

A LEVEL
Transition Guide

MUSIC

H543
For first teaching in 2016

Transition guide KS4-KS5 Topic: Composition

Version 1



A LEVEL MUSIC

Key Stage 4 to 5 Transition guides focus on how a particular topic is covered at the different key stages and provide information on:

- Differences in the demand and approach at the different levels;
- Useful ways to think about the content at Key Stage 4 which will help prepare students for progression to Key Stage 5;
- Common student misconceptions in this topic.

Transition guides also contain links to a range of teaching activities that can be used to deliver the content at Key Stage 4 and 5 and are designed to be of use to teachers of both key stages. Central to the transition guide is a Checkpoint task which is specifically designed to help teachers determine whether students have developed deep conceptual understanding of the topic at Key Stage 4 and assess their 'readiness for progression' to Key Stage 5 content on this topic. This checkpoint task can be used as a summative assessment at the end of Key Stage 4 teaching of the topic or by Key Stage 5 teachers to establish their students' conceptual starting point.

Key Stage 4 to 5 Transition Guides are written by experts with experience of teaching at both key stages.

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Key Stage 4 Content

GCSE content

- Organisation of pitch (melodically and harmonically) including simple chord progressions, perfect and imperfect cadences, and basic melodic devices e.g. Sequence
- Structure: organisation of musical material including simple structure e.g. verse and chorus, call and response, binary and theme and variations.
- Texture: how musical lines (parts) fit together including simple textural combinations e.g. Unison, chordal and solo.



Key Stage 5 Content

A Level Content

- Make expressive use of musical elements, structures and resources through:
 - Creating and developing musical ideas (for example improvising, arranging, composing) using innovative and/or established musical techniques
- Develop and apply, in practical activities, knowledge and understanding of, and specialist vocabulary where appropriate, related to:
 - the use of musical elements including harmonic progressions and relationships
 - musical structures including established forms
 - appropriate notations including staff notation; the relationship between music and its context, including an awareness of the influences which maintain continuity and cause change.

Comment

The transition from KS4 to KS5 requires students to be able to use appropriate notation with more confidence than they have done so far. At KS4 students are usually encouraged to compose by trying out ideas, either on their instrument, at a keyboard or using music technology. While this is still a good way to begin composing at KS5 and is a necessary part of the creative process, students also need to be able to focus more on the structure of their piece as well as specific musical devices and techniques and to understand how other composers have utilized these techniques successfully.

As part of the transition to KS5, the introduction of some of these composing skills is an excellent way to introduce them to working on a longer composition. Composing a melody using structured 2 and 4 bar phrases, decorating a melody, adding chords or a second part are all essential skills that are needed.

In an introduction to composing at KS5, students should also be introduced to a variety of composers' work and should look at how these composers have made use of the different techniques. For example, Bach 2 part writing and chorales, Classical String Quartets and Classical piano style. Romantic piano accompaniments and twentieth century styles such as Impressionism can all be investigated. A further focus when teaching composing involves listening to a huge variety of music and analysing the techniques used. Many music students find it very difficult to start composing and this is not surprising if they have little experience of different styles of music and only listen to one particular genre out of lessons. A complete immersion in as many different styles as possible can only be of advantage to a music student starting to compose at KS5 level and a listening diary where a student can note down pieces they have listened to and the features and techniques used is a good way of going about this.

Activities

Composing ideas

TES Resources:

This resource provides students with lots of useful ideas for composing in different styles. It takes students through a variety of styles such as Blues, Jazz and Rock music.

<https://www.tes.co.uk/ResourceDetail.aspx?storyCode=6085465&>

Melody writing practice

TES Resources:

This is a useful student resource giving ideas on melody writing. It focuses on different ways to extend a melody such as sequence. There is an exercise for student completion.

<https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Melodic-Writing-Activity-6332551/>

Pentatonic composition

TES Resources:

A power point and student worksheets making use of the pentatonic scale as a useful composing technique.

<https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Pentatonic-composition-QandA-phrasing-6078677/>

Compose a 16 bar melody:

Start by composing a 2 bar question in 4/4 time and then compose a 2 bar answer to it. This can then be extended to a 16 bar melody by repeating the first four bars, then writing a new 4 bars before repeating the first four bars again.

The new four bar phrase (line 3) can include a one bar sequence as an introduction to a different composing skill and the ending should finish on the tonic whereas lines 1 and 2 can finish on a different note.

As an extension to this task students can work on adding a simple accompaniment such as one chord per bar in semibreves.

Here is the [checkpoint task](#) to give students:

Melody and harmony composing steps:

1. An easy way to add an accompaniment is to use a drone. This can be just one note but is often two notes, usually the tonic and dominant of the key. Try writing a simple melody and adding first a one note drone. Then try a two note drone. Experiment with long notes or repeated notes.
2. Try composing a simple bass line in semibreves. Add a melody above this, also in semibreves. Now try to decorate your semibreve melody by adding extra notes such as passing notes, extra harmony notes etc to make a more interesting melody
3. This time start from a chord pattern. Choose four chords as your starting point. Try writing a melody in crotchets to go with the chords using just notes available in the chords. Now make the melody more interesting by adding non chord notes such as passing notes, auxiliary notes and make use of some quavers to add interest to the original crotchet rhythm

You can extend this by writing a different four bars in the same way. This can be turned into a 16 bar melody by repeating phrases as desired. Instead of writing the chords as semibreves you can play them as broken chords.

Note: there is a separate student version of this checkpoint task for use in class on the OCR web site.

Mapping KS4 to KS5

Possible Teaching
Activities (KS4 focus)Checkpoint task
(KS4 focus)Possible Teaching
Activities (KS5 focus)Possible Extension
Activities (KS5 focus)Resources, links
and support

Activities

Chord progressions

TES resources:

This is a useful power point presentation which goes through the basics of chord progressions.

<https://www.tes.co.uk/ResourceDetail.aspx?storyCode=6003162&>

Introduction to composing

TES resources:

<https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Introduction-to-Composing-OCR-6257239/>

Analysis for composition

TES resources:

<https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Analysis-for-Composition-6357154/>

Activities

Chord configurations

TES resources:

This website provides detail about the notes in different chords such as diminished and augmented.

Students can transfer the information into other keys and practise playing them at the keyboard. This is a useful task for guitarists also to complete at the keyboard for them to gain further understanding of the chords they probably use on a regular basis.

<https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Chord-configuration-6322754/>

Introduction to composing

TES resources:

This website is a composing guide which can be dipped into as required. The guide gives ideas for focused listening work and suggestions for the requirements when composing a piece for GCE.

There are some clear student worksheets on rhythm, melody and harmony that can be attempted

<https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/-and-39-Start-Composing-and-39-Booklet-6087583/>

Mapping KS4 to KS5

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Resources, links and support

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To find out more about GCSE and A Level reform please visit:
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse-and-a-level-reform>

Useful external Links:

- Musical Futures – attend courses and network with other teachers to teach music musically!
<https://www.musicalfutures.org/>
- Share resources and join in conversations - <https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resources/>



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