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About the authors

Julia Winterson has many years experience of teaching in colleges and universities. She has also worked as the music Qualification Leader for Edexcel and as Head of New Music for Peters Edition. Publications include four anthologies of music for schools, and *Pop Music: The Text Book*. Her DPhil research was into the education work of orchestras and opera companies. She is a member of the International Society for Contemporary Music British Section, the Music Publishers Association Education and Training Committee, and the Editorial Board of *New Notes* magazine.

Michael Russ is Associate Dean of Music, Humanities and Media at the University of Huddersfield. Before moving to Huddersfield he taught music at the University of Ulster eventually becoming Head of School. His publications include a monograph on Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition as well as a large number of journal articles on music theory and analysis, primarily as applied to late nineteenth and early twentieth century music. He won the Westrup prize for musicology in 1994 and holds a Distinguished Teaching Award from the University of Ulster. Michael Russ was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship from the Higher Education Academy in 2008.

The authors may be contacted at the following email addresses

j.m.winterson@hud.ac.uk

julia.winterson@btinternet.com

m.russ@hud.ac.uk

For further information and electronic copies you can visit the project webpage at

<http://www.hud.ac.uk/tqef/1c>

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1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale for the research project

This project stemmed from a need to improve understanding of the transition from school to university in music and other related subjects. It followed informal observations that the quality of the student experience in their first year at university is in part dependent on how comfortable students feel with the interface between school and university. While some students might thrive precisely because they are embarking on new challenges, students who feel that their work at school is poorly matched to their work at university, or their perception of what university music should be like, may become disillusioned and withdraw or fail to progress.

This project acknowledges that students now come from a wide range of backgrounds and that university staff need to understand these more comprehensively in order to manage transition

more effectively. A Level was traditionally seen as a good preparation for a degree programme and the fact that, for many reasons, this is not the case has not been fully appreciated by the higher education community. Although the project arose from particular concerns with students entering music programmes, the project has ranged more widely than this and ways in which other subjects have considered these issues were reflected both in the research process and the outcomes. The project sought to establish much more clearly the strengths and weaknesses of students following particular Level 3 programmes (primarily AS / A2 and BTEC National specifications), and to document these clearly in order for them to become a resource to be used in the design of first year undergraduate curricula. Level 3 curricula in music are no longer designed as a preparation for university entrance and students are coming to university from much more diverse backgrounds. In Music, for example, the amount of time spent studying Western Classical Music and traditional skills in harmony and counterpoint has much decreased.

The project examined both how curricula can build upon the strengths of students and how to avoid the negative view that it is necessary to begin an undergraduate course with essentially remedial work.

The main aims of this project were to:

- research the interface between A Level and university entrance across a range of subjects
- (in the case of music and music technology) establish what is currently being taught at Level 3 and to establish the most and least favoured options within the syllabi.
- engage with AS and A2 Examination Boards to establish the mechanisms by which they take account of the views of universities in a range of subjects and to establish what they perceive to be the underlying drivers of syllabi
- work with teachers to develop an understanding of how the curriculum is delivered and to reach a clear understanding of the likely strengths and weaknesses of students coming from a variety of approaches to the Level 3 curricula
- try and reach a better understanding of student learning styles at school and how these might impact on their work at university
- survey students from a range of subjects at Huddersfield and elsewhere about their transition from school to university
- organise dissemination events and developmental engagements with staff with the latter focusing on improving the teaching of first year students through establishing a clear understanding of their backgrounds
- implement changes to curricula and teaching methods as appropriate.

Important drivers for the project came from events arranged by the Society for Music Analysis (SMA) and the National Association for Music Staff in Higher Education (NAMHE). At an event focusing on the teaching of music analysis organized by the SMA in March 2006 it was evident that teachers of A Level Music and music staff in higher education had considerably moved apart. A participant at this event, Hugh Benham, Chief Examiner in Music for Edexcel indicated that Universities were taking little or no part in the planning of the A Level syllabus. Shortly before this NAMHE had organized its annual one-day conference in May 2005 around the theme of 'Foundations of University Music: From Secondary to Higher Education'. The conclusion of this conference, summarised in the anonymous conference report on the NAMHE website was that:

What emerged from the conference was that a broad consensus between the teaching sectors at school and university level does not exist. The disjunction between the two sectors might be typified crudely as being the incompatibility of participation, as an imperative for schools, with the discrimination tertiary-level teachers wish to deploy.

<http://www.namhe.ac.uk/events/past.php>

The project has the support of the subject centre for performing arts (PALATINE), the music subject association (NAMHE) and the Society for Music Analysis (SMA).

1.2 Related literature

The recently published report *The first-year experience in higher education in the UK* (Yorke & Longden, 2008) focused on aspects of the student experience that might be impacting on discontinuation. The study had two phases. Phase 1 was based on a large-scale survey of first-year full-time students in different universities and across contrasting subject areas. The second phase surveyed students who had withdrawn from their courses to ascertain their reasons for discontinuing. They found that the major influences on student withdrawal were 'poor choice of programme; lack of personal commitment to study; teaching quality; lack of contact with academic staff; inadequate academic progress; and finance'.

In Phase 1 they found that the majority of students were positive about their first year, but in both phases of the study they found evidence that 'the transition from a previous approach to teaching and learning to an approach based more on self-reliance and undergirded by different kinds of expectation caused considerable difficulty for some.' The findings are discussed with reference to ways of enhancing the student experience. For entering students they recommend

assisting students in the making of choices; being clear about what is on offer; ensuring adequacy of resources; and managing the transition into higher education such that students gain an early appreciation of what higher education is asking of them

Yorke & Longden 2008: 52

Most of the literature about the transition between school and university in arts and humanities subjects deals with general issues and is not subject specific. The majority of studies into transition in the arts and humanities deal with the disciplines of English and History. These recognize the importance of the first-year experience for student retention, and the potential difficulties of the transition from school to university. This research reinforces the work of Yorke & Longden (2008) and has shown that the areas of difficulty that crop up most frequently for first year students are related to study skills and time management. They also have to adapt to new learning styles: independent note-taking in large lectures; writing essays that focus on analysis and discussion rather than narrative; and referencing written work, for example.

Smith and Hopkins (2005) address several of these matters in their study of sixth-formers' perceptions of teaching and learning in degree-level English: 'For first-year students it can be a shock coming to terms with independent, student-led learning, rather than the more guided, teacher-led learning experience of A Level study.' They concluded that

Although most students seem to have no concerns about their ability to study English at university, there does seem to be a strong indication that the mode of learning is problematic for them. At university, the students find themselves having to deal with a new approach which challenges their expectations of what studying English involves. There is a movement from collective, group study towards a more independent approach without the levels of support to which the students were accustomed.

Smith & Hopkins 2005: 315

University students are often taught through a combination of lectures and seminars. The lectures are taught in large groups. This environment is very different from what students will have experienced at school. Importantly, the familiar teacher can be interrupted for the pupils to ask questions without too much embarrassment. In theory, the same could happen in a large university lecture, but it is made more

difficult when surrounded by large numbers of (often) unfamiliar faces. As Smith (2004) writes

It is all too easy in a lecture silently to drown. What intimidates is the unfamiliarity of the situation – a large lecture hall populated by strangers, rather than an intimate school classroom populated by friends and acquaintances.

Smith 2004: 94

Yorke & Longden (2008) make several recommendations to help overcome some of these problems. These include the adoption of teaching approaches that actively engage students from the outset. They recognise that ‘low levels of contact hours may initially be insufficient to motivate students to undertake the expected levels of independent study’ and recommend the front-loading of resources for first year students by increasing the ratio of staff to students and ensuring that those staff teaching first-year students ‘have a strong commitment to teaching and student learning’.

One of the problems in schools is that the focus is very much on the A Level syllabus, getting through the content so that the students can pass exams and the schools can meet their targets. As Smith (2003) puts it ‘English schools are hounded by league tables of exam results’. Having two sets of exams - AS and A2 – also cuts down the available teaching time. As a result teachers are not able to introduce the kinds of pedagogy that students will encounter at university. As Smith and Hopkins (2005) point out ‘This is not the ethos of lifelong learning, which surely promotes open, critical-minded deep and independent learning rather than learning how to jump hurdles to reach the next stage in the educational race’.

There is a general feeling that universities and schools should have a closer relationship in order to facilitate mutual planning for transition. In 1990 there was, according to Clark and Ramsey (1990), an urgent need for better communication between secondary and tertiary educational institutions. However, Lowe & Cook (2003) found that this had not been addressed at the University of Ulster and pointed out the need for higher education ‘to provide appropriate academic, attitudinal and social preparation for their new students.’ Smith (2003) too noted the ‘lack of planned transition from school to higher level study’.

Much of the research into the experiences of first-year students of music has taken place in conservatoires rather than university music departments. The focus of Burt & Mills (2006), for example, ‘Taking the plunge: The hopes and fears of students as they begin music college’, is largely confined to aspects of musical performance for students in the first year of a conservatoire course, in this case the Royal College of Music. However, some general strands were evident. Many of the RCM students surveyed mentioned that time management was a concern, a common experience for students new to higher education. Dibden (2006) explored student experience in the music department of a British red-brick university. She too found that musical performance activities and the development of a performer identity were central, but the research also revealed ‘an association between socio-economic background, term-time employment and academic achievement’. Other research has identified part-time employment as having a negative effect on academic achievement. Smith (2003), for example, points out that student loans and consequent ‘fear of debt and the need for term-time paid work, exacerbate problems of dropout and underachievement’.

Unlike many other subjects, music and music technology are areas that students are likely to pursue as an outside interest or hobby. Lamont et al (2003) reported high levels of music-making outside schools rather than the music-*listening* found in previous research. The study highlighted

the importance of the contexts of music-making, which are expanding and changing very rapidly in our increasingly digital, networked and globalised world. Involvement in music listening and activity can take place easily in informal as well as formal contexts, and the relationship between music-making in and out of school is becoming increasingly complex.

1.3 Methods of data collection and analysis

The project proceeded through close comparison of the various A Level and BTEC syllabi. The views of students and staff were sought through questionnaires. The views of various education bodies were sought.

These included representatives from schools and colleges across six different local authorities, the University of Huddersfield, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, the Edexcel examination board and the teacher training sector.

Data collection in secondary schools, sixth form colleges and colleges of Further Education took place through interviews with teachers, group interviews with students, and classroom observations. Interviews with teachers focused on the impact of Curriculum 2000, examination boards and options, traditional skills in harmony and counterpoint, teaching and learning styles, and the transition from school to university and from GCSE to A Level. Teachers were also asked what they would like to see covered in university music courses. Classroom observations identified different teaching and learning styles.

Data collection in universities took place through questionnaires, and interviews with lecturers and students. 422 students were surveyed across Music, Music Technology and English courses at the University of Huddersfield, Liverpool Hope University and the University of Southampton. The student questionnaires focused on the areas which were key to their first experience of studying for a degree. Each of the student questionnaires opened by asking for information about entry qualifications, career aspirations, and course choice. Next, individual modules were taken in turn and questions focused on how well they had followed on from their previous course at school or college, as well as seeking to identify aspects of modules that students may have found both difficult or particularly comfortable with. As part of the analysis, comparisons were made firstly between the responses of students who had followed different GCE examination boards, and secondly between those who had taken the A Level route and the BTEC National Diplomas route.

University staff questionnaires and interviews focused on the perceived strengths and weakness of current students and a comparison of these with students of ten years ago; the main reasons for students dropping out; and any changes that lecturers would like to make to current degree courses. University entry and exit qualifications were examined through statistical analysis.

2 Level 3 Qualifications in Music and Music Technology

2.1 Broad principles

Broadly speaking the school and college music curriculum reflects many changes in the cultural, social and educational attitudes to music where

- there is an increased emphasis on providing accessibility across the full ability range
- jazz, popular music, world music and film music are included alongside Western classical music
- an holistic approach is taken to Performing, Composing and Listening.

The introduction of a systematic and creative school music programme has enabled many more pupils to progress in and enjoy music at a higher level. It has been well-documented that music was an unpopular subject at school during the mid-twentieth century. In 1963 the Newsom Report found that music was the subject most frequently dropped from the school curriculum. The 1968 Schools Council

report, Enquiry 1: Young School Leavers, found that music was again bottom of the subject preferences. As one young pupil put it, 'Music at school is dull but modern music isn't'. The subsequent Schools Council report (1971) Music and the Young School Leaver reinforced this message.

To put the situation plainly, many teenage pupils, especially those in the 14-16 age group, are indifferent and even hostile towards curriculum music. (1971:8)

As late as 2000 the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) found that pupils who take music only as part of the statutory curriculum tend to drop it as soon as they can. At the same time OFSTED painted a similarly gloomy picture observing that a good deal of secondary school music seems to be unsuccessful, unimaginatively taught, and out of touch with pupils' interests.

But things were changing in 2003 when Hargreaves et al found that 'attitudes towards music from both teachers and pupils were positive, and uncovered many examples of good practice in music education'. They discovered that the inclusion of 'active music-making across a range of musical styles and genres' promoted 'a positive attitude amongst pupils, enabling them to assert a degree of ownership over their music-making that is far less possible with classical music'. Pupils responded positively to many different opportunities to develop and extend their musical activities both in and out of school.

All of this is welcome, but as a result the post-16 curriculum is no longer focused on those who may wish to follow the subject at university; a point which is returned to below.

2.2 The examination boards, QCA and government policy

It is important to emphasise that the GCE curriculum in music is no longer designed as a preparation for university; rather it is – in the same way as other qualifications – simply an entry requirement. When all the A Level specifications were rewritten for Curriculum 2000, examination boards were required to adhere strictly to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) Subject Criteria for GCE in general, and for their subject in particular. It was QCA's intention that the GCE should 'build on the requirements for music in Key Stages 1 to 3 and the skills, knowledge and understanding established at Key Stage 4. However, it may come as a surprise to some to know that although the encouragement of 'life-long learning' is cited, progression to higher education is not mentioned as being one of the aims. Rather, the subject criteria are intended to 'help higher education institutions and employers know what has been studied and assessed'.

However, it would appear that in music, at least, HE is not availing itself of this opportunity. Universities once had an important role in determining the content of GCE syllabi, but now the relationships with examination boards are diminished and there is a much poorer understanding of what goes on at school. There is a growing realisation that relationships need to be rebuilt if proper planning for transition is to take place. As Alan Thomson (2008) of the Times Higher Education supplement, wrote 'Many educationists now believe the schools and higher education systems have diverged too far to work together effectively'.

As Hugh Benham, Chair of Examiners for GCE Music for one of the A Level awarding bodies, observed

Although NAMHE are alive to the situation, I don't think universities have been sufficiently involved with awarding bodies in recent years. This is probably a kind of over-reaction to how it was in the 1970s and 80s. In those days, some exam boards were largely run by universities, who tended to think of A Level as first and foremost (if not exclusively) as a pre-university exam...I don't think the awarding body I work with has a mechanism by which it takes account of the views of universities. If it has, I don't know of it.

In fact, the views of universities were taken into account during the new GCE Music 2008 revisions, but this was largely down to Hugh Benham's own initiative. As he wrote,

the views of universities are so diverse these days that it's difficult to see quite what line to take. I distilled from the advice I took that universities prized above all else (i) the ability of upcoming students to do whatever they had learned to do well, and (ii) some ability to see the wood for the trees. In other words, there was less concern that first-years could already write immaculate five-part fugues than they should understand how simple harmonic progressions work and how some chords are more important than others.

When asked what he felt the underlying drivers of syllabi were today he mentioned 'efficient administration - reducing the burden of assessment on teachers and centres and on awarding bodies in terms of cost' adding that this was reflected in the fact that 'the people within the awarding bodies who deal with subject development seem no longer to be always subject specialists.' Another driver is the need to maximise the number of candidates by giving centres what they are perceived to like on the advice of teachers, and finally the constraints introduced by QCA which 'have a tendency to reduce specification development at times to an exercise in juggling with percentages'.

Many educationists believe that there are two further elements of government policy that have (inadvertently) exacerbated problems in the transition from school to university. These are the introduction of league tables for schools in the early 1990s, and the move towards widening participation. It is widely felt that school league tables have led to, what Thomson (2008) describes as a 'pass at all costs culture in which pupils are spoon-fed the information they need to pass a given exam'. As a result they do not develop either independent learning or the study skills they will need in higher education.

Following on from the publication of the White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* in January 2003, there was a call for widening participation in higher education and a move towards

50% of young people going on to study for degrees. In 1980, UK universities educated roughly 20% of 18 to 30-year-olds, most of whom were school-leavers. In 2008 this number has risen to roughly 44%. This has meant that universities are now expected to cater for a far broader spectrum of abilities.

2.3 Level 3 Music Specifications

Students entering higher education to study music or music technology will have followed a number of different routes. These may be summarised as follows:

School: AS/A2 Music
AS/A2 Music Technology

College Business & Technician Education Council (BTEC) National Diplomas (NDs) in Music & Music Technology

Most students will have followed the Edexcel specification, though a smaller number will have taken the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (OCR), Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) or Council for the Curriculum Examinations & Assessment (CCEA) programmes. In 2006, nationwide 55% followed the Edexcel syllabus, 17% OCR, 13% AQA., 9% WJEC and 6% CCEA.

Twenty years ago the examination boards were all doing roughly the same thing and comparisons would have been unnecessary. But now there are sharp differences between them as well as a wide range of options. Consequently there are sharp differences too in the experiences of students. Furthermore, twenty years ago BTEC National Diplomas in Music and Music Technology did not exist.

The QCA Curriculum 2000 Subject Criteria for Music stated that AS and A Level specifications should include a minimum of 20% synoptic assessment across the assessment objectives, i.e. Performing, Composing and Listening. Each of the examination boards took a different approach, meaning that AQA, OCR and Edexcel A Level Music all have different emphases and offer different options. This, coupled with the fact that BTEC National Diploma students have a choice of optional units, means that it is very likely that each university student will have followed a different pre-university route. Nationwide, the majority of A Level Music students take the Edexcel qualification, but even within that there are several different routes, e.g. in compositional techniques. So the starting points at university are not the same for each student.

2.4 A Level Music

Please see Appendix for a summary of the current AS/A2 GCE Music Specifications.

2.5 Some examples of the differences between examination boards and specifications (Music)

(i) Set works and Analysis

There is a different approach to the study of set works in each of the main A Level exam boards. Edexcel students study 18 works from three different Areas of Study (chosen from a list which includes Western classical music, pop and jazz, film music, and music from around the world), whereas OCR and AQA study only six which in both cases are very largely Western classical music. The *QCA Review of standards in A Level and GCSE music 1985–2005*, although welcoming the move over time to expand the repertoire studied, was concerned that the detailed analytical study of set works had been lost. This must be based on the assumption that where there is a smaller number of set works, these are studied in more detail and that this is a better preparation for further analytical study. However this is not evident from the responses in the survey.

(ii) Harmony and Counterpoint

The holistic approach of the National Curriculum and Curriculum 2000 means that there is less emphasis on the discrete assessment of musical techniques such as harmony and counterpoint. Relevant skills are assessed instead through compositional work. Edexcel students can choose from options in composition techniques which range from the ‘Bach chorale’ and ‘Baroque counterpoint’ to ‘Extended techniques’ and ‘Electro-acoustic music’ whereas OCR have an emphasis on tonality. In contrast, the word ‘counterpoint’ does not appear anywhere in the AQA specification, there is no requirement for harmony and counterpoint in the CCEA specification and WJEC treat harmony and counterpoint as an option.

(iii) Aural

There is no longer the emphasis on aural dictation that there was pre-Curriculum 2000, particularly for AQA and Edexcel candidates. In fact, the paper in aural dictation is optional for Edexcel candidates. As the *QCA Review* puts it, ‘In the case of aural perception and musical techniques, there was general agreement that traditional skills were no longer being tested at such high levels as in the past’. Tests of aural perception are now more likely to focus on provenance, context, comparison, and other aspects of musical technique and style. The *QCA Review* perceives this as ‘a decline in demand’ and a ‘reduction in levels of aural perception skills required’. Whether this is a decline in demand is open to question given the consequent development of a wider variety of aural skills.

2.6 QCA Review of standards in A Level and GCSE music. 1985–2005

The following is an extract taken from the Conclusion of the *QCA Review of standards in A Level and GCSE music. 1985–2005*.

The 20-year period covered by this review of music A Level syllabi has seen changes in the cultural, social and educational attitudes to music within schools and colleges, as well as change in the design of the A Level qualification in line with Curriculum 2000 reforms. These changes were seen as positive in a number of ways:

- jazz, popular and world music are included alongside the western classical tradition
- areas of study have promoted a more integrated and holistic approach in syllabi
- having performance and composition as integral parts of music syllabi requires candidates to engage in firsthand musical experiences, including expressive and creative work, rather than being tested almost exclusively via a suite of written papers (as in 1985)
- there is now increased accessibility reflecting the full ability range.

However, there are several areas that have seen a decline in demand meaning that some important skills and understanding are not being as fully developed as they were for candidates in the past:

- there has been a reduction in levels of aural perception skills required
- there is less emphasis on the discrete assessment of musical techniques such as harmony & counterpoint, although relevant skills now assessed through compositional work
- the standardisation of requirements for performance to grade 6 equivalence means there is no longer the same impetus for the most able performers to challenge themselves; in addition, most awarding bodies no longer have an unprepared element to performing and the playing times required in 2005 syllabi are variable
- there is a reduced requirement for candidates to present ideas and arguments in extended written work, resulting in less need for the detailed study of set works.

2007: 73-74

2.7 A Level Music Technology and BTEC National Diplomas in Music

A Level Music Technology and BTEC are very different beasts, not least because the BTEC National Diploma is a three-A Level equivalent with a wide range of options. BTEC diplomas aim to provide a sound practical and theoretical grounding for a career or further study in music or music technology. They have been devised in collaboration with professional bodies in the music industry. The qualifications are recognised by universities, employers and the music industry, and the staff are often from the music industry themselves

The courses are practical and work-related. Students learn by completing assignments that are based on realistic workplace situations, activities and demands. Although the emphasis is practical there are also written projects. As part of the BTEC philosophy, the emphasis is on the process rather than the product which means that assessment is continuous rather than through formal written examination. There are increasing numbers of BTEC Music and Music Technology students going on to university. As with all courses, standards and resources vary from one centre to another, but Edexcel has a rigorous approvals and verification process to ensure that a high quality is maintained nationally.

There are two BTEC National Diplomas in Music; the ND in Music Practice and the ND in Music

Technology. Students must complete a minimum of 18 units including five core units. All BTEC National Diploma in Music Technology students complete core units in:

The Music Industry	
Listening Skills	
MIDI Sequencing and Software OR Sound Recording Techniques	
Studio Production Process	
Studio Production Project	

Students can then choose from specialist units that include Audio Electronics, Audio Engineering Workshop Skills, Computer Technology for Music, Digital Audio Principles, Music Publishing, Music Technology in Performance, Sound for the Moving Image, DJ Technology, and Live Sound.

Edexcel is the only examination board to offer A Level Music Technology. The GCE was introduced as part of Curriculum 2000 and since then has attracted increasing numbers of students. In 2007 more than 3000 candidates completed the Music Technology A Level (roughly 38% of those who completed Music A Level).

A Level Music Technology students study the following units:

AS UNITS	A2 UNITS	
Unit 1	Part (a) Practical work	
Part (a) Practical work	1 Sequencing, recording and producing	
1 Sequencing or Recording		
2 Arranging and improvising using	2 Composing using technology	
technology		
	Part (b) Written work	
Part (b) Written work	1 Listening and analysing II	
1 Listening and analysing I	A1 Analysis and discrimination	
	A2 Controlling and interpreting MIDI	
	data	
	Music technology in context	

There are four Areas of Study in

- 1: The development of technology in music
- 2: Music from the Western classical tradition
- 3: Popular music and jazz
- 4a: Music for the Moving Image or 4b: Words and Music

Please see Appendix for a summary of the current AS/A2 GCE Music Technology and BTEC National Diploma Specifications

2.8 The Creative and Media Diploma

The new diplomas

In 2005 the *14-19 Education and Skills White Paper* set out the government's vision for a new learning route that would provide access to skilled employment and higher education. The intention is that the new qualifications will meet the skills needs of the economy by engaging young people in more relevant learning. The diplomas have been developed in collaboration with employers and a range of representatives from the higher education sector e.g. the Universities of Manchester and Leeds

Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs) led by Sector Skills Councils have brought together employers, FE, HE and schools to set out the essential knowledge, capabilities and skills that

employers need from young people. Creative & Cultural Skills is the Sector Skills Council for advertising, crafts, cultural heritage, design, music, performing, literary, and visual arts. Awarding bodies are developing the qualifications in partnership with the DDPs which will be accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). At the same time as the introduction of the diplomas, there are other education reforms taking place. As part of these reforms, A Levels will be made more challenging through, for example, an A* grade. The Extended Project that forms part of the Advanced Diploma will also be an option alongside A Level courses. Schools and colleges are forming partnerships in their local areas to ensure that the education needs of all young people can be accommodated. A student taking a diploma is likely to attend more than one institution as part of their weekly timetable. The diplomas will combine academic and practical learning in a similar way to BTEC qualifications, but they will also include 'functional skills', 'personal, learning and thinking skills' (PLTS) and a wide variety of options. Diplomas will be developed in 17 'lines of learning'.

For teaching from September 2008	For teaching from September 2010
• Construction and the Built Environment	• Public Services
• Creative and Media	• Retail
• Engineering	• Sport and Leisure
• Information Technology	• Travel and Tourism
• Society, Health and Development	
For teaching from September 2009	For teaching from September 2011
• Business, Administration and Finance	• Science
• Environmental and Land-based Studies	• Languages
• Hair and Beauty Studies	• Humanities
• Hospitality	
• Manufacturing and Product Design	

There will be around 850 schools and colleges offering diplomas in September 2008. Each Diploma will be available at three levels: Foundation, Higher, and Advanced. In 2011 an Extended Diploma will be introduced which is intended to ensure that the most able students are given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Foundation	Level 1	takes broadly the same time to do as 4 or 5 GCSEs, worth 5 grades D-G GCSE
Higher	Level 2	takes broadly the same time to do as or 6 GCSEs, worth 7 grades A*-C
Advanced	Level 3	takes broadly the same time to do as 3 A-levels, worth 3.5 A-levels. Maximum of 420 UCAS tariff points, with a maximum of 300 for the "principal and generic learning" and another 120 for additional and specialist learning.
Progression	Level 3	takes broadly the same time as 2 A-levels and is aimed at those who cannot complete a whole Advanced Diploma

Components	Characteristics
Principal learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning that is related to the sector of the economy • Learning that is designed and endorsed by industry
Generic learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes the assessment of Functional Skills in English, maths and ICT • Develops a student's employability skills of teamwork and self management • Gives the student the opportunity to produce an extended project • Requires at least 10 days' compulsory work experience
Additional and/or	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for the student to specialise • Allows for the student to choose more qualifications

|specialist
|learning

| • Allows for flexibility and choice of learning
|

|
|

Assessment

Each of the components are qualifications in their own right and A Levels may be studied alongside. Diploma students will also receive an overall grade that will be calculated from the principal learning and project aspects of the course. They will need to fulfil the requirements set by other parts of the course (e.g. work experience and functional skills at the appropriate level) but these will not be included as part of the grading process.

