

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION
(Taught Postgraduate)**



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	MA
4	Programme Title	MA in Music
5	Programme Code	4190 F/P
6	Programme Accreditation	n/a
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Music Benchmarks
8	FHEQ Level	7
9	Last updated	May 2026

10 Programme Aims

The MA in Music (Performance and Composition) develops professional practice as a musician. Students expand their musical competencies and their understanding of the contemporary position of their creative practice through opportunities for experimentation alongside more conventional approaches. This supports reflective practice as a means for students to evaluate their progress and strategize for their continuing development. Alongside taught classes are more bespoke and individualised practice-based learning experiences that equip graduates with a versatile set of skills applicable to satisfying creative expression, and contemporary professional music careers. Students benefit from staff expertise across a range of musical genres and styles: classical, jazz, folk, pop, turntablism, and from acoustic instruments and voice to digital and analogue forms of electronic technology. The aim is for a professional level of creative practice that is both rigorously skilful and imaginatively creative.

The strands provide a learning environment which actively encourages and fosters curiosity, innovation, collaboration and individual exploration and practice. Students are immersed in Newcastle's long-established and thriving music scene, from classical concerts to thriving DIY and experimental performances, both on campus and beyond. State of the art resources, studio and practice spaces in the heart of the university campus allow the practical study and execution of music to flourish and thrive.

Central to the programme is the cultivation of a networked intercultural graduate cohort that recognises the importance of building sustainable relationships within the contemporary music ecosystem. Through projects, studio and public performances, students learn the value of collaboration, communication, and community-building. This is built into the lived experience of the course, with students encouraged to actively engage with other musicians and fostering connections that extend beyond the classroom and into the wider art community.

The aims of the programme are:

- 1 To foster a professional level of creative practice in music that is rigorous and imaginative;
- 2 To encourage the development of original approaches;
3. To consolidate the skills acquired in student's previous studies;
4. To cultivate the skills and attitude necessary for independent and/or collaborative professional practice;

5. To enable students to study and practice music in its contemporary context regardless of genre or style.

11 Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in a range of areas and subdisciplines in the field of creative practice. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements for Music.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should have advanced knowledge and understanding of:

- A1 The range of repertoires, techniques, and/or creative practices currently pursued by musical practitioners such as composers, performers, and others;
- A2 The current artistic debates and ecosystems concerning musical creativity and its realisation through composition, performance, and other related practices;
- A3 Compositional and performance-related contemporary discourses;
- A4 The critical (and historical, where relevant) contexts needed to advance towards a professional creative practice with awareness of the wider cultural industries;
- A5 The strategies to support individual and collaborative compositional or performance-related practice;
- A6 The wider professional sectoral contexts and practices relevant to field.

11.a) Teaching and Learning Methods

The programme takes a holistic approach to learning, with classes organised around problem-based learning, supported by focused individualised face-to-face support.

A focus on workshop-style learning encourages the sharing of knowledge around contemporary practice, discipline-specific understandings and vocabularies, and the advancement of musicianship through performance or composition. Working with professional musicians and leading researchers, students learn both in group settings and individually and advance their critical abilities. Through this, students build recognition of regional, national and global contexts for musicianship and the specific vocabularies associated with them.

Core approaches are established in plenary workshops delivered in taught modules in semester 1. In semester 2 (FT) musical collaborations are facilitated in small group workshops. Throughout the year performance students will have one-to-one instrumental or vocal lessons, alongside master classes delivered by home and visiting staff. Composition students will work one-to-one with an assigned supervisor, again, supplemented by master class events. A high level of private study activity - listening, studying existing repertoires, personal practice and creative work - is assumed throughout, and this feeds into workshops and tutorials. The teaching and learning methods are underpinned by an experiential learning approach that fosters collaboration and innovation, as well as consolidating primary skills.

Alongside learning musical skills and creative methods, students take modules in music education (Performance strand) or the creative industries (Composition strand) and choose an additional supplementary module in either education or the creative industries. Overall, the programme equips students with a well-rounded skill set that combines musicianship, "real world" applications, collaboration, critical thinking, and innovation.

11.b) Assessment Strategy

This programme uses authentic and integrated assessment design to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of key practices, ideas and frameworks related to music performance and composition. Assessment works holistically at each semester to critically appraise their practical development. Additionally, the assessment strategy aims to foster

collaboration and reflective practice among learners who work both individually and as a group. Performance work, critical analysis and written and verbal communication underpin learning and teaching and the assessment of these skills and abilities. The assessment criteria focus on the student's creative practice and the written and verbal articulation of its concerns, as evidence of depth of knowledge, critical analysis, creativity, ethical awareness and collaborative skills.

