The Island VI Form

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Post-16 Curriculum - Music Tech

Subject Curriculum Overview

Subject	Music Tech
Qualification / Specification	9MT0
Awarding Body	Pearson Edexcel
Level	3
Curriculum Lead	Rich Wiseman
Teaching Staff	Rich Wiseman
Guided Learning Hours	360
Year(s) Delivered	Year 12 and 13
Last Review Date	June 2026
Next Review Date	June 2027

1. Curriculum Intent

A Level Music Technology is for students who want to understand how recorded music is made, shaped, and how to aurally analyse. The course teaches students how to use a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) to both create their own original works, and also analyse, edit, manipulate, and correct audio. Students will learn how to use a music studio to record various instruments and vocals, and also learn how creative decisions affect the capture of musical performances. Students will improve their listening skills and be able to explain the technical choices that they make.

The course supports students who want to move on to music production, sound engineering, live sound, media, composition, performance, broadcasting, or wider creative-industry routes. It also develops useful transferable skills such as organisation, problem-solving, working to a brief, managing deadlines, responding to feedback and explaining decisions clearly.

Students work in ways that mirror real production practice, such as setting up recording equipment, planning sessions, capturing clean audio, editing accurately and creatively, comparing versions and making improvements. They learn to talk about sound using the correct technical language, and make musical judgments.

A successful student can set up and run a recording session, capture clean audio, organise a project sensibly, edit with accuracy and shape a mix with control. They can create and manipulate sounds through synthesis and sampling, recognise production techniques in unfamiliar music, and explain the link between what they hear and the technology that produced it. They can demonstrate their creativity through managing and mastering a mix and respond to a compositional brief with flair; they can justify their creative and technical decisions.

2. Foundational Knowledge

Area	Essential Knowledge / Skills	Why It Matters
Sound and digital audio	Frequency, amplitude, phase, harmonics, waveforms, envelopes, acoustics, decibels, sampling, bit depth, file types and basic psychoacoustics.	Students need to understand what sound is before they can make sensible decisions about recording, editing, processing or explaining it in the exam.
Signal flow, equipment and safe studio practice	Microphones, DI boxes, preamps, interfaces, monitoring, headphones, cables, routing, gain structure, feedback, noise and safe use of studio spaces.	Understanding the route from source to speaker, they can set up independently, avoid faults and diagnose problems when issues arise.
DAW workflow and organisation	Project setup, audio and MIDI tracks, tempo and grid, markers, folders, routing, buses, sends and returns, automation, exporting and version control.	Good organisation is essential for making growing projects manageable. It also helps students prepare for working under Component 4 conditions and avoid losing or damaging practical work.
Recording and microphone technique	Dynamic and condenser microphones, polar patterns, frequency response, proximity effect, distance, angle, room sound, spill, phase and stereo techniques.	The recording stage has a huge effect on the final outcome. Students need to understand that a clean capture matters more than trying to fix everything later.
Editing audio and MIDI	Splitting, trimming, fades, crossfades, comping, correcting timing and pitch, removing unwanted noise, quantising, MIDI editing and audio manipulation.	Accurate editing is a core skill for coursework, production work and the component 4 practical exam.
Mixing and processing	Balance, pan, EQ, filters, compression, gating, limiting, reverb, delay, modulation effects, stereo image, automation and basic mastering decisions.	Students need to shape clarity, space, impact and style. They should be able to explain why a process was used, not just name the plug-in.
Synthesis, sampling and creative sound design	Oscillators, waveforms, filters, envelopes, LFOs, modulation, sampling, mapping, looping, slicing, pitch shifting, time stretching and layering.	These skills are central to the technology-based composition (C2)
Critical listening and production history	Identifying recording, editing, mixing and sound-design techniques; understanding key styles, technologies and production approaches in popular music.	The component 3 listening paper depends on students hearing technical evidence and explaining it clearly. Wider production knowledge helps them make stronger links.

3. Powerful Knowledge

Powerful Knowledge Area	Why It Matters	Evidence of Understanding
The Signal Chain	A recording is a connected system. A decision at the source, microphone, preamp, interface, DAW or mix stage changes what happens later. Considerations throughout the recording process/journey affect the final outcome; decisions around gain-staging, Signal-to-Noise ratios, headroom all will have a subsequent effect.	Students can trace a signal path, spot where a fault is likely to be, and explain a practical solution. Students can confidently discuss technical decisions throughout the recording process and explain how these decisions will affect later outcomes/the finished product.
Different Approaches	EQ, compression, reverb or editing should not be used automatically. Students need to hear the issue or musical aim before choosing a process. Students need to consider the different methods and approaches to a problem and then select the most effective method	Students can link an audible feature to a technical cause and select a suitable tool or setting. Students can practically demonstrate the skill, or describe how it could be carried out with suggested parameters.
There is rarely one correct setting or solution	Good production decisions depend on a variety of different factors: the source, genre, arrangement, room, style and intention. Presets and memorised settings only get students so far - they are useful as a starting point, however students must use their own listening and skills to improve their audio outcomes.	Students compare options, use references and justify choices in relation to the sound and style.
Corrective and creative work overlap	The same process can fix a problem or be used creatively to create a distinctive sound. What matters is the intention and the control with which it is used.	Students can explain whether a process is being used to correct, enhance or transform the sound, and justify their own creative decisions.
The best fix is often before the mix	Performance, instrument choice, room sound and microphone placement can make mixing easier or harder. Some (most) problems are better solved by re-recording, rather than spending time trying to ‘fix’ audio	Students are able to plan recording sessions properly and recognise when source quality is limiting the outcome.
Technology changes musical style	New recording formats, instruments, software and studio methods have shaped the sound and structure of popular music.	Students can explain how technological developments have helped to create a recognisable production style or sound.

