

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION
(Undergraduate)**



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	BA (Hons)
4	Programme Title	Contemporary and Popular Music Contemporary and Popular Music (with Year Abroad) Contemporary and Popular Music (with Placement Year)
5	UCAS/Programme Code	W301, 1135U, 1670U
6	Programme Accreditation	N/A
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Music
8	FHEQ Level	Level 6
9	Date written/revised	March 2026

10 Programme Aims

The BA (Hons) in Contemporary and Popular Music enables students to develop as thoughtful, skilled and well-informed musicians possessing a wide range of musical experiences. The programme offers a sound musical and academic training that reflects the diversity and complexity of the contemporary musical field, fostering creativity, curiosity, resilience and cultural awareness. Students will engage with music both critically and creatively, developing fluency in a range of theoretical, historical, and technical approaches. The course promotes exploration across genres, styles and performance traditions, with opportunities to study performance, composition, audio production, and musicology. It encompasses both traditional areas of study and current developments in musical practice and thought. The course structure offers sufficient choice and flexibility to allow students to pursue their own interests and aptitudes within a well-defined curricular structure. Graduates will leave with a wide-ranging set of skills - intellectual, practical, and collaborative - that are valuable in themselves, relevant to a variety of professional contexts, and provide a strong foundation for postgraduate study.

11 Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements for Music

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should have developed knowledge and understanding in the following areas:

- A1 Cultural approaches to the study of Music
- A2 Issues in historical musicology
- A3 Interdisciplinary applications and theoretical approaches relevant to the study of Music
- A4 Samples of musical repertoires of various kinds (including classical, world, folk and traditional, and contemporary and popular)
- A5 Musical processes and structures

For Students Completing a Placement Year. Students should be able to:

- A6 Apply personal and professional development strategies to prioritise, plan, and manage their own skills development and learning

A7	Research, select and apply relevant knowledge aimed at enhancing their own skills and effectiveness in specific duties at their placement
A8	Demonstrate an understanding of a work environment, how it functions and their contribution to it
A9	Relate their work-based learning to other areas of personal development, including academic performance
For Students Completing a Year Abroad:	
A10	Demonstrate the ability to adapt to different learning environments
Teaching and Learning Methods	
Lectures are the primary method of imparting knowledge and understanding. These are supplemented by seminars and/or tutorials where students can reinforce their learning through discussion and practice. Students are taught material through independent reading and listening, with close reading of set texts and close listening to set pieces often required preparation for lectures and seminars. In some cases, learning is also peer-assisted by means of student study groups which focus on a lecture or seminar assignment. A4 and A5 require workshops, rehearsals and 1:1 teaching.	
Assessment Strategy	
Essay and project assignments, seen and unseen exam papers, take-away exam papers, individual assignments for lectures, seminars, etc.	
Intellectual Skills	
On completing the programme students should have developed:	
B1	the ability to evaluate evidence from different sources
B2	the ability to present coherent arguments and an independent viewpoint
B3	analytical powers
B4	critical skills (e.g. awareness of ideologies, the culturally mediated nature of knowledge)
B5	the ability to understand and handle non-verbal knowledge and thinking
Teaching and Learning Methods	
These are acquired and developed in all the expected forums: lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops and 1:1 teaching. B1 and B2 are addressed at stage 1 in Study Skills teaching. Individual module descriptions give more specific details.	
Assessment Strategy	
Essay and portfolio assignments; seen, unseen and take-away exam papers; presentations, individual and group assignments for seminars; live performances, etc.	
Practical Skills	
On completing the programme students should have developed their ability in:	
C1	Performance (instrumental, vocal, technologically-mediated)
C2	Composition (whether score-based, electronic, or improvisatory)
C3	Musicological Research skills
C4	Harmony and aural skills
C5	Music-analytical skills
C6	Applied musical skills
Teaching and Learning Methods	

C1 is taught through a combination of 1:1 and group tuition, with systematic support through Music's series of master classes and workshops.

