



# Subject Benchmark Statement: Music

## The Basics

This summary is designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Music for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape and boundaries of the discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI); accessibility and the needs of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); enterprise and entrepreneurship; and the impact of generative artificial intelligence on the subject practice.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains practices and considerations in relation to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours or a master's degree in the subject.



## Why study a degree in Music?

The study of Music in higher education is an extremely rich field of endeavour, providing students with opportunities to engage in a broad spectrum of intellectual and creative activity, enabling them to develop a wide range of specialised and generic skills, and preparing them for a diverse array of careers, both within Music and beyond it. Music graduates have skills and knowledge of great value to society. They are agents of social cohesion, cultural understanding, artistic expression, and individual and collective well-being.

Music graduates work in many fields. Many are employed in roles specific to Music and/or the wider cultural sector. Some bring their knowledge and skills to bear in other professional environments such as broadcasting and healthcare. Many work in education, either independently, in institutions, or in other organisations (such as regional music services). The skills acquired from the study of Music are transferable to other sectors, with creative skills being particularly sought after by employers. Music graduates are frequently self-employed, and often have portfolio careers across a range of musical activity.



## What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Music?

Teaching and learning in Music degree courses encompasses a wide range of styles and methods, reflective of the broad scope and diverse content of the courses themselves and the diversity of students' needs and prior experience. Teaching takes an inclusive and collaborative approach, offering a range of learning opportunities to meet the required outcomes. Because the cultivation of intellectual and creative independence is fundamental to successful Music practice, educational design encompasses practical learning where appropriate. Teaching in Music may take place in person, online, or utilising hybrid delivery and engagement methods. These are carefully considered and balanced to ensure that accessibility needs are met and suitable support is in place, and that the method of delivery is appropriate for the subject matter.

Teaching and learning in Music are supported by high-quality environments, performing spaces and studios, and the provision of appropriate instruments and technical equipment, as well as qualified staff to ensure maximum engagement with facilities. Music courses are also supported

by access to a wide range of printed sources (including books and scores), online resources, and collections of audio and video recordings.



## How are students assessed?

The wealth of approaches to the study of Music in UK higher education necessitates an approach to assessment and feedback which acknowledges the diversity of skills required across both practice and theory, thereby empowering students' development. Assessment is closely aligned with, and reflective of, the breadth of ways in which Music is taught. Many aspects of Music can be understood as both a 'process' and a 'product', making both formative and summative modes of assessment crucial.

Diverse assessment methods allow students to demonstrate a range of authentic skills that will be used in their professional careers. The breadth and profile of assessment combinations will range widely to reflect, for example, the specialist profile of the provider or an emphasis on particular learning activities and outcomes within a given programme. These diverse assessment methods support students to demonstrate critical, analytical, reflective and creative skills. Many assessment methods in Music require personal engagement and individual expression. More information on diverse assessment modes can be found on **pages 16-18** of the full Statement.

Some forms of assessment raise issues of accessibility for some students, and in such instances alternatives are offered in accordance with the principles of Accessibility discussed on **page 5** of the Statement.



## Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold and typical standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours or master's degree in Music are outlined on **pages 20-24** of the Subject Benchmark Statement.. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 26** of the Statement.

Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as an expert quality body on behalf of the higher education sector.

### Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

The [full Subject Benchmark Statement](#) is available on the QAA website.

Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector.

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