



The final first teach date for A Level Music (H543) is **September 2026**.
The final assessment opportunity will be **Summer 2028**. There is no resit opportunity.

Specification

A LEVEL

MUSIC

Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE
in Music

H543

For first assessment in 2018

Disclaimer

Specifications are updated over time. Whilst every effort is made to check all documents, there may be contradictions between published resources and the specification, therefore please use the information on the latest specification at all times. Where changes are made to specifications these will be indicated within the document, there will be a new version number indicated, and a summary of the changes. If you do notice a discrepancy between the specification and a resource please contact us at: resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk

We will inform centres about changes to specifications. We will also publish changes on our website. The latest version of our specifications will always be those on our website (ocr.org.uk) and these may differ from printed versions.

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Support and Guidance

Introducing a new specification brings challenges for implementation and teaching, but it also opens up new opportunities. Our aim is to help you at every stage. We are working hard with teachers and other experts to bring you a package of practical support, resources and training.

Subject Advisors

OCR Subject Advisors provide information and support to centres including specification and non-exam assessment advice, updates on resource developments and a range of training opportunities.

Our Subject Advisors work with subject communities through a range of networks to ensure the sharing of ideas and expertise supporting teachers and students alike. They work with developers to help produce our specifications and the resources needed to support these qualifications during their development.

You can contact our **Music** Subject Advisors for specialist advice, guidance and support:

01223 553998

music@ocr.org.uk

[@OCR_PerformArts](https://www.instagram.com/OCR_PerformArts)

Teaching and learning resources

Our resources are designed to provide you with a range of teaching activities and suggestions that enable you to select the best activity, approach or context to support your teaching style and your particular students. The resources are a body of knowledge that

will grow throughout the lifetime of the specification, they include:

- Delivery Guides
- Transition Guides
- Topic Exploration Packs
- Lesson Elements.

We also work with a number of leading publishers who publish textbooks and resources for our specifications. For more information on our publishing partners and their resources visit: ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder/publishing-partners

Professional development

Our improved Professional Development Programme fulfils a range of needs through course selection, preparation for teaching, delivery and assessment. Whether you want to look at our new digital training or search for training materials, you can find what you're looking for all in one place at the CPD Hub: cpdhub.ocr.org.uk

An introduction to new specifications

We run training events throughout the academic year that are designed to help prepare you for first teaching and support every stage of your delivery of the new qualifications.

To receive the latest information about the training we offer on GCSE and A Level, please register for email updates at: ocr.org.uk/updates

Assessment Preparation and Analysis Service

Along with subject-specific resources and tools, you'll also have access to a selection of generic resources that

focus on skills development, professional guidance for teachers and results data analysis.



Subject Advisor Support

Our Subject Advisors provide you with access to specifications, high-quality teaching resources and assessment materials.



Skills Guides

These guides cover topics that could be relevant to a range of qualifications, for example communication, legislation and research. Download the guides at ocr.org.uk/skillsguides



Active Results

Our free online results analysis service helps you review the performance of individual students or your whole cohort. For more details, please refer to ocr.org.uk/activeresults



Practice Papers

Assess students' progress under formal examination conditions with question papers downloaded from a secure location, well-presented, easy to interpret mark schemes and commentary on marking and sample answers.



1 Why choose an OCR A Level in Music?

1a. Why choose an OCR qualification?

Choose OCR and you've got the reassurance that you're working with one of the UK's leading exam boards. Our new A Level in Music course has been developed in consultation with teachers, employers and Higher Education to provide learners with a qualification that's relevant to them and meets their needs.

We're part of the Cambridge Assessment Group, Europe's largest assessment agency and a department of the University of Cambridge. Cambridge Assessment plays a leading role in developing and delivering assessments throughout the world, operating in over 150 countries.

We work with teachers, employers, and universities to create qualifications that support the needs of all students and help them prepare for their future. We offer A levels, GCSEs, vocational courses, and other academic options to schools, colleges, workplaces, and other organisations.

Our Specifications

We believe in developing specifications that help you bring the subject to life and inspire your students to achieve more.

We've created teacher-friendly specifications based on extensive research and engagement with the teaching community. They're designed to be straightforward and accessible so that you can tailor the delivery of the course to suit your needs. We aim

to encourage learners to become responsible for their own learning, confident in discussing ideas, innovative and engaged.

We provide a range of support services designed to help you at every stage, from preparation through to the delivery of our specifications. This includes:

- A wide range of high-quality creative resources including:
 - Delivery Guides
 - Transition Guides
 - Topic Exploration Packs
 - Lesson Elements
 - ... and much more.
- Access to Subject Advisors to support you through the transition and throughout the lifetimes of the specifications.
- CPD/Training for teachers including face-to-face events to introduce the qualifications and prepare you for first teaching.
- Active Results – our free results analysis service to help you review the performance of individual learners or whole schools.

All A level qualifications offered by OCR are accredited by Ofqual, the Regulator for qualifications offered in England. The accreditation number for OCR's A Level in Music is QN601/8242/8.

1b. Why choose an OCR A Level in Music?

OCR's A Level in Music will provide a contemporary, accessible and creative education in Music with an integrated approach to the three main elements – performing, composing and appraising.

Learners are encouraged to be creative and to broaden their musical horizons and understanding with Areas of Study that inspire and challenge.

This specification will enable learners to explore performance and composition in greater detail and

allow them to choose a specialism in performance or composition.

Through the various genres, styles and eras contained in our Areas of Study they will explore musical context, musical language and performance and composition skills.

OCR's A Level in Music has options and pathways designed to appeal to, and cater for, a wide range of interests, instruments, personalities and directions.

Aims and learning outcomes

OCR's A Level in Music will encourage learners to:

- engage actively in the process of music study
- develop performing skills to demonstrate an understanding of musical elements, style, sense of continuity, interpretation and expression
- develop composing skills to demonstrate the manipulation of musical ideas and the use of musical devices and conventions
- broaden musical experience and interests, develop imagination and foster creativity
- develop as effective, independent learners and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds
- reflect critically and make personal judgements on their own and others' music
- engage with, and extend appreciation of, the diverse heritage of music in order to promote personal, social, intellectual and cultural development
- recognise the interdependence of musical knowledge, understanding and skills, and make links between the integrated activities of performing, composing and appraising underpinned by attentive listening
- develop and extend the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to communicate effectively as musicians
- develop knowledge and understanding of a variety of instruments and styles, and of relevant approaches to both performing and composing
- develop awareness of music technologies and their use in the creation and presentation of music
- appraise contrasting genres, styles and traditions of music, and develop understanding of musical contexts and a coherent awareness of musical chronology.

1c. What are the key features of this specification?

The key features of OCR's A Level in Music for you and your learners are:

- an integrated approach to the teaching and learning of appraisal, performing and composing
- Areas of Study designed to appeal to a wide range of learners and offer a range of opportunities to study diverse and traditional fields
- flexibility to allow learners to have an emphasis on either performance or composition
- a performance component – non-exam assessment completed during the course and submitted to OCR for assessment
- a composition component – non-exam assessment completed during the course and submitted to OCR for assessment
- an examined listening and appraisal component sat at the end of the linear course
- co-teachable structure with the OCR AS Level Music qualification.

1d. How do I find out more information?

If you are already using OCR specifications you can contact us at: www.ocr.org.uk

If you are not already a registered OCR centre then you can find out more information on the benefits of becoming one at: www.ocr.org.uk

If you are not yet an approved centre and would like to become one go to: www.ocr.org.uk

Want to find out more?

Ask a Subject Advisor:

Phone: 01223 553998

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/by-subject/music-related/meet-the-team/>

Email: music@ocr.org.uk

Teacher support:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/by-subject/music/>

<http://www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk>

News: Twitter: [@OCR_PerformArts](https://twitter.com/OCR_PerformArts)

2 The specification overview

2a. OCR's A Level in Music (H543)

Learners take components: 01, 03, and 05; **OR** 02, 04 and 05.

