



**Educating Popular Musicians:  
*Insights into Music Teaching and Learning  
on Higher and Further Education Programmes in Ireland***

by

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to investigate approaches to the teaching and learning of popular music in higher and further education institutions in the Republic of Ireland. Despite the proliferation of popular music in contemporary culture, very little research has been conducted into how popular musicians are educated in Ireland. This research presents an analysis of case study data using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a framework. The research examines how students of popular music approach their learning and whether their needs are adequately supported in higher and further education settings. The research also investigates how the study of popular music is valued at institutional level. Findings highlight the importance of informal learning, authentic learning environments, technology, performance and industry engagement amongst popular music students and tutors. Findings also show an inconsistent approach to the facilitation of these learning needs within higher and further education institutions in Ireland. Disparate attitudes between students and teaching staff in relation to the value of studying music in higher education is also evidenced in the findings. The research makes an important contribution to the field of popular music education in Ireland and provides a number of recommendations for the delivery of popular music programmes in higher and further education.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 1.0 Introduction</b> .....	<b>9</b>
1.1 Background and Context .....	9
1.2 Thesis Aims and Objectives.....	11
1.3 Approach to Research.....	11
1.4 Scope and Limitations.....	12
1.5 Research Questions.....	13
1.5 Layout of Chapters .....	16
<b>Chapter 2.0 Review of Literature</b> .....	<b>17</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	17
2.2 Learning in Popular Music.....	17
2.3 Musical Learning through Social and Online Media .....	26
2.4 Music in Higher Education.....	33
2.5 Conclusion.....	51
<b>Chapter 3.0 Methodology</b> .....	<b>52</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	52
3.2 Methodological Approach .....	52
3.3 Data Collection .....	57
3.4 Data Analysis .....	64
3.5 Conclusions.....	72
<b>Chapter 4.0 Perceptions: Music Staff and Students in Irish Higher Education Institutions</b> .....	<b>73</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	73
4.2 The Learning Environment of HEIs .....	73
4.3 Student Learning Techniques.....	80
4.4 Value of Learning Music in Higher Education .....	84
4.5 Conclusions.....	90
<b>Chapter 5.0 Lived Experiences: A Music Department Case Study</b> .....	<b>92</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	92
5.2 The Higher Education Music Department Learning Environment .....	92
5.3 Performance, Assessment and Feedback .....	95
5.4 Approaches to Learning.....	102
5.5 Value of Studying Music in Higher Education .....	108
5.6 Conclusions.....	111
<b>Chapter 6.0 Reflections: Music Teaching and Learning in Further Education in Ireland</b> .....	<b>112</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	112
6.2 The Further Education Learning Environment .....	112

6.3 Reflections on Learning .....	120
6.4 Reflections on Teaching.....	127
6.5 Conclusions.....	134
<b>Chapter 7.0 Conclusions: Discussion of Music Teaching and Learning in Higher and Further Education in Ireland.....</b>	<b>135</b>
7.1 Introduction .....	135
7.2 Insights .....	135
7.3 Implications and Recommendations.....	143
7.4 Proposed Band Performance Module .....	145
7.5 Further Research .....	149
7.6 Final Conclusions .....	151
<b>References.....</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>160</b>
Appendix A – Strand 1 Participant Information Sheet.....	160
Appendix B1 – Strand 2 Participant Information Sheet .....	162
Appendix B2 – Strand 2 Consent Form.....	163
Appendix C1 – Strand 3 Participant Information Sheet .....	164
Appendix C2 – Strand 3 Consent Form .....	165
Appendix D – Staff Questionnaire .....	166
Appendix E – Student Questionnaire.....	169
Appendix F – Focus Group Topics.....	171
Appendix G – Tutor Interview Guide Questions .....	173

## List of Figures

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1.1 My research questions	<b>14</b>
Figure 3.1 Sequential mixed-methods design	<b>53</b>
Figure 3.2 The ethnographic research design approach	<b>55</b>
Figure 3.3 Model of data analysis	<b>67</b>
Figure 4.1 A comparison between staff perceptions of students' approaches to learning and students' own learning approaches [Ranked from 1 (high) to 14 (low)]	<b>78</b>
Figure 4.2 Autonomy of students as learners (as identified by staff)	<b>79</b>
Figure 4.3 Skill levels of students upon entering higher education (as identified by staff)	<b>80</b>
Figure 4.4 How often students engage in performances as part of coursework	<b>80</b>
Figure 4.5 Techniques students are most likely to use when learning a new performance piece	<b>81</b>
Figure 4.6 How often students engage in extra-curricular performances	<b>82</b>
Figure 4.7 Do your approaches to learning new performance pieces differ depending on the environment (e.g. home, college, community)?	<b>82</b>
Figure 4.8 Career plans of undergraduate music students	<b>89</b>
Figure 4.9 Degrees most likely to develop performance and technical musical skills	<b>90</b>
Figure 5.1 Future career plans of students at Institution 'Y'	<b>110</b>
Figure 6.1 Interactions between students when working on the charity concert event	<b>122</b>
Figure 6.2 What students liked about being part of a team	<b>124</b>
Figure 6.3 Most useful personal skills and attributes identified by students for planning and producing a music event (%)	<b>126</b>

## List of Tables

	<b>Page</b>
Table 3.1 Music degree course offerings in IoTs and Universities in Ireland	<b>58</b>
Table 3.2 Data Management Tools used during project research	<b>64</b>
Table 3.3 Example of open coding during analysis of staff questionnaires	<b>68</b>
Table 3.4 Example of open coding during analysis of student Learner Records	<b>69</b>
Table 3.5 Example of thematically grouped focus group responses from students	<b>71</b>
Table 4.1 Variety of instruments played by staff and students in music departments	<b>74</b>
Table 4.2 Musical genre performance experiences of staff and students	<b>75</b>
Table 4.3 Approaches to learning by participants	<b>77</b>
Table 4.4 How student approaches to learning new performance pieces differ depending on the environment (college, home, community)	<b>83</b>
Table 4.5 Benefits to pursuing music studies in higher education (staff)	<b>85</b>
Table 4.6 Advice regarding approaches to musical learning	<b>86</b>
Table 4.7 Benefits to pursuing music studies in higher education (students)	<b>87</b>
Table 6.1 Music modules delivered 2017/2018	<b>114</b>
Table 6.2 Learner Record reflective tasks – Music Performance Module	<b>117</b>
Table 6.3 Learner Record reflective tasks – Event Production Module	<b>118</b>
Table 6.4 Instruments and genre preferences of students	<b>119</b>
Table 6.5 Approaches to learning as discussed by students	<b>120</b>
Table 6.6 Student reflections in relation to their top three learning methods	<b>121</b>
Table 6.7 Student reflections in relation to peer support	<b>123</b>



# Chapter 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Context

*Music is in the blood. It is part of our cultural DNA.  
But it is also of huge economic importance.*

Niall Stokes (2017) <sup>1</sup>

The image of the Irish performing music is centuries old. From traditions such as traveling musicians, house sessions and ‘comely maidens dancing at the crossroads’ <sup>2</sup> to the modern-day success stories of acts like U2, The Cranberries and Riverdance, *music performance* has become synonymous globally with Irish culture. However, the concept of *music education* in Ireland is less than a century old.

In the 1940s music as a subject was considered merely an ‘activity for girls’ (Beausang, 2002a) and it was not until the 1970s that music became embedded in the Irish primary school curriculum. This was also the decade that saw the establishment of Ireland’s first music-teaching diploma course (Beausang, 2002b). By the 1980s, the opening of a National Concert Hall in Dublin and the establishment of *Music Network* by the Arts Council, ensured that the performance of musical genres such as classical, jazz and Irish traditional music was given a focus in education settings through master classes and school music projects <sup>3</sup>. By the end of the 1980s, a higher education institution in Dublin had established the first full-time music performance degree course (Beausang, 2002b).

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<sup>1</sup> Niall Stokes is founder and editor of Ireland’s music industry magazine, *Hot Press*. The quotation is taken

<sup>2</sup> In Irish historical discourse, this phrase is famously attributed to Irish Taoiseach Eamon DeValera in a St Patrick’s Day speech made by him in 1943. It refers to one of several nationalist aspirations he had for Ireland at that time which included the celebration of Irish music and culture. See, for example, a discussion on the legacy of Eamon DeValera by Irish historian Diarmaid Ferriter in *Judging Dev: A Reassessment of the Life and Legacy of Eamon DeValera* (2007).

<sup>3</sup> Music Network’s mission is to make high quality live music available and accessible to people throughout Ireland, regardless of their location or circumstance, while supporting the career development of musicians. See <http://www.musicnetwork.ie/> <Accessed, 18<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2019>

In the 1990s popular music became a core part of the music curriculum in Irish post-primary schools. Changes in the syllabus enabled students to present activities such as choirs, orchestras and ensemble performances as components for assessment. The establishment of *Music Generation* in 2010 aimed to further broaden access to performance music education and include youth music genres such as pop, rock, electronic music, rap and hip-hop. National policy today envisions that ‘everyone, regardless of background, should get access to music tuition’<sup>4</sup>. Progress in this regard however has been slow and as observed by Moore, access to music education remains by and large the privilege of those who can afford to pay for private music lessons (G. Moore, 2012).

