

DSA Study Needs Assessment

Course information for assessors: FdA in Music Production

Course Overview

The Foundation Degree in Music Production is usually studied over two years and consists of three strands, Specialist Study, Contextual Studies and Professional Studies. The course develops the use of advanced music technology skills for the creation and production of contemporary music.

Areas of study include:

- Studio and computer-based music production
- Composing and arranging
- Digital recording
- Contextual studies
- Industry Studies
- DJ performance (optional)
- Live performance (optional)

Methods of Assessment

The course is modular with all modules being compulsory in Year 1, whilst certain modules are optional in Year 2. A Foundation Degree is assessed via coursework, musical portfolios, recordings, technical tests, presentations or written work (no examinations take place). A Foundation Degree is a vocational programme, with an emphasis on practical work and assessments are designed with industry relevance in mind. Formal assessments tend to take place at the end of each semester, or the end of the year. There are a handful of assignments that have deadlines halfway through a semester.

Conservatoire Facilities and Resources

The conservatoire has a programme of continuous investment in high-end facilities for our students to work with. For production students this includes professional quality recording studios in which students are taught and which they can additionally book to complete their assignments. For performance students this includes soundproofed practice rooms, ensemble rooms and purpose-built performance suites and venues.

Our specialist music courses are taught on the Apple Mac platform, as this is the music industry standard. 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. The core music software packages in extensive use on this course are Apple Logic and Avid ProTools which run on the Apple Mac platform.

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. Production students have access to our music production Macs and dedicated DJ suite when teaching is not taking place (normally only between 7pm and 3am) – these are usually open access for students. Production students are allowed to book 6 hours per week per studio group and can also book other available slots within a 24-hour period in order to get the most from the production resources (potentially a total of 9 hours a week). Students choosing the DJ performance or live performance option in Year 2 have access to the DJ suite or rehearsal spaces.

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