
GCSE MUSIC

(8271)

Specification

For teaching from September 2016 onwards
For exams in 2018 onwards

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Are you using the latest version of this specification?

- You will always find the most up-to-date version of this specification on our website at aqa.org.uk/8271
- We will write to you if there are significant changes to the specification.

1 Introduction

1.1 Why choose AQA for GCSE Music

Music is constantly evolving, inspiring creativity and expression in a way that no other subject can. That's why we have designed a relevant and contemporary GCSE qualification that offers your students the chance to study a wide range of musical genres, with more opportunities for practical learning. Our GCSE brings theory, listening and composition to life in new and engaging ways, and links to the world around us like never before.

We know that every student has different learning styles and musical tastes, which is why our GCSE values all music styles, skills and instruments. Broaden your students' minds and foster a love of all music with a qualification that students of all abilities and backgrounds will enjoy.

You can find out about all our Music qualifications at aqa.org.uk/music

A specification designed for you and your students

Our specification and assessments have been designed to the highest standards, so that your students and parents can be confident that an AQA award provides an accurate measure of achievement.

The specification supports progression to further and higher education in music and related subjects, and provides all students with a platform to inspire a lifelong interest and enjoyment of music.

1.2 Support and resources to help you teach

We've worked with experienced teachers to provide you with a range of resources that will help you confidently plan, teach and prepare for exams.

Teaching resources

Visit aqa.org.uk/8271 to see all our teaching resources. They include:

- **Schemes of work:** a variety of ideas across all titles to help you plan your course with confidence
- **Good practice guides:** to help you to inspire and challenge students to think creatively
- **Teacher guides:** detailed guides for the study pieces with suggested activities to help you to support your students in all areas of the specification
- **Student guides:** detailed guides specifically written for your students to complement the teacher guides in supporting them in all the areas of study
- **Suggested listening lists:** detailed examples of the elements in the music for all areas of study to help you prepare your students for the written exam
- **Exemplification materials:** to showcase sets of students' work supported by examiner commentaries and guidance.

Support service

- **Training courses:** to help you deliver AQA Music qualifications.
- **Subject expertise courses:** for all teachers from newly qualified teachers who are just getting started to experienced teachers looking for fresh inspiration.
- **Teacher standardisation:** our teacher online standardisation (T-OLS) system allows teachers and whole departments to work through exemplar and standardisation material quickly and easily.
- **Music advisory service:** each school or college is allocated a subject adviser. You can contact them for one-to-one advice on any aspect of the subject, assessment and/or support with planning and delivery of course content.
- **Subject community:** this provides access to free resources and services offered by museums, galleries, libraries and universities.
- **Support meetings:** to help you with course delivery by offering practical teaching strategies and approaches that really work.
- **Teacher network group:** this group allows teachers to contact colleagues at other centres to share ideas about resources and teaching strategies for the AQA specification.

Preparing for exams

Visit aqa.org.uk/8271 for everything you need to prepare for our exams, including:

- past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports
- specimen papers and mark schemes for new courses
- Exampro: a searchable bank of past AQA exam questions
- exemplar student answers with examiner commentaries.

Analyse your students' results with Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)

Find out which questions were the most challenging, how the results compare to previous years and where your students need to improve. ERA, our free online results analysis tool, will help you see where to focus your teaching. Register at aqa.org.uk/era

For information about results, including maintaining standards over time, grade boundaries and our post-results services, visit aqa.org.uk/results

Keep your skills up-to-date with professional development

Wherever you are in your career, there's always something new to learn. As well as subject-specific training, we offer a range of courses to help boost your skills.

- Improve your teaching skills in areas including differentiation, teaching literacy and meeting Ofsted requirements.
- Prepare for a new role with our leadership and management courses.

You can attend a course at venues around the country, in your school or online – whatever suits your needs and availability. Find out more at coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk

Help and support available

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at aqa.org.uk/8271

If you'd like us to share news and information about this qualification, sign up for emails and updates at aqa.org.uk/keepinformedmusic

Alternatively, you can call or email our subject team direct.

E: music@aqa.org.uk

T: 01483 437 750

2 Specification at a glance

This qualification is linear which means that students will sit all their exams and submit all their non-exam assessment at the end of the course.

2.1 Subject content

Core content

1. [Understanding music](#) (page 11)
2. [Performing music](#) (page 20)
3. [Composing music](#) (page 24)

2.2 Assessments

Component 1: Understanding music
What's assessed • Listening • Contextual understanding
How it's assessed Exam paper with listening exercises and written questions using excerpts of music.
Questions • Section A: Listening – unfamiliar music (68 marks) • Section B: Study pieces (28 marks) The exam is 1 hour and 30 minutes. This component is worth 40% of GCSE marks (96 marks).



Component 2: Performing music
What's assessed Music performance
How it's assessed As an instrumentalist and/or vocalist and/or via technology: • Performance 1: Solo performance (36 marks) • Performance 2: Ensemble performance (36 marks).
A minimum of four minutes of performance in total is required, of which a minimum of one minute must be the ensemble performance. This component is 30% of GCSE marks (72 marks). Non-exam assessment (NEA) will be internally marked by teachers and externally moderated by AQA. Performances must be completed in the year of certification.



Component 3: Composing music
What's assessed Composition
How it's assessed • Composition 1: Composition to a brief (36 marks) • Composition 2: Free composition (36 marks).
A minimum of three minutes of music in total is required. This component is 30% of GCSE marks (72 marks). Non-exam assessment (NEA) will be internally marked by teachers and externally moderated by AQA.

3 Subject content

Developing and applying the musical knowledge, understanding and skills set out in our GCSE specification can ensure your students form a personal and meaningful relationship with music. They will be encouraged to engage critically and creatively with a wide range of music and musical contexts, and reflect on how music is used in the expression of personal and collective identities.

The Subject content is divided into the three components:

- Understanding music
- Performing music
- Composing music.

3.1 Understanding music

The areas of study provide an appropriate focus for students to appraise, develop and demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical context and musical language. The four areas of study can also provide a rich source of material for your students to work with when developing performance and composition skills.

There are four areas of study:

1. Western classical tradition 1650–1910
2. Popular music
3. Traditional music
4. Western classical tradition since 1910.

3.1.1 Areas of study 1–4

Listening – unfamiliar music

Students must be able to listen attentively to unfamiliar music from all **four** areas of study to identify and accurately describe musical elements, musical contexts and use musical language (including staff notation).

Study pieces

For **two** areas of study (**one** of which must be Area of study 1 and the other a choice of **one** from Areas of study 2–4), students must also be able to critically appraise the music from the specified **study pieces** using knowledge and understanding of:

- the effect of audience, time and place on how the study pieces were created, developed and performed
- how and why the music across the selected areas of study has changed over time
- how the composer's purpose and intention for the study pieces is reflected in their use of musical elements
- relevant musical vocabulary and terminology for the study pieces.

3.1.2 Area of study 1: Western classical tradition 1650–1910 (compulsory)

For the purposes of this specification, the western classical tradition is defined as art music of (or growing out of) the European tradition, normally notated, and normally intended for public performance.

Listening – unfamiliar music

Students must be able to listen attentively to unfamiliar music from the following styles/genres to identify and accurately describe musical elements, musical contexts and musical language:

- The Coronation Anthems and Oratorios of Handel.
- The Orchestra Music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.
- The piano music of Chopin and Schumann.
- The Requiem of the late Romantic period.

Study piece

Haydn: Symphony 101 in D major The Clock movt. 2 (first taught 2016, first assessed 2018, assessed until 2021).

Mozart *Clarinet Concerto in A major*, 3rd movement, Rondo (first taught 2020, first assessed 2022, assessed until N/A).

Musical elements

The following table contains all the musical elements, for this area of study, that students must know and understand to answer questions in section A (Listening) and section B (Study piece). Marks will also be awarded for knowledge of other terms if relevant to this area of study in section B (Study piece) of the exam.

Element type	Element
Melody	• conjunct, disjunct, triadic, broken chords, scalar, arpeggio • intervals within the octave • passing notes • diatonic, chromatic • slide/portamento, ornamentation including acciaccaturas, appoggiaturas • ostinato • phrasing, articulation.
Harmony	• diatonic, chromatic • consonant, dissonant • pedal, drone • cadences: perfect, plagal, imperfect, interrupted and tierce de Picardie • identification of major, minor and dominant seventh chords using chord symbols/roman numerals.

