



GCSE MUSIC

Information and Frequently Asked Questions



This document is to supplement the course information in the HGS year 8 options booklet. It has been prepared to help students further understand what the GCSE music course entails, to give answers to common questions and to assist in choosing the best options for you.

For further information please speak to a music dept. member of staff.

QUEEN



GCSE MUSIC

Introduction

As you may know we have an enviable and rich variety of music taking place at HGS. So, if performing or composing is your thing, GCSE Music is the obvious direction to choose. Whether you are a traditional clarinettist, a singer or a rock guitarist, or if you wish to develop some music technology skills, this course is available to you.

What will it be like?

Edexcel GCSE music focuses on the three primary activities you will have become familiar with - **Performing, Composing and Appraising**. You will be required to **perform** both solo and in an ensemble, and **compose** two pieces. You will also learn about **four areas of study** – **Instrumental Music, Vocal Music, Fusions** and **Music for Stage and Screen** culminating in a listening and appraising exam. These key aspects will be studied throughout all parts of the course and will form the basis of your coursework and examinations. During year 9 we will particularly focus on integrating and developing performing, composing and appraising skills, along with increasing student's understanding of music theory and composition.

Whilst the course naturally attracts instrumentalists and vocalists, and previous theoretical knowledge is an advantage, no previous music exam grades are required. You should however be performing at the **equivalent of ABRSM grade 2 or higher** as you start the course or **regularly achieving performing grades of 7-9s** in your year 8 lessons. This course is open to ALL students though who have a genuine interest in music.

Assessment & Course Overview

There are three areas of assessment:

Performing music (30%)

During the course you will have to record TWO performances – one '**solo**' and one as part of an '**ensemble**'. In some cases these may have been prepared for a concert or show. There will be numerous performance opportunities across both years which will all be recorded and you pick the best ones to submit. The total time of the two performances combined is four minutes of music equivalent to ABRSM grade 4 standard or higher (at the end of the course). You can play alongside any musician (e.g. staff, students, friends etc) or if you perform out of school (e.g. stage school, rock group, local choir etc) these could also be used. Performances do not have to be in public and there are no sight-reading tests or scales. Remember we have an excellent peripatetic instrumental staff to help you and a wide range of regular ensemble opportunities available to join.

Composing music (30%)

During the course you will have to compose TWO pieces of a combined duration of three minutes. One composition is a free choice and the other is in response to a brief set by the exam board which relates to the areas of study. Whether you compose a string quartet, a rock song or a film score with beats and samples this part of the course is very free to explore your style and creativity. Compositions are mainly completed in school time. You may use music technology software such as Sibelius, Cubase or Garageband - or you could create and record your piece using the recording studio - or maybe you could just simply use good old fashioned pencil and paper!

Appraising music (40% externally marked)

This is the only examination part of the course and is taken at the end of Year 11. The 1 hour 45m exam draws on music taken from the eight set works, plus one unfamiliar piece. The eight set works link to each of the four Areas of Study mentioned above and includes pieces by **Bach** and **Beethoven**, music from the show **Wicked** and the film **Star Wars**, pop music by **Queen** and two fusion pieces with mixtures of **Jazz, Samba, African drumming** and **sampling** in them. The test covers breadth as well as depth of knowledge and builds upon much of the work you have already been developing in years 7 and 8.

Areas of Study and Set Works

There are 4 Areas of Study and 8 Set Works

AoS1 - Instrumental Music 1700–1820

1. Bach: Brandenburg Concerto no. 5, Movement 3
2. Beethoven: 'Pathétique' Piano Sonata no. 8, Movement 1

AoS2 - Vocal Music

3. Purcell: Music for a While
4. Queen: Killer Queen

AoS3 - Music for Stage and Screen

5. Stephen Schwartz: Defying Gravity (from *Wicked*)
6. John Williams: Main Theme & Rebel Blockade Runner (from *Star Wars Episode IV*)

AoS4 - Fusions

7. Afro Celt Sound System: Release
8. Esperanza Spalding: Samba Em Preludio

AoS 1 - Instrumental Music

Set Works

AoS 2 - Vocal Music

AoS 3 – Stage and Screen

AoS 4 - Fusions

3 YEAR COURSE STRUCTURE

During year 9 we particularly focus on integrating and developing performing, composing and appraising skills, along with increasing student's understanding of music theory and the use of music technology in composition. We continue this in year 10 as well as starting the first composition coursework. Year 11 is where it all comes together as final performance and composition work are completed and preparations for the final exam are undertaken.

Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Performing Skills - solo & group Composing Skills - various Development of Pop Music Development of Classical Music Film Music Fusion Music including Bhangra World Music	Performing Skills - solo & group Composing Skills - various Development of Film Music Pop Music Jazz and Latin Music Musical Theatre Start Composition Coursework 1 <u>Set Works Covered</u> Killer Queen Star Wars J.S. Bach Wicked	Final Performances Composition Coursework Mock Examinations <u>Set Works Covered</u> Samba em Preludio Purcell Beethoven + Review all 8 set works

Set works are covered as we go along. To supplement these you are encouraged to listen to a **wide range** of music. These are not formally tested but are there to aid your general listening skills. There are exam-board suggestions shown below, but any music linked to the areas of study is fine.



GCSE MUSIC FAQ

In GCSE music can I sing rather than play an instrument for the performance unit?

YES!! Any style of singing is accepted – pop, rock, musicals, classical, jazz etc..

Do I have to play an instrument or sing to take this course?

Yes, by the end of year 11 you will have to undertake the performing element of the course.

Can I (or do I have to) use a computer?

You may wish to use a computer to compose your music, but you do not have to. Many students use the score writing software *Sibelius* to compose their music. We have 32 licences of this and we will teach you from the beginning how to use it. Some students prefer to use the software *Cubase* or *GarageBand*. However, some students use pencil and paper (usually with an instrument) and some students compose their work entirely in the recording studio, building up recorded tracks and then writing a report. The course is flexible to all methods of composition and we teach many of them as exercises in years 9 and 10 so students can choose their preferred method for their final coursework.

Is there a music technology GCSE?

No there isn't a specific GCSE in music technology.

... but can I develop my music technology skills in GCSE music if I wanted to?

Yes, if you want to. You can use computers & the recording studio to **compose** with instead of traditional methods and all students do a little bit of this as taster sessions during year 9 & 10.

Are lessons in the music room (F102) or the music ICT room (S001)?

Each week, one lesson is in the music room and one lesson is in the music ICT room.

Do I have to be ABRSM grade 5 on my instrument/voice to take the course?

No. By the end of year 11 you have to perform to a reasonable standard on your chosen instrument/voice (or the equivalent music technology option). For a traditional student who has followed the Associated Board, RockSchool or Trinity grade route this is about grade 4 at the end of the course to achieve a good final mark. A song from a musical and most pop tracks are usually fine for ability level. Improvisation on an instrument is also acceptable. If you are in **any doubt**, please speak to a member of the music department for advice.

Is ABRSM grade 5 theory & practical the same as GCSE music?

No. They are very useful qualifications, but as there is no listening or composition element they are quite different. They are however very worthwhile qualifications in their own right and can complement GCSE & A level music well. Grades 6-8 do carry UCAS (University entry) points too.

Do I have to take GCSE music if I want to take A level music?

Ideally yes and it is strongly advised to do so. If you wish to take A level music you will have to provide official evidence you have a strong background in music. GCSE music can provide this.

... but is GCSE music a useful subject for a future career path?

Taking music would assist in creating a broad and balanced curriculum for you to follow. As well as an academic subject it helps with your skills in teamwork, cooperation, self-confidence, responsibility, discipline and social skills. These are key skills to have whether you pursue a career in music or not.

Some possible options or 'routes' within GCSE Music

Unit 1 Performing (1 solo performance & 1 ensemble performance)

Performance options

Examples of performance include -

- Traditional solo performance on any instrument or voice (eg clarinet solo or vocal with backing track)
- Solo improvisation on an instrument or voice (eg a drum solo, or from a jazz standard on the saxophone)
- Traditional performance in an ensemble (eg clarinet duet, pop band, vocal duet, etc..)
- Improvisation as part of an ensemble (eg an electric guitar solo with drum & bass backing etc..)
- Using music technology to perform – (eg with the use of guitar loop pedals, audio processors).

Any style is acceptable – e.g. classical, grade exam pieces, pop, rock, folk, musicals etc..

You may wish to perform in a concert with an audience or just privately in the music room with your teacher. You can perform as many times as you wish with the best one used for final assessment.

