

AQA GCSE Music RAG: Understanding Music

This table covers key vocabulary for the Understanding Music exam. Use it alongside the GCSE Terms Knowledge Organiser (which includes definitions for most words) and your Section B notes.

Element type	Element	R	A	G
Melody	conjunct, disjunct, triadic, broken chords, scalar, arpeggio			
	intervals within the octave			
	passing notes			
	diatonic, chromatic			
	ornamentation including trill, acciaccaturas, appoggiaturas			
	pitch bend/slide/glissando			
	ostinato/riff			
	melisma			
	improvisation			
	blue notes.			
Harmony	diatonic, chromatic			
	consonant, dissonant			
	pedal, drone			
	cadences: perfect, plagal, imperfect and interrupted			
	tièrce de Picardie			
	identification of major and minor chords			
	identification of dominant seventh chords			
	identification of chords using chord symbols/roman numerals.			
	chord symbols eg C			
	stock chord progressions eg I VI IV V.			
Tonality	major, minor, modal			
	modulation to dominant, subdominant in major or minor keys			
	pentatonic			
	Blues scale			
Structure	binary and ternary			
	rondo			
	call and response			
	ground bass, continuo			
	cadenza.			
	verse chorus form- intro/outro verse, chorus etc			
	twelve-bar blues			
	Drum fill			
	12 bar blues.			

Sonority (Timbre)	standard orchestral families eg strings, brass, woodwind, percussion			
	standard keyboard instruments eg piano, harpsichord etc			
	standard contemporary instrument types eg electric guitar, synthesisers			
	standard voice types- soprano, alto, tenor, bass etc			
	generic families of instruments as found in traditional/world music eg steel drums			
	string instrumental techniques such as arco, pizzicato, con sordino.			
	guitar techniques eg palm mute (pm), pitch bend, hammer-on (ho), pull-off (po), slide guitar/bottleneck			
	drum kit components and techniques eg rim shot			
	vocal timbres eg falsetto, belt, rap, beat-boxing, scat singing			
	specific instrumental effects eg amplification, distortion, reverb, echo etc			
Texture	harmonic/homophonic/chordal			
	polyphonic/contrapuntal/layered			
	monophonic/single melody line			
	melody and accompaniment			
	a cappella			
	unison			
	octaves.			
	imitative			
Tempo, metre and rhythm	simple and compound time			
	anacrusis			
	common Italian tempo terms eg allegro, andante			
	pulse			
	augmentation, diminution			
	hemiola			
	semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver, semiquaver			
	dotted rhythms, triplets, scotch snap			
	rubato, pause			
	polyrhythm			
Syn copation				
Dynamics and articulation	<i>pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff</i> including the Italian terms			
	<i>cresc, crescendo, dim, diminuendo</i> including hairpins			
	<i>sfz, sforzando</i>			
	legato/staccato			
	common signs, terms and symbols.			