Course Transition

Bridging the Gap
from School to College

Warlingham
Sixth Form College

Year 11 > Year 12 Transition
Summer Term
A Level Music Technology

MUSIC

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Course Summary

A Level Music Technology offers students the opportunity to explore the creative and technical aspects of music production. Through practical work and analytical study, students develop skills in recording, sequencing, composition, and sound engineering. The course is ideal for students with a passion for music, technology, and production, and who may be considering careers or further study in music production, audio engineering, or the wider creative industries.

Exam Board
Edexcel (Pearson) – A Level Music Technology (9MT0)

Component 1: Recording (20%)

Overview: Students produce a high-quality recording of a chosen song from a provided list, using live instruments and studio techniques.
Key Skills:

* Microphone placement
* Multitrack recording
* Mixing and editing
* Applying effects (EQ, compression, reverb, etc.)

Component 2: Technology-Based Composition (20%)

Overview: Students create an original composition using music technology in response to a set brief.
Key Skills:

* MIDI sequencing
* Software instruments
* Creative sound design
* Use of effects and automation

Component 3: Listening and Analysing (25%)

Overview: Written exam based on unfamiliar commercial recordings.
Focus Areas:

* Analysis of production techniques across decades
* Understanding of recording and mixing practices
* Audio editing and effect usage
* Musical elements and technology terminology

Component 4: Producing and analysing (35%)

Overview: Practical and written exam involving the editing, mixing, and production of audio and MIDI materials.
Focus Areas:

* Audio manipulation
* Sound balancing and stereo field control
* Creative and technical problem-solving
* Processing, automation, and effects use

COURSE OVERVIEW

Skills Developed

- Critical listening
- Technical proficiency with DAWs (e.g. Logic Pro, Cubase)
- Studio recording techniques
- Creative composition and arrangement
- Project planning and time management
- Understanding of the history and evolution of music technology

Entry Requirements

- GCSE Music or equivalent experience (preferred but not essential)
- Enthusiasm for music and technology
- Basic keyboard skills and familiarity with music software is beneficial
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Future Pathways

- Degree courses in Music Technology, Sound Engineering, Audio Production, or Creative Music Practice
- Apprenticeships in the music industry
- Careers in music production, live sound, broadcast audio, sound design, or game audio

Why Choose Music Technology?
Music Technology combines creativity with technical skill. It's an exciting, hands-on subject that allows students to produce real-world projects while learning industry-relevant practices. Ideal for those interested in modern music, studio work, and the science of sound.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

College Expectations for Academic Success

The College will work closely with all students and parents to create a purposeful, creative and stimulating environment in which students are encouraged to fully develop - both academically and personally.

We will expect you to take responsibility for your own behaviour and learning. The current College Committee along with the student body have discussed and agreed that students should commit to:

- Ensuring academic success through regular attendance and punctuality at all required registrations, lessons, supervised study lessons and Inspire Periods. Attendance which drops below 95% reduces Key Stage 5 performance by at least one grade, so it is taken very seriously.
- Completing all set tasks on time to the best of your ability, making full use of study periods and homework to enable you to meet all deadlines.
- Using study time effectively by bringing all required equipment and resources with you and making full and regular use of the College study rooms and LRC, respecting the need for silent studying conditions.
- Working closely with all your teachers to develop an effective working relationship based on mutual respect and discussing your work with them on a regular basis and meeting targets set.
- Developing your skills as an independent, self-evaluative learner and work closely with your tutor in monitoring and discussing your academic progress. As an independent learner, if you miss a lesson, it is your own responsibility to find the teacher and catch up with the work missed.
- Organising your work efficiently and effectively into folders for each subject, making full use of individual subject expectations and using Cornell Notes daily to ensure work in your folders is relevant and meaningful.
- Keeping mobile phones out-of-sight in all classrooms and during assemblies so that lessons are not disturbed and/or important information is missed.
- Attending all parents' evenings and arrange appointments with your teachers to discuss your progress and work.

Course-specific Expectations for Academic Success

- Work exceptionally hard, committing to a challenging programme of learning.
- Be prepared to listen to a wide variety of music.

USING CORNELL NOTES

The Cornell Notes system is a note-taking system devised by Walter Pauk, an education professor at Cornell University. It is a proven method that establishes a more effective learning process.

