

BMus [HONS] Performance/ Composition/ Music Technology

CUKAS code: W300

Mode of study: Full time; Part time (final year only)

Language of study: English

A Brief Introduction to the Conservatoire

Birmingham Conservatoire is one of the UK's nine specialist music conservatoires but is uniquely located within a university, meaning that it offers all the benefits of a small, specialist institution alongside all those that a big institution like Birmingham City University can provide, from Accommodation Services to the Student Union. The Conservatoire offers vocational musical training in performance, composition, music technology and jazz at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. We educate and train our students to the highest professional standards, providing an environment in which individual creativity can flourish and successful careers begin.

Broad subject area / external reference points

JACS codes W300/W310

This is the code used by CUKAS to classify the degree programme. W300 is the general code for music; W310 is the code for Musicianship and Performance Studies.

QAA subject Benchmarks for Music (2008)

The Subject Benchmark Statement for Music was produced by the Quality Assurance Agency and describes the general expectations about what standards music students should have achieved for a qualification in terms of the knowledge and skills that graduates should be able to demonstrate. This means that when we designed the BMus (Hons) programme, we drew specifically on the types of knowledge, musical and general skills that the benchmark statement describes. You can find the full statement via this link:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Subject-benchmark-statement-Music-.aspx>

Programme aims

The BMus (Hons) programme is the largest undergraduate course at Birmingham Conservatoire and its main aim is to prepare students for a career in the music profession, whether that is in performance, composition or music technology.

At the heart of our programme's philosophy is the ideal of the informed musician, someone who is able to combine both advanced skills and musical knowledge in the advancement of their musical career. The BMus (Hons) programme therefore aims to develop the specialist skills, the theoretical, historical and practice-based knowledge and to encourage the individual creativity required for you to become an independent learner, a critical interpreter and a reflective practitioner.

An emphasis is placed on versatility, an essential ingredient of most careers in music. Whilst first study work (solo performance, composition and music technology) remains at the center of the programme, you will also have opportunities to develop skills in other areas according to your specific needs, interests and career aspirations. The programme provides a secure foundation for postgraduate study and entry into the music profession.

The aims of the programme are to:

- Prepare musicians for the profession
- Nurture the creativity of our students
- Develop high standards of musicianship and technique
- Promote an open-minded and enquiring attitude to all musics
- Cultivate an appreciation of key historical concepts, performance practice issues and analytical processes to enrich work in performance, composition and technology.
- Develop academic autonomy through the implementation of appropriate research skills
- Guide students in their career aspirations
- Equip students with a range of transferable skills
- Enable students to develop areas of specialism
- Promote self-reliance and responsibility for personal and professional development
- Provide an ongoing opportunity for professional development, encouraging reflection and the acquisition of additional skills useful in a future career in the profession
- Promote the development of personal and interpersonal skills with particular reference to the cooperative and collaborative environment of the music profession

Distinctiveness of programme within the sector

All of the UK's Conservatoires aim to do the same thing: that is, to train students for the music profession, with the emphasis on your first study training, whether that is in performance, composition or music technology. At the Conservatoire, we firmly believe that developing a range of complementary skills in other areas such as harmony, aural and critical thinking are just as important for your longer term development and career prospects. However, although there are basic musical skills that every musician should have, we also believe that one size does not fit all and as you progress through the programme you will find that what you are studying changes to respond to your own interests. In the first two years of the programme, most of what you do away from your first study area will be core curriculum – everyone will mostly be studying the same things and developing a firm foundation in musical skills and knowledge. However, as you move through years three and four, you will have an increasing amount of choice, and in year 4, you will effectively design your own curriculum based on your career aspirations. One of the most important year 4 modules is the Final Project, which all students undertake. This can be anything at all related to your musical development. Previous projects include all kinds of performances from renaissance brass to contemporary piano in central Birmingham venues, collaborations between performers and composition or music technology students, setting up a web-based music business, making a CD, putting on a fund-raising concert, setting up a regular folk night in a local venue, a community music project with the homeless, education projects, dissertations, staging *The Mikado*, Mozart Opera Scenes, or writing and staging a musical – in short, anything that a final year student chooses to do that is focused on their own musical interests and relevant to what they want to do after graduation.

