

A-level Music is a varied, creative and enjoyable course that combines the practical and academic study of music. It is designed to be accessible to musicians with a wide range of different interests and performing specialisms.

Specification Pearson Edexcel: Course Code 9MU0

Like GCSE, there are three components to the course: *performing, composing and appraising*.

- **Performance.** You prepare a performance of 8-12 minutes of music on your chosen instrument or voice. This is recorded and examined externally. In order to achieve the highest grades, students should be performing music of grade 7 standard or above. All styles of music are acceptable, and students are likely to do best performing the type of music they enjoy most. The assessment takes place towards the end of the Upper Sixth.
- **Composition.** You learn to structure and develop creative ideas in various styles and genres. You submit a portfolio consisting of one free composition, and one technical exercise. The free composition is a piece lasting four minutes or more, which may be in response to a brief set by the exam board, with a wide choice of instruments and genres. The technical exercise will demonstrate your ability to use harmonic or contrapuntal procedures from a specific musical genre with control and stylistic understanding; these skills are taught during the A-level course. Students submit a score and a recording of their compositions. Work for examination will be completed during the Upper Sixth, and is marked by an external examiner.
- **Appraising.** You learn about a wide range of set works in different musical styles. You develop your skills of analysis and evaluation, and learn how to relate music to its historical and cultural context. About half the music studied comes broadly from the western Classical tradition; the syllabus also covers music for film and television, popular music and jazz, and music influenced by non-European cultures.



Who is suitable for this course?

In order to do well in A-level Music, you need to have a wide interest in music, and to have participated in music reasonably extensively. It is not a technical requirement to have taken Music at GCSE but it is strongly recommended. To be able to achieve high marks in the performing component, students should have reached Grade 5 standard or better by the time they start the course, although they need not necessarily have taken the exam. Students will need to continue with their instrumental or vocal studies throughout their time in the Sixth Form. All instruments (including voice) and all genres of music are acceptable; the essential thing is a high quality of performance. Parts of the course are notation-based, and students must be able to read music.

Where does it lead?

If you are considering applying for Music at University or Music College, the A level is a required entry qualification. Former Music A level students at OLA currently hold Organ scholarships at Oxford, and instrumental scholarship at Trinity College of Music. It is also an academically rigorous and widely-respected course, which is accepted as an entry qualification for nearly all degree courses. A prominent member of the Law Society was recently quoted as saying that he would rather offer a Law training contract to a Music graduate than to one in any other subject. Music A level students have also gone on to study History, Languages, Drama, English, Engineering, Theology and Creative Writing at University.



Why study music at OLA?

- **Results:** From 2014 every Music A level at OLA has achieved their ALIS prediction or better.
- **Small Class Sizes:** With a subject that is 60% practical, smaller class sizes do enable more individual feedback from the teachers.
- **Leadership:** At OLA we are keen to provide opportunities for our A Level musicians to be leaders. This may be through accompanying younger students, taking lead roles in ensembles or even in running/assisting in running groups. If taking rehearsals, arranging music or learning the art of conducting interests you then we will help make this happen.