

**Guildford County School
Specialist Music College**

**A Level
Music Technology Course**



**2020 – 2022
Sixth Form Booklet**

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Introduction

Welcome to the A-Level Music Technology Course!

This year will contrast from your GCSE Music studies, as the course is focused primarily on developing your skills in using Technology to create or capture music.

You will find that our expectations become greater. We assume that you can organise your time effectively and we assume that you will communicate any concerns or need for help, clarification or extra 1:1 time. We will also assume that you will always meet deadlines. In Music Technology, we deal with some very delicate expensive, and potentially dangerous equipment if mis-handled, and you are expected to be responsible and respectful towards it.

Our lesson routines remain unaltered. You will still receive lessons schedules that outline both the content of the lesson and the adjoining home learning and independent learning tasks.

Home Learning is set weekly, and for each area of the course namely: Listening and Analysing, and your Producing and Analysing work. Of course, this is also including personal practice and you are welcome to use the music rooms in your PS / free periods with prior notice.

Success will be yours if you can commit to regularly reviewing class notes, regularly engaging with Production Analysis and ensuring that your file is organised and up to date. Make connections between what you create and what you record and analyse. Making consistent and quality entries into your Logbooks for both your Composition and Recording pieces is also essential.

Use this booklet well. It has important information in it that you will need to refer to. It is a working resource and will be used throughout the course. There will be separate published booklets for marking criteria and wider listening examples.

Relish and enjoy the challenges of this course and continue to aspire to reach the very highest possible standards in all that you do.

Equipment & Resources

You will need to have the following:

- A lever arch file for your course - with dividers for: Recording; Composition, Listening and Analysing, Producing and Analysing.
- You will be given a production logbook
- A large storage USB stick or External Hard drive to store work, **in addition** to online mass storage (e.g. Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox etc.)

Studio and equipment booking:

Throughout the course you will have access to use our booking system for make use of the studio, outside of lesson time.

Please note that the studio is a professional working space that is to be used by all. We therefore expect you to treat this space and the equipment with the same sense of ownership and professionalism.

Useful Websites:

https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/Music-Technology/2017/specification-and-sample-assessments/9781446933329_GCE2017_AL_MusicTech_Spec.pdf

<https://learningsynths.ableton.com/>

For those new to Logic Pro X

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QQN_UFVpbk

Study Skills and Independent Learning

After your class lessons, please get into the habit of:

- Looking through your class notes and listen to Music and/or Productions listened to in lessons;
- Make sure your **Production Glossary** and **Production Logbooks** are up to date.
- Regularly engage with unfamiliar music (Old and New) and try to dissect as much as you can with new knowledge, identify techniques, effects, and regularly update your Production Techniques Glossary with examples.
- Always seek to listen to pieces *before* the next lesson. Audio memory is vital!
- Get into the habit of writing down where, when and what you need help with.
- Check your spelling and grammar by reading aloud your work.
- Complete your Listening Work, where possible, with Flat-Response Headphone or Studio Monitors. Make sure you listen through several times and check your work while doing so.

When answering all written questions, we will start by:

- Using Bullet points to clarify the main musical and production features
- Once these are understood, we turn each of these features into short. paragraphs and start to understand essay technique.
- We then focus on introductions and conclusions.
- We then practice under timed conditions.

Production & Compositional Techniques

- Please make sure that you are thoroughly acquainted with basic Music Theory (Can read basic notation)
- Please make sure you have access to a DAW outside of the classroom and. if it is not Logic Pro X, make sure to explore how to use the techniques learned in lessons on your personal DAW.
- Please make sure that all your work is saved properly and that you regularly have backups of your work. A good habit to get into is to think ***“If a file doesn’t exist in three places, then it doesn’t exist”***.
- Production logbooks - are a running dialogue / feedback between student and teacher.

It is important while on this course to expose yourself to as much new music as possible to build up your understanding of different production techniques and styles. There are several tracks that we will be using for guided listening for you to better understand Music Production techniques at different points throughout the history;

- “**Bye bye, love**” (1962) by Ray Charles
- “**Venus in Furs**” (1967) by The Velvet Underground
- “**With A Little Help from My Friends**” (1967) by The Beatles
- “**Ziggy Stardust**” (1972) by David Bowie
- “**Autobahn**” (1974) by Kraftwerk
- “**The Big Ship**” (1975) by Brian Eno
- “**Wanna Be Startin’ Somethin’**” (1982) by Michael Jackson
- “**Sledgehammer**” (1986) by Peter Gabriel
- “**It’s Tricky**” (1987) by Run D.M.C
- “**Kiss**” (1987) by Prince
- “**Play Dead**” (1993) by Bjork
- “**Heresy**” (1994) by Nine Inch Nails
- “**Glory Box**” (1995) by Portishead
- “**Shiver**” (2000) by Coldplay
- “**Vodhosbn**” (2001) by Apex Twin
- “**Weird Fishes / Arpeggi**” (2007) by Radiohead
- “**Canvas**” (2009) Imogen Heap
- “**Gun**” (2013) by CHRVHES
- “**Emerald Rush**” (2018) by John Hopkins

We will refer to these tracks throughout the course, therefore I would recommend **Making a Playlist** of these tracks and familiarising yourself with them.

