

Arranging supplementary materials

Specification requirements and assessment criteria

OCR

Arrangement falls under Unit B352, making up 10% of the total GCSE mark. It must be related to AoS 2 (Shared Music – an arrangement of a piece for two or more players), AoS 3 (Dance Music – an arrangement of a piece in the style of a dance of the candidate's choice) or AoS 4 (Descriptive Music – an arrangement of a piece adapted to convey a different mood from the original). There is a maximum length of 5 minutes and no minimum length, but the piece should be long enough to demonstrate the full extent of the student's ability. The candidate is allowed 12 hours to complete the arrangement under controlled conditions. It must be submitted as a recording, accompanied by a score or detailed annotation, a brief (assessed in the log book), and a copy of the stimulus material.

For the assessment, the core criteria (marked out of 15) are in six mark bands. The features assessed here are: the stylistic unity of the arrangement, the extent and sophistication of the reworking of the stimulus material, and the structural unity. There are also area of study criteria, marked out of 5, where the arrangement is assessed as to how fully the candidate has demonstrated their understanding of the relevant AoS in their arrangement. So, for example, in AoS 2, they should display a good grasp of idiomatic writing for their chosen instruments. Finally, there is the log and evaluation, marked out of 10. The highest marks are awarded for responses that display a high level of musical understanding, and the more comprehensive and detailed answers tend to receive the highest marks here.

Edexcel

Arranging is included as an option under Unit 2 (5MU02). Here, candidates are required to complete two coursework tasks, which may be two compositions, one composition and one arrangement, or two arrangements, with each piece of work being worth 15% of the total GCSE mark. Students are allowed 10 hours to complete each coursework task. Each arrangement or composition must be based on a different area of study: AoS 1 (any structure from the period 1600–1899), AoS 2 (Music in the 20th Century), AoS 3 (Popular Music in Context) or AoS 4 (World Music).

Assessment is based on three compulsory criteria (the use and development of ideas, exploration of the medium and choice of material/extent of change/impact) and three optional ones (three from: melodic interest, harmony/accompaniment, texture, tempo/rhythm, dynamic contrast, use of technology and overcoming technical problems).

Resources

The most useful preparation for the arranging task is to look at some examples of real-life arrangements.

Cover versions by groups such as McFly and Bananarama display much less creativity, and you could use these to explain the difference between a good arrangement and a cover version.

For **classical** arrangements, Mozart and Beethoven variation sets on popular songs of the day, such as *Ah! Vous dirai-je, madam* (*Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*) and *God Save the King* are good starting points. **Folk-song** arrangements by Britten, Holst, Vaughan Williams and Bartók are also useful.

A good example of a **jazz** arrangement is *Summertime*, by Miles Davis and Gil Evans, based on the song of the same name from George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. This demonstrates all the different ways of developing a stimulus: reharmonisation, textural change, plenty of melodic development, a new bass line, new instrumentation and a new tempo, all of which combine to bring about a radical change of mood.

For **pop music** arrangements, try looking at a pop standard, such as a Beatles song. Find out which groups have recorded arrangements (for instance by looking up the song title on Wikipedia) and then track down recordings (for instance on YouTube). For instance, with *Help!*, Deep Purple's version incorporates an effective change of style to progressive/hard rock, a change of instrumentation, use of additional effects, a new structure and several new sections. However, there is not much harmonic or melodic development in the main body of the song. The Carpenters' version also features a change of style, and contains many added backing vocals and harmonic changes. There is a good punk version by the Damned.

Further reading

There is a good section on arranging in Rhinegold's *Edexcel AS/A2 Music Technology Study Guide*, second edition, by Jonny Martin

Christopher Norton, *Essential Guide to Pop Styles* (Boosey and Hawkes 1994) and *Essential Guide to Latin Styles* (Boosey and Hawkes 1996)