

## AS and A Level Music Launch events FAQs

### Edexcel AS and A level Music now accredited!

We are delighted to announce that Ofqual have accredited our AS and A level Music specifications for first teaching from 2016. You can find copies of these on our website at

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/music-2016.html>

Free support materials will include a Getting Started guide, course planner, schemes of work and mapping documents. We aim to publish these on our website in the coming weeks.

### Additional changes to the set works

You may be aware that we received a petition<sup>1</sup> this summer from one of our A level students, Jessy McCabe, requesting that we reconsider the representation of female composers on our set works list for AS and A level Music. We felt it was important to respond to this feedback, and since then have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders with the purpose of creating a 'long list' of female composers for consideration.

Working with our senior examining team, we have subsequently reviewed this list to identify which composers would best fit the different criteria required by the subject content, and would be most representative of the Areas of Study. We are now completing our final reviews, but we can confirm that we will be replacing some of the pieces listed in our specifications as a result.

We are committed to creating qualifications that are inclusive and empowering for all candidates, and as such, we would like to thank Jessy and all those who signed her petition for bringing this to our attention, and for helping us to select some alternative pieces of music.

### What does this mean for me?

We do appreciate that centres are currently making their decision about which awarding organisation to choose for AS and A level Music qualifications, and we realise that making any changes at this stage may impact that decision. However, please do note that **this change will not affect any other content within the accredited specifications and will not change the assessment structure of these qualifications.**

We will publish a list of the new set works and wider listening pieces on our website by early December. Extra assessment materials

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/edexcel-ensure-the-representation-of-women-on-the-a-level-music-syllabus/u/11796008>

(for the Appraising component) will be released that feature the new set works. We look forward to sharing this list with you shortly.

### **1. When is the composition brief released by Pearson?**

The Pearson set brief (for free choice composition) will be released on 1<sup>st</sup> September and the set brief (assessing technique) will be released on 1<sup>st</sup> April in the year in which the student expects to be certificated.

### **2. Why are briefs assessing technique released on 1 April?**

The briefs assessing technique are released on 1<sup>st</sup> April each year in order to give students sufficient opportunity during the course to develop and master their composing skills, and focus on their free compositions.

Furthermore, the briefs assessing technique have a finite number of solutions, so we need to restrict their exposure in order to minimise the risks of predictability.

The date of their release will be flexible, taking into account Easter holidays.

### **3. If a student performs their own piece of music do they have to submit a score?**

For all performances the following evidence must be submitted: the recording, a score or lead sheet, and the performance authentication sheet. Where possible, the score should be a full score in conventional staff notation, but if not, then a detailed commentary, or other appropriate description of the music, must be submitted. Full details are found in the specification.

### **4. What grade is the standard grade?**

Grade 7 is identified as standard for AS and A level.

### **5. What is the standard level of difficulty for AS and A level?**

Grade 7 is considered the standard level of difficulty for A level (and grade 6 for AS level) and these grades are based on the QCF grid which shows the standard between different qualifications.

## **6. Is World Music kept in the specification?**

While there is no specific topic called 'World Music', the new qualification includes an area of study entitled 'Fusions' which includes pieces of music from different musical cultures and traditions. The set works and wider listening pieces within this area of study enable students to study a range of music from around the world.

## **7. How can it be said there are only two/three set works per area of study when these are split into more movements etc?**

When deciding on the set works the writing team considered many factors. The length of time of the pieces was taken into account in order to make the set works comparable within and between areas of study. Pieces were chosen on the basis of how well they fit and link together. They were also chosen with the need to make them musically interesting to study and engaging for students.

The set works are used to allow students to contextualise the musical elements, musical contexts and musical language. Students are expected to be familiar with the set works but are not expected to know each piece in depth. These set works do not need to be studied to the same depth as the set works in the current specification.

## **8. Do students need to reference bar and beat in the Appraising exam?**

Students should be aware of and be able to make reference to (where the question demands) the bar and beats of the set works in the Appraising exam.

## **9. Will there be a score in the exam?**

Students will have scores or extracts from scores for questions in the exam for which they need to either: complete the score (after listening to an extract) or make reference to the score in answer to a particular question. They may not bring into the exam any copies of scores, annotated scores or anthologies.

## **10. Do set works change?**

The set works will remain the same for the lifetime of the qualification.

We are currently working with Ofqual and other stakeholders to issue an updated list of set works and wider listening in response to concerns over the lack of female composers in the music qualification. We will issue regular updates about this on our website. The new qualification approach and assessment structure will remain the same; only the set works and

wider listening will change. Please see the text at the beginning of this document for more information.

### **11. Will students have access to CDs in the exam and how will this be administered?**

Each student will have a CD containing the extracts of music relating to the exam, and will be in control of listening to the extracts relating to each question. These CDs will be provided along with the exam documentation for each exam series. It will be the responsibility of the centre to administer the CD organisation for the exam. Pearson will provide more guidance in the getting started guide. Centres may use separate CD players or computers.

