

A Student's Guide to the AS and Advanced GCE in

Music

What do I need to know or be able to do before taking this course?

It is useful to have taken music at GCSE level, but this is not essential as long as you can already play a musical instrument and are able to read music.

What will I learn on this Advanced GCE course?

The course demands performing, composing, listening and analytical skills in almost equal measure. You will improve your skills in performing and composing in a range of styles. You will listen to a wide variety of music and develop a more informed appreciation of how and why it was written and/or performed.

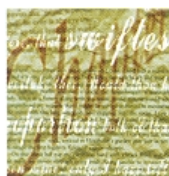
What kind of student is this course suitable for?

Anyone who has a keen interest in creating and listening to different styles of music and who wishes to broaden their experience and deepen their understanding of both live and recorded music. According to which Areas of Study and options you choose, you could follow a route which focuses mainly on classical music or popular music, for example. There are Areas of Study in 'Keyboard Music', 'Popular music and jazz', 'Music for film and television', 'World music', 'Secular vocal music', 'Sacred vocal music', 'Music for large ensemble', 'Music for small ensemble' and '20th and 21st Century art music'.

What examinations will I have to take to get my qualification?

AS

AS is short for Advanced Subsidiary. This is the first half of the Advanced GCE course. It is a stepping-stone to the full Advanced GCE qualification. You can take the AS on its own after a year if you and your teacher agree that this is best for you. You can even decide at the end of the AS course whether to continue and to complete the full Advanced GCE qualification.



The AS qualification consists of the following three units.

Unit 1: Performing (30% AS 15% A2)

In this unit you will develop your skills as a musical performer. You can perform on any musical instrument or you can sing and you will have the opportunity to take part in ensemble performances as well as performing solo. You will perform one or two solo pieces of your choice, with or without accompaniment, lasting between five and six minutes. As part of the performing during the course, you will be expected to play one of your own compositions either as a soloist or as part of an ensemble or group. Your teacher assesses this unit through a recording of your solo performance and by giving you a mark for your contribution to group performances during the course.

Unit 2: Developing Musical Ideas (30% AS 15% A2)

In this unit you will learn the craft of composing. You will develop musical ideas in the form of original compositions and exercises. There is a wide range of musical styles to choose from. For composition, you will study one topic from the following list and submit one free composition: Variations, Romantic miniatures, Neo-classicism, Post-modernism, Popular song, Club dance and hip-hop, Fusions or Film and television music.

You will also study the following topics and submit two compositional techniques exercises: Textures (Baroque counterpoint or Minimalism); Chords and Cadences (Bach chorale or 32 bar pop song); Scales, Modes and Series (Renaissance counterpoint or Serialism); and Timbres (extended instrumental techniques or electro-acoustic music).

Unit 3: Listening and Understanding (40% AS 20% A2)

Throughout the course, you will be expected to develop and improve your listening skills so that you can recognise different sounds and make judgements about performances. This unit is in two parts. In Part 1 you will answer questions related to music heard on a CD during a 45-minute examination. The music heard will be in a range of styles. In Part 2 you will have an hour and a half to respond to two structured questions based on your chosen Areas of Study. You will choose two Areas of Study from: 'Keyboard Music', 'Popular Music and Jazz', 'Music for Film and Television', 'World Music', 'Secular Vocal Music', 'Sacred vocal music', 'Music for Large Ensemble', 'Music for Small Ensemble' and '20th and 21st Century Art Music'.

Advanced GCE

The full Advanced GCE qualification is made up of the AS units plus three more units studied at a higher level. You don't necessarily have to take the full Advanced GCE qualification; you can still get a certificate for the AS. Your teacher will advise you on what is best. If you do decide to take the second half of the course, it will cover the following three units.

Unit 4: Specialist Options (15% A2)

For this unit, you will either complete a composition portfolio or perform a recital.

If you choose Pathway A, you will produce two compositions, one from each of the two chosen topics (Variations, Romantic miniatures, Neo-classicism, Post-modernism, Popular song, Club dance and hip-hop, Fusions or Film and television) the two works together lasting not less than six minutes. The compositions must be presented as a score (either handwritten or printed), and as a recording (on cassette tape, mini disc or CD wherever possible). You will also be required to submit a short description of the procedure that you have adopted in your work.

If you choose Pathway B, you will perform a recital lasting 20 minutes to an audience. The performance will be recorded and assessed. You will have a free choice of music, you may play on one or more instruments and you will be expected to present a balanced programme of pieces.

Unit 5: Performing and Composing (15% A2)

In this unit you will take part in a range of solo and ensemble performance activities during the course, of which one or two must be solo performances. You will keep a log of performances at which your teacher will have been present and choose the four best occasions for submission to Edexcel.

You will also extend the compositional techniques acquired in Unit 2, Developing Musical Ideas and will be assessed by completion of a commissioned exercise.

Unit 6: Analysing Music (20% A2)

This unit tests all the knowledge, understanding and skills you have developed **across** the whole course. You will take a listening test and will also be asked to answer written questions on the music you have studied.

How can I develop my full range of skills by doing this course?

As well as covering music at advanced level, the course will enable you to develop Key Skills which could be essential to you in whatever you go on to do afterwards:

Key Skill	Typical activities
Communication	Discuss critically, in groups and in writing, your own and others' compositions
Improving Own Learning and Performance	Plan a rehearsal/practice schedule and set targets for achievement
Information Technology	Use the Internet as a research tool
Problem Solving	Work out appropriate and practical interpretations of a score
Working With Others	Plan and take part in rehearsals and contribute towards group evaluation

What could I go on to do at the end of my course?

This AS/Advanced GCE in Music can lead to further study in music or performing arts in higher education at degree or HND level and may lead on to a career in the music industry.



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