GCE AS and A level subject criteria for music and music technology

September 2006

QCA/06/2861

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Advanced subsidiary (AS) and advanced (A) level subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all AS and A level specifications in a given subject. They provide the framework within which the awarding body creates the detail of the specification.

Subject criteria are intended to:

- help ensure consistent and comparable standards in the same subject across the awarding bodies
- define the relationship between the AS and A level specifications, with the AS as a subset of the A level
- ensure that the rigour of A level is maintained
- help higher education institutions and employers know what has been studied and assessed.

Any specification that contains significant elements of the subject music or music technology must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

2. Aims

2.1 AS and A level specifications in music and music technology should encourage students to:

- extend the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to communicate through music and to take part in making music
- engage in and extend their appreciation of the diverse and dynamic heritage of music, promoting spiritual and cultural development
- develop particular strengths and interests encouraging lifelong learning and providing access to music-related and other careers
- recognise the interdependence of musical skills, knowledge and understanding and the links between the activities of performing/realising, composing and appraising.

AS and A level specifications should also encourage students to broaden experience, develop imagination, foster creativity and promote personal and social development.

2.2   A level specifications in music and music technology should extend the skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the AS and provide a basis for further study.

3. Subject content

3.1   AS and A level specifications in music and music technology should build on the requirements for music in earlier key stages including the skills, knowledge and understanding established at key stage 4 and GCSE qualifications.

3.2   AS and A level specifications in music and music technology should require candidates to develop aural perception skills and the ability to:
- make expressive use of musical elements, structures and resources through:
    - interpreting musical ideas (for example presenting performances, performing with others, sequencing/realising, directing ensembles)
    - creating and developing musical ideas (for example improvising, arranging, composing) using innovative and/or established musical techniques
- make critical judgements about the use of musical elements, structures and resources through:
    - listening to, analysing, evaluating and reflecting on own and others' work (for example refining own performances and compositions, reviewing written/published, live and recorded music, comparing different interpretations).

3.3   AS and A level specifications in music should require candidates to:
- gain a depth of understanding of two contrasting areas of study, at least one of which should be taken from the western classical tradition. An area of study might be, for example, a genre, style, musical device, musical process, period of time or contextual influence
- gain a breadth of understanding by being able to place the selected areas of study within a broader musical perspective
- develop and apply, in practical activities, knowledge and understanding of, and specialist vocabulary where appropriate related to:
    - the use of musical elements including harmonic progressions and relationships
    - musical structures including established forms
    - appropriate notations including staff notation

o   the relationship between music and its context, including an awareness of the influences which maintain continuity and cause change.

3.4   AS and A level specifications in music technology should require candidates to:

- gain a depth of understanding of two contrasting areas of study, one of which should reflect a historical and contextual aspect of music relevant to music technology. An area of study might be, for example, a genre, style, musical or technical process, period of time or contextual influence

- gain a breadth of understanding by being able to place the selected areas of study within a broader musical perspective

- develop and apply in practical activities, knowledge and understanding of, and specialist vocabulary related to:

    o   the use of musical elements and musical structures

    o   technical processes relating to sound production, recording and editing

    o   appropriate notations including aspects of staff notation relevant to music technology.

3.5   In addition, A2 specifications in music and music technology should require candidates to:

- demonstrate more finely discriminating aural perception

- use a wider range and more finely developed control and application of specific techniques and conventions

- show increased stylistic awareness in solo and/or ensemble performance/realisation and in composing activities

- increase depth of study within one of the areas selected at AS

- increase breadth of study to include one further area of study

- make more extensive connections, for example between music and its context, between different areas of knowledge and between different aspects of musical activities

- apply the musical knowledge and understanding gained through study at both AS and A level to unfamiliar music.

4. Key skills

4.1   AS and A level specifications in music and music technology should provide opportunities for developing and generating evidence for assessing relevant key skills from the list below. Where appropriate these opportunities should be directly cross-referenced, at specified level(s), to the key skills standards, which may be found on the QCA website (www.qca.org.uk).

- Application of number
- Communication
- Improving own learning and performance
- Information and communication technology
- Problem solving
- Working with others

4.2   AS and A level specifications in music and music technology should take account of the impact of information technology on the way music is heard, created and performed. Some specifications will provide extensive opportunities for developing and generating evidence for assessing the key skill of information technology.

5. Assessment objectives

5.1   The assessment objectives and the associated weightings for AS and A level are the same. Aural perception skills and the application of knowledge and understanding will be assessed within each objective.

5.2   All candidates must be required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives are to be weighted in all specifications as indicated.

Assessment objectives		Weighting	
		Music	**Music technology**
AO1	Interpret musical ideas with technical and expressive control and a sense of style and awareness of occasion and/or ensemble (*performing/realising*).	20–40%	15-35%
AO2	Create and develop musical ideas with technical control and expressive understanding making creative use of musical devices, conventions and resources (*composing/arranging*).	20–40%	15–35%
AO3	Demonstrate understanding of, and comment perceptively on, the structural, expressive and contextual aspects of music (*appraising*).	35–45%	15–35%
In addition, music technology students should:			
A04	Demonstrate effective use of music technology to capture, edit and produce musical outcomes.	—	20–40%
AO5	Demonstrate understanding of and comment perceptively on the technical processes and principles that underpin effective use of music technology.	—	15–25%

5.3   Each objective should be assessed at both AS and A2.

5.4   For music technology, assessment objectives AO1 and AO3 should not exceed a total weighting of 45 per cent.

5.5   AS and A level must require students to develop and present ideas relating to music in a coherent manner. At least one unit of assessment in A level must require candidates to use extended writing or comment articulately through a viva voce.

6. Scheme of assessment

6.1 A level specifications in music will consist of three units at AS and three units at A2, except in Northern Ireland where they will consist of two units at AS and two units at A2.

6.2 A level specifications in music technology will consist of two units at AS and two units at A2.

Internal assessment

6.3 All A level specifications in music may have a maximum internal assessment weighting of 50 per cent. Not more than 25 per cent internal assessment may be located in either the AS or the A2.

6.4 All A level specifications in music technology may have a maximum internal assessment of 65 per cent.

6.5 Where internal assessment is included, specifications must make clear how reliability and fairness are secured, by setting out requirements that ensure the robustness of each stage of the internal assessment, ie:
- the specific skills to be assessed
- setting of tasks
- extent of supervision in carrying out of tasks
- conditions under which assessment takes place
- marking of the assessment and internal standardising procedures
- any moderation process.

Synoptic assessment

6.6 All A level specifications should include synoptic assessment at A2. Synoptic assessment should require students to:
- make connections between different aspects of musical activities
- apply the skills, knowledge and understanding described in the assessment objectives to unfamiliar music
- demonstrate aural perception and aural discrimination.
For example:
- relating music, previously unheard, to styles, genres and traditions experienced in a range of different activities, making judgements based on the identification of musical characteristics that indicate a particular cultural context

- performing/directing music with awareness of stylistic conventions and contextual influences and technical and expressive control
- creating a composition within a clearly defined brief that refers to the use and selection of resources, structural and expressive features and contextual influences, accompanied by a log, review or commentary.

Quality of written communication

6.7   AS and A level specifications will be required to assess the candidates' quality of written communication in accordance with the guidance document produced by QCA.