



BRADFIELD COLLEGE

Frequently Asked Questions (parents)

SBS: Music

1. What are the reasons for designing and teaching your own music course in place of the GCSE?

We have the opportunity to do something better. We have the opportunity to offer a music course that represents even better preparation for study in the sixth form, that excites pupils and develops their own musicianship, that intentionally develops digital literacy, self-regulation, and complex problem-solving, and that offers pupils greater ownership and control over their chosen area of interest.

In the context of an *Education for Life*, where we consider what is appropriate (essential!) for our pupils in 2030 and beyond, we are now able to offer a music course that develops the skills and mindset of the modern musician, whether that be concert pianist or dance DJ.

2. Why do you feel SBS: Music is superior to the current GCSE?

When presented with a blank canvas, we first discussed and agreed the educational principles. Everyone agreed that the course must provide **ring-fenced time** for pupils to practice their chosen instrument, a luxury not afforded by the GCSE. Related, there was full support for giving pupils the vehicle to go into real depth in their chosen area of interest.

SBS: Music assesses pupils' progress in a more contemporary way as opposed to the lion's share of the marks coming from stressful, high-stakes exams. Not only will this develop a range of contemporary workplace skills, we understand it will allow those who don't always perform at their best in traditional exams to showcase their prowess through other means.

3. Who is this course designed for and what level of music background do they need?

This course is for any pupil interested in music making, whether it be an instrument, singing, or music technology. Pupils should be enrolled in instrumental/singing/music technology lessons at Bradfield and have reached the level of at least Grade 3 standard (or equivalent) when starting the course.

4. How will pupils be assessed and will Grades 9 – 1 still be awarded?

There are 4 components to this course – Performing, Creating, Listening, and the Special Study. Each contributes 25%. The 4 possible outcomes for this (and future) SBS course(s) are Complete, Pass, Merit, or Distinction. We anticipate the percentage Distinction/Merit in summer 2026 and 2027 being broadly equivalent to recent outcomes in the GCSE i.e. 95% Grade 9-7.

As mentioned previously, this course offers a broader range of assessments. The course will comprise performance, viva voce (an interview), a study journal, an extended essay as well as a traditional end-of-course exam.

5. Will universities and conservatoires recognise this course?

Bradfield is proud of its innovation in education and, as part of that, its SBS: Music course. We cannot, however, claim to be at the vanguard. Bradfield is a member of the School Directed Course Consortium, a group of like-minded schools, many of whom have already embarked on similar courses. These include Latymer Upper School (who will only offer 2 GCSEs come 2026) and St Paul's Girls (who have not offered GCSE Music for over 10 years now). St Edward's, Oxford moved to 8 GCSEs a number of years ago. 'Independent' in name, schools similar to Bradfield are taking advantage of the fact that they have the opportunity to be 'independent' from the National Curriculum and so are preparing fresh, more contemporary courses for their pupils.

UCAS have confirmed that SBS: Music will formally be an option for a pupil to select on any UCAS application they submit.

Offers for music conservatoires would be made on performance at audition. Offers for university degree courses would be based on IB/A level predicted grades.

6. How will the standard compare to the current GCSE?

SBS: Music will mirror the overall standard of the current GCSE. It must be noted, however, that Bradfield's own music course has different objectives to the current offering. As much as overall outcomes might be similar to previous years, those achieving the highest award may have a different profile to those achieving Grade 8/9 in other subjects.

SBS: Music will be allocated exactly the same curriculum time as the current GCSE Music. OFQUAL's seminal document 'General Conditions for Recognition' (linked [here](#)) provides the parameters for this and future SBS courses. The course has been ratified by Council's Education Committee on behalf of the school governing body, and links have been established with other leading independent schools by way of providing external moderation and standardisation.

7. Who will teach the course and have they been trained? To what extent have the different components been trialled?

The same music teachers currently delivering the GCSE will teach on the SBS: Music course. The whole team have fully engaged with this design project since its inception and so understand

the course principles and how they will manifest in classrooms. All of the team are very familiar with the different components because all except one of them feature in the GCSE albeit they are given different emphasis. The Special Study is new and different but compares favourably with the Extended Project Qualification. All A level pupils complete the EPQ for which Mrs Victoria Hughes (Head of Academic Music) was formerly Head of Department. Furthermore, the College has established mutual relationship with St Paul's Girls in London who have a Special Study component in their own proprietary music course. We have also been collaborating with Cranleigh School on assessment criteria and standardisation.

8. What type of study resource will study resources be available (study guides, textbooks, past papers)?

As mentioned in the previous question, many of the aspects of the new course feature in SBS: Music albeit the weighting of each is different. As such, many of the resources will remain relevant. Those resources will be a mix of physical copy and digital with the latter collated in pupils' OneNote.

We do not shy away from the fact that many resources will be new. This is important if we are to honour the founding principles of this course.

Overall, pupils and parents should be reassured that a library of resources that support stretch, challenge and creativity will be available to all pupils and for each component.