

Post-16 Curriculum - Music

Subject Curriculum Overview

Subject	Music
Qualification / Specification	9MU0
Awarding Body	Edexcel
Level	3
Curriculum Lead	Rich Wiseman
Teaching Staff	Rich Wiseman
Guided Learning Hours	360
Year(s) Delivered	12 & 13
Last Review Date	June 2026
Next Review Date	June 2027

1. Curriculum Intent

A level Music is for students who want to become stronger musicians; better performers, more thoughtful composers, and more confident listeners. The course will move their understanding of music theory to an advanced level; they will closely study a number of set works and carry out wider listening across a range of musical styles and genres. Students learn to hear how music is put together, explain what they notice, and use that knowledge in their own performance and composition.

The course prepares students for music, performing arts, and creative-industry routes including conservatoire study, university, apprenticeships, and employment. It builds skills and habits that matter beyond music, such as independent practice, aural and listening skills, written evaluative communication, project management, and importantly resilience and how to work with constructive feedback.

The curriculum reflects the way musicians actually work - students will embark on a path of preparing for a final performance recital recording, they will respond to composition briefs, continually revise and improve their ideas, work with other musicians, meet deadlines, and be able to explain their creative decisions. They will learn to use notation and music technology to make decisions that are musically informed and justified.

A successful student can perform a well-prepared recital with musical control and expression; they can compose music that not only fits a given brief, but has a clear musical intention and direction that takes listeners on a journey; they can write about familiar and unfamiliar music using evidence from both musical scores and contextual knowledge.

2. Foundational Knowledge

Area	Essential Knowledge / Skills	Why It Matters
Musical elements and vocabulary	Melody, harmony, tonality, rhythm, metre, tempo, texture, sonority, instrumentation, dynamics, articulation, structure and form. Students learn to use musical terminology accurately, in the right context.	Students need a shared musical language before they can approach discussing, comparing or explaining music.
Aural skills, dictation and notation	Pitch, rhythm, intervals, chords, cadences, keys, metre and phrase structure; reading treble, bass, alto and tenor clefs; reading short scores, open scores and transposing instruments.	Students need to be able to connect what they hear with what they see on the page. This supports analysis, rehearsal, composition and confidence in the written paper.
Harmony, tonality and structure	Diatonic harmony, chromaticism, chord functions, cadences, modulation, modes, non-chord notes, phrase structure, common forms and ways of developing musical ideas.	Harmony and structure are central to how music can create direction, tension, and release in a coherent way. They also give students practical tools that are essential for composing.
Musical context, style and set works	The six Areas of Study, the 13 set works, wider listening, historical and cultural context, genre conventions, and performance practice.	Context helps students understand why musical choices matter, but it should always be linked back to what can be heard or seen in the score.
Performance skills	Accuracy, fluency, tone, intonation, ensemble awareness, phrasing, articulation, dynamics, stamina, stylistic understanding, practice routines.	The recital depends on students using rehearsals over time to improve their performance. Students need to become more independent in noticing problems and solving them musically.
Composition skills and the composition process	Generating ideas, selecting and developing material, melody writing, harmony, texture, accompaniment, idiomatic instrumental writing, structure, notation, drafting and refining ideas.	Students need to broadly shape, test and revise their ideas so that the final piece feels coherent and meets the given brief.
Appraising and extended writing	Analytical listening, score annotation, precise evidence, explanation of effect, comparison with other contextual works, evaluation and	The exam requires students to choose the best evidence, explain its musical importance, and compare with similar works.

	planning for 20- and 30-mark exam question responses.	
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3. Powerful Knowledge

Powerful Knowledge Area	Why It Matters	Evidence of Understanding
Connecting Musical elements	Students need to move from simply spotting features to explaining how they combine and create effects.	Students select the most important pieces of evidence and explain how they work together.
The components of a musical 'style'	Musical styles are built from repeated features; harmonies, textures, structural forms, instruments, technologies, performance conventions	Students can explain how a piece fits a style, or challenges the expectations of the style or genre.
Musical Content	Historical and cultural context is important when explaining how and why music is created	Students use context to strengthen a musical argument
NEA work improves analysis - analysis improves NEA work	As Performing and composing skills develop, students acquire a greater understanding of how ideas are shaped, and how technical choices affect how music is communicated	Students utilise ideas they have studied in their own composition work. Similarly through analysis, they have a more in-depth understanding of the performance practice conventions of their recital composers.
Composition is shaping and revising ideas	Effective compositions balance coherence, contrast, pacing and development; Originality comes from purposeful, thought-out musical decisions.	Students can explain how their material develops, and why they have made their creative decisions.
Transferring knowledge to unfamiliar music	Students need to apply what they know to music they have not directly studied.	Students are able to approach unfamiliar extracts with confidence, systematically analyse, and build an evaluative response from evidence.

