



# **GCSE to A Level Transition Booklet**

**Eduqas A level Music**

## **Choosing Music A Level**

Music at A level is varied, practical, and intellectually stimulating. GCSE is not necessarily a prerequisite but being proficient on an instrument is.

You will hone numerous skills; listening, analysing, essay writing, and forming arguments, alongside the creative skills Music fosters so successfully. This marriage of skills makes Music A Level a respected and well-rounded qualification. We also aim to deliver the qualification in an engaging and practical manner, through performance and composition tasks which link to the set works.

### **Top tips for the course**

1. Listen to as much music as you can. Vary the genre, explore composers and artists you have not previously listened to.
2. Begin to discover a basic history of music; eras, composers, particular features of genres. Read books and do some research online.
3. Revise how to read staff notation and basic music theory. Grade exams are not necessary but an understanding of how to read music and knowledge of theoretical concepts will help.
4. Perform as much as you can!
5. Compose without the fear of doing it 'wrong'! Find a way which works for you: with an instrument, at the piano, using technology, or even paper and pencil!

Every subject at A Level is a step up from the GCSE qualification. Remember that we have two years to cover the course content and consolidate the knowledge and skills required. We structure the set works and course to ensure the transition is as seamless as possible, with good progression from GCSE.

This booklet will give an overview of the whole course, as well as some suggestions of how you can begin to prepare for the transition from GCSE to A level. The tasks and recommendations are merely suggestions but have been designed to give you a complete preparation for the course.

## What does the course consist of?

Three components make up Eduqas A Level Music, as shown below:

### COMPONENTS

This specification offers a range of musical experience including solo or ensemble performance, composition and analysis.

Learners must choose either Option A in both Components 1 and 2 or Option B in both Components 1 and 2.

All learners must study Component 3.

Component	Percentage of Grade
Component 1: Performing	35% (Option A) or 25% (Option B)
Component 2: Composing	25% (Option A) or 35% (Option B)
Component 3: Appraising	40%

## OPTION A (SPECIALISM IN PERFORMING)

### Performing

Total duration of performances: 10-12 minutes

35% of qualification

**Recital:** A performance consisting of a minimum of three pieces. At least one of these pieces must be as a soloist. The other pieces may be either as a soloist or as part of an ensemble or a combination of both. One piece must reflect the musical characteristics of one area of study. At least one other piece must reflect the musical characteristics of one other, different area of study.

### Composing

Total duration of compositions: 4-6 minutes.

25% of qualification

Two compositions, one of which must reflect the musical techniques and conventions associated with the Western Classical Tradition and be in response to a brief set by WJEC. Learners will have a choice of four set briefs.

The second composition is a free composition.

## OPTION B (SPECIALISM IN COMPOSING)

Performing	Composing
<p>Total duration of performances: 6-8 minutes</p> <p>25% of qualification</p> <p>Non-exam assessment: externally assessed by a visiting examiner.</p> <p><b>Recital:</b> A performance consisting of a minimum of two pieces either as a soloist or as part of an ensemble or a combination of both. One piece must reflect the musical characteristics of one area of study.</p>	<p>Total duration of compositions: 8-10 minutes</p> <p>35% of qualification</p> <p>Non-exam assessment: externally assessed by WJEC</p> <p>Three compositions, one of which must reflect the musical techniques and conventions associated with the Western Classical Tradition and be in response to a brief set by WJEC. Learners will have a choice of four set briefs.</p> <p>The second composition must reflect the musical characteristics of one different area of study (<u>i.e.</u> not the Western Classical Tradition) while the third composition is a free composition.</p>

## COMPONENT 3: ANALYSIS

- Written examination: 2 hours 15 minutes (approximately)
- 40% of qualification

### **Area of study A (Compulsory)**

**A: The Western Classical Tradition (The Development of the Symphony 1750-1900)**  
which includes two set works. Choose one set work for detailed analysis and the other for general study.

- Symphony No. 104 in D major, 'London': Haydn
- Symphony No. 4 in A major, 'Italian': Mendelssohn.

