Year 11 > 12 Bridging Work
Summer Term 2023

Subject	**Music Technology**
Course	**A-Level**
Awarding Body	**Edexcel**

Contents:

Course/specification overview

Recording 20%	Composing 20%
You will produce a multi-tracked recording of a song, chosen from a list of 10 artists. You will learn about mic placement, editing, dynamic processing, mixing and mastering, and will produce and engineer your song from start to finish.	You will use Logic to create a composition in which technology plays a significant part. You will learn about sequencing, synthesis, sampling, audio manipulation and effects. You will work to a brief which will be released at the start of Year 13. You will have a choice of starting-points for your piece: • A set of words • A set of samples • A video
Listening and analysing 25%	**Producing and analysing 35%**
Similar to a GCSE music listening paper, but with an emphasis on technical/production aspects of the music. There is also an essay component to this exam. This will cover the history of recording and production technology.	A practical exam done on Logic. You are given audio and MIDI tracks to create, correct and edit, and then mix them to produce the final track. There is also a written component.

Our department expectations

- Attention to detail and response to feedback are both crucial to success in this course. If either of these is lacking, you will not reach your potential in music technology. We expect an excellent concentration span and the ability to work at long-term projects with resilience. You will need to act positively on all the feedback you are given.

- You will need to be able to work to deadlines and manage your time well.

- The course involves using a wide variety of equipment, which has been a huge investment for the school. We expect students to care for this equipment, ensuring that everything is put away correctly after use. When using the studio, you need to follow systems for booking, and use your time productively. It is expected that you will get a key from a music teacher, and **lock the studio after use**. Failure to respect the rules of studio use may incur a temporary ban.

- There is a large volume of technical vocabulary and processes to learn for this course. We expect you to work on this, using the guidance that we will provide, and keep your work organised and in a format which will be useful for revision.

- You will be engaging with music from the 1950s to the present day. You will need to have an open mind about unfamiliar styles.

Review/revise

Basic music theory

While music theory itself is not an examined part of this course, you will be composing, and it is necessary to understand how music is put together. The Building Blocks channel on YouTube has some great videos to help you with any aspects of music theory that you need to work on.

Sequencing skills

It will be extremely helpful to acquire some basic sequencing skills before the start of the course. It doesn't matter if you don't have any sequencing software at home – there are free, cloud-based programs that you can use. **Soundtrap** is a really good place to start – you can create a free account and watch the tutorial videos.

Watch

- Although music theory is not an examined part of the course, you will be composing and need to have some musical knowledge. The Building Blocks channel on YouTube has some great videos to help you with any aspects of music theory that you need to work on.
- Introduction to Logic Pro and Tracks in Logic show you the basics of the program we will be using the most.
- Signal flow is one of the most basic things that it is crucial to understand. This video explains it.
- The history of sound recording is essential knowledge. This video is a 30-minute introduction, which you will need to watch for the listening tasks on page 10.
- You need to fill in some gaps in your knowledge if the classics of rock and pop are not your strong point. Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* is an iconic album which is regarded as a pinnacle of achievement, both musically and from a production point of view. This video shows you what went into it. The Beatles are another band which it is essential to know about – watch this documentary.

Listen to

- Do you have gaps in your musical knowledge? If you don't know these classic albums, you really should – they are reference points for music and production. **Listen to them all.**

    - Pink Floyd – *Dark Side of the Moon*
    - The Beatles – *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*
    - Michael Jackson – *Thriller*
    - Radiohead – *OK Computer*
    - Queen – *A Night at the Opera*
    - Portishead – *Dummy*
    - Daft Punk – *Random Access Memories*
    - Boards of Canada – *Tomorrow's Harvest*
    - Brian Eno – *Music for Airports*
    - Nirvana – *Nevermind*
    - Black Sabbath – *Black Sabbath*
    - Thundercat – *Drunk*
    - Burial – *Untrue*
    - J.J.Cale – *Troubadour*
    - Björk – *Homogenic*
    - The Beach Boys – *Pet Sounds*
    - Aphex Twin – *Drukqs*

- https://tapeop.com/podcasts/ Tape Op is just the best music tech magazine there is. They also do podcasts, which are very highly recommended if you want to learn about music production. Please note that some of the interviews may contain swearing or drug references.

- http://strongsongspodcast.com/ is a brilliant breakdown with one iconic song covered in each episode. Listening to these will help you with your aural and analytical skills, strengthen your knowledge of musical concepts and production techniques, and perhaps introduce you to some great new music.

- https://www.ubkhappyfuntimehour.com/ is a music production podcast with top tips in a witty and entertaining style.

Read

Introductory books and reference – all of these are extremely useful

- *Music Technology from Scratch* by Mortimer Rhind-Tutt (ISBN 978-1906178864, Rhinegold 2009)
- *A level Music Technlogy Revision Guide* by James Reevell (ISBN 978-1785586347, Rhinegold 2018): there is a Study Guide as well, but this is actually better
- *AS and A Level Music Technology Guide: New Specification from 2017* by Daniel Plewinski (ISBN 978-1979270540, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform 2017)
- *Understanding Popular Music* by David Ventura (ISBN 978 1780382494, Rhinegold 2012)

Tape Op is the best music tech/production magazine there is, and we highly recommend that you read it – just please be aware that some of the interviews with musicians contain swearing/drug references. You can sign up to receive free copies of the magazine via email, and read a sample copy here.

Books for wider reading – all fascinating in their own right, but especially relevant for those thinking of applying for university music tech courses to show reading around the subject

- *Perfecting Sound Forever: An Aural History of Recorded Music* by Greg Milner (ISBN 9780865479388, Faber & Faber 2010)
- *How Music Works* by David Byrne (ISBN 9780857862525, Canongate Books 2013)
- *Music Production: Discover the Past, Present & Future of Music Production, Recording Technology, Techniques, & Songwriting* by Tommy Swindali (ISBN 978-1913397630, Fortune Publishing 2019)

Research

- Go on a virtual tour round Abbey Road Studios by watching the videos on this PowerPoint. There is a task to complete on this on the next page.
- Get to know a sequencing program. If you have never used one before, set up a free Soundtrap account, and use that – there are excellent tutorial videos.

Complete

1. **Abbey Road virtual tour** (see 'Research' on p9 for details)

   Please complete these questions to demonstrate what you have learned about recording studios.

2. **Composition**

   Create a short piece of music using a sequencing program. This can be in any style you like, but should include the following:
   - Some MIDI tracks that **you have inputted yourself** (i.e. not loops from a library)
   - Some audio that **you have manipulated in some way**. This could be something you have recorded yourself, or you could explore audio stems on the internet. If you want to remix an existing song, search for 'isolated vocals'. By 'manipulated' this at the very least means trimming it at putting it in appropriate place in your piece. But this is only the start – let's see what your imagination can come up with!
   - Some use of **effects –** this can be anything you like.

   If you have an Apple computer, you will have GarageBand. Otherwise, you could use a free, cloud-based sequencer for this project such as Soundtrap. When you have finished your piece, save it as an audio file to show your teachers in September.

3. **Listening and evaluation**

   Choose **one** of the iconic albums listed on page 7, that you think sounds particularly good. Listen to it, research it, and then fill in your answers to these questions. Next, you will need to watch the video on the history of sound recording listed on page 6. There is a task to complete on this in the same document.