Element type	Element
Tonality	- major, minor, and their key signatures to four sharps and flats - modulation to dominant, subdominant in major or minor keys - relative major or minor - tonic major or minor.
Structure	- binary and ternary - rondo - arch-shape - through-composed - theme and variations, sonata, minuet and trio, scherzo and trio - call and response - ground bass, continuo - cadenza.
Sonority (Timbre)	- instruments and voices singly and in combination as found in music, including that for solo instruments, concertos, chamber groups - instrumental techniques such as arco, pizzicato, con sordino.
Texture	- harmonic/homophonic/chordal - polyphonic/contrapuntal - imitative, canonic, layered - antiphonal - a cappella - monophonic/single melody line - melody and accompaniment - unison, octaves.
Tempo, metre and rhythm	- simple and compound time - regular - anacrusis - common Italian tempo terms eg allegro, andante - pulse - augmentation, diminution - hemiola - semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver, semiquaver - dotted rhythms, triplets, scotch snap - rubato, pause - tempo.
Dynamics and articulation	Gradation of dynamics as follows: <i>pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff</i> including the Italian terms <i>cresc, crescendo, dim, diminuendo</i> including hairpins <i>sfz, sforzando</i> - common signs, terms and symbols.

3.1.3 Musical language (Area of study 1)

Students must be able to use the musical language appropriate to this Area of study in the following ways:

Reading staff notation

Students must be able to identify musical elements (as above) when reading short passages of unfamiliar music in staff notation of up to 12 bars.

Writing staff notation

Students must be able to demonstrate the ability to write staff notation within short passages of up to eight bars:

- melodically up to four sharps and flats
- rhythmically including simple and compound time.

Chords

Students must learn major and minor chords and be able to identify them in aural and written form. Examples of relevant types of chords can be found in the musical elements table above.

Musical vocabulary and terminology

Students must be able to identify and apply appropriate musical vocabulary and terminology to music heard and notated. The appropriate vocabulary required can be found in the table above.

3.1.4 Area of study 2: Popular music

For the purpose of this specification, popular music is defined as mainstream music including a number of musical styles and genres including rock, pop, musical theatre, film and computer gaming music from 1950 to the present.

Listening – unfamiliar music

Students must be able to listen attentively to unfamiliar music from the following styles/genres to identify and accurately describe musical elements, musical contexts and musical language:

- music of Broadway 1950s to 1990s
- rock music of 1960s and 1970s
- film and computer gaming music 1990s to present
- pop music 1990s to present.

Study piece

The Beatles: *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* – the following three tracks:

- *With a Little Help from my Friends*
- *Within You, Without You*
- *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*

(first taught 2016, first assessed 2018, assessed until 2021)

Little Shop of Horrors – the following three tracks:

- *Prologue/Little Shop of Horrors (overture)*
- *Mushnik and Son*
- *Feed Me*

(first teaching 2020, first assessment 2022, last assessment N/A)

Musical elements

In addition to the musical elements listed for Area of study 1, students must know and understand musical elements appropriate to this Area of study.

The following table contains all the musical elements, for this area of study, that students must know and understand to answer questions in section A (Listening) and section B (Study piece). Marks will also be awarded for knowledge of other terms if relevant to this area of study in section B (Study piece) of the exam.

Element type	Element
Melody	• riff • pitch bend • melisma • hook • slide • glissando • improvisation • ostinato • blue notes.
Harmony	• power chords • chord symbols eg C⁷ • stock chord progressions eg I VI IV V.
Tonality	• pentatonic • modal • blues scale.
Structure	• intro/outro • verse • chorus • break • twelve-bar blues • drum fill.

Element type	Element
Sonority (Timbre)	• standard contemporary instrument types eg electric guitar, synthesisers • specific instrument types eg sitar, dilruba • instrumental techniques eg palm mute (pm), pitch bend, hammer-on (ho), pull-off (po), slide guitar/bottleneck • drum kit components and techniques eg rim shot • vocal timbres eg falsetto, belt, rap, beat-boxing, scat singing • specific instrumental techniques eg slap bass • specific instrumental effects eg amplification, distortion • specific technological recording techniques eg automatic double-tracking (ADT) and direct input transformer (DIT).
Tempo, metre and rhythm	• bpm (beats per minute) • mm (metronome marking) • groove • backbeat • syncopation • off-beat • shuffle, swing/swung.

3.1.5 Area of study 3: Traditional music

For the purpose of this specification, traditional music is defined as music that takes influences from traditional sources including folk music and reinterprets them in a contemporary style, and traditional music from traditional sources and cultures that is performed as intended by the composer.

Listening – unfamiliar music

Students must be able to listen attentively to unfamiliar music from the following styles/genres to identify and accurately describe musical elements, musical contexts and musical language:

- Blues music from 1920–1950
- Fusion music incorporating African and/or Caribbean music
- Contemporary Latin music
- Contemporary Folk music of the British Isles.

Study piece

Santana: Supernatural – the following three tracks:

- *Smooth*
- *Migra*
- *Love of my Life*

(first taught 2016, first assessed 2018, assessed until 2021)

Paul Simon – the following three tracks:

- *Graceland*
- *Diamonds on the Soles of Her Shoes*
- *You Can Call Me Al*

(first teaching 2020, first assessment 2022, last assessment N/A)

Musical elements

In addition to the musical elements listed for Area of study 1, students must know and understand musical elements appropriate to this Area of study.

The following table contains all the musical elements, for this area of study, that students must know and understand to answer questions in section A (Listening) and section B (Study piece). Marks will also be awarded for knowledge of other terms if relevant to this area of study in section B (Study piece) of the exam.

Element type	Element
Melody	• blue notes • pentatonic, whole tone, modal • slide/glissando/portamento, pitch bend, appoggiaturas • ostinato • riff • melody–scat • melisma • improvisation.
Tonality	• modal • pentatonic.
Structure	• strophic, verse and chorus, cyclic • call and response • popular song forms • structure–12/16 bar blues.
Sonority (Timbre)	• generic families of instruments as found in traditional/world music eg steel drums • the use of technology, synthesised and computer-generated sounds, sampling and the use of techniques such as reverb, distortion and chorus • drone • vocal techniques eg falsetto, vibrato, rap.
Texture	• a cappella • imitative • layered/layering.

Element type	Element
Tempo, metre and rhythm	• irregular, free • skank • bubble • clave (Bo Diddley type beat) • augmentation, diminution • anacrusis • hemiola • bi-rhythm, cross-rhythm, polyrhythm • shuffle beat • backbeat • syncopation • off-beat • bossa nova • samba • salsa • tango • habanera • danzón • merengue • cha-cha-cha • rumba.

3.1.6 Area of study 4: Western classical tradition since 1910

For the purpose of this specification, western classical tradition since 1910 is defined as music that comprises modern, contemporary classical music, experimental and minimalist music as well as other forms.

Listening – unfamiliar music

Students must be able to listen attentively to unfamiliar music from the following styles/genres to identify and accurately describe musical elements, musical contexts and musical language:

- The orchestral music of Copland
- British music of Arnold, Britten, Maxwell-Davies and Tavener
- The orchestral music of Zoltán Kodály and Béla Bartók
- Minimalist music of John Adams, Steve Reich and Terry Riley.

Study piece

Aaron Copland: *Saturday Night Waltz* and *Hoedown* from *Rodeo*

(first taught 2016, first assessed 2018, assessed until 2021)

Zoltán Kodály: *Battle and Defeat of Napoleon* and *Intermezzo* from *Háry János*

(first teaching 2020, first assessment 2022, last assessment N/A)

Musical elements

In addition to the musical elements listed for Area of study 1, students must know and understand musical elements appropriate to this Area of study.

The following table contains all the musical elements, for this area of study, that students must know and understand to answer questions in section A (Listening) and section B (Study piece). Marks will also be awarded for knowledge of other terms if relevant to this area of study in section B (Study piece) of the exam.

Element type	Element
Melody	• ostinato • motifs • melisma.
Harmony	• chromatic • dissonant • pedal.
Tonality	• pentatonic • whole tone • modal • tonal ambiguity.
Sonority (Timbre)	• specific families of instruments • use of technology, synthesised and computer-generated sounds • instrumental techniques eg vamping.
Texture	• drones • imitative • layered/layering.
Tempo, metre and rhythm	• irregular, free • augmentation, diminution • anacrusis • hemiola • rubato • bi-rhythm, cross-rhythm, polyrhythm • syncopation • off-beat.

3.1.7 Musical language (Areas of study 2–4)

Students must be able to use musical language appropriate to their selected area of study in the following ways.

Reading staff notation

Students must be able to identify musical elements (as above) when reading short passages of staff notation of up to 12 bars.

