

GCSE, AS and A-level Music

Your companion guide
to our new specifications

Teach it from September 2016
First assessment AS Music summer 2017
First assessment GCSE and A-level
Music summer 2018

Find out more at:
aqa.org.uk/music

Music is changing

We've created this guide to help you understand how the new GCSE, AS and A-level changes from Ofqual and the Department for Education will affect you and your students.

These changes will apply to all exam boards. Changes take effect from summer 2017 for AS Music and from summer 2018 for GCSE and A-level.

GCSE grades will be in numerical format

The current grading of A*–G is changing to numerical grading of 9–1. Grade 9 will be equivalent to A**, Grade 4 will be equivalent to a Grade C and Grade 1 will be equivalent to a Grade G.

AS will be decoupled from A-level

The two new qualifications are completely separate.

For more information about the changes to music, visit aqa.org.uk/music

AS and A-levels will be co-teachable

We have ensured that all of our new AS and A-level specifications are co-teachable. The course content of our AS specifications is the same as the first year of our corresponding A-level, which means that you can teach a mixed class of AS and A-level students together in year one (Year 12).

We're here to help and support you

Want to speak to someone in the music team?

T: 01483 437 750

E: music@aqa.org.uk

Explore our draft specifications: aqa.org.uk/music

Find out more about the new GCSE grades: aqa.org.uk/new-GCSE-grades

Specifications for you and your students

Creating new qualifications that meet the needs of you and your students is extremely important to us. That's why we've been working with teachers and subject experts to design new specifications that you'll enjoy teaching and that your students will find engaging.

1. We're confident you'll find them inspiring, interesting and practical to teach.
2. Students will have the chance to study a wider range of musical styles and genres.
3. Our qualifications will motivate and stretch students of all abilities, equipping them with the skills and experience to succeed at GCSE and also prepare students to go on to further study.
4. Discover free and great value teaching resources to help you plan your lessons, teach and assess your students.
5. We're also hosting free specification launch events to ensure you're prepared to teach the new specifications in September 2016.

GCSE, AS and A-level Music key dates

Download our draft specifications from aqa.org.uk/music	May 2015
Book your place at one of our free launch events (also available online for GCSE only)	July to September 2015
Download our accredited specifications from aqa.org.uk/music	Autumn 2015
Download practice papers and mark schemes from the qualification pages on our website	Autumn 2015
Start teaching	September 2016
First exams for AS Music	Summer 2017
First exams for GCSE and A-level Music	Summer 2018

Discover some of the highlights of our new specifications

Relevant and contemporary

Our specifications feature more styles and genres, more artists and composers, and more opportunities to compose and perform.

Designed to be taught the way students learn

The best way to learn music is to compose and perform it. At GCSE we've scored excerpts of the study pieces for modern and classical instruments so your students can get to know them even better. We've created new composition briefs for a wide range of styles and genres, including for films and computer games.

All styles are valued

Our specifications appreciate all styles and genres, skills and instruments, catering for different learning styles and musical tastes.

Music technology

Music technology is fully integrated. You'll see many areas of study have artists or composers who have written works in this format and students can perform and compose using technology.

Unrivalled teaching support

Free teaching support and resources, such as our Teacher network group, will help you plan, teach and prepare your students for assessment.

How the new assessment will work

- GCSE performance and composition work is marked internally (moderated by us). All AS and A-level work is externally assessed by us.
- Assessment objectives AO1 and AO2 (performing and composing) are assessed separately and worth 60%.
- AO3 (knowledge and understanding) and AO4 (evaluative and critical judgements) are assessed together in an external paper worth 40%.
- Questions will be appropriately designed for the level of qualification.



Specification at a glance

GCSE Music

Component 1: Understanding music

What's assessed

Component 1 focuses on listening and contextual understanding. It has two sections, covering assessment objectives AO3 (knowledge and understanding) and AO4 (evaluative and critical judgements).

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes.
- Exam paper includes listening exercises using excerpts of music.
- Externally assessed by AQA.
- Section A – listening (68 marks).
- Section B – contextual understanding (28 marks).
- 96 marks in total (40% of GCSE).

