

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

Music Technology

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

It is useful to have studied music or information technology at GCSE or Intermediate GNVQ level, but this is not essential.

What will I learn on this course?

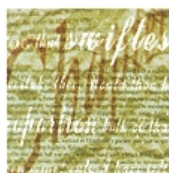
You will complete three Areas of study. These are 'Music from the Western classical tradition,' 'The Development of music technology and then you have a choice of either 'Music for the moving image' or 'Words and music.

Through these Areas of Study you will learn how to:

- produce performances using sequencing software in a range of musical styles
- develop the skills required to make high quality recordings of musical performances
- learn how to compose and arrange using technology
- develop your knowledge of the principles and development of music technology
- learn how to control and interpret data

What kind of student is this course suitable for?

Anyone who has a keen interest in music technology, who enjoys creating and listening to different styles of music, and who wishes to extend their practical experience and understanding of music technology.



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 one unit as follows. The unit is split into two parts, Part (a) Practical Work and Part (b) Written Work.

The AS qualification consists of the following units:

Unit 1: Part (a) Practical Work AS 70% AL 35%

(i) Sequencing or recording AS 30% AL 15%

Structured commentary AS 10% AL 5%

You will cover both sequencing and recording in the AS qualification but in this section you will specialise in one of them through two Areas of Study of: 'The development of music technology' and 'Music from the Western classical tradition'.

Sequencing

In this unit you will learn how to produce accomplished musical performances in a range of musical styles using sequencing software. You will interpret and realise two contrasting pieces of music. The first will be a piece of music from the Western classical tradition. The second sequence can be from any musical idiom. You will be expected to complete a Structured Commentary to demonstrate your understanding of the music that you have sequenced.

Recording

In this unit you will learn how to make high-quality recordings of musical performances. You will make two contrasting recordings using complimentary recording techniques. The first will be a direct to 2 track stereo recording of a piece of music from the Western classical tradition using ambient recording techniques. You will be expected to complete a structured commentary to demonstrate your understanding of the music that you have recorded. The second recording will be a 4 track multitrack recording using close mic techniques. This will involve recording 4 live tracks using microphones or direct input (DI), and will require the use of overdub and mixdown. The second recording can be of any style of music.

(ii) Arranging and improvising using technology – AS 30% Advanced GCE 15%

In this part of the practical work you will be required to focus on recording if you have opted for sequencing in section (i) or on sequencing if you have opted for recording in section (i). You will also be required to study a range of music within a third area of study: ‘Popular Music and Jazz’. The third area of study will form part of the written assessment in Part (b) and in this practical section you will make an arrangement of two short pieces of music.

The first arrangement will be developed from a short melody or folk tune using a computer sequencing and notation package. You will submit a CD or minidisc of your arrangement together with a copy of the stimulus material and completed score and parts. The second task is from Area of Study 3: Popular Music and Jazz This second arrangement task can be undertaken in a number of ways you may:

- take on the role of performer and arranger, playing ideas into the computer in real time, and subsequently editing the musical material into a finished product
- use musicians in a recording studio undertaking the role of arranger, performer and ensemble director.
- use a porta-studio, and develop your ideas by recording instrumental tracks one at a time, acting as both performer and arranger.

In each case you must submit a recording of your finished arrangement mini-disc or CD, together with a copy of the stimulus material and a commentary.

Unit 1: Part (b) Written Work AS 30% A2 15%

Listening and analysing I – AS 30% A2 15%

In this part of the AS unit you will be required to demonstrate your ability to listen to unfamiliar music and analyse musical, technical and stylistic features. You will be given an individual copy of the assessment exercise on CD, and will be allowed to listen to the material as many times as you require to answer the questions. You will also sit a paper in which you will answer questions related to ‘The Development of Technology in Music’ and ‘Popular Music and Jazz’. You will be asked to recognise musical features and elements and to consider the impact of music technology on the music you are listening to you will also answer questions which put music in a broader cultural and social context.

Advanced GCE

The full Advanced GCE qualification in Music Technology comprises the AS unit, plus the following A2 unit. In the A2 unit you will extend your study of ‘The Development of Music Technology’ and select a further Area of Study: either ‘Music for the Moving Image’ or ‘Words and Music’.

Unit 2: Part (a) Practical Work (30%)

(i) Sequencing, recording and producing – A2 15%

The practical aspects of MIDI sequencing and recording studied for AS are extended and integrated in this part of the qualification. You will build on the skills learnt in the AS unit and apply them to the recording and production of two pieces of music from any genre (eg Popular Music, Jazz, World Music or Classical).

In the first task of this unit you will make a 3-4 minute multitrack recording of a piece of music using close mic and overdub techniques. You will submit the finished recording on CD or mini-disc together with a recording log sheet. In the second task you will produce a sequenced backing track of a piece of music containing at least six musical parts. This backing will then form the basis of a second multitrack recording, in which a vocal track and another live track such as guitar or saxophone, is added to the sequenced backing. You will submit the finished recording on CD or MD together with a MIDI file of the sequenced backing and a recording log sheet.

(ii) Composing using technology – Advanced GCE 15%

In the second part of the practical work you will use computer software and/or multi-track recording to produce two compositions lasting 5-6 minutes in total. You will study a number of musical examples, from a fourth area of study: either (i) Music for the Moving Image or (ii) Words and Music.

The first composition will be created to your own brief. It must use music technology as an integral musical resource underpinning the composition, such as a set of samples, or the development of textures using multi-track recording. The composition must be submitted on CD or MD together with an explanation of the brief and a score in an appropriate form of notation (staff, graphic, diagram etc).

The second composition will relate to the fourth area of study and will be in response to a brief set by Edexcel from the compendium of compositional briefs. You will submit a recording of the composition on CD or MD together with a log sheet and score in an appropriate form of notation.

Unit 2: Part (b) Written Work

Advanced GCE 20%

Listening and Analysing II

This section of the unit involves tasks that test the knowledge, understanding and skills developed across the whole qualification.

A1 Analysis and discrimination

Advanced GCE 5%

A2 Controlling and interpreting MIDI data

Advanced GCE 7½%

In the first part of this 1 hour CD-ROM audio and MIDI test you will demonstrate your skills and knowledge of music technology through a practical exercise. You will use sequencing and aural skills to control and interpret MIDI data. You will answer questions related to an audio and MIDI file set on a CD-ROM and will be asked to recognise features of unfamiliar music, to comment

upon the corrections that could be made to a sequenced version of the music and to compare a recorded performance with a score.

Music technology in context – Advanced GCE 7½%

In this part of the exam, a written paper with audio CD, you will be expected to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of a range of music related to Area of Study 4. You will answer 1 question on either ‘Music for the Moving Image’ or ‘Words and Music’. Part 1 of the question will relate to recorded extracts and Part 2 of the question will ask you to demonstrate your understanding of the Area of Study

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

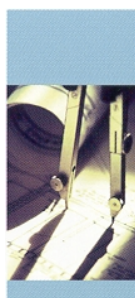
As well as covering music technology at Advanced level, the course will enable you to develop Key Skills which could be essential to you in whatever you go on to do afterwards:

Key Skill	Typical activities
Communication	Discuss critically, in groups and in writing, your own and others’ compositions and arrangements
Improving own learning and performance	Plan a recording 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 a recording and contribute towards group evaluation



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

The Advanced GCE in Music Technology can lead to further study of music technology or performing arts at Higher National or degree level. The Advanced GCE can also help you on your way to a career in the music industry or to a technology/computer orientated career.



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