Chords and chord symbols

Students must learn major and minor chords and their associated symbols and be able to identify them in aural and written form. Examples of relevant types of chords and symbols can be found in the musical elements tables above.

Musical vocabulary and terminology

Students must be able to identify and apply appropriate musical vocabulary and terminology to music heard and notated. The appropriate vocabulary required can be found in the tables relevant to the area of study.

3.2 Performing music

Students must be able to perform live music using one or both of the following ways:

- instrumental (including DJ)/vocal
- production via technology.

One performance **must** be as a soloist and **one** piece **must** be as part of an ensemble lasting a combined minimum of **four** minutes. The performance as part of an ensemble must last for a minimum of **one** minute.

Repertoire will be determined by the student and teacher. It need not reference an area of study and can be in any chosen style or genre.

Students must be able to interpret relevant musical elements as appropriate using resources (eg microphones) and techniques (eg *pizzicato*) as appropriate to communicate musical ideas with accuracy and expression and interpretation, including phrasing and dynamics appropriate to the style and mood of the music.

If students choose to perform using non-standard instruments (ie for which there are no nationally recognised accredited music grades) the requirements for instrumental/vocal **must** be followed.

Please refer to [Component 2: Performing music assessment grids](#) (page 34) for information about how to mark performances.

In all cases, the recording of the performances must be accompanied by one or more of the following documents, as appropriate to the type of performance:

- notated score
- lead sheet
- guide recording
- annotation.

3.2.1 Instrumental (including DJ)/vocal

Instrumental (including DJ)/vocal performance type	Definition	Technical control (accuracy)	Expression and interpretation
Solo	A solo instrument/voice with accompaniment/backing track where the student has a substantial solo part. Unaccompanied instrumental/vocal solo. Performance of pieces written with an accompaniment intended by the composer should not be unaccompanied.	Pitch (including intonation). Rhythm and fluency.	Tempo, dynamics, phrasing and articulation.
Ensemble	Music performed by the student in conjunction with at least one other musician (one of which must be the student being assessed), in which each player or singer has a unique and significant role (ie that is not doubled).		

Instrumental (including DJ)/vocal performance type	Definition	Technical control (accuracy)	Expression and interpretation
Solo DJ	Using turntables (raw vinyl/CDJ) and/or Digital DJ technology (software controller/DVS) to manipulate tracks and demonstrate an understanding and use of a range of techniques. There must be a minimum of two tracks – beat matched, with respect to the structure, tonality and arrangement of the selected tracks.	Pitch. Rhythm, tempo and fluency.	Dynamics and articulation.
Ensemble DJ	Using turntables (raw vinyl/CDJ) and/or Digital DJ technology (software controller/DVS) to perform with one or more DJs/ live musicians in which each performer has a unique and significant role (ie that is not doubled). For the student being assessed, there must be a minimum of two tracks – beat matched, with respect to the structure, tonality and arrangement of the selected tracks.		

3.2.2 DJing skills

Students must know, understand and be able to apply the following as appropriate to the level of demand of the piece.

DJing skills and sound sources	
Basic skills	cue stuttering rewind/spin-back drop-ins E.Q. Blending or use of on board FX (eg filtering, flanger, delay etc).

DJing skills and sound sources	
Intermediate skills	baby scratches looping (using digital buttons) hot cues – jumping to parts of the song during performance or edited live a cappellas – as a chosen sound source for 8 bars or more – vocal must fit harmonically, rhythmically and structurally with overall mix.
Advanced skills	advanced scratching – transforms advanced scratching – flares advanced scratching – chirps advanced scratching – orbits hot-cue drumming – using hot cue to trigger multiple sounds to create something new juggling – live looping using platters not buttons a cappellas – as a chosen sound source for 32 bars or more – vocal must fit harmonically, rhythmically and structurally with overall mix.
Sound sources	tracks scratch samples (allowing hot cue triggering or scratching) loops drum loops bass loops a cappellas (pre-separated vocals from another song).

For examples of DJ performances, please refer to [e-AQA](https://www.aqa.org.uk) online standardisation materials.

3.2.3 Production

Technology performance type	Definition	Technical control (accuracy)	Expression and sense of style
Solo	A complete performance of a pre-existing piece using music technology, sequencing and/or multi-tracking techniques to record a solo performance of a minimum of three tracks . At least one track must be performed live in real time.	Pitch (including intonation). Rhythm and balance.	Dynamics, articulation and panning.
Ensemble	A complete performance of a pre-existing piece using music technology, sequencing and/or multi-tracking techniques to record an ensemble performance of a minimum of four tracks , three of which must be performed by the student and one or more tracks performed by at least one other musician in which each performer has a unique and significant role (ie that is not doubled). At least one track must be performed live in real time by the student and at least one track must be performed live in real time by at least one other member of the ensemble.		

3.3 Composing music

Students **must** learn how to develop musical ideas, including extending and manipulating musical ideas, and compose music that is musically convincing through **two** compositions. One must be in response to an externally set brief (Composition 1) and the other a free composition (Composition 2).

The combined duration of the compositions **must** be a minimum of **three** minutes.

Compositions can be composed in any style or genre to best reflect the skills, strengths and interests of the individual students.

Both compositions **must** be assessed on the student's ability to demonstrate:

- Creative and effective selection and use of musical elements
- Appropriate selection and use of musical elements (to the compositional intention)
- Technical and expressive control in the use of musical elements.

Each composition **must** demonstrate selection and use of **at least four** types of musical element as follows:

- at least **two** of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure, form
- at least **two** of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing, articulation.

Please also refer to the full tables of musical elements in [Subject content](#) (page 11).

Students must be able to compose using methods appropriate to the style/genre of their composition and may use a combination of vocal/instrumental and technology. This could include the use of score writing software, sequencing software, studio multi-tracking or traditional techniques including hand written notation and working through improvisation.

3.3.1 Documenting the composition

Programme note

Students must write a Programme note of approximately 150 words for each composition, which clearly informs the assessor of the compositional intention, including the intended audience/occasion. Students must also identify the types of musical element selected and provide details of any software and hardware used in their compositional process.

In all cases the audio recording of the composition and Programme note must be accompanied by one or more of the following documents:

- staff notated score
- lead sheet
- aural guide.

Please refer to [Component 3: Composing music assessment grid](#) (page 44) for information about how to mark compositions.

4 Scheme of assessment

Find past papers and mark schemes, and specimen papers for new courses, on our website at aqa.org.uk/pastpapers

This specification is designed to be taken over two years.

This is a linear qualification. In order to achieve the award, students must complete all assessments at the end of the course and in the same series.

GCSE exams and certification for this specification are available for the first time in May/June 2018 and then every May/June for the life of the specification.

All materials are available in English only.

Our GCSE exams in Music include questions that allow students to demonstrate their ability to:

- draw together their knowledge, skills and understanding from across the full course of study
- provide original practical responses
- provide short and extended written responses.

Synoptic assessment of GCSE Music should require students to:

- develop a broad understanding of the connections between the knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the specification as a whole
- demonstrate their understanding of the relationships between theory and practice.

4.1 Aims and learning outcomes

Courses based on this specification should encourage students to:

- engage actively in the process of music study
- develop performing skills individually and in groups to communicate musically with fluency and control of the resources used
- develop composing skills to organise musical ideas and make use of appropriate resources
- recognise links between the integrated activities of performing, composing and appraising and how these inform the development of music
- broaden musical experience and interests, develop imagination and foster creativity
- develop knowledge, understanding and skills needed to communicate effectively as musicians
- develop awareness of a variety of instruments, styles and approaches to performing and composing
- develop awareness of music technologies and their use in the creation and presentation of music
- recognise contrasting genres, styles and traditions of music, and develop some awareness of musical chronology
- develop as effective and independent learners with enquiring minds
- reflect upon and evaluate their own and others' music
- engage with and appreciate the diverse heritage of music, in order to promote personal, social, intellectual and cultural development.

4.2 Assessment components

4.2.1 Component 1: Understanding music (Assessment objectives A03 and A04)

Understanding music is assessed through an externally marked exam in two sections lasting one hour and thirty minutes. It is marked out of a total of 96 marks and constitutes 40% of the total marks for the qualification.

4.2.1.1 Section A: Listening (Assessment objectives A03 and A04)

Students will be assessed on their ability to evaluate the music heard in the exam and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of musical elements and musical language (see [Subject content](#) (page 11)).

Section A will consist of **eight** sets of linked questions covering all areas of study. Students must answer all questions in this section.