Component	Method of assessment
Principal learning	A mixture of internal and external assessment
Functional skills	Students must achieve a set standard in English, Maths and ICT. For the Advanced Diploma this will be Level 2
The project	Students choose a topic of particular interest to them. Internally assessed
Work experience	No formal assessment, students will review their experience with their teachers
Additional and/or specialist learning	This includes a wide range of qualifications which are already in place. Over time, new qualifications will be developed specifically for the diploma

The Advanced Creative and Media Diploma

Level 3 students who wish to study music as part of a diploma will take the Advanced Creative and Media Diploma. According to the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the highlights for a Creative and Media Diploma student in their second term might be

- producing a guide to what's on in Manchester covering clubs, galleries and gigs
- putting together a radio report covering a bus strike, interviewing drivers and passengers
- analysing funding for the Reading Festival

Principal Learning

Principal Learning emphasises learning through the practical application of knowledge, understanding and skills to relevant work experience and work-related tasks, problems and contexts. At the heart of the Principal Learning for the Diplomas in Creative and Media are four core themes:

- 1 creativity in context
- 2 thinking and working creatively
- 3 principles, processes and practice
- 4 creative businesses and enterprise.

There are six units for the Edexcel Level 3 Principal Learning in Creative and Media. All units are compulsory.

Unit number	Title	Assessment
1	Capture	Internal
2	Show	Internal
3	Interaction	Internal
4	Commission	Internal
5	Evaluation	External
6	Investigation	External

Personal, learning and thinking skills

These are required to be covered and assessed during the delivery and assessment of the whole Diploma. They comprise 'independent enquiry', 'creative thinking', 'reflective learning', 'team working', 'self-management' and 'effective participation'.

Additional and specialist learning

Additional and specialist learning consists of accredited qualifications at the same level as, or one level above, the Diploma. It may include qualifications which are also available to learners not taking the Diploma, or qualifications specifically developed to be part of the Diploma. Additional learning is intended to broaden the learning experience by including qualifications from other sectors. Specialist learning is intended to allow learners to specialise further in the sector by undertaking qualifications from the same sector as the Diploma.

Qualifications for additional and specialist learning must be selected from the Additional and Specialist learning (ASL) catalogue through the National Database of Accredited Qualifications. The catalogue includes qualifications which have the approval of the Diploma Development Partnership (DDP) and will expand over time as more qualifications are approved.

The future of the diplomas

In 2013 the government will review all 14-19 qualifications including A Levels. By then all seventeen diplomas will be in place. At the time of writing it is impossible to predict how successful the new diplomas will be and how they will eventually be regarded by schools and colleges, higher education and employers. The diplomas have been written in conjunction with the higher education sector and have been allocated a UCAS tariff, so they should offer a different and viable route into university. The intention of the Department for Children, Schools and Families is that they will 'make for a smoother transition between school and university'. Headteachers are keen for the diplomas to work but schools have expressed concerns over the complexity of the specifications, logistical problems of timetabling students on different sites, and the availability of work placements. Although the government insists that the diplomas should be designed to appeal to academically-minded youngsters, but with a workplace slant, there is still a general concern that a two-tier system could develop whereby the diplomas are seen as 'second-best' vocational qualifications for the less academically able.

2.9 Summary

1. The National Curriculum reflects many changes in the cultural, social and educational attitudes to music where

- there is an increased emphasis on providing accessibility across the full ability range
- jazz, popular music, world music and film music are included alongside, and as equals to, Western classical music
- an holistic approach is taken to Performing, Composing and Listening.

2. In recent years many more pupils progress in and enjoy music at a higher level.

3. The post-16 curriculum is no longer focused on those who may wish to follow the subject at university

4. The GCE curriculum in music is no longer designed as a preparation for university; rather it is an entry

requirement

5. Universities once had an important role in determining the content of GCE syllabi, but now the relationships with examination boards are much diminished

6. QCA subject criteria are intended to 'help higher education institutions and employers know what has been studied and assessed' but HE does not often avail itself of this opportunity.

7. The relationships between schools and universities need to be rebuilt if proper planning for transition is to take place

8. The introduction of league tables for schools has meant that the GCE curriculum is exam led and there is not enough emphasis on independent learning

9. Twenty years ago A Level Music syllabi across the different examination boards were very similar. Nowadays there are sharp differences between them as well as a wide range of options.

- there is a different approach to the study and number of set works
- there is less emphasis on the discrete assessment of harmony and counterpoint. relevant skills are assessed instead through compositional work.
- there is no longer the emphasis on aural dictation that there was pre-Curriculum 2000.

10. In September 2008, as a result of the *14-19 Education and Skills White Paper*, a new Level 3 qualification, the Advanced Creative Diploma, will be introduced into schools across the country. This is in part designed to help smooth the transition from school to university but, at the time of writing, it is impossible to predict how successful this will be.

3 Music in Schools, Sixth Form Colleges and Further Education Colleges

Music A Level classes were observed in several schools and 14 teachers of A Level Music and/or Music Technology were interviewed. They came from a representative sample of schools and colleges from seven local authorities across the country; four sixth form colleges, two further education colleges, three comprehensive schools, and an independent school. One interviewee taught music privately at home and another worked on community music projects with various opera companies and orchestras across the country.

Several common themes emerged from the interviews. One of the most significant was the impact of Curriculum 2000. This was mentioned by all of the teachers interviewed.

3.1 The impact of Curriculum 2000

In 1999 all the A Level specifications were rewritten according to new QCA Subject Criteria. AS and A2 exams were introduced across all subjects. The introduction of AS levels has meant that the amount of time available for teaching has been reduced because of the additional exams. The general feeling was that courses have now become more exam driven with less time for critical thinking. As a consequence the time spent in the sixth form is very structured which can leave new undergraduates at a disadvantage when having to structure their own time.

As one teacher put it:

A Levels have been turned into exam 'sausage machines' with no opportunity to breathe or to give a bigger picture. It has changed the flavour of the first year of A Level study. In the past it could be used as a foundation year but now, because it leads to the AS assessment, it is very full, which has precluded this. Students often ask 'do we need this for the exam?'

Although the AS/A2 structure was criticised by many, most teachers welcomed the broader approach of the Curriculum 2000 Music A Level, seeing it as an opening out of the whole subject giving teachers the opportunity to take different routes through the specification e.g. in Edexcel the Bach chorale/counterpoint route or the 32 bar pop song/popular music route. One comprehensive school teacher summarised these strengths and weaknesses as follows:

Strengths of students following most A Level courses: variety of choice, diversity of styles, nothing too technical. All of these are disadvantages for a university! Also there are many opportunities to make music in groups and perform in concerts – clearly advantageous for universities.

Weaknesses of students following most A Level courses: insufficient time for study, teachers with patchy technology skills, little time for proper aural training.

Each of the GCE Music exam boards offers a range of options within the specification. One private music teacher perceived this as a weakness:

The current exams seem to place far more emphasis on following individual preferences as opposed to a broader more structured course. There is far too much emphasis, in my opinion, on composition and performance. There is also too much free choice as to what works are studied. Students quite often manage not to study any Western classical music at all on the courses.

Because the standard of performance is not as demanding as previously, it is no longer necessary for students to have private instrumental lessons. As a result of this, coupled with the broader Curriculum 2000 approach, candidate numbers for both GCSE and GCE have risen and continue to rise.

Year	Number of AS Music and Music Technology candidates	
2003	11,412	
2004	11,982	
2006	13,129	
Year	Number of A2 Music and Music Technology candidates	
2003	8040	
2004	8570	
2006	9338	

As one comprehensive school teacher commented,

Our group sizes have been steadily increasing - about 10/12 in Year 12 of very different musical abilities ranging from Grade A - E at AS.

3.2 The transition from GCSE to A Level Music

There was a general feeling from teachers that the current step from GCSE to A Level Music was too big. The recent (February 2007) *QCA Review of standards in A Level and GCSE music. 1985–2005* also expressed concern over the transition from GCSE to A Level Music.

Overall, reviewers considered that the step from GCSE to AS was too large, whereas that from AS to A2 was seen as relatively smooth, and presenting few problems. The difficulties of progression from GCSE to AS, were seen to lie, not in the nature of the content of syllabi, but in the low level of assessment challenges set for candidates at GCSE, leaving them unprepared for the more appropriate demands at AS and A2.
2007:84

One secondary school teacher, however, has found that it is possible to engineer a carefully chosen route through Edexcel GCSE which eases students into the A Level. Nowadays GCSE students only need performance level of around Grade III ABRSM Practical, and it is not necessary to be able to read staff notation in order to take the exam. Several of the music staff who were interviewed were concerned that GCSE does not offer the rigour that it could and that some students find the shift to AS level quite difficult. One FE lecturer felt that GCSE was not the adequate preparation for A Level that students perceived it as and went as far to say that ‘GCSE is not needed – it gives students a false sense of security for A Level Music.’ Because of this the entry requirements for his college are built on interview and audition, rather than GCSE, and all students are taught to read notation once they start the course. Some teachers were developing strategies to overcome the perceived shortcomings of GCSE. One taught GCSE Music ‘with AS level in mind’, and another expected to ‘teach harmony from scratch’ at AS level.

3.3 Examination boards and options

Most of the teachers interviewed (75%) followed the Edexcel route. Of the remaining three, two followed OCR and one, AQA. This is roughly in line with national trends.

Board	No of A2 candidates 2004	No of A2 candidates 2006
Edexcel Music	4054 (65%)*	4359 (67%)
Edexcel Music Technology	2321	2806
AQA	964 (15%)	903 (14%)
OCR	1231 (20%)	1270 (19%)
TOTAL	8570	9338

* Percentages shown do not include Music Technology.

When choosing which options to offer, each school took a different approach. The implications of the multiplicity of different routes were recognised in some of the teacher’s comments:

In my experience there is no single approach to this among music teachers. I offer most options and students choose – some schools offer no options and all students follow the course the teacher deems most important or best. Again this gives you no clear baseline.

How well prepared students are for the music degree depends very much on which A Level they have done and which options they have taken. They are at an advantage if they have done the Bach chorale with Edexcel.

The teacher from the high-achieving independent school believed that ‘with dedicated teachers the options offered by the Edexcel A Level in Music can be perfect’ but added that he found the standard far below what his pupils can handle and therefore he covers twice as much ground with the pupils writing 2500 – 4000 word essays, for example.

A sample of the different approaches to option choice is given below:

The students choose their own Composition Techniques – they often choose serialism and the electro-acoustic option. They also do the Bach chorale – this is often part of the entry tests for university music degrees.

Our selection of options is aimed at a basic grounding in harmony and analysis for those who need it when they go to Music college for performance courses/Uni or even on popular music courses. We try to work with the students strengths obviously.

There is choice of options for Composition Techniques – the selection is made partly by the staff and partly by the students. Four options are offered for A2. All of those going on to university will be expected to take the harmony option.

For composition techniques, all students study the Bach chorale and serialism. These have been chosen with the specialist skills of the teachers in mind and because the Bach chorale is fundamental to many other aspects of the course and a good preparation for university. For AS, all students follow Areas of Study in 'Music for Large Ensemble' and 'Sacred Vocal Music'. The additional A2 Area of Study varies from year to year, but last year the students studied 'Film and Television Music', sometimes gaps are left gaps in the chronological context.

All students study the Bach chorale and are then grouped into other Areas of Study and composition techniques classes. The staff chose which options the students follow, but with the students' interests in mind. The Bach chorale is not always popular with the students. A fellow teacher refers to it as 'eating your greens'. It is certainly of limited use for pop musicians.

As can be seen from these comments, most of the teachers chose to follow the Bach chorale option, recognising that it is 'fundamental to many other aspects of the course and a good preparation for university'. The popularity of this Edexcel option is reflected nationwide.

The following extracts from the *2006 GCE Music Examiners' Report* give some indication of the popularity of each Compositional Techniques topic.

AS - 80% (4500 students)[1] of the AS candidates chose the Bach chorale.

A2: 57.5% (2500 students) of candidates chose the Bach chorale

14.5% (600 students) the pop song

12.5% (500 students) Baroque counterpoint

9.3% (400 students) Serialism

4% (200 students) Minimalism.

Very few chose 'Renaissance counterpoint', 'Extended techniques' and 'Electro-acoustic music'.

3.4 A new type of music student

Pre-Curriculum 2000, few students would have studied music at A Level and a significant proportion of these would have gone on to study music at university. There was a clear route for skilled classical musicians from GCSE through A Level to BMus, often culminating in work in the music profession. The broadening out of the A Level music specification coupled with the introduction of A Level Music Technology, has resulted in widening participation. Several teachers welcomed the new type of students this has attracted. One teacher from a successful sixth form college said that he now dealt with a wide range of students:

from those who took music up as essentially a 4th or 5th subject with no previous experience (some never having encountered notation) to those who were planning on going to music college. Perhaps the most interesting students though were those who considered music their main subject but who had never engaged with classical music. These students (by far the majority now I would say) typically played guitar, bass or drums and ran their own often quite successful bands. They often did far more performing than the 'classical' students and were far more interested in current musical issues.

Another sixth form college teacher noted that, in his experience, music students are predominantly interested in classical music and are good performers, whereas Music Technology students are divided between those who are classically trained and those who may struggle with the theory but are good pop and rock instrumentalists. He observed that his Music Technology students tend to be more creative than the classically trained Music students. As another comprehensive teacher observed:

It should be remembered, of course, that many students do not go to university to merely continue where they left their A Level studies. It is the excitement of new ideas and processes which I think grabs their interest.

3.5 The teaching of traditional skills in analysis, harmony and counterpoint

There is a feeling amongst music lecturers at the University of Huddersfield that today's students have weaker skills in analysis, harmony and counterpoint than those of ten years ago. Teachers were asked about these aspects of the A Level course. Several of them pointed to the lack of time to develop these skills. In the independent school, for example, students study the Bach chorale plus either serialism or minimalism. Their teacher believes that, in general, no-one reaches a really high standard of writing in the Bach chorale. He feels that there is not enough time to bring the pupils to a high standard, particularly when they have joined the school in the sixth form and have come from schools with little music.

The broadening out of A Level Music courses means that a lot more ground is covered in the course. As one teacher said 'There is more to do in Music A Level than other A Level subjects, but the students all enjoy it.' Furthermore, most schools offer a wealth of extra-curricular music activities. As one comprehensive teacher pointed out

This means that 'traditional' skills, particularly of analysis and harmony / counterpoint receive fairly small emphasis. In a typical A Level course [OCR], for example, I would expect to teach harmony from scratch (GCSE is of necessity very mixed-ability in a comprehensive school, with many students not reading music). AS level requirements are equivalent to Grade VI ABRSM, and I would be able to spend no more than 20 hours at AS and 20 at A2 on harmony; at A2 level, students can avoid formal harmony completely if they want to. Having also taught AQA, my perception is that there is a slightly more strict harmony element, but students still have the option to avoid traditional harmony. Typically I am allotted 3 hours per week for A Level music with very small groups (1-4 students).

The comments I have made about harmony apply equally to counterpoint, which I would not teach until A2 and then only to exceptional students. Similarly, music analysis at AS level is elementary, with again approximately 20–30 hours devoted in AS to the study of 6 set works - 3 jazz, three classical (c 1780 – 1835). A2 analysis is wider ranging with OCR, but (unfortunately in my opinion) there are no set works.

3.6 Teaching and learning styles

One of the teachers interviewed gave a useful summary of teaching and learning styles in his sixth form college:

Lessons are one hour and five minutes long. Groups may have up to 20 students in them. Different teachers take different approaches, of course, but worksheets are used to act as a framework. Notes are not dictated. There are no formal study skills lessons but these are built into the introductory sessions. The students are not very confident about expressing their opinions, rather they see themselves as receptacles to be filled with knowledge and ideas. Many students find it difficult to write essays and are not very good at taking notes. There was more of an emphasis on essay writing in the old specification. There is too much reliance on internet research and a reluctance to use the library. They do not use the library much but are given study packs to use.

There seemed to be a general awareness of the importance of essay writing and the pupils' weaknesses in this area, in particular their over-reliance on the internet. Several of the music teachers helped with essay-writing techniques within music classes. In one of the sixth form colleges, students learn essay writing skills within all A Level subjects and the teaching of it was rigorous. The library had a pamphlet 'References and citations' which all students use and Music A Level students were given a workbook on how to use the library.

All of the A Level classes observed were friendly, informal groups which are at the same time teacher-dependent and teacher-led. The focus was very much on the A Level syllabus, getting through the content so that the students can pass exams and the schools can meet their targets. This was well-illustrated in one lesson where A2 A Level Music students were present for an introductory session on Performance Investigation – a detailed comparison of two different performances of the same piece of music. Both of the teachers present work as Examiners for OCR and the work focused on the methods and approaches needed to get the highest marks. As part of the Performance Investigation students have to submit recorded excerpts and in this session students were learning how to use some new software – 'Audacity'. To this end they were each given instructions in a spiral-bound workbook with a plastic cover. The teacher had clearly gone to a lot of trouble to prepare them. These sixth-formers would be very well-prepared for their A Level exams, but not necessarily for the independent study they will encounter at university. Everything observed was very teacher-dependent: students were being given useful skills but were not being given the opportunity to think for themselves. In short, they were being spoon-fed.

3.7 What teachers believed universities should offer in their music degrees.

Teachers were asked what they would like to see universities offer in their music degrees. The private music teacher thought that

universities should be maintaining high standards and not lowering these to meet the inability of incoming students. It needs to be made clear in prospectus' etc. what the requirements are and what students are expected to know. I think it would be all too easy for universities to lower their standards in order to succumb to the inappropriate AS and A2 music courses.

Most teachers, however, looked for a broadening out of music degree courses. One of the sixth form

college teachers felt that ‘courses should not be too narrow in their approach (too much note-by-note Schenkerian analysis, for example) but should always enable a clarity of context.’ Another of the sixth form college teachers, a graduate of the University of Huddersfield, thought that music degrees should be ‘broad and not too focused’:

Everyone should learn about music technology and it should also include something about the professional skills needed in the music business – more about how to apply for funding, the BMIC, spnm etc. Everyone should study music theory but it should be tailored towards student interests.

When asked whether he thought that the BMus course at Huddersfield had prepared him for his future career, he said that it had set him up for everything he did now as a freelance composer and educationalist. He was impressed by the open-minded philosophy and the emphasis on the real world. For him the main strengths were in the study of composition where he cited the good staff and the valuable opportunities to have pieces performed. In comparison he described the BMus course at the University of London college, where he now teaches, as being rooted in the nineteenth century with its emphasis is on musicology and limited opportunities for performing and composing.

The independent school teacher looked towards a British system emulating the top music courses in the United States, where students study music stage by stage, intensively and systematically, covering everything from pop music to world music, ancient music to Jewish chants. He contrasted this with Cambridge ‘where three or four areas of music are covered and everything else is run down’ adding that ‘Cambridge will have to reinvent itself or the world will pass it by’.

Two of the comprehensive school teachers looked for ways to bridge the gap between A Level and degree, one wrote:

In my view the most effective course of action for a university music department, having decided what type of courses to teach, is to run a short foundation course for all students. Whether a traditional music course, a technology or jazz course, it would be a straightforward task to establish a set of baseline skills and knowledge which all students would be aware of the need for. After all, you are taking students from such diverse backgrounds that there is no real baseline. Even then there is no guarantee that all students will have the skills necessary to access the rest of the course!

3.8 The PGCE Perspective

In order to establish how well-prepared music graduates are for a career in teaching, various representatives from two PGCE courses were interviewed. These were Lesley-Anne Pearson, Jayne Price and Helen Cowan from the School of Education and Professional Development at the University of Huddersfield, and Tony Harris from Nottingham Trent University.

In the past, the majority of music undergraduates were expected to play the piano, develop keyboard harmony skills, sight sing and study four-part harmony. Nowadays music degrees differ from course to course, but it is unlikely that music graduates will have developed all these skills. Lesley-Anne Pearson observed that in recent years there has been a decline in student abilities in these areas but considers them vital for classroom teaching. At the same time, significant changes in the National Curriculum in Music have not been reflected in most university degrees to the same extent. As a result, prospective teaching students often do not have the broad range of skills that are needed in a music classroom. It could be argued that music degrees do not prepare students for teacher training although many of them will follow this route. Both universities recognise that a breadth of skills and experience is necessary to be a successful music teacher and, because of this, PGCE students complete a skills audit at the beginning of

the course in order to identify any areas of weakness. They are then required to develop their existing musical knowledge, skills and understanding through the year. The University of Huddersfield 'Audit of subject knowledge, skills, experiences and understanding' breaks down the different areas into

- instrumental skills
- keyboard skills
- knowledge of world music
- knowledge of the history of music
- composition skills
- aural skills
- musical analysis
- using electronic equipment
- using sound-processing equipment
- using score-writing computer packages
- using sequencers for composing

Numbers of pupils studying Music Technology A Level continue to increase (helped by the fact that prices of hardware and software have recently fallen dramatically) but there is still a shortage of competent teachers in this field. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that many teacher training institutions will not accept students with music technology rather than music degrees. However, the teacher-training representatives interviewed put the emphasis on breadth of knowledge rather than depth of expertise in either music or music technology and recognised that music technology graduates can shine in the classroom, particularly when they are teamed with an older teacher without music technology skills.

3.9 Summary

1. Curriculum 2000 has meant increased accessibility across the full ability range with jazz, popular, world music and film music being included alongside Western classical music. This broader approach is welcomed by most teachers.
2. Student numbers for Music and Music Technology A Levels have risen and continue to rise.
3. The introduction of the AS/A2 structure has meant that courses are now more exam-driven and the time available for teaching has been reduced.
4. Teachers feel that the step from GCSE to A Level Music is too big.
5. Pre-university music qualifications are too diverse to expect a smooth transition from school to university.
6. Most schools offer Edexcel A Level Music which has a wide range of options. The majority of schools teach the Bach chorale as part of Composition Techniques.
7. Widening participation has meant that new types of music student have appeared, often with a pop/music technology background. Their creativity and open-mindedness is welcomed by many music teachers.
8. Curriculum 2000 has meant that there is less time to teach more traditional skills such as harmony, counterpoint and analysis.

9. Sixth formers are very well-prepared for their A Level exams but not necessarily for the independent study they will encounter at university.

10. Most of the teachers interviewed looked for a broadening out of university music degrees.

11. Many music graduates follow a career in teaching, but prospective teaching students often do not have the broad range of skills that are needed in a music classroom.

4 Music, Music Technology and English at the University of Huddersfield

4.1 Music provision at Huddersfield

The BMus course was the first undergraduate music course to be introduced outside the Universities when it came into being at Huddersfield Polytechnic (originally as a BA in Music) in 1970. The course had and still has a particular focus on practical performance and contemporary composition. It currently recruits about 80 students a year. Since the late 1990s music technology courses have been developed both by the School of Music, Humanities and Media (MHM) and the School of Computing and Engineering. There is a diverse range of such courses: those in the School of Music, Humanities and Media tend to focus on the more creative areas and on popular music, whereas those in Computing and Engineering are more concerned with the technology. In music around 80 students are recruited to music technology courses, with a larger number being recruited by the School of Computing and Engineering. At the heart of both provisions is sound-recording and editing as well as sequencing and more sophisticated means of generating and manipulating sounds.

There is relatively little overlap in terms of module content between the BMus and Music Technology courses and the two course portfolios tend to recruit quite distinct types of student. A very particular difference between the groups of students is their knowledge of music notation. Most, but not all, Music Technology students can read music to some extent but some (particularly in Engineering) have not learnt conventional music notation. By contrast, a sophisticated notational ability is required from BMus students.

The division in Huddersfield between the BMus and Music Technology courses is fairly characteristic of the way music provision has developed in the Higher Education sector. This has partly come in response to market forces – the development of music technology courses, particularly in the College/FE sector, the development of a Music Technology A Level, as well as the increasing availability of sophisticated music software.

4.2 Issues in the sector

There are numerous pieces of evidence pointing to university staff having concerns about a decline in both the skills and subject knowledge of students currently entering university. The NAMHE Conference in 2006, and the Society for Music Analysis meeting gave a particular focus to this perceived problem. The primary areas of concern for those teaching BMus modules may be summarised as:

- poor skills in harmony and counterpoint
- poorly developed skills of music analysis (at times a resistance to the whole concept)
- insufficient knowledge of the canon of Western classical works (students have a different view of its significance seeing it as only one of a diverse range of types of music)
- poor concert attendance (students experience music in a much more diverse range of ways)
- poor sight reading ability and some difficulties with notation
- a desire simply to play musical instruments and a failure to recognise how a wider knowledge of the repertoire, its history and analysis, might enrich their performance
- a resistance to composing in more challenging styles (a general desire to write rather limp tonal music).

Whether students in the past had strengths in all these areas is open to debate. Undoubtedly some of the observations of staff are the result of looking at their own musical education through rose-tinted spectacles. However, the difficulties identified do reflect some deeper attitudes.

It was evident from interviews with Music Technology staff that their main areas of concern about their students could be summarised as follows:

- poor skills in maths
- poor skills in science
- problems in working to deadlines
- problems with independent learning
- limited capacity to research beyond the internet
- poor music technology teachers in schools
- A Level music technology does not have a broad enough base of skills

When interviewed, music technology staff expressed concern over the difficulties that some students were having with the maths element of the course. The students are given a maths test at the beginning of the year and each year between 30-40% fail it. Without some maths ability there are potential problems with some of the modules e.g. Audio Technology. Furthermore, as one lecturer put it 'With different maths specifications at both GCSE and A Level, it is difficult to predict what students will know.' Some students are held back by their technical ability and struggle with the technical work. In contrast, as one lecturer observed, those students who have technical, mathematical and music theory ability are at an advantage and can do very well.

