

Programme Specification 2025-26

MUSIC TRIPOS

Awarding body	University of Cambridge
Teaching institution	Faculty of Music
Accreditation details	None
Name of final award	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Programme title	Music Tripos
UCAS code	W300 BA/M
HECoS code(s)	100070 (music)
Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Music
Qualifications framework level	6 (Honours)
Date specification produced	August 2023

Facilities and Provision

The Faculty of Music at Cambridge is situated in the University Music School on West Road. Around 200 undergraduates and 65 postgraduates work in the Faculty, which has a teaching staff of 16 University Teaching Officers and more than 20 Affiliated Lecturers. Teaching of undergraduate and graduate courses, as well as many of the Faculty's research activities and events, take place in the Music School, a building completed in the early 1980s and extended since then. The complex houses the West Road Concert Hall, a smaller Recital Room, the Pendlebury Library, the Centre for Music and Science, a collection of historical instruments (in the Cudworth Room), lecture rooms, offices for teaching staff, and a small number of practice rooms.

Educational aims

The Music Tripos is intended to deepen students' understanding of music and of its historical, social and cultural contexts whilst ensuring that fundamental skills in writing and analysing music and in practical musicianship are acquired.

The core of the course comprises historical and cultural studies, analysis, and compositional techniques. As the student progresses through the three years of the Tripos, an increasing amount of choice is offered. Opportunity is given to explore aspects of music such as ethnomusicology, notation, music & science and performance studies. The development of intellectual and practical skills is balanced by the aim of stimulating and encouraging individual interests. Although most undergraduates who read Music at Cambridge aspire to enter the music profession in one guise or another, the course provides a broad education for those who take up other occupations.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

On completion of Part IA students should have

- made the transition in learning style and pace from school (or other educational background) to university;
- acquired a grounding in techniques of tonal harmony and of common-practice counterpoint;
- acquired foundational knowledge and understanding of western musical repertoires

- through both historical and analytical studies;
- developed a mental map of ways of thinking about music in today's world, complementing the technical, practical, and historical components of the first-year programme;
- developed aural skills and acquired basic fluency in practical skills;
- acquired foundational learning skills in
 - the reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources;
 - essay writing;
 - tonal skills;
 - effective participation in individually supervised and group discussion.
- developed the ability to prepare and present an extended project in two of the following areas: Composition, Performance, History Workshop and Dissertation

On completion of Part IB students should have

- started to take responsibility for their own learning and to have developed the ability to work independently of direct supervision;
- developed a more sophisticated understanding of western musical repertoires through historical, technical, analytical, and where appropriate, practical studies;
- developed critical thinking and project design skills;
- developed the capacity to link their musical practice to the approaches and sub-disciplines of academic music study;
- acquired subject-specific knowledge and skills in at least three sub-disciplines of music study to a level sufficient to lay the foundations for, and inform choice, of advanced specialisation in Part II;
- developed further learning skills in
 - the reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources;
 - essay writing;
 - musical literacy (analysis, tonal skills);
 - effective participation in individually supervised and group discussion.

On completion of Part II, students will have developed advanced skills in the six sub-disciplines chosen for examination. It is expected that by this stage all students will have acquired detailed knowledge of several specialised musicological areas. Through their study of these subjects they should have understood the basic principles of scholarly research and have acquired the ability to develop independent and critical judgement. Through the varied requirements of the course, students should have become aware of multi-disciplinary approaches to their subject and should have acquired the skills of oral presentation through presentations to seminar groups. Interested students will also have the opportunity to develop advanced proficiency in composition and/or musical performance. The variety of specialist courses available in Part II will offer students appropriate preparation for a wide range of postgraduate studies.

Skills and other attributes

All undergraduates can expect to acquire during their university career a set of intellectual and practical skills and attributes that are defined as 'transferable skills' which, as well as enhancing academic performance, can be used beyond university, and are sought by employers.

These include:

- Knowledge and understanding of the subject;
- Practical music skills such as the ability to read musical scores without recourse to recordings, fluency in keyboard skills, composition and arrangement skills, proficiency in musical performance;

- Research skills: use of libraries to supplement information given in lectures, finding literature both in traditional and electronic forms, and critical evaluation, how to construct bibliographies, the ability to take notes quickly and effectively;
- Project design: the ability to structure and complete large-scale pieces of work; to undertake ethnographic study via ethically-sound questionnaires and interviews; to create innovative recital programmes;
- The ability to assimilate large amounts of literature, to evaluate evidence critically and present an argument;
- The ability to write clearly, accurately and to a deadline;
- The ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing;
- Working to a deadline and under pressure; in particular, balancing the skills needed to maintain high-level musical performance and study;
- Interpersonal skills gained by working with others on projects, regular discussion with members of staff, holding positions of responsibility in the Faculty and University;
- Computer literacy: word and music processing, sound recording, experimental and statistical applications;
- Foreign language skills: encouragement to undertake research involving foreign languages, taking advantage of Language Centre provision.

Programme structure

The Music Tripos is taught over three years in Part IA (1st year), Part IB (2nd year) and Part II (3rd year).

Part IA

The first-year programme comprises the following compulsory papers: Music in Contemporary Societies; Western Music History I; Music Analysis I; Tonal Skills I (all 1.0), and General Musicianship (0.5 paper). In addition, students are required to choose two half-paper options from the following: Composition, Music History workshop, Extended essay, Performance. Students take a total of 5.5 papers.