Content Overview

Recital minimum of **6 minutes** and two contrasting pieces. Choice of:

- solo piece(s) on one or more instruments or voice
- ensemble performance (including accompanying)
- realisation using music technology

Recital – minimum of **10 minutes** and three contrasting pieces. Choice of:

- solo piece(s) on one or more instrument or voice
- ensemble performance (including accompanying)
- realisation using music technology

Section 1: Free Choice

Section 2: Focused Study

Compositions with a combined duration of at least **8 minutes**

- One to a brief set by OCR
- One to a brief written by the learner
- Three short technical exercises

Compositions with a combined duration of at least **4 minutes**

- One to a brief set by OCR
- One to a brief written by the learner

Listening and appraising

- Analysing and evaluating music
- Familiar and unfamiliar pieces
- Prescribed works
- Questions based on aural extracts

Assessment Overview

Performing A (01)

Recital
75 Marks

Non-exam assessment – externally assessed via audio-visual recording

25%
of total
A level

Performing B (02)

Recital
105 Marks

Non-exam assessment – externally assessed via audio-visual recording

35%
of total
A level

Composing A (03)

Compositions accompanied by a score, lead sheet or written description

105 Marks

Non-exam assessment – externally assessed via audio recordings

35%
of total
A level

Composing B (04)

Compositions accompanied by a score, lead sheet or written description

75 Marks

Non-exam assessment – externally assessed via audio recordings

25%
of total
A level

Listening and appraising (05)

Written exam including aural extracts

120 Marks

2 hour and 30 minutes written exam

40%
of total
A level

Withdrawal of A Level Music (H543)

We are withdrawing A Level Music (H543). We will continue to support and assess this qualification up to the conclusion of the final assessment series in **Summer 2028**.

The final first teach date for A Level Music (H543) is **September 2026**. The final assessment opportunity will be **Summer 2028**. There is no resit opportunity.

2b. Core Content of A Level in Music (H543)

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The following core content outlines the knowledge and understanding that underpin this qualification. The content will be assessed across all components. It should be used in conjunction with the Areas of Study. This qualification requires learners to develop an in-depth understanding of musical elements,

musical contexts and musical language, and apply these, where appropriate, to their own work when performing and composing. Further details of the skills needed for the Performing, Composing and Listening and appraising components are given in Sections 2c – 2g.

Musical elements and their interdependence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• organisation of pitch (melodically and harmonically) including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ harmonic change○ cadences e.g. interrupted○ melodic and harmonic devices○ complex chord progressions e.g. the use of secondary dominant○ melodic devices such as augmentation• tonality including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ how keys are related to each other e.g. circle of fifths○ complex and remote key relationships e.g. enharmonic• structure; organisation of musical material including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ complex structures e.g. sonata form, fugue and through-composed music• sonority including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ combinations of vocal timbres○ instrumental techniques e.g. con sordino, sul ponticello• texture including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ complex combinations of musical lines (parts) e.g. homophony and polyphony○ and more complex applications of these e.g. fugue• tempo, metre and rhythm; how music is organised in time including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ metrical and rhythmic devices e.g. changing metres and syncopation, additive rhythm and polyrhythms• dynamics; use of dynamics including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ expressive devices e.g. contrast and extended ranges and refined control of dynamics and extreme ranges.
Musical contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the effect of purpose and intention e.g. of the composer, performer, commissioner on how music is created, developed and performed in different historical, social and cultural contexts• the effect of audience, time and place e.g. venue, occasion on how music is created, developed and performed in different historical, social and cultural contexts• how music from different historical, social and cultural contexts has changed over time.

Musical language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading and writing staff notation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ rhythmic notation in compound time, irregular time signatures and all key signatures • chords and associated chord symbols including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ standard harmonic progressions e.g. chord inversions and dominant 7th chords ○ extended chords e.g. secondary 7ths and 9ths • musical vocabulary and terminology related to the Areas of Study including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recognition and use of appropriate musical vocabulary and terminology e.g. glissando, repetition and conjunct; recognition ○ use of sophisticated terminology e.g. portamento, and ascending minor scale.
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Areas of Study

Learners will study at least four areas from a choice of six Areas of Study. Learners will study Areas of Study 1 and 2 and a choice of at least two more from Areas of Study 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Through the investigation and in-depth study of the large variety of music contained in the six Areas of Study set for A Level Music, learners will further develop their knowledge and understanding of:

- the musical elements and their interdependence
- musical contexts
- musical language.

The purpose of the Areas of Study is to provide contexts through which learners will study the core content of A Level Music and explore the three key inter-related elements of:

- tonality
- interpretation
- instrumental/vocal techniques.

They are designed to encourage a musical and practical approach to teaching and learning, and to promote integration between the skills of performing, composing and appraising (listening).

The Areas of Study have been designed to be flexible to allow centres and learners to tailor the course of study to their own preferences. The centre may choose which Areas of Study to follow based on learner choice, learner ability, or teacher preference. The table below gives examples of how the Areas of Study can be combined.

	Performing	Composing	Listening and appraising	Areas of Study covered
Example 1	Learner has free choice - applies knowledge of skills, techniques and interpretation to free performance choices.	Learner studies Area of Study 2 and chooses composition brief related to Area of Study 2 .	Area of Study 1 and 2 compulsory. Learner studies and chooses questions related to Area of Study 3 and Area of Study 4 .	1, 2, 3 & 4
Example 2	Learner chooses a recital programme related to Area of Study 6 .	Learner studies Area of Study 6 and chooses composition brief related to Area of Study 6 .	Area of Study 1 and 2 compulsory. Learner studies and chooses questions related to Area of Study 3 and 6 .	1, 2, 3 & 6

Area of Study 1: Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven

<p>Outline</p>	<p>Learners should study in depth the development of Classical instrumental music as found in the instrumental works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use attentive listening and contextual knowledge to analyse, evaluate and make critical judgements about the repertoire • use technical vocabulary to communicate a sophisticated understanding of music and its context. <p>This includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber Music • Symphony • Concerto • Sonata. <p>A prescribed work from this Area of Study will be part of the focus for study although learners should understand about the context and development of the music around the prescribed work.</p>
<p>Focus for learning</p>	<p>Learners should analyse, explain and compare developments in instrumental style, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the characteristics and principles of instrumental music in the Classical period • the forms and style of the Classical period as found in the music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. <p>Learners should study and understand how classical composers use musical elements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the orchestra and instruments of the Classical period • the use of instrumental techniques including articulation • instrumentation and texture • techniques of melodic construction • the use of harmonic language including inversions, cadences and harmonic progressions • phrasing and structure • musical vocabulary and terminology related to instrumental music e.g Harmonic change and melodic and harmonic devices • dynamics and expressive devices. <p>Learners should study and understand the conditions and context in which Classical instrumental music was created and performed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the historical and social context of the music of the Classical period • the effect of purpose and intention on how music is created and developed • the reading and writing of associated staff notation • working conditions for musicians.
<p>Prescribed works</p>	<p>See appendix 5d.</p>
<p>Suggested repertoire</p>	<p>There is no suggested repertoire for this Area of Study.</p>

Area of Study 2: Popular Song: Blues, Jazz, Swing and Big Band

2

<p>Outline</p>	<p>Learners should study in depth the development of song and the singers in early popular and recorded genres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use attentive listening and contextual knowledge to analyse, evaluate and make critical judgements about the repertoire • use technical vocabulary to communicate a sophisticated understanding of music and its context. <p>This includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocal Jazz and Blues • popular solo song • recordings by vocal artists of repertoire • interpretation of 'standards'. <p>A prescribed work from this Area of Study will be part of the focus for study although learners should understand about the context and development of the music around the prescribed work.</p>
<p>Focus for learning</p>	<p>Learners should analyse, explain and compare developments in styles of jazz, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • song structures • performing techniques e.g. improvisation. <p>Learners should study and understand how artists use musical elements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivery and expression of lyrics • application and treatment of the melody and lyrics • vocal techniques e.g. belt, use of register, articulation, vibrato • dynamics and expressive techniques and devices • use of accompaniment • relationship of voice and accompaniment • organisation of pitch, melodically and harmonically • musical vocabulary and terminology related to the Area of Study. <p>Learners should study and understand the conditions and context in which jazz music was created and performed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the effect of audience, time and place on how the songs are created, developed, performed and recorded including developments in recording and technology • the historical and social context of the songs in this Area of Study • working conditions for musicians.
<p>Prescribed works</p>	<p>See appendix 5d.</p>
<p>Suggested repertoire</p>	<p>There is no suggested repertoire for this Area of Study.</p>