Each question will contain excerpts of music from **unfamiliar** music representing the styles/genres listed for each area of study.

Students will be played the excerpts a stated number of times (between two and four) depending on the length and tempo of the excerpt and the nature of the question.

4.2.1.2 Section B: Contextual understanding (Assessment objective A04)

Students will be assessed on their ability to analyse and evaluate music in written form, using knowledge and understanding of musical elements and musical contexts to make critical judgements about repertoire (study pieces) within the chosen areas of study.

This section will consist of **four** sets of linked questions (short and extended) one for each Area of study 1–4. Students must answer **two** linked sets of questions, **one** of which must be Area of study 1: Western classical tradition 1650–1910.

4.2.2 Component 2: Performing music (Assessment objective A01)

Performance is internally marked by teachers and externally moderated by AQA, marked out of 72 and constitutes 30% of the total marks for the qualification.

Each student must select, following a discussion with their teacher, the pieces that the student will perform during the assessment. Each student must perform two pieces lasting a combined minimum time of **four** minutes. One performance must be as a solo and one performance as part of an ensemble. Each student must perform for at least **one** minute as part of an ensemble.

If the student's performance does not meet the required duration a penalty is applied to the mark (the size of the penalty depends on the severity of the timing infringement). It may also result in schools or colleges being investigated for maladministration. Teachers must check the final performance for assessment of each student's work to ensure it meets the minimum duration requirement.

There is no maximum duration for performances.

Performance must be through one or a combination of the following methods:

- playing music
- singing music
- realising music using music technology.

4.2.2.1 Administrative and assessment requirements for solo and ensemble performance

You are responsible for ensuring the following requirements are met in administering and assessing the solo and ensemble performances:

- performances should take place in a suitable venue in a live setting
- performances should be recorded using good quality audio equipment
- performances must be under the supervision of a teacher for authentication purposes
- audio recordings of performances and production must be submitted complete and without post-performance editing or augmentation
- performances must take place in the year of certification
- performances must meet the specified minimum duration
- where available a copy of either the score(s) or lead sheet(s) must be submitted with the performance for assessment. Where a written score or lead sheet does not exist other means of showing the performance intention should be submitted. For example annotation(s) or guide recordings.

4.2.2.2 Assessment evidence

Audio recordings and performance documentation must be submitted as evidence as well as a signed *Candidate record form* (CRF).

Assessment evidence for this component will be marked using the [Component 2: Performing music assessment grids](#) (page 34) for performance/production.

Audio recording of performance

Performances should be saved digitally and must be produced in accordance with the *Guidance for audio recording assessment* on the AQA website.

Instrumental/vocal audio recordings of performances must be submitted complete and without post-performance editing.

Performances produced via technology must be submitted complete and in their final state as completed by the student without any further editing or augmentation.

Each student's recording of the performance for assessment must be kept under secure conditions until sent to AQA for assessment by the specified date given at aqa.org.uk/keydates

Performance documentation

The performance documentation is referred to when marking the audio recording of the performance, using Component 2 assessment grids. Students must submit **one or a combination** of the following, as appropriate, for each of the pieces performed for assessment.

Evidence type	Requirement
Notated score	Providing full performance information through musical notation.

Evidence type	Requirement
Lead sheet	Providing a detailed framework giving structure and musical substance from which a performance can be produced that meets the composer's intentions.
Guide recording (if no score or lead sheet available)	If students have based their own performance on a recording of another performance of the same piece, this must be submitted digitally so that the file can be easily accessed by the examiner.
Annotation	Including details of the processes, devices and techniques used that contributed to the final performance. Students must provide details of any hardware and software used.

4.2.3 Component 3: Composing music (Assessment objective A02)

Each student must compose **two** pieces. One composition must be in response to an externally set brief and the other composition must be freely composed by the student.

Both compositions **must** be assessed on the student's ability to demonstrate:

- Creative and effective selection and use of musical elements
- Appropriate selection and use of musical elements (to the compositional intention)
- Technical and expressive control in the use of musical elements.

Each composition **must** demonstrate selection and use of **at least four** types of musical element as follows:

- at least **two** of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure, form
- at least **two** of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing, articulation.

4.2.3.1 Composition 1 – Composition to a brief

The composition must include **at least four** types of musical element (as above) and be in response to **one** brief from a choice of **four** externally set briefs. The briefs will be released on or as near as possible to 15 September of the year of certification. Students must be given the externally set briefs in their entirety; they must not be edited, changed or abridged in any way.

Each brief will refer to a specific context (ie audience/occasion) and may include different stimuli, such as:

- a poem or a piece of text
- photographs, images or film
- notation.

4.2.3.2 Composition 2 – Free composition

Free compositions need not reference areas of study or a given brief but students should refer to the suggested audience/occasion, and include a minimum of **four** types of musical element (as above).

4.2.3.3 Compositions 1 and 2

Together, the compositions must last a combined minimum time of **three** minutes.

If the student's combined compositions do not meet the required duration a penalty is applied to the mark (the size of the penalty depends on the severity of the timing infringement). It may also result in schools or colleges being investigated for maladministration.

Marks are not awarded specifically for the duration of the composition. There is no specified maximum duration for composition.

For each student, you are responsible for ensuring the following requirements are met in administering the final compositions for assessment:

- the final compositions for assessment of each student's work meet the minimum duration requirement
- the audio recordings of the final compositions are recorded from start to finish
- each student must be wholly responsible for the creation of their complete compositions and this must be their own unaided work
- the student is not required to perform the composition but may do so if they wish.

Please refer to [Component 3: Composing music assessment grid](#) (page 44) for information on how the component will be marked.

4.2.3.4 Supervising students

Students must have sufficient direct supervision to ensure that the work submitted can be confidently authenticated as their own.

You may provide guidance and support to students so that they are clear about the requirements of the tasks they need to undertake and the marking criteria on which the work will be assessed.

You should encourage students to reflect upon and evaluate their own music, including considering the success of meeting the brief/intent, during their composition process.

You are expected to follow the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) instructions regarding the provision of feedback to students.

See also [Non-exam assessment administration](#) (page 51)

4.2.3.5 Assessment evidence

Audio recordings and composition documentation must be submitted as evidence for both compositions as well as a signed *Candidate record form* (CRF).

The audio recordings are marked alongside the composition documentation, to derive the overall mark for the component, using [Component 3: Composing music assessment grid](#) (page 44) .

Audio recording of compositions

The student is not required to play on the recording but may do so if they wish.

The audio recordings of the final compositions for assessment must be:

- recorded from start to finish
- saved digitally
- kept under secure conditions until sent to AQA for assessment by the specified date given at aqa.org.uk/keydates
- submitted complete and in their final state as completed by the student without any further editing or augmentation.

Composition documentation

Programme note

For both compositions, students must provide a Programme note of approximately 150 words that identifies:

- the compositional intention, including the intended audience/occasion
- the types of musical element selected
- details of the software and hardware used in the compositional process.

For both compositions, students must also provide one or more of the following which details the composition's structure and how musical elements have been used.

Evidence type	Requirement
Notated score	Providing full performance information through musical notation, detailing, for example, dynamics, tempo, and techniques where appropriate.
Lead sheet	Providing a detailed framework, giving structure and musical substance from which a performance can be produced that meets the composer's intentions, eg a melody line with chord symbols and lyrics.
Aural guide	A written account providing a detailed guide through the aural experience of the piece that will highlight structure and musical elements, including the ways in which they have been explored.

Please note: if composition documentation is not submitted for assessment with the audio recording, the audio recording of the final composition will still be accepted as assessment evidence. However, this will compromise how clearly the evidence supports the mark awarded by the centre, meaning centre marks are more likely to be adjusted at moderation.

4.3 Assessment objectives

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all GCSE Music specifications and all exam boards.

The assessments will measure how students have achieved the following assessment objectives.

Assessment objectives		Weighting
AO1	Perform with technical control, expression and interpretation.	30%
AO2	Compose and develop musical ideas with technical control and coherence.	30%
AO3	Demonstrate and apply musical knowledge.	20%
AO4	Use appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music.	20%

Assessment objectives	Component 1 Understanding music	Component 2 Performing music	Component 3 Composing music	Overall weighting
AO1		30%		30%
AO2			30%	30%
AO3	20%			20%
AO4	20%			20%
Overall weighting of components	40%	30%	30%	100%

4.3.1 Assessment weightings

The marks awarded on the papers will be scaled to meet the weighting of the components. Students' final marks will be calculated by adding together the scaled marks for each component. Grade boundaries will be set using this total scaled mark. The scaling and total scaled marks are shown in the table below.