In addition to this, I would recommend regularly engaging in **newly released music**, across various genres in addition to keeping up to date with modern developments in Music Technology (subscribing to the ‘**Sound on Sound Magazine**’ **YouTube channel** is a good way to keep up to date).

Exams & Deadline Dates:

Mock Exams:

Spring Term 2021

Listening & Analysing and Producing and Analysing Mock Exams - **April 2021**

Coursework:

- Recording – **May / June 2022**– Externally Examined Coursework
- Composition - **May / June 2022**– Externally Examined Coursework

Final Exams (May / June 2022)

- Listening and Analysing – Written exam with listening (1 hour 30 minutes)
- Producing and Analysing – Written exam with practical (2 hours 15 minutes)

Content and Assessment Overview

A Level
Component 1 – Recording (20%) 60 Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One recording, chosen from a list of 10 songs provided by Edexcel, consisting of a minimum of five compulsory instruments and two additional instruments - Total time must be between 3 minutes and 3 ½ minutes. - Logbook and Authentication forms must be supplied.
Component 2 – Composition (20%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One technology-based composition chosen from three briefs set by Edexcel. - Must make use of Synthesis, Sampling & Audio Manipulation and Creative Effects. - Total time must be exactly 3 minutes. - Logbook and Authentication forms must be supplied.
Component 3 – Listening and Analysing (25%) [Exam: 1 Hour 30 Minutes]
Section A – Listening and Analysing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four questions, each based on unfamiliar commercial recordings.
Section B – Extended Written Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two essay questions. - One comparison question, which uses two unfamiliar commercial recordings. - The second essay uses a final unfamiliar commercial recording
Component 4 – Producing and Analysing (35%) [Exam & Practical Task: 2 Hour 15 Minutes]
Section A – Producing and Analysing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will be provided with a set of audio/MIDI materials for the practical element of the exam. - Students will correct and then combine the audio and MIDI materials to form a completed mix, which may include the creation of new tracks or parts from the materials provided. - Five questions related to the audio and MIDI materials provided that involve written responses and practice tasks.
Section B – Extended written response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One essay focusing on a specific mixing scenario, signal path, effect of music technology hardware unit.

Recording Assessment

Students must choose **one song** from the list of 10 songs or artists released for the correct series and produce a stereo mix of that song that meets the requirements listed below. A list of 10 new songs or artists will be released every year. Students must complete a logbook detailing the equipment and techniques used in the recording. In order to be assessed, the recording must meet the following instrumentation requirements:

Compulsory audio instruments

You must record all the instruments in this list.

Each must be played for a total of at least 2 minutes.

- Drum kit recorded with a minimum of four microphones
- Bass guitar or Double Bass
- Electric Guitar
- Lead vocal
- Backing Vocal

Additional Audio Instruments

You must record at least two different instruments from this list.

Each must be played for a total of at least 1 minute.

- Acoustic Melody Instrument
- Acoustic Guitar
- Keyboard

Recordings will be externally assessed for all students. There are **60 marks** available for this assessment. Recordings will be assessed individually, using the assessment grids on the following pages. These criteria assess students' skills in audio capture, processing (EQ, dynamics and effects), and managing the final mix regarding balance and blend, noise and distortion, and use of stereo.

Assessment Criteria

Level 1

- Limited Success of capture / shaping EQ / management of dynamics / use of effects / balance and blend / use of stereo / management of noise, misjudgements detract from the clarity / mix throughout.

Level 2

- Inconsistent capture / shaping EQ / management of dynamics / use of effects / balance and blend / use of stereo / management of noise, misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall clarity / mix.

Level 3

- Competent capture / shaping EQ / management of dynamics / use of effects / balance and blend / use of stereo / management of noise, misjudgements do not significantly detract from the overall clarity / mix.

Level 4

- Excellent capture / shaping EQ / management of dynamics / use of effects / balance and blend / use of stereo / management of noise throughout.