Changing attitudes in society to Western classical music

Since the 1960s, pop music in the UK has eclipsed all other forms of music by any measure of popularity or economic dominance. Consequently Western classical music has lost some of the pre-eminent status it used to have: this form of music making is increasingly seen as just one of many equally worthy forms of music. A difficulty related to this is that many staff view the canon of Western classical music (and a thorough knowledge of it) as being of greater importance than the students do. Students often regard the repertoire of their instrument or their band as more significant and frequently listen to more popular music

and film music than to the canon.

It could be argued that there is a poor fit between what is taught in courses and the expectations of students and actual career destinations.

More generic issues

To the difficulties with transition associated with music courses, we must add the more generic issues which often have a clear connection to first year attrition.

- research and essay-writing skills.
- study skills / styles problems
- social and settling-in problems

Janet Price, Academic Skills Tutor at the University of Huddersfield, was asked what she perceived as the weaknesses of the Music and Music Technology students and how she felt that these problems might be addressed. She finds that many of the problems are with essay writing and are often connected with aspects of presentation such as referencing. Often students do not understand the thinking behind these conventions. Price believes that with widening participation, the first year can no longer be regarded as a journey of discovery. Students should not be left guessing in Year 1, particularly during the first part of the year. They need clear guidelines on essay writing, note taking, and so on. She feels that there is a lack of uniformity in the approach to essay writing amongst the lecturers. Students need clearer criteria as to what is needed and what makes a good essay, this should be reflected in the assessment criteria.

Students feel that their emphasis is on creativity and do not see writing as a creative exercise. They do not seem to understand that they are studying for a *degree* in, say, Music or Music Technology rather than just the subject itself. The reality is that most of the students will not have a career in music, so it is important that they develop their transferable skills.

One way for the students to develop their academic skills would be for the study of learning skills to run parallel to work being developed in different modules. So the first essay on, for example, Musicology, could be used as a model in learning skills classes running alongside.

In particular the Music and Music Technology students need

- appropriate models to follow e.g. how to break a question down into keywords
- to be taught the difference between tasks e.g. 'describe', 'analyse', 'discuss' etc.
- to understand the purpose of referencing
- to learn how to analyse and to develop their critical skills
- more guidance in the first year leading to independence in the second year.

Price believes that although essay writing is a good test of certain skills, it should not be the only form of assessment for written work. Students tend to get obsessed with the structure of the essay to the extent that the content can become secondary and the work is no longer an adequate demonstration of their knowledge and understanding. Students could be assessed through a set of questions. This could test their understanding, and the skills developed could be cross-referenced to essay writing.

4.3 Staff Questionnaire – Analysis

Thirteen members of the University of Huddersfield full-time music staff were interviewed in September/October 2007. The lecturers taught on either the BMus or the music technology degrees, or both. No differentiation was made between the courses (see Appendix for Staff Questionnaire).

How would you rate the strengths and weaknesses of the 2006-7 first year cohort in terms of

- harmony and counterpoint
- music analysis
- essay writing
- research
- knowledge of the Western classical repertoire
- knowledge of music outside the Western classical repertoire
- sight reading ability
- fluency in reading notation
- performance skills
- composition skills
- music technology skills
- computer skills

Although some staff acknowledged that the students covered a wide range of ability, overall the majority of the staff found the students to be weak or at best adequate in seven of the twelve areas identified (harmony and counterpoint, music analysis, essay writing, research, knowledge of the Western classical repertoire, sight reading ability, fluency in reading notation). The exceptions were knowledge of music outside the Western classical repertoire, performance skills, music technology skills and computer skills, where the majority of the staff found the students to be at worst adequate and at best very good.

The following table shows the different areas ranked from strongest to weakest.

Skills and knowledge	Weak/Very weak (% of respondents)	Adequate (% of respondents)	Good/Very good (% of respondents)
Computer skills	0%	25%	75%
Music technology skills	0%	38%	62%
Knowledge of music outside the Western classical repertoire	25%	17%	58%
Performance skills	0%	50%	50%
Composition skills	28%	44%	28%
Sight reading ability	40%	40%	20%
Fluency in reading notation	30%	70%	0%
Essay writing	66%	33%	0%
Harmony and counterpoint	66%	33%	0%
Music analysis	57%	43%	0%
Knowledge of the Western classical repertoire	80%	20%	0%
Research	92%	8%	0%

Comparisons were made between the first-year students of 2006-7 and those of ten years ago. At the same time as acknowledging that this was something of a subjective measure, the knowledge of the current students was ranked in comparison as follows:

Skills and knowledge	Weaker/Much weaker (% of respondents)	About the same (% of respondents)	Stronger/Much stronger (% of respondents)
Computer skills	0%	0%	100%
Music technology skills	16%	0%	84%
Knowledge of music outside the Western classical repertoire	16%	0%	84%
Research	43%	14%	43%
Composition skills	25%	50%	25%
Fluency in reading notation	28%	58%	14%
Performance skills	16%	84%	0%
Essay writing	40%	60%	0%
Sight reading ability	50%	50%	0%
Harmony and counterpoint	80%	20%	0%
Music analysis	80%	20%	0%
Knowledge of the Western classical repertoire	84%	16%	0%

92% of the music staff described the students' research skills as 'weak' or 'very weak'. One lecturer summed this up by saying 'Students tend to rely on the internet, they are very poor at using the library or looking outside their own area.' Some staff talked about the lack of discrimination in selecting materials 'looking at Wikipedia and poor programme-note sites rather than at Grove.' Several thought that this weakness was because the students 'are not used to thinking for themselves.'

Ten years ago the internet was rarely used by university students as a research tool. Opinions were divided as to whether the research skills of students were weaker (43%) or stronger (43%) in the past. Those who felt that research skills were stronger in the past referred to the lack of independent thinking by current students; 'The traditional self-reliance of students has gone'. Some acknowledged that although research skills may have been stronger, this was 'within a much more limited environment'. Many referred to today's 'cut-and-paste plagiarism' but some recognised that 'Then they copied out of books rather than off the internet'.

80% of the staff described the students' knowledge of the Western classical repertoire as 'weak' or 'very weak' with a similar percentage (84%) finding this knowledge weaker than ten years ago: 'Students don't really inhabit the Classical music world'; 'They have a limited knowledge of a narrow repertoire'. One lecturer put this down to the fact that 'Many more students used to be in school ensembles, youth orchestras and choirs. This helped with their knowledge of the repertoire. Nowadays they are as likely to play in a salsa band.' In comparison 84% described students' knowledge of music outside the Western classical repertoire as 'stronger' or 'much stronger' than those ten years ago, with 58% finding students' knowledge today as 'good' or 'very good'. As one lecturer said, 'The internet has opened up all sorts of possibilities, there is a wider range of music available.' However, there was a feeling from several lecturers that this knowledge was often limited to pop music and was often uncritical. 'Pop music is what they are familiar with but as a background to their lives. It is a familiarity rather than an academic study in, for example, the writings of Simon Frith.

66% described skills in harmony and counterpoint as 'weak' or 'very weak' and 80% found these skills 'weaker' or 'much weaker' than that of students ten years ago: 'There is a general lack of ability to use the language, students are not fluent. Some of them struggle to identify chords.' Staff referred to the wide ability range, a variability no doubt linked to previous A Level study and the disparity between the requirements of different exam boards. In comparison 'All students would have studied four part harmony and two part counterpoint at A Level before'. Although a smaller percentage (57%) described skills of music analysis as 'weak' or 'very weak', the same percentage of staff (80%) found these skills to be 'weaker' or 'much weaker' than that of students ten years ago. A link was made between the two areas,

with one lecturer saying that 'Those who are stronger in Counterpoint, Harmony and Analysis (CHA) are also stronger in analysis' but another finding 'Their skills of music analysis are stronger than their harmony and counterpoint skills.'

Two thirds of the staff found the essay writing skills of today's students to be 'weak' or 'very weak'. Some acknowledged that there is a wide ability range, one described 'some of the music technology students' as being 'the best' and others related ability to 'which exam board they have studied before' and 'which other A Levels they have taken, English and History, for example, are helpful.' Several referred to the need for spoon-feeding.

Most of the staff (70%) found that fluency in reading notation was 'adequate' with 58% finding it about the same as ten years ago (some of the remainder found it 'weaker' and some 'stronger'). Any weaknesses related to the use of different clefs. There was a fairly even spread of responses to the question of sight reading ability with 40% finding it 'weak' or 'very weak' and the same percentage finding it 'adequate'. Similarly the same percentage (50%) found it 'weaker' or 'much weaker' in the past as those who found it about the same. One lecturer explained any weaknesses with the fact that 'In the past A Level tested sight reading skills, keyboard skills etc. It no longer does, so students have not got as much experience.' Half the staff described performance skills as 'good' or 'very good' and the other half as 'adequate'. 84% found these skills about the same as they were ten years ago. One lecturer felt that there were 'more of the stronger performers in the past' but another said that although he had felt that performance skills were in decline for a few years in the late 1990s, he feels that they have picked up recently.

There was a fairly even spread of responses to the question about composition skills. 44% found these skills 'adequate' whereas the same percentage (28%) found them 'weak' or 'very weak' as those who found them 'good' or 'very good'. Similarly 50% of the staff found the students' ability about the same as ten years ago whereas the remainder were equally split between 'weaker' and 'stronger'. One lecturer observed that 'The computer composition students are much more creative than the BMus students and they are open to new styles unlike the BMus students.' Another pointed out that although in the past 'there were fewer students who had already composed, they did not rely on computer software (particularly Sibelius) as much'

The music technology skills and computer skills of current students were ranked highest. 62% of staff described the students as having 'good' or 'very good' music technology skills and 75% 'good' or 'very good' computer skills. Ten years ago such technologies were not as well developed so it was not surprising to find that the skills of today's students were rated as significantly stronger than in the past. As one lecturer put it 'Students are very techno-fluent, sometimes better than their teachers, and are able to assimilate things more quickly.'

Knowledge of current A Level and BTEC specifications

Specification	Non-existent	Sketchy	Adequate	Detailed
A Level Music	15%	70%	15%	0%
A Level Music Technology	60%	30%	10%	0%
BTEC National Diploma	70%	15%	15%	0%

None of the staff had a detailed knowledge of any of the pre-university specifications and in all cases the very large majority (85%-90%) described their knowledge as 'less than adequate'. A very large majority of the staff (85%) has not had any engagements with school or college examination boards. Two have worked as examiners.

From your experience as a tutor, what, in your view, is the main reason that students drop out in the first year?

Although staff pointed out that it was difficult to generalise, overall they cited two main reasons for students dropping out in the first year. These were – 'wrong choice of course' and 'workload and time management'.

Staff talked of the disillusionment which resulted from a mismatch between expectations and reality. In the case of the BMus course this was usually because students wished for more performing opportunities. As one lecturer put it 'They expect something more like a conservatoire where there is a lot of playing and not much else', and another 'There are not enough opportunities to perform in the first year. Performance lessons are likely to focus on technique rather than performance at this stage.' Several lecturers wondered whether there was too much academic work in Year 1 describing this variously as 'over-theoretical' and 'too traditional' which could be 'difficult' and 'off-putting' for some students, particularly those who did not have the appropriate skills in Counterpoint Harmony and Analysis, Musicology and Analysis.

Similarly those music technology students who dropped out had hoped for a more practical emphasis: 'Some students come thinking that they will have more time in the recording studio. They expect the degree to be more like the BTEC course i.e. more practical with less technical information and essay writing.'

Some students sought more of an emphasis on pop music. This was mentioned twice: 'some students transfer to the Popular Music Production course because they want more of a pop music environment, they may be intimidated by the music atmosphere of this department'; and 'They are more interested in pop music. The BMus is not really for them.'

The general feeling amongst those who mentioned workload and time-management was that 'Some students can't organise themselves, they are not used to independent learning and they cannot deal with time-management skills.' More specifically, they are not very skilled at knowing what to do in between lectures when they are unsupervised. Several lecturers put this inability down to the 'gap between the spoon-feeding students experience at school and the reality of university study'. 'At university there are too many options and they are not ready to cope with the decision making or to think for themselves'. One lecturer wondered whether it was a result of 'widening participation' which 'has meant that we are attracting students who don't know what they are taking on'.

Three lecturers felt that some students had made the wrong choice to go to university. Some students did not have the commitment to succeed, and others were 'unsuited intellectually'. One member of staff felt that 'some students are simply not suited to studying music technology at university and that they might be better off getting a job in a studio rather than studying for a degree.' Lack of preparedness was mentioned again in this respect: 'There is too big a gap between the way they have been taught in the past

at school and they way things are approached on a degree course.’

Financial reasons and personal matters were also mentioned. Changes to the system of students grants and loans have meant that increasing numbers of students are taking on part-time work which can be time-consuming and difficult to co-ordinate with study at university. Some staff felt that students often left for personal reasons which led to them having difficulties with their course work.

Given the capabilities of today’s students, are there any changes you would make to the current degree courses?

Roughly half the staff prefaced their answer to this question by saying that they would not make any major changes: ‘the students are happy and we have a good track record’; ‘the BMus has a wide range of options and suits most students’; and ‘on the whole, the music technology courses cover the right things, the students are given a huge amount of choice and flexibility.’

However, the majority of the staff had suggestions as how the courses could have a better overall structure. Many of these comments were related to integration between courses and modules. Joint courses were mentioned with a concern that the ‘two subjects are not formally connected’, as well as collaboration between courses, for example ‘the Media or Computer Games degrees joining forces with Music Technology students on projects...This kind of collaboration would be a reflection of careers in the real world’ and help to develop collaborative skills’.

Although the large choice of options was generally seen as a good thing, one lecturer felt the ‘problem is the module construction – 120 credits is not enough. We cannot shoehorn everything into this number of credits’ and another said ‘We can’t do everything and just keep adding new areas – something has to go’.

Concerns were raised about some aspects of progression. ‘There is a danger of having a ‘pick and mix’ attitude. Students need more advice from the tutors in selecting their modules.’ Musicology was mentioned several times in this respect, with the need to have more ‘interaction between electives’ and a clearer progression through the three years. At the moment students ‘can reach the third year and have only studied one period.’ Some lecturers argued that the range of modules was too diverse and that all the historical periods need to be covered so that there is something ‘to build on’. A restriction of choices or a quinquennial review were suggested. Another solution was to ‘cover a wider range of periods during the first year.’

Changes to the structure of different years of the course were suggested. For example, ‘in Year 2, more complex analysis could be made into a 20 credit core module’ and ‘in the third year there may be too much of an emphasis on what they are good at’. One lecturer felt that ‘the first year is a bit over-theoretical’ arguing that because ‘only a sixth of it is practical...it is not a reflection of what the students want to do.’ Although agreeing that ‘the students need a good grounding...there is probably too much Counterpoint, Harmony and Analysis (CHA) and Analysis... A term of CHA and Analysis might be better or they could be merged into one. This would leave room for a new module which supported their main interest be it performance or composition.’ A more radical idea was the suggestion of ‘the kind of project based degree that you find at York University. It is much nearer to reality given that freelance life is project-based.’

Only a handful of staff made reference to the ‘capabilities of today’s students’ mostly questioning the need to ‘modify courses to suit the students’. One lecturer felt that it was more valuable to give them ‘something challenging’ and another that ‘GCSE and A Level should change – they appear to have changed without consultation.’ In contrast, one lecturer asked whether we need the ‘types of skills we are developing’ adding that ‘nowadays we look at music in different ways and from different perspectives. We listen in different ways.’

Some general comments were made about the curriculum content of the music technology courses. One referred to the need 'to give students a more scientific foundation' and another the need to ensure that there is 'an element of written based research in each year of the courses at the moment it is possible to complete the Music Technology and Digital Media course without doing any written work.' Reference was also made to the problem of 'balancing the vocational with the more old-fashioned academic. There are some who feel that aspects of the Music Technology content do not represent the real world and that it could be made more commercial with, for example, more of an emphasis on 'computer games, radio programmes, film music and special effects.'

Several comments were made about the use of large lecture groups which were not always believed to be effective. Specific comments were made about the Computer Composition module. These argued that the use of lecture groups and tutorials means that there is not as much contact time (one-to-one or in small groups) as on the BMus course. 'The BMus students have a further advantage in that a professional ensemble is used to perform their compositions.' One lecturer suggested that this module should be redesigned to allot '20 credits for techniques (such as synthesis, sound manipulation and sound recording) and a further 20 credits for pure composition' in order to help the students to 'develop their imagination in creating film music and special effects'.

One BMus lecturer said that 'Small composition group tutorials would be more effective than one-to-one classes. They do not need one-to-one classes until Year 3.'

The use of Logic was mentioned and the disproportionate amount of time that has to be spent teaching it. 'We have to teach them from scratch. At school they use PCs and Cubase, they need to be able to use Macs and Logic here.'

One lecturer thought that it would be 'helpful if instrumental teachers took more responsibility for sorting out which students played in which ensembles.' Another bemoaned the fact that there is 'very little of the contemporary repertoire taught by the instrumental teachers here... Much more can be learnt from the contemporary repertoire, not only in terms of performance, it also helps to give the student composers an awareness of the context we are living in.'

Some staff felt that more time was needed on study skills and that it worked better when it was taught separately, rather than being absorbed into Musicology where it could get 'tagged on at the end.' Some commented on the importance of professional development. One lecturer felt that more of this should be built into the music technology courses because those students are 'most likely to have a portfolio career'. Another recommended that 'Getting students to recognise the skills that they have gained should be built into the course'.

Several suggestions were made as to how to encourage independent study. Some felt that students were given too much tutor support which could 'take the motivation away from students to lead their own activities'. One lecturer talked of creating an environment with 'more student-led ensembles and activities' and another of using an extended induction period of a month where students could 'learn the skills of time management, research, essay writing etc. – a crash course of what university is like. ..they could develop team-work skills through hands on activities...and learn about each other, the school and its environment.'

4.4 Summary of findings

Staff acknowledged that the students covered a wide range of ability. The majority of the staff perceived the students to be 'weak' or 'very weak' in

- research skills (92%). Students are poor at using the library, they tend to rely on the internet and use indiscriminately. Several staff thought that this was a result of students not being able to think independently.
- knowledge of the Western classical repertoire (80%). A similar percentage found this knowledge weaker than ten years ago.
- harmony and counterpoint (66%). 80% found these skills 'weaker' or 'much weaker' than that of students ten years ago. Staff referred to the wide ability range, linked to the disparity between the requirements of different exam boards
- essay writing (66%). Several staff referred to the need for spoon-feeding.
- music analysis (57%). 80% found these skills to be 'weaker' or 'much weaker' than that of students ten years ago.
- sight reading ability (40%). Comments included: 'In the past A Level tested sight reading skills, keyboard skills etc. It no longer does so, so students have not got as much experience.'
- fluency in reading notation (30%). Any weaknesses related to the use of different clefs

The majority of the staff found the students to be 'good' or 'very good' in

- computer skills (75%). Comments included: 'Students are very techno-fluent, sometimes better than their teachers, and are able to assimilate things more quickly.'
- music technology skills (62%)
- their knowledge of music outside the Western classical repertoire (58%). 84% found this stronger or much stronger than ten years ago. However, there was a feeling from several lecturers that this knowledge was often limited to pop music and was often uncritical.
- performance (50%)

None of the staff had a detailed knowledge of any of the pre-university specifications. A very large majority described their knowledge as 'less than adequate' and very few had any engagement with the school examination boards. The staff cited two main reasons for students dropping out in the first year.

- Wrong choice of course resulting from a mismatch between expectations and reality. In the case of the BMus this was usually because students wished for more performing opportunities. Several staff wondered whether there was too much academic work in Year 1. Music Technology students who dropped out, often hoped for a more practical emphasis, usually more time in the recording studio.
- Workload and time-management resulting from the fact that students are not used to independent learning.

Suggestions for changes to courses

Roughly half the staff would not make any major changes to the courses. The most frequent suggestions for changes were

Overall structure of both the BMus and the Music Technology courses. Many comments were related to integration between courses and modules and the need to have

- more interaction between electives
- a clearer progression through the three years
- restriction of choices
- a quinquennial review
- more teaching of study skills

Several changes to the structure of different years of the BMus course were suggested. Some found the first year to be over-theoretical.

Curriculum content of the Music Technology courses. Comments included referred to the

- need to give students a more scientific foundation
- need to ensure that there is 'an element of written based research in each year of the courses
- need to balance the vocational with the academic
- need to represent the real commercial world
- need to include more professional development
- use of Logic and the disproportionate amount of time that has to be spent teaching it.

Group sizes

- large lecture groups were not always believed to be effective.
- small composition group tutorials could be more effective than one-to-one classes

Instrumental teaching. Suggestions were made that instrumental teachers should

- take more responsibility for sorting out ensembles
- make more use of contemporary repertoire

Independent study. Suggestions were made as to how to encourage independent study. These included

- more student-led ensembles and activities
- an extended induction period of a month

5 Student surveys – Music, Music Technology and English

5.1 Introduction

Questionnaires were distributed to students across courses in Music, Music Technology, and English. 228 first year students were surveyed in 2007. In order to confirm the findings (or otherwise) a further 78 first year Music and Music Technology students were surveyed in 2008. In fact, the findings of both the 2007 and 2008 surveys were very similar (a brief comparison is given on p.70). The focus of what follows is very largely on the 2007 surveys with little detail being given of the 2008 survey, thus avoiding unnecessary repetition. The questionnaires and statements of results for all these surveys can be found in the Appendix. The 2008 survey however did include three extra questions which asked about ‘best’ and ‘worst’ first year experiences and invited the students to suggest any significant changes they would make to their first year experience. Details of these findings can be found on pages 70-82

Subject	Number of students surveyed in 2007/2008
University of Huddersfield	
Music (BMus)	104
Music Technology	154
English Studies	48
English Language	28
Liverpool Hope University (Music and Music Technology)	43
University of Southampton (BMus)	45
TOTAL	422

Student surveys at the University of Huddersfield

The Music Technology students came from two Schools (Music, Humanities and Media, and Computing and Engineering) and seven courses. Most of the responses were similar across the music technology courses so, for the majority of the analysis, these have not been differentiated. Where significant differences were noted in the responses between schools or courses these have been detailed. Although the majority of the questions were the same for all students on music technology courses, the questionnaires for the two schools, had slightly different emphases. These differences will be highlighted where appropriate.

Course and School	No. of students
BA and BSc in Popular Music Production (Computing and Engineering)	26
BA in Music Technology and Popular Music (Music, Humanities and Media)	39
BA in Music Technology (Music, Humanities and Media)	20
BSc in Music Technology and Audio Systems (Computing and Engineering)	22
BSc in Music Technology Software Development (Computing and Engineering)	6
BA in Creative Music Technology (Music, Humanities and Media)	8

The English Language students were from three courses.

Course	No. of students
English Language	16
English Language with Journalism	6
English Language with Creative Writing	6

The English Studies students were from eight courses.

Course	No. of students
English Studies	9
English Studies with Creative Writing	2
English and History	7
English and Media	3
English Literature	6
English Literature and Creative Writing	7
English Literature with Journalism	6
English Literature with Creative Writing	8

5.2 Music and Music Technology Surveys

5.3 Entry qualifications

Music entry qualifications

81% BMus students had passed A Level Music and 13% had a BTEC National Diploma in Music Practice (some students had both). The remaining students had either AS level in Music, ABRSM Practical and Theory, Open College Network or the International Foundation Year in Music/Music Technology. In addition to the above, 17% had completed A Level Music Technology.

Numbers of first year BMus students at the University of Huddersfield (2007) according to entry qualification

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Of the students who had passed A Level Music, 57% had followed the Edexcel specification, 30% AQA, 11% OCR and one student had taken the WJEC (Welsh Joint Education Committee) exam. This is a loose reflection of national trends in that Edexcel have the large majority of candidates, followed by AQA and OCR respectively.

Numbers of first year BMus students at the University of Huddersfield (2007) according different A Level examination boards



Although 57% of the students had passed Grade V-VI ABRSM Theory, only 11% had passed Grade VII-VIII. These statistics are a clear reflection of the national statistics. Each year, roughly 20,000 candidates pass Grade V Theory, the numbers drop dramatically for the higher grades with only 198 passing Grade VIII Theory.

Numbers of first year BMus students at the University of Huddersfield (2007) according to ABRSM Theory grades



70% of the BMus students had passed Grade VIII Practical exams. Between them they played a range of instruments with piano (24%) and voice (18%) being the most popular instruments. Of the remainder, the most popular instrumental families were brass (26%) and woodwind (16%). The least popular instruments were strings.

The piano (22%) remains the most popular instrument when Grades VII and VIII are looked at together and, of the remainder, the most popular instrumental families were brass (32%), then singing (19%), woodwind (15%) and again the least popular, strings (12%).

Music Technology entry qualifications

Across all the music technology courses, students had pursued the following pre-university routes:

58% - A Levels

37% - BTEC National Diplomas

Other qualifications included:

- Scottish Highers in Music and Sound Engineering
- International Foundation Year in Music/Music Technology
- Open College Network
- GNVQs
- Access to Music
- HND

So the starting points are not the same for each student. Some students had completed both AS/A2 levels and a BTEC National Diploma. Because of the small numbers involved, any comparisons between the responses of A Level students across the different exam boards will not be significant. Instead, later on in the survey, broader comparisons will be made between the students who followed the A Level route and those who completed BTEC qualifications.

A course-by-course analysis shows the relative percentages of those taking BTEC National Diplomas in either Music Technology or Music Practice.

Course	BTEC National Diplomas %
BA in Music Technology (MHM)*	50%
BA in Music Technology and Popular Music (MHM)	44%
BA/BSc in Popular Music Production (C&E)*	40%
BSc in Music Technology Software Development (C&E)	33%
BSc in Music Technology and Audio Systems (C&E)	32%
BA in Creative Music Technology (MHM)	0%

* (MHM) – School of Music, Humanities and Media, (C&E) – School of Computing and Engineering

As part of the entry requirements, all students entering the School of Computing and Engineering must have a Maths qualification at at least GCSE level and those who follow the A Level route, must also include an A Level in a Science subject. When interviewed, music technology staff expressed concern over the difficulties that some of the students were having with the Maths element of the course. Others are held back by their technical ability.