Area of Study 3: Developments in Instrumental Jazz 1910 to the present day

Outline	<p>Learners should study the development of instrumental jazz music from 1910 to the present day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study examples in depth of recorded jazz performances from the period of study using live performances, recordings and scores as appropriate • use attentive listening and contextual knowledge to analyse, evaluate and make critical judgements about the repertoire • use technical vocabulary to communicate a sophisticated understanding of jazz music and its context.
Focus for learning	<p>Learners should analyse, explain and compare developments in styles of jazz, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early jazz • swing • bebop • cool jazz • hard bop • avant-garde and free jazz • jazz-rock fusion • contemporary approaches to jazz. <p>Learners should study and understand how jazz musicians use musical elements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvisation • swing • syncopation • polyrhythms • harmony and tonality • blues • blue notes and decoration of notes (vibrato, pitch bend, smear etc.) • timbre • organisation of pitch, melodically and harmonically • devices, e.g. chorus, call and response, riff or ostinato • roles of solo and ensemble, rhythm section (drums, bass etc.). <p>Learners should study and understand the conditions and context in which jazz music was created and performed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • its origins in New Orleans and elsewhere • its dissemination to a wider audience in the United States of America and Europe • changes in the popularity and commercial viability of jazz • the role of radio and recording in the development of jazz • working conditions for jazz musicians • challenges and issues for jazz performers and composers working today.
Prescribed works	<p>No prescribed works for this Area of Study.</p>
Suggested repertoire	<p>A list of suggested repertoire is provided (see appendix 5e).</p>

Area of Study 4: Religious Music of the Baroque Period

Outline	<p>Learners should study how vocal music was used to express religious belief in the Baroque period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study examples in depth of sacred vocal music from the period of study, using live performances, recordings and scores as appropriate • use attentive listening and contextual knowledge to analyse, evaluate and make critical judgements about the repertoire • use technical vocabulary to communicate a sophisticated understanding of Baroque religious music and its context.
Focus for learning	<p>Learners should analyse, explain and compare developments in religious music style, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholic tradition in Italy, e.g. Venetian concertato, a cappella successors to Palestrina, Latin oratorio, operatic influence on vernacular oratorio • Lutheran and Catholic Germany, e.g. Chorale, Venetian influence, passion music, chorale, church cantata, recitative, aria, chorus • Anglican developments, motet, English oratorio • French grand motet, solo petit motet, cantata, choral style. <p>Learners should study and understand how composers use musical elements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • harmony and tonality • structures, e.g. recitative, aria, chorus • textures e.g. chordal, fugal, imitative, solo and choral writing, instrumental • word setting and interpretation of text • resources, accompaniment e.g. obbligato • rhythm and metre, e.g. from dance patterns. <p>Learners should study and understand the conditions and context in which religious music of the period was created and performed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • worship, liturgy, opportunities and restrictions, e.g. Lent, Holy Week, use of instruments in church, use of Latin or vernacular • dissemination of music, e.g. publishing • working conditions for church musicians, education and training, e.g. St Mark's Venice, Chapel Royal, St Thomas's Leipzig.
Prescribed works	<p>No prescribed works for this Area of Study.</p>
Suggested repertoire	<p>A list of suggested repertoire is provided (see appendix 5e).</p>

Area of Study 5: Programme Music 1820–1910

Outline	<p>Learners should study the development during the Romantic period of instrumental concert music that communicates a narrative or a non-musical idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study examples in depth of music for orchestral, chamber or solo performance from the period of study, using live performances, recordings and scores as appropriate • use attentive listening and contextual knowledge to analyse, evaluate and make critical judgements about the repertoire • use technical vocabulary to communicate a sophisticated understanding of romantic programme music and its context.
Focus for learning	<p>Learners should analyse, explain and compare developments in styles of programme music, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concert overture • symphonic poem • programme symphony • solo works • works communicating an awareness of national identity. <p>Learners should study and understand how musicians use musical elements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • harmony and tonality, e.g. expressive effects of dissonance, chords and modulation • integrating structural principles and expressive freedom, e.g. melodic writing, rhythm, adaptations of sonata form • instrumental resources, e.g. expansion of the orchestra, improvements in piano technology, instrumental technique, virtuoso soloists, the conductor • development of dynamics, expression, articulation, complex textures, dramatic contrast and other effects. <p>Learners should study and understand the conditions and context in which programme music was created and performed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Romantic movement in the arts, e.g. Goethe, English poets, Gothic, rediscovery of Shakespeare • influence of opera on concert music • technological advances, e.g. valved brass, piano making • audience, e.g. growth of wealthy middle class, industrialisation, railway travel • transmission of music to a wider audience in Europe and the United States of America, growth of orchestras and public concerts • working conditions for musicians.
Prescribed works	<p>No prescribed works for this Area of Study.</p>
Suggested repertoire	<p>A list of suggested repertoire is provided (see appendix 5e).</p>

Area of Study 6: Innovations in Music 1900 to the present day

Outline	<p>Learners should study the continuation, development and innovations in music of the Western tradition from 1900 to the present day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study examples in depth of music from the period of study, using live performances, recordings and scores as appropriate • use attentive listening and contextual knowledge to analyse, evaluate and make critical judgements about the repertoire • use technical vocabulary to communicate a sophisticated understanding of twentieth century and contemporary music and its context.
Focus for learning	<p>Learners should analyse, explain and compare developments in Twentieth and Twenty-first Century styles, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • late Romantic style, e.g. large scale symphonic works • impressionism • expressionism, atonality and serialism • neo-classical developments, e.g. reinterpretation of traditional forms • national styles, e.g. based on folk traditions • post-1945 avant-garde, experimental approaches, electronic music, post-modern response e.g. to Eastern or African influence • minimalism • contemporary approaches to composition. <p>Learners should study and understand innovations in the use of musical elements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • irregular rhythm, metre, polyrhythm, polymetre, organisation of time • pitch, dissonance, harmony, tonality, modality, atonality • exploration of sonority, timbre, textures, instrumental and vocal techniques and resources, percussion, technology • dynamics, contrast, extreme range • structure, form, notation, improvisation, aleatoric. <p>Learners should study and understand the conditions and context in which music of this period was created and performed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • audience reaction to innovation • technology and mass media • the response of composers to political and social events, e.g. revolution, war, persecution, censorship • ideas about the function and relevance of music, e.g. Gebrauchsmusik, crossover with popular styles, music for films, propaganda • working conditions for musicians • challenges and issues for performers and composers working today.
Prescribed works	<p>No prescribed works for this Area of Study.</p>
Suggested repertoire	<p>A list of suggested repertoire is provided (see appendix 5e).</p>

2c. Content: Performing A (01)

Where a learner takes Performing A (01) they must take Composing A (03).

Learners will make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to interpret and communicate musical ideas with technical and expressive control and an understanding of style and context.

Learners must perform at least **two** contrasting pieces.

This will be achieved through playing or singing solo or in an ensemble, or realising music through music technology.

They may choose to relate their recital to one or more Area of Study to demonstrate their understanding of style and context and inform their performance choices.

Full details of the performance requirements are given in Section 3a.

	Learners should:
Recital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to interpret and communicate musical ideas with technical and expressive control and an understanding of style and context. This must be achieved by one or more of the following means: playing or singing solo, or in ensemble, or realising music using music technology • perform music with control and continuity using appropriate tempi, showing critical understanding of the music chosen • perform fluently showing critical understanding of the overall shape, direction and style of the music chosen • practice a variety of pieces that develop their skills as a soloist, part of an ensemble, accompanying or realising using music technology • be able to perform confidently and stylishly • demonstrate an understanding of performing with accuracy and fluency • demonstrate an understanding of performing with technical control across a range of techniques • demonstrate understanding of interpretation and communication through realisation of relevant performance markings and performing conventions • develop and demonstrate stylistic understanding of the music performed and their interpretation of it.

2d. Content: Performing B (02)

Where a learner takes Performing B (2) they must take Composing B (04).

Learners will make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to interpret and communicate musical ideas with technical and expressive control and an understanding of style and context.

