

A Level Music

Transition Work

2024



A Level Music at NSB

Congratulations on choosing A Level Music! You've made a great decision to study with us and to learn about such an intriguing subject.

The following pages will outline the course, give details of the tasks to be completed for September and give you some suggestions of further reading / research. The Edexcel A Level specification can be found [here](#).

We hope that you enjoy your time studying music at NSB and make the most of the opportunities, support and guidance available. There are a huge number of extra-curricular groups for you to play in as well as academic support groups and music theory classes.

The vast majority of our students go on to study music at conservatoire or university and we have a programme of visiting musicians who support your transition to degree level studies.

There are many ways to be successful throughout your A Level studies but applying yourself, being organised, attending rehearsals and practising regularly (if not daily!) are key to getting as much out of your sixth form experience as possible.

Helpful Resources

You will be given all resources, scores and materials you need, but we have provided a list below of revision guides and websites which you may be interested in.

A Level Music Revision Guide - Edexcel
A Level Music Study Guide – Edexcel

Alistair Wightman (Rhinegold)
Banham & Wightman (Rhinegold)

Bach Chorales available [here](#)

LSO A Level revision shorts available [here](#)

LSO Overview of Music Styles

[Part I](#)

[Part II](#)

[Part III](#)

BBC Radio 3 regularly produces shows about music that include performances, documentaries and interviews. You can listen live, on iPlayer or you can download the podcasts. The 'Composer of the Week' podcast is useful listening. ClassicFM also make excellent videos, podcasts and resources.

You could read:

Classical Music: A Beginners Guide
The Story of Music

Julian Johnson
Howard Goodall

A Level Music: Course Overview

Component 1: PERFORMING

Assessment:

- 60 Marks
- 30% of the qualification

Overview:

- A public performance of one or more pieces performed as a recital
- Solo and / or ensemble
- Minimum of 8 minutes performance time
- Performances must be recorded as a whole
- Recorded after 1 March 2023 (Year 13)

Component 2: COMPOSING

Assessment:

- 60 Marks
- 30% of the qualification

Overview:

- Two compositions
- Composition 1: 40 marks
At least 4 minutes in duration
Free composition or in response to a brief set by Edexcel
- Composition 2: 20 marks
At least 2 minutes in duration
1 major and 1 minor Bach chorale OR an arrangement OR remix
Completed from 1 April 2023 over 6 hours (max)

Component 3: APPRAISING

Assessment:

- 100 Marks
- 40% of the qualification

Overview:

- Knowledge and understanding of musical elements, contexts and language applied to six areas of study, each with two set works (**one AoS has 3**)
- AoS 1-6: Vocal Music, Instrumental Music, Music for Film, **Popular Music and Jazz**, Fusions, New Directions

Exam:

- One written paper of 2 hours split into two sections: A and B
- Section A: 50 marks
3 listening questions related to the set works
Melody / rhythm dictation exercise
- Section B: Two essay questions
Essay 1 - 20 marks: linked to set works but unfamiliar piece of music
Essay 2 - 30 marks: choice of three questions based on the set works

Course Structure – Year 12

Term 1 & 2

- Composition – 2 lessons per week: Composing at A Level
NMPAT composition competition
- History / Analysis – 4 lessons per week: Introduction to A Level music
AoS 3: Film Music
AoS 2: Instrumental Music

Term 3 & 4

- Composition – 2 lessons per week: Bach chorales
Free composition
- History / Analysis – 4 lessons per week: AoS 6: New Directions
AoS 1: Vocal Music

Term 5 & 6

- Year 12 Exams (2 week exam leave)
- Composition – 2 lessons per week: Arrangements
Free composition
- History / Analysis – 4 lessons per week: Completion of AoS 1, 2, 3, 6
Revision
- Performance preparation

How to be Successful

To get the most out of A Level music you should:

- Attend all lessons
- Complete every piece of work (including homework) to the highest standard
- Spend time after each lesson consolidating notes and reviewing material covered
- Attend all rehearsals and be as musically active as possible
- Practice regularly
- Organise your notes and scores carefully to aid revision
- Ask for help when you need it

Help Available

It is important to ask for help when you need it

- Theory support (notable knowledge) runs at lunchtimes in C6
- Composition support is available on at lunchtimes in C6
- Lesson resources, revision materials and audio tracks are available on Edmodo
- Regular or occasional individual support and help is available – just ask!

