Difficulty levels:
Further Guidance for Ensemble Performances

The standard level for ensemble performance at GCSE, AS and A Level is the same as that for solo performance:

GCSE: Grade 4
AS Level: Grade 6
A Level: Grade 7

This means that the part played by the candidate should be of equivalent difficulty with solo pieces of that level.

There is no increase of Difficulty Level because the performance is an ensemble rather than a solo.

The definition of what constitutes an ensemble performance in the Specification should be read with care and music for assessment selected to match this appropriately.

To choose a Difficulty Level for an ensemble performance the part performed should be compared with solo pieces and a suitable level selected. The following lists offer further guidance as to what musical issues might be considered when doing this. They are to be used for guidance only and are not exclusive.

PIANO

GCSE	**A Level**
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Some independence between the hands 2. Changes of hand position 3. Varied rhythmic patterns 4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation 5. Use of the sustaining pedal if appropriate 6. Some interplay with other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Complete independence between the hands 2. Frequent changes of hand position 3. Complex rhythmic patterns 4. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation 5. Appropriate and effective use of the sustaining pedal 6. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with other part(s)

BRASS

GCSE	A Level
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. A pitch range greater than an octave, not all in an easy register for the instrument 2. Some melodic leaps 3. Varied rhythmic patterns 4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation 5. Phrasing that requires some breath control 6. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. A pitch range greater than a 12th, possibly even using the full range of the instrument, requiring some dexterity in the use of valves/slide 2. More frequent or awkward leaps 3. Complex rhythmic patterns 4. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation 5. Phrasing that requires good breath control, such as long sustained phrases or faster passage-work 6. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

STRINGS

GCSE	A Level
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Co-ordination of the left hand and the bow 2. Changes of left hand position 3. Varied rhythmic patterns 4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation 5. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. A range of bowing techniques 2. More frequent changes of left hand position 3. Complex rhythmic patterns 4. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation 5. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

WOODWIND

GCSE	A Level
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. A pitch range greater than an octave, not all in an easy register for the instrument 2. Some melodic leaps 3. Varied rhythmic patterns 4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation 5. Phrasing that requires some breath control 6. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. A pitch range greater than a 12th, possibly even using the full range of the instrument 2. More frequent leaps or awkward passages of fingering 3. Complex rhythmic patterns 4. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation 5. Phrasing that requires good breath control, such as long sustained phrases, or good co-ordination of breath control and fingering, such as faster passage-work 6. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

VOICE

GCSE	A Level
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. A pitch range greater than an octave 2. Some melodic leaps (up to at least a 4th) 3. Varied rhythmic patterns 4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation 5. Phrasing that requires some breath control 6. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. A pitch range greater than a 10th 2. More frequent or awkward leaps (a 6th or larger) 3. Complex rhythmic patterns 4. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation 5. Phrasing that requires good breath control, such as long sustained phrases or faster passage-work 6. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

KEYBOARD

GCSE	**A Level**
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Some independence and awareness of balance between the hands 2. Some use of extended chords 3. Changes of hand position 4. At least two patch changes 5. Varied rhythmic patterns 6. Some control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation 7. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Independence and awareness of balance between the hands 2. Wide range chords 3. Frequent changes of hand position 4. More frequent patch changes 5. Complex rhythmic patterns 6. Sophisticated control of dynamics and/or articulation 7. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

GUITAR (Classical)

GCSE	**A Level**
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Two clear parts 2. Some changes of left hand position 3. Some variety in right hand technique 4. Varied rhythmic patterns 5. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation 6. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Fully independent bass and melody parts 2. Frequent changes of left hand position 3. Varied right hand techniques 4. Complex rhythmic patterns 5. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation 6. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

GUITAR (Popular)

GCSE	A Level
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Covering at least four strings 2. At least up to 5th position 3. Some barre chords 4. Moving between chords and single notes, including double stops on adjacent strings 5. Varied rhythmic patterns 6. Some use of damping 7. Some control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation 8. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Covering all six strings 2. At least up to 15th position 3. Frequent barre chords, awkward chord changes, or use of extended/altered chords 4. Moving between chords and single notes, including double stops on non-adjacent strings 5. Complex rhythmic patterns 6. Some use of natural and/or false harmonics 7. Sophisticated control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation 8. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

BASS GUITAR

GCSE	A Level
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Bass line mainly uses notes from the chord 2. Some changes of left hand position 3. Varied rhythmic patterns 4. Use of slapped and pulled notes 5. Even use of fingers on the picking hand 6. Some control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation 7. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Bass line includes notes from outside the chord 2. Frequent changes of left hand position 3. Complex rhythmic patterns 4. Highly developed slap style using fretted notes with pulled and muted notes, and use of double stops, with effective string jumping 5. Use of all fingers on the picking hand 6. Sophisticated control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation 7. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

DRUMKIT

GCSE	A Level
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Varied rhythmic patterns 2. Some control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation 3. Some simple fills 4. Some independence of limbs required, including use of open and closed hi-hat 5. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Complex rhythmic patterns 2. Sophisticated control of dynamics and/or articulation 3. More complex fills 4. Independent use of all limbs 5. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

TUNED PERCUSSION

GCSE	A Level
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Some damping required 2. Includes some melodic leaps 3. Varied rhythmic patterns 4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation 5. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Frequent damping required 2. Frequent melodic leaps or use of chords 3. Complex rhythmic patterns 4. Sophisticated control of dynamic contrasts and articulation 5. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

UNTUNED PERCUSSION

GCSE	A Level
At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Varied rhythmic patterns 2. Some use of decorations (rolls, flams, paradiddles) 3. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation 4. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: 1. Complex rhythmic patterns 2. Frequent use of decorations (rolls, flams, paradiddles, drags, ruffs, etc) 3. Sophisticated control of dynamic contrasts and articulation 4. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)