My experience of music education started when I was very young. I was exposed to music in the family home and was in the fortunate position to be able to attend private music lessons. Over a number of years I took Associated Board piano exams and learned classical music repertoire. I participated in theatre productions in my hometown and took music as a subject in school. However, it was not until I started to sing, play the guitar and perform popular music that I really engaged on an emotional level with music. Like many musicians in Ireland, I was exposed to the practice of ‘learning by ear’. I listened to the music that was playing on the radio or the record player at home and soon had a very interesting back catalogue of popular songs by Irish county and folk artists as well as bands such as The Seekers, The Everly Brothers and The Beatles (my parents’ favourite artists at that time!). My engagement with popular music performance continued off and on until my late twenties when I decided to give up my ‘permanent, pensionable job’ in the information technology sector to return to university to ‘study’ music. While I didn’t really know why I wanted to undertake a music degree or indeed what I planned to do with it once it was completed, I just knew I had to do it. You could say it was an itch that had to be scratched.

It was my experience of returning to university as a mature student to study music that brought about my interest in popular music education. I enrolled for a Bachelor of Music degree in 2002. While at university I took a

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<sup>4</sup> Music Generation is a national performance music education programme for children and young people in the Republic of Ireland. It is co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, the Department of Education and Skills and Local Music Education Partnerships <https://www.musicgeneration.ie/about/> <18<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2019>

number of popular music performance modules and participated in the local music industry as a performer. However, I always felt that the support for popular music at institutional level was less than satisfactory and that the genre was not as highly valued as performance modules in areas such as classical music or Irish traditional music. That experience stayed with me.

My professional life since graduating with a BMus in 2006 has included ten years spent as a part-time lecturer in a higher education institution as well as five years working as a music project coordinator. My experiences of working with young people and managing youth music education projects has given me an insight into the impact that popular music can have on the life of a young person. Whether simply listening to music or jamming with friends, young people place a huge value on popular music. This, along with my own experiences of engaging with popular music both at home and in the formal setting of an education institution is the reason I chose to commence this research project a number of years ago.

## **1.2 Thesis Aims and Objectives**

My overall aim in undertaking this research was to investigate approaches to the teaching and learning of popular music in higher and further education institutions in Ireland. It was my primary objective to gain an insight into how students of popular music approached their learning in formal education settings and whether those institutions adequately supported their learning needs. In addition, I also wanted to investigate the role played by technology and social media as learning tools amongst students. My final key objective in conducting the research was to assess how both staff and students valued the study of music in higher and further education settings and whether the music courses undertaken by students of popular music served their future career plans and aspirations.

## **1.3 Approach to Research**

My overall study comprised three strands of research. Strand 1 consisted of a general survey of staff and students across Higher Education Music

Departments to ascertain the type of learning environments that were prevalent nationally<sup>5</sup>. Strand 2 was a more detailed case study of music performance students and their tutor in a Higher Education Music Department. This strand enabled me to conduct a deeper investigation into specific approaches to music teaching and learning. Strand 3 involved the analysis of learner records from my own music performance students at a College of Further Education. In Ireland such institutions provide opportunities for adults to undertake 1-2 year courses and facilitate progression to higher education or directly into employment. Courses are more practical in content and are primarily focused on the development of vocational skills<sup>6</sup>. Strand 3 therefore enabled me to investigate alternative perspectives through the reflections of students in a further education setting. It also allowed me to provide my own perspective and narrative as researcher-practitioner.

#### 1.4 Scope and Limitations

The scope of the thesis was to present my research into approaches to popular music education in a sample of higher and further education institutions in the Republic of Ireland. I also limited my investigations to the research aims and objectives outlined above. I undertook the research activities over a six-year period between late 2012 and early 2018. As I was also working as a lecturer and teacher while conducting this research project, it was necessary for me to conduct the investigations on a part-time basis and at times during the academic year that did not impact on my teaching commitments. I relied on my contacts in the field of music education to make the necessary connections to conduct my research. This proved to be an arduous and time consuming process due to the difficulties I had gaining access to higher education institutions (I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 3).

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<sup>5</sup> At the time of research, the Irish higher education system included Universities and 'Institutes of Technology' (ITTs). Since then and in response to the government's 'National Strategy for Higher Education 2030' publication, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) is currently overseeing the re-designation of some Institutes of Technology as Technological Universities (TUs). The first TU was established in Dublin in January 2019. See <https://hea.ie/policy/he-reform/technological-universities/>. Accessed June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> For more information see <https://www.education.ie/en/the-education-system/further-education-training/> Accessed June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

As outlined in section 1.3 above, Strand 3 study participants included my own students of popular music in a College of Further Education where I was employed as a teacher. Whilst this allowed me to conduct the final stage of my research in a shorter timeframe, a limitation of the study was a potential bias in the reporting of my findings. Kumar discusses how an ‘unbiased and objective’ researcher should conduct research in a manner that allows conclusions to be drawn to the best of one’s ability and without any vested interest (Kumar, 2014). To control any potential bias I might bring to my teacher reflections or any possible influence I might exert on my students as research participants, it was necessary for me to do the following:

1. Ensure I was as honest and objective as possible in my teacher reflections.
2. Wait until my students had completed their course before asking them to participate in my research.

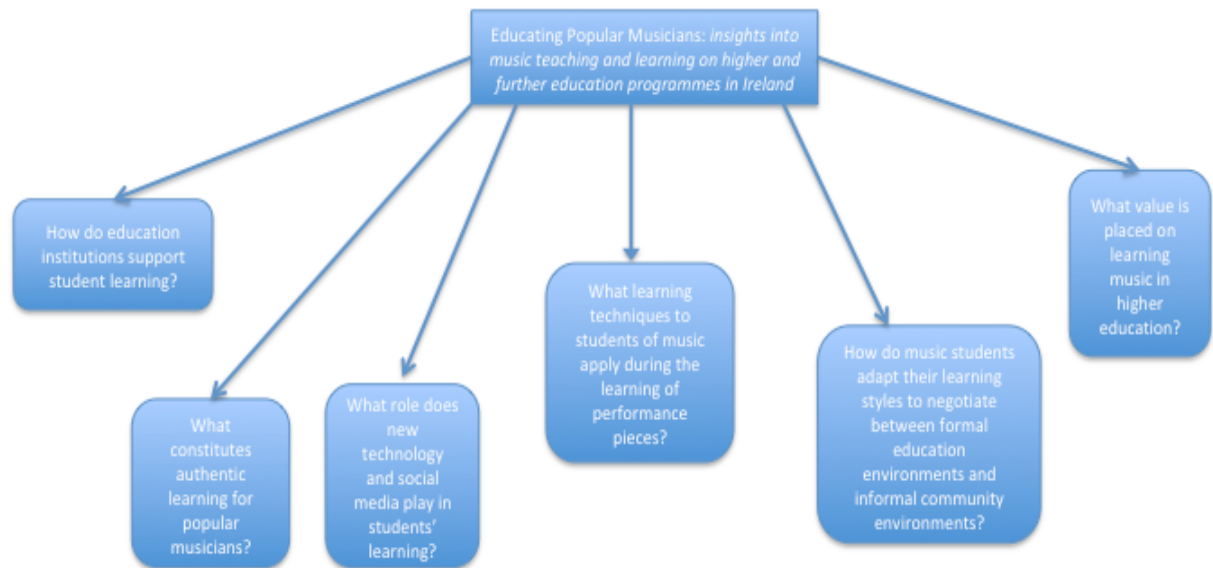
### 1.5 Research Questions

The six primary research questions addressed throughout my study are shown in Fig. 1.1 and discussed below. The primary research questions focused on investigating participants’ understanding of teaching and learning experiences and were designed to explore process and investigate sense making

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<sup>7</sup> Discussed by Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) in respect of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and the assumption that data can tell us something about people’s involvement in the world and how they make sense of it (p 47).



**Figure 1.1 My research questions**

**1. What learning techniques do students of popular music apply during the learning of performance pieces?**

This question was investigated across all three strands of the study and specifically examined the various approaches taken by students when learning and preparing songs for performance. In Strand 1 of the study students were given a list of learning techniques to choose from. Use of these techniques was further explored with students through focus groups and classroom observations in Strand 2 and through an analysis of narrative and reflective accounts in Strand 3.

**2. What constitutes ‘authentic’ learning for popular musicians?**

This question examined notions of ‘authenticity’ and its potential meaning and relevance for students of popular music in education settings. Areas of investigation included determining how students approached their learning, whether informal learning could be observed taking place in the formal education environment and indeed whether education institutions represented authentic learning environments for popular musicians. The question was specifically investigated in Strand 2 of the research project during classroom observations and focus group sessions. Further analysis was undertaken in Strand 3.

