



BA (Hons)

Popular Music

UCAS code W340

Entry requirements

A level: ABB

Study mode

Full-time

Duration

3 years

Apply by: **29 January 2025**

Starts on: **22 September 2025**

About this course

The University of Liverpool has a particular specialism in popular music, having established the world's first specialist centre for its study – the Institute of Popular Music – in 1988. Recent investment in our teaching facilities has provided state-of-the-art studios, practice rooms, a games research lab and a large rehearsal space.

Introduction

In addition to practical areas, this programme focuses on developing an in-depth and critical historical understanding of popular music repertoires, cultures, and practices. Practical modules are concerned with musical performance, song-writing, or creative music technology, although none of these are compulsory; while other modules focus on popular music history topics or the music industry. There are also options in areas such as music psychology and audio-visual media (films and videogames). Throughout, you will learn to write about popular music from a historical, critical, sociological, or philosophical viewpoint.

In your first year, core modules will take a detailed look at the nature of the popular music industries, and a critical exploration of 20th century popular music history – not only going through key musical milestones, but also exploring their social contexts and the long-term cultural implications.

In your second and final years you will focus in more depth on fewer selected topics, either concentrating solely on Popular Music modules, or retaining the option to pursue one or two modules in other areas. Specialist topics are studied alongside advanced level performance and music technology modules. In the final year, there is a particular emphasis on specialism and an extended or independent project (such as a research project, a music technology project, or an extended performance recital).

Year in Industry

Undergraduate students in the Department of Music have the opportunity to spend a year in industry, either in their third year, or by adding a 'follow-on year' at the end of their academic studies. These are paid placements within an organisation in industry, broadly defined, and you will receive support from the Department and the School of the Arts to source and apply for opportunities. [Find out more about the difference between these options](#), including how to apply.

What you'll learn

- A critical understanding of music from a wide range of aesthetic, cultural and social perspectives
- A detailed understanding of Western Popular (and some other) music repertoires
- Advanced proficiency in performance, and composition
- Academic research skills
- Critical and cultural awareness
- The ability to devise and sustain complex arguments
- Written and oral communication and presentation
- Creativity
- Time management and organisations skills

^ [Back to top](#)

Course content

Discover what you'll learn, what you'll study, and how you'll be taught and assessed.

Year one

You will take three compulsory modules: **MUSI140**, **MUSI121** and **MUSI150**; and five optional modules (the majority from popular music modules).

- In year 1, you:
 - Must take at least one from: **MUSI180**, **MUSI182**.
 - May take a maximum of one from **MUSI102**, **MUSI106**, **MUSI130**, **MUSI181** (Classical Music options)
 - May not take both Classical Performance and Popular Performance

Modules

Compulsory modules	Credits
<u>INTRODUCTION TO POPULAR MUSIC HISTORY (MUSI140)</u>	15
<u>MUSIC AS AN INDUSTRY (MUSI150)</u>	15
<u>MUSIC IN CONTEXTS: WHY MUSIC MATTERS (MUSI121)</u>	15

Optional modules	Credits
<u>CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE 1 (MUSI102)</u>	15
<u>CLASSICAL COMPOSITION 1 (MUSI106)</u>	15
<u>FOUNDATIONS IN TONAL HARMONY (MUSI181)</u>	15
<u>INTRODUCTION TO CLASSICAL MUSIC HISTORY (MUSI130)</u>	15

Optional modules	Credits
<u>INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL AUDIO WORKSTATIONS (MUSI109)</u>	15
<u>INTRODUCTION TO SOUND AND MUSIC IN AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA (MUSI170)</u>	15
<u>INTRODUCTION TO SOUND AND TECHNOLOGY (MUSI171)</u>	15
<u>INTRODUCTION TO SOUND RECORDING AND PRODUCTION (MUSI108)</u>	15
<u>POPULAR MUSIC THEORY IN PRACTICE (MUSI182)</u>	15
<u>POPULAR PERFORMANCE 1 (MUSI104)</u>	15
<u>THE HISTORY OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC (MUSI172)</u>	15
<u>THEORY IN PRACTICE: EXPLORING MUSIC'S CONSTRUCTION (MUSI180)</u>	15
<u>WRITING FOR INSTRUMENTS (MUSI105)</u>	15
<u>POPULAR COMPOSITION 1 (MUSI107)</u>	15

Programme details and modules listed are illustrative only and subject to change.

