

GCSE Music Qualification Outline – Consultation Version



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Introduction

This document provides a high-level overview of the proposed WJEC GCSE Music Qualification.

It is based on Qualification Wales's Approval Criteria (key sections are included in Appendix 1). Our qualification **must** meet these requirements.

The qualification outline will provide a guide for the development of the Specification and Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs).

Qualification Overview

The construct of the GCSE Music qualification is based on the Welsh Government subject specific considerations for the Expressive Arts¹.

The qualification will:

- through the creative process, allow learners to explore, respond to stimuli and create and reflect on their own work while engaging in rich, authentic experiences.

The following concepts for the GCSE Music qualification are based on the Welsh Government statements of what matter for Expressive Arts²:

- **exploring** the Expressive Arts is essential to developing artistic skills and knowledge and it enables learners to become curious and creative individuals
- **responding** and **reflecting**, both as artist and audience, is a fundamental part of learning in the Expressive Arts
- **creating** combines skills and knowledge, drawing on the senses, inspiration and imagination.

The GCSE Music qualification will support the Curriculum for Wales by supporting the principles of progression³ by:

- encouraging learners to explore, experience, interpret, create and respond to increasingly complex meaning
- developing an increased sophistication of conceptual learning
- more sophisticated use of relevant skills and the ability to transfer existing skills and knowledge into new contexts.

¹ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/expressive-arts/designing-your-curriculum/#specific-considerations-for-this-area>

² <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/expressive-arts/statements-of-what-matters/>

³ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/expressive-arts/principles-of-progression/>

Proposed Qualification Structure

Unit 1: Performing

Practical assessment

32.5% of qualification

Marked by centre and moderated by WJEC

Unit 2: Composing

Practical assessment and reflective log

32.5% of qualification

Marked by centre and moderated by WJEC

Unit 3: Appraising

Digital examination

35% of qualification

Marked by WJEC

- We propose the following percentages for the four assessment objectives:

AO1	Demonstrate and apply knowledge and understanding of a range of music	20%
AO2	Develop and apply performance and/or realisation skills	32.5%
AO3	Reflect on, analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others	17.5%
AO4	Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning in compositions	30%

This will be a linear qualification. Unit 1 and Unit 2 could be completed any time during the two years and submitted to WJEC in the final year of the course. Unit 3 would be completed in the final year of the course.

Unit Information

Unit 1- Performing

The purpose of this unit is to:

- allow learners to explore a range of performing repertoire and select pieces they wish to perform
- allow learners to develop their technical and performing skills by reflecting on their work in an ongoing cycle of practice and improvement
- provide opportunities for learners to perform individually and/or as part of an ensemble and develop the skills required to become proficient
- provide an opportunity for learners to develop personal skills of self-evaluation, resilience, determination and confidence.

This unit will be based on the following concepts and possible content:

- **exploring** – learners will have the opportunity to explore and perform a range of repertoire, from various genres and periods and linked to different cultures in Wales and the world. This could include performing using any instrument, voice, or technology, as a soloist or as part of an ensemble.
- **responding and reflecting** – learners will have the opportunity to reflect on their own work, and the feedback from others to focus their practice, allowing them to develop their practical skills further. They can evidence their self-evaluation and their response to the feedback through improvements in the performances they give, with increased technical ability and communication.
- **creating** – learners will have the opportunity to include improvisation in their performances, and with practice, to become more proficient and confident in this skill. In experiencing the process of creating their final performances they will also be able to interpret repertoire in a way which is appropriate to their own ability and personal style choices.

The unit will take the form of a practical non-examination assessment. Audio recordings and supporting evidence will be submitted in the final year of the course during the summer series. The tasks for this unit will target AO2. It is envisaged that the performance time will be approximately 4 minutes and either solo or ensemble performances, or a mixed submission, would be acceptable. WJEC will allow learners to perform in the style(s)/genre(s) of their choosing and will also support an open choice of instrument, voice or digital technology. In this context “performing” would also include realisation of a piece of music using technology.

Unit 2- Composing

The purpose of this unit is to:

- develop an awareness of the process of creating original music
- develop learners' skills in self-evaluation, refinement and development of their own work
- develop a sense of writing music for a specific purpose
- allow learners to explore creating music in a variety of different genres and styles, from different periods.

This unit will be based on the following concepts and possible content:

- **exploring** – learners will have the opportunity to explore various styles and genres of music linked to different cultures in Wales and the world and understand how they have been created to produce the intended effect. They will be able to use these methods to create and develop their own ideas. They will also be able to compose through exploring ideas in improvisation.
- **responding** and **reflecting** – learners will be able to evaluate and refine their work through reflection and feedback from others to create a successful finished product.
- **creating** – learners will create their own original music in a style of their choosing, and a piece to meet a brief specified by WJEC.