### **3. How do music students adapt their learning styles to negotiate between formal education environments and informal community environments?**

A question regarding the potential differences between learning approaches undertaken within the formal environment of an education institution compared to the approaches taken in less formal community or home settings was initially investigated in Strand 1 (student survey). The question was subsequently explored with students in Strand 2 during focus group sessions.

### **4. What role does new technology and social media play in students' learning?**

This question was investigated across all three strands of the study and specifically examined how students were using technology, online resources, apps and social media platforms. As well as potential aids to learning, the use of such tools for the generation of social capital was also examined, as was the use of technology within music departments.

### **5. How do institutes of education support student learning?**

This question was examined through the staff survey in Strand 1, the tutor interview in Strand 2 and through my own reflections as practitioner in Strand 3. Topics of investigation included staff perspectives on the learning preferences of students, the type of learning values espoused by staff and attitudes to the learning needs of students at institutional level.

### **6. What value is placed on learning music in education settings?**

Investigations of this question focused on both staff and student perspectives on the benefits of learning music in higher education and whether the study of music was considered to be of use to the planned future careers of popular musicians. The question was examined through student and staff surveys in Strand 1, the focus group and interview sessions in Strand 2 and my reflections as practitioner in Strand 3.

## 1.5 Layout of Chapters

Chapter 1 provides the rationale, background and context for the conducting of this research project. It also outlines the overall aims, objectives, scope and limitations of the project as well as presenting the research approach and research questions.

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature pertinent to my study and situates my research within a number of thematic areas including learning amongst popular musicians, learning through technology and music in higher education.

Chapter 3 discusses my methodological approach and data design and collection methods. It also presents the theoretical framework that informed my research analysis as well as outlining my data analysis methods.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from Strand 1 of my study and the results of questionnaire data from staff and students in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Ireland.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings from Strand 2 of my research conducted at a Higher Education Institute (Institution 'Y'). It includes an analysis of the data from classroom observations, focus groups and interviews.

Chapter 6, which discusses Strand 3 of my study, provides an analysis of the learner diaries of music students at a College of Further Education (Institution 'Z') as well as my own reflections as a music teacher at that Institution.

Chapter 7 provides an overall discussion on the main insights derived as a result of this research project into popular music teaching and learning in higher and further education in the Republic of Ireland. The overarching findings are presented and implications and recommendations discussed. Opportunities for further research are also highlighted.



## Chapter 2.0 Review of Literature

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide context for my research questions through presenting a review of relevant literature in the fields of popular music, teaching and learning and higher music education. I will discuss pertinent literature in relation to learning amongst popular musicians. I will review empirical studies into informal and authentic musical learning, and examine notions of ‘authenticity’ as put forward by researchers in popular, folk and world music. I will investigate the use of online and social media as learning tools amongst popular musicians. More specifically, I will also assess how popular music is delivered in higher education settings. In particular I will focus on perspectives on teaching and learning as well as values and expectations in respect of popular music education. Finally, I will assess a number of key studies in higher music education in Ireland to provide further context for my own research into popular music education in higher and further education institutions.

### 2.2 Learning in Popular Music

#### 2.2.1 Informal Learning

One of the most influential texts in understanding approaches to musical learning by popular musicians, is *How Popular Musicians Learn* by Lucy Green (2002). In her book, Green discusses the learning techniques of popular musicians and asks how such practices might be facilitated in formal music education environments. Much of the musical learning discussed by Green is based on the premise that popular music is learned in a much more informal way to classical music, a genre which has traditionally been the mainstay of many university and conservatoire music departments over the past century. Green identifies techniques such as aural learning, purposive listening, ensemble

performance and the practising of music in friendship groups, as reflecting the traditional methods of learning amongst popular musicians (Green, 2002).

Other studies into musical learning have also looked at how to engage students with informal learning pedagogies that incorporate their own musical interests, such as those of popular music (Evelein, 2006; Finney & Philpott, 2010; Green, 2008). Indeed, a subsequent publication by Green, *Music, Informal Learning and the School* (Green, 2008) was one of the first studies to systematically incorporate informal learning practices within the formal setting of school music in the UK. Green's study spawned the *Musical Futures* project, an approach to music education based on the informal learning practices of popular musicians that has been embraced by schools and youth music groups across the UK and further afield.

A report discussing the implementation of *Musical Futures* across a selection of schools in the UK sheds light on the values held by the students engaging with the project (S Hallam, Creech, Sandford, Rinta, & Shave, 2012). As well as improved benefits to pupils' musical skills and attitudes, students were also found to have enjoyed their music lessons more, exhibited more confidence and motivation and were better behaved. Participation in the project also brought about enhanced musical skills, better musical performances, enhanced listening skills and a greater understanding of a range of musical genres (ibid: 5-7). In terms of what pupils liked best about *Musical Futures*, their preferences included the fact that they could work with friends and learn from others in a group or band. They also enjoyed listening to the music they liked and the fact that they could experiment with different instruments (ibid: 46).

These findings provide strong support for Folkestad's assertion that 'a lot of musical knowledge is acquired outside school, in informal musical practices, and [...] this is the learning experience of many students, regardless of whether they are small children, adolescents or adult students in Schools of Music and teacher education programmes' (Folkestad, 2006: 136). Folkestad refers to the various ways in which children and young people engage with music through community, socialisation, performance and technology, as 'common' ways of learning (Ziehe, 1986 cited in Folkestad, 2006). Folkestad further asserts that formal and informal learning are constantly in dialogue with each other such that

‘all musicians of all genres combine formal and informal learning strategies in their practice of musical learning’ (ibid: 140).

In identifying ways of using and defining informal learning, Folkestad describes situation (where the learning takes place), learning style (the character, nature and quality of the process), ownership (who owns the decision of the activity) and intentionality (whether learning or simply performing) as central to understanding the difference between formal and informal learning situations (ibid: 141-142). He further states that formal and informal ways of learning are aspects of most educational situations and that an interesting way of analysing musical activities is to observe and describe how ‘the switch’ between the formal and the informal takes place (ibid). This echoes a description by Finney and Philpott of ‘the moment’ of informal learning in a formal teacher-training environment (Finney & Philpott, 2010: 11) and illustrates how learners are not always cognizant of making the switch between formal and informal ways of learning. Exactly how such ‘common’ and informal moments of learning are negotiated by young adults in higher education settings necessitates further investigation and forms the core of my own research project where I examine musical learning in a higher education institution in Ireland through classroom observations.

In discussing informal learning practices amongst popular musicians, Green describes the two most important areas of informal learning as those of listening and peer learning and refers to the overriding practice of popular musicians, to listen to and copy from recordings. According to Green (Green, 2002: 60-98), peer-directed and group learning such as casual encounters, band rehearsals, watching performances and talking to musicians are also central components in popular musicians’ acquisition of skills. Having spent much of her investigation looking at the informal learning methods employed by popular musicians, by the final chapter of her book Green asks whether the two methods of formal and informal learning are at all compatible or simply a ‘contradiction in terms’ (Green, 2002: 177). I conducted similar investigations over the course of this research project by analysing the different processes that underpin musical learning for popular musicians in higher and further education institutions in Ireland.

While there is scant research into the learning processes of musicians in HEIs in Ireland, one study discussing processes of musical performance, transmission and learning amongst musicians focuses on the Irish traditional music scene. John O'Flynn (2011) argues that young Irish traditional musicians reflect popular youth culture insofar as Irish traditional music has in recent decades evolved as a youth-oriented 'popular' music (Smith, 2004, cited in O'Flynn, 2011: 257). In his study, O'Flynn relates the learning experiences of eight young traditional musicians and finds that their individual backgrounds and experiences were much more formative than any formally received style. In particular, he found that family influence was the most critical factor in early enculturation into the tradition. Green defines enculturation as an 'immersion in the music and musical practices of one's environment' (Green, 2008: 5). She discusses how, in a similar way to most folk and traditional musics of the world, popular musicians tend to acquire their musical skills and knowledge first and foremost through enculturation in a community of peers. Echoing these findings, O'Flynn discusses how friendship groups and community participation were also found to be important in the education of the Irish traditional musicians and included 'both real and virtual networks' (O'Flynn, 2011: 261). Furthermore, learning by ear and by listening to recordings were techniques also cited as important in his study (ibid: 263).

Similarly, Cope explored the learning histories of six diverse traditional musicians in an investigation into the importance of social context in the informal learning of musical instruments (Cope, 2002). The findings were based on telephone interviews conducted with musicians performing at the Hebridean Celtic Festival in Scotland in 2000. Cope identifies a number of approaches to informal learning amongst the group such as 'watching and taking advice from other players', 'reading some materials' and participation in sessions, which were seen as motivating and influencing the musicians' development (ibid: 97). Views on the value of formal tuition varied depending on the musicians' learning histories. Cope states that 'those who had been taught conventionally tended to assume that tuition was invaluable to learning' while 'those who had taught themselves were less likely to regard it as central' (ibid: 99). Cope's study indicates that one of the key factors in informal learning is social context. The

informal music session was seen as a key part of the socio-cultural context in which the traditional musicians' music was rooted and an important source of their motivation to practise. Formal tuition without context was deemed to be unsatisfactory (ibid: 103).

