

Music



Examination Board: Edexcel and Eduqas



■ What is the course about?

The course caters for a wide range of musical interests and musical styles. It involves performing and composing as well as development through listening and analysis.

■ For the two-year linear course you will study:

• **Component 1: Performing**

Total performance time of eight minutes. Performance can be solo and/or ensemble.

• **Component 2: Composing**

Two compositions: one free choice and one brief assessing technique. Together these total a minimum of six minutes.

• **Component 3: Appraising**

Six areas of study with three main set works in each. Areas of study include film music, popular music and jazz, instrumental music, vocal music, new directions and fusions.

■ How is the course assessed?

- The three key elements of performing, composing and appraising from GCSE are retained for A Level.
- Performing is worth 30% at A Level. Students have to perform for a minimum of eight minutes, in front of a live audience comprised of two or more people.
- Composing is worth 30% at A Level. Students must compose two pieces. One must be in response to a brief set by the board which is aimed at assessing technique. Students at Notre Dame will harmonise a Bach chorale for this component. The other piece is a free composition in any style and work will begin in the first year of study.
- Appraising is worth 40% and content has been given in terms of musical elements, contexts and language. This is assessed through a written exam at the end of the two years, including listening tests, dictation and two essays.

■ What skills will I need and develop in this course?

The base standard for performance is ABRSM Grade 7/8 at A Level, though it is possible to start the course on Grade 6; you will need to discuss this with your teacher.

Performance skills developed include technical proficiency, musicality and a sensitivity to and awareness of the music's style.

The style of composition allowed covers the full spectrum from classical to the latest pop and the student will explore melodic, harmonic, structural and stylistic features of the chosen style.

Musical understanding develops both the ability to recognise melodic, rhythmic and harmonic details and also to identify how such patterns work with instrumentation and other elements to create a coherent musical structure. Hence the skill to read music is integral, as is good knowledge of music theory,

such as scales and chords up to four sharps and flats.

Grade 5 theory is a requirement for this course. If students have not yet completed Grade 5 theory, it can be completed in the summer, though it is a prerequisite for Grade 6+ ABRSM so most students will already have this certification.

■ Subject combination advice

If you know you want to study this subject at university then you should study A Level music. Music works well alongside other subjects as it has transferable skills such as critical analysis, identifying patterns, the ability to think and understand in patterns, planning ahead, collaborative and independent work and executive function. Music is a desirable A Level for many career paths and complements all other subjects well.

■ What can the course lead to in terms of higher education and future careers?

The A Level music course provides an excellent basis for lifelong learning and for higher education courses in music; many students who take A Level music continue their studies at university. The three units of the course can lead to studies in performance, composition, musicology, ethnomusicology, sound engineering, conducting, popular music and jazz, band management, and music education. Due to the discipline required in the mastery of a musical piece for performance, the control and command of oneself required to stand in front of an audience to perform and the ability to work positively within a group in ensemble preparation and performance, musicians are highly respected for their work ethic and maturity as well as their ability to communicate with others.

■ What are the formal entry requirements?

It is not necessary to have studied GCSE music in order to successfully complete the A Level music course but this would be assessed on an individual basis. Advice from the Head of Music regarding your performance and theory skills is advisable.

■ What activities enrich this subject?

Involvement in school and out-of-school music activities and ensembles or bands. Entering local music competitions. Regular attendance at concerts and other live music events. Regular weekly (if not daily) listening to the wide range of music available on the radio and internet.