

Table 2. Changes in subject content for GCSE music between 2007 and the present day¹

THREE NATIONS	ENGLAND	NORTHERN IRELAND	WALES
QCA (2007). <i>GCSE subject criteria for music.</i>	DfE (2015). <i>Music GCSE subject content.</i>	CCEA (2017). <i>GCSE specification in music.</i>	WJEC (2024). <i>GCSE music: Specification.</i>
PERFORMING · COMPOSING · APPRAISING			
GCSE specifications in music must require learners to develop their ability in performing / realising and composing, and their listening / appraising skills.	GCSE specifications in music must require students to apply practically knowledge and understanding – including musical vocabulary and notation as appropriate to the context – through the skills of performing, composing, and appraising.	This specification includes the three fundamental musical activities: performing and appraising; composing; and listening and appraising.	Learners will develop knowledge, skills, and understanding in performing, composing, and appraising.
	- Make use of musical elements, techniques, and resources to interpret and communicate musical ideas through playing or singing music, improvising, or realising music using technology with technical control and expression. - Perform music with control, making expressive use of phrasing and dynamics appropriate to the style and mood of the music.	- Create a solo and ensemble performance with technical control and accuracy, and interpret and communicate the composer’s stylistic intentions. - Comment perceptively on the performance and programme; title, composer, and stylistic content; technical challenges; stylistic conventions; and extant recordings.	- Perform music as a soloist and/or part of an ensemble. - Communicate through performance or realisation with technical control, fluency, and expression. - Understand the elements of music and how they are represented in the music performed.
	- Make use of musical elements, techniques, and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and coherence; in free composition and in response to a brief. - Compose music that develops musical ideas, uses conventions, and explores the potential of musical resources.	Create and develop musical ideas; understand, control, and make use of musical resources effectively; and make consistent, effective use of appropriate structure, harmony, texture, rhythm, timbre, and technology.	- Compose music in a choice of styles and to a set brief. - Control the elements of music and musical devices in developing ideas. - Reflect on the compositional process. - Realise compositions using instrument(s), voice(s), and/or technology as appropriate.
	Analyse and evaluate music in aural and/or written form, using knowledge and understanding of musical	Use appraising skills to analyse familiar choral and orchestral music (1600–1910); film	Identify and describe how the elements of music are applied in different genres and styles of music.

¹ For clarity and concision, some specification extracts have been abridged. Direct references aligning with the addition of assessment objectives relating to propositional ‘knowledge and understanding’ (including of musical elements, resources, language, and contexts) are highlighted in bold.

	elements, musical contexts, and musical language to make critical judgements about repertoire within the areas of study. - Use knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical contexts, and musical language to analyse unfamiliar music. - Make critical judgements about music through attentive listening and using appropriate musical vocabulary.	music; Irish traditional music; and popular music (1980–present). - Use appraising skills to analyse unfamiliar choral and orchestral music (1600–1910); film music; Irish traditional music; and popular music (1980–present). - Refer to the appropriate musical elements.	- Study a choice of set works in depth from a variety of diverse genres and styles. - Understand how meaning is communicated musically. - Understand how music is notated and captured.
ELEMENTS • LANGUAGE • CONTEXTS			
GCSE specifications in music must require learners to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of musical elements, resources, and contexts.	GCSE specifications in music must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical contexts, and musical language , and allow students, where appropriate, to apply these to their own work when performing and composing.	Students should be able to comment perceptively on the musical elements in relation to familiar and unfamiliar music from each area of study.	The study of music integrates the activities of performing, composing, and appraising and as such teachers and learners should know and understand the musical terms in the glossary and use them in all relevant contexts.
The use of musical elements, devices, tonalities, and structures.	Musical elements: organisation of pitch including simple chord progressions and basic melodic devices; tonality including major, minor, and basic modulation; organisation of musical material including simple structures; sonority including recognition of a range of instrumental and vocal timbres and articulation; how musical lines fit together including simple textural combinations; tempo, metre, and rhythm including pulse, simple and compound time, and rhythmic devices; basic dynamic devices.	- Melody: sequence, ostinato, riff, etc. - Harmony: diatonic, pedals, cadences, modulations, etc. - Tonality: major, minor, modal, etc. - Form and structure: binary, ternary, verse and chorus, reel, jig, hornpipe, etc. - Timbre: instruments, voices, performance techniques, electronic effects, etc. - Texture: unison, monophony, homophony, layering, etc.	- Articulation: staccato, legato, etc. - Devices: pedal, sequence, etc. - Dynamics: piano, forte, crescendo, diminuendo, etc. - Form and structure: binary, ternary, rondo, verse, chorus, etc. - Harmony: primary and secondary chords, diatonic, chromatic, etc. - Melody: conjunct, disjunct, etc. - Metre: simple, duple, compound, etc. - Musical styles: western classical tradition, jazz, blues, folk, hymn, etc. - Performance techniques: scat, vibrato, pizzicato, etc.
The use of resources, conventions,	Musical language: reading and writing of staff notation including treble-clef	Tempo, metre, and rhythm: including common vocabulary.	- Rhythm: note values, etc. - Technology: panning, phasing, etc.

processes, music technology, and relevant notations including staff notation.	and bass-clef note names, rhythmic notation in simple time, key signatures to four sharps and four flats, major and minor chords; chord symbols including traditional and contemporary notation as appropriate; recognising and accurately using appropriate musical vocabulary and terminology.	· Dynamics and articulation: including common vocabulary.	· Tempo: allegro, moderato, etc. · Texture: homophony, polyphony, etc. · Timbre: strings, woodwind, etc. · Tonality: major, minor, modal, etc.
· The contextual influences that affect the way music is created, performed, and heard, such as different intentions, uses, venues, occasions, resources, and cultures.	· Musical contexts: the effect of purpose and intention on how music is created, developed, and performed in different historical, social, and cultural contexts; the effect of audience, time, and place on how music is created, developed, and performed in different historical, social, and cultural contexts.		
CONVENTIONS · CONNECTIONS			
Learners must develop their aural perception, musical skills, and knowledge and understanding of connections between the musical elements , use of resources and notations , and contextual influences through a contrasted range of three to six areas of study.	Areas of study must provide an appropriate focus for students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding and develop skills across a broad range of musical genres, styles, and traditions. They must encompass repertoire that allows the musical elements , musical contexts , and musical language to be taught in context and allow opportunities for students to demonstrate contextual understanding when performing and composing.	Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of stylistic conventions and the relationship between music and its social and historical contexts; use subject-specific musical vocabulary; and make evaluative and critical judgements on familiar and unfamiliar music.	Learners will have the opportunity to explore various styles and genres of music linked to different cultures in Wales and the world; understand how they have been created to produce the intended effect; and identify links between different pieces of music in terms of the use of the elements of music in contrasting styles or genres.