Jo Miller highlights similar findings in her thesis investigating the practices of Scottish traditional musicians in the Glasgow Fiddle Workshop (GFW), an organisation that provides opportunities for people with a common interest in Scottish traditional music to learn how to play. For over a year and a half, Miller conducted fieldwork and observed members of the organisation participating in classes, workshops, sessions and events. She highlights the importance of informal learning, aural learning and enculturation during her observations. In reflecting the type of learning typically associated with traditional musicians, Miller points out that the phrase 'learning to play by ear' is one that the group strongly emphasises (Miller, 2016:70). Miller discusses how a limited understanding of learning as being either formal or informal does not accurately reflect learning amongst these musicians. Instead, she asserts that practices varied 'according to the needs of individuals and groups' and were often 'determined by the learning and performance goals of those involved' (ibid: 200). Echoing the findings of Cope, Miller also states that for these musicians, context was key.

The findings of Cope (2002), O'Flynn (2011) and Miller (2016) point to the strong similarity between the informal and socially-situated learning practices of traditional musicians in Scotland and Ireland and the practices of popular musicians. It is such instances of informal and common learning practices in Ireland and their place in the formal environment of higher and further education institutions that formed the basis of my research into learning amongst Irish students of popular music.

### 2.2.2 Authenticity

The notion of authenticity and its place in the world of popular musicians, is deliberated at length in *How Popular Musicians Learn* (Green, 2002). In the book Green discusses a question she posed to her interviewees regarding their

approaches to discipline and systematic study during musical learning, approaches commonly associated with the learning of classical repertoire. Interestingly, her findings show that popular musicians tended to equate 'discipline' with words such as 'unpleasant', 'forced' and 'work' thereby illustrating the commonly held notion of an 'ideology of authenticity' which surrounds rock musicians and which works on the romantic assumption that music is an outpouring of the soul (ibid: 100-103). This 'creed of authenticity' and its potential meaning and relevance for popular music students was examined by me during my research.

Research conducted by Finney and Philpott in relation to informal learning on an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) university programme in the UK, also cites teacher concerns with regard to the authenticity of a pedagogy which replicates informal learning practices in a formal learning environment (Finney & Philpott, 2010: 16). Resolving this dialectic between the formal and the informal and how it fits with the authentic learning expectations of musicians, echoes a concern of Folkestad who states, 'as soon as someone teaches, as soon as somebody takes on the role of being a teacher, then it is a formal learning situation' (Folkestad, 2006: 142). In discussing the BoomTown Music Education Programme in Sweden, a two-year higher education programme for young band musicians of rock and related genres, Karlsen reiterates the point by stating that one of the primary concerns for educators is whether informal learning can still be considered to be informal when converted into pedagogy in a formal education environment (Karlsen, 2010). Furthermore she adds, 'we should ask how we might create meaningful learning environments in terms of fulfilling students' need for authenticity' (ibid: 44). Karlsen however, offers little by way of analysis on this point as her research into the BoomTown Music Education Programme did not include an assessment of the benefits or student experiences of the programme. Whether then a formal institution such as a HEI is even an appropriate environment for 'authentic' learning for popular musicians was also investigated by me during this research project.

In *Experiencing Ethnomusicology: teaching and learning in European universities* (Kruger, 2009), Simone Kruger offers interesting insights into notions of authenticity as expressed by students of ethnomusicology studying

world music in British and German universities. She states, 'recent debates have raised questions about music education in the West, criticising (the often staged and managed) musical transmission for potentially constructing traditionalism and authenticity' (ibid: 71) and further adds that 'instructional culture' (p.71) can never truly replicate how music is authentically transmitted and due to institutional constraints, teaching methods invariably have to be adjusted. The author states that authenticity is now increasingly regarded as 'an ideological concept that is socially and culturally constructed' (ibid: 74). Kruger goes on to identify five 'Signifiers of Authenticity' (ibid: 74-88) based on research into the learning experiences of students of ethnomusicology (see Box 2.1). The 'signifiers' primarily relate to authentic experiences surrounding the physical performance environment, the appropriateness of the instruments used, the sound of the music itself, the means of transmission of the music and whether the teacher is indigenous to the musical culture in question. Kruger's *Signifiers of Authenticity* serve as a useful guide into how authentic musical learning might be categorized and was used as a framework by me when analysing data in relation to authentic learning amongst students of popular music in Ireland.

#### **Box 2.1 Signifiers of Authenticity (Kruger, 2009)**

1. *The Physical Space* - the particular physical space in which students listened to and played their music
2. *The Material Space* - the use of cultural artefacts such as particular musical instruments
3. *The Sonic Space: Music as Sound* - the particular social meanings assigned to musical structures
4. *The Literate Aspects* - the use of particular types of notation, oral / aural transmission etc.
5. *Ethnicity* - whether teachers are 'native' to the musical culture

In an article looking at cases of authentic learning in the Dutch education system, Frits Evelein provides a detailed case study of a student named Irene, an undergraduate studying music at the Rotterdam Academy for Music Education (Evelein, 2006). Evelein states that Irene was encouraged 'in a natural and authentic way' and with the support of her professor to develop her own learning methods such as, for example, active listening to decide whether something 'sounds good' (ibid: 180). Irene's musical learning experiences such as aural learning, the learning of popular instruments and music from other cultures as well as input from experienced lecturers and tutors reflect some of the *Signifiers of Authenticity* outlined by Kruger (2009) i.e. *The Material Space*, *The Literate Aspects* and *Ethnicity*.

In further situating young people's experiences of learning in 'musical places', a study by Lonie & Dickens explores access, inclusion, learning styles and learning environments amongst a group of young musicians on a publicly funded *Wired4Music* youth leadership programme in the UK (Lonie & Dickens, 2016). The authors state that their aim is to examine young people's experiences of musical places and musical learning in the context of cultural and educational policy. They discuss how school boundaries are being critically questioned and situated within their wider communities and that 'within geography, an emerging agenda around new geographies of education and learning has begun to develop' (ibid: 89). Lonie and Dickens point to the importance of the environment in musical learning. They refer to the significance of 'domestic spaces' to facilitate learning and emphasise how musicians re-appropriate domestic spaces for activities other than living (such as music making) and re-purpose formal spaces, such as in school or college, to give greater individual ownership and autonomy for musical learning (ibid: 95). They describe some of the informal learning features engaged in by participants such as learning outside of formal spaces and curricula, self-directed learning and peer-supported learning through communities of practice (ibid: 97). 'In making sense of their own learning trajectories, participants could readily describe how factors other than 'music education' were significant in their musical development' (ibid: 98). The authors state that issues of space and learner identity need to be considered alongside pedagogy in music education. Their study supports other findings in



relation to communities of practice and informal learning (Green, 2002; O'Flynn, 2011; Kenny, 2013) while also further reflecting Kruger's (2009) *Signifiers of Authenticity* such as *The Physical Space*, *The Literate Aspects* and *Ethnicity* in highlighting the importance of authentic learning environments.

What exactly can be understood by terms such as 'natural', 'authentic' and 'common' in relation to popular music, is something that is not consistently defined or explained across the research literature. While Thornton (1995), Green (2002) and Moore (2002) for example all agree on the importance of authenticity in popular music, how they define authenticity appears contradictory. In referring to the sub-cultures of club, dance and the recording industry, Thornton states music in this commercial context 'is perceived as authentic when it *rings true* or *feels real*, when it has *credibility* and comes across as *genuine*' (Thornton, 1995: 49). In contrast, Green refers specifically to the authenticity of rock music as a genre with 'no commercial interest' (Green, 2002: 103). In a study across multiple popular music genres, Moore (2002) takes another approach when he defines authenticity in terms of 'who' rather than 'what' is being authenticated. Moore argues that in fact *every* music can be found to be authentic depending on who it is being perceived by. He asserts that authenticity in music performance is assessed through listening and varies depending on different perspectives (A. Moore, 2002). Moore refers to three perspectives that authenticate a performance:

1. 'First person authenticity' - how the originator (composer or performer) conveys the impression that the music has integrity.
2. 'Third person authenticity' - how accurately the performer represents the ideas of another.
3. 'Second person authenticity' - how the performance is valued by the listener or audience.

He further asserts that when it comes to assessing the authenticity of a performance it is the 'success with which a particular performance conveys its impression that counts' (A. Moore, 2002: 220).

While such research studies present a myriad of possible definitions of authenticity from various popular musical genres and perspectives, they do not offer any real clarification as to the potential meaning of authenticity for students of popular music within higher education environments. During my investigations into student learning in higher education I bridged this gap by using Kruger's *Signifiers of Authenticity* amongst British and German university music students (2009) as a theoretical framework for analysing perceptions of authenticity by popular music students and tutors within an Irish education context.

