UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

BA (Hons)

Popular Music

UCAS code W340

Entry requirements	**Study mode**	**Duration**	Apply by: **30 June 2026**
A level: ABB	Full-time	3 years	Starts on: **28 September 2026**

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

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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 one, you:

- Must take at least one from: **MUSI180, MUSI181**.
- May take a maximum of one from **MUSI102, MUSI106, MUSI130** (Classical Music options)
- May not take both **Classical Performance (MUSI102)** and **Popular Performance (MUSI104)**.

Modules

Compulsory modules	Credits
INTRODUCTION TO POPULAR MUSIC HISTORY (MUSI140)	15
MUSIC AS AN INDUSTRY (MUSI150)	15
MAKING MUSIC IN CULTURE (MUSI121)	15

Optional modules	Credits
FOUNDATIONS OF MUSIC THEORY (MUSI181)	15
INTRODUCTION TO CLASSICAL MUSIC HISTORY (MUSI130)	15
INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL AUDIO WORKSTATIONS (MUSI109)	15

Optional modules	Credits
INTRODUCTION TO SOUND AND TECHNOLOGY (MUSI171)	15
WRITING FOR INSTRUMENTS (MUSI105)	15
CLASSICAL COMPOSITION 1 (MUSI106)	15
INTRODUCTION TO SOUND AND MUSIC IN AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA (MUSI170)	15
INTRODUCTION TO SOUND RECORDING AND PRODUCTION (MUSI108)	15
POPULAR COMPOSITION 1 (MUSI107)	15
THEORY IN PRACTICE: EXPLORING MUSIC'S CONSTRUCTION (MUSI180)	15
CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE 1 (MUSI102)	15
POPULAR PERFORMANCE 1 (MUSI104)	15

Programme details and modules listed are illustrative only and subject to change. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we are currently reviewing all of our programmes. This may include refining study pathways, strengthening links with employers, integrating generative AI, developing students' research skills, and enhancing alignment with our research strengths. The course content currently shown on this page reflects the programme as it is running in September 2026. This page will be updated for students beginning in September 2027 by 1 September 2026 at the latest.

Year two

Your second year is made up entirely of optional modules. There may be some restrictions on which modules can be taken in conjunction with others, which will be explained during module registration.

- Students taking the Year in Industry must take **SOTA260**.

Modules

Optional modules	Credits
CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE 2A (MUSI201)	15
EARLY MUSICAL CULTURES FROM THE ISLAMICATE COURT TO THE ENGLISH REFORMATION (MUSI219)	15
EXPLORING HARMONY, CHORD PROGRESSION AND PITCH (MUSI280)	15
FOLEY AND SOUND DESIGN (MUSI208)	15
GLOBAL POP: POPULAR MUSICS OF THE WORLD (MUSI261)	15
LIVE SOUND (MUSI214)	15
MAX AND ABLETON LIVE (MUSI209)	15
MUSIC IN GAMING (MUSI273)	15
OPERA AND POLITICS (MUSI232)	15
POPULAR MUSIC COMPOSITION 2 (MUSI210)	15
POPULAR PERFORMANCE 2A (MUSI203)	15
PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT (SOTA260)	15
SOUND RECORDING AND PRODUCTION 2 (MUSI243)	15
WORKING IN MUSIC INDUSTRY (MUSI252)	15
BECOMING ENTREPRENEURIAL (ULMS254)	15

Optional modules	Credits
CLASSICAL COMPOSITION 2 (MUSI207)	15
CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE 2B (MUSI202)	15
COMPOSITION FOR DIGITAL GAMES (MUSI206)	15
COMPOSITION FOR FILM AND TELEVISION (MUSI205)	15
CONTEMPORARY GENRES (MUSI263)	15
INTRODUCTION TO CONDUCTING (MUSI200)	15
INTRODUCTION TO MUSIC PSYCHOLOGY (MUSI290)	15
LIVE IMPROVISATION WITH ABLETON (MUSI217)	15
MUSIC AND HUMAN EXPERIENCE (MUSI291)	15
MUSIC IN WORLD CINEMA (MUSI270)	15
MUSIC, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY (MUSI220)	15
MUSICAL THEATRE (MUSI274)	15
ORCHESTRATION (MUSI216)	15
POPULAR PERFORMANCE 2B (MUSI204)	15
SAMPLING AND REMIXING (MUSI213)	15
SOUND, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY (MUSI241)	15

Optional modules	Credits
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS WORK PLACEMENTS MODULE (SOTA300)	30

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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.