An analysis of A Level subjects was made in order to establish how many Music Technology students had entered the course with Maths A Level, how many had taken Science subjects and which were the most popular A Levels. Although all of the students had passed Maths GCSE, only seven had taken the subject at A Level. Perhaps surprisingly the most common subject passed was English, closely followed (less surprisingly) by Music and Music Technology. Overall, the majority of students (63%) had taken A Levels in Arts and Humanities subjects with a much smaller percentage (37%) having taken Science A Levels. Clearly the music technology courses at the University of Huddersfield are attracting a smaller number of students with a scientific background. Perhaps this is indicative of a gulf between student expectations of the nature of Music Technology degrees and the reality of the course content. When asked whether the course was what they expected it to be, the results varied from course to course, but overall the large majority of the students responded positively. Of the 20% who gave negative responses, the most common reasons were to do with the balance of the course content – students complained that there was too much that was technical, mathematical or computer-based and too little involving performance and recording.

When these statistics were broken down into individual courses and analysed according to the most popular A Level subjects completed, there was a clear division between the top five A Levels in two of the courses: the BA/BSc in Popular Music Production and the BSc in Music Technology and Audio Systems.

Popular Music Production	Music Technology and Audio Systems.	
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A Level	No of students	A Level	No of students
English	8	Maths	5
Music	7	Music Technology	5
Music Technology	4	Physics	5
Media	4	Computing	4
Business Studies	3	ICT	3

BTEC National Diploma students must complete a minimum of 18 units including 5 core units (see Appendix). Colleges must offer a minimum of 18 units – most offer more than 18 and many students complete more than 18. There are currently 21 optional units available for the National Diploma in Music Practice, and 19 optional units available for the National Diploma in Music Technology (not forgetting the maximum of four which they can import from other qualifications). In order to establish which were the most popular units on offer and therefore which units undergraduates were most likely to have taken, students were asked which units they had completed. As well as the BTEC core units, Music Technology degree students at the University of Huddersfield had also completed optional units in the following.

Numbers of first year Music Technology students at the University of Huddersfield (2007) according to BTEC optional units

Optional units	Number of students
Sound Recording Techniques	20
Introduction to Acoustics	15
Computer Technology for Music	14
Live sound	14
Sound for the Moving Image	13
Music in Context	12
Sound Creation and Manipulation	11
Multimedia Sound Production	11
Events Management	8
Audio Electronics	8
Digital Audio Principles	7
Music Technology in Performance	6
DJ Technology 1	5
DJ Technology 2	3
The Freelance World	3
Composing	2
Live Performance Workshop	2
Music Improvisation 2	2
Music Performance Techniques 1	2
Audio Engineering Workshop Skills	2
History of Popular Music	1
Music Improvisation 1	1
Music Performance Techniques 2	1
Music Theory and Harmony	1

Although 20% of the students had passed Grade V ABRSM Theory only one student had passed a higher grade – again a clear reflection of the national statistics.

Numbers of first year Music Technology students at the University of Huddersfield (2007) according to ABRSM Theory grades



Only one of the music technology courses, the BA in Popular Music Production, requires practical ability as an entry requirement, however, across the board, 66% of the music technology students had passed ABRSM Practical exams

Numbers of first year Music Technology students at the University of Huddersfield (2007) according to ABRSM Practical grades



Between them they played a range of instruments with piano (29%) and drums (15%) being the most popular instruments. Some of the instruments played were standard pop instruments (29%) but there were more orchestral instruments (40%).

5.4 Difficult aspects of the course

Aspects of the course that BMus students at the University of Huddersfield (2007) found difficult



When students were asked the open-ended question whether there were any parts of the course that they had found difficult in the first year, many made specific mention of course modules (some mentioning more than one module). The frequency of the core modules was: CHA (Counterpoint, Harmony and Aural) (30%), Analysis (22%), Musicology (20%), Composition (13%) and Technology for music (11%).

There appears to be some correlation between the A Level Music exam board taken and difficulties with specific core modules. This was particularly evident with CHA where 85% of the AQA students had found it difficult in contrast with the much lower 20% of the Edexcel students. There was a similar slant displayed in the Analysis module where 53% of the AQA students mentioned difficulties as opposed to 16% of Edexcel candidates. It is interesting to note that AQA has a small number of set works (6) whereas Edexcel candidates are required to analyse a wider range of works (18). These will be examined in more detail in the sections on Counterpoint, Harmony and Aural, and Analysis.

Difficulties with Composition 1 and Technology for music were relatively few and were spread across the exam boards.

Some of the students mentioned essay-writing skills and time management (28%). One BMus student wrote 'The only problem is time management and knowing when notes are needed but it is stuff you learn over time'. Comments about essay writing focused on the difficulties of referencing and research. One student wrote of problems with 'practice time, seminar preparation, reading and revising, researching' and another that they were 'just not prepared for the self-learning aspect'. This will be examined in more detail in the section on Musicology 1 (see p.49).

Very similar results were found for the music students at the two other universities surveyed. Essay writing came top of the list of difficult aspects for students at both the University of Southampton (33%) and Liverpool Hope University (42%). 18% of the Southampton students found aspects of harmony and counterpoint difficult as did 26% of the Liverpool Hope students.

Aspects of the course that Music Technology students at the University of Huddersfield (2007) found difficult



Again the large majority of the students focused on specific modules, particularly in the 2007 survey[2]. Audio Technology was the module mentioned most, with comments focussing on the maths and physics involved. 19% of the students mentioned Music Theory, one added that it was 'due to having no past experience in it compared to the rest of my group' and another that 'It wasn't taught in Music Technology A Level very thoroughly'. The vast majority of the students played instruments but did not necessarily read staff notation: as one pointed out 'Being self-taught as a guitarist I had mostly ignored the theory'.

Object Oriented Programming was referred to by 17% of the students – one found 'programming difficult' and another 'had never done it before'. 13% found Computer Composition and Sound Design difficult. One student wrote that they were 'not familiar with Cubase, so I struggle'

As part of the questionnaire analysis, comparisons were made between the responses of students who had taken the A Level Music Technology or the BTEC National Diploma in Music Technology. It was clear from the survey that students who followed the BTEC route were better prepared for their degree than those who had taken the A Level in Music Technology. Although this was not evident in some modules, in others it was quite striking. For example, a much larger percentage of A Level students than BTEC students found Audio Technology difficult, usually because of the strong elements of maths and physics in the module. There was a similar disparity in numbers between the A Level and BTEC students who had found Multimedia and the Internet difficult. The advantages of BTEC courses were reinforced by several comments from ex-BTEC students (particularly in the 2008 survey). These observations were written in response to open-ended questions and included 'I felt well prepared for everything having done the same sort of thing in the BTEC'. One student had chosen the Music Technology and Popular Music course because it 'followed on from BTEC but [was] more tech based'.

In some ways it is not surprising that BTEC students are at an advantage. The BTEC National Diploma affords significantly more contact time than would be found for one A Level. Consequently students are offered a wide choice of options and are able to spend much more time in the, usually better equipped, recording studio. Furthermore, in line with the vocational BTEC philosophy, they will have been taught by people who have worked in the music industry. This is in contrast with the situation in schools. There the upsurge of popularity in music technology has meant that schools have often been unprepared both in terms of staff and equipment. Students have often been left to work on their own and effectively teach themselves. This is evident from comments in the survey, one student even commented that 'the use of actual studios' was new to him. The situation is not helped by the A Level content which is generally regarded as having an over emphasis on sequencing at the expense of the other two key elements of the subject - sampling and synthesis.

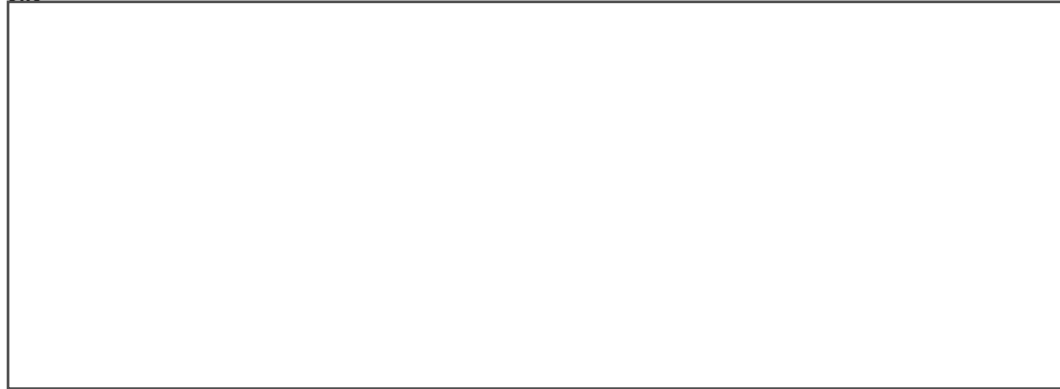
Audio Technology provides an overview of the technologies found in modern audio recording and

introduces the student to audio principles. The large percentage of A Level students having difficulties with this could be accounted for by the strong elements of maths and physics in the module. As already mentioned, only a small number of the students had studied these subjects at A Level whereas the BTEC National Diploma offers optional units in three audio technology related areas: Introduction to Acoustics; Digital Audio Principles; and Audio Electronics. It would appear that studying these units had helped the students with this module.

The disparity in numbers between the A Level students and the BTEC students who had found Multimedia and the Internet difficult could be explained by the fact that this area is not covered at A Level (in fact the word 'multimedia' does not appear in the specification) whereas the BTEC National Diploma has a whole unit devoted to it.

5.5 Aspects of the course that students felt well-prepared for

Aspects of the course that BMus students at the University of Huddersfield (2007) felt well-prepared for



35% of the Huddersfield students felt particularly well-prepared for Performance with a similar percentage for Southampton students (31%). Liverpool Hope students also put Performance at the top of their list (42%). This is not surprising given that in most cases performance activities will have extended beyond the classroom and the A Level or BTEC syllabus. Most students are likely to have many years of performing experience both inside and outside school or college.

Perhaps more surprisingly, given that this came top of the list in terms of the module that most students found 'difficult', 33% of the Huddersfield students wrote that they felt particularly well-prepared for Counterpoint, Harmony and Aural. Similarly, the number of students who had found Analysis difficult was roughly equal to the number who wrote that they felt well-prepared for it. 38% of Southampton students also felt well-prepared for harmony and counterpoint putting it at the top of their list. Most of these had followed the Edexcel A Level specification.

Music Technology

When asked whether there were any aspects of the course that they felt particularly well-prepared for, although some aspects varied from course to course, Recording and Composition came out on top (in both the 2007 and 2008 surveys) with a striking majority of the students citing Recording. Clearly this is because recording is a significant part of both the BTEC and A Level Music Technology courses (see Appendix). In addition a significant number of students felt that they had been helped with this module through their extra-mural activities. What was perhaps more interesting were the comments made when students were asked which aspects of Recording were new to them. The most frequent responses were: the detail of the recording; different equipment; effects and mixing; concert hall recording; and location recording. Of most significance is the way that these responses were split between BTEC and A Level students: all the students who had mentioned 'effects and mixing', 'decent studios' or 'more advanced techniques' were A Level students; whereas all those who mentioned 'different equipment' were BTEC students. It would appear that the A Level students were struggling with the more fundamental problem of the principles of recording, whereas any problems the BTEC students had were in coming to terms with unfamiliar equipment. This difference in emphasis reflects the fact that the BTEC students will have gained more recording experience and will have studied the subject in more detail. It is also probably safe to say that most colleges of Further Education have better equipped recording studios than schools. In contrast with the A Level student who commented that 'the use of actual studios' was new to him, one BTEC student wrote that the module was 'All very similar to final year of BTEC'.

A significant number of students (25%) felt well-prepared for the Computer Composition and Sound Design module. Most of these were BTEC students. However, the majority of the students who felt particularly well prepared for the Composition and Analysis module were A Level students.

A larger percentage (27%) felt well-prepared for Music Theory than those who found difficulties with it (19%). Some of these students gave reasons, mostly relating to pre-university courses. : One student wrote 'because of previous music experience (GCSE, wind band in school etc.)'. A significantly larger percentage of these respondents had previously studied A Level Music (71%) rather than A Level Music Technology (29%) or BTEC (10%).

The large majority of the students who cited some aspects of music theory being new to them were BTEC students. All of them would have taken the core unit in Listening Skills. According to the specification: To achieve this unit a learner must

- 1 Develop a musical vocabulary
- 2 Recognise and analyse the rhythmic aspects of music
- 3 Recognise and describe basic structures, harmony and tonality
- 4 Recognise different aspects of vocal and instrumental resources and textures.

It is therefore difficult to explain why there were not more BTEC students who felt well-prepared for the Music Theory module. However, different colleges will take different approaches and some students may have studied music theory in less depth than others.

Although Audio Technology was the module that most students had found difficulties with, a relatively small percentage felt well-prepared for it. One of the students wrote 'I, because I have studied physics and electronics before'.

5.6 Individual modules

Each of the 2007 surveys asked about specific modules[3]. In most cases these were core modules. Students were asked about aspects that were new to them, those that they had found difficulties with, and those aspects that they felt particularly well-prepared for. Some modules had supplementary questions. Where appropriate, responses compared preparation via different pre-university routes. Although in many cases there did not appear to be any correlation, in others it was clear that some pre-university routes were a more effective preparation than others. Some of this material has already been covered earlier on in the report so readers are referred to the appropriate sections.

Composition 1 - This follows on well from my previous course at school/college.

Composition 1 - Some aspects of the module are completely new to me.

Overall 35% agreed that Composition 1 followed on well from their school or college, whilst 42% disagreed. Most of the students (65%) felt that some aspects of the course were completely new to them and only 15% disagreed.

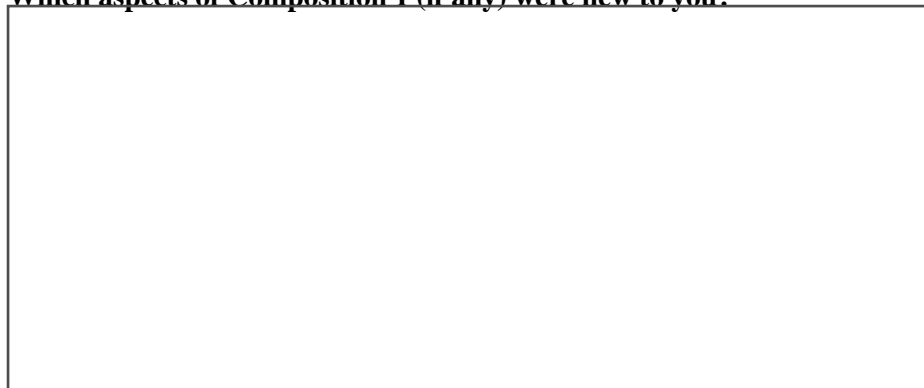
24% of the Edexcel students felt that Composition 1 followed on well from their A Level whilst 48% disagreed. 71% wrote that some aspects of the course were completely new to them and only 14% disagreed. For the composition element of their A Level course Edexcel students must complete exercises

in Compositional Techniques as well as composing three pieces from another list of topics. The number of option routes would help to explain the differing responses; a student who had followed, for example, the Bach chorale/Post-modernism route would have had quite a different experience from one following the Popular Song/Club Dance route and would no doubt be better prepared for Composition 1.

31% of the AQA students felt that Composition 1 followed on well from their A Level whilst slightly more (38%) disagreed. The large majority (79%) wrote that some aspects of the course were completely new to them and only one student disagreed. The composition element of the AQA A Level is much less prescriptive. Candidates may explore any appropriate medium or genre and draw on any accepted historical style - one of the compositions must be written in a recognisably tonal idiom. This freedom of choice could well explain the range of responses when asked how well Composition 1 followed on from their school work.

There is an emphasis on tonality for OCR candidates (see Appendix). The recent (February 2007) *QCA Review of standards in A Level and GCSE music. 1985–2005* expressed concern over OCR's 'overemphasis on tonality' and its 'sidelining of contemporary art music'. This was acknowledged in the 2008 survey by one of the OCR students who wrote 'The course should be less contemporary-based and take into account more A Level syllabi because I feel disadvantaged with everyone having a head start on me'.

Which aspects of Composition 1 (if any) were new to you?



A significant number (41%) cited composing in a 'contemporary style'. This applied to 70% of the AQA candidates. Comments included 'Use of atonality', 'Composing in a contemporary style is new to me but I prefer it' and 'Contemporary style - was used to writing in classical style with a key'. Interestingly, one of the students who wrote that none of it was new to them added '...due to BTEC. If I had only done A Level I would have been unprepared'.

Are there any aspects of Composition 1 that you have found more difficult than others?

Although composing in a 'contemporary style' was new to 41% of the students, only 13% wrote that they found it difficult. Again, these were mainly AQA students. Comments included 'Tend to forget about contemporary style and start writing in a classical style', 'composing in a contemporary yet structured way', 'conforming to contemporary ideals at Huddersfield' and 'I think that we should be able to compose in different styles of music, not just contemporary.' All of the students who wrote that they had not found any aspects difficult were Edexcel students. It would appear that in general Edexcel students are better prepared for this module than AQA students.

Which aspects of the module have you felt most comfortable with?

There were some enthusiastic and wide-ranging responses. The most common aspect (13%) was the exercises. Comments included: 'Basic exercises are actually quite interesting', 'Applying the exercises given to a bigger composition', and 'Being given a set task for next lesson'. Students also enjoyed the freedom to use their own ideas and writing for specific instruments, some enjoyed composing in a 'contemporary style' and one student added that he liked the 'logical approaches, eliminating blank page syndrome'.

Musicology 1[4] Most students (67%) agreed that some aspects of the module were completely new to them.

Which aspects of Musicology 1 are new to you?



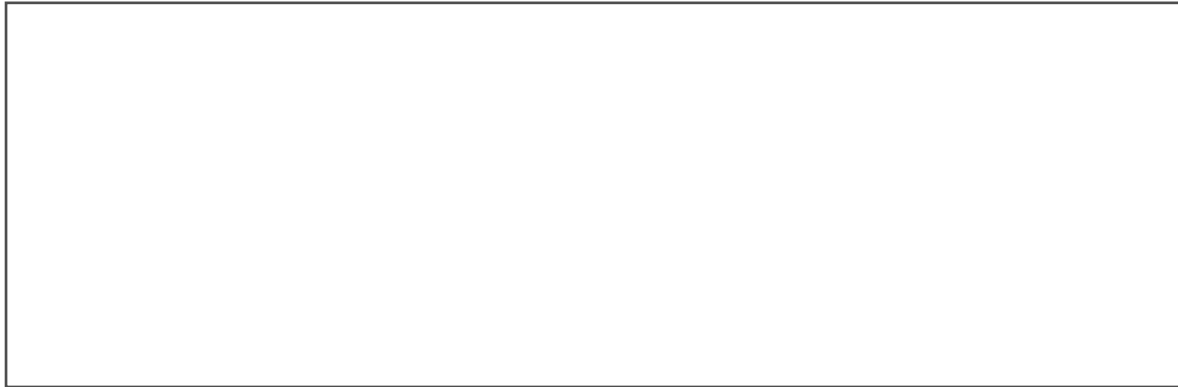
It is no surprise that some of the subjects covered were new to students, nor is it of any significance. Exam boards not be expected to cover everything. What is more interesting is that so many students (20%) mentioned essay writing and research; a significant number of them had written a respectable number of essays at school as can be seen from the graphs below. This belies the oft-repeated myth that students are no longer expected to write essays for A Level or BTEC Music courses.

Approximately how many *music* essays did you write as part of your A level or BTEC course?



In terms of extended written work students are required to write one essay as part of the exam for each of the main exam boards. In addition to this, AQA students must complete an Investigation, Report & Composition and OCR candidates are required to make a comparison of interpretations of a single work.

Are there any aspects of Musicology 1 that you have found more difficult than others?



Many students mentioned essay writing and research as being the most difficult aspect of the module. Specific mention was made of the research and the bibliography. Pre-university essays may well focus on comments rather than analysis, and facts rather than interpretation. Previous research has shown that is advisable for students to learn note-taking at both school and university, and that they need to learn study skills both from specialists and during subject lectures. Musicology 1 students cover study skills in the first term. Several students mentioned their appreciation of this.

Which aspects of the Musicology 1 module do you feel most comfortable with?



It is interesting to note that although many students mentioned essay writing and research as being the most difficult aspect of the module, a similar percentage had found it to be one of the aspects that they were most comfortable with. A significant number of students made comments about the breadth and depth of the Musicology 1 module. Some felt that the context was wider than A Level, others that it was more in-depth and one mentioned both with the comment 'Looking at music in a much wider and more detailed context'.

When the A Level specifications were rewritten for Curriculum 2000, examination boards were required to adhere to the QCA Subject Criteria. In terms of breadth and depth, the QCA Subject Criteria for Music states that AS and A Level specifications should require candidates to:

- gain a depth of understanding of two contrasting areas of study across time and/or place – at least one of which should be taken from the western classical tradition
- gain a breadth of understanding by being able to place the selected areas of study within a broader musical perspective.

Each of the examination boards took a different approach, mainly through the use of the areas of study (see Appendix). None of the students perceived the change of emphasis in breadth and depth as a difficulty, and two of them found it one of the most comfortable aspects of the module.

Musicology 1 is taught through a combination of lectures and seminars. The lectures are taught in large groups. This environment is very different from what students will have experienced at school where there would be familiar teachers and fewer students. School teachers may occasionally lecture but are more likely (depending on the individual) to ask questions and to discuss and develop the responses. One BMus student wrote that the aspect they found most difficult was 'Taking in so much information from lectures'. One of the music lecturers commented on this when he wrote, albeit of a more practical subject, that

demonstrating what are fundamentally practical concepts in a large group lecture seems to leave the students disengaged (perhaps this is just a symptom of large lectures in general.) There seems to be a tendency for some students to switch off, especially when projection is used. I find it difficult to think of activities which are both interactive and that support the topics I'm teaching.

Analysis

The *QCA Review of standards in A Level and GCSE music. 1985–2005*, although welcoming the move over time to expand the repertoire of music to be studied, was concerned that the detailed analytical study of set works had been lost. This is based on the assumption that where there is a smaller number of set works, these are studied in more detail. If this is so, then this would appear to be a better preparation for the Analysis module. However this is not evident from the responses. More of the AQA students, who studied a small number of set works, felt that Analysis did not follow on well from their A Level course than those who did. In contrast, 64% of Edexcel students, who studied the largest number of set works, felt that the Analysis module followed on well from their A Level. It would appear that looking at a wider number of pieces at A Level could be a better preparation for university music than the narrower focus on a small number of set works.

A relatively small percentage of the students (13%) were new to figured bass. Not surprisingly, some of the musical forms were new to the students. One student commented ‘As a brass player I have never really understood various forms’.

When asked whether there were any aspects of analysis that they found more difficult than others, the types of analysis that were specified included: ‘critical analysis (the nitty gritty)’; ‘tabular analysis’, ‘breaking down pieces bar by bar’; ‘chordal analysis’; ‘analysing sonatas’; ‘style analysis’; and some of the structures. No one type occurred more frequently than any other so no conclusions can be drawn from this.

Counterpoint, Harmony and Aural

Roughly the same number of students agreed that Counterpoint, Harmony and Aural had followed on well from their previous course as those who disagreed. This is an indication of the disparate nature of the exam board requirements and the different option routes that schools and colleges follow. A further indication of this disparity was given when students were given a list of compositional styles and techniques and were asked to indicate which they had undertaken before they came to university.

Before coming to university I had undertaken the following

Contemp - Free composition using 'contemporary' harmony **Tonal** - Free composition using tonal harmony, **Pop song** – Composing 'popular' songs, **Bach chorale** – Exercises based on Bach chorales
2 pt cpt – Counterpoint exercises (e.g. two-part Bach style), **String 4tet** – Exercises based on classical string quartets, **Other classical** - Exercises based on other classical genres
Students were also invited to indicate any other types of composition exercises they had undertaken and the responses included improvisation, lieder, minimalism, film music, programme music, choral free composition, vocal work, and composing and arranging music by ear.

All the OCR students (5) agreed that the module had followed on well. There is an emphasis on tonality for OCR candidates. Roughly half of the Edexcel students felt that it followed on well, whereas only 21% of the AQA students agreed. There are no harmony requirements in the AQA specification (free composition) whereas Edexcel students must develop compositional techniques from a list of eight options. Different schools offer different options which explains the disparity in the Edexcel responses to the survey. Nationwide, the popularity of the options differs from year to year, but in 2006, 80% of the AS candidates and 57.5% of the A2 candidates chose the Bach chorale and 12.5% Baroque Counterpoint. Very few chose Renaissance Counterpoint.

Of the three components, counterpoint was the one which was new to the largest number of students (52%). This was made up of AQA (71%), OCR (40%) and Edexcel (39%). Both OCR and Edexcel students complete exercises in stylistic techniques, opting for styles which include counterpoint. In contrast, it is very significant to note that the word 'counterpoint' does not appear anywhere in the AQA A Level specification. The absence of any requirement for harmony and counterpoint (or aural dictation) should also be noted that in the CCEA (Northern Ireland) specification and WJEC's (Wales) treatment of harmony and counterpoint as an option.

Four part harmony was new to a much smaller number of students. It was not new to any of the OCR candidates and was new to only 8% of the Edexcel students. Only 21% of the AQA students had studied four part harmony before and it was completely new to 64% of them. In fact the phrase 'Four part harmony' does not appear in the AQA specification.

Aural dictation was only new to a small number (12%) of students, most of these were Edexcel students. It was not new to any of the OCR students and was only new to one AQA student. In all 22% of Edexcel students said that it was new. This should not be the case given that all the exam boards include aural tests. However, there is no doubt that there is no longer the emphasis on aural dictation that there was in previous A Level syllabi pre-Curriculum 2000 (see page 12).

Are there any aspects of Counterpoint, Harmony and Aural that you have found more difficult than others?

Other comments included: '4ths being dissonant is a new idea as I have a modern ear to which a 4th is remarkably consonant'; 'So many rules; learning new rules and different ones from before'; 'figured bass'; 'most of it as I have never done any of this type of work at A Level (AQA)'; and 'cantus firmus'.

Which aspects of the Counterpoint, Harmony and Aural module do you feel most comfortable with?



Performance

Most students (66%) agreed that the performance module followed on well from their previous course. When the sample was broken down into exam boards, similarly percentages were evident for Edexcel (72%) and AQA (69%) although only two out of the five OCR students agreed. Of course most, if not all, students will have been involved in performance outside school, consequently, exam boards will have less significance in this area. In fact, one student wrote that he was 'Prepared OK, not particularly through A Level course and school, but outside school such as music centres. No support was given at school.'