Component	Maximum raw mark	Scaling factor	Maximum scaled mark
Understanding music	96	1	96
Performing music	72	1	72
Composing music	72	1	72
Total scaled mark			240

4.4 Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria below must be applied to the assessment of students' work for the performing music and composing music components.

You should refer to standardisation materials available at [aqa.org.uk/music](https://www.aqa.org.uk/music) for information regarding assessment grids.

4.4.1 Marking to the correct standard

Online exemplification materials are provided on e-AQA with written commentaries which explain how the marks have been awarded.

To ensure you use the assessment criteria grid to mark to the correct standard:

- access the online exemplification materials provided before you mark your own students' work
- ensure a senior music representative from your school, with responsibility for conducting internal standardisation, completes online standardisation.

4.4.2 Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into mark bands, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor indicates the quality that will be expected in the student's evidence for that mark band.

4.4.2.1 Identifying the correct mark band

The work must be assessed against each criterion separately. Start at the lowest mark band and see whether the evidence meets the descriptor for that mark band. If it meets the lowest mark band then go to the next one and decide if it meets this mark band, and so on, until you have a match between the mark band descriptor and the student's evidence.

4.4.2.2 For assessment grids with more than one mark per band

Instrumental (including DJ)/vocal assessment grids and Compositions 1 and 2 assessment grids have three marks within each mark band. Once you have identified the correct mark band (as above), you need to decide which mark to allocate within the band. The lower mark indicates that the student has **just** met the requirement described in that particular band level descriptor. The next mark indicates that evidence is **clear**. The higher mark indicates that evidence is **convincing** but that the student has not quite met the requirements set out in the next band.

4.4.2.3 Determine an overall mark

The marks for each criteria need to be added up, following the instructions below, to determine the final overall mark for each component.

4.4.3 Component 2: Performing music assessment grids

The performance component is marked out of a total of 72 marks. Each of the performances is out of a maximum of 36.

You are required to provide a mark for each of the assessment grids separately in accordance with the assessment criteria and a total mark out of 72 must be provided for the component. The assessment grid must be used to identify the student's level of performance in relation to each of the areas.

The marks are made up from the following assessment grids.

Instrumental (including DJ)/vocal

Mark (total of 36 per performance)	Assessment criteria
6	Levels of demand
15	Technical control (accuracy)
15	Expression and interpretation

Production via technology

Mark (total of 36 per performance)	Assessment criteria
6	Levels of demand
5	Accuracy
5	Expression
5	Balance
5	Panning/stereo separation
5	Appropriate use of effects

Mark (total of 36 per performance)	Assessment criteria
5	Sense of style

The assessment grids refer to the individual part performed by the student either as a soloist or as part of an ensemble.

Levels of demand

The following assessment grid shows the marks which should be awarded for different levels of demand for all performance types:

- instrumental/vocal grades refer to nationally recognised accredited music grades
- for non-standard instruments the levels of demand for instrumental/vocal **must** be used

Teachers must refer to online exemplification materials which show how marks are awarded for each level of demand across all performance types. Please refer to [e-AQA](#)

Both the common level descriptor and additional descriptors, as appropriate to the type of performance, should be used to locate the correct mark.

Levels of demand assessment grid

Total 6 marks	Instrumental/vocal	DJ	Production via technology
6	The music will be complex and technically demanding; the performance will demonstrate a high level of command of the chosen resources.		
	The equivalent to instrumental/vocal grade five or above.	• two basic skills • two intermediate skills • one advanced skill • two additional sound sources.	There will be highly effective use of variety of texture and dynamics plus greater complexity of rhythm within two or more tracks. Includes at least two of the following: • vocal • instrumental • synthesised/midi.

Total 6 marks	Instrumental/vocal	DJ	Production via technology
5	The music will make a substantial range of technical demands; the performance will demonstrate command of the chosen resources.		
	The equivalent to instrumental/vocal grade four.	• two basic skills • two intermediate skills • one advanced skill • one additional sound source.	There will be effective use of variety of texture and dynamics plus greater complexity of rhythm within one or more tracks. Includes at least two of the following: • vocal • instrumental • synthesised/midi.
4	The music will make a moderate range of technical demands; the performance will demonstrate clear competence in the control of the chosen resources.		
	The equivalent to instrumental/vocal grade three.	• two basic skills • one intermediate skill • one advanced skill • one additional sound source.	There will be moderately effective use of variety of texture and dynamics plus some rhythmic variety within the tracks. Includes at least two of the following: • vocal • instrumental • synthesised/midi.
3	The music will make a narrower range of technical demands while the performance will still demonstrate a degree of command of the chosen resources.		
	The equivalent to instrumental/vocal grade two.	• two basic skills • one intermediate skill • one additional sound source.	There will be at least two changes in texture and dynamics plus some rhythmic variety within the tracks. Includes at least two of the following: • vocal • instrumental • synthesised/midi.

Total 6 marks	Instrumental/vocal	DJ	Production via technology
2	The music will make some demands within a more limited range of technical expertise and command of the chosen resources.		
	The equivalent to instrumental/vocal grade one.	• two basic skills • one additional sound source.	There will be straightforward rhythms and at least one noticeable change of texture and dynamic. Includes at least one of the following: • vocal • instrumental • synthesised/midi.
1	The music will make few demands and be technically straightforward in its use of the chosen resources.		
	Below instrumental/vocal grade one.	One basic skill or one additional sound source.	There will be similar timbres across the tracks, straightforward rhythms with no clear variety of texture and/or dynamics Includes at least one of the following: • vocal • instrumental • synthesised/midi.
0	No work submitted or worthy of credit.		

4.4.3.2 Instrumental (including DJ)/vocal assessment grid

Marks	Technical control (accuracy)		Expression and interpretation	
	Instrumental/vocal	DJ	Instrumental/vocal	DJ
15 Convincing	Exceptional ability to demonstrate technical control, with excellent accuracy (pitch, rhythm, intonation) and fluency. At the top of the band, there will be no discernible flaws, with just minor inaccuracies towards the lower end.	Exceptional ability to demonstrate technical control, with excellent accuracy (pitch, rhythm, tempo) and fluency. At the top of the band, there will be no discernible flaws, with just minor inaccuracies towards the lower end.	Exceptional ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation, with an excellent and assured sense of style and attention to detail. Lack of attention to small expressive details will result in a mark towards the lower end of this band.	Exceptional ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation, with an excellent sense of style and attention to detail. Arrangement of selected tracks demonstrates excellent sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music. Lack of attention to small expressive details will result in a mark towards the lower end of this band.
14 Clear				
13 Just				

Marks	Technical control (accuracy)		Expression and interpretation	
	Instrumental/vocal	DJ	Instrumental/vocal	DJ
12 Convincing	Highly developed ability to demonstrate technical control, with high levels of accuracy (pitch, rhythm, intonation) and fluency. Towards the lower end of the band inaccuracies will become more noticeable.	Highly developed ability to demonstrate technical control, with high levels of accuracy (pitch, rhythm, tempo) and fluency. Towards the lower end of the band, inaccuracies will become more noticeable.	Highly developed ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation, with a highly developed, secure sense of style and attention to detail. A more frequent lack of sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music will result in a mark at the lower end of this band.	Highly developed ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation, with a highly developed sense of style and attention to detail. Arrangement of selected tracks demonstrates highly developed sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music. A more frequent lack of sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music will result in a mark at the lower end of this band.
11 Clear				
10 Just				

Marks	Technical control (accuracy)		Expression and interpretation	
	Instrumental/vocal	DJ	Instrumental/vocal	DJ
9 Convincing	Secure ability to demonstrate technical control, with moderate accuracy (pitch, rhythm, intonation) and fluency. Regular inaccuracies in more than one area will result in marks towards the lower end of this band.	Secure ability to demonstrate technical control, with moderate accuracy (pitch, rhythm, tempo) and fluency. Regular inaccuracies in more than one area will result in marks towards the lower end of this band.	Secure ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation, with a moderately secure sense of style and attention to detail. At the lower end of this mark band, a moderate lack of sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music will inhibit how well the character of the music is conveyed.	Secure ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation, with a moderately secure sense of style and attention to detail. Arrangement of selected tracks demonstrates moderate sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music. At the lower end of this mark band, a lack of sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music will inhibit how well the character of the music is conveyed.
8 Clear				
7 Just				
6 Convincing	Moderate ability to demonstrate technical control, with limited accuracy (pitch, rhythm, intonation) and fluency. At the bottom of this band, the basic outline of the music will still be appreciable to the listener.	Moderate ability to demonstrate technical control, with limited accuracy (pitch, rhythm, tempo) and fluency. At the bottom of this band, the basic outline of the music will still be appreciable to the listener.	Moderate ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation, with a basic sense of style and attention to detail. Limited sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music, becoming more pronounced towards the lower end of the mark band, resulting in a performance which has a limited sense of character.	Moderate ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation, with a basic sense of style and attention to detail. Arrangement of selected tracks demonstrates limited sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music, becoming more pronounced towards the lower end of the mark band, resulting in a performance which has a limited sense of character.
5 Clear				
4 Just				