Technology-based Composition Assessment

Students will compose **one piece** from the list of 3 options and compose a stereo mix of that song that meets the requirements listed below. Students must complete a logbook detailing the equipment and techniques used in the recording. In order to be assessed, the recording must meet the following instrumentation requirements:

The options will be:

1. To produce music for a supplied stimulus. The stimulus may be a short film clip, computer game footage, or a descriptive scenario such as an art installation. If the stimulus is a video clip, only the version of the video supplied by Pearson should be used. Audio must not be sampled from any other version of the video.
2. To use a text supplied by Pearson as the basis for a technology-based composition, which may be implemented as a song, or may use readings of the text, or samples made from portions of the text. The meaning of the text must be reflected in the music.
3. To use 'sound bites' (i.e. samples) in a structured way to create a technology-based composition concerning a topic set out by Pearson.

Assessment Bands

There are 60 marks available for this assessment. Students will be graded on how they Create and Edit sound (with synthesis, sampling, creative effects, processing & balance) and Structure Sounds (Response to the brief, stylistic conventions, melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, form and structure).

Level 1

- Limited use of stylistic conventions / structural ideas / rhythmic ideas / texture / synthesis / melodic ideas / harmonic ideas/ sampling / creative techniques that are ineffective.
- Unconvincing Editing of Mix / Sonic Musical Ideas / Flow and Direction to the piece.
- Sonic and musical ideas / Handling of processing and balance is limited.
- Melodies, Textures, Structures, Rhythms and Harmonies are underdeveloped and lack shape, variety, development, fluency and direction.

Level 2

- Inconsistent use of stylistic conventions / structural ideas / rhythmic ideas / texture / synthesis / melodic ideas / harmonic ideas/ sampling / creative techniques that are with some misjudgements.
- Generally convincing Editing of Mix / Sonic Musical Ideas with Flow and Direction to the piece.
- Sonic and musical ideas / Handling of processing and balance is mostly successful.
- Melodies, Textures, Structures, Rhythms and Harmonies are generally effective but may lack shape, variety, development, fluency and direction.

Level 3

- Competent use of stylistic conventions / structural ideas / rhythmic ideas / texture / synthesis / melodic ideas / harmonic ideas/ sampling / creative techniques that are with some misjudgements.
- Excellent Editing of Mix / Sonic Musical Ideas with Flow and Direction to the piece.
- Sonic and musical ideas / Handling of processing and balance are handled successfully throughout.
- Melodies, Textures, Structures, Rhythms and Harmonies are imaginative, effective and consistent and have shape, variety, development, fluency and direction.

Listening and Analysing Exam Assessment

Students will sit one **1 hour 30-minute** exam. This is worth **75 marks**.

Section A – Four questions, each based on an unfamiliar commercial recording supplied by the examiner.

- Section A will consist **of four questions** of 10 marks each, which may include multiple-choice, gap-fill, diagrammatic, short-open and open response questions using unfamiliar commercial recordings as a stimulus (40 marks).

Section B – Two essay questions based on unfamiliar commercial recording supplied by the examiner.

- Section B will consist of **two extended open response questions** (see Appendix 2 for further details). The first will be comparative and based on production techniques and effects processing used on two unfamiliar commercial recordings (15 marks).
- The second will be based on one recording and ask the student to consider the wider musical context (20 marks).

The exam covers the following Musical Styles.

Jazz	Blues	Rock n Roll	Rock	Metal
Soul	Disco & Funk	Acoustic & Folk	Urban	Reggae
Pop	Electronic	Music in Media	Computer game and Film	

The exam aims to assess your understanding of a range of recording and production techniques, identifying and discussing their use in commercial recordings.

The assessed areas are;

Capture of Sound

- Gain structure and how it affects noise and Distortion, The characteristics and suitability of microphone types, The suitability of microphone placement techniques, The advantages and disadvantages of microphone types in terms of polar pattern and frequency response, Advanced microphone techniques and how microphones work.

Synthesis

- How synthesis is used to create sounds and how timbre is affected by a wider range of parameters.

Sampling

- Pitch Mapping, editing samples, Looping and Advanced Parameters

Audio Editing

- How to remove clicks and noise.

Pitch and rhythm correction and manipulation.

- How to correct inaccuracies in pitch, how correct inaccuracies in rhythm and Parameters that allow greater control and creativity.

Automation

- How to use volume and pan automation and automating parameters of plug-ins.

Dynamic Processing

- Uses of compression and gating, core and advanced parameters of a compressor and gate.