The unit will take the form of a practical non-examination assessment, and a reflective log. Audio recordings and supporting evidence will be submitted in the final year of the course during the summer series.

The mix of tasks for this unit will target AO3 and AO4, with greater emphasis on AO4. Composition briefs will be set by WJEC at the beginning of the course (typically Year 10), for submission during the final year of the course (typically Year 11). Learners will have the choice and flexibility in the selection of the set composition brief for this unit. In addition, learners will also compose in response to their own brief. WJEC will allow learners to compose in the style(s)/genre(s) of their choosing and permit an open choice of instrument, voice or digital technology.

Unit 3- Appraising (Digital Examination)

The purpose of this unit is to:

- allow learners to experience music from different styles, times, and genres.
- allow learners to develop transferable listening skills based on an appreciation of the elements of music and how they are used.
- develop the language of describing and analysing music.
- demonstrate aural skills in relation to familiar and unfamiliar music.
- allow learners to develop as creative musicians through understanding the music of others.

This unit will be based on the following concepts:

- **exploring** – learners will have the opportunity to experience listening to a wide range of music to understand how the composers and performers create the intended effect, tell a story or convey emotions. This will support the work learners complete in Unit 2 Composing, where they will be able to use the techniques they hear, and in Unit 1 Performing, where they will be able to follow stylistic conventions they have heard.
- **responding** and **reflecting** – learners will be able to identify links between different pieces of music in terms of the use of the musical elements, and to respond at their own level to the effectiveness of these in contrasting styles or genres.

The unit will be assessed via a digital examination in the second year of the course, available from the 2027 summer series onwards, with a mix of question types that will target AO1 and AO3, with greater emphasis on AO1. The duration of the examination is likely to be approximately 1 hour, but this will need further exploration regarding permitting learners to replay extracts to answer the questions which is relevant to manageability for both learners and centres. All questions will incorporate audio examples. There will be questions on pieces set by WJEC and on unprepared works. The set works will include pieces: of contrasting styles/genres; from contrasting periods; created in or inspired by Wales; written by a diverse range of writers including those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Consideration of manageability, engagement, reliability and validity

In developing this proposed qualification outline, we have considered manageability, engagement, reliability and validity, and how to balance these considerations in the context of the requirements of the Approval Criteria.

The Approval Criteria require 65% of the qualification to be assessed by non-examination assessment that is marked by the centre and moderated by WJEC. This poses some potential manageability challenges which we propose to minimise by allowing greater flexibility for centres and learners regarding when internal assessments can be undertaken during the two years.

As the Approval Criteria state that the qualification must be linear, all work will be submitted during the final year of the course. However, to aid manageability for centres and learners we propose allowing the freedom to record the practical elements of both the Performing and Composing units at any time during the two years. In addition to this, WJEC intend to release the composition briefs at the beginning of the course, allowing more time for learners to experience, explore and experiment with relevant music styles and genres before they begin to undertake their own composing work. This will allow learners to be assessed after they have undertaken the teaching and learning and developed the required skills and knowledge. We are liaising with Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government about centre capacity to deliver the on-screen assessment.

We believe that our proposed qualification should provide opportunities for centres to develop an engaging programme of study for its learners, in line with the expectations of the Curriculum for Wales. Within the Performing unit, the freedom offered regarding the choice of performance style/genre and open choice of instrument, voice or digital technology will help to make the assessment more engaging for learners. Again, within the Composing unit,

there will be a range of composition briefs with diverse perspectives that will allow learners to explore a local, national or international perspective. These briefs will help to engage learners, facilitating the opportunity to create work which is relevant and creative. In addition, learners will devise their own brief to create a free composition.

We believe that the non-examination assessment tasks we propose for the Performing and Composing units are a valid approach to assessing the purpose and content because they allow students to demonstrate their skills in appropriate contexts. To ensure the reliability of the non-examination assessment, each unit will target the same assessment objective weightings over time. Marking criteria will be developed and teachers will be provided with a package of support to ensure consistent application across centres and over time. We will moderate a sample of candidate work from each centre to provide further assurance of reliability.

We propose varying levels of control for non-examination assessment tasks. For example, within the Composing unit, learners will be given the freedom to explore and create ideas without the need for high-level supervision, providing that centres are able to authenticate the work at various stages throughout the process.

