



Music Curriculum Information - A Level

As students embark on their Music A Level, we thought it would be useful to share an overview of the course.

In Key Stage 5 Music:

The examination board for A Level Music is Edexcel. You can find further information relating to the specification here: [Edexcel A Level Music Specification](#)

- Component 1 - Performing - 30%
- Component 2 - Composing - 30%
- Component 3 - Appraising - 40%

Performance is worked on throughout the two years of the course, the final assessment being a recording of a performance of at least 8 minutes in length, which may be a solo or as part of an ensemble. The final mark is adjusted based on the difficulty of the pieces performed.

Composition is also worked on throughout the two years. Each student will produce two compositions after working on various compositional techniques. The first of these is a free composition (worked on largely in Year 12) and this is complemented by a composition to a brief supplied by Edexcel, which is completed in Year 13. This brief composition may be either a Bach Chorale harmonisation, a piece of counterpoint, an arrangement or a remix, at the student's choice.

'Appraising' music is the examined component of the course and is worked on throughout the two years of the course. Students study music from six areas of study relating to different musical periods and deepen their understanding of through the in-depth study of many contrasting works:

Vocal Music

- J. S. Bach, Cantata, Ein feste Burg
- Vaughan Williams, On Wenlock Edge

Instrumental Music

- Clara Wieck-Schumann, Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17: movement 1
- Berlioz, Symphonie Fantastique

Music for Film

- Danny Elfman, Batman Returns
- Bernard Herrmann, Psycho

Popular Music and Jazz

- Kate Bush, Hounds of Love
- Beatles, Revolver
- Courtney Pine, Back in the Day

Fusions

- Debussy, Estampes
- Anoushka Shankar, Breathing Under Water

New Directions

- Kaija Saariaho, Petals for Violoncello and Live Electronics
- Stravinsky, The Rite of Spring

The exam assesses listening and appraising skills of these pieces, as well as extended opportunities to demonstrate an understanding of the wider historical and social context in which the works were written, with an emphasis on wider listening, which enables a broad and expansive understanding of the context in which pieces were written and listened to.

Required resources:

- All technical resources and stationary required are provided
- An instrument for home practice is essential
- Any sheet music required for chosen performances

Career Links:

- [Why Study Music](#)

Homework and assessment:

Homework of approximately 4 hours duration will be set in Music to give the students time to consolidate their understanding of work covered at school and further develop their ideas. Homework may take the form of a written piece or online assessment and feedback is given in line with the school marking policy and exam board assessment criteria. Assessment marks are subject to change and are based on the last exam season grade boundaries. If a student is struggling with their homework then they should talk to their teacher about it so that support can be provided.

Co-curricular Music:

Throughout the year the Music department runs a large number of opportunities for students to further enhance their performance and creative skills, some jointly with the Boys' Grammar School. It is highly recommended that music students take an active role in participating in these, both to support their studies and gain experience of making music with others. There are also plenty of opportunities for students to set up ensembles themselves. Examples of current ensembles and opportunities include:

- Choir
- Orchestra
- String groups (junior and senior)
- Guitar ensemble
- Percussion ensemble
- Jazz Band
- Joint Musical Production

More information can be found on the [Music Subject Content page](#) of the school's website.

If you have any queries, please contact Mr Mark Warner, Director of Music at mwarner@ahs.bucks.sch.uk.