Marks	Technical control (accuracy)		Expression and interpretation	
	Instrumental/vocal	DJ	Instrumental/vocal	DJ
3 Convincing	Limited ability to demonstrate technical control, with minimal accuracy (pitch, rhythm, intonation) and fluency. At the bottom of this band, the basic outline of the music will be barely appreciable to the listener.	Limited ability to demonstrate technical control, with minimal accuracy of pitch, rhythm, tempo and fluency. At the bottom of this band, the basic outline of the music will be barely appreciable to the listener.	Limited ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation, with a rudimentary sense of style and minimal attention to detail. Minimal sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music, becoming more pronounced towards the lower end of the mark band, resulting in a performance which has virtually no sense of character.	Limited ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation, with a rudimentary sense of style and attention to detail. Arrangement of selected tracks demonstrates minimal sensitivity towards the expressive and interpretative demands of the music, becoming more pronounced towards the lower end of the mark band, resulting in a performance which has virtually no sense of character.
2 Clear				
1 Just				
0	No work submitted or worthy of credit.			

4.4.3.3 Production via technology assessment grid

Marks	Accuracy	Expression	Balance	Panning/stereo separation	Use of effects	Sense of style
5	Exceptional ability to demonstrate accuracy of pitch, rhythm and intonation.	Exceptional ability to demonstrate expressive detail, with appropriate dynamic range and articulation.	Exceptional ability to demonstrate a sense of balance throughout the recording.	Exceptional ability to demonstrate use of panning appropriately. Use of panning results in separation of all parts which is totally effective.	Exceptional ability to demonstrate discerning use of effects appropriately, throughout the piece.	Exceptional ability to demonstrate sense of style. Awareness of stylistic requirements is sustained throughout the piece.
4	Highly developed ability to demonstrate accuracy in pitch, rhythm and intonation.	Highly developed ability to demonstrate expressive detail, with appropriate dynamic range and articulation.	Highly developed ability to demonstrate a sense of balance. Occasional misjudgment of balance resulting in a slight loss of clarity at times.	Highly developed ability to demonstrate use of panning appropriately. Occasional misjudgment in use of panning still results in clear separation of parts.	Highly developed ability to demonstrate use of effects appropriately, throughout the piece. Occasional misjudgment in the use of effects.	Highly developed ability to demonstrate sense of style. Occasional lapses in awareness of stylistic requirements of the piece.

Marks	Accuracy	Expression	Balance	Panning/stereo separation	Use of effects	Sense of style
3	Secure ability to demonstrate accuracy (pitch, rhythm and intonation) and fluency.	Secure ability to demonstrate expressive detail, with appropriate dynamic range and articulation. Tonal qualities such as vibrato and clear diction in a vocal recording will be lacking at times.	Secure ability to demonstrate a sense of balance. Misjudgments of balance mean features of the music are unclear.	Secure ability to demonstrate use of panning appropriately. Misjudgment in use of panning results in not all parts being clearly separated.	Secure ability to demonstrate use of effects appropriately. Misjudgment in use of effects detracts from the overall performance.	Secure ability to demonstrate sense of style. Awareness of stylistic requirements of the piece is inconsistent and detracts from the overall performance.
2	Moderate ability to demonstrate accuracy (pitch, rhythm and intonation) and fluency.	Moderate ability to demonstrate expressive detail, with appropriate dynamic range and articulation. Inconsistencies in expressive detail significantly detract from the overall performance.	Moderate ability to demonstrate a sense of balance. Misjudgments of balance lead to a significant number of important features being unclear.	Moderate ability to demonstrate use of panning appropriately. Misjudgments in panning result in unclear separation of parts.	Moderate ability to demonstrate use of effects appropriately. Misjudgment in use of effects significantly detracts from the overall performance.	Moderate ability to demonstrate sense of style. Limited awareness of the stylistic requirements of the piece significantly detracts from the overall performance.
1	Limited ability to demonstrate accuracy (pitch, rhythm and intonation) and fluency.	Limited ability to demonstrate expressive detail resulting in a performance lacking in musicality.	Limited ability to demonstrate a sense of balance. Minimal evidence of balance results in a performance in which most of the detail is unclear.	Limited ability to demonstrate use of panning appropriately. Minimal evidence of use of panning results in no clear separation of parts.	Limited ability to demonstrate use of effects appropriately. Minimal evidence of use of effects or effects used are inappropriate.	Limited ability to demonstrate sense of style. Little or no awareness of the stylistic requirements of the piece.
0	No work submitted or worthy of credit.					

4.4.4 Component 3: Composing music assessment grid

Each assessment criteria **must** be marked separately to derive a mark (out of 18) using the composition assessment grid. These marks must then be added together to derive the overall mark for each composition (out of 36). The overall mark for each composition must then be added together to derive a total mark for the component (out of 72).

Each criteria focuses on selection and use of six types of musical element:

Mark (total of 36 per composition)	Assessment criteria
18	rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure, form
18	harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing, articulation

Both compositions **must** be assessed on the student's ability to demonstrate:

- Creative and effective selection and use of elements
- Appropriate selection and use of musical elements (to the compositional intention)
- Technical and expressive control in the use of musical elements.

Each composition **must** demonstrate selection and use of **at least two** types of musical element from the choice of six for **each** criteria.

4.4.4.1 Indicative Examples

To guide marking, indicative examples of musical elements which students may typically select and use at the level of ability described in the mark band, are provided for each element type in each mark band.

Some elements are typically only selected and used at higher levels and others only at lower levels of ability. As such the indicative examples provided are the same for the top three mark bands (10–18 marks), whilst progressively fewer examples are provided in the bottom three mark bands (1–9 marks).

The lists of indicative examples are not a 'required range' for the mark band, ie depending on the student's compositional intent, a narrower range of elements and/or other elements (that have not been suggested) may have been selected and used.

4.4.4.2 Compositions 1 and 2 assessment grid

Marks	Selection and use of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure, form		Selection and use of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing, articulation	
	Descriptor	Indicative examples	Descriptor	Indicative examples
18 Convincing	Selection and use of elements (at least two of rhythm, metre, texture melody, structure and form) is exceptionally creative and effective, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of composition. The selection and use of elements is exceptionally perceptive and insightful: entirely appropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. The composition sounds finished with excellent technical and expressive control throughout.	Rhythm, metre: eg change of metre/compound time/augmentation/diminution/cross rhythm/syncopation/dotted rhythms/triplets/rubato/tempo change. Texture, melody: eg homophonic texture/polyphonic texture/scalic, triadic conjunct and disjunct movement/ornamentation/ostinato or riff/improvisation/imitation/canon/antiphonal texture/blue notes/passing notes. Structure, form: eg rondo/arch shape/theme and variations/minuet and trio/strophic/through composed/sonata/ground bass/popular song form/blues.	Selection and use of elements (at least two of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing and articulation) is exceptionally creative and effective, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of composition. The selection and use of elements is exceptionally perceptive and insightful: entirely appropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. The composition sounds finished with excellent technical and expressive control throughout.	Harmony, tonality: eg perfect, plagal, imperfect and interrupted cadences/major and minor tonality/modal tonality/diatonic harmony/inverted chords/modulation/7th chords/dissonance/pedal or drone/chromatic harmony. Timbre, dynamics: eg single instruments and/or voices/instrumental groupings and/or vocal groupings/synthesised sounds/computer-generated sounds/crescendo and diminuendo/reverb/tremolo/distortion/vibrato/falsetto. Phrasing, articulation: eg legato/staccato/tenuto/marcato/accents/slurring/arco/pizzicato/tonguing.
17 Clear				
16 Just				