## **2.3 Musical Learning through Social and Online Media**

### **2.3.1 Social Networking and Sharing Platforms**

The need to acquire social capital is hugely important for music students given the regularity with which they have to rely on group interactions and knowledge sharing to complete performances and group assessments. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as the 'aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group' (Bourdieu, 1986: 248). Bourdieu asserts that while the amount of social capital an individual possesses depends on the network of connections he/she can acquire and maintain, the 'profits' or benefits for that individual can include not only social but also cultural and economic capital. It is this 'network of relationships', Bourdieu argues, that establishes 'social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term' (ibid: 249). The acquisition of social capital that can arise as a result of being a member of an educational institution is a key consideration in assessing learning amongst music students in higher education settings.

When discussing students' acquisition of social capital, consideration must be given to the potential role of online social networking and sharing platforms in educational settings. A study by Ellison et al., investigates how the

social networking site Facebook contributes to the accumulation of social capital on a college campus (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Three forms of social capital were investigated: 'bridging' social capital ('weak' ties / loose connections with potentially useful individuals), 'bonding' social capital ('strong', emotional ties such as with family and close friends) and 'maintained' social capital (maintaining ties with a 'previously inhabited' community). The authors point out that research into the use of Facebook suggests that users are more likely to engage in 'searching' for people with whom they have an offline connection rather than 'browse' for complete strangers (ibid: 1144). This points to the potential of Facebook as a tool for educational institutions to encourage social interaction and knowledge sharing amongst students. The authors also refer to a 2006 Pew Internet survey report which showed that 'online users were more likely to have a larger network of close ties than non-Internet users, and that Internet users are more likely than non-users to receive help from core network members' (ibid: 1147). Results also showed that Facebook was implicated in students' efforts to 'develop and maintain' bridging social capital (ibid: 1157). The researchers suggest that latent ties (i.e. those that are technically possible but not activated socially) might be more easily converted into weak (bridging) ties through the use of social media sites such as Facebook (ibid: 1162). Interestingly, while Internet use alone did not predict social capital accumulation, intensive use of Facebook did, leading them to draw the conclusion that colleges should explore ways to encourage such usage (ibid: 1164).

Although this research relates specifically to Facebook, a specific platform that may likely change or dissipate over time, the use of social networking and sharing platforms amongst students is an important consideration in the context of music education. The above findings point to the potential for academic staff to engage with students through social networking and sharing platforms in order to tap into the large knowledge-sharing community that exists. What social media use can do for the generation of social capital amongst students of popular music was also examined by me in the context of student learning in higher and further education institutions in Ireland.

### 2.3.2 Virtual Communities and Online Learning

As observed by Burnard (2012) the digitisation of music has resulted in a new form of musical creativity that has come to be facilitated by social technologies such as the Internet. Burnard states, 'the sites on which artists and fans create their own music, download playlists, remix music, and share files have a sense of a virtual community and collectiveness' (Burnard, 2012: 16). Burnard adds that these emergent communal music-making processes can be found in online digital media spaces. With the creation, consumption and learning of music becoming increasingly linked to the Internet and social technologies, the potential role of technology as a learning tool in education settings is an important area investigated by me in my research.

A study into the online Chat Page of the musician John Prine highlights one such example of 'a virtual place of music community' (Kibby, 2000). The study consisted of a web survey, semi-structured email interviews and a qualitative analysis of exchanges on the chat page over a 12-month period. Both long and short-term users of the page were identified, the former being credited with the emergence of a 'virtual community' (McLaughlin et al. 1995, cited in Kibby, 2000: 94). The author identified three primary modes of use of the Chat Page (Box 2.2) including socialising and the exchanging of musical knowledge and information.

#### **Box 2.2 Primary modes of use of the 'John Prine' Chat Page (Kibby, 2000)**

1. Socialising i.e. general or social chat (70%)
2. Exchanging music related ideas and experiences (41%)
3. Getting or providing music related information (34%)

The findings point to the potential importance of such forums not just for the accumulation of social capital but also for the acquisition of musical knowledge. The Chat Page was also found to give the network of users a sense of place and identity with Kibby stating that knowledge and the 'ritual sharing of information' provided a sense of belonging to the online community (ibid: 95).

Kibby further adds, 'the success of the John Prine Chat Room lay in the fact that it enabled a virtual community, defined by the place of the web page; connected by implied links to John Prine; and bound by the ritual sharing of information' (ibid: 96). Whether online chat rooms, discussion groups or intranet sites were used as sources of musical knowledge by students of popular music was investigated by me through the conducting of classroom observations and focus groups in a higher education institution in Ireland.

An interesting topic also discussed by Kibby was in relation to the demise of the Chat Room which came about once the artist had stopped releasing new albums and when no new information about John Prine or his musical activities was forthcoming. Whilst online conversations continued, Kibby found the absence of Prine as a topic of conversation to be noticeable (ibid). Divisions between users that were 'regular' contributors to the site and newcomers also began to emerge. In addition, 'flaming' or 'the use of personal comments of a negative, insulting or invective nature' (Baym, 1995, cited in Kibby, 2000: 98) became common and were fuelled by the absence of social inhibitors on the anonymous web forum. Considerations in relation to how to appropriately manage interactions amongst students on social media at a time when cyber-bullying is a concern for many young people, was also investigated by me in my observations of student learning while teaching music performance at a College of Further Education in Ireland.

A study by Salavuo investigating the use of online communities as forums for musical collaboration found that online communities have become environments for learning and musical practice across the developed world (Salavuo, 2006). Salavuo cites Poblocki (2005) in asserting that 'at least occasional face-to-face contacts are common and required for a community to maintain social ties created in online communities' (Salavuo, 2006: 254). This points to the potential benefit of online communities as places of learning and musical engagement for groups of practicing musicians. Salavuo further identifies the goals and purposes of such communities as the sharing of values and standards, opportunities to meet new people and the ability to access information (ibid: 255). In terms of the voluntary and informal nature of participation on online forums, Salavuo noted that in order for online

communities to exist, they require a critical mass of members who are 'both motivated to participate and have useful knowledge' (ibid: 256). Salavuo suggests that online communities in the field of music are both knowledge communities and musical communities in that the distribution of music and listening to the music of one's peers are equally as important. Such practices Salavuo says, can be contrasted with the need for expert scaffolding and external motivation factors in institutional learning environments (ibid). During my focus group discussions with music students I also compared the learning motivations of students engaged in informal learning through online and social media with the formal learning undertaken by them in their educational institution.

Reasons for participation by respondents were revealed by Salavuo to be primarily musical or both musical and social. Motives that had to do with learning and advancing social knowledge were quite significant for participants while musical reasons included the chance to hear other people's music as well as getting feedback on one's own music (ibid: 262). The discussion forum connected to the website was not found to be as important as the music section (ibid: 264) and in terms of social community therefore, the author suggests that online communities are not as solid as workplace or school communities. This hypothesis would seem to contradict findings such as those of Kibby (2000) and a previous study by Salavuo & Hakkinen (2005), however, where evidence was found of processes of social learning such as 'knowledge construction, argumentation and requests for clarification' (cited in Salavuo, 2006: 264). The study also found that members with formal musical knowledge were seen as a valuable asset to the online community. Salavuo states that online community provides opportunities to provide answers to problems 'at the time they are relevant' (ibid: 265).

Salavuo states 'online communities have become mainstream environments of musical practice for musicians in their teens and 20s' (ibid). In discussing the implications of this for music education, the author refers to the ill-organised nature of online forums and their potential threat to inexperienced members and advises music educators to teach their students the skills necessary to cope in such environments. Salavuo echoes the findings of Folkestad (2006) in stating that institutional music education can only cover a

small part of the musical activities of young people and that ‘teachers should be aware of the possibilities the online communities offer in terms of collaborative, on-demand based reciprocal learning, and social searching of information’ (ibid: 267). However, with only 4% of the respondents in Salavuo’s study identifying as active music students (ibid: 259), the findings do not provide any real insight into the specifics of how students of popular music might engage with this type of online learning.

In a study into the use of technology amongst higher education students in Australia (Zhukov, 2015), Zhukov found that there was ‘clear evidence that Australian higher education music students have embraced technology in their instrumental learning’ (ibid: 75). Zhukov highlights in particular their use of the music-sharing platform YouTube and asserts that it has become a basic tool for them in that it ‘provides an immediate access to multiple performances of the same work’ (ibid) and assists with repertoire selection and the learning of musical pieces. John O’Flynn (2011) also found online learning to play an important part in the learning practices of Irish musicians. One musician he interviewed, Niamh, declared herself a fan of learning tunes from the internet, while two others, Sile and Stephen were ‘very enthusiastic about YouTube...for picking up new tunes, arrangements and techniques’ (O’Flynn, 2011: 264).