Transition Work

[musictheory.net](https://www.musictheory.net)

What?

Use [musictheory.net](https://www.musictheory.net) to refresh (or extend) your music theory knowledge. Follow the lessons below carefully and make notes if needed.

Why?

You will learn to analyse pieces of music, but you'll need music theory to do so effectively. This work will be useful to you as composers and will be invaluable when you start learning how to harmonise a Bach chorale

Tasks

Chapter	Lessons to Study
The Basics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Staff, Clefs and Leger Lines• Note Duration• Measures and Time Signature• Rest Duration• Dots and Ties• Steps and Accidentals
Rhythm and Metre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple and Compound Metre• Odd Metres
Scales and Key Signatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Major Scale• The Minor Scale• Scale Degrees• Key Signatures• Key Signature Calculation
Intervals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generic Intervals• Specific Intervals• Writing Intervals• Interval Inversion
Chords	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to Chords• Triad Inversion• Seventh Chords (extension)
Diatonic Chords	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diatonic Triads• Roman Numeral Analysis: Triads

It would also be useful to complete the exercises on [musictheory.net](https://www.musictheory.net) too!

Performance

What?

Don't neglect your playing during this break. You may still be having lessons (albeit in a different format) with your teacher, or you may be relying on yourself and your motivation to practice. Either way, practising is essential to your development as a musician. Complete the tasks below

Why?

Performance counts as 30% of your final A Level grade so it is important to play and practice regularly.

Tasks

- Practice and perfect a piece you are already working on and video it. Although it might be terrifying, watching yourself playing and listening to your tone, expression and the accuracy of what you're playing critically is worth it. You can then practice in a more forensic way and re-record the piece. You may be able to find a recorded accompaniment on Youtube (if you need one) for pieces that are regularly played for exams or are part of your instrument's standard repertoire
- Spend some time listening to recordings of the pieces you are playing. Think about how the performer brings the music to life, how their tone changes, how they manage the very tricky passages etc. There are some excellent videos of musicians teaching and explaining how they approach certain pieces which are well worth watching
- Look at the graded lists for A Level music which can be found [here](#) and consider now which pieces you might play in your recital. You need to play for at **least 8 minutes** and it can all be as a soloist. For those of you who did Edexcel GCSE Music, the list is the same, but you are looking at Level 7 pieces as 'standard' and Level 8 / 9 as 'more difficult'. Information on performance is in the specification [here](#). The GCSE, AS and A Level Difficulty Booklet can be found [here](#). Consider how many pieces you are likely to need – it may be 1, 2 or as many as 4!

My Recital Pieces Might Be:

Title	Composer	Level

Film Music AoS 3

What?

Watch a superhero film and make notes about the music you hear. Write using the table format below. You should relate the music to the action on screen where possible

Why?

We study Film Music at A Level and this will be a good introduction to the topic. The notes you make now can be used in Year 12 and 13 as wider listening

Task

Element	Description of the Music
Context <i>Plot / action / section of film / composer / date</i>	
Melody <i>Motifs / themes / ostinati / development of melodies / construction (scalar, leaps etc) / how melodies reflect action</i>	
Harmony & Tonality <i>Key / modulations / types of chords used / dissonance / how tonality reflects action</i>	
Structure <i>Organisation of music / through composed or recognisable shapes?</i>	
Sonority <i>Instruments / sounds / technology used / techniques (trills, key clicks etc) / recording techniques / how sonority reflects action</i>	
Texture <i>Types of texture used / how textures reflect action</i>	
Tempo, Rhythm & Metre <i>Tempi used and changes / rhythms used / metre(s) used / how tempo, rhythm and metre reflect action</i>	

Listening

What?

Listen to 'The Lark Ascending' by Vaughan Williams and write about it using the table format below. You should write in as much detail as possible. You may read about the music but please don't copy and paste information. It is important you do this properly

Why?