Year two

In year 2, you:

- Must take at least one of the following: **MUSI220, MUSI261, MUSI263**
 - You must take at least one of and may take a maximum of four from: **MUSI200, MUSI201, MUSI202, MUSI203, MUSI204, MUSI205, MUSI206, MUSI207, MUSI208, MUSI209, MUSI210, MUSI213, MUSI214, MUSI216, MUSI217, MUSI243, MUSI252** (Practical options)
 - You may take a maximum of two from **MUSI201, MUSI202, MUSI207, MUSI216, MUSI230, MUSI232** (Classical Music options)
 - You may not take both Classical Performance and Popular Performance.
 - Students who take **SOTA600** (Year in Industry) may not take **SOTA300**.

Modules

Optional modules	Credits
<u>CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE 2A (MUSI201)</u>	15
<u>CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE 2B (MUSI202)</u>	15
<u>COMPOSITION FOR FILM AND TELEVISION (MUSI205)</u>	15
<u>CLASSICAL COMPOSITION 2 (MUSI207)</u>	15
<u>CONTEMPORARY GENRES (MUSI263)</u>	15
<u>EXPLORING HARMONY, CHORD PROGRESSION AND PITCH (MUSI280)</u>	15
<u>GLOBAL POP: POPULAR MUSICS OF THE WORLD (MUSI261)</u>	15
<u>INTRODUCTION TO CONDUCTING (MUSI200)</u>	15
<u>INTRODUCTION TO MUSIC PSYCHOLOGY (MUSI290)</u>	15
<u>LIVE SOUND (MUSI214)</u>	15
<u>MAX AND ABLETON LIVE (MUSI209)</u>	15
<u>MUSIC, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY (MUSI220)</u>	15
<u>MUSIC IN GAMING (MUSI273)</u>	15
<u>MUSIC IN WORLD CINEMA (MUSI270)</u>	15
<u>MUSICAL THEATRE (MUSI274)</u>	15

Optional modules	Credits
<u>OPERA AND POLITICS (MUSI232)</u>	15
<u>POPULAR MUSIC COMPOSITION 2 (MUSI210)</u>	15
<u>POPULAR PERFORMANCE 2A (MUSI203)</u>	15
<u>POPULAR PERFORMANCE 2B (MUSI204)</u>	15
<u>PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT (SOTA260)</u>	15
<u>POST-WAGNERIAN MUSIC AND PHILOSOPHY (MUSI230)</u>	15
<u>RECORD LABEL MARKETING, PROMOTION AND DISTRIBUTION (MUSI215)</u>	15
<u>SAMPLING AND REMIXING (MUSI213)</u>	15
<u>SCHOOL OF THE ARTS WORK PLACEMENTS MODULE (SOTA300)</u>	30
<u>FOLEY AND SOUND DESIGN (MUSI208)</u>	15
<u>SOUND RECORDING AND PRODUCTION 2 (MUSI243)</u>	15
<u>SOUND, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY (MUSI241)</u>	15
<u>WORKING IN MUSIC INDUSTRY (MUSI252)</u>	15
<u>EARLY MUSICAL CULTURES FROM THE ISLAMICATE COURT TO THE ENGLISH REFORMATION (MUSI219)</u>	15
<u>COMPOSITION FOR DIGITAL GAMES (MUSI206)</u>	15
<u>LIVE IMPROVISATION WITH ABLETON (MUSI217)</u>	15
<u>ORCHESTRATION (MUSI216)</u>	15

Programme details and modules listed are illustrative only and subject to change.

Final year

You will undertake a major independent project in research, performance, composition or technology. The rest of your modules will be chosen from a range of options, but you must take at least one of **MUSI341** and **MUSI370**.

Modules

Optional modules	Credits
<u>AESTHETICS OF MUSIC (MUSI320)</u>	15
<u>ART SONG (MUSI326)</u>	15
<u>BEETHOVEN'S LIFE AND WORKS (MUSI331)</u>	15
<u>CURATION AND HERITAGE (MUSI353)</u>	15
<u>EXPLORING RHYTHM, FORM, AND MUSICAL TIME (MUSI380)</u>	15
<u>INDEPENDENT PROJECT: CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE (MUSI395)</u>	30
<u>INDEPENDENT PROJECT: COMPOSITION (MUSI397)</u>	30
<u>INDEPENDENT PROJECT: CREATIVE MUSIC TECHNOLOGY (MUSI396)</u>	30
<u>INDEPENDENT PROJECT: POPULAR PERFORMANCE (MUSI398)</u>	30
<u>INDEPENDENT PROJECT: RESEARCH (MUSI399)</u>	30
<u>JAZZ (MUSI341)</u>	15
<u>COMPOSING ELECTRONIC MUSIC (MUSI308)</u>	15

