



**Department for Education consultation on new GCSE, AS
and A Level Music subject content**

19 September 2014

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MPA response to proposals for new GCSE, AS and A Level Music subject content

Background Information:

1. The MPA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Government's review of the new GCSE, AS and A Level subject content. The Music Publishers Association ("MPA") is the trade association for music publishers in the UK, with over 260 members. Our members include all three of the UK's major music publishers, independent pop publishers, classical publishers, production music publishers and also printed music publishers.
2. A number of our printed music publishers are involved in the development and production of specialist content and support materials for the current GCSE and A Level music curriculum. Leaders in this field include Faber Music, Music Sales, Peters Edition and Schott Music.
3. The MPA submission to this consultation reflects input from these music publishers, who are also signatories to this response.

MPA Recommendations:

4. The proposals for the reformed content for Music GCSE, AS and A Level have been generally well received by the music publishing community and we broadly welcome the intended focus on greater intellectual rigour.
5. There are some areas, however, which need to be strengthened in order to provide a more relevant and balanced programme of study at both GCSE and AS/A Level. The suggestions we make below are designed to create a more inclusive programme of study and will better prepare those students who wish to study music beyond A Level or who wish to follow a career in the music industry.

- a. **Music Technology:** The absence of any explicit reference to the teaching of music technology is of great concern to the music publishing community.

Music technology is a vital tool for both classical and popular musicians. Technology is widely used for composition, making arrangements, as a practice and performance tool, as well as for recording.

Increasingly a child's first experience of creating or appreciating music will be through technology – many are likely to have played with 'GarageBand' on an iPad, before they ever pick up an instrument.

Technology is used by all involved in the creation and production of music. Notation software, such as Sibelius, is used for composing or arranging and there are a number of software programs for sequencing and recording available for schools. In particular, an understanding of notation software is crucial for those hoping to study music beyond A Level.

Our publishers have had feedback that the lack of any teaching about music technology, particularly at A Level, is a concern for universities who currently offer a range of music degree courses beyond the traditional Bachelor of Music. The [University of Huddersfield](#), for example, offers ten undergraduate music degrees and many of them require either A Level Music or A Level Music Technology. Our concern is not including any teaching about music technology as part of A Level Music, will mean that students for these newer courses will potentially have to take two music A Levels to be adequately prepared for undergraduate study.

We acknowledge that both the GCSE and A Level specifications mention that music technology can be used in performance – but this is very different from equipping students with an understanding of how to use appropriate technology in other areas of their studies. **We ask the Government to include the teaching of music technology in both the GCSE and A Level content specifications.**

- b. **Intellectual Property:** There is no mention in either the GCSE or A Level specifications of teaching the importance of intellectual property to the creation and subsequent economic value of musical works. We believe that it is vital that students - both dealing with the work of others

and producing their own work -are able to understand and respect the basic principles of intellectual property and copyright. **We would like to see reference in both the GCSE and A Level music specifications, that teaching about intellectual property is included within the programme of study.**

- c. **MPA comments on 'Areas of Study':** Both at GCSE and A Level, the proposed 'areas of study' place too great a weighting on the western classical tradition between 1700 - 1900, meaning it is quite possible that a music student could complete an A Level in music with very little academic teaching of more recent music genres. **We would like to see it made explicit in both the GCSE and A Level specifications that students must study four contrasting areas of music, one of which must be from the western classical tradition. This will ensure the inclusion of many significant composers/songwriters and musicians and give students access to a greater variety of styles and genres including popular music and world music.**
- d. **MPA comments on 'Musical elements/musical contexts/musical language':** At both GCSE and A Level the content specifications for the sections titled 'musical elements', 'musical contexts' and 'musical language' are overly detailed and almost exclusively focused on the forms, structures and vocabulary of classical music.

Whilst we applaud the increased level of intellectual rigour in the teaching of these qualifications – we are concerned that the level of detail required will limit the amount of time for teaching about other forms and structures of music. In addition, the increased focus on the reading and writing of staff notation at GCSE level may well deter students. **We would like to see greater reference made to music outside the western classical tradition e.g. instruments (electric guitar, drums etc), notation (TAB notation and chord names etc) and tonality (modes, pentatonic, blues scale etc).**

- e. **Creativity:** There is a worry that there is not sufficient focus on the importance of creativity in either the GCSE or A Level subject specifications. We are concerned that this will deter some of the more creative and performance led students from taking GCSE Music as an option. There has been a much greater interest in GCSE Music in recent years, and we would like to see this level of interest sustained. In the last year of O Level, 5,000 candidates chose to study Music. In

2013, 60,000 candidates sat a Music GCSE examination. At GCSE in particular, it is important that both the academic and creative elements of music can be studied side by side.

6. One of the aims of the new AS/A Level, as stated in the consultation document, is “to provide access to higher education and university degree courses in music and music-related subjects as well as music-related and other careers.” As currently drafted, the Government’s proposals, with their narrow focus on classical music and the side-lining of both popular music and music technology, will not deliver that objective.
7. We hope that the inclusion of our recommendations within the new curricula for GCSE, AS and A Level Music, will deliver not only an academically challenging programme of study, but also a relevant and inclusive qualification which will better equip students for further study and potentially on to a career within one of the UK’s biggest and most culturally significant industries.

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About the MPA:

The Music Publishers Association (“MPA”) is the trade association for music publishers in the UK, with over 260 members, representing nearly 4,000 catalogues covering every genre of music. Our members include all three of the UK’s “major” music publishers, independent pop publishers, classical publishers, production music publishers and also printed music publishers. We estimate that our members represent around 95% of publishing activity in the UK.

The vast majority of our member companies are small or medium sized enterprises. Many of our member companies are multi-disciplinary music companies, operating not just as music publishers but as record labels, managers, promoters, producers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers.

The MPA is the owner of the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society (MCPS) and of Printed Music Licensing Limited (PMLL), which licenses the copying of sheet music in schools.

www.mpaonline.org.uk

About Music Sales:

Music Sales, under the Rhinegold Education imprint, publishes Study Guides, Revision Guides and a wealth of supporting material for GCSE and A Level music students and their teachers, across the three main exam boards.

www.rhinegold.co.uk/

About Schott Music:

Schott Music are publishers of classical, contemporary and educational music, providing resources for GCSE and A Level music as well as general classroom and instrumental teaching. The Schott catalogue includes guides to composition, styles and techniques from plainchant to minimalism, rock, jazz, blues and music technology, music for film and stage as well as anthologies of listening material from around the world.

www.schott-music.com

About Peters Edition:

Peters Edition has published supporting publications for GCSE and A Level examinations since 1999, and currently produces co-publications for these exams with Edexcel.

www.edition-peters.com/

About Faber Music:

Faber Music is a leading music educational publisher and is uniquely engaged with developments in the UK education market through its links with Sing Up.

www.fabermusic.com