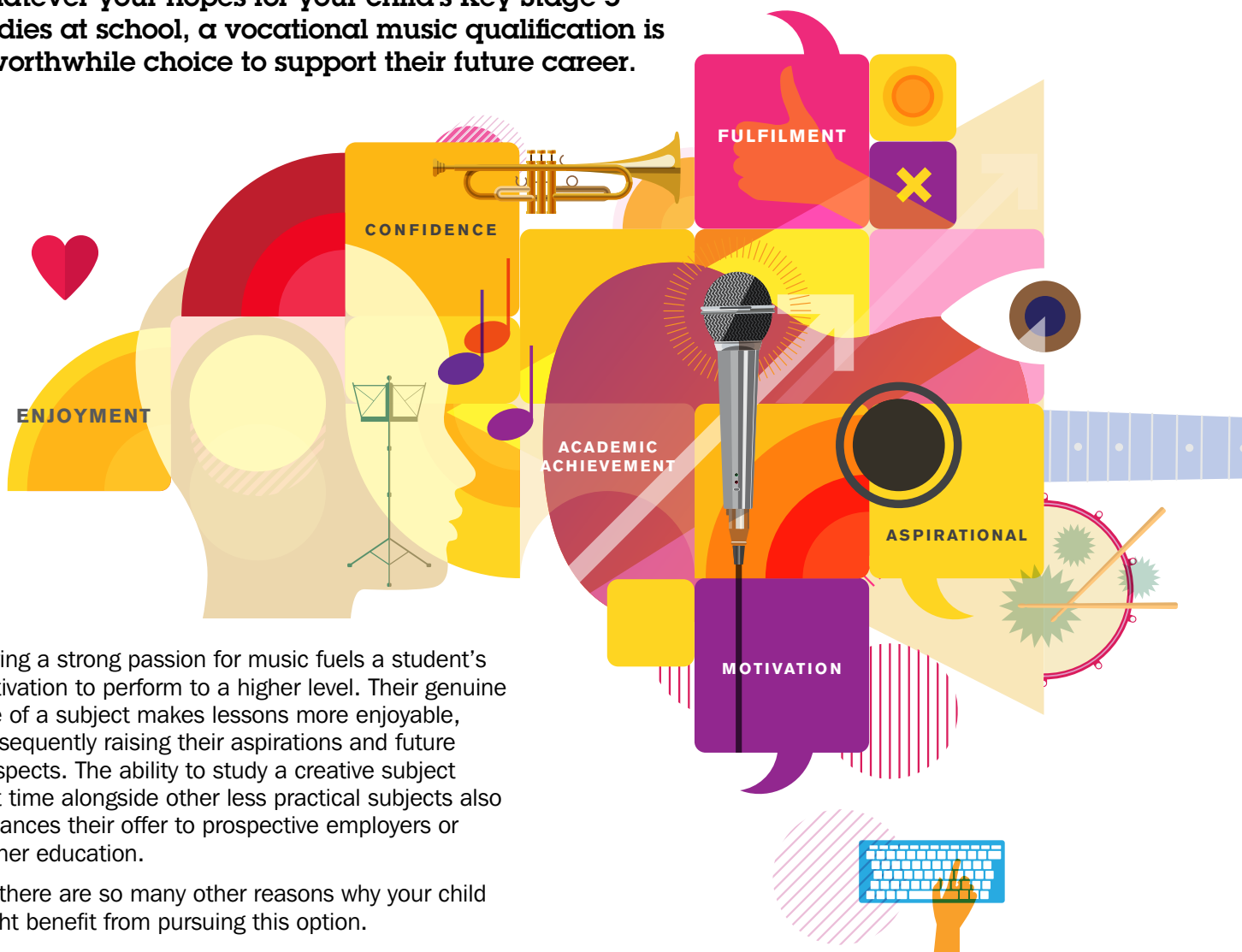


# Why choose to study a vocational qualification in music post 16?

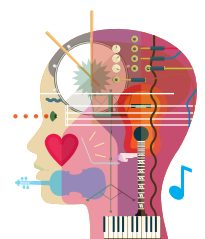
**Whatever your hopes for your child's Key Stage 5 studies at school, a vocational music qualification is a worthwhile choice to support their future career.**



Having a strong passion for music fuels a student's motivation to perform to a higher level. Their genuine love of a subject makes lessons more enjoyable, consequently raising their aspirations and future prospects. The ability to study a creative subject part time alongside other less practical subjects also enhances their offer to prospective employers or further education.

Yet there are so many other reasons why your child might benefit from pursuing this option.

**Read on to find out more and learn about what's involved in a vocational music qualification at sixth form or college.**



# What are the benefits of a vocational award in music?



There are many different exam boards offering vocational music qualifications, such as BTEC, CTEC among others.

Studying a vocational music course allows students to have hands-on experiences and opportunities to learn from tutors and visiting professionals within the performing arts industry. It also often allows students to work with peers studying other disciplines within the performing arts, effectively setting them up for post 18 education and the workplace. Creative qualifications and courses are able to support students with acquiring a variety of skills that future employers will value. They also support learners with their confidence and will challenge them to try new concepts and ideas.

