

BMus (Hons) Composition

Modules Description

Students will undertake the following modules during their course of study:

Composition Studies 1A / 1B / 2A / 2B / 3A / 3B

This module forms a core part of a student's composition study, which is designed to be a continuous, cohesive and progressive element throughout the three years of study. The aim is to provide students with a foundation of basic compositional skills and techniques that they will need in order to complete the Composition pathway on the BMus Course. Students will be taught on a one-to-one basis by a composition tutor, who is specific to their chosen area of study.

They will work with the help of the tutor on a technical workbook that will help build skills towards the end-of-semester techniques exam. They will also produce a critical review of the Composers' Workshop series (the Commentary assignment). There will be a Viva Voce interview, which is regarded as a separate assignment, to discuss your portfolio with at least two members of the composition team.

Harmony and Counterpoint

The module aims to provide students with foundational skills in aural, harmony and instrumentation. Such skills are considered fundamental to the student being able to progress effectively to the modules available at Levels 4 and 5.

Alongside the weekly lecture experience students will participate in seminars/workshops designed to develop and increase aural awareness in a variety of contexts. Module workbooks will form the basis of work-in-progress and will develop the student's ability to understand and tackle simple harmonic exercises as well as basic scoring and instrumentation techniques.

Music Analysis

This module complements Harmony & Counterpoint in the following ways: (a) aural and harmonic skills will be implemented here through the critical scrutiny of representative repertoire (scores), identifying historical use of devices; (b) instrumentation skills will be further deepened by a guided and structured critical examination of historical repertoire, enabling informed critical comment.

History A

This module will cover topics and issues relating to the following basic issues in Music 1600-1900: The changing functions of music in society, the relationship between words and music, Absolute (wordless) music, musical form and structure, Programme music, Nationalism.

Methods and Materials

Semester 1 focuses on the building blocks of composition, providing students with a thorough overview of the key devices and resources they should have at their disposal as composers in the 21st century, without any stylistic constraints. In Semester 2, students will look at a variety of non-style specific techniques through a study of a wide range of music, covering medieval to contemporary. The subjects will comprise listening, analysis and exercises.

Orchestration and Arranging / Advanced Orchestration and Arranging

This module consists of score-study alongside recordings which will play a crucial role in developing your understanding and experience of recognised techniques. This module will train you to be fluent in the comprehension of score layout, transcription, balance, spatial planning, historical and stylistic context, and texture of instruments. Students will gain an advanced working knowledge of instrumental techniques and practicalities.

Students will orchestrate/arrange, for example, piano works, songs or chamber works for a variety of instrumental groupings, and will also encounter the particular logistical and creative challenges faced when material requires downsizing to smaller forces than those of the original work; given the present economic difficulties facing the music industry along with the rest of society, this is a vital skill to acquire, not least with an eye to the film music world.

Advanced Musicianship

This module is designed to equip students with the understanding of aural and sight singing skills. Students will learn to apply music theory knowledge in the aspect of pitch, rhythm and harmony. Students will also be able to dictate music and sight sing hands-on musical excerpt.

History B

This module is designed to complement historical studies in semester 1, as well as providing a broad knowledge base that will equip students to progress to a variety of academic modules at level 5, including world music studies, pop and jazz studies, and 20th century music studies.

World Music Studies

This module introduces students to a wide variety of musical genres and styles throughout the world, as well as to some of the theoretical and conceptual issues involved in ethno-musicological approaches to studying music.

Music for the Moving Image

The module puts the student into the role of a 'Sound Designer/Composer' – an increasingly important profession that is responsible for providing film in particular with its acoustic identity. Part of the module will include investigating the creative aspects of sonic art and also the relationship of sound to moving image. Students will compose original and imaginative audio to support and manipulate the meaning of moving image sequences.

Dissertation

This is a module where students will write an extended research essay their chosen topics. The course will begin with a discussion of the nature, purpose and extent of research. Students will be given an introduction to research methods: the use of libraries, journals, electronic resources, and bibliographical control.

Conventions of research will be taught as a precursor to a discussion of the planning of research, literary style and critical orientation. Students will gain an insight into historiographical practices and current musicological practices. They will also be informed about the latest methodologies and strategies in different styles of research.

Music Management

This module is designed to give you practical experience and theoretical knowledge in music management and business issues, that will be of fundamental importance in your future performing/composing careers. You will need to be familiar with a variety of concepts and issues, understanding their deployment in a number of different practical situations.

It also aims to develop the student understanding of employment opportunities within music industry, and particularly recent moves towards a “freelance” industry where the need for multi-skilled and adaptable employees is expected. The module will also introduce an understanding of the mechanics of production and marketing including copyright, contracts, and the procedures involved selling a product in the modern market.