This will be achieved through playing or singing solo or in an ensemble, improvising, or realising music through music technology.

Learners must perform at least **three** pieces in total.

They may choose to relate their whole recital to one or more Area of Study to demonstrate their understanding of style and context and inform their performance choices.

Full details of the performance requirements are given in Section 3a.

	Learners should:
Section 1: Free Choice – at least two contrasting pieces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to interpret and communicate musical ideas with technical and expressive control and an understanding of style and context. This must be achieved by one or more of the following means: playing or singing solo, or in ensemble, or realising music using music technology • perform music with control and continuity using appropriate tempi, showing critical understanding of the music chosen • perform fluently showing critical understanding of the overall shape, direction and style of the music chosen • practice a variety of pieces that develop their skills as a soloist, part of an ensemble, accompanying or realising using music technology • be able to perform confidently and stylishly • demonstrate an understanding of performing with accuracy and fluency • demonstrate an understanding of performing with technical control across a range of techniques • demonstrate understanding of interpretation and communication through realisation of relevant performance markings and performing conventions • develop and demonstrate stylistic understanding of the music performed and their interpretation of it.
Section 2: Focused Study – at least one further piece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and demonstrate an in depth understanding of repertoire idiomatic to their chosen instrument • make informed musical choices that demonstrate styles and techniques as found in idiomatic repertoire.

2e. Content: Composing A (03)

Where a learner takes Composing A (03) they must take Performing A (01).

Learners will make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and expressive understanding. This will be achieved by preparing compositions as outlined below.

Learners will respond to a brief set by the board which will relate to an Area of Study of their own choice. Full details of the performance requirements are given in Section 3a.

Learners may choose to relate their learner set brief to an Area of Study. The Technical Exercises must also relate to an Area of Study of the learner's own choice.

2

	Learners should:
Section 1: Composition in response to a brief set by OCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and expressive understanding, by responding to a brief or commission supplied by others • compose music that develops musical ideas and shows understanding of musical devices and conventions in relation to the chosen genre, style and tradition • compose music that is musically convincing and shows a sophisticated use of musical elements in combination • compose music that makes creative use of musical ideas and shows understanding of musical devices and conventions in relation to the chosen genre, style and tradition.
Section 2: Composition in response to a learner set brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and expressive understanding, freely as the composer chooses • compose music that develops musical ideas and shows understanding of musical devices and conventions in relation to the chosen genre, style and tradition • compose music that is musically convincing and shows a sophisticated use of musical elements in combination • compose music that makes creative use of musical ideas and shows understanding of musical devices and conventions in relation to the chosen genre, style and tradition • determine their own composition briefs to allow demonstration of ability to create and develop musical ideas.
Section 3: Technical exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compose short exercises that demonstrate an ability to compose music that develops musical ideas and shows understanding of musical devices and conventions in relation to genre, style and tradition • be able to demonstrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an imaginative understanding of a range of techniques within the chosen option ○ integration of ideas and technique ○ control of ideas ○ technical knowledge of the chosen medium.

2f. Content: Composing B (04)

Where a learner takes Composing B (04) they must take Performing B (02).

Learners will make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and expressive understanding. This will be achieved by preparing compositions as outlined below.

Full details of the performance requirements are given in Section 3a.

Learners will respond to a brief set by the board which will relate to an Area of Study of their own choice. Learners may also choose to relate their learner set brief to an Area of Study.

	Learners should:
Section 1: Composition in response to a brief set by OCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and expressive understanding, by responding to a brief or commission supplied by others • compose music that develops musical ideas and shows understanding of musical devices and conventions in relation to the chosen genre, style and tradition • compose music that is musically convincing and shows a sophisticated use of musical elements in combination • compose music that makes creative use of musical ideas and shows understanding of musical devices and conventions in relation to the chosen genre, style and tradition.
Section 2: Composition in response to a learner set brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and expressive understanding, freely as the composer chooses • compose music that develops musical ideas and shows understanding of musical devices and conventions in relation to the chosen genre, style and tradition • compose music that is musically convincing and shows a sophisticated use of musical elements in combination • compose music that makes creative use of musical ideas and shows understanding of musical devices and conventions in relation to the chosen genre, style and tradition • determine their own composition briefs to allow demonstration of ability to create and develop musical ideas.

2g. Content: Listening and appraising (05)

Through the investigation and in-depth study of the large variety of music contained in the Areas of Study set for A Level Music, learners will develop their knowledge and understanding of the inter-related elements of music.

This component will assess learners' knowledge and understanding of Musical Elements, Musical Language and Musical Contexts as explored through the Areas of Study. The content for this component is given in Section 2b (Core Content).

	Learners should:
Appraise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse and evaluate music in aural and written form, using knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical contexts and musical language to make critical judgements about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ repertoire within the Areas of Study ○ musical interpretations (e.g. how a performer plays a piece of music, how a composer responds to a brief or a starting point, or demonstration of stylistic understanding) ○ others' work including unfamiliar music (i.e. individual pieces of music that have not been stipulated within the specification) • form critical judgements, which will be achieved by attentive listening and aural perception, and could also be achieved by informed discussion (in writing and/or through speech), analysis, evaluation, contextualisation and reflection • comment in detail on music heard, showing critical understanding across the genres, styles and traditions studied • use acute aural perception and discrimination skills • show understanding of the complex interdependencies between musical elements • show understanding of the sophisticated connections between music and its context.

2h. Prior knowledge, learning and progression

No prior knowledge or learning of the subject is required. The GCSE (9–1) in Music is not a pre-requisite to take the OCR A Level in Music.

The OCR A Level in Music specification provides a full foundation for study at Higher Education level, including conservatoires and universities.

A background in music, for example, learning to play an instrument, would be beneficial.

There are a number of Music specifications at OCR. Find out more at www.ocr.org.uk

The AS Level in Music is not a pre-requisite to take the A Level in Music but the two qualifications are co-teachable.

2

3 Assessment of A Level in Music

3a. Forms of assessment

The assessment of the OCR A Level in Music is split into three linear components – two non-examined components which together are worth 60% of the qualification and one examined component worth 40%.

Performing A (01)

This component is worth 75 marks and represents 25% of the marks for the A level. This is an externally assessed, non-exam assessment component assessing AO1 in its entirety.

Recital (75 marks): Learners are required to perform a programme of at least **two** contrasting pieces which demonstrate features of the repertoire for the instrument, voice or technology presented and their ability to interpret musical ideas through performing, with technical and expressive control and an understanding of style and context.

The pieces must last a **minimum duration of six minutes** with a recommended **maximum of nine minutes**.

A penalty will be applied by OCR where the minimum duration is not met.

The recital may use one or more of the following:

- solo piece on one or more than one instrument or voice
- ensemble performance
- accompanying
- realisation using music technology.

If it is appropriate to the repertoire being performed, learners may improvise.

Learners may choose to relate their recital to one or more Area of Study.

It is recommended that learners prepare for a live performance, to an audience. This could be in the form of a formal recital evening, to classmates, or friends and family.

Where technology is being used as the learner's main study for performance, there must be an element of live control involved in the performance. It cannot

simply be a playback of a sequenced realisation for example.

Learners will be assessed on:

- knowledge and fluency
- technical control
- realisation of performance markings and/or performance conventions.

The marking criteria for Performing A (01) can be found on the OCR website: www.ocr.org.uk.

Requirements

Learners must carry out their recital (which is externally assessed by OCR) between 1 March and 31 May in the academic year in which the learner expects to be awarded the qualification.

A complete, unedited audio-visual recording of the performance must be provided to OCR by the centre. Centres must also provide OCR with the score or lead sheet of all music performed. Where a written score or lead sheet is unavailable – because it does not exist – other means of referencing the performance intentions can be permitted. However, where a written score or lead sheet is available, it should still be used.

Alternative material will only be accepted where a written score or lead sheet is unavailable because it does not exist, and the only other types of evidence permissible are:

- the chord pattern used
- the note pattern/raga used
- a recording of the piece by the original commercial performer
- a recording by a commercial artist in the style of the learner's performance.

Candidates are awarded marks for the quality of the performance only. The score, lead sheet (or alternative reference material) is not awarded any marks.

Centres should use a cover sheet when submitting learners' work.

