

I'm writing to you about your successful application to study the BA in Music and Modern Languages & Cultures (MDLU10) at the University of Sheffield. As you know, the University will be adjusting how it delivers its courses in the autumn to accommodate the social distancing measures required to combat the coronavirus pandemic. The current plans involve a blend of face-to-face teaching in small groups in Sheffield, where social distancing can be maintained, supported by digital delivery. In this email, I'll explain what this will mean for your studies on the BA in Music and Modern Languages & Cultures.

Preparing for the start of your degree

In the School of Languages & Cultures, we've prepared a [dedicated Intro website](#) for all our students. It will have all the information that you need to get started with your studies at Sheffield. From online registration, live language taster sessions, selecting your modules through to our student societies and arrangements for Intro Week, the SLC Freshers' Site will guide you through induction. Not all the information will be immediately visible on the website, but will progressively become available as we are working towards your registration, module choice and the start of the semester.

Teaching in 2020/21

While our teaching practices have adapted to accommodate social distancing requirements, we're committed to offering high-quality teaching and learning. That won't change and there are no changes to the overall learning outcomes of the course. In your language studies this means that you'll still obtain an advanced level of written and spoken proficiency in the languages you choose to study, you will still have the opportunity to develop a detailed and nuanced understanding of the cultures and histories of the countries where those languages are spoken, and you will obtain the same wide range of valuable transferable skills alongside your intercultural awareness and linguistic proficiency.

For the music aspect of the course, there's no change to the overall learning outcomes. You'll still obtain proficiency in a broad range of specialist musicianship skills, an advanced understanding of the study of music in its various disciplines, and a wide range of transferable skills. However, to accommodate the new protocols for the 2020-21 academic year, we have made some adjustments to the content and structure of Level 1.

- Due to the guidelines on social distancing and current regulations relating to group gatherings, we are unfortunately unable to run MUS130 Ensemble Participation this year.
- We have added several 20-credit modules from other departments' courses to our list of optional modules. These will replace the University's unrestricted credits for 2020-21. You will have access to the full range of modules when you start your course, but you can find the module descriptions for the music modules on our webpages [here](#)

Teaching will be spread across the usual two semesters and will start the week commencing Monday 28 September.

For 2020-21, we are moving to a 'blended learning' model for all of our courses. This means teaching and learning through a creative mix of study materials prepared in advance and accessible before classes (so-called 'asynchronous' learning), scheduled live online classes (so-called 'synchronous' learning), and some more traditional face-to-face teaching. Through blended learning, we believe we can offer a richer and more inclusive learning environment that allows us to do some things that weren't previously possible when teaching only in a static physical space, such as the traditional lecture theatre.

In terms of languages, Beginners can expect four hours of classes per week, delivered through the blended learning approaches described above. For post-A-level languages, you will have three timetabled hours' language tuition per week taught also via blended learning. The online teaching is delivered through our

virtual learning environment (BlackBoard). These digital sessions will be live and fully interactive, for example group video conferencing.

For content modules in Modern Languages & Cultures, you will be taught through a similar mix of prepared materials accessed in advance, such as powerpoint presentations, set reading, films and video clips, and scheduled interactive classes online, plus some face-to-face teaching where numbers and teaching space allow.

As it's not possible to social distance in a crowded lecture theatre, for your Music studies we'll be delivering all our lectures online. Lectures include presentations by one of our subject experts, and online delivery suits the format well. For online delivery, lecture content will be broken down into multiple shorter chunks and tasks, rather than a single lengthy video. The Department of Music has extensive experience with running distance learning courses and thus is well equipped to ensure all content is easily accessible and engaging for all.

Instrumental lessons will be provided digitally at the start of the semester, and we hope to move to face-to-face teaching when the situation allows. Our instrumental tutors are experienced and well equipped to give high quality virtual lessons so you can continue to progress from a location that is most appropriate for you.

Staff in the Department of Music and in the School of Languages & Cultures will be available as usual for personal tutor sessions and other one-to-one meetings, and we will still hold regular office hours. It may not be possible for these sessions to take place in person, but if not you'll be able to make an audio or video call.

Learning resources

Most of our learning resources are already available online, and this includes all the core reading for our Level 1 modules. Our physical libraries will be open as soon as it's safe to do so, and our librarians are committed to providing as full a service as possible, taking into account social distancing requirements and all the latest government advice.

We are currently planning the re-opening of the Soundhouse practice room and studio facilities to ensure social distancing arrangements are in place and in line with the latest government and university guidance.

Arrangements for booking out music technology equipment and practice rooms will be included within the individual module handbooks you'll receive as part of your induction.

Assessment

Coursework assignments are already completed electronically, and submitted and marked online. We're still finalising our plans for exams, but we won't be holding formal, invigilated exams in the January/February exam period. It's likely we'll use an 'open book' format instead, where exam questions are made available online and you have a set time to answer them. You'd complete your answers electronically at home, and you'd be able to consult your books and notes. For presentations and performances, a portfolio recording is one option we can use for submission of work.

We'll confirm the arrangements for all your assessments in the individual module handbooks you'll receive when you join us.

Fees

The tuition fee for the course will stay the same, and we don't expect students will incur additional costs as a result of the changes we're making. You'll be able to participate in all the online activities using a regular

laptop or tablet connected to the internet, although you will need a microphone and camera to contribute fully in virtual discussions. There will be central technical support for all students to ensure that you have the correct working equipment and the know-how to use it effectively in order to make the most of your studies.

We normally expect students to bring and service their own instruments throughout their degree (excluding pianos and percussion), and for this year we will request students to use their own stands, to ensure health and safety measures are followed.

I hope this email has given you an idea of what to expect when you join us in the autumn. As you'll be aware, this pandemic is a fast-moving and unpredictable phenomenon, and we might need to make further changes as the situation develops and the University responds to updates in public health guidance. In the Department of Music as in the School of Languages & Cultures, we pride ourselves on ensuring that all students are supported, and that is one thing that won't change. We are confident that you will receive a world-class university education here at Sheffield.

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with us via slc-enquiries@sheffield.ac.uk.

Further information

Along with the subject knowledge that you will gain, you will be advancing and further refining your existing academic skills as your studies progress. The [301: Academic Skills Centre](#) provides resources which will help you to transition to undergraduate level study at the University of Sheffield. It will enable you to get the most out of yourself when undertaking the learning activities and assessments on your course.

Please keep looking out for emails from the University and checking our [frequently asked questions](#), which are updated regularly with all the latest developments. We also have some on-demand content from our online [applicant open days](#) which you might find useful.

I hope you enjoy what's left of the summer and stay safe.

Best wishes

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