Students are able to develop a wide variety of transferable skills ranging from:

- **Teamwork**
  - Leadership
  - Self-management
  - Communication
- **Develop and present musical ideas to a set brief**
  - Time management
  - Meeting deadlines
  - Exploring new genres of music
- **Analysing, evaluating and enhancing their learning**
  - Broadening their repertoire
  - Using specific musical vocabulary
  - Review and reflect different approaches

## Did you know that:

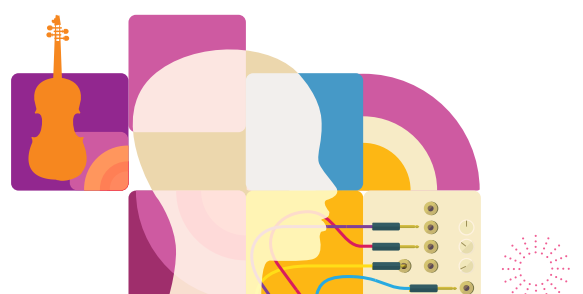
- With a vocational music course there is flexibility on the course size – it can be a full time equivalent course, or a part time course sitting alongside your A levels to give variety.
- Universities really love vocational courses – they prepare you well for independent study. In fact, a lot of universities actually contribute to the course content as they like to be sure certain things are covered before students arrive at university to study their courses.
- Employers and universities love it when students take an arts-based subject, and it enhances, not dampens your chances, when applying for even Oxbridge or Russell group universities.
- It is not an ‘easy option’ compared to A Level. It is rigorous and demanding. You are just focusing on slightly different skills to A level music in places.

## Both employers and universities see creative subjects as assets.

Music is able to provide students with a range of skills that enhance their employment prospects. The discipline of learning an instrument, along with resilience and determination, thinking and creating, using one’s initiative, and being able to communicate ideas are all invaluable assets. Universities and employers are always impressed by the skills musicians have due to their well-balanced curriculum.

“[My BTEC] taught me so many good skills; time keeping, working towards a deadline, trying to achieve and set targets. It teaches you about real life experiences”

**Max Whitlock**  
MBE Double Olympic Gold Medallist



# FAQs about vocational awards in music

Every school has slightly different entry requirements and approaches so it's always best to speak to the Head of Music at your child's school.



## What standard do they need to have reached in musical performance?

We understand that not all students take graded exams. Vocational music qualifications do not have a grade requirement. It is best to talk to the school in question about their own specific entry requirements. On a vocational music course, you are more able to personalise the course to develop your own musical interests, whilst keeping an open mind. For example, on some courses you may be able to study in music production alongside or instead of performance.

## Can I take a vocational music qualification if I don't have instrumental lessons?

Students benefit from having lessons with a specialist instrumental teacher, however exceptions can be made for hard working and dedicated students. There is help available for students who are looked-after, entitled to Pupil Premium / free school meals or have special educational needs or disabilities – please contact your school for further information.

Also, with Vocational courses, you get credit for making progress in your instrument, so you don't have to be virtuosic at the start of the course!

## My child can't read music!

Don't panic – schools can help with this. There are times when students will be required to respond to or create musical scores. Don't forget there are lots of ways to notate music out there!



## What units could my child be studying?

The brilliant thing about vocational music qualifications is that the units are varied. The units tend to be project based and with a heavy focus on the practical application of skills developed.

Students will develop their performance, composition and production / music technology skills, as well as learning about the music and performing arts industries, and the units focus on also developing the soft skills needed in a post educational setting.

“BTEC Music has helped me develop as a musician and has been really useful as I understand the industry I want to go into now.”

**Year 12 BTEC Music Student**

“I like CTEC Music as I have been able to specialise in a different discipline to my friends but have still been able to work collaboratively.”

**Year 12 BTEC Music Student**

## When will my child need to apply?

In the Autumn term most schools will put on 'options' information evenings where parents, carers and students can speak to teachers about possible courses. You will probably have to apply for the course in the January before the course starts. The most important thing to remember is to have conversations with your Music Department as soon as possible.

## How will my child's work be assessed?

The majority of student's work is assessed internally by the music department and then moderated by an external verifier. There are externally assessed units, but these are well prepared for and carried out over a number of weeks rather than a 1 day exam.

# FAQs about vocational awards in music

continued



## Where could a vocational music qualification lead?

Music can filter into further studies (of any course) at university or college. Or students may choose to use their vocational qualification as a springboard straight into a career in the music industry. Music will complement your choices whatever the future may hold.

It can open doors to a range of education and employment pathways in:

### Music

The music industry covers a vast array of opportunities from journalist to blogger, live sound to recorded music, composer to performer, classroom teacher to instrumental tutor. The list is endless!

### The Arts/Creative Industries

Music can support your child's development into other creative areas. Media, film, TV and radio, all incorporating musical and artistic skills.

### However, if they don't want to study music beyond KS4, is it still a smart choice?

The course provides many transferrable skills. From presenting ideas and pitching projects, through to analysing and recreating music – music prepares students for a wide range of real-life situations. Employers are always looking for their employees to be 'creative' and 'think outside the box' – a common phrase seen on job specifications, but something that can get lost when studying other subjects.

### Other Professions

Music is highly regarded as a subject that works in harmony with your other studies in leading to a professional career such as medicine, law and accountancy.

"I studied Music alongside Maths, Further Maths and French, and the variety within the subjects kept me sane and enabled me to keep a passion going strong whilst allowing me to play to my strengths and apply for university courses."

"I like the fact that you can opt for a 'double' in a vocational qualification, or keep it a single which is the same as an A Level in terms of UCAS points"

"I studied a vocational music course alongside my other A Levels and have really valued it for the skills it gave me and the enhancement of my wellbeing whilst studying alongside non practical subjects. I have now graduated from King's College London with a first in History."

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This resource was originally devised by Wiltshire Music Connect (Wiltshire Council) during its tenure as the Music Education Hub for Wiltshire.

**Wiltshire Council**

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