Performing B (02)

This component is worth 105 marks and represents 35% of the marks for the A level. This is an externally assessed, non-exam assessment component assessing AO1 in its entirety.

Recital (105 marks): Learners are required to perform a programme of at least **three** pieces which demonstrate features of the repertoire for the instrument, voice or technology presented and their ability to interpret musical ideas through performing, with technical and expressive control and an understanding of style and context.

The pieces must last a **minimum duration of ten minutes** with a recommended **maximum of fifteen minutes**.

A penalty will be applied by OCR where the minimum duration is not met.

The recital may use one or more of the following:

- solo piece on one or more than one instrument or voice
- ensemble performance
- accompanying
- realisation using music technology.

If it is appropriate to the repertoire being performed, learners may improvise.

Learners may choose to relate their recital to one or more Area of Study.

It is recommended that learners prepare for a live performance, to an audience. This could be in the form of a formal recital evening, to classmates, or friends and family.

Where technology is being used as the learner's main study for performance, there must be an element of live control involved in the performance. It cannot

simply be a playback of a sequenced realisation for example.

Section 1 – Free choice (75 marks): Learners are required to perform at least **two** contrasting pieces which demonstrate features of the repertoire for the instrument or voice presented and their ability to interpret musical ideas through performing, with technical and expressive control and an understanding of style and context.

Learners will be assessed on:

- knowledge and fluency
- technical control
- realisation of performance markings and/or performance conventions.

Section 2 – Focused Study (30 marks): Learners are required to demonstrate their understanding of style and context by choosing at least **one further** piece within their recital to relate to the idiomatic repertoire of their chosen instrument. They will demonstrate through their performance the understanding of the style and context specific to this instrument and its repertoire.

The marking criteria for Performing B (02) can be found on the OCR website: www.ocr.org.uk.

Requirements

Learners must carry out their recital (which is externally assessed by OCR) between 1 March and 31 May in the academic year in which the learner expects to be awarded the qualification.

A complete, unedited audio-visual recording of the performance must be provided to OCR by the centre. Centres must also provide OCR with the score or lead sheet of all music performed. Where a written score or lead sheet is unavailable – because it does not exist –

other means of referencing the performance intentions can be permitted. However, where a written score or lead sheet is available, it should still be used.

Alternative material will only be accepted where a written score or lead sheet is unavailable because it does not exist, and the only other types of evidence permissible are:

- the chord pattern used
- the note pattern/raga used

- a recording of the piece by the original commercial performer
- a recording by a commercial artist in the style of the learner's performance.

Candidates are awarded marks for the quality of the performance only. The score, lead sheet (or alternative reference material) is not awarded any marks.

Centres should use a cover sheet when submitting learners' work.

Composing A (03)

This component is worth 105 marks and represents 35% of the marks for the A level. This is an externally assessed, non-exam assessment component assessing AO2 in its entirety.

Learners are required to compose **three** separate pieces of music with a combined duration of **at least eight minutes**.

Students may not be able to access the full range of marks if they do not reach the minimum duration requirements.

Section 1 (35 marks): Composition in response to a brief set by OCR. The briefs will be communicated to centres on 1 September of the academic year in which the learner expects to be awarded the qualification. The briefs will be available on the OCR website.

The OCR set briefs will provide a choice of six stimuli to enable learners to specialise in an area of composition that is relevant to their personal skills and interests. Each brief will relate to one of the Areas of Study and will specify an audience and/or occasion for the composition.

Learners will be assessed on:

- response to brief and ideas
- compositional techniques
- communication.

Section 2 (40 marks): Composition in response to a brief set by the learner. The composition may be for any medium and in any style.

The learner set brief must allow learners to create a composition that demonstrates their ability to make

use of musical elements, techniques and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and expressive understanding.

Learners will be assessed on:

- effectiveness of the learner set brief in generating ideas
- response to brief and ideas
- compositional techniques
- communication.

Section 3 (30 marks): Composition of three short pieces using compositional techniques from **one** of the following as found in **one** chosen Area of Study (AoS):

- Pitch organisation – e.g. Modes, use of harmony and tonality in instrumental Jazz (AoS 3). Serialism (AoS 6)
- Rhythms and Metre – e.g. minimalism (AoS 6)
- Textures – e.g. Instrumentation (AoS 1) Song accompaniment (AoS 2) Solo and Choral Writing (AoS 4).

Learners will be assessed on:

- language
- technique
- compositional coherence.

Each composition must be a **maximum of forty seconds** in length.

The marking criteria for Composing A (03) can be found on the OCR website: www.ocr.org.uk.

Requirements

The compositions submitted should demonstrate the full range of the learner's knowledge and understanding of the chosen technique, being representative of their achievement by the end of the course.

The following must be submitted to OCR for assessment using the OCR coversheet:

- Section 1 – recording of composition
– accompanying score, lead sheet or written account of composition

- Section 2 – recording of composition
– accompanying score, lead sheet or written account of composition
– learner set brief
- Section 3 – recording of composition exercises
– accompanying score, lead sheet or written account of composition.

The learner does not have to perform the piece of music which they have composed. Compositions may be realised through music technology or performed by others.

Composing B (04)

This component is worth 75 marks and represents 25% of the marks for the A level. This is an externally assessed, non-exam assessment component assessing AO2 in its entirety through a recording of the learner's compositions.

Learners are required to compose **two** separate pieces of music with a combined duration of **at least four minutes**.

Students may not be able to access the full range of marks if they do not reach the minimum duration requirements.

Section 1 (35 marks): Composition in response to a brief set by OCR. The briefs will be communicated to centres on 1 September of the academic year in which the learner expects to be awarded the qualification. The briefs will be available on the OCR website.

The OCR set briefs will provide a choice of six stimuli to enable learners to specialise in an area of composition that is relevant to their personal skills and interests. Each brief will relate to one of the Areas of Study and will specify an audience and/or occasion for the composition.

Learners will be assessed on:

- response to brief and ideas
- compositional techniques
- communication.

Section 2 (40 marks): Composition in response to a brief set by the learner. The composition may be for any medium and in any style.

The learner set brief must allow learners to create a composition that demonstrates their ability to make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and expressive understanding.

Learners will be assessed on:

- effectiveness of the learner set brief in generating ideas
- response to brief and ideas
- compositional techniques
- communication.

The marking criteria for Composing B (04) can be found on the OCR website: www.ocr.org.uk.

Requirements

The compositions submitted should demonstrate the full range of the learner's knowledge and understanding of the chosen technique, being representative of their achievement by the end of the course.

The following must be submitted to OCR for assessment using the OCR coversheet:

- Section 1 – recording of composition
– accompanying score, lead sheet or written account of composition
- Section 2 – recording of composition
– accompanying score, lead sheet or written account of composition
– learner set brief.

The learner does not have to perform the piece of music which they have composed. Compositions may

be realised through music technology or performed by others.

Listening and appraising (05)

This component is an externally assessed written paper assessing AO3 and AO4 accompanied by an audio recording containing aural extracts. This component is worth 120 marks and represents 40% of the A level.

Learners will be required to complete an examination paper lasting **two hours and thirty minutes**. This will

include a listening section. Learners will need individual audio playback facilities for the examination to allow them to listen to the music extracts individually and play them as many times as they wish. Learners will be provided with an insert of any relevant scores, lead sheets etc.

The examination paper will consist of three sections:

Section A	Section B	Section C
Area of Study 1 and 2	Area of Study 1 and 2	Area of Study 3, 4, 5 and 6
30 marks	40 marks	50 marks
Learners must answer all questions	Learners must answer all questions	Learners must answer two questions based on different Areas of Study
Questions based aural extracts from unfamiliar works	Questions based on aural extracts from prescribed works	No aural extracts provided
Question types include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multiple choice • short answer • melodic/bass/ • rhythm dictation. 	Four 10 mark questions including analysis, comparison of aural extracts, and testing understanding of musical background/context. Requirement for learners to have carried out wider listening based on the Areas of Study.	Essay questions, providing the opportunity for extended writing. Choice of two questions for each Area of Study. Learners answer two 25 mark essay questions.

3b. Assessment objectives (AO)

There are four Assessment Objectives in the OCR A Level in Music. These are detailed in the table below.