4. Curriculum Implementation

Term / Unit	Key Content	Foundational Knowledge	Powerful Knowledge	Assessment Opportunities
Year 12 Autumn term Music Technology Basics - getting to know the DAW	Studio and DAW induction: safe working, file management, Cubase workflow, signal flow, gain, monitoring, basic microphone use, audio principles and core listening vocabulary.	Sound and digital audio; signal flow; safe studio practice; DAW organisation; basic capture; technical language.	Sound travels through a chain; listen first; source, room, hardware and software all affect the result.	Entry diagnostic; short Cubase tasks; signal-flow and audio-principles quizzes; mini recording and mix; listening tasks.
Year 12 Spring term Recording, editing and mixing	Record and mix progressively: drums, bass, guitars, keys and vocals where possible. Microphone choice, placement, spill, phase, comping, editing, EQ, compression, reverb, delay, balance, pan and automation.	Microphone technique; editing; mixing and processing; critical listening; project planning.	The best fix is often before the mix; there is rarely one correct setting; corrective and creative work overlap.	Practical skills checks; mix critiques; timed listening questions; short technical explanations; Component 1-style task.
Year 12 Summer term Sound design, composition, exam preparation, C1 launch	Synthesis, sampling, MIDI/audio manipulation, looping, slicing and pitch/time editing. Students complete a small C2 technology-based composition while preparing for Component 3 and 4 exams. Later in the term, the exam board will release the artist list for C1. Students research and make recording decisions; plan	Synthesis and sampling; MIDI/audio manipulation; musical structure; advanced DAW editing; analytical writing.	Listen first, then choose the tool; choices serve the music; exam success depends on transfer.	Technology-based composition project; timed Component 4 tasks; end-of-year Component 3-style assessment.

	sessions and set up their C1 DAW projects.			
Year 13 Autumn term Launch component 2	Continue with C1 and begin the final Component 2 composition. Students capture first takes, develop sound-design ideas and keep Component 3 and 4 practice moving through short weekly routines. C3 and C4 trial examination preparation	Recording foundations; synthesis and sampling; file management; logbook habits; project planning; analytical terminology.	Strong production is created through continuous shaping and improvement; creative decisions are contextual to each project; performance, capture and mix are interdependent.	Although each students' NEA project will be heading in a different direction, individual milestones are planned and agreed throughout; progress reviews; standardisation checkpoints; targeted listening tests; timed Component 4 tasks. C3 and C4 trial exams
Year 13 Spring term Finish NEA and sharpen exam technique	Refine and complete the recording and technology-based composition. Use mocks and question-level analysis to target gaps in Component 3 and Component 4 while final exports and logbooks are completed. C3 and C4 trial examination preparation	Recording foundations; synthesis and sampling; file management; logbook habits; project planning; analytical terminology.	Strong production is created through continuous shaping and improvement; creative decisions are contextual to each project; performance, capture and mix are interdependent.	NEA milestone and final checks; targeted intervention. C3 and C4 trial exams
Year 13 Summer term Final coursework collection and exam preparation	Final submission of C1 and C2 coursework projects with full detailed logbooks. Final preparation for the external C3 and C4 papers: core principles, production history, unfamiliar listening, extended	Secure recall and fluent application of core technical, practical and listening knowledge.	Exam practise; prioritising under time pressure; approaches to different types of exam questions - concise technical explanations.	Low-stakes retrieval; timed sections; full-paper practice; self-assessment and auditing of C3 and C4 knowledge and skills

	responses and timed DAW tasks. The focus is fluency, accuracy and good decisions under pressure; considering alternative approaches to tackling practical tasks.			

5. Assessment Strategy

Assessment Type	Purpose	Frequency
Diagnostic	Find out what students already know about music, recording, DAWs, listening and technical language to identify who needs more support with the basics and who is ready for more independence.	At the beginning of the course and at the start of major new practical areas; after trial exams or in-class assessments when knowledge gaps become clear.
Formative	Check understanding while students are working: live questioning, teacher modelling, listening checks, practical observation, retrieval and short written explanations.	Starter tasks - mixture of practical and written every lesson in some form. More formal feedback and checkpoint review ongoing throughout extended recording or composition projects.
Summative	Use the exam board specification and mark-scheme to regularly check-in and track strengths and gaps, and prepare students for the standard of NEA and external assessment.	Following each substantial practical task, listening/written assessment, trial exam; throughout NEA portfolio work
Synoptic	Check that students connect knowledge from the different areas of the course; bring together sound principles, listening, production history and practical skill, and use them with unfamiliar audio or under timed conditions.	At least termly in Year 12. More frequently in Year 13, including full Component 3 and Component 4 mocks.