The Online Academy of Irish Music (OAIM) provides an example of a knowledge-sharing website for Irish traditional musicians to access music tuition, discuss lessons and engage with peers in classroom chat forums around the world<sup>8</sup>. Ailbhe Kenny’s study of the OAIM discusses the growing culture of this new form of on-line musical participation (Kenny, 2013). In discussing some of the community practices in evidence on the site, Kenny states ‘despite the often-assumed solitary nature of learning from the Internet, much of the learning was carried out and / or related in a collective manner through the chat forums’ with both individual and group learning emphasised through ‘reflection’ (Kenny, 2013: 205). The website subscribers to the OAIM formed relationships, took a collective responsibility for the site, were mutually accountable for its success and generally fostered ‘a sense of shared ownership over the decision making in the OAIM’ (ibid: 206). OAIM was found to fulfill a particular need for users who

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<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.oaim.ie>. Accessed Feb 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

had no access to Irish Traditional Music in their own locality with access cited as 'a major factor' in joining (ibid: 209). Kenny identifies several community practices at work such as forming relationships, sharing experiences, learning and knowledge, projecting music-related identities and collaborating (ibid: 213).

The OAIM learning approaches included online course material, support material (such as notation), chat forums and optional feedback (through sending a video of a performance to a tutor). Video tutorials were seen as copying the natural 'passing it on' approach taken in Irish traditional music where musicians learn a tune orally phrase by phrase. Visual learning was also seen as very important to the process with live 'cyber sessions' providing a focus for such musical practices by capturing the essence of group music-making. The physicality of the website location (Co. Clare), was also seen as crucial by learners (ibid: 218 -220) and can be seen to reflect one of Kruger's *Signifiers of Authenticity* (2009), *The Physical Space* with environment cited as an important factor in recreating authenticity. Kenny identified one of the OAIM musical practices as an integration of pedagogies of e-learning and traditional approaches. Practising habits, for example, varied but multiple learning tools were used e.g. 'Alice used multiple resources for practising including the video tutorials, notation, books and specialised software, therefore mixing technology with more traditional tools for learning' (Kenny, 2013: 223). Dedication to self-directed practice routines was also very evident with progression in learning motivating students to sustain their musical practice (ibid).

The above studies point to the important use of websites, discussion forums and social media as places of peer and musical learning for musicians. In order to investigate online learning in the context of popular music education in Ireland, I conducted classroom observations and focus group discussions with popular music students in order to examine the prevalence of online learning during music performance activities and in support of informal learning in the formal environment of a higher education institution.



## 2.4 Music in Higher Education

### 2.4.1 Teaching, Learning and Authenticity

Gaunt and Papageorgi state that current debates around the value of music have become areas of concern within the HE environment where the concept of a musician within contemporary higher education has 'grown and diversified' (Gaunt & Papageorgi, 2010: 261). The authors add that the balance of skills required by musicians varies between fields of music and refer to various research studies which have looked at gender, levels of prior experience and musical genre specialisation (ibid: 264-265). They state, for example, that classical musicians consider the drive to excel musically and technically along with notation and analytical skills to be of utmost importance. Popular, jazz and folk musicians on the other hand, place a higher value on non-notation skills.

Gaunt and Papageorgi (2010) also make reference to the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and its statement that HEIs foster 'informed, reflective, versatile, innovative and open-minded musicians with a raft of transferable skills' (QAA, 2008). This notion, that attaining transferable skills is an important outcome of a music degree, is an interesting idea also raised elsewhere in the research literature (see, for example, Cloonan, 2005; Green, 2002; Hunter, 2006) and by the National Association for Music in Higher Education (NAMHE). In a series of videos documenting 'The Value of a Music Degree', NAMHE profiles music graduates working in areas such as music performance, community music, politics and human resources. The videos focus on the employability of music graduates who have attained not just specific skills in music performance but also transferable skills such as time management, creativity, teamwork, problem solving, communication and the ability to network (NAMHE, 2019).

Another study by Papageorgi et al. (2010b, cited in Gaunt & Papageorgi, 2010: 269-270) reveals many of the key features of ideal learning environments as articulated by music students (see Box 2.3). These include developing student's own musical interests, cultivating supportive communities of learning, providing progressive and positive learning environments and the presence of

inspirational teachers. This supports findings from other studies into teaching and learning in the creative arts such as that of Olsson (1997) who presents the role of the teacher in creative subjects as primarily that of a facilitator. Unlike the traditional role of the 'authoritarian teacher', a facilitator provides 'supervision' and is 'a good role model' in an environment where classroom activities 'tend to be much more open-ended' (Olsson, 1997: 298). In discussing pedagogy in music education, Burnard asserts that classroom environments should enable creativity through providing students with choice and ownership of their learning (Burnard, 2010: 10). In the specific case of popular music education, Green also stresses the importance of a non-authoritarian approach to teaching and learning:

*In so far as a community of practice is available to young popular musicians, it tends to be a community of peers rather than 'master-musicians' or adults with greater skills. The significance of this is profound, as it affects the entire way in which skills and knowledge are transmitted in the popular music field, taking the onus of transmission away from an authority figure, expert or older member of the family or community, and putting it in large measure into the hands of groups of young learners themselves.*

(Green, 2008: 6)

**Box 2.3 Ideal learning environments as articulated by music students  
(Papageorgi et. al., 2010b)**

1. Motivating and inspiring teachers / mentors
2. Facilitating networking and the bringing together of musicians
3. Broadening students' minds and developing their musical interests
4. Facilitating entry into an active music scene
5. Being progressive
6. Fostering a positive learning environment
7. Fostering personal as well as professional development
8. Cultivating supportive communities of learning

In an investigation into the socio-cultural and learning experiences of music students in a traditional British 'redbrick' university (Dibben, 2006), Dibben observes that 'one fairly unique aspect of the study of music in HE is the opportunities it presents for informal teaching and learning, and enhanced social contact between students and staff through musical performance' (ibid: 93). Dibben found however, that a primary reason for dropping out of the music degree programme at the university was 'dissatisfaction with the amount and type of performance' (ibid: 100), this perhaps suggesting that the informal and social learning experiences valued by students were not always available to them as undergraduates. Dibben's study also found that for some students, the curriculum did not cater for their individual genre preferences and was too biased towards the classical repertoire with genres such as popular and film music 'noticeably absent from the course' (ibid: 104). Such findings reflect the observation of Gaunt and Papageorgi (2010) that one of the challenges for music in HEIs now, is how best to support multiple areas of excellence while enabling individuals to forge focused paths (ibid: 271).

In contrast to Dibben's findings in a UK context, a study by McPhail in New Zealand, looks at the tension between informal and formal approaches within an educational context by providing examples of teachers (in this case two rock graduates) who needed to up-skill their formal musical knowledge to meet the learning needs of their students (McPhail, 2013). He states that in New Zealand, curriculum changes in post primary school have sought to emphasise knowledge *in* music along with 'the legitimisation of students' interests, skills and prior learning' (ibid: 44). McPhail acknowledges a conflict between the formal and the informal in education and asserts that 'a curriculum that emphasises the social at the expense of the epistemic may leave students (and indeed future teachers) less well-equipped to move beyond the context of the music and music making they already know' (ibid: 45).

McPhail presents the case of two teachers, Lydia and Robert, both of whom were graduates of rock degree programmes. In Lydia's case, she was the sole music teacher in her school and her popular music approach primarily facilitated songwriting and performance. Her students regarded their school

music as enhancing their own areas of interest and the researcher found that the students were hugely influential in the conceptualisation and realisation of the music curriculum. He describes a tension for Lydia 'between wanting to validate the musical talents and interests of her students and the need to provide access to other sorts of musical knowledge' and describes how this tension was exacerbated by her poor knowledge of traditional music education discourse such as Western Art Music (ibid: p48). He states, 'what struck me while observing the students in their practical music-making session was a lack of facility to verbalise and communicate in the process of attempting to put a piece of music together' (ibid: 49).

Robert, on the other hand, was part of a diverse team of teachers in the music department at this school. His experience of formal music knowledge at his university meant he had 'attempted to expand students' awareness of the use of theoretical knowledge through its application in songwriting and composition' (e.g. through chord progressions in melody writing) (ibid: 50). In relation to music theory however, Robert described having to learn on-the job and stay a step ahead of his students when he first started teaching and described how his own lack of immersion in theoretical and classical aspects of music knowledge had created challenges for him in his work. McPhail observed that there was a sense of purpose and direction in Robert's lessons not seen in Lydia's and a differentiation between the everyday knowledge that students brought to the school and the specialist concepts being introduced in the lessons (ibid: 51). He asserts that a curriculum that centres predominantly on student interest and performance 'may not provide students with all the knowledge they need to become fully critical members of the field in which they might wish to participate and contribute' (ibid: 52). The author cites Feichas (2010) who asks to what degree higher education music is preparing students to work in a wide variety of genres, styles and functions. McPhail suggests that higher education teacher training programmes should identify the important foundational conceptual knowledge required by teachers along with the appropriate pedagogical approaches to impart it (ibid: 53). He advocates for a social realist and progressive approach to music teaching and the creation of links between informal and formal knowledge rather than the replacement of one with the

other. In my interview with a music performance tutor in a higher education institution in Ireland, I also investigated whether both formal and informal knowledge was evident in the popular musicians studying there.

