

I'm writing to you about your application to study the BMus/Music in the Department of Music 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 BMus/Music.

There's no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. 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 modules descriptions for the [music modules](#) on our webpages.

Teaching

As you know, the majority of our teaching comprises lectures, seminars and practicals, and we'll still be using these formats in 2020-21. Teaching will be spread across the usual two semesters and will start the week commencing Monday 28 September.

It's not possible to social distance in a crowded lecture theatre, so 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.

For our interactive classes, we'll be using a combination of face-to-face and digital teaching, and you'll have regular, timetabled sessions of each format. The mix of face-to-face and digital teaching will differ from module to module, but interactive elements will be present across all modules. The face-to-face sessions will take place in small groups, so that we can use our larger teaching rooms and still maintain social distancing. The digital sessions will be live and fully interactive, for example group video calls. Those who are unable to attend face-to-face sessions will still be able to access all the necessary resources online.

Our academic staff will be available as usual for tutorials and other one-to-one meetings, and will still hold their 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.

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.

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

We're still finalising our plans for exams, but we won't be holding formal, invigilated exams in the Semester 1 exam period in January/February. It's likely we'll use an 'open book' format instead, where exam questions are made available online and you have a certain amount of time to answer them. For presentations and performances, a portfolio recording is one option we can use for submission of work.

Coursework assignments are already completed electronically, and submitted and marked online, meaning that there will be little change to the way we carry out the majority of our assessments at level 1.

We'll confirm the arrangements for Semester 1 exams in the individual module handbooks you'll receive when you join us.

Costs

The tuition fee for the course will stay the same, and we don't expect students to 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.

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.

We understand that some students may be temporarily unable to attend on campus, due to international travel restrictions, visa delays, medical reasons or a disability. We are committed to ensuring that you are not excluded or disadvantaged for this reason. You will be able to access our induction activities and all our digital learning online, until you are able to join us later in Semester 1 or at the start of Semester 2.

The recent changes we have put in place allows us to respond quickly and easily to more online, or face-to-face based activities. Please be assured that we'll be approaching the next year as a single departmental family of staff and students together, and we're committed to ensuring that you're supported, and that you still receive a world-class university education here at Sheffield.

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with our learning support officers at admin-ugmusic@sheffield.ac.uk. Please also let us know if you have any medical or personal circumstances that might affect how you're able to participate next year.

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.

You can access the resources [here](#).

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

Simon Keegan-Phipps
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[The Department of Music](#)