Unit 2 Composing (2 compositions - 1 free and 1 from a fixed exam board brief set each year)

Ideas for example include -

- Compose a piece for solo piano - *producing a hand written notated score*
- Compose a pop song for vocal, guitar, bass and drums - *producing a Sibelius notated score*
- Compose a film score - *producing a part notated and part annotated score*
- Compose an electronic music piece using beats and samples - *producing a report on how you did it.*
- Record a rock song in the recording studio - *producing a lead sheet & a written report*

Unit 3 Listening and Appraising

This is a fixed unit no matter which route you take. However, many of the skills we learn are used in a practical way and therefore you can use your expertise within the class lessons. Whether it is singing, instrumental, percussion, keyboards or music technology, all students will develop a variety of skills through their learning.

A FEW STUDENT EXAMPLES OF COURSEWORK CHOICES

Example 1 - a 'traditional' clarinettist could possibly -

Perform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- a grade 4 clarinet piece with piano accompaniment- a clarinet duet with their peripatetic teacher
Compose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- a classical style piece for clarinet and piano using Sibelius notation software- exemplar brief 4 - 'Compose a jazz waltz to accompany a dance'
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- fixed

Example 2 - a rock guitarist could possibly -

Perform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- a piece from their 'RockSchool' book with CD backing track- a rock song with another student drummer, bassist and singer.
Compose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- a rock song recorded in the studio, using guitar, vocal, bass and drum machine- exemplar brief 3 - 'Compose a soundtrack for a trailer for a film about exploring Mars'
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- fixed

Example 3 - a vocalist could possibly -

Perform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- a pop song vocal solo with mp3 backing track- a vocal duet from a musical with (teacher) piano, synthesiser & bass guitar
Compose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- a pop song with the backing composed on Sibelius/Cubase & sung over in the studio- exemplar brief 2 - 'Compose a song in verse/chorus form to be performed by a solo voice and accompaniment at a school concert'.
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- fixed

The Importance of Music – A National Plan for Music Education

The National Plan for Music Education was published by the Department of Education in 2011 and reviewed/updated in 2022. Below are a few quotes from this plan -

The Value of Music

The value of music as an academic subject lies in its contribution to enjoyment and enrichment, for its social benefits, for those who engage in music seriously as well as for fun. High quality music education enables lifelong participation in, and enjoyment of, music, as well as underpinning excellence and professionalism for those who choose not to pursue a career in music. Music teaching starts in the early years, and we want the vision to extend across all five to eighteen year-olds, both in and out of school, in both formal and informal settings.

The Benefits of Music

Music can make a powerful contribution to the education and development of children, having benefits which range from those that are largely academic to the growth of social skills and contribution to overall development. It is a unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act. Ofsted say that children's involvement in music engages and re-engages pupils, increasing their self esteem, and maximising their progress in education and not just in music.

The Academic Value of Music

Research has shown a direct link between music and improved reading ability in children. It shows that pupils who were given certain types of music instruction had improved reading comprehension compared to those who did not. Greatest improvement was seen when teaching was tailored to pupils' existing skills and abilities – for example if reading and language skills are of a high standard initially, more advanced musical education may be needed to have an impact on it... ... In addition, studies have shown that music instruction improved pupils' ability to remember words and so improve their vocabulary and enhance language development.

Evidence also suggests a link between mathematics and music. Studies have also shown a connection between music and increased scores in IQ. In both cases it is rhythmic music training that has been shown to make the greatest improvement. Other studies have demonstrated a link between music and creative skills, particularly musical improvisation and lessons which require pupils to be imaginative.

The Social Value of Music

A number of studies have demonstrated the positive impact music can have on personal and social development, including increased self-reliance, confidence, self-esteem, sense of achievement and ability to relate to others. Other studies have shown different benefits from participating in music groups and needing to work together towards a common goal. These include discipline, teamwork, cooperation, self-confidence, responsibility and social skills.

The Importance of Music provides a flexible template for high quality music provision throughout a pupil's education. The very existence of this plan underlines the unwavering commitment by both the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to recognise the importance of music in the lives of young people and to ensure that we consistently give young people a music education that is of the highest quality. Music helps bind pupils into the wider life of the school and of a wider local music structure. When young people make music together, they work toward a common goal that has the potential to change lives profoundly for the better.

This National Plan is clear about the importance of music: it will ensure not just that more children have access to the greatest of art forms, but that they do better as a result in every other subject.

The full National Plan documents can be downloaded from the Department of Education's website at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1086619/The_Power_of_Music_to_Change_Lives.pdf