Across the programme students are assessed in the following ways:

1. Live performances and portfolios capturing performance and composition (A1; A5);
2. Critical writing about music in a range of contexts, in relation to their own and other work A2; A3, A6);
3. Presentation of their own work in verbal, written and visual forms (A4; A5, A6).

Regular constructive feedback is provided to learners and throughout the programme through group, peer-to-peer crits and individual lessons. Feedback emphasises strengths and areas of improvement to encourage continuous learning and development throughout the programme. By employing this cohesive assessment and feedback strategy, the programme effectively and constantly evaluates learners' knowledge and understanding, thereby promoting a reflexive approach to addressing the complex challenges of building a distinctive and sustainable musical practice.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- B1. Make critical decisions about their own performance and composition; practices and be able to communicate their decisions in writing and in oral forms;
- B2. Strategise and pre-plan their practice;
- B3. Justify their artistic decision making where several options would be available.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The LTAS is articulated in 11a and is based around experiential and project-based learning and teaching methods. To develop the intellectual skills B1-B3, which encompass critical evaluation, creativity, flexibility and problem-solving the programme provides a range of teaching and learning methods to engage learners.

These include:

- Workshops to introduce and explore key skills within a practical context;
- Industry-facing and/or education applications of musicianship in the "real world";
- Presenting work to others to develop effective communication of different perspectives and problem-solving approaches;
- One-to-one and group discussions to consider logistical and planning concerns.
- One to one support of musicianship.

Regular feedback from tutors, individually and in the classroom, supports students throughout the programme. It emphasises the development of existing strengths and encourages students to broaden their horizons and knowledge. Combining this range of teaching and learning methods creates a dynamic and enriching educational experience, fostering the development of the creative and critical thinking and analytical skills necessary for developing into a professional musician in the present day.

Assessment Strategy

The main objective of the overall programme assessment strategy is provided in section 11a.

In addition, creative work is assessed and presented in the form appropriate to the material (live performance, portfolio of scores or recordings, etc.) together with supporting written commentary to curate the intellectual underpinnings of the work presented (B1-B3)

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- C1 Engage with contemporary approaches to music and the wider creative sector;
- C2 Demonstrate technical skills appropriate to their specific artistic practice;

<p>C3 Organise and present a public musical performance or otherwise disseminate their creative outputs to a public;</p> <p>C4 Work in collaboration with other musical practitioners;</p> <p>C5 Apply their musical skills in an educational (performance strand) or industry-facing (composition strand) as appropriate.</p>

Teaching and Learning Methods

<p>The LTAS is articulated in 11a and is based around experiential and project-based learning and teaching methods. To develop the practical skills C1-C4 which encompass the creating and exhibiting of creative work, students will engage in:</p>

<p>One-to-one supervision or instrumental and vocal lessons by specialists in the field (C2, C3);</p> <p>Collaborative working is taught in small-group workshops under a designated leader. This may involve creative projects, or more applied ones (C1, C3, C4, C5)'</p> <p>Lecture and small group learning that incorporates critical and historical issues into practical contexts (C1; C4; C5);</p> <p>Organise their own performances in the Music Final Major Project (C2, C3, C4; C5).</p>

<p>These teaching methods work together over the year to build students' practice towards the final Music Major Creative Project.</p>

Assessment Strategy

<p>The main objective of the overall programme assessment strategy is provided in section 11a. In addition, practice-based skills are assessed by producing planning documentation (C1, C3; C5), performances and analysis of these in written, visual and verbal forms (C2, C4; C5).</p>

Transferable/Key Skills

<p>On completing the programme students should be able to:</p> <p>D1 Work independently and collaborate with others in a range of contexts;</p> <p>D2 Use secondary and digital resources efficiently and appropriately;</p> <p>D3 Manage their own schedule, strategise and make decisions with confidence;</p> <p>D4 Demonstrate critical and creative thinking in a range of contexts and be able to communicate them clearly in writing and verbal forms.</p>

Teaching and Learning Methods

<p>The LTAS is articulated in 11a and is based around experiential and project-based learning and teaching methods. In addition, and to enable this, students:</p>

<p>Acquire key transferable skills through knowledge, intellectual and practice-based skills and learning strategies (see above).</p> <p>Use case studies, examples and digital resource to position themselves as experts and solve complex problems (D2; D3).</p> <p>Engage in debates and discussions around musical practice with leaders in the field (D1; D2).</p> <p>Are supported to produce and promote public facing performances (D1; D3).</p>