C2 is taught through a mixture of lectures (demonstrating relevant techniques and approaches), seminars, group projects and tutorials.

Musicological research skills (C3) are fostered within all musicology-based modules. At Stages Two and Three, students choose at least one historical-cultural option, taught in lectures and seminars, which considers recent research in the relevant field, and whose assessment is normally via an independently conducted research project. As appropriate, training in bibliographical techniques and musicological methodologies is given through a combination of Robinson Library induction and the Academic Practice for Music module (see, under section B).

Options in musical analysis and harmony (see A5 above), taken alongside studies in composition and/or performance, enable students to develop their theoretical and notational fluency (C4 and C5).

A range of honours level options in Applied Studies helps students to acquire skills in orchestration, conducting and editing (C6). Placement options in industry and education build on these skills during the final stage of the programme while providing useful professional experience.

Assessment Strategy

As above Assessment Strategies, plus performances, and portfolios of compositions and assignments.

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should have developed their skills in:

- D1 Research methods
- D2 Communication through both spoken and written word
- D3 Public presentation
- D4 Time management
- D5 Computer and technological literacy
- D6 Independent learning
- D7 Teamwork

For Students Completing a Placement Year

- D8 Reflect on and manage own learning and development within the workplace.
- D9 Use existing and new knowledge to enhance personal performance in a workplace environment, evaluate the impact and communicate this process.
- D10 Use graduate skills in a professional manner in a workplace environment, evaluate the impact and communicate the personal development that has taken place.

For Students Completing a Year Abroad

- D11 Adapt and operate in a different cultural environment.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Research skills (D1) are embedded within musicological studies.

D2 is practised across the board in ways appropriate to each module, such as coursework assignments, written exams and oral presentations. Some modules offer the opportunity to submit work-in-progress on a formative, rather than summative, basis. Additional support is given through the stage 1 module Academic Practice for Music Studies, which is compulsory for all students in their first stage. Spoken presentations are given in seminars, tutorials and peer study groups; final-stage students are required to give presentations on their on-going Specialist

Study projects (Dissertation or Project options) in the Finalists Conference which takes place at the end of the first semester of a student's final stage.

D3 is inherent within all performance, which is integral to all undergraduate music degrees, either by way of public concerts or gigs or within rehearsals.

D4: time-management training is offered, where appropriate, within the Study Skills programme. In any case, effective time management is integral to a music student's *modus operandi* – in the maintenance of a balanced and sustainable schedule of rehearsals, lectures, seminars, independent study, and vocal/instrumental practice.

IT skills (D5) are ubiquitously used within music degrees. Training in the use of music notation and DAW software is given as part of the relevant composition modules; training in the use of research tools (JSTOR, RILM, First Search, Web of Science, etc.) is given to students taking historical/cultural optional modules and those writing dissertations or projects in their final year. In their first Welcome Week, all Music students are given training in the use of Canvas, RAS, and other essential IT resources; this training is reinforced through the strategic use of Canvas for the delivery of teaching materials and the electronic submission of assignments during the first stage of study. All submitted work must also be word processed.

D6: Generally (as is typical for an arts degree) a high a proportion of individual preparation time to class contact time is assumed: students are ultimately expected to be responsible for their own learning. More specifically, opportunities are provided for individual project work – for example, in historical/cultural options, in which a small research project related to material studied on the module forms the main part of the assessment. At least one third of students' final stage is devoted to a specialist study, which is conducted largely through independent learning, with intermittent supervisions or vocal/instrumental lessons.

D7: students frequently work together in workshops, rehearsal, and peer study-groups, and are often required to produce a collaborative response to seminar assignments: teamwork is integral, for instance, to compositional studies at Stage 1.

Assessment Strategy

D1, D2: see above.

