

Music theory comparison

Comparison of GCSE subject content and assessment objectives (released January 2015 by the Department for Education and Ofqual respectively) and the ABRSM specification for graded examinations in music theory.

Comparison headings	GCSE subject content (DfE January 2015)	Grades 4 and 5 music theory
Aims and objectives	GCSE specifications in music must require students to develop and demonstrate their musicianship skills through performing, composing and appraising.	<p>ABRSM’s Theory of Music exams give students opportunities to acquire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a knowledge of the notation of western music, including the signs and terminology commonly employed • an understanding of fundamental musical elements such as intervals, keys, scales and chords • skill in constructing balanced rhythmic patterns or completing given melodic or harmonic structures • an ability to apply theoretical knowledge and understanding to score analysis <p>Candidates are assessed on their ability to identify, use and manipulate conventional musical symbols, to complete extracts and to answer questions relating to the elements of music according to the grade-by-grade parameters detailed on the following pages.</p>
Content - practical	<p>Musical elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisation of pitch (melodically and harmonically) including simple chord progressions e.g. perfect and imperfect cadences, and basic melodic devices e.g. sequence • tonality including major, minor and basic modulation e.g. tonic – dominant • structure; organisation of musical material including simple structure e.g. verse • and chorus, call and response, binary and theme and variations • sonority including recognition of a range of instrumental and vocal timbres and articulation e.g. legato and staccato • texture; how musical lines (parts) fit together including simple textural combinations e.g. unison, chordal and solo 	

Appendix B - A comparison of Graded Examinations with relevant GCSEs and A levels

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tempo, metre and rhythm including pulse, simple time, compound time, and basic rhythmic devices e.g. dotted rhythms • dynamics; basic dynamic devices e.g. crescendo and diminuendo 	
<p>Content – theoretical understanding</p>	<p>Musical language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading and writing of staff notation including treble-clef and bass-clef note names, rhythmic notation in simple time, key signatures to four sharps and four flats • major and minor chords and associated chord symbols including traditional and contemporary notation as appropriate e.g. IV or G7 	<p>Grade 4 requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note values • Time signatures including simple and compound duple, triple and quadruple. The breve and double dotted notes and rests. • The staff • Clefs including the alto clef • Sharp, flat and natural signs including double sharp and double flat signs and enharmonic equivalents. • The identification and writing of triads (root position) on the tonic, subdominant and dominant notes in any of the keys set for this grade. • Terms and signs including the recognition and naming (but not writing out) of the trill, turn, upper and lower mordent, acciaccatura and appoggiatura. • Scales and key signatures including all major and minor keys up to and including five sharps and flats, with both forms of minor scales. Technical names for the notes of the diatonic scale (tonic, super- tonic, etc.). Construction of the chromatic scale. All intervals, not exceeding an octave, between any two diatonic notes in any of the keys set for this grade.
<p>Content – historical and contextual studies</p>	<p>Musical contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the effect of purpose and intention (e.g. of the composer, performer, commissioner) on how music is created, developed and performed in different historical, social and cultural contexts • the effect of audience, time and place (e.g. venue, occasion) on how music is created, developed and performed in different historical, social and cultural contexts 	

Appendix B - A comparison of Graded Examinations with relevant GCSEs and A levels

<p>Assessment – practical</p>	<p><i>NB the assessment objectives are likely to contain a mixture of practical and theoretical elements which will be assessed using a variety of means.</i></p> <p>AO1 Perform with technical control, expression and interpretation 30%</p>	
<p>Assessment – knowledge and understanding</p>	<p>AO2 Compose and develop musical ideas with technical control and coherence 30%</p> <p>AO3 Demonstrate and apply musical knowledge 20%</p> <p>AO4 Use appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music 20%</p>	<p>Grade 4 QCF unit (learning outcomes and assessment criteria)</p> <p>LO 1 Answer questions about the notation of music as stipulated for the grade</p> <p>AC1.1 Demonstrate a developing knowledge and understanding of keys, scales and simple harmony</p> <p>AC 1.2 Demonstrate a developing knowledge and understanding of metre and rhythm</p> <p>AC 1.3 Demonstrate a developing knowledge and understanding of form, shape and structure</p> <p>LO 2 Identify, use and manipulate conventional music symbols</p> <p>AC2.1 Respond to music notation with appropriate awareness of its symbols</p> <p>AC2.2 Relate commonly found musical terms and signs to practical meaning, as appropriate to the grade</p> <p>LO3 Respond creatively to set compositional demands</p> <p>AC 3.1 Manipulate conventional music symbols to create coherent musical patterns</p> <p>AC 3.2 Complete musical extracts in an appropriate style</p>