40% of the students found that some aspects of the module were completely new to them. 36% of the students overall did not find any aspects completely new to them. The aspects that most students found new were the Learning Journal (31%) and technical exercises. This is not surprising given that they are not requirements for A Level. However BTEC performance units make much use of practice diaries and logbooks, and students are assessed on both their practice routine and technical exercises.

Several students mentioned improvisation, both as something new to them and something that they found difficult. Edexcel A Level students may take the opportunity to improvise in the performance units and special assessment criteria have been devised for improvisation. Although AQA students may improvise, this is more of a passing mention and there are no special assessment criteria to cater for this. OCR candidates need to *know* about improvisation for their study of Instrumental Jazz 1920 – 1960 but there are no opportunities for practical improvisation. In contrast there are two improvisation units as part of the BTEC National Diploma.

21% of the students found practising the most difficult aspect, particularly finding the time to fit it in and working to a deadline. 13% mentioned the focus on technique. When asked which aspects they felt most comfortable with the highest responses (17%) were the individual lessons and performing generally.

The very large majority (94%) of BMus students had learnt to read music by the time they went to secondary school. Most of these (73%) learnt to read music between the ages of 6 and 8. The length of their instrumental lessons varied but averaged roughly 40 minutes. The large majority of the students had individual lessons at school.

Technology for music

Not surprisingly A Level Music students were less prepared for the Technology of Music module than A Level Music Technology and BTEC National Diploma students who were clearly much better prepared. Students appeared to welcome the course, one commented 'Recording, editing, Logic – I am glad that they are now a standard part of this course'. Logic was overwhelmingly the aspect that students found most

difficult. It is not commonly used in schools whereas Sibelius (the aspect that students felt most comfortable with) is. Most of the BTEC students felt comfortable with all aspects of the module, one of them having worked in a recording studio.

Music Technology

The Music Technology students surveyed in the School of Computing and Engineering were not asked about individual modules. However many comments were made in the opened ended questions particularly about the modules in Recording, Computer Composition and Sound Design, Audio Technology and Music Theory.

Recording 1 Please see comments on pages 45, 61, 82-83 and 99.

Audio Technology Please see comments on pages 43-45, 46, 61 and 83.

Music Theory Please see comments on pages 43, 45, 61, 62, 83 and 99.

Computer Composition and Sound Design Please see comments on pages 45, 61-2 and 82.

Computer Composition 1

60% of the students agreed that Computer Composition 1 followed on well from their previous school or college but a larger percentage (80%) agreed that some aspects of the module were completely new to them. The difference between the A Level Music Technology students and the BTEC students was significant: 95% of the A Level students had found some aspects that were completely new in comparison with 34% of the BTEC students. This could be in part explained by the fact that most of the BTEC students had taken the optional unit in Computer Technology for Music which has much in common with Computer Composition 1. Earlier in the survey one of the BTEC students commented that she had 'covered all aspects of this at college and knew how to use it effectively already'

63% of the students were new to Logic; it is not commonly used in schools or colleges. 22% had never used Apple Macs before, for the same reason. 22% were new to synthesis – all of these students had studied A Level rather than BTEC. Synthesis appears several times in the BTEC specification – in both the optional and core units. It is also a feature of A Level Music Technology, but here there is less emphasis.

The aspect of difficulty mentioned most often was Logic. Students mentioned having to learn 'a whole new software', that the handbook was 'quite complicated', and that there was 'very short time'. One student wrote that using the software had hampered his 'creative ideas'. One student found the whole module 'difficult in some ways', one felt that the 'volume of work can be overwhelming, whilst another felt 'comfortable and able to deal with most aspects of it'. Some students found aspects of composing difficult such as 'getting new sounds' and 'taking ideas and developing them' whilst others found the technical aspects (such as 'mixing', 'using Macs') more demanding.

When asked which aspects of the module they felt most comfortable with, 'Composing' was the aspect most frequently mentioned. On this point there did appear to be some correlation with the pre-university course, given that they were largely A Level students. Two students enjoyed 'the freedom to compose almost anything' and 'writing music in my own style' – again A Level students. This could be accounted for by the fact that all A Level students will have studied composition, whereas composing is optional for BTEC students. This preference for the creative was balanced by a similar number of students who preferred the more technical aspects – 'well-equipped programmes', 'synthesis' and 'using samples'.

Composition and Analysis of Popular Music, Composition and Analysis of Popular Music, and Music in the Computer Age

Many of the comments about these modules refer to difficulties related to music theory. Please see comments about music theory on pages 43, 45, 61, 62, 83 and 99.

Popular Music in Context

40% of the students agreed that the module followed on well from their pre-university course whereas a smaller percentage (28%) disagreed. Popular music is now part of most A Level, BTEC and GCSE courses (see Appendix). Edexcel students, for example, can opt for an Area of Study in 'Popular music and jazz' and can elect to complete composition exercises in the 32 bar pop song and to compose pieces which fall under the topics Popular Song, Fusions, or Club Dance music. Pop music is central to the BTEC National Diploma courses with two units in particular (Music in Context and the History of Popular Music) having a similar content and approach to the Popular Music in Context module. This is reflected in the responses where 58% of the BTEC students agreed and only 8% disagreed that the module follows on well from their previous course. In comparison, a smaller percentage (28%) of the A Level students agreed and a larger percentage (46%) disagreed.

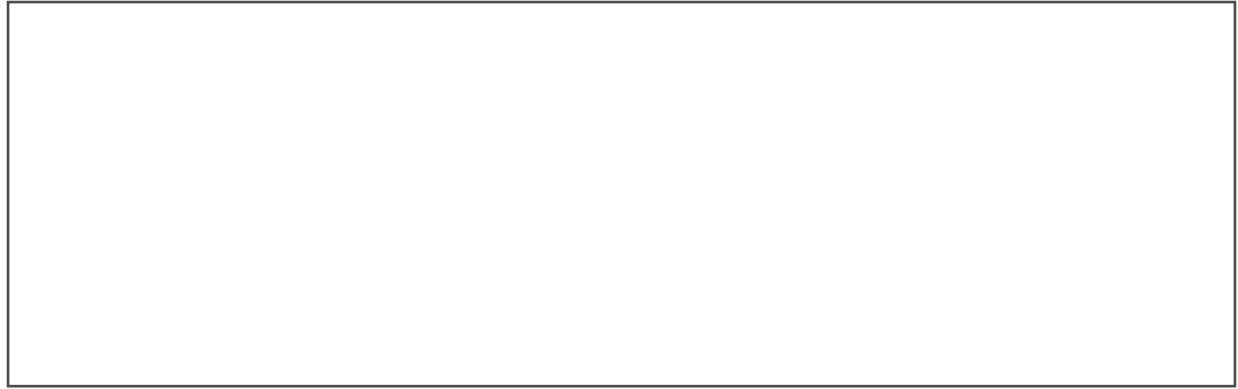
Of those who responded, 61% found essay writing the most difficult aspect of the course (please see comments on essay writing p.91-92) and 57% felt most comfortable learning about the history of music and 43% with essay writing. The word 'enjoyment' was used several times in response to this question. Students wrote, for example, that they enjoyed 'learning about music history', and 'being able to write about the history of a song/genre'.

Interactive Sound Design

None of the students agreed that this module followed on well from their pre-university course. 91% of the students agreed that some aspects were completely new to them and 25% cited 'All aspects'. Given the specialised nature of this software, this is not unexpected. It is no surprise that some of the subjects covered are completely new to students, nor is it of any significance. MAX/MSP is central to this unit and it was the programming aspect that was mentioned most. One student added that it was a 'completely new concept' and another described it as 'using maths to create music'. When asked if there were any aspects that they had found more difficult than others, there was a range of responses including: 'learning the programme'; 'solving some problems'; and the 'ability to be very logical'. Several students wrote that they did not find any aspects difficult – one added 'I enjoy it' and several felt comfortable with most aspects. This serves to emphasise that it should not be automatically assumed that if students encounter a university module where the content is completely new to them, that they will necessarily find it difficult.

5.7 Course choice

Why did you choose the BMus course at the University of Huddersfield?

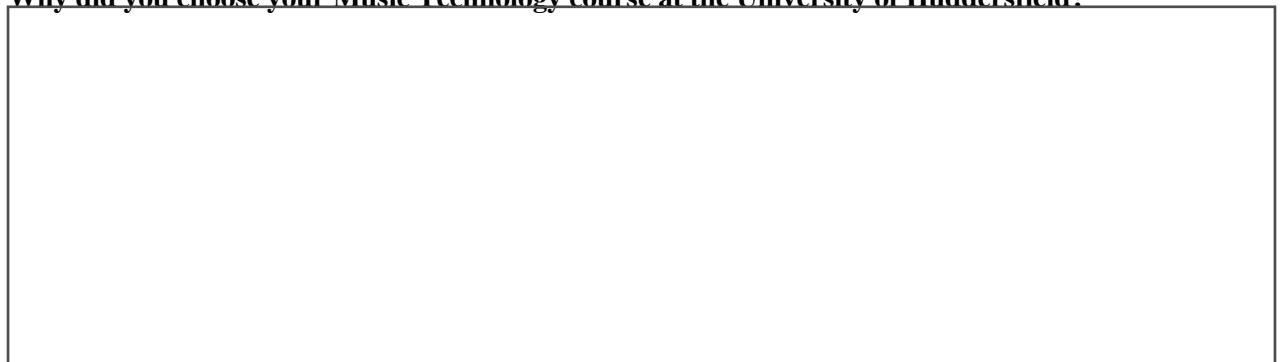


There were many positive responses to this question. Overall, half the students made some reference to the course content many of these mentioning the choice and variety of modules. Several students focused on performance with comments such as 'More practical based than other universities', 'I wanted to have a great standard of performance whilst being at university before progressing to a conservatoire' and 'Brass band'. A significant number (37%) mentioned the good reputation of the course, the Music Department and its staff, more than one citing the 'friendly atmosphere' and 'good tutors'. One student wrote that 'The enthusiasm of the staff tipped it'. Four students had come on the recommendation of their teachers or past students

The high rankings at Southampton and Liverpool Hope were very similar. Both put course content, particularly the variety of modules, at the top of the list. Similar numbers had been recommended or were attracted by the atmosphere of the respective departments. A large number of Huddersfield Music Technology students and Southampton students mentioned the impressive facilities, but Liverpool Hope facilities were only mentioned by a small number.

However, none of the Huddersfield students and few of the Southampton students had been drawn to the university by the town, but 21% of Liverpool Hope students had chosen their course because of the city.

Why did you choose your Music Technology course at the University of Huddersfield?



Again, there were many positive responses to this question with more than half of the students making some reference to the course content, many of these mentioning the choice and variety of modules, and the vocational aspects. The words 'enjoy' and 'enjoyment' cropped up several times. 25% mentioned the 'good facilities'. One wrote that the facilities 'were better than any other place I applied – the studio equipment and the quality of equipment'. 20% had been attracted by the good reputation of music technology at the university. One student wrote that his reason for coming was 'Because I heard it was the best place in the UK to study Music Technology'. 15% liked the place - the town, the people, the nightlife and the accommodation were all found to be attractive features. Six students had come on the recommendation of others.

5.8 Expectations of the course

Music

When asked whether the BMus course was what they expected to be, 85% answered 'Yes'. The 11% who answered 'No' gave a variety of reasons why the course was not what they expected it to be. The most common response was connected to performance, generally speaking the students had expected more opportunities. As one student wrote: 'I had expected more practical and less musicology', and another 'More performance and practice in different kinds of music - not just classical, but rock, jazz, funk, blues etc.'. One student commented that 'Composition forces us to use a contemporary style'.

A smaller percentage (44%) of Liverpool Hope students had found the course what they expected it to be and 46% of these had expected more performance and practical work. The BMus course met the expectations of 73% of the Southampton students

Music Technology

When asked whether their expectations of the course had been met, the responses of music technology students varied from course to course.

Is the course what you expected it to be?

Course	Yes
Overall	80%
Music Technology and Audio Systems	100%
Music Technology and Software development	100%
Music Technology and Popular Music	85%
Popular Music Production	58%
Music Technology	58%

When asked which aspects of the course were not what they had expected, some students mentioned specific modules (notably Multimedia and the Internet, and Audio Technology) but the large majority of the responses referred to the balance of the course content. More specifically, students had found

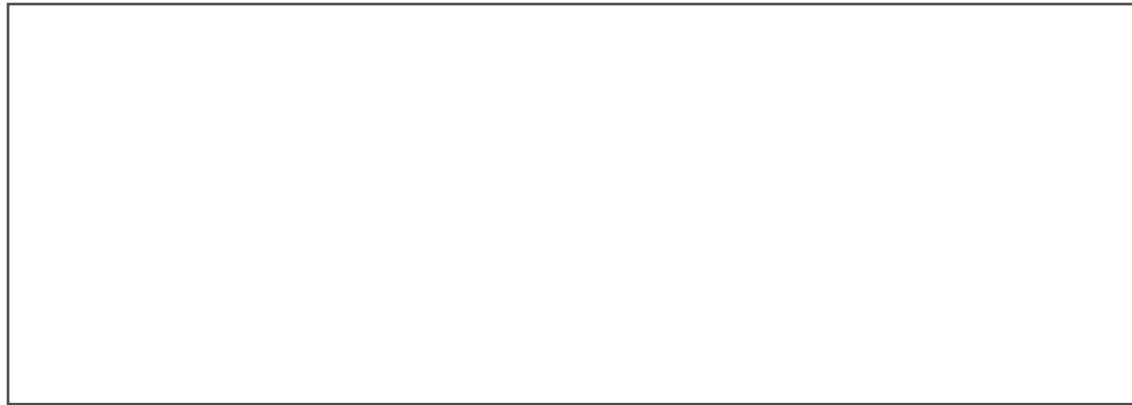
- too much that was technical, mathematical or computer based
- too little performance and recording

As mentioned earlier, this may be indicative of a gulf between student expectations of Music Technology degrees and the reality of the course content. It is interesting to note that both the courses with 100% fulfilment of expectations (Music Technology and Audio Systems and Music Technology and Software Development) have an overtly technical bias and the students were more suitably qualified in terms of scientific entry qualifications.

5.9 Career aspirations

Music

What would you like to do when you have completed the course?



The first thing to note is the students' unanimous hope to pursue a career in a music-related field. This is not surprising, given that they have embarked on a degree in music, but it serves to illustrate the attitude that the students have towards their chosen subject as a vocation. The exact area of employment that the students wished to become involved in is less clear. There was a certain air of indecision indicated in the responses. Several students simply 'Don't know' (15%) and many others had not made their minds up and supplied alternatives (26%). The range of careers referred to was very narrow. The large majority of students (65%) wanted either to teach or perform. Teaching was clearly seen as second best. Other than that, four students mentioned composing/songwriting, two mentioned musical directing in the West end, one wanted to be an army musician, another a cathedral organist, and another was going to 'look into music therapy'.

There also appeared to be a general lack of confidence in the way the answers were phrased: 'Maybe', 'I'm unsure', 'If I can cope' and so on. This could, of course, demonstrate an awareness of the competitive nature of the music profession and a willingness to remain flexible in the light of future uncertainty[5].

Although this is only the first year of their course and it is not to be expected that they would all have worked out their career path, the responses do contrast with the responses of the students on the music technology courses who seemed to have much clearer and more ambitious ideas about their future. As well as teaching and performing, Music Technology students listed amongst other careers – in order of popularity, music production, studio work, composition, teaching and performance, programming, sound design, music for film, owning a studio, and acoustic design. A much smaller percentage did not know. This was evident in both the 2007 and 2008 surveys.

Similar results were found at the University of Southampton in that 22% responded with 'Don't know' and many of the others had not made their minds up and supplied alternatives. Again many students (50%) wanted either to teach or perform. However, significantly more students (13%) wanted to pursue an MA course and a wider range of careers was suggested.

Single Honours Music students at Liverpool Hope University cover three areas: Music, Popular Music, and Music Technology therefore it is not possible to make a comparison between responses to this question.

5.10 Music outside school

There is considerable evidence that in the twenty first century a shift in emphasis is taking place from passive listening to music to active participation. This is reinforced by the work of Lamont et al (2003) in their study of young people's music in and out of school. It is well-known that most A Level Music students would have played in some kind of ensemble beyond the school gates, but what opportunities had the music technology students found and to what extent had these helped them with their degree course?

Music Technology students were asked to list any music/music technology activities that they took part in outside their school or college and to indicate any ways in which these had helped them with their course.

In fact, 93% had been involved in some kind of extra-mural activity and 72% found that it had helped them with their university course. Nearly all the students had some performing experience, mostly with rock bands and a small number had played professionally. There were also several DJs and a couple of VJs. For many, playing in rock bands had led to other useful experience such as setting up PAs and sound systems, and recording. 28% of the students had worked in some way with sound engineering and/or live sound: ‘school productions and gigs’; recording my band’; ‘setting up PAs and sound systems’; and ‘sound engineering live pub gigs’. One student had produced his band’s EP, several had created websites, and a significant number had set up their own home studio. 13% had worked with music or music technology in a professional capacity. They had worked in a range of jobs, several of these in recording and live performance. When asked which university work these extra-mural activities had helped with, the module that was mentioned by far the most was Recording.

Extra-mural activities that Music Technology degree students had taken part in outside their school/college, and university modules that these had helped them with

University module	Extra-mural activity
81% Recording	Performing, working in sound engineering, live sound, home studios.
61% Audio Technology	Professional work, sound engineering, live sound
31% Computer Composition and Sound Design	Home studio or performing in bands
Music theory	Instrumental lessons
Multimedia and the Internet	Web design

The activities that had helped the students were largely performing or working in sound engineering and/or live sound. Home studios also helped. A large number cited the module in Audio Technology. Several students found their professional work had helped with this and a small number mentioned working in sound engineering and/or live sound. 31% mentioned that they had been helped with Computer Composition and Sound Design - most of these by working with a home studio or through performing in bands. Not surprisingly the students who were interested in web design had found that this helped them with Multimedia and the Internet. A small number mentioned Music Theory – all of these had had instrumental lessons which had no doubt helped them with musical notation.

The link between informal music making and undergraduate study was emphasised strongly by one student who wrote that ‘Playing in bands’ had helped with ‘All modules’. Furthermore, some A Level students thought that their work outside school prepared them for university better than their work inside. They were quite blunt about the shortcomings of the A Level and added comments such as ‘The A Level did help but not as much as it could have! I have more confidence in the aspects which I have prepared independently’. And another that ‘Most of the preparation I had was from my own learning because I was interested in music technology.’

5.11 English Language and English Studies surveys

The English surveys provided several interesting contrasts with those in Music and Music Technology. This was apparent from the start in the range of entry qualifications.

English Language entry qualifications

100% of the English Language first year students had taken A Levels. 86% of these had completed English Language A Level with 75% following the AQA specification. The entry qualifications of this cohort were much less diverse than those taking music and music technology therefore there was no scope, or indeed need, to make comparisons between A Levels from different examination boards.

English Studies entry qualifications

77% of English Studies students had taken A Levels in 'English Literature' or 'English Language and Literature' and 15% had completed the Access to Higher Education course. Other qualifications included A Levels in other subjects and the International Baccalaureate. One student had studied in Germany. Throughout the analysis, comparisons were made between the three largest groups – those who had completed 'AQA English Literature A Level', those who had completed 'English Language and Literature A Level', and the remainder of the cohort who had between them completed a range of qualifications.

Aspects of the course that English Language students at the University of Huddersfield (2008) found difficult



When asked whether there were any aspects of the course that they had found difficult, almost half the students (46%) mentioned problems with time management and independent learning. Similarly 48% of the English Studies had problems in these areas. This is a large percentage, particularly in comparison with other subjects surveyed, for example, Music (7%) and Popular Music Production (0%). However, this is in line with previous research focusing on students of English at British universities. It has shown that the areas of difficulty that crop up most frequently for first years are related to study skills and time management. As Smith & Hopkins (2005) write 'For first-year students it can be a shock coming to terms with independent, student-led learning, rather than the more guided, teacher-led learning experience of A-level study':

46% of the students found difficulties with time management and independent learning. The main areas of difficulty were broken down as follows

Aspects of time management and independent learning that English Language students at the University of Huddersfield (2008) found difficult



Several students mentioned the difficulties they had with meeting deadlines – they seemed unsure of when the deadlines were and felt that they all seemed to come at once. The aspects that were mentioned most frequently matched those cited by the English Studies students in most respects, namely meeting deadlines, time management generally, working independently and the workload.

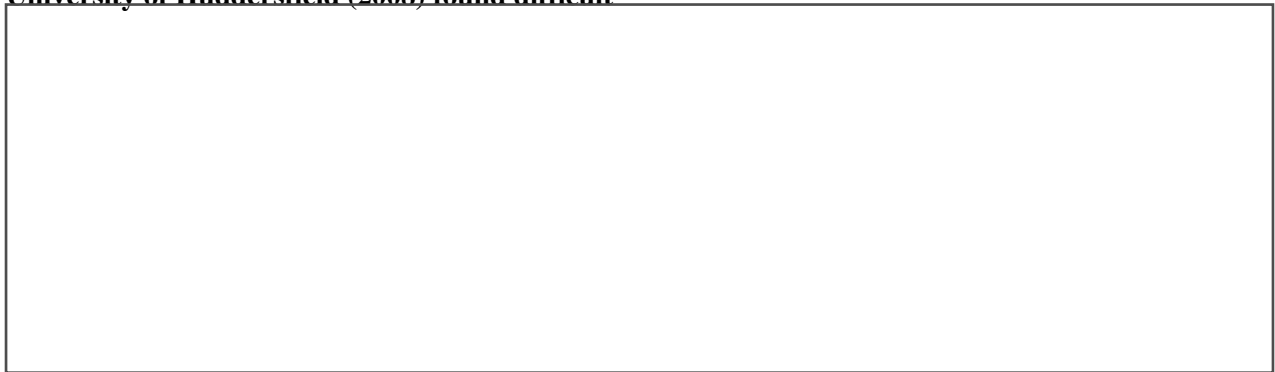
Other comments about difficulties with the course focused on individual modules. 25% had difficulties with Introduction to Stylistics, partly because of the module's bias towards literature. Five students found difficulties with English, Past and Present (mainly because of the element of history involved). The same number cited Introduction to Describing English, particularly because of the phonetics. This will be covered in more detail in the section on individual modules.

Aspects of the course that English Studies students at the University of Huddersfield (2008) found difficult



48% of the students found difficulties with time management and independent learning. The main areas of difficulty were broken down as follows

Aspects of time management and independent learning that English Studies students at the University of Huddersfield (2008) found difficult



When asked whether there were any aspects of the course that they had found difficult, almost half the students (48%) mentioned problems with time management and independent learning. 23% mentioned the amount of reading they had to do and the difficulties they were having in keeping up with it. 'Time management and independent learning' and 'Reading' were treated separately in the statement of results. It could be argued that keeping up with reading is a time management problem. If these two groups had been treated as one, then the total percentage of students having problems with time management would account for 71% of the students. This is a very large number, particularly in comparison with other subjects surveyed, for example, English Language (46%), Music (7%) and Popular Music Production (0%).

One of the main areas of time management mentioned was 'meeting deadlines'. Students wrote that a lot of work 'has to be completed at the same time', several had difficulties in knowing exactly when the deadlines were and others talked of problems with Blackboard. Other problems mentioned were those of time management generally, the amount of independent study which they did not feel prepared for, the sheer amount of work, and note-taking.

All the comments about reading referred to the amount required and being able to keep up with it. It should be added that later on in the survey 'reading' was not often seen as a 'difficult' aspect of the course, rather it appeared more frequently as an aspect that students felt 'more comfortable with' e.g. in Approaches to Literature.

In the Music and Music Technology surveys, when asked about difficult aspects of the course the very large majority of students mentioned individual modules. In this survey, only two individual modules were mentioned – ‘Poetry and Drama’ and ‘Literary Histories’ (although this was only mentioned by two students). Eight students found ‘Poetry and Drama’ difficult. Comments focused on the concepts and methods of analysis.

Only four students mentioned having difficulties with essay writing. This is a smaller percentage than in the music and music technology surveys.

Are there any aspects of the course that you feel particularly well-prepared for?

Although 17% of the English Studies students did not feel well-prepared for any aspects of the course, only one English Language student felt unprepared for any aspects. Four English Language students felt well-prepared in general.

Several English Language students felt particularly well-prepared for the same modules as those that had been mentioned as being difficult, namely Introduction to Describing English, English Past and Present, and Introduction to Stylistics. Not surprisingly the students felt more comfortable with areas that they had covered in pre-university courses (e.g. conversation analysis and phonetics for those who had studied English Language A Level and Shakespeare for those who had taken English Literature A Level).

Only four of the English Studies students mentioned having difficulties with essay writing and when asked whether there were any aspects of the course that they had found particularly well-prepared for, five students mentioned essay writing.

One student wrote that they liked ‘the debate that can emerge from seminars’ and this appreciation of seminars was echoed in each of the modules throughout the survey. This is in line with previous studies, several^[6] of which have shown that students prefer the smaller groups and discussions associated with seminars.

Individual modules

For each of the modules, students were asked to respond to the statement ‘This follows on well from my previous course at school/college’.

This follows on well from my previous course at school/college (English Studies students)

Module	Agree	Disagree
Introduction to Describing English	52%	30%
Introduction to Narrative	44%	29%
Approaches to Literature	42%	21%
Introduction to Stylistics	27%	45%

The above table shows that when the full cohort is looked at, none of the degree modules followed on particularly well from their previous course at school or college, but it is clear that students are best prepared for Introduction to Describing English and least prepared for Introduction to Stylistics (the same was found with the English Language students).

This follows on well from my previous course at school/college (English Language students)

Module	Agree	Disagree
Introduction to Describing English	57%	18%
Introduction to Stylistics	32%	36%

In order to try and establish whether there was any correlation between previous courses and preparation for individual modules, English Studies students were split into groups according to their pre-university qualifications^[7]. The two largest groups were those who had studied AQA English Literature A Level (16 students) and those who had taken English Language and Literature A Level (11). The remaining groups were too small to have any statistical significance on their own so they were grouped together. Comparisons were then made between these three groups (AQA English Literature A Level, English Language and Literature A Level, and the remainder of the cohort) and their responses to the statement 'This follows on well from my previous course at school or college'. From this it could be seen that, in the cases of Introduction to Stylistics and Approaches to Literature it does not make a significant difference which course students have completed before.

