

## Music AS and A level (Edexcel)

### What is the Music Department like?

The Music Department is responsible for the academic studies of specialist music students, as well as offering activities and access to music facilities to many other students. We run a stimulating and active department in which experienced and enthusiastic staff set high standards both in examination achievements and in music-making activities.

Our facilities include two Yamaha grand pianos, two drum kits, practice rooms, two well-equipped recording studios, a mastering suite, 2 computer suites, each with 16 networked computers offering a variety of music software, and independent workstations for composing, recording and sequencing.

In addition to academic work, as a music student you would be involved in solo and ensemble performing and contribute to some of the department ensembles, which include SATB choir, chamber choir, concert band, jazz ensemble, chamber orchestra and a numerous other chamber groups and bands. Large ensembles meet during a timetabled afternoon for music rehearsals, chamber groups have timetabled rehearsals and many other groups meet at lunchtimes. All ensembles perform regularly in concerts in and out of College.

### What is the course about?

The Music course introduces you to some of the disciplines involved in an academic study of the subject. It develops the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to communicate through music and to take part in music-making, whether as a composer, a performer or a listener.

For Unit 1 students are required to **perform**, either as a soloist or member of an ensemble, or both. In Unit 2 will **compose** a three minute piece in response to a brief set by the examination board. Unit 3 involves the **analysis** of music through **listening** and the study of scores and includes a study of harmony and tonality and the completion of **harmony** exercises.

A2 provides opportunities to extend all these studies in more depth and includes a 15 minute performance.

We often invite in professional performers, and run workshops, trips and concert visits to support the work on the course.



### What sort of work will I be doing?

Wherever possible we try to integrate the diverse elements of the subject, each one supporting the understanding and development of others.

**Aural awareness** is encouraged through singing activities, dictation and listening exercises, both in and out of the classroom.

Your study of **harmony** and **compositional techniques** involves weekly exercises, which can be completed with the aid of a keyboard instrument, as well as longer **composition assignments**, which may involve the use of computer software.

In **analysis**, you are given short written tasks, arising from class work, or as preparation for lessons, and at A2 essays requiring research and planning are written over about two weeks.

**Performing** skills are developed throughout the course. Students can perform in the classroom or in College concerts and many are also involved in ensembles and concerts outside College.

Revision programmes and regular testing are built into the course to help you to prepare for final examinations.



### What other skills will I develop during this course?

Music will provide you with the opportunity to develop your skills in communication and information technology as well as encouraging you to become an independent learner.

## How will I be assessed?



### AS Units:

- 1 Performing Music** (minimum standard of playing should be Grade 5)  
You will give regular solo and ensemble performances, some of which are recorded. The final submission must consist of a minimum of 5 minutes continuous performing.
- 2 Composing Music**  
You will compose one composition of 3 minutes in length. The examination board sets 4 composition briefs from which you select one, which should be completed under timed examination conditions. A CD sleeve note for the composition is also written.
- 3 Developing Musical Understanding**  
You will sit a written exam (2 Hours) on two Areas of Study: Instrumental Music and Vocal Music, some of which is based on Listening tests. During the examination you will also be required to analyse some unfamiliar music and complete a piece of harmony.

### A2 Units:

- 4 Extended Performance** (minimum standard of playing should be Grade 6)  
You will give a 12-15 minute performance of solo or ensemble music.
- 5 Composition and Technical Study**  
You will compose one composition of three minutes in length in response to a brief set by the examination board. You will also complete a piece of chorale harmony in the style of J.S.Bach. Both parts of the unit are completed under timed examination conditions.
- 6 Further Musical Understanding**  
You will sit an aural analysis paper and a written analysis paper on set works that have been studied involving short answers and essay writing. The whole examination is two hours in length.



### What prior qualifications are recommended?

You should have five GCSE subjects at Grade C or above, including English and Mathematics, and a music performance standard of at least Grade 5 (exams do not have to have been taken). A GCSE in Music is advised, although not essential if a student has appropriate previous experience in performing and composing.

### What are the progression routes with this qualification?

Music 'A' Level is an extremely demanding qualification that offers you the development of a wide range of skills including analysis, criticism, creative expression, verbal, written and musical communication, discipline, initiative, team work and the application of ICT. Few other subjects cover such a range of disciplines, so Music is recognised as an excellent preparation not only for music-related careers but also for progression into other fields, and it can readily complement and broaden programmes of study in both the Arts and Sciences. Music can be studied for single honours at university or at conservatoire, but there are also many joint honours courses with subjects such as English, History, Languages, Maths, Media Studies and Physics.

### What extra work can I do?

We give out regular reading and listening lists to support your studies and it is expected that you will follow a recommended listening schedule throughout the course. It is also hoped that, where appropriate, students will look for opportunities to perform externally to College, for example in the County's youth orchestras and choir. You should continue to take specialist lessons in your main instrument or voice in order to prepare for performance assessments. Many students continue their studies privately, but the College is also able to offer lessons, some through the local Music Centre (Surrey Performing Arts). You can claim a subsidy towards the cost of your lessons from College. The work covered on the course will be appropriate if you are contemplating entry to Oxford or Cambridge or to one of the recognised Music Colleges, and all students taking any form of university or music college entrance examination will be offered extra tuition.

**The College Music Department is an extremely busy and fun place to be! If you would like to be part of a community that immerses itself in creating and enjoying music, at the same time as giving you a high quality education, then the Music course is definitely for you.**