

A level Music Exam breakdown - EDEXCEL

Candidates are required to develop and demonstrate their musicianship skills through performing, composing, appraising, and:

- to perform for a set amount of time
- to compose either freely or to a set brief
- to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical contexts & musical language through study of 3 Areas of Study

UNIT 1 - PERFORMANCE (30%, coursework)

You will work *independently*, with support from your instrumental teacher and the Music department, to prepare a recital lasting a **minimum of 8 minutes**. This is to be performed in public at the end of year 13.

You will perform at various points throughout the course, though the final assessed public recitals must take place between March — May of Year 13. We hold recitals in March, to which a small audience of friends and family is invited.

As with GCSE, students should be prepared to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular music, as performing in groups during the course is an invaluable way to develop performance skills.

This unit is externally assessed (marked) by Edexcel.

Your recital... some more details

- ◆ You can perform as a soloist or part of an ensemble; in any style or genre (including traditional performance, improvisation, performances by oral tradition, performance of your own composition), and on any instrument / voice. Ensembles are defined as 2 or more people playing undoubled, simultaneously sounding independent parts, with/without additional backing / accompaniment
- ◆ Total performance marked out of 60, 12 of which are available for difficulty of the pieces. The performance is assessed as a whole, it is not marked as individual pieces.
- ◆ Music written with an accompaniment must be performed with that accompaniment (can include backing tracks)
- ◆ If you perform less than 8 minutes you lose marks

Note:

Edexcel will now expect the standard level of performance to be Grade 7 (by the end of Y13) for Music. Therefore, we advise that students who opt for Music A level should be playing at approx. Grade 5 standard on their instrument by the end of Year 11. Performances that do not meet these expectations can still be submitted, but may be marked down.

UNIT 2 - COMPOSITION (30%, coursework)

You will develop your composing skills in a number of styles, leading up to a submission of TWO pieces (with a combined time of 6 minutes in total).

Total of two compositions, one to a brief set by Pearson and one either free composition or also to a brief.

- One composition must be from either a list of briefs related to the areas of study, or a free composition, carrying 40 marks for this component. This composition must be at least 4 minutes in duration.
- One composition must be from a list of briefs assessing compositional technique, carrying 20 marks for this component. This composition must be at least 1 minute in duration, unless the brief specifies a longer minimum duration.

Composition 2:

The second composition must be from a list of briefs assessing technique, of at least one minute in duration. Marked out of 20, externally marked by the board. The four briefs will always include:

- Bach chorale,
- Two-part counterpoint,
- Arrangement
- Remix

Any submissions less than 6 minutes (combined total) will lose marks! This unit is externally assessed (marked) by Edexcel.

UNIT 3 -APPRAISING (40%, coursework)

Students will develop knowledge and understanding of:

- Musical elements - organisation of pitch, tonality, structure, sonority, texture, tempo, metre and rhythm and dynamics
- Musical contexts - the effect of purpose and intention and the effect of audience, time and place
- Musical language - major and minor chords, reading and writing of staff notation, using appropriate musical vocabulary

Students need to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of musical elements, contexts and language in relation to music they have studied.

You will sit an exam in the June of Year 13 of 2 hours 10 minutes (worth 100 marks).

There are six Areas of Study; 2 are based on Western art music, the others are from other genres. All are compulsory:

You will study extracts of the set works below:

<u>VOCAL MUSIC</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• J. S. Bach - Cantata, Ein feste Burg• Vaughan Williams - On Wenlock Edge	<u>MUSIC FOR FILM</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Danny Elfman - Batman Returns• Bernard Herrmann - Psycho	<u>FUSIONS</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Debussy – ‘Estampes’• Anoushka Shankar - Breathing Under Water
<u>INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clara Wieck-Schumann - Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17: movement 1• Berlioz - Symphonie Fantastique	<u>POPULAR MUSIC/JAZZ</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kate Bush – Hounds of Love• Courtney Pine – Back in the Day• Beatles - Revolver	<u>NEW DIRECTIONS</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kaija Saariaho - Petals for Violoncello and Live Electronics• Stravinsky - The Rite of Spring

The exam paper

One audio CD with the extracts to accompany questions on the paper will be provided per student.

- This paper comprises two sections: A and B. Section A: Areas of study and dictation (50 marks)
- Three questions related to the set works (audio and skeleton score provided).
- One short melody/rhythm completion exercise. Section B: Extended response
- Two essay questions – essay one (20 marks) and essay two (30 marks)
- Essay one asks students to draw links from their study of the set works to the music heard as an unfamiliar extract.
- Essay two gives a choice of three questions that ask students to evaluate the musical elements, context and language of one set work. Each option will be from a different area of study.

You will also do wider listening that relates to each of the Areas of Study to help you prepare for appraising unfamiliar music in the exam, and gain understanding of the wider context of the works.

This contextual and wider knowledge will be important, as the questions in the exam will ask you to refer to other pieces you have heard which relate to your set work.

You answer some listening questions on your set works, and some on unfamiliar music. Your essays will be based around the areas of study, but require you to reference your wider listening as well as the pieces you've studied.