Learners are expected to demonstrate their ability to:

Assessment Objective	
AO1	interpret musical ideas through performing, with technical and expressive control and an understanding of style and context
AO2	create and develop musical ideas with technical and expressive control and coherence
AO3	demonstrate and apply musical knowledge
AO4	use analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music.

AO weightings in A Level in Music

The relationship between the assessment objectives and the components are shown in the following table:

Component	% of overall A level in Music (H543)			
	AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4
Performing A (H543/01)	25	0	0	0
Performing B (H543/02)	35	0	0	0
Composing A (H543/03)	0	35	0	0
Composing B (H543/04)	0	25	0	0
Listening and appraising (H543/05)	0	0	10	30
Total	25–35%	25–35%	10%	30%

3c. Total qualification time

Total qualification time (TQT) is the total amount of time, in hours, expected to be spent by a learner to achieve a qualification. It includes both guided learning hours and hours spent in preparation, study,

and assessment. The total qualification time for A Level Music is 360 hours. The total guided learning time is 360 hours.

3d. Qualification availability outside of England

This qualification is available in England. For Wales and Northern Ireland please check the Qualifications in Wales Portal (QIW) or the Northern Ireland Department of Education Performance Measures /

Northern Ireland Entitlement Framework Qualifications Accreditation Number (NIEFQAN) list to see current availability.

3e. Language

This qualification is available in English only. All assessment materials are available in English only and all candidate work must be in English.

3f. Assessment availability

There will be one examination series available each year in May/June to **all** learners.

This specification will be certificated from the June 2018 examination series onwards.

All examined components must be taken in the same examination series at the end of the course.

3g. Retaking the qualification

Learners can retake the qualification as many times as they wish. Learners must retake all examined components but they can choose to either retake one or both of the non-exam assessment (NEA) components or carry forward (re-use) their most recent result(s) (see Section 4a).

The final assessment opportunity will be **Summer 2028**. There is no resit opportunity.

3h. Assessment of extended response

The assessment materials for this qualification provide learners with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to construct and develop a sustained and

coherent line of reasoning and marks for extended responses are integrated into the marking criteria.

3i. Non-exam assessment

Evidence for the non-examined components (i.e. Performing and Composing) must be submitted to OCR for external assessment.

Work submitted for the A level components should reflect the standard expected for a learner after a full A level course of study. The work presented for assessment in an A level qualification shows greater depth than that presented for an AS qualification.

This is achieved by:

- the longer minimum required duration of performances and compositions at A level giving learners the opportunity to show further sophistication in their compositions and fluency and control in their performances
- the further requirement at A level that performances demonstrate fluency and a critical understanding of the overall shape, direction and style of the music chosen
- the further requirement at A level that composition demonstrates sophisticated use of musical elements in combination and creative use of musical ideas, and shows understanding of musical devices and conventions in relation to the chosen genre, style and tradition.

The amount of time given to learners for the preparation period for the two non-examined

components should be determined by centres. All work must be completed by the designated finishing time set by the centre.

Dates and deadlines for preparatory work must be set by centres in order to facilitate the completion of work to be submitted for assessment by the OCR-set deadline.

Guidance should be given to learners about availability and choice of materials, health and safety, avoidance of plagiarism and completion of work in accordance with specification requirements and procedures.

The performance and composition must be completed under supervised conditions within the centre to ensure the authenticity of the learner's submission.

The performance and composition must be completed in the academic year in which the learner expects to be awarded the qualification.

Work submitted for the A level non-examined components must be authenticated by the centre which delivers the assessment. See section 4d for further guidance.

3j. Synoptic assessment

The OCR A Level in Music is designed to encourage integration of the skills of listening/appraisal, performing and composing during the teaching and learning process.

The Areas of Study are intended to facilitate integrated teaching and learning through the exploration of a wide variety of genres and styles for practical exploration through listening, performing and composing.

3k. Calculating qualification results

A learner's overall qualification grade for A Level in Music will be calculated by adding together their marks from the three components taken to give their total weighted mark. This mark will then be

compared to the qualification level grade boundaries for the entry option taken by the learner and for the relevant exam series to determine the learner's overall qualification grade.

4 Admin: what you need to know

The information in this section is designed to give an overview of the processes involved in administering this qualification so that you can speak to your exams officer. All of the following processes require you to submit something to OCR by a specific deadline.

More information about the processes and deadlines involved at each stage of the assessment cycle can be found in the Administration area of the OCR website.

OCR's *Admin overview* is available on the OCR website at www.ocr.org.uk/administration

4a. Pre-assessment

Estimated entries

Estimated entries are your best projection of the number of learners who will be entered for a qualification in a particular series. Estimated entries

should be submitted to OCR by the specified deadline. They are free and do not commit your centre in any way.

Final entries

Final entries provide OCR with detailed data for each learner, showing each assessment to be taken. It is essential that you use the correct entry code, considering the relevant entry rules and ensuring that you choose the entry option for the submission method you intend to use.

Final entries must be submitted to OCR by the published deadlines or late entry fees will apply.

All learners taking an A Level in Music must be entered for one of the following entry options.

Entry option		Components		
Entry code	Title	Code	Title	Assessment type
H543 A	Music option A	01	Performing A	Non-exam assessment
		03	Composing A	Non-exam assessment
		05	Listening and appraising	External assessment
H543 B	Music option B	02	Performing B	Non-exam assessment
		04	Composing B	Non-exam assessment
		05	Listening and appraising	External assessment
H543 C	Music option C	01	Performing A	Non-exam assessment
		83	Composing A	Non-exam assessment (Carry forward)
		05	Listening and appraising	External assessment

Entry option		Components		
Entry code	Title	Code	Title	Assessment type
H543 D	Music option D	81	Performing A	Non-exam assessment (Carry forward)
		03	Composing A	Non-exam assessment
		05	Listening and appraising	External assessment
H543 E	Music option E	81	Performing A	Non-exam assessment (Carry forward)
		83	Composing A	Non-exam assessment (Carry forward)
		05	Listening and appraising	External assessment
H543 F	Music option F	02	Performing B	Non-exam assessment
		84	Composing B	Non-exam assessment (Carry forward)
		05	Listening and appraising	External assessment
H543 G	Music option G	82	Performing B	Non-exam assessment (Carry forward)
		04	Composing B	Non-exam assessment
		05	Listening and appraising	External assessment
H543 H	Music option H	82	Performing B	Non-exam assessment (Carry forward)
		84	Composing B	Non-exam assessment (Carry forward)
		05	Listening and appraising	External assessment

The final assessment opportunity will be **Summer 2028**. There is no resit opportunity.

Collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system

Regulators have published guidance on collecting evidence of student performance as part of long-term contingency arrangements to improve the resilience of the qualifications system. You should review and consider this guidance when delivering this qualification to students at your centre.

For more detailed information on collecting evidence of student performance please visit our website at: <https://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/general-qualifications/assessment/>

4b. Special consideration

Special consideration is a post-assessment adjustment to marks or grades to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time the assessment was taken.

Detailed information about eligibility for special consideration can be found in the JCQ publication *A guide to the special consideration process*.

4c. External assessment arrangements

Regulations governing examination arrangements are contained in the JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations*.

Head of Centre Annual Declaration

The Head of Centre is required to provide a declaration to the JCQ as part of the annual NCN update, conducted in the autumn term, to confirm that the centre is meeting all of the requirements detailed in the specification.

Any failure by a centre to provide the Head of Centre Annual Declaration will result in your centre status being suspended and could lead to the withdrawal of our approval for you to operate as a centre.

4d. Admin of non-exam assessment

Regulations governing arrangements for internal assessments are contained in the JCQ *Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments*.

Authentication of learners' work

Centres must declare that the work submitted for assessment is the learner's own by completing a centre authentication form (CCS160). This information must be retained at the centre and be available on request to either OCR or the JCQ centre inspection service.

It must be kept until the deadline has passed for centres to submit a review of results. Once this deadline has passed and centres have not requested a review, this evidence can be destroyed.

Authenticity control: Learners will complete all work for assessment under direct teacher supervision except as outlined below.

For A Level Music most, but not necessarily all, work for assessment would be under direct teacher supervision. For example, it is acceptable for some aspects of exploration to be outside the direct supervision of the teacher but the teacher must be able to authenticate the work and insist on acknowledgement and referencing of any sources used.

