NCFE Level 3 Applied General Certificate in Music Technology

Vision statement: *The Music Department, part of our Performing Arts Faculty, state their vision as 'Performing Arts, performing always'.*
Through the Music Curriculum at Ridgewood School we use our specialist skills to equip our students with powerful musical knowledge. We encourage them to realise their creative instincts through sound and technology; expand their aspirations through the provision and opportunities from our national and local music community; understand a wide range of musical traditions and concepts throughout history and enrich the soul with the universal language of music so they can access unforgettable experiences. Across all Key Stages students are taught and assessed using a holistic approach, strengthening their connection between listening, performance and composition.

Curriculum Intent: The overarching intent of the **Level 3 Music Technology curriculum** is to empower learners to transition from enthusiastic consumers of music into technically proficient, creatively autonomous, and industry-ready sound professionals. This vocational and academic pathway is designed to bridge the gap between amateur digital music-making and the rigorous technical demands of modern audio industries.
The curriculum aims to foster a deep synthesis of **artistic creativity** and **scientific precision**. Students are challenged to understand not just *how* to use industry-standard hardware and software, but the underlying acoustics, physics, and historical contexts that govern professional audio production.

The curriculum is intentionally structured around four interdependent pillars of mastery:

- **Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) Mastery:** Cultivating advanced, fluent operational skills in industry-standard software (Logic Pro). This includes sophisticated MIDI manipulation, complex audio editing, and a profound mechanical understanding of signal routing and workflow optimization.
- **Acoustic Engineering & Studio Practice:** Equipping students with the spatial awareness and technical knowledge required to operate professional recording environments. Students master microphone selection, placement techniques (e.g., multi-mic setups for acoustic instruments), and the physical mechanics of sound capture.
- **Creative Sound Design & Media Composition:** Developing the ability to compose, synthesise, and arrange music dynamically to meet distinct commercial and creative briefs. This extends to non-traditional music fields, including sound design, foley creation, and synthesis/sampling for film, television, and video games.
- **Critical Listening & Sonic Refinement:** Training the ear to perceive frequency imbalances, dynamic discrepancies, and spatial placement. Students learn to apply mixing and mastering strategies (EQ, compression, spatial effects) to transform raw audio into commercially viable assets.

To realise this intent, the course is delivered through a hands-on, project-based framework that mirrors real-world workplace constraints:

- **Brief-Led Assignments:** Learning is anchored in practical scenarios—such as client-led remix requests, live sound engineering gigs, or post-production sound tracking for video—ensuring mathematical and technical theories are directly applied.
- **Scaffolded Technical Rigour:** Initial modules focus on core competency safety Nets (basic DAW functions and safe studio setups). These progressively evolve into advanced, student-led investigative projects requiring multi-track mixing, synthetic soundscapes, and live signal management.
- **Industry Placement & Context:** Students explore the economic realities of the modern music sector, evaluating copyright law, publishing streams, freelance business strategies, and emerging AI tools within audio production.

Beyond technical metrics, this curriculum deliberately enriches students' cultural capital by exposing them to a diverse lineage of sonic history, encompassing the evolution of electronic music genres, historical studio innovations, and pioneering record producers.

Crucially, the curriculum forces the development of essential transferable professional behaviours:

- **Resilience and Problem-Solving:** Learning to systematically troubleshoot hardware signal failures, software lag, and acoustic phase issues in real-time.
- **Collaborative Literacy:** Working effectively as part of a production team, mimicking the collaborative dynamics of multi-room commercial studios or live venue crews.

By the end of this Level 3 course, the outcome will be that you are a student who is:

1. **Technically Competent:** Confidently navigating professional recording studios, live mixing consoles, and advanced DAW software architecture without operational supervision.
2. **Portfolio-Rich:** Possessing a professional, diverse portfolio of original engineering, production, and sound design works that acts as a calling card for the industry.
3. **Future-Proofed:** Prepared seamlessly for direct progression into higher education (BSc/BA in Music Production, Creative Audio, Sound Engineering) or entry-level freelance careers, apprenticeships, and employment within the creative industries.