Questions

- Two sections.
- Section A – eight compulsory questions.
- Section B – four sets of linked questions, two compulsory (one must be on Western classical tradition).



Find out more

You can see full details of the new specifications at: [aqa.org.uk/music](https://www.aqa.org.uk/music)

Component 2: Performing music

What's assessed

Musical performance, covering assessment objective AO1.

How it's assessed

- Two pieces, one solo and the other as an ensemble.
- Either through playing music, singing, or music technology.
- Total performance time must last four minutes minimum and seven minutes maximum (ensemble performance must be one minute minimum).
- Must provide recording of the performances, including accompanying evidence (a score, lead sheet, annotation, or guide recording).
- Internally assessed by you and externally moderated by AQA.
- 72 marks in total (30% of GCSE).



Component 3: Composing music

What's assessed

Composition, covering assessment objective AO2.

How it's assessed

- Each student must compose two compositions.
- Composition 1: composing to a brief (36 marks).
- Composition 2: free composition (36 marks).
- Combined composition time must last three minutes minimum and four and a half minutes maximum.
- Internally assessed by you and externally moderated by AQA.
- 72 marks in total (30% of GCSE).

Specification at a glance

AS Music

Component 1: Appraising music

What's assessed

Listening, analysis and contextual understanding. It has three sections, covering assessment objectives AO3 (knowledge and understanding) and AO4 (evaluative and critical judgements).

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 2 hours.
- Exam paper includes listening and written questions using excerpts of music.
- Externally assessed by AQA.
- Section A – listening (49 marks).
- Section B – analysis (17 marks).
- Section C – contextual understanding (30 marks).
- 96 marks in total (40% of AS).

Questions

- Three sections.
- Section A – two compulsory questions from a selection of seven (one must be on Western classical tradition).
- Section B – two questions, students to answer one.
- Section C – one essay question from a choice of six.



Find out more

You can see full details of the new specifications at: [aqa.org.uk/music](https://www.aqa.org.uk/music)

Component 2: Performance

What's assessed

Musical performance, covering assessment objective AO1.

How it's assessed

- Solo and/or ensemble performing as an instrumentalist or singer; and/or music production (via technology).
- Performance must last six minutes minimum and eight minutes maximum.
- Must provide recording of performance, including accompanying evidence (a score, lead sheet, annotation, or guide recording).
- Externally assessed by AQA.
- 50 marks in total (30% of AS).



Component 3: Composition

What's assessed

Composition, covering assessment objective AO2.

How it's assessed

- Each student must compose two compositions.
- Composition 1: composing to a brief (25 marks).
- Composition 2: free composition (25 marks).
- Combined composition time must last four and a half minutes minimum and six minutes maximum.
- Externally assessed by AQA.
- 50 marks in total (30% of AS).

Specification at a glance

A-level Music

Component 1: Appraising music

What's assessed

Listening, analysis and contextual understanding. It has three sections, covering assessment objectives AO3 (knowledge and understanding) and AO4 (evaluative and critical judgements).

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 2 hours 30 minutes.
- Exam paper includes listening and written questions using excerpts of music.
- Externally assessed by AQA.
- Section A – listening (60 marks).
- Section B – analysis (30 marks).
- Section C – contextual understanding (30 marks).
- 120 marks in total (40% of A-level).

Questions

- Three sections.
- Section A – three compulsory questions from a selection of seven (one must be on Western classical tradition).
- Section B – three questions, students to answer two.
- Section C – one essay question from a choice of six.



Find out more

You can see full details of the new specifications at: [aqa.org.uk/music](https://www.aqa.org.uk/music)

Component 2: Performance

What's assessed

Musical performance, covering assessment objective AO1.

How it's assessed

- Solo and/or ensemble performing as an instrumentalist or singer; and/or music production (via technology).
- Performance must last ten minutes minimum and twelve minutes maximum.
- Must provide recording of performance, including accompanying evidence (a score, lead sheet, annotation, or guide recording).
- Externally assessed by AQA.
- 50 marks in total (35% of A-level).



Component 3: Composition

What's assessed

Composition, covering assessment objective AO2.