Optional modules	Credits
<u>POPULAR MUSIC COMPOSITION 3 (MUSI310)</u>	15
<u>POPULAR PERFORMANCE CONTEXTS (MUSI303)</u>	15
<u>RECORD LABEL MANAGEMENT (MUSI315)</u>	15
<u>RECORD LABEL RECORDING, PRODUCTION AND PROJECT PLANNING (MUSI314)</u>	15
<u>SCHOOL OF THE ARTS WORK PLACEMENTS MODULE (SOTA300)</u>	30
<u>SOUND STUDIES (MUSI322)</u>	15
<u>THE FILM MUSIC OF JOHN WILLIAMS (MUSI370)</u>	15
<u>FROM HARDWARE-HACKING TO HYPER-INSTRUMENTS (MUSI318)</u>	15
<u>SELF-MANAGEMENT FOR THE MUSIC INDUSTRIES (MUSI319)</u>	15
<u>ADVANCED LIVE SOUND (MUSI316)</u>	15
<u>INDEPENDENT PROJECT: POPULAR COMPOSITION (MUSI394)</u>	30

Programme details and modules listed are illustrative only and subject to change.

Combined degree

Choosing this subject as a combined degree

Options include performance, technology, audio-visual music, world music, and music industry. In years two and three you focus in more detail on the areas that interest you most (such as history, psychology, audio-visual, performance, or popular composition/song-writing).

Teaching and assessment

How you'll learn

We employ a range of teaching methods, including lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, master classes, 1-2-1 instrumental lessons, ensemble coaching, and online tasks and projects. The emphasis is on student participation and interaction. We fit the most appropriate mode of teaching to the particular subject, conscious that the learning process needs to be enjoyable, enabling you to acquire useful and marketable skills and knowledge.

How you're assessed

Each module has an individually determined system of assessment (by coursework, written paper, test, recital, composition or technology portfolio, presentation or podcast, examination, and combinations of these), and we select the method that best suits the nature of the module.

Liverpool Hallmarks

We have a distinctive approach to education, the Liverpool Curriculum Framework, which focuses on research-connected teaching, active learning, and authentic assessment to ensure our students graduate as digitally fluent and confident global citizens.

The Liverpool Curriculum framework sets out our distinctive approach to education. Our teaching staff support our students to develop academic knowledge, skills, and understanding alongside our **graduate attributes**:

- Digital fluency
- Confidence
- Global citizenship

Our curriculum is characterised by the three **Liverpool Hallmarks**:

- Research-connected teaching
- Active learning
- Authentic assessment

All this is underpinned by our core value of **inclusivity** and commitment to providing a curriculum that is accessible to all students.

Careers and employability

Studying Music opens up many career opportunities, including composing, performing, music therapy, community arts, and teaching.

As well as jobs in music employers in many sectors are increasingly seeking arts and humanities graduates for their transferable skills.

As a student in the School of the Arts, you will be supported to maximise your employability from day one.

The School has its own placements and employability officer, and you will have the opportunity to undertake the following work experience opportunities:

- work placement or a year in industry as part of your programme;
- work in our [student-run record label](#) to gain practical experience in all aspects of the music industry – from contract negotiation and project planning to promotion and distribution.

^ [Back to top](#)

Fees and funding

Your tuition fees, funding your studies, and other costs to consider.

Tuition fees

UK fees (applies to Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Republic of Ireland)

Full-time place, per year - £9,535

Year in industry fee - £1,905

Year abroad fee - £1,430 (applies to year in China)

International fees

Full-time place, per year - £24,100

Year in industry fee - £1,905

Year abroad fee - £12,050 (applies to year in China)

The tuition fees shown are correct for 2025/26 entry. Please note that the year abroad fee also applies to the year in China.

Tuition fees cover the cost of your teaching and assessment, operating facilities such as libraries, IT equipment, and access to academic and personal support. [Learn more about paying for your studies.](#)

Additional costs

We understand that budgeting for your time at university is important, and we want to make sure you understand any course-related costs that are not covered by your tuition fee. This could include buying a laptop, books, or stationery.

Find out more about the [additional study costs](#) that may apply to this course.

Entry requirements

The qualifications and exam results you'll need to apply for this course.

As part of our application process, applicants are normally required to attend an Applicant Interview and Music Experience Day where you will either have an interview or a short audition with an academic member of staff. This is your chance to demonstrate your passion for the subject and allow us to make a decision on your application. (There is an option for phone or Skype interviews).

A levels

ABB but the offer may be reduced to BBB for those candidates achieving grade 8 distinction in any instrument.

Applicants with the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) are eligible for a reduction in grade requirements. For this course, the offer is **BBB** with **A** in the EPQ.

You may automatically qualify for reduced entry requirements through our contextual offers scheme. Based on your personal circumstances, you may automatically qualify for up to a two-grade reduction in the entry requirements needed for this course. When you apply, we consider a range of factors – such as where you live – to assess if you're eligible for a grade reduction. You don't have to make an application for a grade reduction – we'll do all the work.