Marks	Selection and use of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure, form		Selection and use of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing, articulation	
	Descriptor	Indicative examples	Descriptor	Indicative examples
15 Convincing	Selection and use of elements (at least two of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure and form) is highly creative and effective, demonstrating a coherent understanding of composition. The selection and use of these elements is highly perceptive and insightful: clearly appropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. The composition requires very little more to sound finished, with consistent technical and expressive control throughout.	Rhythm, metre: eg change of metre/compound time/augmentation/diminution/cross rhythm/syncopation/dotted rhythms/triplets/rubato/tempo change. Texture, melody: eg homophonic texture/polyphonic texture/scalic, triadic conjunct and disjunct movement/ornamentation/ostinato or riff/improvisation/imitation/canon/antiphonal texture/blue notes/passing notes. Structure, form: eg rondo/arch shape/theme and variations/minuet and trio/strophic/through composed/sonata/ground bass/popular song form/blues.	Selection and use of elements (at least two of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing and articulation) is highly creative and effective, demonstrating a coherent understanding of composition. The selection and use of these elements is highly perceptive and insightful: clearly appropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. The composition requires very little more to sound finished, with consistent technical and expressive control throughout.	Harmony, tonality: eg perfect, plagal, imperfect and interrupted cadences/major and minor tonality/modal tonality/diatonic harmony/inverted chords/modulation/7th chords/dissonance/pedal or drone/chromatic harmony. Timbre, dynamics: eg single instruments and/or voices/instrumental groupings and/or vocal groupings/synthesised sounds/computer-generated sounds/crescendo and diminuendo/reverb/tremolo/distortion/vibrato/falsetto. Phrasing, articulation: eg legato/staccato/tenuto/marcato/accent/slurring/arco/pizzicato/tonguing.
14 Clear				
13 Just				

Marks	Selection and use of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure, form		Selection and use of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing, articulation	
	Descriptor	Indicative examples	Descriptor	Indicative examples
12 Convincing	Selection and use of elements (at least two of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure and form) shows secure creativity and effectiveness, demonstrating a sound understanding of composition. The selection and use of these elements shows secure perception and insight: almost always appropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. The composition sounds mostly finished, but with some further work required: technical and expressive control is not always consistent.	Rhythm, metre: eg change of metre/compound time/augmentation/diminution/cross rhythm/syncopation/dotted rhythms/triplets/rubato/tempo change. Texture, melody: eg homophonic texture/polyphonic texture/scalic, triadic conjunct and disjunct movement/ornamentation/ostinato or riff/improvisation/imitation/canon/antiphonal texture/blue notes/passing notes. Structure, form: eg rondo/arch shape/theme and variations/minuet and trio/strophic/through composed/sonata/ground bass/popular song form/blues.	Selection and use of elements (at least two of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing and articulation) shows secure creativity and effectiveness, demonstrating a sound understanding of composition. The selection and use of these elements shows secure perception and insight: almost always appropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. The composition sounds mostly finished, but with some further work required: technical and expressive control is not always consistent.	Harmony, tonality: eg perfect, plagal, imperfect and interrupted cadences/major and minor tonality/modal tonality/diatonic harmony/inverted chords/modulation/7th chords/dissonance/pedal or drone/chromatic harmony. Timbre, dynamics: eg single instruments and/or voices/instrumental groupings and/or vocal groupings/synthesised sounds/computer-generated sounds/crescendo and diminuendo/reverb/tremolo/distortion/vibrato/falsetto. Phrasing, articulation: eg legato/staccato/tenuto/marcato/accent/slurring/arco/pizzicato/tonguing.
11 Clear				
10 Just				

Marks	Selection and use of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure, form		Selection and use of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing, articulation	
	Descriptor	Indicative examples	Descriptor	Indicative examples
9 Convincing	Selection and use of elements (at least two of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure and form) is moderately creative and effective, demonstrating a moderate understanding of composition. The selection and use of these elements is moderately perceptive and insightful: largely appropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. The composition sounds mostly finished, but with some further work required: occasionally lacks coherence, technical and expressive control is limited and not always consistent.	Rhythm, metre: eg simple or compound time/a regular tempo/semibreves, minims, crotchets, quavers and semiquavers. Texture, melody: eg single line melody/unison and octaves/homophonic texture/ostinato/riff. Structure, form: eg binary/ternary/strophic/through composed/ground bass/popular song form/twelve bar blues.	Selection and use of elements (at least two of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing and articulation) is moderately creative and effective, demonstrating a moderate understanding of composition. The selection and use of these elements is moderately perceptive and insightful: largely appropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. The composition sounds mostly finished, but with some further work required: occasionally lacks coherence, technical and expressive control is limited and not always consistent.	Harmony, tonality: eg major and minor chords, perfect and imperfect cadence, major tonality/pedal. Timbre, dynamics: eg single instrumental, vocal or synthesised/computer-generated sounds/group instrumental, vocal or synthesised/computer-generated sounds/changes in dynamic. Phrasing, articulation: eg legato/staccato/accent/slurring/arco/pizzicato/tonguing.
8 Clear				
7 Just				

Marks	Selection and use of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure, form		Selection and use of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing, articulation	
	Descriptor	Indicative examples	Descriptor	Indicative examples
6 Convincing	Selection and use of elements (at least two of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure and form) shows limited creativity and effectiveness, demonstrating a basic understanding of composition. The selection and use of these elements shows limited perception and insight: sometimes inappropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. The composition sounds unfinished: often lacking coherence, basic and infrequent technical and expressive control.	Rhythm, metre: eg simple time/a regular tempo/ semibreves, minims, crotchets and quavers. Texture, melody: eg single line melody/unison and octaves/homophonic texture/ riff. Structure, form: eg binary/ ternary/strophic/ground bass/ popular song form/twelve bar blues.	Selection and use of elements (at least two of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing and articulation) shows limited creativity and effectiveness, demonstrating a basic understanding of composition. The selection and use of these elements shows limited perception and insight: sometimes inappropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. The composition sounds unfinished: often lacking coherence, basic and infrequent technical and expressive control.	Harmony, tonality: eg major and minor chords, perfect and imperfect cadence, major tonality/pedal. Timbre, dynamics: eg single and/or group instrumental, vocal or synthesised/ computer-generated sounds/ balance in dynamic. Phrasing, articulation: eg legato/staccato/slurring.
5 Clear				
4 Just				

Marks	Selection and use of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure, form		Selection and use of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing, articulation	
	Descriptor	Indicative examples	Descriptor	Indicative examples
3 Convincing	Selection and use of elements (at least two of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure and form) shows minimal creativity and effectiveness, demonstrating a very simplistic understanding of composition. The selection and use of elements shows minimal perception and insight: largely inappropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. Although there are creditworthy elements, the composition sounds incomplete: incoherent, very little evidence of technical and expressive control.	Rhythm, metre: eg simple time/regular tempo. Texture, melody: eg single line melody/riff/unison and octaves. Structure, form: eg binary/ternary.	Selection and use of elements (at least two of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing and articulation) shows minimal creativity and effectiveness, demonstrating a very simplistic understanding of composition. The selection and use of elements shows minimal perception and insight: largely inappropriate to the intentions for the music, including the suggested audience/occasion. Although there are creditworthy elements, the composition sounds incomplete: incoherent, very little evidence of technical and expressive control.	Harmony, tonality: eg major and minor chords, major tonality. Timbre, dynamics: eg single or group instrumental, vocal or synthesised/computer-generated sounds/awareness of dynamic. Phrasing, articulation: eg legato/staccato.
2 Clear				
1 Just				
0	No work submitted or worthy of credit.			

5 Non-exam assessment administration

The non-exam assessment (NEA) for this specification is performance and composition.

Visit aqa.org.uk/8271 for detailed information about all aspects of NEA administration.

The head of the school or college is responsible for making sure that NEA is conducted in line with our instructions and Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) instructions.

5.1 Supervising and authenticating

To meet Ofqual's qualification criteria and conditions, the requirements set out in [Assessment components](#) (page 28) of the specification must be adhered to. Evidence of authentication for each student must include:

- a *Candidate record form* (CRF), signed by the student and their teacher to confirm that all the student's Non-exam assessment evidence submitted is their own work and was conducted under the conditions laid down by this specification
- audio recordings of each student's performance/composition, which identify the candidate by name and candidate number.

Students must have sufficient direct supervision to ensure that the work submitted can be confidently authenticated as their own. This means that you must review the progress of work during its production to see how it develops.

Any work produced without supervision, for example outside of the classroom, should be compared to work produced with supervision.

In comparing the student's work, consideration must be given to the consistency in levels of skill demonstrated.

Work that cannot be confidently authenticated must not be included in the student's submission.

You are required to provide details of the support the student received on the CRF and sign the authentication statement. If the statement is not signed, we **cannot** accept the student's work for assessment.