- You must take at least one of the following: **MUSI341**, **MUSI370.**
- There may be some further restrictions on which modules can be taken in conjunction with others, which will be explained during module registration.

Modules

Optional modules	Credits
WHAT IS GOOD MUSIC? (MUSI320)	15
COMPOSING ELECTRONIC MUSIC (MUSI308)	15
FROM HARDWARE-HACKING TO HYPER-INSTRUMENTS (MUSI318)	15
JAZZ (MUSI341)	15
POPULAR PERFORMANCE CONTEXTS (MUSI303)	15

Optional modules	Credits
RECORD LABEL RECORDING, PRODUCTION AND PROJECT PLANNING (MUSI314)	15
SELF-MANAGEMENT FOR THE MUSIC INDUSTRIES (MUSI319)	15
ADVANCED LIVE SOUND (MUSI316)	15
BETWEEN ROMANTICISM AND MODERNISM (MUSI332)	15
CURATION AND HERITAGE (MUSI353)	15
EXPLORING RHYTHM, FORM, AND MUSICAL TIME (MUSI380)	15
POPULAR MUSIC COMPOSITION 3 (MUSI310)	15
RECORD LABEL MANAGEMENT, MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION (MUSI315)	15
THE FILM MUSIC OF JOHN WILLIAMS (MUSI370)	15
INDEPENDENT PROJECT: CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE (MUSI395)	30
INDEPENDENT PROJECT: COMPOSITION (MUSI397)	30
INDEPENDENT PROJECT: CREATIVE MUSIC TECHNOLOGY (MUSI396)	30
INDEPENDENT PROJECT: POPULAR COMPOSITION (MUSI394)	30
INDEPENDENT PROJECT: POPULAR PERFORMANCE (MUSI398)	30
INDEPENDENT PROJECT: RESEARCH (MUSI399)	30
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS WORK PLACEMENTS MODULE (SOTA300)	30

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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 Learning Framework

At Liverpool, we take a distinctive approach to education through the Liverpool Learning Framework. This means teaching that is engaging, inclusive and designed to help you succeed during your studies and beyond.

You'll develop specialist subject knowledge alongside the skills employers value most, including:

- Digital fluency
- Confidence
- Global citizenship

Our curriculum is characterised by the three Liverpool Hallmarks:

- Research-connected teaching - learning informed by the latest ideas and discoveries
- Active learning - taking part, applying knowledge and learning by doing
- Authentic assessment - assessments designed around real-world tasks and challenges

We also embed key priorities across our curriculum, including AI literacy, employability, and sustainability, helping you prepare for the future and make a positive impact in the world.

We're committed to creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment where every student can thrive.

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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.

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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 - £9,790
Year in industry fee - £1,955
Year abroad fee - £1,465 (applies to year in China)

International fees

Full-time place, per year - £27,000
Year in industry fee - £1,955
Year abroad fee - £13,500 (applies to year in China)

The fees shown are for the academic year 2026/27. Please be advised that tuition fees may increase each year for both UK and international students. For UK students, this will be subject to the government's regulated fee limits.

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** from A levels, 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

32 points overall with no score less than 4 or pass the IB Diploma plus 6,5,5 in 3 HL subjects.

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

B in the Welsh Baccalaureate, plus AB at A level.

Access

Pass relevant Access to HE Diploma with 45 Level 3 credits with 33 at Distinction and 12 at Merit.

International qualifications

Select your country or region to view specific entry requirements.

Many countries have a different education system to that of the UK, meaning your qualifications may not meet our direct entry requirements. Although there is no direct Foundation Certificate route to this course, completing a Foundation Certificate, such as that offered by the University of Liverpool International College, can guarantee you a place on a number of similar courses which may interest you.

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.

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

If you took a TOEFL test on or before 20 January 2026, you'll need 88 overall, with minimum scores of listening 17, writing 17, reading 17 and speaking 19. If you took a TOEFL test from 21 January 2026 onwards, when a new scoring system was introduced, you'll need 4.5 overall, with 4 or above in all components. TOEFL Home Edition not accepted.

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

International Baccalaureate English A: Literature or Language & Literature

Grade 5 at Standard Level or grade 5 at Higher Level

International Baccalaureate English B

Grade 7 at Standard Level or grade 6 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 or online
5.5 overall, with no more than one component at 5.0	10 weeks	On campus or online
5.5 overall, with no component below 5.0	12 weeks	Online
5.0 overall, with no component below 5.0	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 at 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.