Learning Outcomes
1. Knowledge and Understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate knowledge of repertoire, practices and issues of style appropriate to the first-study area • Demonstrate advanced subject knowledge in specialist areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and integrate contextual evidence into your performance/compositional practices • Transfer insights between different bodies of knowledge • Draw independent conclusions and communicate them effectively
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a detailed contextual understanding of repertoire, including social, historical and performance-practice issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between theory and practice • Integrate musical understanding with contextual knowledge • Apply the knowledge, skills and methodologies of the discipline to the interpretation and expression of musical ideas • Demonstrate knowledge of teaching/ pedagogy relevant to the first study area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an understanding of a variety of musical practices • Show an understanding of performance practice issues in music of all periods • Demonstrate an awareness of the way in which the chosen field of study fits into the wider context of the music profession
2. Practical skills and musicianship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the musical and creative skills required by the performer, composer or music technologist • Integrate a high level of technical skill into performance, composition or music technology • Deploy advanced communication skills through performance, composition or music technology • Work autonomously as a performer, composer or music technologist at a high standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • utilize advanced musicianship skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate corporate and cooperative skills in ensemble work • Demonstrate workshopping skills through improvisation and devising work.
3. Generic and graduate skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devise, plan and execute a project and present its results • Work autonomously and accept accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give effective oral presentations • Demonstrate ability to communicate effectively in written form in accordance with good academic practice and using appropriate word-processing software
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise judgment in the planning of recital programmes or composition portfolios • Reflect on and develop appropriate professional skills • Manage time and prioritize workloads • Show confidence and self-awareness in reflection, evaluation and self-criticism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the ability to work well in teams, with appropriate leadership, negotiation, organization and decision-making skills • Understand professional ethics, etiquette and conventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make effective use of relevant information technology, including word-processing and music-writing software
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate intellectual curiosity • Show a potential for continuing artistic and creative development • Understand and begin to plan career pathways

Programme Team's approach to offering effective learning, teaching and assessment experiences.

Because the BMus (Hons) is a vocational music course, much of the learning and teaching will not take place in traditional lectures and classes but in practical and active settings. You will normally have a weekly one-to-one lesson for your first study (performance, composition or technology), and in addition to this there will be other first study group classes: masterclasses, workshops, coaching, talks, discussions, studio lab sessions and tutorials. For performers, there will also be a range of other practical learning activities such as orchestras, ensembles, showcase events, choirs, and opera performances; and there are regular opportunities within these activities for composers to have their work performed throughout the year.

In addition, there are some more traditional classes. For academic modules, there are a few subjects (e.g. history) which are taught through a combination of large lectures and small-group workshop classes; and others taught solely in smaller groups (e.g. harmony, aural). You will normally be in groups of 18-22 for academic subjects. The academic work is supplemented through a variety of online resources and learning materials, including lessons, quizzes and audio-recordings. The most distinctive part of our approach to learning and teaching is finding active and practical approaches wherever possible, even in traditional academic subjects, whether this is through using ideas from music history lectures as the basis for devising and improvising music, to using online resources to allow lectures to be replaced by discussion-based classes.

In assessment, we avoid duplicating types of assessment in any one year. This is because each type of assessment requires specific skills – writing skills for essays; communication skills for presentations – and by varying the types of assessment we can help you to develop a range of skills that will be useful to any graduate. In the early years of the course, we help you to start developing these skills by breaking academic assessments down into 'patchwork assignments' where each patch builds towards the final assessment, with regular feedback along the way.

The types of assessment you will encounter on the BMus (Hons) are as follows:

- First study recital
- Composition portfolio
- Music technology portfolio
- First study technical examination/ portfolio
- Viva voce
- Essay
- Patchwork assessment
- Group presentation
- Individual presentation
- improvised/ devised group work
- Musicianship coursework (e.g. stylistic composition)
- Listening examination (history)
- Practical examination (harmony/ aural)
- Reflective writing
- Professional development planning exercise
- Student-defined project
- Evaluation Report

Programme structure:

The structure of the course, the modules, levels and credit values, and the awards which can be gained are shown in the diagram below. You will follow one of the three first study pathways throughout the programme. For students who demonstrate an exceptionally high standard at audition and who pass an entrance examination, we can offer direct entry to Year 2.