5.2 Submitting NEA evidence and marks to AQA

You must send all your students NEA evidence (set out in [Assessment components](#) and [Supervising and authenticating](#)) to the moderator for moderation and marks to AQA by the date given at aqa.org.uk/keydates

You must show clearly how marks have been awarded against the assessment criteria in this specification. Your comments must help the moderator to see, as precisely as possible, where you think the students have met the assessment criteria. You must:

- record your comments on the Candidate Record Form (CRF)
- check that the correct marks are written on the CRF and that the total is correct.

The moderator re-marks a sample of the evidence and compares this with the marks you have provided to check whether any changes are needed to bring the marking in line with our agreed standards. Any changes to marks will normally keep your rank order but, where major inconsistencies are found, we reserve the right to change the rank order.

5.3 Avoiding malpractice

Please inform your students of the AQA regulations concerning malpractice. They must not:

- submit work that is not their own
- lend work to other students
- allow other students access to, or use of, their own independently-sourced source material
- include work copied directly from books, the internet or other sources without acknowledgement
- submit work that is word-processed by a third person without acknowledgement
- include inappropriate, offensive or obscene material.

These actions constitute malpractice and a penalty will be given (for example, disqualification).

If you identify malpractice **before** the student signs the declaration of authentication, you don't need to report it to us. Please deal with it in accordance with your school or college's internal procedures. We expect schools and colleges to treat such cases very seriously.

If you identify malpractice **after** the student has signed the declaration of authentication, the head of your school or college must submit full details of the case to us at the earliest opportunity. Please complete the form *JCQ/M1*, available from the JCQ website at jcq.org.uk

You must record details of any work which is not the student's own on the front of the assessment booklet or other appropriate place.

You should consult your exams officer about these procedures.

5.4 Teacher standardisation

We will provide support for using the marking criteria and developing appropriate tasks through teacher standardisation.

For further information about teacher standardisation visit our website at aqa.org.uk/8271

In the following situations teacher standardisation is essential. We will send you an invitation to complete teacher standardisation if:

- moderation from the previous year indicates a serious misinterpretation of the requirements
- a significant adjustment was made to the marks in the previous year
- your school or college is new to this specification.

For further support and advice please speak to your adviser. Email your subject team at music@aqa.org.uk for details of your adviser.

5.5 Internal standardisation

You must ensure that you have consistent marking standards for all students. One person must manage this process and they must sign the *Centre declaration sheet* to confirm that internal standardisation has taken place.

Internal standardisation may involve:

- all teachers marking some sample pieces of work to identify differences in marking standards
- discussing any differences in marking at a training meeting for all teachers involved
- referring to reference and archive material, such as previous work or examples from our teacher standardisation.

5.6 Factors affecting individual students

For advice and guidance about arrangements for any of your students, please email us as early as possible at eos@aqa.org.uk

Occasional absence: you should be able to accept the occasional absence of students by making sure they have the chance to make up what they have missed. You may organise an alternative supervised session for students who were absent at the time you originally arranged.

Lost work: if work is lost you must tell us how and when it was lost and who was responsible, using our special consideration online service at aqa.org.uk/eaqa

Special help: where students need special help which goes beyond normal learning support, please use the CRF to tell us so that this help can be taken into account during moderation.

Students who move schools: students who move from one school or college to another during the course sometimes need additional help to meet the requirements. How you deal with this depends on when the move takes place. If it happens early in the course, the new school or college should be responsible for the work. If it happens late in the course, it may be possible to arrange for the moderator to assess the work as a student who was 'Educated Elsewhere'.

5.7 School and college consortia

If you are in a consortium of schools or colleges with joint teaching arrangements (where students from different schools and colleges have been taught together but entered through the school or college at which they are on roll), you must let us know by:

- filling in the *Application for Centre Consortium Arrangements for centre-assessed work*, which is available from the JCQ website jcq.org.uk
- appointing a consortium co-ordinator who can speak to us on behalf of all schools and colleges in the consortium. If there are different co-ordinators for different specifications, a copy of the form must be sent in for each specification.

We will allocate the same moderator to all schools and colleges in the consortium and treat the students as a single group for moderation.

5.8 After moderation

We will return your students' work to you after the exams. You will also receive a report when the results are issued, which will give feedback on the appropriateness of the tasks set, interpretation of the marking criteria and how students performed in general.

We will give you the final marks when the results are issued.

We may need to use some of your students' work to meet Ofqual requirements for awarding, archiving or standardisation purposes. Unless you specifically ask us to, we will not return your students' work to you after the exams.

6 General administration

You can find information about all aspects of administration, as well as all the forms you need, at aqa.org.uk/examsadmin

6.1 Entries and codes

You only need to make one entry for each qualification – this will cover all the question papers, non-exam assessment and certification.

Every specification is given a national discount (classification) code by the Department for Education (DfE), which indicates its subject area.

If a student takes two specifications with the same discount code:

- further and higher education providers are likely to take the view that they have only achieved one of the two qualifications
- only one of them will be counted for the purpose of the *School and College Performance tables* – the DfE's rules on 'early entry' will determine which one.

Please check this before your students start their course.

Qualification title	AQA entry code	DfE discount code
AQA GCSE in Music	8271	TBC

This specification complies with:

- Ofqual *General conditions of recognition* that apply to all regulated qualifications
- Ofqual GCSE qualification level conditions that apply to all GCSEs
- Ofqual GCSE subject level conditions that apply to all GCSEs in this subject
- all other relevant regulatory documents.

The Ofqual qualification accreditation number (QAN) is 601/8361/5.

6.2 Overlaps with other qualifications

There are no overlaps with any other AQA qualifications at this level.

6.3 Awarding grades and reporting results

The qualification will be graded on a nine-point scale: 1 to 9 – where 9 is the best grade.

Students who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade 1 will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate.

6.4 Resits and shelf life

Students can resit the qualification as many times as they wish, within the shelf life of the qualification.

6.5 Previous learning and prerequisites

There are no previous learning requirements. Any requirements for entry to a course based on this specification are at the discretion of schools and colleges.

6.6 Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion

General qualifications are designed to prepare students for a wide range of occupations and further study. Therefore our qualifications must assess a wide range of competences.

The subject criteria have been assessed to see if any of the skills or knowledge required present any possible difficulty to any students, whatever their ethnic background, religion, sex, age, disability or sexuality. If any difficulties were encountered, the criteria were reviewed again to make sure that tests of specific competences were only included if they were important to the subject.

As members of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) we participate in the production of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments: General and Vocational qualifications*. We follow these guidelines when assessing the needs of individual students who may require an access arrangement or reasonable adjustment. This document is published on the JCQ website at jcq.org.uk

6.6.1 Students with disabilities and special needs

We can make arrangements for disabled students and students with special needs to help them access the assessments, as long as the competences being tested are not changed. Access arrangements must be agreed **before** the assessment. For example, a Braille paper would be a reasonable adjustment for a Braille reader but not for a student who does not read Braille.

We are required by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to remove or lessen any disadvantage that affects a disabled student.

If you have students who need access arrangements or reasonable adjustments, you can apply using the Access arrangements online service at aqa.org.uk/eaqa

6.6.2 Special consideration

We can give special consideration to students who have been disadvantaged at the time of the assessment through no fault of their own – for example a temporary illness, injury or serious problem such as the death of a relative. We can only do this **after** the assessment.

Your exams officer should apply online for special consideration at aqa.org.uk/eaqa

For more information and advice about access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration please see aqa.org.uk/access or email accessarrangementsqueries@aqa.org.uk

6.7 Working with AQA for the first time

If your school or college has not previously offered any AQA specification, you need to register as an AQA centre to offer our specifications to your students. Find out how at [aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre](https://www.aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre)

6.8 Private candidates

This specification is available to private candidates, under condition that:

- candidates attend an AQA school or college which will supervise the production of non-exam assessment evidence
- any other requirements concerning the administration of non-exam assessments contained within this specification are met.

A private candidate is someone who enters for exams through an AQA-approved school or college but is not enrolled as a student there.

A private candidate may be self-taught, home-schooled or have private tuition, either with a tutor or through a distance learning organisation. You must be based in the UK.

If you have any queries as a private candidate, you can:

- speak to the exams officer at the school or college where you intend to take your exams
- visit our website at [aqa.org.uk/privatecandidates](https://www.aqa.org.uk/privatecandidates)
- email: privatecandidates@aqa.org.uk

Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at aqa.org.uk/8271

You can talk directly to the Music subject team:

E: music@aqa.org.uk

T: 01483 437 750