## COMPONENT 3: ANALYSIS

**A choice of one of the following:**

**AND a choice of one of the following:**

**B: Rock and Pop**

**C: Musical Theatre**

**D: Jazz**

(This decision will be made with the cohort in mind- all students in a year group must study the same area of study)

**E: Into the Twentieth Century** including two set works:

Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, Movement II: Poulenc

Three Nocturnes, Number 1, Nuages: Debussy

**F: Into the Twenty-first Century** including two set works:

Asyla, Movement 3, Ecstasio: Thomas Adès

String Quartet No. 2 (Opus California) Movements 1 (Boardwalk) and 4 (Natural Bridges): Sally Beamish

Specification link: [A level specification template \(eduqas.co.uk\)](http://eduqas.co.uk)

## **How to prepare for Component 1 (Performance)**

In Year 13, a recital lasting between 6-12 minutes (depending on your specialism) will be recorded. Your performance can be solo and/or ensemble and music should be of the highest difficulty you can play accurately, fluently, and expressively. You can play on one or multiple instruments.

There is a mark boost available for performing pieces which are Grade 7 (higher than standard), Grade 6 pieces remain the same (standard) whereas Grade 5 level pieces (lower than standard) will have marks deducted.

Performances are assessed by a visiting examiner in the Spring term of Year 13.

1. Accuracy
2. Technical control
3. Expression and interpretation

### **So what can you do?**

- Have regular lessons with a peripatetic teacher
- Practise and perform regularly. Take opportunities to perform in front of an audience
- Focus as much on expression (dynamics and articulation) as accuracy and fluency. There are a lot of marks for expression alone
- Choose repertoire which shows you at your best. Pieces do not have to be classical; it's the level of difficulty and how accurately and expressively you can perform that matters
- Join school ensembles, especially with the voice/instrument you intend to use for A level performance.



## **How to prepare for Component 2 (Composition)**

Depending on which specialism you choose, you will either complete 2 compositions of 4-6 minutes or 3 compositions of 8-10 minutes.

- All students will select and complete a composition brief from the Western Classical Tradition
- All students write a free choice composition.
- Composition specialist will write a 3<sup>rd</sup> piece from another Area of Study (i.e. not Western Classical Tradition).

Composition is marked across 3 areas which are:

1. creating musical ideas
2. developing musical ideas
3. technical and expressive control of the musical elements

### **What can I do to prepare?**

- Compose in a range of styles
- Brush up on music theory paying specific attention to Western Classical harmony
- Listen to as much music as you can and note any common features of particular styles
- Try not to overcomplicate it; keep it simple initially
- Create numerous small ideas rather than one large composition for now
- Find a way which works for you: with an instrument, at the piano, using technology, or even paper and pencil!

## How to prepare for Component 3 (Appraisal)

This examination will assess knowledge and understanding of music through three areas of study. Area of study A is compulsory and learners then choose two further contrasting areas of study: one from either area of study B or area of study C or area of study D, and one from either area of study E or area of study F.

Area of Study	Set works/Genres
Compulsory: A: The Western Classical Tradition (The Development of the Symphony 1750-1900)	Symphony No. 104 in D major 'London': Haydn Symphony No. 4 in A major 'Italian': Mendelssohn
Choose one from... B: Rock and Pop Area of study C: Musical Theatre Area of study D: Jazz.	Learners are required to study five rock and pop genres between 1960 and 2000: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop</li> <li>• Rock (including progressive rock, heavy metal, folk-rock and punk rock)</li> <li>• Soul</li> <li>• Funk (and disco)</li> <li>• Folk (and country)</li> </ul>
Choose one from... E: Into the Twentieth Century F: Into the Twenty-first Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, Movement II: Poulenc</li> <li>• Three Nocturnes, Number 1, Nuages: Debussy</li> </ul>

### Preparing for Appraisal

- Listen to as much music as you can of a variety of genres
- As you listen, aim to do some basic analysis: time signature, tonality, instrumentation, melodic features etc.
- Create an extended piece of writing on some of your favourite pieces of music, creating an argument and evidencing it with musical features; E.g. The Beatles' use of sonority was ground breaking or John Williams' melodic writing for the Star Wars films has influenced film music since its creation.

