



HEANOR GATE SCIENCE COLLEGE

“Develop all learners to achieve their full potential”

“Create a culture of aspiration”



Music

Our course is broken up into three components:

- Performing (30%) (*solo* - 15%, *ensemble* - 15%)
- Composing (30%) (*set brief* - 15%, *‘free’ composition* - 15%)
- Appraising (40%)

Each of these components needs plenty of **practice**.

‘Great Minds and How to Grow Them’ (Berliner & Eyre) describe **practice** as the ability to...:

- *‘train and prepare through repetition of the same processes in order to become more proficient at them’*
- *‘concentrate and focus on what you are learning so that you can refine and improve what you do’*

To become good at anything needs practice - even if you are not intending to be some kind of maestro.

Practice works best when:

- It’s regular
- It’s deliberate and planned
- You are always working towards achievable incremental goals
- You practice what you *can’t* do well, rather than what you can

PERFORMING

GCSE students will have been given a **yellow home rehearsal booklet** to log when they practice, to evaluate their progress and to set targets looking at what to work on next. The back of the booklet will have weekly advice from their teacher as to what they specifically need to work on for that week.

Generic step-by-step advice:

1. Break down the whole piece into smaller chunks (e.g. 8 bars, section A etc.)
2. Work out the pitches (notes) and play them in order
3. Work out the rhythmic pattern of these notes and play them *slowly* in time with a regular pulse (*If on a piano - play right hand first, then left hand, then both hands together*)
4. If there is a particularly tricky bar / part, **repeat that bar** over and over and over (slowly at first, then build up to the required speed)
5. As a rule, you should be able to play a section **five consecutive times without mistakes** to prove that you *really* know it

At times, practice will require perseverance:

- Keeping going and not giving up, even in the face of obstacles and difficulty
- Persisting in effort
- Working diligently and systematically
- Not being satisfied until you’ve delivered high quality and precise work



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Most GCSE music students find composing more difficult than performing. Luckily, the assessment criteria looks for a demonstration of understanding techniques used in music rather than creating something entirely original. GCSE composers should seek to compose a piece that *sounds a bit like an existing piece*. It would be advantageous to utilise features from the **set works** (see Appraising section).

Here is a step-by-step method for composing that can be followed to *begin* a composition in any style. Students will have experienced a demonstration in class:

1. Choose a key (e.g. C major)
2. Complete a chord chart for you chosen key
3. Using chords from your chart, create a 8-bar chord sequence
 - a. Start with chord I
 - b. The last two chords need to form a **cadence** (e.g. perfect cadence V-I)
 - c. Fill in the other bars with chords from your chart
4. Decide which **inversion** of the chord you are going to use and how you are going to play your chords
5. Choose a **bass note** for each chord (most should be **root notes**)
6. For each chord, select a **harmony note** (a note from the chord) for your **melody**
 - a. Try and make some kind of pattern with your choices; ascending / descending, leap/step
 - b. Don't use too many root notes
7. 'Join up' each **melody** note with **non-harmony notes** (notes *not* from the chord) to make your **melody** more interesting
8. What **stylistic features** from the chosen genre could you add?
9. Repeat steps 1-8 for **other** sections, but in a different keys (e.g. A minor)
10. Arrange your sections into a **structure** (e.g. Ternary form = Section A / Section B / Section A)

APPRAISING

This is assessed in the final exam at the end of the course. Appraising skills should be developed throughout the GCSE course. Students need to be able to listen to music and comment on the musical elements (pitch, dynamics, structure, texture, sonority, tempo / metre / rhythm, tonality). The majority of the exam is based on the **EIGHT set works**. These are studied in lessons and should be regarded in a similar fashion to the set texts in English Literature. Regular listening and analysis of all set works is **essential** to a successful exam.

For **each set work** students should regularly:

1. Listen to the pieces and follow the music from their copy of the score
2. Link the notable features highlighted in lessons to what they are hearing
3. Be able to recall the '**identify**' features from **each page** of their revision guide (e.g. a student asked 'Purcell - structure' should respond 'ternary form')
4. Be able to **describe / analyse / explain** features when prompted in a specific area (e.g. '**Describe** the instrumentation of the Bach set work' should be answered with 'use of concertino and ripieno instruments' and then be able to elaborate further)
5. Be able to **compare** features across the set works (e.g. How is 'Killer Queen' similar / different to 'Defying Gravity' in terms of structure?)