Some of the work, by its very nature, may be undertaken outside the centre, e.g. listening, practising, etc. but it is expected that using or applying these activities will be undertaken under direct teacher supervision. With all work submitted for assessment, the teacher must be satisfied that the work submitted for assessment is the learner's own work and be able to authenticate it using the specified procedure.

Feedback to learners is encouraged within tightly defined parameters. Teachers should supervise and guide learners who are undertaking non-examined assessment work. The degree of teacher guidance will vary according to the nature of the work being undertaken. It should be remembered, however, that learners must reach their own judgements and complete the work in its entirety themselves.

When supervising tasks, teachers are expected to:

- exercise continuing supervision of work in order to monitor progress and to prevent plagiarism (teachers must not allow learners to help each other nor to work at home, where the authenticity of the work cannot be verified)
- ensure that the work is completed in accordance with the specification requirements and can be assessed in accordance with the specified marking criteria and procedures.

Private candidates

Private candidates may enter for OCR assessments.

A private candidate is someone who pursues a course of study independently but takes an examination or assessment at an approved examination centre. A private candidate may be a part-time student, someone taking a distance learning course, or someone being tutored privately. They must be based in the UK.

OCR's A Level in Music requires learners to complete non-examined assessment. This is an essential part of

the course and will allow learners to develop skills for further study or employment.

Private candidates need to contact OCR approved centres to establish whether they are prepared to host them as a private candidate. The centre may charge for this facility and OCR recommends that the arrangement is made early in the course.

Further guidance for private candidates may be found on the OCR website: <http://www.ocr.org.uk>

Carrying forward non-exam assessment (NEA)

Learners who are retaking the qualification can choose to either retake the non-exam assessment (NEA) or carry forward their most recent result for that component.

To carry forward the NEA component result, you must use the correct carry forward entry option (see table in Section 4a).

Learners must decide at the point of entry whether they are going to carry forward the NEA result or not.

The result for the NEA component may be carried forward for the lifetime of the specification and there is no restriction on the number of times the result may be carried forward. However, only the most recent non-absent result may be carried forward.

When the result is carried forward, the grade boundaries from the previous year of entry will be used to calculate a new weighted mark for the carried forward component, so the value of the original mark is preserved.

4e. AI use in the NEA

Teachers delivering NEA components **must** follow the JCQ guidelines: [*AI Use in Assessments: Your role in protecting the integrity of qualifications.*](#)

Teachers are responsible for monitoring students' progress to ensure that:

- work meets the NEA marking criteria
- work can be confidently authenticated as the student's own
- the student is **not** rewarded if they have used AI tools in such a way that mean they have not **independently** met the marking criteria.

Teachers must provide sufficient supervision to be able to confidently authenticate that the work submitted is the student's independent work.

You can access the forms here on our [Assessment](#) page or from our Forms finder tool when selecting a qualification and subject with moderated units or components. They are also available in the Assessment > Forms section on Teach Cambridge.

For further information on AI, please see the following guidance on our website: [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) support.](#)

4f. Results and certificates

Grade Scale

A level qualifications are graded on the scale: A*, A, B, C, D, E, where A* is the highest. Learners who fail to reach the minimum standard for E will be

Unclassified (U). Only subjects in which grades A* to E are attained will be recorded on certificates.

Results

Results are released to centres and learners for information and to allow any queries to be resolved before certificates are issued.

Centres will have access to the following results information for each learner:

- the grade for the qualification
- the raw mark for each component
- the total weighted mark for the qualification.

The following supporting information will be available:

- raw mark grade boundaries for each component
- weighted mark grade boundaries for each entry option.

Until certificates are issued, results are deemed to be provisional and may be subject to amendment.

4g. Post–results services

A number of post–results services are available:

- **Review of results** – If you are not happy with the outcome of a learner’s results, centres may request a review of their moderation and/or marking.
- **Missing and incomplete results** – This service should be used if an individual subject result for a learner is missing, or the learner has been omitted entirely from the results supplied.
- **Access to scripts** – Centres can request access to marked scripts.

4h. Malpractice

Any breach of the regulations for the conduct of examinations and non-exam assessment work may constitute malpractice (which includes maladministration) and must be reported to OCR as soon as it is detected.

Detailed information on malpractice can be found in the JCQ publication *Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments: Policies and Procedures*.

5 Appendices

5a. Overlap with other qualifications

There is overlap between the content of this specification and that for OCR's AS Level in Music to allow for co-teachability.

5b. Accessibility

Reasonable adjustments and access arrangements allow learners with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do, without changing the demands of the assessment. Applications for these should be made before the examination series. Detailed information about eligibility for access arrangements can be found in the *JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*.

The A level qualification and subject criteria have been reviewed in order to identify any feature which could disadvantage learners who share a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010. All reasonable steps have been taken to minimise any such disadvantage.

5c. Prescribed works

Area of Study 1: Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven	
2025	Haydn: <i>Symphony No. 103 in E flat major, 'Drum Roll'</i> (1795), first and second movements
2026	Mozart: <i>Sinfonia Concertante in E flat major, K. 364</i> (1779-80), first movement
2027	Beethoven: <i>Piano Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111</i> (1821-22)
2028	Haydn: <i>Symphony No. 39 in G minor, Hob. I:39</i> (1765)
2029	Beethoven: <i>Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92</i> (1811-12), first movement
2030	Mozart: <i>Piano Concerto No. 22 in E flat major, K.482</i> (1785), third movement
Area of Study 2: Popular Song: Blues, Jazz, Swing and Big Band	
2025	Cécile McLorin Salvant: <i>For One To Love</i> (2015): (i) 'Wives And Lovers', (ii) 'The Trolley Song', (iii) 'What's The Matter Now?', (iv) 'Le Mal De Vivre'
2026	Bessie Smith: (i) 'Young Woman's Blues' (October 26, 1926), (ii) 'Back Water Blues' (February 17, 1927), (iii) 'Alexander's Rag Time Band' (March 2, 1927), (iv) 'Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out' (May 15, 1929)
2027	Ian Shaw: <i>The Theory of Joy</i> (2015): (i) 'Small Day Tomorrow' (3'15"), (ii) 'Where Are We Now?', (iii) 'How Do You Keep The Music Playing?', (iv) 'You've Got To Pick A Pocket Or Two'
2028	Billy Eckstine: <i>Basie/Eckstine Incorporated</i> (1959): (i) 'Stormy Monday Blues', (ii) 'Lonesome Lover Blues', (iii) 'Little Mama', (iv) 'Song Of The Wanderer'
2029	Dianne Reeves: <i>The Calling: Celebrating Sarah Vaughan</i> (2000): (i) 'Lullaby Of Birdland', (ii) 'Send In The Clowns', (iii) 'Key Largo', (iv) 'Fascinating Rhythm'
2030	Bing Crosby: <i>Brunswick recordings</i> : (i) 'I Found A Million Dollar Baby' (June 12, 1931), (ii) 'Star Dust' (August 19, 1931), (iii) 'Dinah' (with the Mills Brothers, take 1 and/or take 2, December 16, 1931), (iv) 'How Deep Is The Ocean?' (October 14, 1932)

5d. Suggested repertoire

At A level there are no prescribed works for Areas of Study 3–6. Centres are therefore able to design their own programme of listening to support the learning required for performing, composing and listening and appraising components.

In addition to studying the prescribed works, learners should carry out wider listening based on their chosen Areas of Study.

Centres should ensure that the repertoire for wider listening is sufficient to give a detailed, in-depth understanding of the chosen Areas of Study, such that learners are able to form critical judgements using knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical contexts and musical language and comment

in detail on music heard, showing critical understanding across the genres, styles and traditions studied. The wider repertoire will support the learning for the Performing, Composing and Listening and Appraising components. Learners should refer to the wider repertoire as supporting evidence in their answers to questions in the Listening and Appraising examination.

The table below gives two examples of suggested repertoire lists for Areas of Study 3 to 6 to give an indication of an appropriate number of works and range of composers and performers. These are intended as guidance only and centres are free to create their own lists, or adapt the examples given, to suit the interests, strengths and needs of their learners.