## **Suggested online resources for wider reading and listening:**

### **Stuff to watch on Youtube:**

- Good basic introduction to [the symphony by Howard Goodall](#) from the BBC
- An [introduction to Debussy](#), again from Howard Goodall at the BBC
- Anything on the [LSO Youtube Playlist](#)
- Click here to access [archived Berlin Philharmonic concerts](#) – amazing!
- Lloyd Webber musicals archived here [theshowsmustgoon](#)

### **Ted talks on many different areas of music:**

<https://www.ted.com/playlists/browse?topics=music>

### **BBC Radio 3:**

A variety of programmes and radio shows across numerous genres. Composer of the week is also useful.

Programmes: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/schedules/p00fzl8t>

Composer of the week: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nrvd3/episodes/downloads>

### **San Francisco Symphony Orchestra:**

Podcasts and information on a variety of composers

<https://www.sfsymphony.org/Discover-the-Music/Listen-to-Podcasts/Program-Notes-Series>

### **Music History:**

Read through and listen to the material on the [Short History of Music](#) pages on [www.ALevelmusic.com](http://www.ALevelmusic.com)

### **Chorale help:**

<http://www.choraleguide.com/>

### **Basic Theory:**

On the following (external) page you should be familiar with the topics in the following sections:

#### **Musictheory.net**

- *The Basics* – all sections
- *Rhythm and Metre* – all sections
- *Scales and Key Signatures* – all sections
- *Intervals* – all sections
- The first two lessons from *Chords, Diatonic Chords* and the first from *Chord Progressions* would be a bonus

Also [www.mymusictheory.com](http://www.mymusictheory.com) has free online resources for grades 1-8

### **Reading**

ABRSM: The AB Guide to Music Theory, Part 1 or 2

A History of Western Music by Burkholder, Grout, and Palisca

Edexcel AS and A Level Music Study Guide

Edexcel AS/A Level Anthology of Music - Edexcel AS/A Level Music 2016

Harmony in Practice (ABRSM), Anna Butterworth

Music: A Very Short Introduction by Nicholas Cook

It is also worth buying a concise dictionary of music

## Optional Summer Tasks

### Performance

- Keep practicing your instrument(s) over the summer and have a piece ready to perform early in the Autumn Term.

### Composition

Download musescore at home and select one of the following tasks to complete and bring it into your first music lesson with Mrs Selwood.: [Free music composition and notation software | MuseScore](#)

1. Write a composition using one pitch. For example, only use B but you are permitted to use different octaves.
2. Take the following chord progression. Make the triads more complex by adding notes (e.g. sus4, 7<sup>th</sup>) and create a rhythm to play the chords to. Am G C F
3. Create a 4 bar leitmotif on any instrument to represent a character from Greek / Roman mythology (Zeus, Hera, Hephaestus etc). Write a short paragraph explaining the musical features used to depict that character
4. Explore various ranges, techniques, and characteristics of you first instrument. Can you create something interesting and unusual to exploit these characteristics of your instrument?

### Appraisal

1. Familiarise yourself with the DR CAT SMITH mnemonic for A level. Dynamics, Rhythm (metre and tempo), Context, Articulation, Texture, Structure, Melody, Instrumentation, Tonality, Harmony. **Write as many keywords** / features of those areas as you can. E.g. Rhythm may include syncopation, andante, hemiola.
2. Choose a composer, a piece by that composer and listen to it. Why do you enjoy this piece? What musical features make it so satisfying, refer to each element of music from DR CAT SMITH in your answer? Give the composer, title of the piece, era of music e.g. Baroque.

Bring these tasks into your first music lesson with Ms. Curtis

Email: Please email either of us if you have any questions and we look forward to seeing you in September.

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