We listen to lots of different types of music and you need to develop critical listening skills. The notes you make now can be used in Year 12 and 13 as wider listening

Task

Element	Description of the Music
Context	
Melody	
Harmony & Tonality	
Structure	
Sonority	
Texture	
Tempo, Rhythm & Metre	

Key Words and Terms – Help Sheet

Melody - useful terms include:

Scalic	Moving like a scale; stepwise movement
Triadic	Moving around the notes of a triad – like a fanfare
Chromatic	Moving down every chromatic note
Diatonic/consonant	Not clashing notes
Atonal	No key
Dissonant	Clashing sounds
Phrases	Regular and balanced or irregular
Sequence	Melodic idea repeated slightly higher or lower
Repetition	Melodic ideas which are repeated
Conjunct	Notes close to each other
Disjunct	Wide intervals between notes, angular melody
Ornaments	Acciaccatura, trill, appoggiatura, mordent, turn etc

Rhythm, tempo and metre - useful terms include:

Simple metre	4/4, 3/4, 3/2 time signatures
Compound metre	6/8, 12/8 time signatures
Syncopation	Strongly accented notes played off or against the beat
Cross rhythms	2 different rhythm patterns against each other. Groups of 2 against 3 etc
Swung rhythms	Tripping rhythm used in Jazz
Rubato	Robbing the time; pulling the time around for expressive effect

Texture - useful terms include:

Homophonic	Melody and accompaniment
Polyphonic	Two or more melodic lines occur simultaneously
Monophonic	A single line which can be sung or played by several people
Heterophonic	Two or more instruments playing variations of the same melody together
Counter melody	Another melody on top on the main melody
Pedal	A sustained note, usually in the bass, often on tonic or dominant notes
Imitation	A contrapuntal device in which melodies are copied across different parts
Homo-rhythmic	All parts have the same rhythm

Harmony and tonality - useful terms include:

Consonant	Notes which sound pleasing together
Dissonant	Notes which clash together
Diatonic	Using only the notes of the key
Pedal	A sustained note, usually in the bass, often on tonic or dominant notes
Major	Using a major key (sounds happy)
Minor	Using a minor key (sounds sad / reflective)
Modal	Using a mode eg Dorian; often used in folk music and jazz
Quartal	Chords based on intervals of a 4 th rather than thirds
Atonal	No key
Bitonal	Music in two keys at once
Cadences	Two chords which act as a full stop (perfect / plagal) or comma (imperfect)
Chromatic	Notes which don't belong to the current key (opposite of diatonic)
Note clusters	A dissonant chord that includes several adjacent notes

Structure - useful terms include:

Sonata form	Exposition, development, recapitulation
Ternary form	ABA structure
Binary form	AB structure
Verse-chorus	Traditional structure of a song
Strophic	Traditional structure of a song
Through composed	Continuous composition with no sections. Usually used in film music

Sonority - useful terms include:

Strings	Violin, viola, cello, double bass, harp etc
Woodwind	Flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon etc
Brass	French horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba etc
Percussion	Timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tam tam, gong, xylophone etc
Basso Continuo	Harpsichord/organ & cello (or other bass instrument) used in Baroque music
World Instruments	Djembe (Africa), sitar (India), cuatro (Latin America)
Voices	SATB (soprano, alto, tenor, bass)
Pop Instruments	Guitar, bass, drum kit, synthesiser, drum machine etc
Techniques	Pizzicato, arco, double stopping, flutter-tongue, palm muting, prepared piano, multi-phonics, glissando, overtone singing, harmonics

Dynamics / expression - useful terms include:

Loud	<i>Forte (f)</i> – Loud, <i>Fortissimo (ff)</i> – very loud, <i>Mezzo Forte (mf)</i> – fairly loud
Soft	<i>Piano (p)</i> – soft, <i>Pianissimo (pp)</i> – very soft, <i>Mezzo Piano (mp)</i> – fairly soft
Crescendo	Gradually getting louder
Diminuendo	<i>dim / decresc</i> – gradually getting softer

Context - useful comments include

- Composer name and any relevant details about them, their work, their life
- Date of composition and typical stylistic features
- Why the music was composed / what it was composed for
- If the music is programmatic (tells a story), give details of the story / plot / ideas
- Other works which are similar by the composer
- Other works which are similar by other composers
- How the music has influenced other pieces / other composers