DSA Study Needs Assessment
Course information for assessors: Post-graduate study - Music (MA/PGDip)

Course Overview and Methods of Assessment

Studying on the MA/PGDip Music course is a uniquely flexible experience in post-graduate learning, which allows focus on different creative specialisms from one trimester to the next. The PGDip level can be studied from Sep to June or the MA level from Sep to Sep.

Specialist Study

Each trimester, students enrolled on both the PGDip and MA programmes are subject to a suitable level of existing proficiency, as well as able to request that their tuition incorporate one or more of the following specialisms: composition, performance and production. Students then choose to be assessed either through recorded/scored work submitted as a portfolio, or by live performance or installation.

In the final trimester, all students progressing to Masters Level are required to present their work publicly rather than through portfolio. Students develop this work with the guidance of one-to-one tutors, course tutors, professional guests and fellow group members.

Creative Practice in Context

All students conduct critical and analytical research into their own practice as it relates to relevant surrounding creative and professional cultures, and are assessed either through submitted written essay or spoken exam. Materials will be gathered and developed in group-taught sessions, tutorials and through individual research.

IT Hardware and Software

Hardware and software requirements will depend upon student choice. The majority of Apple hardware at the conservatoire is made up of iMac M1 Chip 8-Core CPU + 8-Core GPU, 16GB RAM and 2TB SSD storage models, supplemented by Mac Studio M1 Max 10-core CPU + 24-core GPU models with 32GB RAM and 4TB SSD storage. Software packages most commonly used are Avid Sibelius (musical score writing software), which operates on both Windows and Apple Mac platforms and Logic Pro (music recording and arranging software) which runs exclusively on Apple Mac platforms.

We have a number of Apple Mac and PC computer suites that students can access throughout the conservatoire. These facilities are available until 3am on weekdays and during the daytime at weekends.

Due to the restricted networking capabilities of Apple products and software licensing restrictions, Leeds Conservatoire is unable to provide students with individual licenses of all the course-specific software that they require for their pathway of study. All students are

expected to take advantage of in-house facilities as much as possible to complete their studies during term-time, as these facilities are of a professional standard across the conservatoire. These facilities are provided in-house so each student is not required to own an Apple Mac at a professional level specification to run all of the additional software and hardware needed.

Students with learning difficulties/conditions that affect their working memory, co-ordination, focus or information processing speed often experience extra difficulty in reading music, accurately handwriting musical scores or inputting information into music writing software Sibelius, and coping with the high density multiple screen setup of information in professional music software like Logic Pro. This is similar to the difficulties experienced when producing word-processed written work, and the process of working with music goes alongside working with other written information as a core part of the learning process on this course. Mental health or other difficulties causing concentration problems can also make specialist music software more difficult to use due to the volume and complexity of information the user is required to input and manipulate.

This course involves a significant amount of moving between different studios and performance venues in and out of the conservatoire, and for this reason, we have found that many of our disabled students benefit from having a laptop to allow them to access their assistive technology and course materials on the move.

Music software applications use a large amount of memory, particularly when run concurrently with accessibility software, so extra RAM may be required to avoid slowing down the operating speed of any DSA recommended computer system. It is preferable to specify a machine with a smaller core hard drive but greater additional memory rather than vice versa, as music software uses a large amount of RAM on its own.

For notetaking and lecture recording purposes, a digital recording device with a built-in two-way microphone is recommended as a useful aid to learning to enable the recording of music excerpts used alongside orally and visually presented information in lectures.

All course information and lecture notes are accessed only via Space, the online Virtual Learning Environment. The majority of assignments are submitted online via the VLE and use of the internet for research is also required.

Further information on the support available at Leeds Conservatoire is available on our website: https://www.leedsconservatoire.ac.uk/student-life/student-support/disability-support/

Contact information

The Disability Support Team is located in the Student Support room (4th floor) of the Leeds Conservatoire St Peter's Square building.

Email: disability@leedsconservatoire.ac.uk