<p>Present their work, ideas and critical arguments in front of their peers and professional musicians, allowing for constructive feedback (D2; D4).</p>

Assessment Strategy

<p>The main objective of the overall programme assessment strategy is provided in section 11a. Key transferable skills are also acquired through successful attainment of the skills and knowledge outcomes and assessment (see above). Specifically, key transferable skills are assessed through communicating about their musicianship (D1 and D2) supported and scaffolded management of practice and through the performance and portfolio capture of their work (D3; D4).</p>

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features
Basic structure of the programme

MA Music is about performing and composing music. It offers a contemporary creative education, focussed around bespoke and individualised support for learning that equips graduates with a versatile set of skills vital for a continuing professional life as a professional musician. **Semester 1** focuses on developing skills and expanding knowledge of the music scene, compositional skills or performance practices. Students develop their individual musicianship and start to think about how they might perform and present it and/or their compositions. **Semester 2** focuses on collaborative practices of various sorts and allows students to start mapping out their own plans for performances or composition, while also consolidating the skills in applying their musicianship in “real world” situations. Advancing their skills in writing about music supports this activity and provides transferable skills for the wider art sector. **Semester 3** offers students a fully immersive creative project, where they can build their own expertise and independence as an artist through planning and executing a performance or creative portfolio on their own terms.

Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)

The programme offers an unusually wide range of musical genres in which to specialise and a unique learning environment of studios, practice rooms and the King’s Hall as a live music venue. Students benefit from free weekly professional concerts in the King’s Hall, alongside weekly student concerts, all of which are part of Newcastle’s thriving music scene.

Newcastle University is a leading institution for popular and global musics, ethnomusicology, classical music and historically informed performance. It has unique provision for folk and traditional music and is part of a cutting-edge experimental music and DIY culture in the city of Newcastle. It thus affords an exceptionally rich environment in which to specialise in either performance or composition.

Collaborative, experiential learning is a key component of the programme, engendering the flexibility and creativity essential to professional music making of whatever style or genre. Performance students additionally benefit from training in vocal and instrumental pedagogy while composition students receive training in industry-facing approaches, developing knowledge and practical skills to navigate the wider sector in which they will work. At the heart of the MA, is training in applying musical skills in “real world” settings and the development of professional musical practice.

The MA is situated in an exceptionally broad intellectual and creative school, affording a plural and diverse environment with an exceptional range of potential specialisation.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[Programme Regulations 2026-27](#)

13 Support for Student Learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available at the following link.

[Generic Information](#)

14 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

[Generic information regarding University provision is available at the following link.](#)

[Generic Information](#)

15 Regulation of assessment

Generic Information regarding University provision is available at the following link.

In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus:

Degree Programme and University Regulations: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/>

Please note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided.

Mapping of Intended Learning Outcomes onto Curriculum/Modules

Module	Type	Intended Learning Outcomes			
		A	B	C	D
MUS8016 Translation for Singing	Optional	1, 2, 4, 5	3	1, 2, 4	1, 2, 3, 4
MUS8022 Instrumental and Vocal Pedagogy: Practice-based Teaching (20)	Compulsory [Perf strand]	1, 2, 5, 6	1, 2	2, 4.	3
MUS8023 Music & the Creative Economy: Concepts and Practices	Optional	1, 2, 4, 6	2	1, 5	2, 3, 4
MUS8020 Researching Music (20)	Compulsory	1, 2, 4, 5	1, 2	1, 3	3
MUS8025 Performing Music (20)	Compulsory [perf strand]	1, 2, 4	3	1, 3	1, 3., 4
MUS8026 Composing Music (20)	Compulsory [comp strand]	1, 2, 4,	3	1, 3	1, 3, 4
MUS8027 Live Music Events	Optional	2, 4, 6	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 3
MUS8028 Pedagogical Technology in Music Education	Optional	5, 6	2, 3	1, 2, 5	2, 3, 4
MUS8029 Music Education, Community & Wellbeing	Optional	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	1, 2	1, 3, 4, 5	1, 3, 4
MUS8031 Developing your musicianship (40)	Compulsory [all]	1, 1, 3, 5	1	3, 4	1
MUS8266 Major Creative Project	Compulsory [all]	1, 2, 3, 4,	, 2, 3	3, 4	5
MUS8033 Music for Public Spaces	Compulsory [Comp strand]	4, 6.	1	1	1 4