We believe that the purpose and content of the Appraising unit can be validly assessed by examination, and a mix of question types can help us maximise validity. When developing assessments, WJEC will ensure that all tasks target the relevant construct, that there is an appropriate balance of content covered over time and that there is alignment between assessment items and learning outcomes. Where appropriate, we will use data available to us on how an assessment has functioned. To ensure reliability, the examined units will target the same assessment objective weightings and have a consistent level of demand within each series. Marking criteria will be developed and assessors will be trained on how to apply them consistently.

We will continue to consider the balance of manageability, engagement, reliability and validity, at each stage of qualification development.

Appendix 1

Key information from Approval Criteria

The following information has come directly from Qualifications Wales' [GCSE Music Approval Criteria](#) - our qualification must meet these requirements.

Purpose

1. **GCSE Music** must:
 - 1.1 be designed primarily for *Learners* between the ages of 14 and 16
 - 1.2 build on the conceptual understanding *Learners* have developed through their learning from ages 3-14
 - 1.3 support teaching and learning by providing appropriately broad, demanding, relevant and engaging content and assessment that relates to and supports the Curriculum for Wales, including its [four purposes](#)
 - 1.4 allow *Learners* to develop a strong foundation of knowledge, skills and understanding which supports progression to post-16 study and prepares them for life, learning and work
 - 1.5 provide meaningful, fair and accurate information on *Learner* achievement within a subject that highlights what *Learners* know, understand and can do

Aims

2. **GCSE Music** must:
 - 2.1. allow *Learners* to explore a range of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to music
 - 2.2. provide opportunities for *Learners* to be assessed in a variety of relevant and meaningful contexts
3. **The GCSE Music** qualification must support *Learners* to:
 - 3.1. explore music created and performed by other people and develop their own musical talents
 - 3.2. gain understanding of a range of musical forms, styles and genres, and musical elements
 - 3.3. develop knowledge, understanding and appreciation of how meaning is communicated musically
 - 3.4. respond to and reflect on others' music, applying knowledge of context to evaluate the effectiveness of ideas and techniques used to communicate meaning
 - 3.5. apply performance/realisation skills to communicate musically and demonstrate control
 - 3.6. develop creative skills to manipulate musical ideas to communicate meaning
 - 3.7. reflect on, refine and evaluate their own work
 - 3.8. explore the cross-cutting themes of human rights and diversity, including Black, Asian, and minority ethnic perspectives, identity, culture, and contributions

Assessment Objectives

- The assessment of the knowledge, understanding and skills required in the qualification must target the following assessment objectives in line with the indicated weightings, within a tolerance of +/- 5 percentage points.

AO1	Demonstrate and apply knowledge and understanding of a range of music	20%
AO2	Develop and apply performance and/or realisation skills	30%
AO3	Reflect on, analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others	20%
AO4	Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning in compositions	30%

Scheme of assessment

- The **GCSE Music** qualification must be linear.
- The qualification will not be tiered.

The **GCSE Music** specification must include the following assessment arrangements:

- 11.1. a total of 35% of the qualification must be assessed by external examination which must:
- 11.1.1 be set and marked by the awarding body
 - 11.1.2 include, and require Learners to review and respond to, recordings of prepared and unprepared musical performances
- 11.2 over the lifetime of the qualification, external examination must assess Learners on music:
- 11.2.1 of contrasting styles/ genres
 - 11.2.2 of contrasting periods/ contexts
 - 11.2.3 created in or inspired by Wales
 - 11.2.4 written by a diverse range of composers, including those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds
- 11.3 a total of 65% of the qualification must be assessed through practical non examination assessment.
- 11.4 the non-examination assessment must:
- 11.4.1 include a performance unit worth 32.5% of the qualification
 - 11.4.2 be set and marked by the Centre and Moderated by the awarding body
- 11.5 the non-examination assessment must:
- 11.5.1 include a composing unit worth 32.5% of the qualification
 - 11.5.2 be set by the awarding body, marked by the Centre and Moderated by the awarding body.
- 11.6 the non-examination assessments must be submitted in the final year of the course
- 11.7 the non-examination assessment must allow Learners to perform and compose in the style(s)/genre(s) of their choosing

- 11.8 the non-examination assessment must support an open choice of instrument, voice or digital technology
- 11.9 there must be an opportunity for all non-examination assessments to be submitted digitally
- 11.10 as part of the composing unit, Learners must submit a reflective log in a non-prescribed format; this will be compulsory to access the full range of marks
- 11.11 the reflective log must:
 - 11.11.1 be worth no less than 2% and no more than 5% of the total qualification
 - 11.11.2 be worth a fixed number of the marks available
 - 11.11.3 be able to be submitted digitally