Module	Qualification	Agree	Disagree
Introduction to Stylistics	Eng Lang and Eng Lit A Level	40%	20%
	AQA Eng Lit A Level	38%	25%
	Remainder of the cohort	11%	77%
Approaches to Literature	Eng Lang and Eng Lit A Level	55%	18%
	AQA Eng Lit A Level	38%	12%
	Remainder of the cohort	38%	29%

However, it is clear that in the case of Introduction to Describing English, those who had studied AQA Eng Lit A Level were at a distinct advantage. Similarly in the case of Introduction to Narrative, those who had studied English Language and Literature A Level were at an advantage. In both cases, this was particularly evident in comparison with those who had not taken A Levels but had followed other pre-university courses.

Module	Qualification	Agree	Disagree
Introduction to Describing English	AQA Eng Lit A Level	88%	0%
	Eng Lang and Eng Lit A Level	33%	50%
	Remainder of the cohort	33%	44%
Introduction to Narrative	Eng Lang and Eng Lit A Level	73%	9%
	AQA Eng Lit A Level	44%	25%

Next individual modules were looked at in turn and students were asked which aspects they were finding difficult. In general terms, there did not appear to be any correlation between previous study and how well students coped with the different modules. As we have seen, Introduction to Stylistics was the module which students felt least prepared for by their pre-university work, but on the whole they did not appear to be having more difficulties with it. This is clearly a significant point; students may feel that a university module follows on well (or otherwise) from their work at school) but this does not appear to be connected to their competence in handling the university module.

Introduction to Describing English

This was the module which the largest number of students found had followed on well from their school or college, in particular those who had followed the AQA English Literature specification. Some made specific reference to topics they had studied at school but were now looking at in more detail. On the whole students appeared to be comfortable with this module, having a good general understanding and seeing it as being useful and enjoyable. The area mentioned most frequently as being new was phonetics. However, a larger percentage (36%) wrote that they felt most comfortable with this aspect of the course and there were some enthusiastic comments e.g. 'Phonetics are great!!'

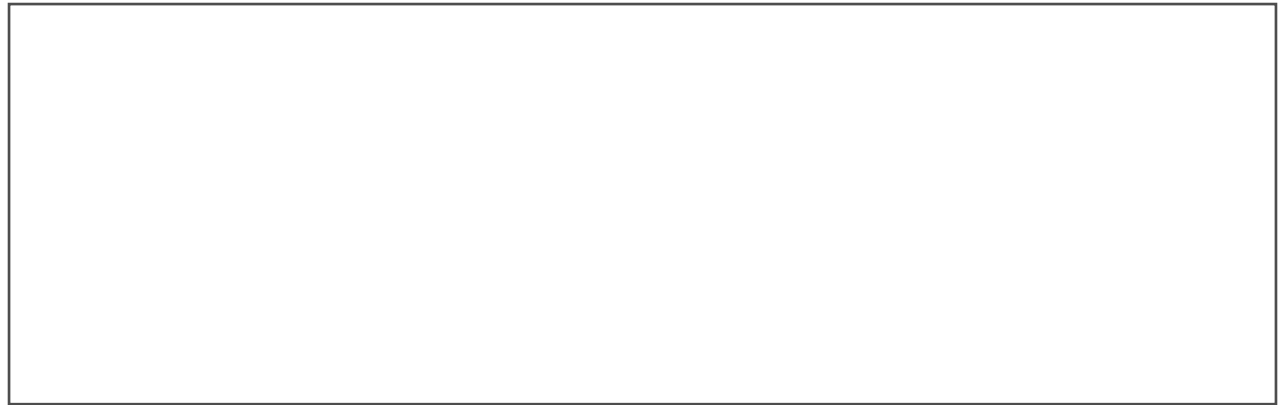
Several comments were made about the seminars, two students wrote that seminars were the aspect that they felt most comfortable with. One wrote – 'I love my ability to grasp understanding in seminars' and another that 'I find the lectures on this module hard to grasp but feel the seminars are taught well enough for me to understand the basic concepts and ideas'. This is in line with previous studies, several^[8] of which have shown that students prefer the smaller groups and discussions associated with seminars.

Introduction to Stylistics

This module was highlighted as the one which students felt least prepared for by their pre-university work. The majority of them mentioned some aspects that were new and several mentioned the new terminology. However, on the whole they did not appear to be having difficulties with it. One student wrote that 'All of it is well-explained and useful' and again several commented on the seminars which 'make things easier to understand'.

Why did you choose your English Language course at the University of Huddersfield?

Why did you choose your English Studies course at the University of Huddersfield?



The responses from the Music and Music Technology students were similar, but there was quite a difference between these and the responses from the students in the English Department. What was most striking was the large number of students in both English Language and English Studies who had been attracted to their respective courses because of their enjoyment of the subject. This was particularly evident in English Language where over half of the students cited either their personal aptitude and enjoyment of the subject or the fact that they had enjoyed the subject at A Level. For English Language students, enjoyment of English Language A Level was the most popular response. 'I enjoyed English Language at college and I wanted to do a course at university that I knew I would enjoy' was a typical comment. Very few of the Music or Music Technology students mentioned career prospects, but this featured strongly on both the English surveys. The careers that were mentioned most by the English Language students were teaching and journalism and, by the English Studies students, teaching and creative writing.

Was the course what you expected it to be?

The majority of the students (English Language 71%, English Studies 77%) found their chosen course to be what they expected it to be. The six English Language students who had not found the course as they expected it to be all gave different reasons as to why not, so no conclusions can be drawn from this. However, comments from the English Studies students in this section, and in other parts of the survey, indicated that some of them were somewhat unaware of what a degree course entailed. Several were surprised that the course was modular and others were surprised at the number of modules. Some wrote that they expected it to be more like A Level. Responses to this question and comments throughout the survey showed that a significant number had not expected the amount of work and had problems with the workload.

Career aspirations

The English surveys did not include a specific question about career aspirations. However, some students (English Language 36%, English Studies 27%) made reference to career paths when asked why they had chosen their particular course. The majority wanted to be English teachers and the remainder journalists. Given that the students were not asked specifically about career choice, it would be to unreasonable to draw any conclusions from this.

5.12 Music and Music Technology 2008 surveys

The results of the 2007 and 2008 surveys were very similar, thus reinforcing the initial findings. The same themes appeared throughout both, and in most of the tables the rankings differed only slightly, and in

several cases were identical. The only notable differences were that the BMus students in the 2008 survey put more emphasis on the difficulties of essay writing and time management. It should also be mentioned that, more than once, a number of the students, although acknowledging the helpfulness of the tutor, questioned the relevance of the core module in Technology for Music .

The best and worst aspects of the first year experience and desired changes.

Phase 1 of the Yorke and Longden report (2007) includes the findings of a large scale survey of first-year full-time students. The survey took place in 2005 across 25 institutions and a range of subjects. Over 7000 forms were completed. Three of the questions in the survey asked ‘What to date has been the best aspect of your first year experience at university?’; ‘What to date has been the worst aspect of your first year experience at university?’; and ‘If you could make one significant change to your first year experience, what would you want it to be?’. These three questions were added to the 2008 Music and Music Technology surveys and the responses were compared with those of Yorke and Longden.

What to date has been the best aspect of your first year experience at university?

BMus students at the University of Huddersfield 2008

Making new friends (26%)
Individual instrumental and vocal lessons (26%)
Performing (18%)
Feedback and assessment (12%)
New experiences and opportunities (10%)
Concerts (8%)
Freedom and independence (8%)
Curriculum aspects (6%)
Generally positive (6%)

Making new friends
Meeting new people in all years.
Meeting new people and having the ‘uni’ life.
Individual instrumental and vocal lessons
Piano lessons are superb
Working with instrumental teacher and making significant progress
Feedback and assessment
Having the right guidance and help with all aspects of work
Getting a good mark for my second Musicology essay
The staff have been incredibly helpful, friendly and supportive
Freedom and independence
Feeling of independence and doing something I’ve chosen to pursue
Generally positive
Very enjoyable, has been a lot going on.

Music Technology Students at the University of Huddersfield 2008

New experiences and opportunities (42%)
Composition (25%)
Curriculum aspects (25%)
Making new friends (21%)
Feedback and assessment (3%)

Generally positive (3%)	
New experiences and opportunities	
Learning new software and composition techniques	
Using the state-of-the-art equipment for recording	
Learning a lot more about music and what I can do to create it	
Composition	
Learning to write music in new ways	
Making new friends	
Meeting so many people, musicians	
Feedback and assessment	
Getting a good grade for my first composition assignment and the positive	
feedback from my tutor	

It is interesting to compare these responses with those of the Yorke and Longden national survey. As can be seen from Figure 1 below, at 45% the most frequent response was ‘Making new friends’. In the words of Yorke and Longden

The importance of meeting new people is clearly a powerful and important aspect of the first-year experience. Making new friends provides a mechanism to integrate the student into the new higher education experience. While this is identified as an important aspect of the first year it must also be recognised that some students do not make friends straightway, and this may contribute to a weakening of the integration process into higher education. Yorke & Longden 2007: 73

‘Making new friends’ was also the most frequent response for BMus students, but at 26% it was of less significance for them. Of equal significance were the individual instrumental and vocal lessons, which were often mentioned with great enthusiasm. A similar percentage, 21%, of the Music Technology students cited ‘Making new friends’, ranking this aspect as fourth on their list with more importance given to new experiences and opportunities, composition, and curriculum aspects. What is most striking about the responses of both the Music and Music Technology students is the way in which the large majority of ‘best aspects’ relate to their course. In contrast with the national survey, no mention is made by either the BMus or the Music Technology students of the following: resources and facilities; personal matters; the induction process; accommodation-related or generally negative aspects.

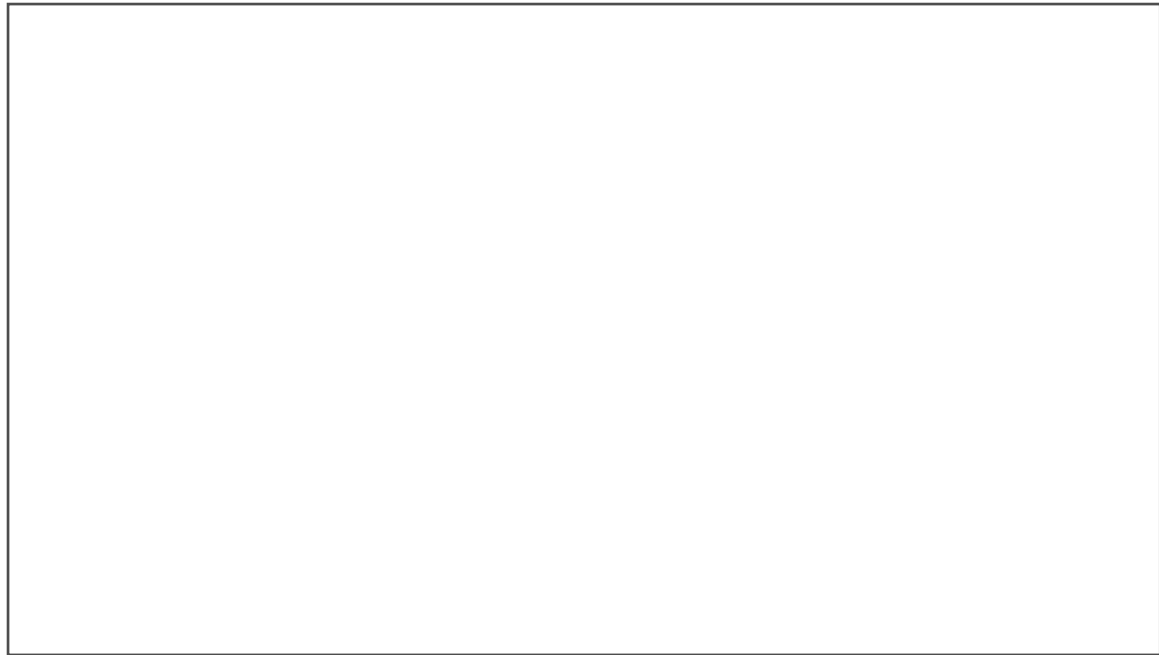
Figure 1: Percentage response rate for ‘best aspects of the first year experience: The first-year experience in higher education in the UK: Yorke and Longden



This is even more evident when the student responses are re-grouped according to the Yorke and Longden categories (see Figures 2 and 3). In both cases it is ‘teaching related’ aspects that are overwhelmingly the most important to the Music and Music Technology students.



Figure 2: First-year BMus (Music) students at the University of Huddersfield, 2008
Figure 3: First-year Music Technology students at the University of Huddersfield, 2008



Previous research has underlined the importance of performance for music students[9]. An enthusiasm for performance on the part of the BMus students has been evident throughout these surveys and this is reflected when they are identifying the best aspects of the course, with 26% citing ‘Individual instrumental and vocal lessons’ and a further 18% citing ‘Performing’.

Earlier on this report ‘a new type of music student’, whose main interests were pop music and music technology, was described. Sixth form teachers spoke of these students, noting their creativity, their interest in ‘current musical issues’ and the way that ‘the excitement of new ideas and processes...grabs their interest’. 42% of Music Technology students ranked ‘new experiences and opportunities’ as being the best aspect of their first year at university. The students wrote enthusiastically about the new skills they had learnt using ‘programming language’, ‘Logic software’, and ‘3D animation’, for example, as well as more general experiences with comments such ‘Unlike college my university modules tie in perfectly together and inspire me in one direction (whereas my college experience felt somewhat disjointed)’.

Best aspects - a comparison with the University of Southampton and Liverpool Hope University responses

Liverpool Hope University	University of Southampton	
Curriculum aspects (26%)	Curriculum aspects (24%)	
New experiences and opportunities (23%)	Performing (24%)	
Concerts (19%)	Making new friends (20%)	
Making new friends (16%)	New experiences and opportunities (16%)	
The trip to Wales (16%)	Freedom and independence (13%)	
Individual instrumental and vocal lessons (16%)	Individual instrumental and vocal lessons (11%)	
Performing (14%)	Social life (11%)	

Single Honours Music students at Liverpool Hope University cover three areas: Music, Popular Music, and Music Technology. No doubt because of this, the responses were something of an amalgam of those of the Huddersfield BMus and Music Technology students and included the top three best aspects of the BMus course (Making new friends, individual instrumental and vocal lessons, and Performing) as well as the first and third of the Music Technology courses (New experiences and opportunities, and Curriculum aspects).

In common with the Huddersfield Music Technology students, a lot of enthusiasm was generated by the new experiences and opportunities they had encountered. Many comments focused on their progress: 'Being able to get a better grasp on music technology and liking it'; 'Music theory has improved; Working at a higher level; and 'Learning to appreciate other styles', for example. Liverpool Hope students were also enthusiastic about their individual lessons and, like the BMus students, relished the progress they had made. One of them wrote 'Singing lessons have been amazing – have learnt so much already'.

An important aspect to be noted is the clear success of the activity trip to Wales. As one student wrote 'The trip to Wales was awesome – although it had nothing to do with assessment it was a great chance to meet people'. If this had been included in the category of 'Making friends' then 'Making friends' would have jumped to the top of the list.

The second-ranking 'best aspect' for Huddersfield Music Technology students was Composition. This was missing from the Liverpool Hope list, instead appearing more prominently under difficult aspects of the course. Students take Style Composition (pastiche) as a module and many of them find it difficult, some because of their notation-reading abilities.

Again for both Liverpool Hope and University of Southampton students, it is 'teaching related' aspects that are the most important and again, in contrast with the Yorke and Longden national survey, no mention is made of resources and facilities, personal matters, the induction process, accommodation related or generally negative aspects.

Although the Southampton and Huddersfield students focused on similar aspects of their first year, those from Southampton gave more prominence to the academic aspects of the curriculum, at 24% ranking academic equally with performing, and putting individual lessons sixth on their list rather than second. Typical comments were: 'Writing essays confidently after grasping the topic and enjoying formulating an argument'; looking into lots of aspects of music'; 'Learning about historical music and its place'; 'Extending my musical knowledge'; and 'Looking in greater depth at topics that were only briefly covered at GCSE/A Level'.

What to date has been the worst aspect of your first year experience at university?

BMus students at the University of Huddersfield 2008

Essay writing (22%)	
Workload and time management (16%)	
Technology for Music (16%)	
Feedback and assessment (8%)	
Generally positive (8%)	
Individual modules and classes (8%)	
Homesickness and illness (6%)	
Organisation and management of the course (4%)	
Student accommodation (4%)	
Workload and time management	
Trying to organise my work and practice and not knowing what to do	
Having enough time - fitting in practice	
A lot of work on your own, trying to have self-motivation has pushed me	
to the limit	
The amount of written work	
Essay writing	

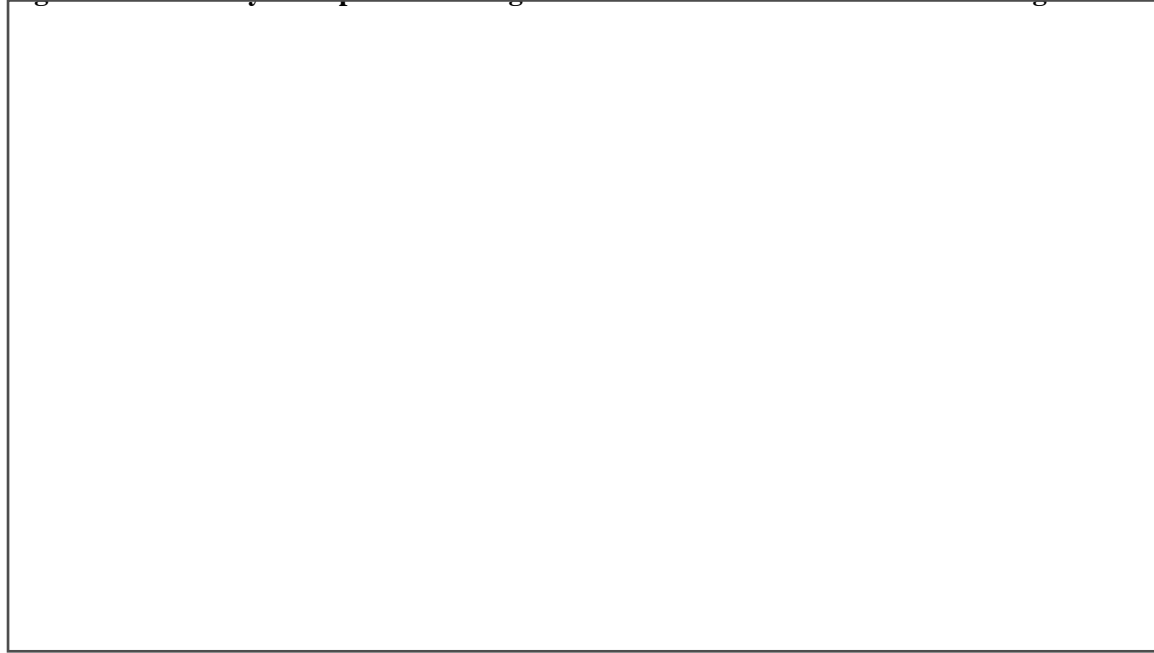
|Every single essay due
|New essay writing guidelines
|Completion of coherent essays
|Technology for Music
|It has been difficult but the tutor is helpful
|I am not continuing with this next year - or ever
|I do not understand it, I have no past experience
|Feedback and assessment
|Left with no guidance on some assignments.
|Never being able to get high marks however hard I try
|Getting bad marks in essays
|Homesickness and illness
|Fear of being away from home
|Organisation and management of the course
|I have 4-5 hour gaps between lectures and have to waste an hour
|travelling home

Music Technology students at the University of Huddersfield 2008

|Individual modules (21%)
|Organisation and management (21%)
|Workload and time management (18%)
|Accommodation related (14%)
|Essay writing (11%)
|Homesickness and illness (11%)
|Commuting from home (11%)
|Making friends (7%)
|Finance related (7%)
|The course in general (7%)
|Generally positive (7%)

|Organisation and management
|Massive gaps between lectures
|Lack of studio time (only allowed to book 2 hours per week which is
|ridiculous)
|Not being able to do my work due to rooms being full
|Workload and time management
|Unable to prepare for the next class because at university nobody tells
|you what to do
|Feeling I'm always behind if I don't understand the work and not sure
|where to find the answer
|Homesickness and illness
|Being so far away from home - 4-5 hours away
|Finance related
|Money - spending too much and not staying in budget

Figure 4: The first-year experience in higher education in the UK: Yorke and Longden



The dominant factor that emerged in the Yorke and Longden analysis was workload and time management (16%). A similar percentage (18%) was found in both the BMus and Music Technology surveys. BMus students were particularly concerned with finding time to practise with a large workload. Comments from the Music Technology students included 'Unable to prepare for the next class because at university nobody tells you what to do'. This is very telling in the light of previous findings about the apparent spoon-feeding of sixth formers.

Previous research[10] has shown the importance of making friends for first-year students. Student friendships and social integration can be central to academic success and, when less than successful, have also been linked to student attrition. As Stuart (2006) observes of student friendships, they provide 'networks of support and encouragement not found elsewhere in their lives'[11]. The national survey revealed that a significant percentage of students (12%) had found difficulties in making friends. As Yorke and Longden write of making friendships in higher education, 'Institutions can assist in this process through the pedagogic approaches they adopt – for example, by engaging students early on in activities that involve collaboration'. The Liverpool Hope University trip to Wales (see page 73) would be a good example of this. Although 7% of the Music Technology students found making friends to be their worst aspect, the same difficulty did not feature on the BMus survey, possibly because of the number of opportunities for getting to know people that performing music affords, such collaborative activities as playing in ensembles, for example.

Boute et al (2007) conducted a study into first year university students' living arrangements and how this affected new friendships. They found that students who lived in university residences made friends more easily than those who commuted into university. It is interesting to note that several of the Music Technology students cited commuting as the worst aspect of the first year. One student wrote 'Commuting (made it harder to meet people)'.

At 22%, essay writing was the 'worst aspect' which was mentioned most by the BMus students. It is not surprising that this aspect did not feature on the national survey given that it was across a range of courses, some of which would not use essays as a means of assessment. However, it does underline the degree of the problem that BMus students are encountering with essay writing. This was reinforced in some of the

comments on feedback and assessment with comments such as ‘Receiving bad marks for essays I thought I had done well in’ and ‘Never being able to get high marks however hard I try’.

Some of the worst aspects mentioned are the responsibility of the student, others are the responsibility of the university, whereas for some there is a dual responsibility. Two of the ‘worst aspects’ cited most frequently by Music Technology students were concerned with individual modules and the organisation and management of the course. Clearly these are the responsibility of the university. The comments were not focused on any one module rather than another so individual modules need not be an area of concern. However, the problems to do with the organisation and management of the course (mainly timetabling and access to resources) need to be examined more closely and recommendations made.

At first glance, it may be surprising that more students did not cite finance related problems (Yorke and Longden (7%), BMus (0%) and Music Technology (7%). This could perhaps in part be explained by the fact that Yorke and Longden, when looking for reasons for student withdrawal, found ‘finance and employment-related issues were of greater influence on the non-continuation of’ several groups including:

- older rather than younger students
- students whose ethnicity was other than white, rather than white students
- students with prior experience of higher education rather than those without it
- students with dependants rather than those without

Both the BMus and Music Technology courses have a large majority of white students and relatively few mature students. This could help to explain the low numbers citing ‘finance related aspects’.

8% of the BMus students and 7% of the Music Technology students could not identify a ‘worst aspect’ of the course and, in line with the national survey, were classified as ‘Generally positive’. This compares with 5% found in the Yorke and Longden survey.

Worst aspects - a comparison with the University of Southampton and Liverpool Hope University responses

Liverpool Hope University	University of Southampton	
Essay writing (16%)	Workload and time management (27%)	
Feedback and assessment (14%)	Individual modules and classes (22%)	
Workload and time management (12%)	Organisation and management of the course	
	(9%)	
Aspects of music technology (12%)	Twentieth century music (9%)	
Generally positive (12%)	Generally positive (7%)	
Not enough performance (12%)	Homesickness and illness (4%)	
Organisation and management of the	Essay writing (4%)	
course (9%)		

Again the responses of the Liverpool Hope students had much in common with those of the Huddersfield students. In fact, the Huddersfield BMus students and the Liverpool Hope students gave the same top 4 rankings for worst aspects – essay writing, feedback and assessment, workload and time management, and aspects of music technology. The Huddersfield students and the Liverpool Hope students both put essay writing at the top of the list. As well as finding it difficult to adapt to ‘HE essay writing’, the Liverpool students had the added bugbear of timed essays. Their comments on feedback and assessment focused mainly on tests.

It is interesting to see that, like the Huddersfield BMus students, a significant number (12%) of Liverpool Hope students found Music Technology to be the ‘worst aspect’. Comments focused on Music

Technology lectures which 'could be more interactive and more practical' and the difficulties in using new software.

Throughout the survey a common theme has emerged where students register their disappointment at there not being more practical/performance work and less theory. 12% of the Liverpool Hope students brought this up as the 'worst aspect' of their first year with comments such as 'Finding out how small a part actual playing music there is in this course' and 'Too few practical lectures, not enough playing'. This appeared to be of less significance to the Southampton students who, in the whole survey, only mentioned this a couple of times.

12% of the Liverpool Hope students had problems with workload and time management. In common with the Huddersfield BMus students, the 'large amount of work' meant that finding time to practise was a problem. The responses of the Southampton students were significantly different. None of them mentioned 'feedback and assessment' or 'music technology' and very few mentioned essay writing. Two aspects of their first year dominated the aspects that they found worst. These were workload and time management (27%) and Individual modules and classes (22%). Many of the comments about the excessive workload referred to the amount of listening they had to cover and the number of deadlines that clashed. One student mentioned 'The week when we had two essays, a test and a harmony assignment to hand in' and another 'When given different assignments at the same time – the massive workload gets on top of me and I get really stressed'.

Across the three universities, none of the music students mentioned making friends as being the 'worst aspect' of their first year. This lends weight to the idea that the collaborative performing activities of music students are a helpful means to making friendships.

12% of the Liverpool Hope students could find no 'worst aspects' of the course – a slightly larger percentage than the Huddersfield BMus students (8%), Music Technology students (7%), and the University of Southampton students (7%) who were all 'Generally positive'.