D3: public recital or gig at final stage, presentation in seminars

D4: mostly indirectly assessed (success/failure in time-management is usually self-evident)

D5: all students are required to produce word-processed essays and to demonstrate internet and general IT literacy as part of their research assignments. Students undertaking studio-based compositions submit their work on CD or file share; students submitting score-based compositions normally use note-processing software (e.g., Sibelius).

D6: students take at least one historical/cultural option at each stage, which in most cases is assessed through an independently conducted research project. Students must take at least one Specialist Study, where the emphasis is primarily on independent learning.

D7: mostly not directly assessed, although contributions to team-based submissions, and effectiveness or team participation, are assessed in certain modules.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

The BA has three 'stages', each equivalent to one academic year of full-time study. For full-time students 'Stage 1' means 'first year', 'Stage 2' means 'second year' and so on. You will find full descriptions of each module in the module outlines website. It is also possible to enter the BA in Contemporary and Popular Music at stage 2 on satisfactory completion of a Foundation Degree or approved HND under RPL.

Stage 1

Two routes are offered in the first year of studies: with music modules only or with a foreign language. Foreign language study is regarded as valuable for music students. The option of studying a foreign language for 20 or 40 credits is available. This option is particularly important

for students considering an exchange year at a non-Anglophone destination. Students are introduced to HE level study in areas that include musicology, music theory and analysis, performance, and composition.

Stage 2

The second stage has among its aims: exposing students to more diverse musical experiences; developing their research skills; encouraging more in-depth practical, creative and academic activity. All this prepares students for their final stage with its emphasis on greater specialisation and independent learning. All Stage 2 modules are Honours modules. For the purposes of final average and degree classification, stage 2 modules count as one third of the final total weighting.

100 credits are elective, and there is one compulsory module: Music and Cultural Theory (MUS2054). However, students must choose at least one module from the list of Applied or Practical options, and one from the list of Historical and Cultural options.

At Stage 2 students may also take modules to the value of 20 credits in a subject other than Music. You might want, for example, to continue with a foreign language you began in Stage 1, or pursue a cultural, historical or theoretical topic from the complementary perspective of another subject or gain vocational experience. If this is your intention you should make the necessary enquiries at the appropriate school.

On attainment of a combined stage 1 and semester 1 stage 2 mark average of 60% or higher students may be considered for transfer to the Study Abroad programme, 1135U. The relevant DPD should be consulted if this is being considered.

Year Abroad

Students wishing to spend a year abroad as part of their degree can do so in consultation with and at the discretion of the DPD in a partner institution. This is mutually exclusive with any option in stage 2 for an Erasmus semester abroad, and is also subject to a threshold of at least 60% in the overall stage-one average. It is also possible at the end of stage 2 to transfer to the Study Abroad programme, at the discretion of the relevant DPDs, and on attainment of a stage 1 and first semester of stage 2 average of 60%. These candidates will be transferred to the internal degree programme code 1135U.

Placement Year

Students have the option to take part in a Careers Placement Year in-between Stage 2 and 3 of their programme. They will be transferred on to programme code 1670U.

Stage 3:

By the time the student reaches Stage 3, the final stage of the BA programme, they are in a position to specialise to a considerable extent, building further on their particular strengths and interests. Normally at least a third of their time (40 credits) will be devoted to a Major Specialist Study. In discussion with your Degree Programme Director you may also take a second, Minor Specialist Study.

As at Stage 2, a menu of 20-credit historical/cultural options and a menu of 20-credit applied options is also available. In usual circumstances students will take at least one module from each menu.

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

Students generally specialise in some form of contemporary music performance or composition, ranging from acoustic singer-songwriters through to extremely experimental electronic form. Strong emphasis is placed on creativity, artistic risk-taking and experiment. Students are encouraged to look beyond formulaic commercial music forms, and to engage with more exploratory contemporary ways of making music.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[PROGRAMME REGULATIONS](#)

13 Support for Student Learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

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

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

Accreditation reports

N/A

Additional mechanisms

N/A

15 Regulation of assessment

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

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

The University Prospectus: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/#subject>

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.