Level 4 (Yr 1)

Module number	Module name	Credit
	First-Study Performance 1 OR First-Study Composition 1 OR First Study Music Technology1	60
	Professional Portfolio 1: First-Study Activities	15
	Musicianship Skills 1	15
	Contextual Studies 1: History of Western Music to 1900	15
	Performance Traditions 1	15

Award: Cert HE (120 credits)

Level 5 (Yr 2)

Module number	Module name	Credit
	First-Study Performance 2 OR First-Study Composition 2 OR First Study Music Technology2	60
	Professional Portfolio 2: Community Engagement	15
	Musicianship Skills 2	15
	Performance Traditions 2: Music after 1900 in history and practice	15
	Contextual Studies 2: Case Studies	15

Award: Dip HE (240 credits)

Stage 2 Level 6 (Yr 3)

Module number	Module name	Credit
	First-Study Performance 3 OR First-Study Composition 3 OR First Study Music Technology 3	60
	Professional Portfolio 3: Pedagogy and Planning	15
	Contextual Studies 3: Specialisms	15
	Musicianship 3: Specialisms	15
	Performance Traditions 3	15

Award: BMus (360 credits)

Level 6 (Yr 4)

In Year 4, all students will select a total of 120 credits which must include a First Study module and a Final Project module; and up to 45 credits of optional. Part time students will select 60 credits in each year, which should normally include a Final Project module in year 4 and a First Study module in year 5.

Module number	Module name	Credit
	Final Recital (60)/Final Composition Portfolio (60)/Final Music Technology Portfolio (60)	60
	Final Recital (45)/Final Composition Portfolio (45)/Final Music Technology Portfolio (45)	45
	Final Recital (30)/Final Composition Portfolio (30)/Final Music Technology Portfolio (30)	30
	Final Project (60)	60
	Final Project (45)	45
	Final Project (30)	30
	Final Year Options:	
	Contextual Studies Project (30)	30
	Further Specialism Further Pedagogy Professional Portfolio Project Music and Health Contextual Studies Project (15)	15

Award: BMus (Hons) (480 credits)

Opportunities for personalized learning:

Continuing personal and professional development

As a vocational programme, all your first study work is aimed at your continuing professional development. Other areas of the course are also part of this: the skills in writing, research, communication and critical thinking you develop in the academic modules are the types of graduate skills that will make you more employable in any area of professional life, musical or not. Team working and collaborative skills are highly valued in the professions as a whole and are particularly important in any musical context, and you will have opportunities to work as part of team across all areas of the course. Equally you will have opportunities to develop your ability to work under your own direction, whether that is through the individual time spent practicing and completing first study work, or researching and writing essays and presentations. We guide you through these in the early years of the course so that you can work more independently in the later years.

In each year of the course, there will also be a module that specifically asks you to reflect on your own learning. Being able to think about what you have already learned and what you still need to learn is a very important skill in being able to plan and take charge of your own development as a musician, both as a student and as a professional.

Extracurricular learning

There are many opportunities at the Conservatoire to take part in additional activities outside the curriculum that can form an important part of your learning experience. We run a number of electives in areas such as conducting, world music (these two following on from work done in the Performance Traditions module in year 1), Kodály, folk music, Alexander Technique, Chorus, early music and contemporary music.

There are also a variety of extracurricular schemes that take students out of the Conservatoire and into the professional world. Numerous professional engagements for students are administered through the Conservatoire External Engagements service which provides direct experience of paid professional work. We also run a number of placement schemes. These include long running schemes with CBSO and

the Philharmonia, where students participate actively or as observers; collaboration with Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, which gives composition students the opportunity to have their music played by experienced professionals who also give feedback; other collaborative schemes with organizations such as Dudley Arts, Heartlands Hospital, Birmingham Music Service, and Birmingham Royal Ballet.