If you could make one significant change to your first year experience, what would you want it to be?

Students were invited to write about any aspect of their first-year experience that they would like to see changed and that, by implication, would have improved their first-year experience.

BMus students at the University of Huddersfield 2008

|Curriculum aspects (20%)
|Organisation and management of the course (14%)
|Teaching related (12%)
|Preparedness and attendance (8%)
|Change course or modules (4%)

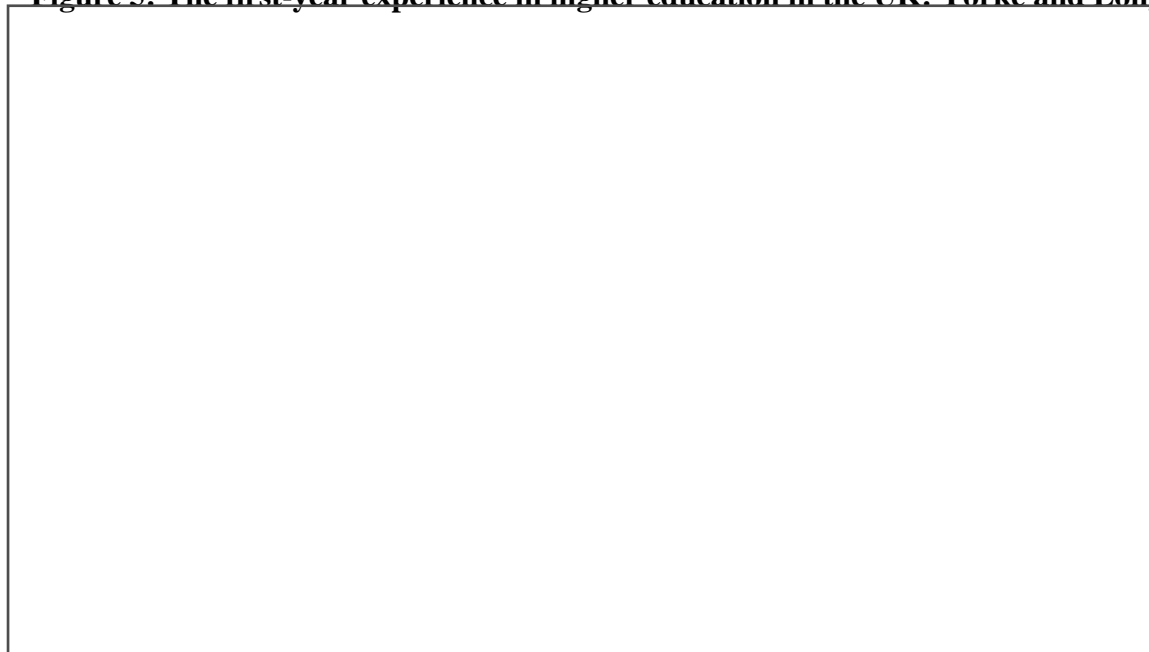
|Curriculum aspects
|Longer instrumental lessons
|Choice of contemporary or traditional composition
|Less written work - more practical
|Organisation and management of the course
|Not having my instrumental lessons at late times like 8.00pm
|More choice of modules for Year 1
|The course should be less contemporary-based and take into account more A
|Level syllabi because I feel disadvantaged with everyone having a head
|start on me (OCR)
|Preparedness and attendance
|Be more organised from the start
|Would have liked to have known about the main areas in Musicology so as to
|research them before coming to university
|I would do more practice
|Change course or modules
|I would have chosen Media and Music Journalism. I don't feel that
|Musicology is of any use for my career path

Music Technology students at the University of Huddersfield 2008

|Change course or modules (21%)
|Organisation and management (14%)
|Accommodation related (14%)
|Fewer essays (11%)
|Generally positive (7%)
|Personal matters (7%)

|Organisation and management
|More real work - less formative
|Have some of the modules made harder
|Make sure I have a day off so I don't have to come in for just one hour
|Accommodation related
|Put Huddersfield closer to Reading
|Generally positive
|Nothing, it has been great!
|Finance related
|Get a grant! How come my parents' wage controls what I get?? Then I could
|have gone out instead of penny pinching

Figure 5: The first-year experience in higher education in the UK: Yorke and Longden



Although the national survey revealed that workload and time management were the features that most students would like to change, they did not appear on the BMus survey and were mentioned by only a very small number of the Music Technology students. BMus students instead concentrated on curriculum aspects. Some familiar themes cropped up such as wanting to remove the focus on contemporary composition, the desire for 'Less written work – more practical' and for Technology for Music to be made optional, whilst a significant number of the Music Technology students wished that they had made a different choice of modules.

Organisation and management of the course was mentioned by 14% of both the BMus and the Music Technology students. This compares with 10% in the national survey. Some students mentioned the type of timetabling problems that had featured before but others related more to academic standards and levels of difficulty. Such comments included 'More real work – less formative', 'Have some of the modules made harder' and 'Split Music and Music Technology into separate classes so knowledge level is more similar between students'. Much of this reflects the problems created by the transition from school/college to university by the diversity of pre-university qualifications which means that all the students have different starting points. One OCR A Level student recognised this when he wrote 'The course should ... take into account more A Level syllabi because I feel disadvantaged with everyone having a head start on me'.

Two further points of interest emerged. A number of the Music Technology students mentioned the difficulties of commuting, thus serving to reinforce the previous point about the ensuing difficulties in forming friendships. Secondly, 11% of the Music Technology students asked for fewer essays. One of the students was quite specific when he mentioned the module 'Music in the Computer Age'. Earlier in the survey one student had written 'Music in the Computer Age – it is all research and essays. Although I love attending lectures and found them really interesting I found it difficult writing such a large amount'. It could be argued that the content of this module[12] does not immediately lend itself to essay writing. Perhaps there is an argument to be made for using other forms of assessment.

The Liverpool Hope and University of Southampton questionnaires did not include the question about suggesting one significant change.

5.13 Summary of findings

The findings of the 2007 University of Huddersfield BMus and Music Technology student surveys were very largely confirmed by the 2008 surveys.

When asked what had attracted them to their chosen course, half the Music and Music Technology students made some reference to the course content, many of these mentioning the choice and variety of modules. Several Music students focused on performance whereas a large number of the Music Technology students also mentioned the impressive facilities. The responses from the students in the English Department were strikingly different. Most English students had been attracted to their respective courses because of their enjoyment of the subject. This was particularly evident in English Language where over half of the students cited either their personal aptitude and enjoyment of the subject or the fact that they had enjoyed the subject at A Level. Few English students mentioned course content and, of these, it was usually specific modules that they had been attracted to, such as creative writing and phonetics. However, joint courses were a major draw for English Studies students.

Very few of the Music or Music Technology students mentioned career prospects as a reason for choosing their course, but this featured strongly on both the English surveys. The careers that were mentioned most by English students were teaching, journalism and creative writing. In terms of career aspirations, the Music Technology students seemed to have much clearer and more ambitious ideas about their future than the Music students who displayed a general air of indecision and lack of confidence. Whereas the large majority of Music students mentioned only teaching or performing (often regarding teaching as second-best), the Music Technology students cited a wide range of careers and had a much more positive outlook.

Both Music and Music Technology students have a wide range of entry qualifications, largely A Levels (across the three main exam boards and all with several option routes), BTEC Diplomas, and ABRSM Practical and theory exams. This means that students of Music and Music Technology all have different starting points. In contrast, the entry qualifications of the English cohort were much less diverse and the very large majority had taken A Levels.

The very large majority of the Music Technology students had been involved in some kind of extra-mural activity across a wide range of performing, recording and composing activities (both amateur and professional), and most found that it had helped them with their university course, the Recording module in particular. The extra-mural activities that were mentioned most frequently were playing in rock bands and working in home studios. These had helped with modules in Recording, Audi Technology and Computer Composition and Sound Design. The link between informal music making and undergraduate study was emphasised strongly by one student who wrote that 'Playing in bands' had helped with 'All modules'. Furthermore, some A Level students thought that their work outside school had prepared them for university better than their work inside and were quite blunt about the shortcomings of Music Technology A Level.

As part of their entry qualifications, Music Technology students must have at least one science based A Level. However, overall, the majority of Music Technology students had taken A Levels in Arts and Humanities subjects with a much smaller percentage having taken Science A Levels. Music Technology staff expressed concern over the difficulties that some of the students were having with the technical work, particularly the maths element of the courses. At the same time, students complained that there was too much that was technical, mathematical or computer-based and too little involving recording and performance. This could be indicative of a gulf between student expectations of the nature of Music Technology degrees and the reality of the course content.

Similarly, some Music students found that aspects of the course had not met their expectations. Their

feelings are best summarised by the following comments: 'I had expected more practical and less musicology'; 'More performance and practice in different kinds of music - not just classical, but rock, jazz, funk, blues etc.'; and 'Composition forces us to use a contemporary style'. An enthusiasm for performance on the part of the BMus students was evident throughout the surveys with a significant percentage identifying it as the 'best aspect' of the course, particularly individual lessons. The resistance to contemporary art music cropped up throughout the survey. Nearly half the Music students wrote that they were new to composing in this style. The majority of these were AQA candidates and many found this aspect difficult.

Comments from the English Studies students indicated that some of them were unaware of everything that a degree course entailed, mainly in terms of the modular structure and the workload. Some wrote that they had expected it to be more like A Level.

When Music students were asked whether there were any parts of the course that they had found difficult, most made specific mention of course modules. There appeared to be some correlation between the exam board followed and the core module e.g. the large majority of the AQA students had found Composition, and Counterpoint, Harmony and Aural difficult in contrast with a much lower percentage of the Edexcel students. Although students found these areas difficult, they did not feature strongly when they were asked to identify 'worst aspects' of the course.

Some of the students found essay writing skills difficult. When asked about the 'worst aspect' of their first year, essay writing came top of the list for BMus students. Comments about essay writing focused on the difficulties of referencing and research. Only four English students mentioned having difficulties with essay writing. No doubt this is because essay writing is central to A Level English, but not to Music and Music Technology.

Most Music students felt particularly well-prepared for Performance. The aspect that the largest percentage of Music Technology students felt well-prepared for was Recording. Clearly this is because recording is an integral part of both the BTEC and A Level Music Technology courses. In addition a significant number of students felt that they had been helped with this module through their extra-mural activities. When students were asked which aspects of the module were new to them, the way that these responses were split between BTEC and A Level students was significant. It would appear that the A Level students were struggling with the more fundamental problem of the principles of recording, whereas any problems the BTEC students had were in coming to terms with unfamiliar equipment.

It was clear from the survey that students who followed the BTEC route were better prepared for their degree than those who had taken the A Level in Music Technology. Although this was not evident in some modules, in others, for example Audio Technology it was quite striking. BTEC students are better prepared for Music Technology degrees: they have more guided learning hours; they spend much more time in the recording studio; they have a wide choice of options; and are taught by people from the music industry. At the same time, it is widely felt by university lecturers that A Level Music Technology has an over emphasis on sequencing at the expense of sampling and synthesis. Furthermore, the upsurge of popularity in A Level Music Technology has meant that schools are often unprepared in terms of staff and equipment and students are often left to work on their own and teach themselves.

Although a significant number of Music Technology students had problems with Music Theory a slightly larger percentage felt well-prepared for it (mostly students who had taken A Level Music or instrumental lessons). The large majority of the students who cited some aspects of Music Theory being new to them were BTEC students. All of them would have taken the core unit in Listening Skills, essentially a music theory unit, so it is difficult to explain why this should be. However, different colleges will take different approaches and some BTEC students may have studied music theory in more depth than others.

Students in the 2007 survey welcomed the Technology for Music module, but Logic was overwhelmingly the aspect that they found most difficult. Logic is not commonly used in schools. Most of the BTEC students felt comfortable with all aspects of this module. The responses in the 2008 survey were different with some students questioning its relevance and identifying it as an aspect of the course that they would like to be changed.

Nearly half of the English students mentioned problems with time management and independent learning, particularly meeting deadlines, the amount of independent study (particularly reading for the English Studies cohort), the sheer amount of work, and note-taking. This is a very large number, particularly in comparison with the other subjects surveyed, but it is in line with previous research into the difficulties faced by first year students of English. In terms of workload and time management, BMus students were particularly concerned with finding time to practise with a large workload.

An appreciation of seminars was found across all the subjects. This is in line with previous studies, several of which have shown that students prefer the smaller groups and discussions associated with seminars.

The responses of the University of Huddersfield Music and Music Technology students were compared with the Yorke and Longden national survey, *The first-year experience in higher education in the UK*. When asked about the 'best aspect' of their first year, the most common response nationwide was 'Making new friends'. With lower percentages, it appeared to be of less significance to the Huddersfield students. Instead the large majority cited 'best aspects' which related to their course. BMus students ranked aspects of performing very highly and Music Technology students relished the new opportunities the course offered. In contrast with the national survey, no mention is made by either cohort of the following: resources and facilities; personal matters; the induction process; accommodation-related or generally negative aspects.

The highest ranked 'worst aspect' in the Yorke and Longden analysis was workload and time management. A similar percentage was found in both the BMus and Music Technology surveys. The second highest aspect in the national survey was 'making friends' but the Huddersfield students appeared to find this less problematic, possibly because of the opportunities which collaborative music-making offers. Although the national survey revealed that workload and time management were the features that the largest number of students would like to change, they did not feature at all on the BMus survey and were mentioned by only a few of the Music Technology students. Both BMus and Music Technology students were more concerned with aspects of the curriculum.

A comparison of Liverpool Hope students with those of Huddersfield revealed much in common in terms of both best and worst aspects. Liverpool Hope students too concentrated on teaching related aspects and were equally enthusiastic about aspects of performance and new opportunities. The only significant difference between them was their attitude towards Composition. Although Huddersfield students ranked this as one of the best aspects, Liverpool students did not mention it in this respect, rather it was relegated to being one of the most difficult aspects of the course.

The Huddersfield BMus students and the Liverpool Hope students gave the same top four rankings for worst aspects – essay writing, feedback and assessment, workload and time management, and aspects of music technology, both putting essay writing at the top of the list. A significant number of Liverpool students also found Music Technology to be the 'worst aspect' and both found that the workload made finding time to practise was a problem. Again few Liverpool students mentioned making friends as being the 'worst aspect' of their first year. Liverpool students also registered their disappointment at there not being more practical/performance work and less theory.

6 A comparison of entry and exit qualifications for 2007 graduates at the University of Huddersfield in Music, Music Technology, English Studies and English Language

6.1 UCAS points and final degree classifications

In order to establish whether there was any correlation between UCAS points and final degree classifications, each of the degree classifications was analysed in turn. The results can be seen in the following tables.

2007 BMus graduates

Degree classification	No of students	% of students	Mean of UCAS points	Range of UCAS points
First	4	9.5%	285	100-380
Upper Second	22	52.5%	280	140 - 390
Lower second	13	31%	264	140-340
Third	3	7%	207	160-260

2007 Music Technology graduates

Degree classification	No of students	% of students	Mean of UCAS points	Range of UCAS points
First	4	7%	247	50-300
Upper Second	29	55%	311	100-520
Lower second	19	36%	261	80-470
Third	1	2%	270	270

2007 English Studies graduates

Degree classification	No of students	% of students	Mean of UCAS points	Range of UCAS points
First	1	2%	420	420
Upper Second	19	42%	272	130-420
Lower second	25	56%	293	80-590
Third	0	0%	0	0

2007 English Language graduates

Degree classification	No of students	% of students	Mean of UCAS points	Range of UCAS points
First	1	5%	540	540
Upper Second	9	43%	340	220-480
Lower second	7	33%	253	200-320
Third	4	19%	215	160-260

Range of UCAS points

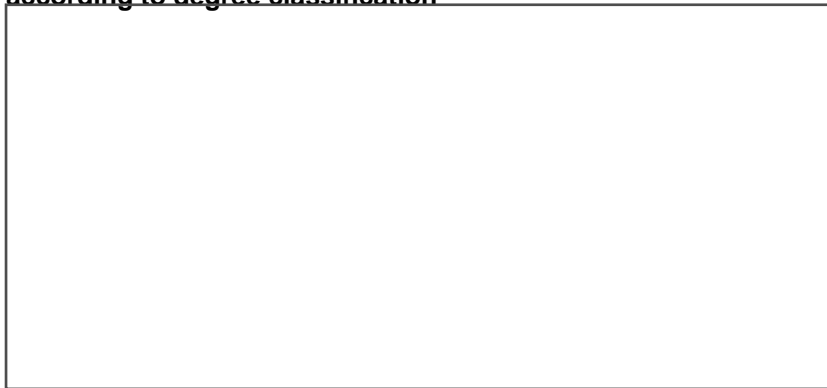
The first statistic to note is that each of the degree classifications for each of the subjects exhibits a wide range of UCAS points[13] – from 100 points to 510 points. The difference averages out at around 250 points (the equivalent of roughly three Grade Cs at a level). This is significant in that it shows that a high number of UCAS points does not guarantee a high degree classification and that a low UCAS score does not debar a student from achieving a First class degree e.g. one of the First class Music Technology students entered the university with a very low score of 50 UCAS points whilst another Music Technology student scored highly on entry with 470 UCAS points but left with a Lower Second. This can be seen

across all the subjects analysed.

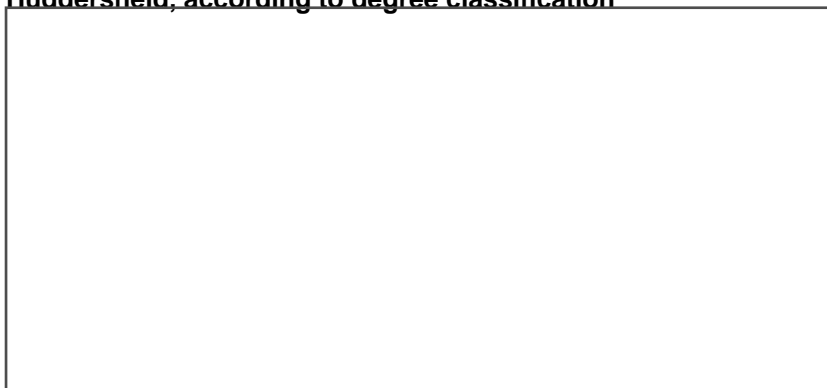
Mean number of UCAS points^[14]

The second statistic to note is that, although one might expect the mean number of UCAS points to decrease from the highest degree class to the lowest, this is by no means always the case. In English Studies the average number of UCAS points is actually higher for a Lower Second than for an Upper Second. Similarly, in Music Technology, the average number of UCAS points is higher for an Upper Second than for a First.

Mean number of UCAS points for 2007 English Studies graduates at the University of Huddersfield, according to degree classification



Mean number of UCAS points for 2007 Music Technology graduates at the University of Huddersfield, according to degree classification



In Music although the mean numbers decreased from the highest degree class to the lowest, the differences were relatively small.

Mean number of UCAS points for 2007 BMus graduates at the University of Huddersfield, according to degree classification



Whereas in English Language, the difference between the means was more marked.

Mean number of UCAS points for 2007 English Language graduates at the University of Huddersfield, according to degree classification



In conclusion, UCAS points are not a reliable indicator of how students will perform in their degree. Having established this, the next step was to examine A Level Grades for subjects closely related to the degree subject and to see if they were any indication of the final outcome.

6.2 Individual A Level grades and final degree classifications

In order to establish whether there was any correlation between individual A Level grades and final degree classifications, each of the degree classifications (for Music, English Studies and English Language)[15] was analysed in turn. For each classification of degree the range of A Level grades was found and the mean number of UCAS points for that one A Level subject was calculated.

2007 BMus graduates

Degree classification	No of students	% of students	Mean of A Level Music UCAS points	Range of A Level Music grades
First	4	9.5%	105	A - C
Upper Second	22	52.5%	88	A - D
Lower second	13	31%	83	A - D
Third	3	7%	67	B - E

2007 English Studies graduates

Degree classification	No of students	% of students	Mean of A Level English[16] UCAS points	Range of A Level English grades
First	1	2%	120	A
Upper Second	19	42%	85	B - D
Lower second	25	56%	64	A - E
Third	0	0%	0	0

2007 English Language graduates

Degree classification	No of students	% of students	Mean of A Level English Language UCAS points	Range of A Level English Language grades
First	1	5%	120	A
Upper Second	9	43%	89	A - D
Lower second	7	33%	76	B - D
Third	4	19%	73	C - D

Range of A Level grades

Each of the degree classifications for each of the subjects exhibits a range of A Level grades – a difference of UCAS points from 20 to 80[17]. This is significant in that it shows that a high grade for A Level does not guarantee a high degree classification, students with A grades achieved degree classifications from a First to a Lower Second across the subjects. It should be added that of all the students who achieved A grades in their subject at A Level, 50% achieved a First class degree and that no-one with a Grade below C achieved a First..

Mean number of UCAS points for A Levels in the degree subject

In each of the subjects, the mean number of UCAS points decreases from the highest degree class to the lowest. Furthermore, this decline is quite marked (particularly in English Studies) which would appear to indicate that there is a correlation between A Level grade for the degree subject and the degree classification.

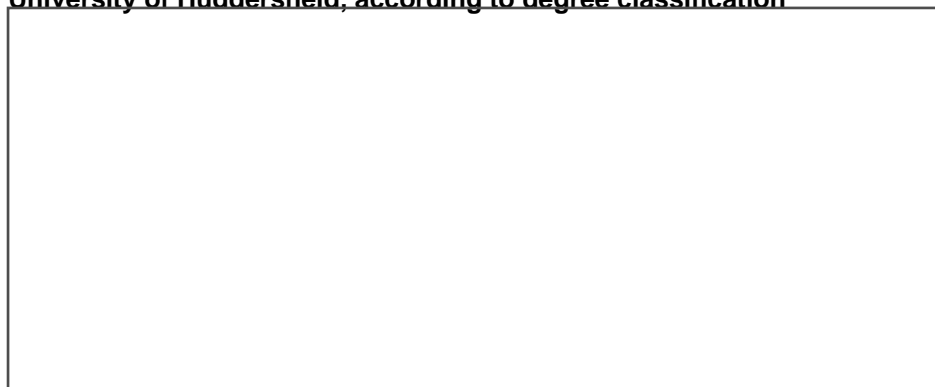
Mean number of A Level Music UCAS points for 2007 BMus graduates at the University of Huddersfield, according to degree classification



Mean number of A Level English UCAS points for 2007 English Studies graduates at the University of Huddersfield, according to degree classification



Mean number of A Level English UCAS points for 2007 English Language graduates at the University of Huddersfield, according to degree classification



6.3 Summary and conclusion

Although there does not appear to be a correlation between the total number of UCAS points and the final degree classification, there does appear to be a correlation between A Level grades for the degree subject and the degree classification.

7 The teaching of composition at university

Each of the three universities surveyed took a different approach to the teaching of composition in the first year. BMus students at the University of Southampton do not have a compulsory unit in composition as part of their first year. In Semester 1, all students take Fundamentals of Analysis, Counterpoint and Harmony and are offered an optional unit in Tonal Composition in Semester 2 where they learn how to 'harmonise melodies, plan classical themes, write variations on themes in a variety of manners, and develop themes in a minuet for string quartet.' Similarly, students at Liverpool Hope University take a first year pastiche composition unit in Musical Analysis and Style Composition.

In contrast, composition is central to all the Music and Music Technology degrees at the University of Huddersfield. As the composer and lecturer Bryn Harrison said in the spnm New Notes Symposium (January 2008) 'One of the strengths of the university is that composition is nurtured as much as performance. It is not seen as a subsidiary skill and non-performers are not seen as underdogs.' This positive attitude was often reflected by the students in the University of Huddersfield surveys with many enthusiastic comments about the various composition modules[18].

At the same time, the surveys revealed a certain tension between the teaching and learning of composition. A significant number of BMus students in both the 2007 and 2008 surveys were resistant to the way in which their style of composing was restricted by the composition lecturer. More specifically, as one student put it 'I think that we should be able to compose in different styles of music, not just contemporary'. Several students made similar comments. There was a feeling that they were being 'forced to use a contemporary style' and to conform to the 'contemporary ideals at Huddersfield'. The student perception is that staff tend to privilege contemporary art music composition over other forms. This may be at odds with student expectations in terms of what they wish to study and, in some cases, with their career aspirations to compose more commercial forms of music.

There is a danger that composition modules, rather than offering students a wide range of possibilities in which to find their own creative personality are instead specialist composition courses that promote only one, often narrow, style of music. In the world outside university, there is a diversity of composing opportunities available – a continuum extending from pop and film music at one end to what could be described as high art/elitist concert music at the other. It is often the latter end which HE composition modules are geared towards. This could be partly explained by the expertise of the lecturers and partly by the fact that it is easier to stage manage the performance of chamber music rather than, for example, film scores. Although recognising that students will not necessarily be entering the composing profession and that the study of composition is intrinsically valuable because it leads to a deeper understanding of music generally, it could be argued that this wide range of styles should be recognised by HE and that students should be encouraged to pursue their particular compositional interests.

In 1998 Christopher Fox (University of Huddersfield) and David Burnand (Royal College of Music) conducted a survey of composers as part of the Professional Integration Project[19]. The survey asked composers from different fields (including concert music, film, pop, opera and dance) what skills and understanding they needed for their profession and what they had gained from their musical education. It is interesting to note that some of the composers surveyed also felt that they had been limited by their composition teachers. The activities that were identified most frequently as having particularly influenced their subsequent career were skills in compositional techniques, orchestration/instrumentation, studio engineering and performance. The subsequent conference[20] reinforced the findings of the questionnaire. There was a broad consensus that composing was of 'intrinsic value to musicianship, musicology and analysis' and that as part of a core curriculum students need to learn the 'fundamental skills of musical invention and compositional craft'. These skills should be 'allied with a wide knowledge of music and ways of thinking about music and a wide range of experience of the ways in which music is realised in both rehearsal and performance'. The majority of the composers surveyed felt that their education had not given them sufficient preparation in the business skills needed to pursue their careers and that these should be built into composition modules.