It is designed to help the user think and reflect upon the notes they have made as well as making them more useful for revision purposes.

Please click here to watch a video that explains how to take Cornell Notes properly.

Pre-Course Review & Revise Tasks for A Level Music Technology

1. Listen Analytically

Task: Choose 5–10 commercial tracks from different decades (1950s–present).

Focus on:

- Instrumentation and arrangement
- Production techniques (e.g. reverb, EQ, stereo image)
- Genre characteristics and stylistic differences

Action plan: *Create a listening log noting key features of each track.*

2. Get Familiar with a DAW (Digital Audio Workstation)

Suggested DAWs: Logic Pro, Cubase, BandLab, GarageBand, Reaper (free), or Cakewalk.

Tasks:

- Explore basic MIDI sequencing
- Try recording a short audio sample (voice/guitar/keyboard)
- Add basic effects (EQ, reverb, compression)

Action plan: *If you don't have access to software, use free online tools like BandLab.*

3. Review Basic Music Theory**Key Concepts:**

- Note names and rhythms
- Major/minor scales and chords
- Basic chord progressions (I–IV–V, ii–V–I)
- Time signatures and key signatures

Action plan: *Use apps like musictheory.net or YouTube tutorials to refresh your knowledge.*

4. Research Key Terms in Music Technology

Create a glossary of 20–30 key terms such as:

Compression Reverb Overdubbing Automation Audio interface
EQ MIDI Multitrack

Action plan: *Use sites like SoundOnSound, Point Blank Music School, or your exam board glossary.*

5. Watch/Read Introductory Material

YouTube Channels:

Produce Like A Pro *RecordingRevolution* *Andrew Huang*

Topics to watch:

Mixing basics Microphone types and placement Intro to synthesis and sampling

Action plan: *Make summary notes of any interesting techniques or tips.*

6. Organise Your Digital Workspace

Tasks:

- Set up cloud storage (e.g. Google Drive or OneDrive)
- Create folders for each component (Recording, Composition, Research)
- Learn basic file naming conventions and project saving

Action plan: *This helps with coursework later—organisation is key in Music Tech!*

7. Reflect: Why Music Technology?

Task: Write a short paragraph or blog post on:

- Why you chose the course
- What kind of music/production inspires you
- What you hope to learn

Action plan: *This can be used as a starting point for your portfolio or first class discussion.*

WATCH

Watch/Read Introductory Material

YouTube Channels:
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Topics to watch:
Mixing basics Microphone types and placement Intro to synthesis and sampling

Action plan: *Make summary notes of any interesting techniques or tips.*

Watch videos on HOW bands/producers recorded—take note of microphone placements, microphone types, the mixing desk used, the DAW, the speakers, tape/digital recorders.

Make observational notes on what each does.

Check into the key genres of Popular Music from 1950's Rock'n'Roll right through to current Drill, Trap etc. See what equipment is used in each genres

LISTEN TO

Spotify/Amazon Music/Deezer/Youtube

Listen to loads of different artists and genres of music, all the time, regularly and often!

Consider this as a starting point—many of whom are on this playlist on the Warlingham School You Tube channel—Click the link!

(8) A Level Music Technology Component 3 - YouTube

60s Beatles, Shadows, Kinks, Who, Led Zeppelin, Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Joan Baez,Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Sam Cooke, Otis Reading, Aretha Franklin, Four Tops

70s Abba, Bee Gees, Queen, Beach Boys, Deep Purple, Alice Cooper, Black Sabbath, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, The Temptations, Marvin Gaye, Kool and the Gang, Diana Ross, Chaka Khan, Pink Floyd, ELO, Kate Bush, Billy Joel, Elton John

80s Culture Club, Police, Spandau Ballet, Duran Duran, Guns N'Roses, AC/DC, Bon Jovi, Journey, Luther Vandross, Prince, Michael Jackson, Shalamar, Earth Wind and Fire

90s Take That, Oasis, Blur, Stereophonics, Nirvana, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Metallica, Pearl Jam, Mary J. Blige, Whitney Houston, Bobby Brown.