Part IB

The Part IB course contains three core papers (Historical Studies in Western Music II, Analysis II, and Tonal Skills II), and a number of optional papers that always includes Introductions to Performance Studies, Music & Science, Ethnomusicology, and Popular Music and Multimedia; Composition Portfolio, Dissertation, Notation, and Practical Skills. Up to 4 additional Elective Topics will be offered on the approval of Faculty Board.

All students are required to take a total of six papers. Students are recommended to take all three core paper and three optional papers. However, in place of **one** of the core papers, they may submit a further optional paper, subject to approval from the Faculty. In addition, special topics will be offered from time to time in Music Studies and/or cognate disciplines on the approval of Faculty Board.

Part II

Candidates choose six papers from a list that always contains Analysis Portfolio, Composition Portfolio, Notation, Advanced Performance, and Dissertation. Other papers include Advanced Tonal Composition, Advanced Practical Skills, and Fugue as well as a number of additional papers (to a maximum total of 17 papers) which vary according to the teaching resources of the Faculty in any given year. In addition, special topics will be offered

from time to time in Music Studies and/or cognate disciplines on the approval of Faculty Board.

Though it is possible to take another subject after either one or two years of studying Music, transfer into Part IB or II of the Tripos is unusual and subject to satisfaction of the Faculty Board of Music that the requisite skills in Music have been obtained.

Teaching methods

Teaching is delivered in the Faculty through lectures and seminars which relate to the papers offered in the Tripos, through musicianship classes (in aural and practical skills), and in the Colleges through supervisions which provide individual and small-group teaching through written work and feedback. Throughout, students are encouraged to undertake independent reading and study to consolidate what is taught.

The core teaching staff consists of 16 University Teaching Officers and more than 20 Affiliated Lecturers. Responsibility for the provision and quality of teaching in Music is shared between the Faculty and the Colleges. The Faculty provides formal teaching through lectures, seminars and classes; it also conducts examinations. The Colleges provide individual and small-group teaching through supervisions; the latter run parallel to the Faculty's teaching.

Assessment

Formative assessment is provided through Faculty classes and through College supervisions where feedback is given in both oral and written form. Assessment takes place at the end of each academic year through written examinations, through the submission of portfolios, essay and dissertations and through the examination of recitals.

Entry

Typical offer: A*AA; IB 40-42 points, with 776 or 777 at Higher Level
Scottish Advanced Highers AAA

Irish Leaving Certificate H1 in three relevant Higher Level subjects

(ABRSM Grade 8 Theory [Merit] is accepted as an alternative qualification in Music where Music was not one of the options taken, but in such cases it is additional to the overall set of qualifications required)

Admission is based on high achievement in A-level or equivalent examinations, on school recommendations and on success in interview and in admissions tests. On average there are 60-70 students reading Music in each year, all of whom are full-time students.

Student support

Students benefit from the complementary relationship between Faculty and College teaching. Core lectures are delivered at the Faculty of Music by University Teaching Officers and other specialist staff, and provide the basis on which self-directed study can be built. Small-group teaching in the form of supervisions (usually in groups of two to four students) is provided by the Colleges.

Supervisions are normally arranged by the student's Director of Studies in Music and are carried out by a supervisor who is a specialist in the relevant subject area. Students are expected to prepare essays or equivalent pieces of work ahead of supervisions, often using material from a suggested reading list or from lecture notes. These are not formally assessed but provide students with the means to explore new approaches and

clarify areas of the topic being studied. The Faculty provides supervisors with as much guidance as possible and monitors the quality of supervision.

The Faculty of Music is small compared to many other Cambridge institutions, and there is considerable overlap between University Teaching Officers and Directors of Studies. There is consequently no large pool of students without a direct or a fairly direct conduit to the Faculty's main decision-making bodies, such as the Faculty Board.

The Faculty of Music complies fully with the University's guidelines for accommodating students with special needs, and lecturers, and support staff do everything they can to assist these students in their learning. The Faculty also takes care to facilitate the special arrangements needed for these students' examinations, taking advice, where needed, from the University's Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre.

Further information about student support may be obtained on request to the Faculty.

Graduate employability and career destinations

The career destinations of those who study Music in Cambridge are extremely varied, as one might expect of a Faculty that teaches a large number of independent sub-disciplines. Some graduates continue with postgraduate study (either at a university or a music college); some go into teaching (either directly or through a teaching-training course); some go into more general work in the media; some use the skills they have acquired in fields unrelated to music.

Preparation for employment in general is provided in the opportunities for acquisition of relevant transferable skills outlined in the programme specification.

The Careers Service maintains links with relevant employers and takes into account employer needs and opinions in the services which it provides for students. The Careers Service also allocates a Careers Adviser to each College, faculty and department to act as a point of contact.

Management of Education Quality and Standards

The University ensures high quality of teaching and learning in the following ways:

1. Scrutiny of the External Examiners Reports for all teaching programmes
2. Encouraging student engagement at both the local level, through involvement in Faculty and Departmental Committees, and at a central level by participation in nationally-benchmarked surveys
3. Participation in the biennial Education Monitoring and Review Process to explore provision, share good practice and suggest constructive courses of action
4. Mentoring, appraisal, and peer review of staff, and encouraging staff participation in personal development programmes

Indicators of Quality

QAA score: Excellent

REF score: In the 2021 Research Excellence Framework, the Music submission was rated overall at 95% world-leading or internationally excellent in research. Ours was the top-ranked Music submission in the UK from a generalist university.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academic year, and any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the *Reporter*. The relevant Faculty or Department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academic year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: <https://www.camdata.admin.cam.ac.uk/>