### **12. Will an anthology be made available?**

An anthology will be available to purchase and contain the sheet music for the set works, introductions to all the pieces and a glossary of key terms.

### **13. Is the anthology free?**

The anthology is not compulsory for taking this qualification. The anthology is a paid-for resource to support teachers and students in the qualification if they choose to purchase it. Pearson's paid-for resources, as well as other endorsed resources, are not a prerequisite for the delivery of our Edexcel specifications.

### **14. Can students perform a piece of music at grades 1-6 and not be differentiated based on its difficulty?**

There is no bottom limit to the grades of music which students may perform, but students submitting very low grade pieces of music will be self-penalising as they will not be able to demonstrate the full range of musical elements necessary to reach the highest available marks that are featured in the assessment grids or achieve the additional marks available on the difficulty levels grid for performing 'standard' or 'more difficult' pieces.

### **15. Why are there different lengths for the Bach Chorales and Two-Part Counterpoint when compared to Arrangements and Remixes in the composing component?**

When the tasks were designed, we looked at the requirements of each task to ensure appropriate comparability so we are confident that all are of equal demand. All the tasks are assessed in the same way, using the same assessment criteria – further ensuring comparability of demand.

Students should be aware of the length of time of their components throughout the course, and, with their teachers' guidance, must ensure their submissions meet minimum time requirements.

**16. In the Composing component the minimum length stated for the arrangements and remixes is three minutes. The composition has to be a minimum of four minutes. This immediately takes the required length in excess of the stated minimum total time of six minutes. Is this correct?**

The requirement that the composition be at least six minutes in length is a rule set by the Department for Education in the subject criteria for Music. The minimum times for the individual briefs are set by Pearson and may vary year to year. The briefs have been designed to ensure appropriate comparability between them all, and they are all of equal demand.

It is important to remember and to remind students that the longer a piece of music does not necessarily mean it is more complex, better or will automatically receive more marks/credit. Students should be reminded that overly long pieces may be self-penalising as the risk of introducing more errors is greater.

**17. How should teachers cover the set works (18 at A level) in sufficient depth in the time available to them?**

Pearson will be publishing a number of free support documents, including course planners and schemes of work to provide guidance for teachers to plan their lessons for each component.

The number of set works is necessary in order to provide students with the breadth and depth of study required to have a full understanding of the musical elements, context and language in a range of music. This will allow them the opportunity to develop their performing and composing skills, as well as prepare them for higher education.

Students are expected to be familiar with the set works but are not expected to know each piece in depth. These set works do not need to be studied in the same depth as the set works in the current specification.

**18. Can the following examples of music be considered to be 'performed live' as is required in the performing component?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGZHM-RmLs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOtj5WtkR1Qs>

**In these examples, although the samples and sound sets are pre-planned, all parts heard are performed (triggered/expressed/mixed and manipulated) live.**

The Music specification requires students to be assessed on a live performance. Our subject experts have considered these examples and conclude that the performer is performing live.

In each example, there is enough evidence for Technical control, Communicating a musically convincing performance and Accuracy; there is also definite fluency being demonstrated in the pieces.

The performances must be accompanied by a detailed written commentary of precisely what is happening (in lieu of a standard score and as permitted in the specification). It must be emphasised that these performances are acceptable because they are demonstrated in a single live event, not pre-recorded.

Teachers would also need to determine the difficulty level of the piece performed. In these examples, there is clearly skill in the timing involved in triggering the samples, and in selecting and combining them. To be standard level at A Level they would need to be equivalent in difficulty to grade 7 pieces. Standard level can be justified in both these clips by comparison with the demands of grade 7 keyboards in the Rockscool syllabus. Some similar performances could conceivably achieve more difficult were there greater motor demands equivalent to the right hand figurations and parallel 3rds introduced at Rockscool grade 8.

**19. Why are both performances and compositions that do not meet the minimum time requirement awarded zero marks?**

It is an Ofqual requirement that performances not meeting the minimum time (set by Ofqual) be awarded zero marks. Ofqual did not rule on compositions however. There are minimum times for students' compositions. For the sake of consistency between the performing and composing components, Pearson has decided to apply the rule of zero marks being awarded for compositions that do not meet the minimum times. This requirement is clearly outlined in our specifications.

## **20. Can students perform arrangements as their compositions?**

Students are free to select any source material, from pre-existing music or their own music, to create their compositions; this therefore includes arrangements. In the specification, they are referred to only as 'compositions'; throughout for ease and readability.

The assessment criteria have been designed to apply equally to a composition using original material or arranged material. Students will be assessed on how they have taken their musical idea and developed it, demonstrating technical control and coherence.