In relation to the study of popular music in higher education, Martin Cloonan poses an interesting question by quoting an NME music journalist who asks, 'can you really learn how to rock like The Strokes by sitting in a lecture theatre?' (Johnstone, 2003: cited in Cloonan, 2005). In his article discussing the emergence of Popular Music Studies as a discipline in UK higher education institutions, Cloonan refers to the difficult relationship historically, between classical musicology and popular music, as evidenced by the early attempts of academics to engage in lyrical analysis rather than musical sound and improvisation in order to legitimise the study of popular music in academia (Cloonan, 2005: 79-80). He refers to Simon Frith as one of the first academics in the UK to make the move away from purely textual analyses of music to the broader study of industry, audience and politics with such changes eventually leading to the study of popular music today as an institutionally established discipline with a broad research base. However, Cloonan tells us, questions regarding its status still remain such as the multidisciplinary nature of the discipline along with its often varied, haphazard and broad curriculum (ibid: 82). Using data drawn from investigations into six popular music degree programmes in the UK, Parkinson and Smith (2015) similarly refer to the problematic nature of providing authentic popular music education in the UK where higher education policy has become increasingly characterised by 'themes of global competitiveness, knowledge to wealth creation and employability' (Parkinson & Smith, 2015: 95). In reflecting the findings of Cloonan (2005), they discuss the suspicion that exists around the academic legitimacy of higher popular music education (HPME). They cite Beaumont (2010) who writes 'as if capless tuition fees and crippling student debts won't make it hard enough for graduates leaving higher education, there's now the possibility they may be lumbered with [...] a qualification gained from taking lessons in Lady Gaga' (Parkinson & Smith, 2015: 98). Beaumont's rather flippant remark clearly illustrates the issues that persist around the value of studying popular music in higher education. I also

investigate values in relation to higher popular music education from an Irish perspective in my study.

Parkinson and Smith's research also investigates 'authenticity' in the context of higher popular music education (HPME) (Parkinson & Smith, 2015) and they discuss authenticity within five key themes (outlined in Box 2.4).

**Box 2.4 Themes of Authenticity in Higher Popular Music Education (HPME)  
(Parkinson & Smith, 2015)**

1. Vocational and Academic Authenticity
2. Authenticities of Employability
3. Musical Authenticity
4. Gender and Authenticity
5. Pedagogic Authenticity

In respect of vocational and academic authenticity, the authors assert that the inclusion of popular music in the academy in the UK has 'destabilised understandings of what it is to be authentic in both popular music *and* the academy' (ibid: 98). With the increasing move towards providing degree-level programmes in popular music, content has become intellectualised with a shift towards more academic, liberal and theoretical content. Where courses have historically had a vocational focus, such as in West London Colleges and the University of Westminster, they say the shift has also moved in favour of incorporating more theoretical content previously absent from the curricula. 'Among the current provision', state the authors, 'it is rare to find programmes that can be neatly ascribed to one or other side of a liberal/vocational binary' (Parkinson & Smith, 2015: 101). Their findings support Cloonan and Hulstedt who identified three broad areas of study - vocational, practical and critical - in their 2012 report into the provision and delivery of popular music courses in

higher education in the UK (M. Cloonan & Hulstedt, 2012). They also observed that 'defining core elements of popular music degrees proved difficult' (ibid: 4).

In discussing authenticities of employability, Parkinson and Smith assert that concern for authenticity in education has moved towards preparing students for the real world of paid employment, with authenticity corresponding to the 'ideological and practical proximity to the professional context' (Parkinson & Smith, 2015: 104). They point to recent developments within HE policy and highlight that currently, the Higher Education Funding Council for England assesses the employability of graduates from higher education degree programmes and maintains statistics on graduate employment and earnings. They note that other dimensions to the value of a degree, such as cultural edification, remain 'muted in comparison' (ibid: 105) and further assert that moves towards the justification of HPME as a means to sustained employment and income contradict the 'ideology of authenticity' identified by Green (2002) in her interviews with popular musicians. Whilst questions about employability were not specifically addressed in Cloonan and Hulstedt's report, the researchers noted that 'within the music industries self-employability is perhaps a greater asset' (M. Cloonan & Hulstedt, 2012: 17). How UK policy expectations in relation to popular music degrees and their need to provide access to sustained employment can be reconciled with the part-time, self-employed status of many popular musicians, would seem to be a glaring omission in the discourse regarding the reality of the music profession. My investigation into the expectations of students in Ireland with regard to their future careers was examined through questionnaires and focus groups discussions with students of popular music.

In terms of musical authenticity, Parkinson and Smith found that genre preferences were rarely declared in programme literature with curriculum design teams making comparative judgments on what to include or exclude in the curriculum content. They suggest that a pluralistic approach to courses should in fact, aspire to an 'authenticity of self-actualisation amongst student players' (Parkinson & Smith, 2015: 109). The authors also address the issue of gender as a barrier to authenticity in popular music education and state that to be authentically gendered in popular music is to be masculine (ibid: 110).

Through their research they point to a 'white male hegemony' within HPME and cite Bourdieu (2001) and Butler (2004) who write 'gender and its habitus are thus obstacles to an authentic music education experience – for women, therefore also for men, and for people whose gender does not conform to the convenient normative binary' (Parkinson & Smith, 2015: 111). Parkinson and Smith argue therefore, that 'institutions of popular music education can be perceived as inauthentic to the music that they teach' (ibid: 112). Their observations in relation to gender can also be compared to the male dominated process of 'musical gentrification' identified within higher popular music education in Norway (Dyndahl, Karlsen, Nielsen, & Skårberg, 2016) (discussed later in this section). Whilst gender representation within higher education was not directly investigated as part of my study, I observed whether gendered differences existed between male and female students during the performance of popular music.

The final theme of authenticity discussed by Parkinson and Smith is in relation to pedagogy. The authors refer to the 'relative vacuum in literature on popular music pedagogy' in the higher education context (Parkinson & Smith, 2015:113) and point to the importance of learning and identity for students in higher education at a time when they are at a critical juncture in their development as musicians. They cite Smith (2013a) in advocating for a 'hybridized' learning model which reflects the formal, non-formal and informal learning practices engaged in by popular musicians (Parkinson & Smith, 2015: 115). The authors assert that given the few established pedagogical models that currently exist within HPME, approaches to teaching and learning in popular music should reflect an aspiration towards authenticity (ibid: 116). My research also examined the authenticity of course content and pedagogy for students of popular music in the context of higher and further education in Ireland.

In the Norwegian context researchers, Dyndahl, Karlsen, Nielsen and Skarberg, explore the process of academisation and institutionalisation of popular music in higher education (Dyndahl et al., 2016). In their article, they pose three key research questions:



1. What kinds of popular music styles have been included and excluded in the academisation of popular music in higher education?
2. How is musical gentrification visible?
3. Which structural forces govern the processes of musical gentrification?

The authors define 'musical gentrification' as 'complex processes with both inclusionary and exclusionary outcomes, by which musics, music practices and music cultures of relatively lower status are made to be objects of acquisition by subjects who inhabit higher or more powerful positions'. They cite Hansen et al. (2014) who claim that professors represent a powerful academic cultural elite with the ability to include new areas of interest, within their own fields, into academic programmes (Dyndahl et al., 2016: 3). The authors found that more 'established' styles of popular music such as jazz, rock and pop, were the most readily accepted into the academy. They state that 'country music, blues, rock and roll, punk rock, contemporary R&B and Scandanavian dance band music are outliers that have been nearly or completely excluded' (Dyndahl et al., 2016: 13). They attest that jazz, rock and pop are perceived within academia as 'high' popular culture with the less successfully accepted styles 'as either too closely associated with working class culture or as offering insufficient opportunities for contemplating the music in a disinterested academic mode' (ibid).

Musical gentrification was found to have occurred in three ways in the Norwegian context: through a gradual uptake of popular music across higher education, an increase in the disciplinary breadth of musicology to include non-Western art music traditions and through music education and music therapy programmes providing for popular music in the conservatoire space. The structural forces that were found to govern the process of musical gentrification in Norway included 'gender, institutional status and the academic elite power ascribed to individual professors' (ibid). In the case of gender, the authors state that up to 2004 the gentrification process in higher education in Norway typically belonged to male academics as men dominated the gentrification processes in numbers and were the individuals that introduced most new

subgenres and styles into the academy. By 2005, the majority of new styles were being introduced by women and the authors question whether this was due to the fact that more female academics had obtained central positions within the field or whether the 'phenomenon of gentrification in general has been feminised and hence devalued' (ibid). Either way, it is clear that there are significant implications for the teaching and learning of popular music in higher education. This is evidenced in the way the content of academic programmes may be influenced by a few individuals with privilege and power. The perceived elitism of academia and the potential barrier it poses to the practice of authentic popular music performance in higher education (Cloonan, 2005; McPhail, 2013; Parkinson & Smith, 2015; Dyndahl et al., 2016) was similarly investigated in my study in the context of Ireland.

