



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
<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some independence between the hands2. Changes of hand position3. Varied rhythmic patterns4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation5. Use of the sustaining pedal if appropriate6. Some interplay with other part(s)	<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complete independence between the hands2. Frequent changes of hand position3. Complex rhythmic patterns4. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation5. Appropriate and effective use of the sustaining pedal6. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with other part(s)

BRASS

GCSE	A Level
<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A pitch range greater than an octave, not all in an easy register for the instrument2. Some melodic leaps3. Varied rhythmic patterns4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation5. Phrasing that requires some breath control6. Some interplay with the other part(s)	<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">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/side2. More frequent or awkward leaps3. Complex rhythmic patterns4. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation5. Phrasing that requires good breath control, such as long sustained phrases or faster passage-work6. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

STRINGS

GCSE	A Level
<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Co-ordination of the left hand and the bow2. Changes of left hand position3. Varied rhythmic patterns4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation5. Some interplay with the other part(s)	<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A range of bowing techniques2. More frequent changes of left hand position3. Complex rhythmic patterns4. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation5. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

WOODWIND

GCSE	A Level
<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A pitch range greater than an octave, not all in an easy register for the instrument2. Some melodic leaps3. Varied rhythmic patterns4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation5. Phrasing that requires some breath control6. Some interplay with the other part(s)	<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A pitch range greater than a 12th, possibly even using the full range of the instrument2. More frequent leaps or awkward passages of fingering3. Complex rhythmic patterns4. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation5. Phrasing that requires good breath control, such as long sustained phrases, or good co-ordination of breath control and fingering, such as faster passage-work6. 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A pitch range greater than an octave2. Some melodic leaps (up to at least a 4th)3. Varied rhythmic patterns4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation5. Phrasing that requires some breath control6. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A pitch range greater than a 10th2. More frequent or awkward leaps (a 6th or larger)3. Complex rhythmic patterns4. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation5. Phrasing that requires good breath control, such as long sustained phrases or faster passage-work6. 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some independence and awareness of balance between the hands2. Some use of extended chords3. Changes of hand position4. At least two patch changes5. Varied rhythmic patterns6. Some control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation7. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Independence and awareness of balance between the hands2. Wide range chords3. Frequent changes of hand position4. More frequent patch changes5. Complex rhythmic patterns6. Sophisticated control of dynamics and/or articulation7. 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Two clear parts2. Some changes of left hand position3. Some variety in right hand technique4. Varied rhythmic patterns5. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation6. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Fully independent bass and melody parts2. Frequent changes of left hand position3. Varied right hand techniques4. Complex rhythmic patterns5. Sophisticated control of dynamics and articulation6. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

GUITAR (Popular)

GCSE	A Level
<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Covering at least four strings2. At least up to 5th position3. Some barre chords4. Moving between chords and single notes, including double stops on adjacent strings5. Varied rhythmic patterns6. Some use of damping7. Some control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation8. Some interplay with the other part(s)	<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Covering all six strings2. At least up to 15th position3. Frequent barre chords, awkward chord changes, or use of extended/altered chords4. Moving between chords and single notes, including double stops on non-adjacent strings5. Complex rhythmic patterns6. Some use of natural and/or false harmonics7. Sophisticated control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation8. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

BASS GUITAR

GCSE	A Level
<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bass line mainly uses notes from the chord2. Some changes of left hand position3. Varied rhythmic patterns4. Use of slapped and pulled notes5. Even use of fingers on the picking hand6. Some control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation7. Some interplay with the other part(s)	<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bass line includes notes from outside the chord2. Frequent changes of left hand position3. Complex rhythmic patterns4. Highly developed slap style using fretted notes with pulled and muted notes, and use of double stops, with effective string jumping5. Use of all fingers on the picking hand6. Sophisticated control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation7. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)

DRUMKIT

GCSE	A Level
<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Varied rhythmic patterns2. Some control of dynamic contrasts and/or articulation3. Some simple fills4. Some independence of limbs required, including use of open and closed hi-hat5. Some interplay with the other part(s)	<p>At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complex rhythmic patterns2. Sophisticated control of dynamics and/or articulation3. More complex fills4. Independent use of all limbs5. 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some damping required2. Includes some melodic leaps3. Varied rhythmic patterns4. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation5. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Frequent damping required2. Frequent melodic leaps or use of chords3. Complex rhythmic patterns4. Sophisticated control of dynamic contrasts and articulation5. 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Varied rhythmic patterns2. Some use of decorations (rolls, flams, paradiddles)3. Some control of dynamic contrasts and articulation4. Some interplay with the other part(s)	At standard level it is likely that the music will include most of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complex rhythmic patterns2. Frequent use of decorations (rolls, flams, paradiddles, drags, ruffs, etc)3. Sophisticated control of dynamic contrasts and articulation4. Exposed lines or frequent interplay with the other part(s)