

Music

Music

Exam board: WJEC

Specification no.: B660 (AS) / A660 (A Level)

This is a two year linear A level course - The AS content forms the first half of the A level content and can be assessed at the end of Year 12 to provide an AS Level qualification if the student is dropping the subject and believes they can get a strong grade, although the emphasis on composing in the AS would require independent work in this area early in the course to be able to meet this requirement. Otherwise, the two years of content are assessed at the end of Year 13 to give the A level grade.

AS level

Module	Assessment	%
Performing Music	Two pieces (solos or ensembles) or more lasting 6-8 mins in total	30%
Composing	Two pieces (one set brief, one free choice) lasting 7 mins in total	30%
Developing Musical Understanding	Study of Music in a variety of styles including the Western Classical Symphonic Tradition and Musical Theatre assessed by a written exam including listening tests.	40%

A level

Module	Assessment	%
Option A		
Extended Performance	Recital consisting of at least three pieces (including at least one solo) of 10-12 mins in total	35%
Composition	Two pieces (one set brief, one free choice) lasting 6-8 mins in total	25%
Option B		
Performance	Two pieces (solos or ensembles) or more lasting 4-6 mins in total	25%
Extended Composition	Three compositions, two to set briefs, one free choice lasting 8-10 mins in total	35%
Compulsory Unit		
Further Musical Understanding	Further study of Music in a variety of styles including the Western Classical Symphonic Tradition, Musical Theatre and Music in the 21 st Century assessed by a written exam including listening tests.	40%

Course Delivery:

You will be taught both in small groups and individually. There is a strong emphasis on collaborating with and learning from others in the group through discussion and joint research and performance activities. Much of the coursework content (Composing and Performing) is individual and students are expected to use their initiative to enable their learning in these areas while receiving frequent feedback from other students, staff and visiting experts. Since 2008 we have worked with composers Richard Barnard, Mark Lawrence, Elizabeth Purnell & Professors of Composition John Pickard & Raymond Warren, as well as professional performers including, the BBC Singers and staff from the Royal Welsh College of Music. Specialists in contemporary music The Ligeti String Quartet have had an annual residency with us since 2016.

Course Content:

Performing: Performance on one (or more if you wish) instruments (including voice). During the course students receive specialist performance coaching from an ABRSM examiner on top of their personal instrumental or voice lessons. They perform to the class in a series of masterclasses and are given supportive and constructive feedback. Students must join one or more of the school's extra-curricular groups and perform at school events in order to develop their ensemble abilities. As a guide a piece of Grade 5/6 standard is taken as the normal standard with extra credit given for more difficult pieces.

Composing: You will compose two or three pieces (depending on the option you take), one in more or less any style, the other related to the mainstream classical tradition (and a third to a set brief if taking Option B). Both should show intelligent use and creative development of memorable original material. Before composing your pieces, you will receive tuition in a variety of musical techniques and be trained in using music specialist software. You will research examples in similar styles or genres to those you will be composing in. Once completed you will write an appraisal of your pieces.

Listening & Understanding: A written paper on set works which also tests listening skills. Students must study a wide variety of Music and will listen to, analyse, read about and in some cases perform these works. Tuition includes historical and social context of the music as well as analysis of the music itself.

Entry requirements:

You do not need to have a GCSE in Music to take this course but if you have not taken GCSE Music you must either have passed Grade 5 music theory or be working towards it. Please note that the ability to read written music to at least a basic level is essential. In addition, you must have the ability to perform to at least Grade 5 standard on one instrument. If you have taken Music at GCSE it should be passed with at least grade 5. At least a grade 5 in GCSE English (Language or Literature) is required as part of the normal entry requirements

Skills & personal qualities required / developed by course:

As a Music Student you will need to be open-minded about music from styles and traditions that you are not yet familiar with. You must be prepared to share with and learn from one another. You must love playing and/or composing and be prepared to spend hours of your own time every week immersed in practising and exploring new sounds. You will have increased physical and mental coordination and be able to present yourself more confidently and professionally in a variety of public situations. You will also learn discussion, time management and independent study skills.

Resources / facilities / opportunities:

Brand new Music IT Centre (with Cubase and Sibelius music software packages) and Recording Studio (with 16 channel mixing desk), dedicated recital room, six pianos, four electric pianos, a pipe organ, a harpsichord. Extra curricular opportunities (Chamber Choir, Orchestra, String, Flute, Clarinet, Brass and Guitar Ensembles, annual Musicals including recently Les Miserables, West Side Story, Guys and Dolls, Beauty & the Beast and Hairspray). Recent large scale classical works performed include Mozart's Requiem and Bach's St John Passion.

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