4. Curriculum Implementation

Term / Unit	Key Content	Foundational Knowledge	Powerful Knowledge	Assessment Opportunities
Year 12 - Autumn Term	Initial focus on base-lining and building musical theoretical knowledge.	Musical elements; aural and notation skills; harmony and tonality; score reading; contextual information.	Elements work together; style is heard through repeated musical choices; context only matters when it links back to evidence in the music.	Baseline theoretical knowledge testing; weekly retrieval and dictation; annotated scores; short written question-style responses;; composition sketchbook tasks.
Foundational Theoretical Knowledge	Melodic and rhythmic dictation, chord construction			
Year 12 Set works				

	and analysis, aural skills, cadential writing and identification Begin studying the AS level set works. Composition foundation tasks begin and will run throughout the year Performance recital programme work begins			
Year 12 - Spring Term AS set works continued	Continue working through the Year AS set works across the Areas of Study. Develop skills in listening, score annotation, wider listening links, comparison and longer written responses. Continue tracking recital progress; composition sketchbook tasks	Knowledge of set-works; wider listening; stylistic features; harmonic recognition; melodic and rhythmic dictation; composition development.	Style is built from patterns of musical choices and use of elements; analysis explains effect rather than simply naming devices; practical work strengthens listening and writing.	Exam-style listening questions; skeleton-score work; short and extended responses; unfamiliar comparison; composition sketch checkpoints and feedback.
Year 12 - Summer term	Finish the Year 12/AS set works before the AS examination. Focus	Secure understanding and recall of AS set works; confident use of command words and	Knowledge is transferable to unfamiliar extracts; strong answers prioritise the best evidence; context supports	Timed Section A tasks; dictation; 20- and 30-mark planning and writing; AS-style papers; individual feedback following the Year 12 AS exam.

Complete AS set works and prepare for the AS exam Study A2 works	on retrieval, exam technique, timing, dictation, unfamiliar listening and selecting precise evidence from the score. Use the AS exam as a meaningful checkpoint before moving on to the full A Level content. After the AS exam, teach the Year 13 A Level set works as a focused block. The aim is to give students the musical content they need before Year 13, so the following year can concentrate on composition portfolio completion and repeated exam-question practice.	subject-specific vocabulary; Section A and B exam techniques; dictation; score evidence; timed planning and writing. A2 level set-work knowledge; advanced rhythm, harmony, texture and sonority; context and chronology; wider listening; links between set works and unfamiliar music.	analysis rather than replacing it. A2 set works deepen the same musical ideas rather than sit apart from them; knowledge needs to be ready for use in exam questions	Low-stakes retrieval; annotated scores; short comparison tasks; wider-listening links; initial A Level-style questions; composition and performance planning for Year 13. End of Year 12 Performance submission consisting of half of the Year 13 recital.
Year 13 - Autumn term Composition portfolio and applied exam practice	Main priority is the composition portfolio following the release of the exam board briefs.	Set-work recall; advanced score reading; composition technique; notation; harmonic and structural control; exam planning.	Composition improves through on-going revision; strong exam answers apply knowledge flexibly and prioritise evidence.	Draft deadlines; composition tutorials; timed questions; dictation; retrieval; performance recital submission for checking.

	Students research compositional genres, styles, contexts relating to the briefs; draft, refine and notate their work. Retrieval/light-touch dictation and component 3 questions each week using the full set-work list.			
Year 13 - Spring / NEA completion and full-paper practice	Complete the composition portfolio and performance NEA. Use mocks and full papers to identify gaps in recall, aural accuracy, comparison and extended writing, then re-teach where needed. Trial Compositional techniques exam in preparation for the Summer 1 paper.	Integration of performance, composition, aural skills, notation, set-work knowledge, context and written communication, encompassing all three course components.	Independent musical decisions in order to improve NEA submission; feedback leads to visible improvement against mark schemes.	Final composition checkpoints; recital recording; Component 3 mocks; full-paper practice; targeted re-teaching. Set work knowledge and understanding audit informs areas to revisit in preparation for the final written paper.
Year 13 Summer term Final Component 3 preparation and	Composition arrangement exam; NEA submission of both composition and recital work.	Accurate aural work; good understanding and ability to incorporate both command words and musical vocabulary; strong essay structures;	Students transfer knowledge independently and are confident in their ability to turn musical understanding into marks.	Low-stakes retrieval exercises; timed tasks; full-paper practice; self-assessment and audit tasks focus revision; final intervention.

external assessment	Final exam preparation: spaced retrieval, timed questions, dictation, score reading, unfamiliar listening and essay planning, with targeted support before the external exam.	comparison tasks are approached confidently with good coverage; exam timings are practised and efficient.		
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5. Assessment Strategy

Assessment Type	Purpose	Frequency
Diagnostic	Identify prior experience, misconceptions and gaps in aural training and perception, understanding of notation and theory, music contextual knowledge and understanding, compositional and performance ability, so that students are skilled sufficiently to undertake the key aspects of the course.	At the beginning of the course the main focus is covering the fundamentals of music theory, notation, and analysis. This is the foundation that all future work is built upon, and is continually tested throughout the course
Formative	Retrieval, questioning, live modelling, aural skill tests, melodic and rhythmic dictation, score annotation, composition tutorials, peer assessment, on-going written and verbal feedback for composition and performance portfolio work	Every lesson in some form through class aural skills tests and exam practice questions. Composition feedback, particularly in year 13 when the briefs are released takes place every lesson.
Summative	Test progress against mark scheme, track performance over time with aural skills and dictation; identify strengths and misconceptions to inform intervention and curriculum delivery.	Half termly and termly coursework submissions with more in-depth feedback Recital recording submissions take place at the end of Year 12 and then three times in Year 13.
Synoptic	Check whether students can bring together listening, score evidence, context, performance understanding and compositional insight, especially when dealing with unfamiliar music.	At least termly in Year 12, then more frequently in Year 13 through full Component 3 papers, comparison tasks and integrated coursework portfolio review.