Find out more about [how we make reduced grade offers](#).

T levels

T levels considered in a relevant subject.

Applicants should contact us by [completing the enquiry form on our website](#) to discuss specific requirements in the core components and the occupational specialism.

GCSE

4/C in English and 4/C in Mathematics

Subject requirements

No specific subject requirements. If an applicant is taking grade 8 in any instrument (or singing), a dual offer can be made: ABB or BBB with grade 8 Distinction. Some of our optional modules require academic demonstration of ability.

BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma

BTEC applications are encouraged. We evaluate each BTEC application on its merits and may make offers at DDM.

International Baccalaureate

33 points, with no score less than 4

Irish Leaving Certificate

H1, H2, H2, H2, H3, H3

Scottish Higher/Advanced Higher

ABB in Advanced Highers, combinations of Advanced Highers and Scottish Highers are welcome

Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced

Accepted including 2 A levels at BB

Access

45 Level 3 credits in graded units in a relevant Diploma, including 30 at Distinction and a further 15 with at least Merit

International qualifications

Select your country or region to view specific entry requirements.

If you hold a bachelor's degree or equivalent, but don't meet our entry requirements, you could be eligible for a Pre-Master's course. This is offered on campus at the [University of Liverpool International College](#), in partnership with Kaplan International Pathways. It's a specialist preparation course for postgraduate study, and when you pass the Pre-Master's at the required level

with good attendance, you're guaranteed entry to a University of Liverpool master's degree.

English language requirements

You'll need to demonstrate competence in the use of English language, unless you're from a [majority English speaking country](#).

We accept a variety of [international language tests](#) and [country-specific qualifications](#).

International applicants who do not meet the minimum required standard of English language can complete one of our [Pre-Sessional English courses](#) to achieve the required level.

IELTS

6.5 overall, with no component below 5.5

TOEFL iBT

88 overall, with minimum scores of listening 17, writing 17, reading 17 and speaking 19. TOEFL Home Edition not accepted.

TOEFL Paper

Grade 7 at Standard Level or grade 6 at Higher Level

Duolingo English Test

125 overall, with speaking, reading and writing not less than 105, and listening not below 100

Pearson PTE Academic

61 overall, with no component below 59

LanguageCert Academic

70 overall, with no skill below 60

Cambridge IGCSE First Language English 0500

Grade C overall, with a minimum of grade 2 in speaking and listening. Speaking and listening must be separately endorsed on the certificate.

Cambridge IGCSE First Language English 0990

Grade 4 overall, with Merit in speaking and listening

Cambridge IGCSE Second Language English 0510/0511

0510: Grade B overall, with a minimum of grade 2 in speaking. Speaking must be separately endorsed on the certificate. 0511: Grade B overall.

Cambridge IGCSE Second Language English 0993/0991

0993: Grade 6 overall, with a minimum of grade 2 in speaking. Speaking must be separately endorsed on the certificate. 0991: Grade 6 overall.

Cambridge ESOL Level 2/3 Advanced

176 overall, with no paper below 162

LanguageCert

Grade 5 at Standard Level or grade 5 at Higher Level

Pre-sessional English

Do you need to complete a Pre-sessional English course to meet the English language requirements for this course?

The length of Pre-sessional English course you'll need to take depends on your current level of English language ability.

Pre-sessional English in detail

If you don't meet our English language requirements, we can use your most recent IELTS score, or [the equivalent score in selected other English language tests](#), to determine the length of Pre-sessional English course you require.

Use the table below to check the course length you're likely to require for your current English language ability and see whether the course is available on campus or online.

Your most recent IELTS score	Pre-sessional English course length	On campus or online
6.0 overall, with no component below 5.5	6 weeks	On campus
5.5 overall, with no component below 5.5	10 weeks	On campus and online options available
5.5 overall, with no more than one component below 5.5, and no component below 5.0	12 weeks	On campus and online options available
5.5 overall, with no component below 4.5	20 weeks	On campus
5.0 overall, with no component below 4.5	30 weeks	On campus
4.5 overall, with no more than one component below 4.5, and no component below 4.0	40 weeks	On campus

If you've completed an alternative English language test to IELTS, we may be able to use this to assess your English language ability and determine the Pre-sessional English course length you require.

Please see our guide to [Pre-sessional English entry requirements](#) for IELTS 6.5 overall, with no component below 5.5, for further details.

Alternative entry requirements

- If your qualification isn't listed here, or you're taking a combination of qualifications, [contact us](#) for advice
- If you are returning to learning, have had a disrupted education or are switching career pathways, the one-year [Go Higher diploma](#) qualifies you to apply for University of Liverpool arts, humanities and social sciences programmes
- [Applications from mature students](#) are welcome.

[^ Back to top](#)

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