Learning partnerships with academic staff

The BMus (Hons) offers a high proportion of one-to-one tuition: students in all years will normally have a weekly lesson with their first study tutor throughout the academic year: this allows a close mentoring relationship to be built up between student and teacher. In academic modules, there will always be opportunities to talk to tutors about your work, and many modules provide a specific tutorial allocation: the Contextual Studies Project in year 4, for example, allocates a minimum of an hour of one-to-one tutorial time to each student, in addition to group classes; and students are allocated up to five hours of individual tutorials or tuition for the Final Project. As a student on the BMus (Hons) you will be supported by your first study teacher, your Head of Department, your Year Tutor and your Course Director.

Individualized study

Throughout the programme, we will encourage you to make your own decisions about what you are studying within modules, to allow you to design your studies around your own needs and interests. In the early years, you will decide on the repertoire of your recital or the contents of your portfolio according to a syllabus or requirements, but there will still be opportunities for you to make your own decisions here in discussion with your first study teacher; and in the final year there is no set syllabus, allowing you to make your own choices. The academic work also allows you an increasing amount of choice in precisely what you are studying as you progress through the programme. In the earlier years, this means choosing your own topics for assignments, while the final year allows you to design a genuinely individual programme both academically and practically.

Criteria for admission:

The general admissions requirements below may appear to be low in comparison to a university music degree programme. This is because all students applying to the Conservatoire will be asked to come for an audition and offers are made on the basis of your audition rather than on the basis of your predicted examination grades.

Normally, one of the following:

1. GCE/GCSE passes in 5 different subjects including 2* subjects at GCE A-level (2x6 units). GCSE passes should be at grade C or higher.
2. GCE/GCSE passes in 4 different subjects including 3* subjects at GCE A-level (3x6 units). GCSE passes should be at grade C or higher.
3. Scottish Certificate of Education/Scottish Qualifications Authority Intermediate/Higher/Advanced Higher in 5 different subjects, of which 3* are at the Higher level.
4. Scottish Certificate of Education/Scottish Qualifications Authority Intermediate/Higher/Advanced Higher in 5 different subjects, of which 2* are at the Advanced Higher level.
5. Scottish Certificate of Education/Scottish Qualifications Authority passes in 4* different subjects at the Higher level.
6. An Irish Leaving Certificate with 5 different subjects at Grade C or above, 4* of which are at the Higher level.

7. An International Baccalaureate with a minimum of 24 points.

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a standard in First-Study equivalent to that of the Associated Board's Grade VIII (Distinction): this may be demonstrated at audition.

** Candidates hoping to satisfy requirements in categories 1 to 6 above should note that successful performance at a Birmingham Conservatoire audition/examination is accepted as the equivalent of one GCE A-level / SQA Higher / Advanced Higher / ILC Higher in Music.*

Approaches to be taken for the evaluation and ongoing enhancement of the programme:

Throughout the year, there are a number of meetings where we discuss ways of developing and enhancing the programme. These include:

- Student Feedback Forum committee (4-7 meetings per year)
- Conservatoire Board (2 meetings per year)
- Examination Board (2 meetings per year)
- Faculty Student Experience/Learning and Teaching Committee (3 meetings per year)

At the end of each year, information is gathered from a variety of sources and used to write a report on how the programme has run over the previous 12 months, any issues that have arisen, and what we want to achieve over the next year. The sources we use to write this report are:

- Annual student feedback surveys
- Annual tutor feedback
- Conservatoire Board
- Student Feedback Forum
- Student Council comments
- External Examiners' Reports
- Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee

Each year, we may make some changes ("minor modifications") to particular modules on the basis of this annual report. Every six years, the programme then undergoes a major review and re-approval, drawing on the ideas that have come from staff, students and external examiners to make sure that the programme is up to date and providing the best possible education for our students. As most of our teaching staff are active professional musicians and composers, their feedback allows us to ensure that the training we provide remains relevant to our central aim of preparing students for the profession.