



Department for Education Consultation on Music Technology A and AS level for first teaching in September 2017
Closing date 24th September 2015

This is the response to the Department for Education's consultation on Music Technology A and AS Level from the Music Education Council (MEC), which is the umbrella organisation for the music education sector across the UK. Through its corporate and individual members MEC represents tens of thousands of music educators across the four countries. This response has been prepared by MEC Executive Member Christopher Walters in consultation with key members of MEC with an interest in aspects of music technology.

MEC agrees with the proposal to differentiate more clearly between music and music technology A level in terms of qualification content. However, it is important that this does not result in music technology becoming a subject for sound engineers and producers only. Music technology is also a creative practice, equivalent to composing or performing on any musical instrument.

This aspect of music technology is available to a wide cohort of learners who may have been excluded from more 'traditional' forms of music education by disability or socioeconomic/cultural factors. It is important therefore that music technology A level embraces and validates this form of creative musical practice as well as exploring the technical side of the discipline.

MEC member organisations have pioneered the use of music technology as a creative tool for learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and have championed the use of music technology with learners who may have been excluded from more formal learning and creative environments. The positive impact that technology can have on music making for a wide range of learners has been documented.

A number HE institutions offer music technology degrees with a focus on creative practice rather than sound engineering. The MEC would argue that music technology A level should serve to prepare learners for courses of this nature as well as for courses that focus on technical aspects such as sound engineering.

To summarise, MEC would propose a version of music technology A level that recognises a student with a GCE qualification in Music Technology as both a skilled musician and technician. To achieve this the qualification would combine sound engineering and production techniques with opportunities to explore music technology as a creative practice. Together, these two important aspects could be underpinned by an academic understanding of creative artists working in the field of music technology as well as an understanding of recording and production techniques and their history. It is MEC's view that a music technology A level along these lines would best reflect the world of music technology as it exists today, and would therefore best serve the needs of learners and HE Institutions.

MEC would be pleased to co-ordinate the expertise of its membership across the music education sector to contribute to the necessary revision of these proposals. MEC also requests a meeting of

key organisations with DfE and Ofqual, which MEC is happy to co-ordinate to ensure a representative small group.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ARuggles', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Angela Ruggles
General Manager
The Music Education Council
admin@mec.org.uk



Ofqual Consultation on Music Technology A and AS level for first teaching in September 2017
Closing date 24th September 2015

This is the response to Ofqual's consultation on Music Technology A and AS Level from the Music Education Council (MEC), which is the umbrella organisation for the music education sector across the UK. Through its corporate and individual members MEC represents tens of thousands of music educators across the four countries. This response has been prepared by MEC Executive Member Christopher Walters, in consultation with key members of MEC with an interest in aspects of music technology.

1. A need for more Creativity

MEC agrees with the proposal to differentiate more clearly between music and music technology A level in terms of qualification content. However, it is important that this does not result in music technology becoming a subject for sound engineers and producers only. Music technology is also a creative practice, equivalent to composing or performing on any musical instrument.

This aspect of music technology is available to a wide cohort of learners who may have been excluded from more 'traditional' forms of music education by disability or socioeconomic/cultural factors. It is important therefore that music technology A level embraces and validates this form of creative musical practice as well as exploring the technical side of the discipline.

MEC member organisations have pioneered the use of music technology as a creative tool for learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and have championed the use of music technology with learners who may have been excluded from more formal learning and creative environments. The positive impact that technology can have on music making for a wide range of learners has been documented.

A number HE institutions offer music technology degrees with a focus on creative practice rather than sound engineering. The MEC would argue that music technology A level should serve to prepare learners for courses of this nature as well as for courses that focus on technical aspects such as sound engineering.

2. Greater acknowledgement of digital technologies

Most applications of music technology are now digital. This is likely to become increasingly so in the near future. A greater focus on digital technologies (including computer programming and programming environments) is therefore necessary in developing students' skill set and preparing them for HE study and for careers in music technology. For these qualifications to be relevant in the real world, it is essential that they include a wider range of contemporary digital composition practices, including object-orientated programming, physical computing for sound, and how to use controllers with software in performance.

3. Assessment

In order for this qualification to serve as a meaningful preparation for HE study or employment the assessment needs to reflect real-world situations within the music industry. These take place over

time and in situ, and cannot be assessed under exam conditions. While our members recognise that there is a place for the exam (for instance, to test knowledge of the physical characteristics of sound), they hold the view that the 60%/40% balance between exam and non-exam assessment is inappropriate, and should be at the very least reversed. A student's musicianship cannot be assessed if she is sitting at a desk. Our view is informed by numerous research studies which show what motivates secondary school-age students and how assessment best serves effective learning.

4. Gender balance

Some of our members have expressed a concern regarding gender balance. Including a greater diversity of music technologies, as suggested above, will help to emphasise the relevance of this field of study to females, as many pioneers in creative music technology were (and are) women. Moreover there is a growing number of female practitioners working in coding, production, engineering, composition for media, live performance and sonic arts.

To summarise, MEC would propose a version of music technology A level that recognises a student with a GCE qualification in Music Technology as both a skilled musician and technician. To achieve this the qualification would combine sound engineering and production techniques with opportunities to explore music technology as a creative practice. Together, these two important aspects could be underpinned by an academic understanding of creative artists working in the field of music technology as well as an understanding of recording and production techniques and their history. It is MEC's view that a music technology A level along these lines would best reflect the world of music technology as it exists today and enable students to prepare for the technologies of tomorrow, thus serving the needs of learners, HE Institutions and industry.

MEC would be pleased to co-ordinate the expertise of its membership across the music education sector to contribute to the necessary revision of these proposals. MEC also requests a meeting of key organisations with DfE and Ofqual, which MEC is happy to co-ordinate to ensure a representative small group.

Yours sincerely



Angela Ruggles
General Manager
The Music Education Council
admin@mec.org.uk