Area of Study 3: Developments in Instrumental Jazz 1910 to the present day	
List A	List B
Jelly Roll Morton: (i) <i>Wolverine Blues</i> (ii) <i>Black Bottom Stomp</i> James P. Johnson: <i>You've got to be modernistic</i> Duke Ellington: (i) <i>Ko-ko</i> (ii) <i>Harlem Airshaft</i> (iii) <i>Cottontail</i> (iv) <i>Prelude to a Kiss</i> Dizzy Gillespie: (i) <i>Things to come</i> (ii) <i>Manteca</i> Miles Davis: <i>So What</i> from <i>Kind of Blue</i> Herbie Hancock: (i) <i>Maiden Voyage</i> (ii) <i>Chameleon</i> Ornette Coleman: <i>Civilization Day</i>	Bix Beiderbecke: <i>Singin' the Blues</i> Louis Armstrong: (i) <i>Hotter than that</i> (ii) <i>West End Blues</i> (iii) <i>Heebie Jeebies</i> (iv) <i>Alligator Crawl</i> Count Basie: (i) <i>Taxi War Dance</i> (ii) <i>Lester Leaps In</i> Benny Goodman: <i>Seven Come Eleven</i> Charlie Parker: (i) <i>Ornithology</i> (ii) <i>Ko-Ko</i> (iii) <i>A Night in Tunisia</i> Art Blakey: <i>Cranky Spanky</i> Miles Davis: <i>Masqualero</i> John Coltrane: <i>Ascension</i> Stanley Clarke: <i>The Toys Of Men</i> (2007)
Area of Study 4: Religious Music of the Baroque Period	
List A	List B
Schütz: <i>Symphoniae sacrae I</i> (1629) Carissimi: <i>Jephte</i> Pelham Humfrey: <i>By the waters of Babylon</i> Purcell: Anthem <i>My heart is inditing</i> Alessandro Scarlatti: <i>Sedecia, Re Di Gerusalemme</i> (1706) Bach: cantata <i>Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam</i> , BWV 7 Handel: Chandos anthem, <i>O Praise the Lord with one consent</i> Handel: <i>Messiah</i>	Monteverdi: <i>Vespers</i> (1610) Allegri: <i>Missa Vidi Turbam Magnam</i> Schütz: <i>St Matthew Passion</i> (1666) Purcell: <i>Hear my prayer, O Lord</i> Vivaldi: <i>Gloria in D major</i> Bach: <i>Magnificat in D</i> Bach: <i>St Matthew Passion</i> Rameau: grand motet <i>Quam dilecta</i> Handel: <i>Jeptha</i>

Area of Study 5: Programme Music 1820–1910

List A

Mendelssohn: *Hebrides overture Fingal's Cave*
 Berlioz: *Symphonie fantastique*
 Liszt: *Transcendental Étude No. 4 in D minor, 'Mazeppa'*
 Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an exhibition* (piano version)
 Saint-Saens: *Danse macabre*
 Rimsky-Korsakov: *Capriccio espagnol*
 Dvořák: *Carnival Overture, Op. 93*
 Sibelius: *Four Legends 'Lemminkäinen Suite', Op. 22*

List B

Schumann: *Kinderszenen*
 Liszt: *Symphonic poem, Orpheus (1853–4)*
 Tchaikovsky: *Fantasy overture, Romeo and Juliet*
 Smetana: *Vltava ('Die Moldau')*
 Grieg: *Lyric pieces, Book 5, Op. 54*
 Dukas: *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*
 Richard Strauss: *Don Quixote*
 Debussy: *Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune*

Area of Study 6: Innovations in Music 1900 to the present day

List A

Mahler: *Symphony No. 6 in A minor, 1st movement*
 Schoenberg: *Chamber Symphony No. 1, Op. 9*
 Vaughan Williams: *Job, a masque for dancing*
 Berg: *Violin Concerto*
 Stravinsky: *Oedipus Rex*
 Webern: *String Quartet, Op. 28*
 Messiaen: *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*
 Tippett: *Ritual dances from The Midsummer Marriage*
 Stockhausen: *Stimmung*
 Reich: *Different Trains*

List B

Elgar: *Concerto in E minor for cello and orchestra*
 Debussy: *Preludes for piano, Book 2*
 Bartok: *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*
 Stravinsky: *The Rite of Spring*
 Prokofiev: *Piano Concerto No. 3*
 Schoenberg: *A Survivor from Warsaw*
 Copland: *Appalachian Spring*
 Britten: *War Requiem*
 James Macmillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*
 Ligeti: *Etudes for piano, Book 1*

5e. Guidance for use of technology in Performance

Learners may choose to present their performance using technology. This includes but is not limited to sequencing and DJ-ing. Video evidence demonstrating the learner's full control of the technology is required.

The guidelines below are examples intended to assist teachers and learners in the preparation of their performances.

Sequencing

For the purposes of this specification, sequencing is defined as a computer controlled production in which the learner has created and manipulated a performance using sequencing software through a combination of step input and real time recording. These initial tracks are then manipulated using a range of MIDI controllers and software functions to create a musical outcome.

Performance realised using sequencing technology needs to have at least three sequenced parts. A copy of the given starting point (melody or score) must be submitted with the recording and score for assessment. The piece must be all the learner's own work – no use of pre-programmed loops or samples is allowed.

Examples of techniques:

- balancing of different parts: use of panning (stereo placing); use of reverb/chorus/other effects
- duration: use of quantisation and editing of note values; use of staccato/legato notes; a range of rhythm patterns

- dynamics: use of volume changes; changes in individual note velocity for phrasing
- tempo: use of tempo changes
- timbre: inventive choice/use of sound sources
- texture: addition of more parts – with some independence
- structure: contrasting section(s); a longer piece using 7 or 8 different parts with obvious structural changes; tempo and dynamic changes; use of quantisation; sense of stereo placement.

DJ-ing

For the purposes of this specification, DJ-ing should be a **freestyle** performance using Vinyl or CD or appropriate DJ-ing software.

The learner must have full control of the decks.

Examples of techniques:

- use of drum scratching: forward and backward scratching, chops/stabs, crab scratching, scribble scratching, echo fading
- duration: complicated rhythmic ideas including syncopation
- dynamics: use of deck faders and cross faders; good mix of both sound sources
- tempo: faster movement of scratches
- timbre: inventive use of sound sources
- structure: addition of contrasting sections
- variety of scratching techniques: drum scratching; good use of the cross fader; accompanying an MC or rapper.

Summary of updates

Date	Version	Section	Title of section	Change
April 2018	1.1	Front cover	Disclaimer	Addition of disclaimer
June 2018	1.2	3a	Forms of assessment	Classification of minimum requirements
		3b	Assessment Objectives (AO)	Classification of AOs
July 2018	1.3	5c	Prescribed works	Updated Prescribed works
August 2018	1.4	3d 4d	Retaking the qualification Admin of non-exam assessment	Update to the wording for carry forward rules
May 2019	1.5	3a	Forms of assessment	Update to minimum duration requirements. Specified types of evidence permissible where a written score or lead sheet is unavailable because it does not exist.
January 2020	1.6	4d	Admin of non-exam assessment	Amend Enquiries about results to review of results
		4f	Post-results services	Amend Enquiries about results to review of results
				Update to specification covers to meet digital accessibility standards
September 2022	1.7.	5c.	Prescribed works	Update to prescribed works
October 2022	1.8	3a.	Forms of assessment	Removal of references to cds from the Listening and appraising (05) component
July 2023	1.9	3	Assessment of A Level in Music	Insertion of new section 3c. Total qualification time.
March 2024	2.0	3d, 3e	Qualification availability, Language	Inclusion of disclaimer regarding availability and language
		4a	Pre-assessment	Update to include resilience guidance
		Checklist		Inclusion of Teach Cambridge
April 2025	2.1	5c	Prescribed works	Update prescribed works
March 2026	2.2	Front cover		Withdrawal information of qualification including final first teach date and final assessment opportunity date.
		2a	Overview of A Level Music (H543)	Minor rewording in generic section 1a.
			Retaking the qualification	Addition of section 3 and 4 of final assessment date
		3g	Pre-assessment	
		4a 4e	AI use in the NEA	New section 4e added - AI use in the NEA







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