EQ & Stereo

- Different types of EQ used in a recording and how parameters affect the sound and Panning

Effects

- Core and advanced Parameters, Reverb, Delay, Modulated Delay, Wah wah pedal, Distortion, Tremolo, Vocal Effects and Lo-Fi

Balance and Blend

- Balance (mixing), Blend

Mastering

- Perceived Volume, Mastering Parameters and Understanding how EQ is used in the mastering process.

Acoustics

- How the live room acoustics affect the recording and Acoustic Parameters

Leads and Signals

- Connectivity including signal path and signal types, the types and uses of leads and Impedance

Numeracy

- Technical Numeracy (Db / Hz / BPM / Oct ft / Semitones & Cents / Mix %)

Levels

- Principles of levels and metering and Levels and metering scales

Students are required to develop knowledge and understanding of the history and development of recording and production technology, from current digital technologies back to the mono, analogue recording technologies in the 1930s, through the following eras:

- Digital audio workstations (DAW) and emerging technologies (c.1996 – present day) Digital recording and sequencing (c.1980 – present day)
- Large-scale analogue multitrack (c.1969 – 1995)
- Early multitrack recording (c.1964 – 1969)
- Direct to tape mono recording (c.1930 – 1963)

Software and Hardware (Digital)

- Digital hardware / software attributes, Digital Sequencing and Digital Audio Workstations (DAW), Digital Consumer formats and Digital Recording and Sampling Hardware.

Hardware: Analogue

- Analogue hardware, Tape Machines, Analogue Consumer Formats, Analogue Effects, Analogue Synthesizers and Electric Instruments.

Producing and Analysing Exam Assessment

Students will sit one **2-hour 15-minute** exam. This is worth **105 marks**.

Section A – Five questions with a selection of written and practical responses based on the audio/MIDI materials.

- Questions 1-4 will be related to the audio and MIDI materials provided and students will create written responses as well as an individual audio bounce/export for each instrument or vocal part that has been edited (61 marks).
- Question 5 will be an extended practical response (24 marks). The question asks students to complete a series of mixing and production tasks and then combine all the instrument/vocal parts to create a finished stereo mix.

Section B – One essay question based on a specific effects process or music technology hardware unit.

- Section B will feature one extended open response question (see Appendix 2 for further details) focusing on a specific recording or mixing scenario, signal path, effect or music technology hardware unit (20 marks)

The exam covers the following Musical Styles.

Jazz	Blues	Rock n Roll	Rock	Metal
Soul	Disco & Funk	Acoustic & Folk	Urban	Reggae
Pop	Electronic	Music in Media	Computer game and Film	

The exam aims to assess your understanding of a range of recording and production techniques, identifying and discussing their use in commercial recordings.

The assessed areas are;

Software and Hardware

- The core and advanced functions of a digital audio workstation (DAW), a range of hardware, other programming environments and new and emerging software, the impact of new and emerging software on music production.

Capture of sound

- Gain structure and how it affects noise and distortion, the characteristics and suitability of microphone types and the suitability of microphone placement techniques, the advantages and disadvantages of microphone types in terms

of polar pattern and frequency response, advanced microphone techniques and how microphones work.

Synthesis

- How synthesis is used to create sounds and how timbre is affected by a wide range of parameters.

Sampling

- Pitch mapping, editing samples, looping and advanced parameters.

Sequencing

- Real-time input, non-real-time input, quantisation, editing skills and how midi works by studying Data Bytes.

Audio Editing

- Truncating, how to remove clicks and noise, how and why clicks and other noises occur and audio editing functions.

Pitch and Rhythm correction and manipulation

- How to correct inaccuracies in pitch, how to correct inaccuracies in rhythm and how parameters allow great control of creativity.

Automation

- How to use volume and pan automation and automating parameters of plug-ins.

Dynamic Processing

- Uses of compression and gating, core and advanced parameters of a compressor and gate.

EQ & Stereo

- Different types of EQ used in a recording and how parameters affect the sound and Panning

Effects

- Core and advanced Parameters, Reverb, Delay, Modulated Delay, Wah wah pedal, Distortion, Tremolo, Vocal Effects and Lo-Fi

Balance and Blend

- Balance (mixing), Blend

Mastering

- Perceived Volume, Mastering Parameters and Understanding how EQ is used in the mastering process.

Acoustics

- How the live room acoustics affect the recording and Acoustic Parameters

Leads and Signals

- Connectivity including signal path and signal types, the types and uses of leads and Impedance

Numeracy

- Technical Numeracy (Db / Hz / BPM / Oct ft / Semitones & Cents / Mix %)

Levels

- Principles of levels and metering and Levels and metering scales