



Welcome to the A Level Music Talk

Meet the Department



Mrs Morgan
Head of Performing Arts



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Subject Overview

A Level Music explores the three components studied at GCSE in much greater depth. The core principles of the course focus on **performing, composing, and appraising music** - developing your practical skills, creativity, and analytical understanding of a wide range of musical styles, genres, and contexts. You'll study set works in detail, refine your instrumental or vocal technique, and create original compositions that reflect your personal musical voice.

Our department is **large, active, passionate, and vibrant**, with **high academic, creative, and performance standards**. Students benefit from a **wide range of extra-curricular groups, student-generated activities**, and excellent use of **music technology** to enhance both learning and creativity.

Key Points

- The A level Music appraising paper is examined at the **end of the course**.
- The 2 Year A level allows students to study in depth and therefore develop and grow as musicians.
- Internal assessments will guide students and ensure they make the required progress.
- The Year 12 internal exams are an ideal waypoint.

Overview

Component 1: Appraising music

What's assessed

- Listening
- Analysis
- Contextual understanding

How it's assessed

- Exam paper with listening and written questions using excerpts of music.

Questions

- Section A: Listening (56 marks)
- Section B: Analysis (34 marks)
- Section C: Essay (30 marks)

This component is 40% of A-level marks (120 marks).

Component 2: Performance

What's assessed

Music performance

How it's assessed

Solo and/or ensemble performing as an instrumentalist, or vocalist and/or music production (via technology).

Requirement

A minimum of ten minutes of performance in total is required.

This component is 35% of A-level marks (50 marks).

Non-exam assessment (NEA) will be externally marked by AQA examiners. Work must be completed between 1 March and the specified date given at [aqa.org.uk/keydates](https://www.aqa.org.uk/keydates) [↗](#)

Work must be sent by post/uploaded to AQA by the specified date given at [aqa.org.uk/keydates](https://www.aqa.org.uk/keydates) [↗](#)

Overview

Component 3: Composition

What's assessed

Composition

How it's assessed

- Composition 1: Composition to a brief (25 marks)
- Composition 2: Free composition (25 marks)

Requirement

A minimum of four and a half minutes of music in total is required.

This component is worth 25% of A-level marks (50 marks).

NEA will be externally marked by AQA examiners. Work must be completed and sent by post/uploaded to AQA by the specified date given at [aqa.org.uk/keydates](https://www.aqa.org.uk/keydates) [↗](#).

Performing

Students must be able to perform music using one or both of the following ways:

- instrumental/vocal: as a soloist, and/or as part of an ensemble
- production: via music technology.
- Students **must** perform for a minimum of **ten** minutes.
- Care should be taken when selecting repertoire for ensemble performance; the level of demand refers to the individual part performed by the student and not to the overall level of demand of the selected piece.
- Performance of pieces written with an accompaniment intended by the composer should not be unaccompanied.

Composing

Students must learn how to develop musical ideas, including extending and manipulating musical ideas, and compose music that is musically convincing through two compositions. One must be in response to an externally set brief (Composition 1) and the other a free composition (Composition 2).

The combined duration of the compositions must be a minimum of four and a half minutes.

Compositions must demonstrate technical control in the use of appropriate musical elements and how they are combined to make sense as a whole.

Listening & Appraising

The areas of study provide an appropriate focus for students to appraise, develop and demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical contexts and musical language. The areas of study can also provide a rich source of material for your students to work with when developing performance and composition skills.

There are seven areas of study:

1. Western classical tradition 1650–1910 (compulsory)
2. Pop music
3. Music for media
4. Music for theatre
5. Jazz
6. Contemporary traditional music
7. Art music since 1910.

Students **must** study Area of study 1: Western classical tradition 1650–1910 and teachers will then choose **two to study** from Areas of study 2–7.

Typical Lesson

Lesson time will generally be split up to ensure each hour has a key focus either in performing, composing or listening and appraising.

Performance and composition will run in a similar manner to at GCSE with practical approaches and 1:1 feedback and support built in.

Listening/appraising lessons will focus on one area of study at a time with listening and theory knowledge, essay writing and musical analysis skills imbedded.

Careers/Subject Combinations

Where can it lead?

Wide variety of degree courses including:

- Technology
- Music therapy
- Arts administration
- Performance
- Academic music
- Teaching
- Sound engineer
- Recording engineer
- Composer/Songwriter
- Arranger/Copyist
- Music Producing

Subject Combinations

Music works well with many other subjects at A Level but particularly:

- English Literature
- History
- Mathematics
- Physics
- ICT subjects
- Languages



All of the King Charles I Open Evening resources can be found by visiting the [school website](#)



We look forward to welcoming you to our classrooms in September 2026