READ

Core & Specification-Specific Books

1. Edexcel AS and A Level Music Technology Study Guide **Author:** Tim Hallas
   - **Publisher:** Rhinegold Education
   - **Why it's useful:**
   - Tailored directly to the Edexcel spec
   - Covers all four components (Recording, Composition, Listening, Producing)
   - Includes definitions, diagrams, practice questions, and exam-style tasks ☑*A must-have main course text*

2. Edexcel A Level Music Technology Revision Guide **Author:** David Guinane
   - **Publisher:** Illuminate Publishing
   - **Why it's useful:**
   - Clear, concise summaries of key topics
   - Includes revision tips, checklists, and self-assessment tasks
   - Ideal for year 13 revision and mock prep

General Music Technology & Production Books

3. The Music Producer's Handbook **Author:** Bobby Owsinski
   - **Why it's useful:**
   - Insight into real-world production techniques
   - Covers tracking, mixing, working with artists, and gear
   - Written in an accessible and modern style □ *Great for developing your Component 1 and 2 skills*

4. Music Technology from Scratch **Author:** Mortimer Rhind-Tutt
   - **Publisher:** Rhinegold
   - **Why it's useful:**
   - Beginner-friendly guide to DAWs, MIDI, effects, and mixing
   - Good for students with limited prior experience
   - Links theory to practice

Mixing, Recording, and Studio Craft

5. Mixing Secrets for the Small Studio **Author:** Mike Senior
   - **Why it's useful:**
   - Practical advice on mixing with limited equipment
   - Breaks down complex ideas into easy steps
   - Especially useful for coursework (Recording and Production)

6. Modern Recording Techniques **Authors:** David Miles Huber & Robert E. Runstein
   - **Why it's useful:**
   - In-depth explanations of studio equipment and signal flow
   - A bit more advanced, but great for stretching top students

Enrichment & Wider Reading

7. How Music Works **Author:** David Byrne (of Talking Heads)
   - **Why it's useful:**
   - Explores how music and technology have shaped one another
   - Insightful and thought-provoking for creative thinking

8. Perfecting Sound Forever **Author:** Greg Milner
   - **Why it's useful:**
   - History of recorded sound, from wax cylinders to Pro Tools
   - Helps students understand the evolution behind the exam topics

RESEARCH

Research thoroughly the concepts for each component of the course.
Have a strong working knowledge of the core concepts.

Component 1: Recording (20%)

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COMPLETE

1. Listening Analysis Tasks
Task: Choose 3–5 tracks from different decades (1950s –present) and analyse:

- Instruments used
- Production techniques (reverb, panning, EQ, etc.)
- Stereo vs mono elements
- Recording quality and style

Write short notes or create a table comparing each track.

2. DAW Exploration (Digital Audio Workstation)
Task: Open a DAW (e.g. BandLab, GarageBand, Cakewalk, Logic Pro if available) and:

- Record a simple MIDI melody or beat
- Try using 3 effects: EQ, reverb, and compression
- Import a sample and manipulate it (cut, stretch, reverse, etc.)

Free option: BandLab.com (browser-based, no install needed).

3. Basic Music Theory Refresher
Task: Review and practise:

- Note names on the keyboard
- Major and minor scales
- Chord building (triads, seventh chords)
- Common progressions (I–IV–V–I)

Use sites like musictheory.net or the Tenuto app.

4. Watch & Reflect
Task: Watch 2–3 videos from YouTube creators like:

- Produce Like A Pro
- RecordingRevolution
- Andrew Huang

Reflect: What's one new thing you learned about:

- Recording vocals/instruments?
- Mixing techniques?
- Creative use of effects?

Write a paragraph or make a quick bullet point summary.

5. Music Technology Glossary

Task: Research and define 20–30 key terms:
Examples:
Reverb, Compression, EQ, Automation, DAW, Overdubbing, Latency, Bounce, Stereo field, High-pass filter-
Create a glossary in your notes or on Quizlet.

6. Short Research Projects
Choose **one** or more:

- The history of recorded music (vinyl → digital)
- The role of a music producer
- How sampling changed pop and hip-hop
- How music for games is created

Write a short 300-word summary or make a one-slide presentation.

 7. Organise Your Files & Workspace
Task: Set up your digital space:

- Create folders for *Recording*, *Composition*, *Research*, and *Notes*
- Try saving and exporting a short audio project
- Practice naming files clearly (e.g. Track1_Demo_mix1.wav)

Good habits from the start make coursework much easier!