Why study Music Technology at The Sixth Form at Ridgewood?

- This qualification offers an engaging and effective introduction to develop your skills, knowledge and understanding of working in the music technology sector.
- If applied learning motivates you and learning through hands-on creative experiences related to the work of a performing musician and music technologist then this is the course for you.
- You will enjoy each and every lesson in Music Technology because the team is committed to making sure lessons are not only geared to your needs but are engaging and challenging too.
- A particular strength of Music Technology at Ridgewood is the wealth of resources and subject knowledge your teachers possess. The music team are always keen to take part in new and exciting ventures working closely with Higher Rhythm Studios and the Doncaster Music education Hub.

What topics will I study in this subject?

Topic	What this means
Using a digital audio workstation	You will learn how to operate and effectively use a digital audio workstation.
Creating music	You will develop your skills to analyse music and use your findings to create your own original compositions.
Multi-track audio, recording, mixing and mastering	You will learn how to undertake recordings, successfully mix, and master audio.
Sound Creation	You will study the properties of sound and how sound is theoretically represented, perceived and relates to music. You will create sound for a range of multimedia purposes.
Live sound performance technology	You will manage sound for a live performance.
Digital music business	You will research ways in which music can be distributed. You will explore revenue and marketing within the digital music business.

What skills will I need in this subject?

Skill	What this skill involves in this subject
LO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding	You need to show that you can learn about and retain knowledge of the functions of a digital audio workstation, concepts and evidence, as well as the musical and cultural elements of a chosen style. You need to show that you can learn about how to plan a recording and the functions of recording equipment, the development of technology and practices
LO2 Application and creation	Demonstrate your use of software functions in response to given briefs, stylistically select and create musical elements to produce presentations of

	compositions as mixed audio files and undertake a multitrack recording session
LO3 Review and evaluate	Analyse and evaluate how the projects have met the brief to a given scenario, the outcome of experimentation and the strengths and areas for improvement.

What will my lessons involve?

- Lessons will be delivered holistically through a range of practical, listening and written workshops.
- All internals units will require written coursework demonstrating your understanding of a given concept or theory and include practical exploration and application on the iMacs and peripherals.
- You will be able to practice skills learnt in a real life setting.
- You will also complete preparation for your external practical examination.
- There will be a requirement for you to complete much of your work outside of lessons both before, in preparation for lessons and after, as follow-up consolidation of academic work.

What will my independent study involve?

- Completion of coursework tasks.
- Practical development on the iMacs
- Flipped learning (reading materials in preparation for your lesson).
- Revision resources.
- Exam questions (self-marked using mark-schemes to familiarise yourself with examiner requirements).

How will I be assessed?

Percentage exam assessment: 50%	Percentage coursework assessment: 50%

Assessment	**Details of assessment**
External written test	Assessment is a two hour written exam worth 80 marks. Listening task assessing underpinning knowledge and skills drawn from across the qualification. (25% of the overall final grade)
External practical test	Assessment is a ten hour invigilated exam assessing application of knowledge and skills worth 60 marks. (25% of the overall final grade)
Internal assessment	Portfolio of evidence covering all learning outcomes. (50% of the overall final grade)

How do I know this is the right course for me?

- You will be required to spend a minimum of six hours per week studying outside of lessons to be successful in completing the Music Technology course.
- This course will suit students who are well organised, enjoy listening to, developing an understanding of popular styles of music and creating popular styles of music using technology.
- You should have an interest in the engineering side of music (sound recording, mixing and mastering).
- If you are looking for a career working in live sound production, music production, music technology and audio systems and music technology and popular music then this is the right course for you.
- This course works well with other qualifications including Physics, Maths, Music and Computer Science.