How it's assessed

- Each student must compose two compositions.
- Composition 1: composing to a brief (25 marks).
- Composition 2: free composition (25 marks).
- Combined composition time must last four and a half minutes minimum and six minutes maximum.
- Externally assessed by AQA.
- 50 marks in total (25% of A-level).

Clear assessment and marking you can trust

We know the time and effort that you and your students put in to exams. We also understand how essential it is that the marks we give are fair, reliable and trustworthy.

Getting the right results

Our Centre for Education Research and Practice (CERP) provides statistics and research evidence to ensure we assess and mark your students' work fairly and accurately. We also recruit and train the highest calibre examiners and moderators and continually monitor their work.

Clear question papers

Students of all abilities will understand our exam papers which are clearly worded.

Clear assessment, well-structured mark schemes and exemplar materials

Our mark schemes demonstrate how to help students of all abilities get the marks that they deserve. Our exemplars use real student answers with comments from senior examiners to explain how our mark schemes are applied.

More exam help and advice available

1. Watch our videos on 'assessment explained' or see 'how we create a specification' at [aqa.org.uk/exams](https://www.aqa.org.uk/exams)
2. Analyse student results with our free Enhanced Results Analysis tool [aqa.org.uk/era](https://www.aqa.org.uk/era)
3. More exam-related help is available at [aqa.org.uk/results](https://www.aqa.org.uk/results)

Assessment support

Our exam and assessment resources will help you and your students prepare for assessment. These include sample assessment materials, teacher standardisation meetings and after school twilight sessions. You can also speak directly with our music team on 01483 437 750.

Free support and resources to help you bring the new specifications to life

Teaching support

Our Teacher network group enables you to contact colleagues at other schools or colleges to share ideas about resources and teaching strategies.

Music advisory service

We ensure every school or college has its own subject adviser. These senior moderators and music teachers provide expert advice about our specifications.

Want to improve your teaching skills?

We can support you throughout your teaching career with practical training, tried, tested and taught by teachers.

Browse and book our professional development events at [aqa.org.uk/professional-development](https://www.aqa.org.uk/professional-development)



Join the conversation
@AQACPD

Free resources and events

Free resources include specimen assessment materials, schemes of work, study guides, performance guides and exemplar materials. Free launch events will guide you through the new specifications.

Music community

We've linked up with music organisations that offer free teaching resources, including BBC Education and the Royal Albert Hall. Access our community at [aqa.org.uk/music-community](https://www.aqa.org.uk/music-community)

A spotlight on our new areas of study

We've created our most engaging specifications yet, bringing together a wide choice of music for students to study, discover and be inspired by.

Here are just some of the highlights.

Music for media

AS and A-level students can study music from film and TV covering the evolution of the genre, including computer game music by Final Fantasy composer Nobuo Uematsu.

Music for theatre

This AS and A-level area of study traces influential musical theatre composers, including Sondheim, Schönberg and critically acclaimed Jason Robert Brown.



Western classical tradition – now an Ofqual requirement

To appeal to all students, we've created classroom performance editions of GCSE study pieces so they can be played by any instrument, in any combination. At AS and A-level, we've divided it into strands so you can pick the strand most relevant to your students. The strands are solo baroque concerto for orchestral players, Mozart opera for vocalists/musical theatre students and piano music of Chopin, Brahms and Grieg for keyboard players. Pick one strand at AS and two strands at A-level.

Pop music and other areas of study

At AS and A-level, pop music includes artists for all musical tastes, from Joni Mitchell to Labrinth.

Our other new areas of study include jazz, contemporary traditional music and art music since 1910.



Meet the team

Our knowledgeable and friendly team are here to support you. When you call us, you'll get through first time, every time.

Seb Ross
Qualifications
Manager



Sarah Perryman
Qualifications
Developer



Jeremy Ward
Qualifications
Developer



Peta Thompson
Customer
Support
Manager



Keep in touch

To contact the music team:

T: 01483 437 750

E: music@aqa.org.uk

Want to know about our
new specification, launch
meetings and resources?

aqa.org.uk/music

The information in this guide is based on the draft specifications submitted to Ofqual in May 2015 and is subject to change. We will publish the accredited specifications and specimen question papers as soon as we receive Ofqual accreditation expected in July 2015.

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