8. Personal Reflection: Why Music Technology?
Task: Write a short paragraph:

- Why did you choose this course?
- What kind of music inspires you?
- What do you hope to learn or create?

This can be your first page in a coursework or portfolio file.

Bonus Challenges

- Record a short podcast or soundscape
- Recreate the rhythm or melody of a song using only household objects
- Try identifying effects in popular songs (e.g., gated reverb on drums in 80s tracks)

A Level Music Technology – Core Glossary

Recording & Microphones

- **Microphone Types:**
- **Dynamic Mic** – Durable, handles loud sounds (e.g., live vocals, drums)
- **Condenser Mic** – Sensitive, used in studio vocals or acoustic instruments
- **Ribbon Mic** – Smooth response, fragile, often used on strings or brass
- **Polar Patterns:**
- **Cardioid** – Picks up sound mainly from the front
- **Omnidirectional** – Picks up sound equally from all directions
- **Figure-of-8 (Bidirectional)** – Picks up sound from front and back
- **Proximity Effect** – Bass boost that occurs when a mic is very close to a sound source
- **DI (Direct Injection)** – Recording an instrument (like bass/guitar) directly into the interface or mixer

Mixing & Processing

- **EQ (Equalisation)** – Adjusts frequency balance of a sound (bass, mid, treble)
- **Compression** – Controls dynamic range by reducing volume of loud sounds and boosting quieter ones
- **Limiter** – Prevents audio from exceeding a set volume limit
- **Gate (Noise Gate)** – Cuts out unwanted low-level noise
- **Reverb** – Simulates space/room reflections
- **Delay** – Adds echoes of the sound at set time intervals
- **Panning** – Positioning a sound in the stereo field (left–right)

Effects & Automation

- **Chorus** – Creates a thicker sound by duplicating and slightly detuning signals
- **Flanger** – Similar to chorus, but with more pronounced sweeping effect
- **Phaser** – Uses phase shifting for a swirling effect
- **Distortion/Overdrive** – Adds harmonic saturation and grit to audio
- **Automation** – Programming changes in volume, pan, effects over time

MIDI & Sequencing

- **MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface)** – Data used to trigger sounds in software instruments
- **Quantisation** – Aligns notes to the grid for rhythm correction
- **Velocity** – How hard a note is played (affects dynamics)
- **Sequencer** – Software used to arrange, edit, and play MIDI/audio

Studio Workflow

- **Multitracking** – Recording instruments/vocals on separate tracks
- **Overdubbing** – Recording new parts over existing tracks
- **Bouncing/Rendering** – Combining tracks or exporting final audio
- **Latency** – Delay between input and hearing output
- **Sample Rate** – Number of samples per second in digital audio (e.g., 44.1kHz)
- **Bit Depth** – Detail of each sample (e.g., 16-bit, 24-bit)

Composition & Sound Design

- **Synthesis** – Creating sounds using oscillators and filters (subtractive, FM, wavetable, etc.)
- **Sampling** – Using recorded audio (e.g., a vocal snippet or drum hit)
- **Looping** – Repeating a section of audio/MIDI
- **Audio Editing** – Cutting, stretching, reversing, or pitch-shifting audio clips

Technology History & Context

- **Mono** – Single audio channel
- **Stereo** – Two audio channels (left and right)
- **Tape Saturation** – Natural distortion from analog tape recording
- **Digital Audio Workstation (DAW)** – Software like Logic, Cubase, Pro Tools

Exam & Analysis Terms

- **Production Technique** – A method used in the creation/mixing of music
- **Musical Element** – Pitch, rhythm, texture, structure, timbre, etc.
- **Genre Characteristic** – A stylistic feature typical of a genre (e.g. breakbeats in drum & bass)
- **Balance** – The level relationships between instruments in a mix

Bonus Terms (for stretch/challenge)

- **Sidechain Compression** – One sound triggers compression on another (e.g. kick ducking synth)
- **Parallel Processing** – Blending a processed signal with the original (e.g. parallel compression)
- **Bus (or Aux)** – A channel used to group or apply shared effects to multiple tracks