

Music GCSE: What will students be examined on, and how we can support our students

The exam boards have now released all of the changes for this years exam, this page will outline those changes, giving ideas of what we can all do to support our students.

Unit one – Performance

Students must perform one or more pieces, these pieces must be at least one minutes 30 if solo performance, or two minutes if ensemble.

How can we support our students?

Encouraging students to practice regularly, small and often is the best way. Offer to listen to the students, suggest students record themselves and listen to their playing.

Unit two – Composition

Students must compose one piece, with a minimum duration of two minutes.

How can we support our students?

Students compose in school, using the software in school, so all is covered in school.

Unit three – Listening and appraising

The first section of the paper will have six listening questions, based on the following set works:

- J S Bach: 3rd Movement from Brandenburg Concerto no.5 in D major
- L van Beethoven: 1st Movement from Piano Sonata no.8 in C minor 'Pathétique'
- H Purcell: Music for a While
- Queen: Killer Queen (from the album 'Sheer Heart Attack')
- J Williams: Main Title/Rebel Blockade Runner (from the soundtrack to 'Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope')
- Afro Celt Sound System: Release (from the album 'Volume 2: Release')

There will then be one aural dictation question, with students asked to write down the pitch and rhythm of what they hear, it will be in the treble clef.

The final listening question will ask students to listen to a piece of fusion music, and answer some questions on it, including the names of instruments and musical features that can be heard in the piece.

Section B of the exam will ask students to write an essay. The essay will be based on Stage and Screen, with students being asked to compare Defying Gravity from Wicked, with an unfamiliar piece of stage and screen music.

How can we support our students?

For questions 1-6 and the final essay, ensuring students regularly listen to the set works is the most important thing to do. If you can ask students to talk about the set works, that would be great. Encouraging students to listen to a wide range of fusion music and music for stage and screen would also be a great help in ensuring that all the students reach their potential.