Similar questions were asked as part of the University of Huddersfield research and as part of a Society for the Promotion of New Music (spnm) Symposium led by Julia Winterson for *New Notes* magazine^[21]. When asked how he believed university composition should be approached, Sinan Savaskan (Director of Music at Westminster School) said that he felt composers should be able to write in any style that they liked but should learn by exploring different techniques in the form of exercises e.g. write a piece using only three pitches. The composer Bryn Harrison thought that undergraduate composition should offer 'everyone the chance to explore their full creative potential' as well as 'different ways of looking at materials and different ways of working with sound to give each student the opportunity to find their own voice, their own self-identity.' He cited the American composer Morton Feldman who believed that the most important thing he could teach a student was to develop an awareness of what exactly musical material is recognising the difference between having ideas and having a sense of the

material that you work with. PA Tremblay added that composition classes should let students 'develop their own voice from their influences' and try 'to broaden that range of influences, because their influences are usually so limited and mainstream.'

All of the composers stressed the importance of listening to a wide and diverse range of music and of having their own music performed. Looking back to his own student days in Canada, PA Tremblay was envious of the way that at Huddersfield students have their pieces workshoped by professional musicians'. Barry Russell felt that, as a student, he would have benefited from 'the chance to actually play my music with other students. I still see a lot of courses where composition is a paper exercise.'

Much of this comes back to the question of whether university music courses should finally embrace and hold a much wider range of listening and music-making experiences as a legitimate basis for music study reflecting the way in which attitudes to music have changed in society at large. We have now moved on from the days when the study of composition was for the specialist few. Since the introduction of the National Curriculum, composing has been obligatory up to Key Stage 3. It is now firmly established in the music education curriculum covering a range of styles and, as we have seen, enjoyed by many both inside and outside school. It would appear that the way forward is not to allow either contemporary art music or tonal pastiche to predominate but to embrace a diversity of styles and to familiarise students with a range of composing techniques.

8 Essay writing for music undergraduates

Essay writing is problematic for a significant number of Music and Music Technology undergraduates at the University of Huddersfield. According to both the 2007 and 2008 surveys, roughly a quarter of the students wrote that they found essay writing both new and difficult, and a similar percentage described it as being the 'worst aspect' of their first year. In contrast, very few English students mentioned having difficulties with essay writing. It would appear that the problems start at school where there is currently less of an emphasis on essay writing for Music A Level. This is compounded by the fact that pre-university essays focus on facts and comments rather than analysis, and interpretation and, as the sixth form teachers surveyed observed, many students have difficulties with note-taking coupled with an over-reliance on internet research and a reluctance to use the library.

Looking at these problems from the University of Huddersfield staff perspective, the large majority described first year essay writing and research skills as 'weak' or 'very weak' (although it is interesting to note that more than half of them felt that the standard of essay writing was about the same as it was ten years ago). Many of the staff related these problems partly to lack of discrimination in the use of the internet and an inability to think independently.

As a consequence, many essays are often poorly researched with a heavy dependence on internet sources. The inherent weaknesses of the essays are evident in an over-use of what is essentially paraphrasing and quotation to disguise a lack of knowledge. They often display a limited and superficial understanding of the subject and there is a lack of capacity to formulate an argument with insufficiently developed skills of analysis to enable effective discussion. In fact some students lack any real opinion on the music which, too frequently, they have never or, at best, fleetingly heard. Although the focus is on the first year, it has to be said that basic essay writing skills are still lacking for some at Year 3 level where they demonstrate poor use of English (which may be symptomatic of lack of subject understanding) and are still unable to structure the work effectively, or to reference their work accurately according to the prescribed system.

This research has highlighted the way in which students are not well prepared for writing

academic essays and that, despite efforts put into study skills, many tend to continue to struggle with this area of their work. As a means of assessment, essays are often poor discriminators between these students with many falling into the same narrow band of marks (roughly 53-63%). Other means of assessment such as formative tests and quizzes are often much better discriminators. It could be argued that as a mode of assessment, the music essay seems to be trying to assess students' knowledge of *writing about* music not their knowledge of *music*. Perhaps we should question whether essays are there to assess students' capabilities in terms of *humanities* skills rather than their *music* skills. If they are, then we need to invest a great deal longer in developing research and writing skills with a consequent impact on the rest of the curriculum. Unlike, say, History degree students who are in a constant iterative process of essay writing and consideration of primary source materials (and have been since A Level), Music students write relatively few essays and these often come at crucial moments e.g. end of year formative assessments.

There are two matters to be addressed here. Firstly, the need to provide means of improving essay writing amongst Music and Music Technology students at the university and secondly, and perhaps more profoundly, the need to question why certain types of knowledge, skills and abilities are assessed through essays rather than by other means. In short, is the essay and the one-hour essay-type exam question a fundamentally flawed mode of assessment within this context?

Essays are used to assess a range of learning outcomes from basic knowledge and understanding to higher-level analytical skills. Perhaps it would be more effective in terms of both assessment and feedback to set up separate tasks to assess different outcomes. Comprehension skills and higher order skills, such as synthesis and evaluation, could be separated out to create different parts for each formative assessment. Comprehension of concepts, for example, could be assessed through tests that consist of objective questions (possibly cross-referenced to essay writing) which would lead towards more rapid feedback and help to create a richer learning experience for the students.

With widening participation, the first year can no longer be regarded as a journey of discovery for students: more guidance is needed at this time leading to further independence in the second year. Students should not be left guessing, particularly during the first part of the year: they need clearer guidelines and criteria as to what is needed. They should engage with why they are at university and understand why they are required to write an essay.

Good essay practice could be developed through 'modelling' where key assessment tasks are identified and linked to models. Extra time could be built in to the course(s) to allow students to work on issues such as:

- how to break a question down into keywords
- the difference between tasks e.g. 'describe', 'analyse', 'discuss' etc.
- the purpose of referencing
- how to analyse and to develop their critical skills

Assessment practices could be improved through the use of revised assessment criteria, peer evaluation and an online depository of exemplar material available for discussion in musicology classes

In summary, the problems that Music and Music Technology students are experiencing with essay writing need to be addressed through a combination of clearer assessment criteria and guidelines and an approach to teaching which embraces an increased cognisance of learning skills and uses a wider range of formative assessment methods.

9 Towards a better understanding of the transition between school and

university

Conclusions and recommendations

Developing the Curriculum in Music and Music Technology

1. Within the curriculum as currently conceived a great deal is done to maximise student achievement. However, this does not mean that the current curriculum is necessarily the best or only one, or that the assessment strategy is the most appropriate.

Improving our knowledge of what goes on in Schools and Colleges

2. It is clear that Music staff should acquaint themselves more thoroughly with the range of qualifications and options within them that students are undertaking before entering university. This, obviously, is most important for Admissions staff and those concerned with the Year 1 Curriculum.

3. Staff should be aware that:

- A Level is not designed as a preparation for undergraduate study. The majority of those studying A Level do not progress to study music at undergraduate level.
- it is possible for those with good practical skills in music performance and composition to pass with very low attainment in more academic aspects. Large numbers of University of Huddersfield BMus students have a Grade C for Music A Level. This grade can be reached by having a good mark for performance and a poor mark for the written work.
- those who take Music at A Level because of their practical abilities may not complement music with humanities A Levels that require the development of, for example, essay writing skills that will be important in their future undergraduate curriculum.

As Tony Cook of the University of Ulster is quoted as saying: “we need to teach the students we recruit, not the ones we would have liked to recruit”[22].

4. Better communication between schools/FE colleges and universities is necessary. Universities should try to engage with teachers, examiners and examination boards to make transition a shared experience by

- continuing efforts to improve interaction with local school teachers, not only focusing on recruitment and ‘what it’s like to be at University’, but also developing a shared understanding of what the two sectors seek to achieve.
- continuing to enhance links with PGCE providers and use their knowledge of drivers within the school curriculum.

5. Relatively few students entering university will have an adequate set of skills to undertake undergraduate studies without some difficulties. Research suggests that front-loading of the academic curriculum with support for time management and study skills is important. However:

- this must be done without alienating the more able (academically) students;
- students need to see reasons for doing this; embedding this support is therefore preferable to study skills classes.

6. Time management and how to study between classes are real issues for the current generation of students. This research has demonstrated that it is an even greater problem in English, partly because of the amount of reading required. It may be less problematic for Music students, because of their regular practice requirements; but they may still need more guidance with academic work.

7. Significant numbers of students seem to have difficulties with essay writing. We need to

- give careful thought as to when and why we ask students to write essays and how we train them to do this
- consider using very precise guidelines and assessment criteria, particularly at foundation level
- consider using a wider range of formative assessment methods.

Implications for the curriculum

In the light of the changing nature, interests and needs of incoming students it is timely to rethink both what we are trying to achieve and how this should be assessed.

8. In developing music curricula, all that can be safely assumed is a basic level of performance skills, notation skills (for BMus) plus a general knowledge / enthusiasm for music.

9. In music technology, the level of knowledge will vary sharply according to the range of equipment and software students have had access to in school or college. Notation skills cannot be assumed, but the level of enthusiasm and engagement with performance may well be high.

10. The beginning of an undergraduate programme should be seen as an opportunity for a 'fresh start' rather than the continuation of a musical education which began at school.

11. Whatever takes place in the first year should, ideally, be quite different, new and stimulating for all students and move away from any sense of the first year plugging gaps or being in some ways remedial. Some staff interviewed considered the first year to be too technical. This is at least partly caused by an understandable desire to plug gaps and lay foundations. There may be a case for delaying some harmony, theory and analysis to Year 2 to allow space for a more radical approach to Year 1. However, before beginning to reconsider a first year it might be useful to step back and consider why we do what we do. Does it all arise out of 'anxiety about successful student recruitment' or are there other factors?

Breadth

12. A theme that constantly came through from teachers and those preparing students for teaching is the question of breadth. Higher Education should attempt to build on the much wider range of 'musics' that students are now familiar with rather than (over-?) prioritising Western classical music and contemporary 'serious'/classical music. But

- it is necessary to guard against the incoherence that may arise from ever widening the curriculum
- there is a need to ensure that, as curriculum planners, we are not like 'straws in the wind' reacting

simply to consumer demand

- there is a need to have a strong justification for the choices we make.

13. Recent revalidation of the Composition modules seems to indicate a greater openness to a range of compositional types[23]. There is a need to consider how open the department is to all styles of composition and if it is considered preferable to steer students towards the hard end of contemporary composition, there must be very clear reasons why and these should be articulated to the students

14. Music in higher education might like to consider more closely the way students listen to music.

- there may be a case for introducing more listening into the curricula and assessing this. However, the way in which this should be done would need careful consideration given that the operation of the first year listening module 'Ways of Listening' was not considered a complete success and was removed
- the traditional concert, and to some extent live performance, are peripheral rather than central to student musical experience. If staff regard them as still essential to musical experience, then perhaps attendance should be compulsory or at least strongly encouraged.

15. At school, students will have studied 'performing, composing and listening' in a holistic way. The boundaries that we set up and the introduction of 'musicology' might seem stranger to them than we think. This is perhaps an argument for more project-based work which is not compartmentalised into musicology/composition/performance etc.

16. The points just made should be considered in the light of a clear definition of what the curricula at Huddersfield seek to achieve and prepare students for. There may be a case for a clearer articulation of core values, and a clearer communication of these values to students.

17. In the case of the BMus, there may be too many aims (training composers and performers, preparing our graduates for other music professions such as teaching, and producing graduates with a range of essentially humanities skills, for example). The aims of the provision should be revisited.

18. The achievement of the best students in Music Technology and Pop tends to be better at the moment than those on the BMus course. It may be worth considering whether this is because their programmes have more focus and the students are clearer about where they want to go.

Employment and Careers

19. It is clear from the surveys that students following Huddersfield's BMus programme have a very constricted view of future careers. Very few of the Music or Music Technology students mentioned career prospects as a reason for choosing their course at either the University of Huddersfield or Liverpool Hope. More needs to be done to prepare students for their future careers otherwise there is the danger that we are simply preparing students to fail as performers and composers. We need to continue to develop modules which face the professions

20. In the Programme Specification Documents (PSDs), the overall aims of the Huddersfield music programmes are perhaps overly compressed in Music Technology, or too all-encompassing on the BMus course. A clearer sense of which careers, particularly in music, the programmes prepare them for might lead students to a better understanding of what they are capable of doing.

- more should be done to widen students' horizons
- in designing the curriculum and determining the knowledge and skills taught, we should develop a clearer sense of how they impact upon students' future lives
- the value of the knowledge and skills taught should be made more evident to students, possibly through more intense Personal Development Planning (PDP) activity or skills mapping exercises.

10 Executive summary

10.1 Introduction

This project stemmed from a need to improve understanding of the transition from school to university music and other related subjects. Students now come from a wide range of backgrounds and university staff need to understand these more comprehensively in order to manage transition more effectively. The project examined how curricula can build upon the strengths of students and how to avoid the (negative) view that it is necessary to begin an undergraduate course with essentially remedial work. It has the support of the subject centre for performing arts (PALATINE), the music subject association (NAMHE), and the Society for Music Analysis (SMA).

The views of various education bodies were sought. These included representatives from schools and colleges across six different local authorities, three universities, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, the Edexcel examination board and the teacher training sector. Data collection in the tertiary sector took place through classroom observations and interviews with teachers and students. Data collection in universities took place through questionnaire, and interviews with students and lecturers. 422 students were surveyed across courses at the University of Huddersfield, Liverpool Hope University and the University of Southampton. The student questionnaires focused on the areas which were key to their first experience of studying for a degree. University staff questionnaires and interviews focused on the perceived strengths and weakness of current students. University entry and exit qualifications were examined through statistical analysis

10.2 Findings

Music in Schools, Sixth Form Colleges and Further Education Colleges

1. The National Curriculum reflects changes in cultural, social and educational attitudes to music: there is an increased emphasis on providing accessibility across the full ability range; other genres of music are included alongside, and as equals to, Western classical music; and an holistic approach is taken to Performing, Composing and Listening.
2. The broader approach of Curriculum 2000 is welcomed by most teachers. Student numbers for Music and Music Technology A Levels have risen and continue to rise. New types of music student have emerged often with a pop/music technology background and a more creative and open-minded approach.
3. Pre-Curriculum 2000, A Level Music syllabi across the different examination boards were very similar. Nowadays there are sharp differences between them and a wide range of options. A significant number of music undergraduates have taken the BTEC route. Pre-university music qualifications are too diverse to expect a smooth transition from school to university.
4. The combination of the AS/A2 structure and the introduction of league tables has meant that courses are now more exam-driven and the time available for teaching has been reduced. Sixth formers are well-prepared for their exams, but not necessarily for the independent study they will encounter at university.
5. The GCE curriculum in music is no longer designed as a preparation for university. Universities once had an important role in determining the content of GCE syllabi, but this is no longer the case.
6. Most of the teachers interviewed wanted a broadening out of university music degrees.

7. Many music graduates follow a career in teaching, but prospective teaching students often do not have the broad range of skills that are needed in a music classroom.

Staff questionnaire

The majority of the University of Huddersfield Music staff perceived the students to be 'weak' or at 'very weak' in

- research skills
- knowledge of the Western classical repertoire
- harmony and counterpoint
- essay writing
- music analysis

The majority of the staff perceived the students to be 'good' or at 'very good' in

- computer skills
- music technology skills
- their knowledge of music outside the Western classical repertoire,
- performance

Roughly half the staff would not make any major changes to the Music and Music Technology degree courses. The most frequent suggestions for changes were linked to

- overall structure – particularly the integration between modules and the need to have a clearer progression through the three years. Some found the first year of the BMus to be over-theoretical
- curriculum content of the music technology courses – particularly the need to balance the vocational with the academic and to represent the real commercial world
- group sizes - large lecture groups were not always believed to be effective
- ways of improving independent study

Student surveys (Music, Music Technology and English)

Course choice Half of the Music and Music Technology students made some reference to the course content, many of these mentioning the choice and variety of modules. Several Music students focused on performance whereas a large number of the Music Technology students mentioned the impressive facilities. The responses from the students in the English Department were strikingly different. Most English students had been attracted to their respective courses because of their enjoyment of the subject. Joint courses were also a major draw for English Studies students.

Career aspirations - Music Technology students seemed to have much clearer and more ambitious ideas about their future than the Music students who displayed a general air of indecision and lack of confidence. Whereas the large majority of Music students mentioned only teaching or performing (often regarding teaching as second-best), the Music Technology students cited a wide range of careers and had a much more positive outlook. The careers that were mentioned most by English students were teaching, journalism and creative writing.

Entry qualifications Both Music and Music Technology students have a wide range of entry qualifications, largely A Levels, BTEC Diplomas and ABRSM Practical and theory exams. This means

that they all have different starting points. In contrast, the entry qualifications of the English cohort were much less diverse and the very large majority had taken A Levels. The majority of Music Technology students had taken A Levels in Arts and Humanities subjects with a much smaller percentage having taken Science A Levels.

It was evident from the survey that students who followed the BTEC route were better prepared for university than those who had taken the A Level in Music Technology. BTEC students have more guided learning hours; they spend much more time in the recording studio; they have a wide choice of options; and are taught by people from the music industry. It is widely felt by university lecturers that A Level Music Technology has an over emphasis on sequencing at the expense of sampling and synthesis. The upsurge of popularity in A Level Music Technology has meant that schools are often unprepared in terms of staff and equipment and students are often left to work on their own.

Music outside school The very large majority of the Music Technology students had been involved in some kind of extra-mural activity across a wide range of performing, recording and composing activities. Most found that it had helped them with their university course, the Recording module in particular. The extra-mural activities that were mentioned most frequently were playing in rock bands and working in home studios. Some A Level Music Technology students thought that their work outside school had prepared them for university better than their work inside school.

Expectations of the course Music Technology staff expressed concern over the difficulties that some of the students were having with the technical work, particularly the maths element. Students complained that there was too much that was technical, mathematical or computer based and too little involving recording and performance. Similarly, some Music students found that aspects of the course had not met their expectations: they expected more practical and less theory and expressed a resistance to contemporary art music in the study of composition. Comments from the English Studies students indicated that some of them were unaware of everything that a degree course entailed, mainly in terms of the modular structure and the workload. Some expected it to be more like A Level.

Difficult aspects of the course Most Music students made specific mention of course modules. There appeared to be some correlation between the exam board followed and the module. Some of the students mentioned essay writing skills and time-management. Comments about essay writing focused on the difficulties of referencing and research. Only four English students mentioned having difficulties with essay writing.

Although a significant number of Music Technology students had problems with Music Theory a slightly larger percentage felt well-prepared for it (mostly students who had taken A Level Music or instrumental lessons). The large majority of the students who cited some aspects of Music Theory being new to them were BTEC students.

Nearly half of the English students mentioned problems with time management and independent learning (particularly meeting deadlines), the amount of independent study (particularly reading), the sheer amount of work, and note-taking. This is a very large number in comparison with the other subjects surveyed, but it is in line with previous research.

Aspects of the course that students felt well-prepared for Most Music students felt particularly well-prepared for Performance and most Music Technology students felt well-prepared for recording. Clearly this is because recording is an integral part of both the BTEC and A Level Music Technology courses. In addition, a significant number of students felt that they had been helped with this module through their extra-mural activities. An appreciation of seminars was found across all the subjects.

A comparison with the Yorke and Longden national survey *The first-year experience in higher education in the UK*

When asked about the 'best aspect' of their first year, the most common response nationwide was 'Making new friends'. It appeared to be of less significance to the Huddersfield students. Instead the large majority cited 'best aspects' which related to their course. BMus students ranked aspects of performing very highly and Music Technology students relished the new opportunities the course offered. The highest ranked 'worst aspect' in the Yorke and Longden analysis was workload and time management. A similar percentage was found in both the BMus and Music Technology surveys. The second highest aspect in the national survey was 'making friends' but the Huddersfield students appeared to find this less problematic, possibly because of the opportunities which collaborative music-making offers.

10.3 Recommendations

1. Music staff should acquaint themselves more thoroughly with the range of qualifications and options within them that students are undertaking before entering university.

2. Staff should be aware that:

- A Level is not designed as a preparation for undergraduate study
- it is possible for those with good practical skills in music performance and composition to pass with very low attainment in more academic aspects
- those who take Music at A Level because of their practical abilities may not complement music with humanities A Levels that require the development of, for example, essay writing skills.

3. Better communication between tertiary and higher education is necessary. Universities should try to engage with teachers and examination boards to make transition a shared experience by

- continuing efforts to improve interaction with local school teachers
- continuing to enhance links with PGCE providers and use their knowledge of drivers within the school curriculum.

4. The front-loading of the academic curriculum with support for time management and study skills is important.

5. Significant numbers of students seem to have difficulties with essay writing. We need to

- give careful thought as to when and why we ask students to write essays and how we train them to do this
- consider using very precise guidelines and assessment criteria, particularly at foundation level
- consider using a wider range of formative assessment methods.

6. In the light of the changing nature, interests and needs of incoming students it is timely to rethink both what we are trying to achieve and how this is going to be assessed. In developing music curricula, all that can be safely assumed is a basic level of performance skills, notation skills (for BMus) plus a general knowledge/enthusiasm for music. In music technology, the level of knowledge will vary according to the range of equipment and software students have previously had access to. Notation skills cannot be assumed, but the level of enthusiasm and engagement with the course may well be high.

7. The beginning of an undergraduate programme should be seen as an opportunity for a 'fresh start' rather than the continuation of a musical education which began at school. This should, ideally, be quite different, new and stimulating for all students and move away from any sense of the first year plugging gaps or being in some ways remedial. There may be a case for delaying some harmony, theory and analysis to Year 2 to allow space for a more radical approach to Year 1.

8. Higher Education should attempt to build on the much wider range of 'musics' that students are now familiar with rather than (over-?) prioritising Western classical music and contemporary 'serious'/classical music. However, it is necessary to guard against the incoherence that may arise from ever-widening the curriculum. We should not react simply to consumer demand and need to have a strong justification for the choices we make.

9. Recent revalidation of the Composition modules seems to indicate a greater openness to a range of compositional types. If it is considered preferable to steer students towards the hard end of contemporary composition, there must be very clear reasons why and these should be articulated to the students.

10. There may be a case for introducing more listening into the curricula and assessing this. If staff regard live concerts as essential to musical experience, then perhaps attendance should be compulsory or at least strongly encouraged.

11. At school, students will have studied 'performing, composing and listening' in a holistic way. This is perhaps an argument for more project-based work, not compartmentalised into musicology / composition / performance etc.

12. The aims of the BMus may be too many and these should be revisited. It may be worth considering whether the Music Technology and Pop programmes have more focus and the students are clearer about where they want to go.

13. More needs to be done to prepare BMus students for their future careers otherwise there is the danger that we are simply preparing them to fail as performers and composers. We need to continue to develop modules which face the professions

14. In the Programme Specification Documents (PSDs), the overall aims of the Huddersfield music programmes are perhaps overly compressed in Music Technology, or too all-encompassing on the BMus course.

- more should be done to widen students' horizons
- in designing the curriculum and determining the knowledge and skills taught, we should develop a clearer sense of how they impact upon students' future lives
- the value of the knowledge and skills taught should be made more evident to students, possibly through more intense Personal Development Planning (PDP) activity or skills mapping exercises.

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[1] Numbers of students have been rounded up or down to the nearest hundred.

[2] The smaller 2008 Music Technology survey, although mentioning individual modules, had a slightly different emphasis. Here more comments were made about the difficulties of using new equipment and software (particularly Logic and MAX/MSP), essay writing and time management. Comments about all of these are covered later on in this report so will not be included here.

[3] Although the 2008 Music Technology survey did not include questions about specific modules, several comments were made about these in response to open-ended questions.

[4] For an outline of the relevant requirements of the different exam boards please Appendix

[5] The same uncertainty is described in Burt, R and Mills, J (2006) 'For some, there is an acknowledgment of the unpredictable and competitive nature of the profession, with their hopes for two years after graduation remaining flexible and uncertain. There are many uses of 'hopefully', and an awareness of the uncertain nature of the profession.'

[6] Notably - Ballinger, Gillian J, 'Bridging the Gap Between A Level and Degree' in *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 2003; 2; 99 and Smith, Keverne 'An investigation into the experience of first-year students of English at British universities' in *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 2004; 3; 81

[7] It was not possible to analyse the responses of the English Language students according to their pre-university qualifications. When the students were split up into groups according to their previous courses, the majority had followed the AQA English Language specification. The remaining groups were too small to have any statistical significance.

[8] Notably Ballinger, Gillian J, 'Bridging the Gap Between A Level and Degree' in *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education 2003*; 2; 99 and Smith, Keveve 'An investigation into the experience of first-year students of English at British universities' in *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education 2004*; 3; 81

[9] BURT, J & MILLS, J. (2006) .

[10] Tinto (2003), Boue et al (2007) and Stuart (2006)

[11] Stuart (2006) p.170

[12] The syllabus will focus on key aesthetic issues in sound technology and practice, exploring historical practitioners and theories and comparing these to contemporary issues. Sessions may include:

The use of MIDI in: Popular music, installation art and interactive sound design, live electronics in contemporary western art music.

An examination of the aesthetic issues and practical applications of Computer Assisted Composition (including examination of works by such composers as Saariaho, Murail, and Xenakis).

The integration of digital sound into multimedia work (music for computer games, CD-Roms and computer animation).

[13] This does not include the categories where only one student achieved a particular degree classification for that subject.

[14] Where only one student has achieved any of the classifications for a subject, the mean numbers have been taken out to avoid distorting the figures.

[15] Too few students had taken Music Technology A Level to provide a large enough sample so this subject was not analysed.

[16] The majority of the English Studies students had completed English Literature A Level but a small number had completed an A Level in English Language and Literature.

[17] This does not include the categories where only one student achieved a particular degree classification for that subject.

[18] These include Composition, Computer Composition, Popular Composition and Arranging, Stylistic Composition and Scoring for Film.

[19] This was led by the Royal College of Music and designed to share ideas of good practice when 'fostering professional skills among those studying music in higher education'.

[20] FDTL LUMEN/PIP conference held at the University of Leeds, July 1998

[21] 'How do you teach composition' in *New Notes* (January 2008). A New Notes symposium with the composers Bryn Harrison (University of Huddersfield) , Barry Russell (Leeds College of Music) and Pierre Alexander Tremblay (University of Huddersfield).

[22] (NAO, 2007, p.30)

[23] This has addressed the perceived lack of stylistic flexibility by establishing two key routes for third year students: 1. 'Advanced composition' which gives more individual contact time and allows for both a more individualised route and greater creative potential. 2. 'Composition in context' which allows for stylistic flexibility and uses class-based teaching, more practical guidance, hands-on experience and composing through interactive/collaborative work.