#### **2.4.2 Values and Expectations**

A study by Venn investigating music performance at Lancaster University, examines the expectations of students and compares those expectations with the stated educational aims and learning objectives of their chosen performance modules (Venn, 2010). Venn states that 'the requirement to balance internal (curricula) and external (financial) demands when designing performance modules frequently necessitates a compromise between those aims and objectives that are desirable and those that are actually achievable' (ibid: 1). The author also states that while practical activities form an important part of the identity of music students, there is limited theoretical underpinning for understanding performance learning environments (ibid: 3).

In terms of student expectations, Venn found that prior school experiences influenced the expectations of university performance students and upon arrival at university, students had only vague notions of what to expect. Their prior educational experiences were found to range from self-taught to conservatoire-educated. Instrumental staff reinforced this impression of students entering university with limited expectations. In fact, many students had few expectations beyond that of playing their instrument. Belief in the importance of the provision of one-to-one tuition was common 'with the

majority of students expecting that the nature of tuition would follow patterns established in pre-university education' (ibid: 11). Students expected that there would be numerous performance opportunities and referred to assessment goals such as passing recitals. Venn states the most common shared pre-university experience, 'was that of working through Associated Board Graded Exams, with A-levels coming a close second' (ibid: 12). The author asserts that aspects of technique, musicianship and self-analysis had been overlooked in students' prior education, leading to difficulties in negotiating the transition to university. Those students who did rate themselves highly, tended to do so based on previous exam success (ibid). The communication of course aims and objectives, was perceived to be the responsibility of the instrumental tutor. For many students, those learning aims and objectives were less important than their own personal goals. In terms of modes of teaching, students valued one-to-one lessons most highly but also appreciated what they perceived as 'the novelty of group lessons and master classes' and the benefits to such approaches (ibid: 16).

Venn points to the need for students in higher education to take responsibility for active learning and the challenges that pre-university experiences present to a successful transition into higher education. The author highlights gaps between departmental aims, delivery of modules and student expectations and concludes that 'as we move deeper into a period in which rising tuition fees creates an ever more demanding student base, the need to reflect on such issues becomes ever more urgent' (ibid: 20). While Venn's statement in relation to the consideration of economic value reflects findings presented by Cloonan & Hulstedt (2012) and Parkinson & Smith (2015), it fails to acknowledge the primary importance of understanding the educational and pedagogical needs and values for students undertaking music qualifications in higher education.

Studies by Pitts (2013) and Simones (2015) into expectations in music departments in respect of performance related activities (PRAs) and performance modules provide an insight into some of the pedagogical needs and values of staff and students engaged in music performance in higher education. Pitts identifies a range of extra-curricular activities that contribute to the diverse learning that takes place within university music departments in the UK (Pitts,

2013). She states that 'music students would think very badly of a department that did not offer a concert series, a range of vocal and instrumental ensembles, and opportunities for student-led music, from string quartets to big bands, jazz groups to musicals' (ibid: 195). Pitts argues that through engagement in performance-related activities or PRAs, 'students are challenged to make independent musical decisions and to apply these in their future careers and musicals lives' (ibid).

Pitts refers to three transitions that take place when students join a university music department: becoming a university musician, learning in and out of the lecture room and changing cultures and priorities. In becoming a university musician, music students have already begun to form their musical identities and develop confidence through PRAs in school and beyond (ibid: 195). Once they enter higher education, the department culture begins to shape what it means to them to be a 'university musician' (ibid: 196) with the participation of staff 'cited as being important to students, both by the students themselves and by staff who saw their own presence as encouraging commitment and critical engagement' (ibid).

In learning in and out of the lecture room, music students who were able to connect their 'out of hours' activities with their degree subject, appeared to be 'more goal-directed and focused on enhancing their learning and employability' with students feeling pressured by an 'employability agenda to demonstrate achievements beyond their degree results' (ibid: 197). Pitts states how this student need creates a challenge for music departments to ensure the value of PRAs not just for learning but also for future employment prospects (ibid).

Disappointingly, the changing culture and priorities of music departments appeared most pronounced when it came to the focus on results and success such as with the introduction in 2012 of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). Pitts found that 'music-making and concert-going were under threat in a range of departments through a gradual erosion of resources as well as a qualitative shift in students' expectations and experiences' (ibid: 199). Furthermore the author states that such a change in culture remains a risk as students get into ever-increasing levels of debt to attend university. She argues that staff will need to be more proactive in asserting the value of PRAs for

student learning, development, identity and participation in a community of practice.

Simones similarly argues that in order for meaningful transformation to take place in higher education, 'a continuous understanding of all the social agents that give 'life' to the university as a community of practice and their dynamic interactions is essential' (Simones, 2015: 1). The author discusses the multiplicity of roles performed by music professionals and the resultant difficulty in defining authentic learning experiences for students. She argues that consideration needs to be given to learning methods that reflect the wide range of possible professional destinations embarked upon by music professionals. Simones' HEA-funded study investigates how specialist instrumental and vocal tuition is integrated into the modular structure of Music degree courses at the University of Ulster and Queen's University, Belfast.

Simones' findings in respect of student learning reflect those of Venn (2010), as 'it was clear that students' attitudes/expectations towards HE appeared to be strongly influenced by past experiences of learning' (Simones, 2015: 3). Students reported preferring one-to-one lessons while also acknowledging the benefits of group lessons. Students who had prior experience of group tuition or who were self-taught, 'showed higher levels of flexibility in relation to the type of tuition offered at their universities' (ibid: 4). The majority of students saw themselves working in the future as both music teacher and performer. Interestingly, Simone highlights the quotation of a student - '*we bought a degree here*' (ibid: 6), which supports findings by Venn (2010), Cloonan & Hulsdedt (2012), Pitts (2013) and Parkinson & Smith (2015) in respect of fee-paying students' expectations of their HE music qualifications.

In relation to tutors, Simones points to the part-time role and lower status of vocal and instrumental tutors when compared to full-time department staff members in music departments in higher education. She further discusses how pedagogical developments in other subject areas are not reflected in vocal and instrumental pedagogy which still remains 'largely tied to eighteenth and nineteenth century teaching principles' (Simones, 2015: 2). The author points out the importance of teaching staff acting as role models for students and asks how pedagogical and professional support can be provided for tutors given the

often casual and part-time nature of their employment. Simones found that almost half of the tutors in her study were not music graduates themselves and even fewer had a practical teaching qualification. The majority of tutors also appeared to have limited interest in the requirements of the rest of the curriculum. The findings prompted Simones to ask, 'how can tutors promote critical thinking in their students as prescribed by the HE whenever there is not a requirement of professional accreditation for tutoring' (ibid: 5).

Overall, Simones' study showed that students possessed the same values as casual instrumental tutoring staff in that they placed a strong emphasis on practical skill development, were somewhat alienated from course requirements that emphasised critical thought, did not realise the interconnectedness of practical skills development with other areas of the curriculum and did not acknowledge the importance of learning to teach (ibid: 7). Simones asks that consideration be given to including pedagogical studies within the curriculum for musicians, given that teaching is such a vital component of the career portfolio of professional musicians. The author further states that the 'HE cannot dismiss its responsibility in arming tomorrow's instrumental/vocal music teachers with the skills to enhance and inform their teaching practices' (ibid: 9). The roles played by performance tutors in supporting student learning in higher and further education institutions in Ireland, is investigated in my study through an analysis of questionnaire and interview data and teacher reflections.

In a study investigating employability in higher education music, Bennett also discusses necessary curriculum changes for music programmes in higher education (Bennett, 2016). Bennett describes how 'music graduates are among a growing number of higher education graduates who enter ill-defined, complex labour markets with rapidly transforming employment contexts' (ibid: 386). Such 'portfolio careers', the author continues, are too complex to be measured by traditional metrics such as graduate destination surveys or census collections, which tend to favour the main occupation held, while ignoring other concurrent roles. 'As a result, government demands for higher education institutions to define and demonstrate graduates' successful entry into the labour market are confounded by inadequate graduate and labour market data, and the assumption that success is represented by a single, full-time position' (ibid: 387).

Bennett asserts that few musicians think of the music industry as part of an economically strong sector, yet music is one of the largest creative industries. She refers to the 'creative trident' of occupations (Higgs et. al, 2008; cited in Bennett, 2016) to illustrate how, music graduates, like other creative workers, can occupy different types of roles. Such roles include those of 'specialist creative' (in core creative occupations within the creative industries e.g. orchestral musicians), 'embedded workers' (in core creative occupations within other industries e.g. musicians in therapeutic settings), and 'support workers' (other occupations within the creative industries e.g. musicians in business roles) (ibid: 388). 'Non-creative workers' are classified as those whose roles fall within other sectors and would include, for example, musicians who teach. This represents a further problem with traditional metrics, which may not capture such roles in respect of creative workers. Bennett states that, 'creative workers manage their own careers, work typically in small firms and on an ad-hoc basis, gain employment through networks, and stay employable by learning new skills and ensuring that they are visible to the market' (ibid: 390)

Bennett refers to her study of 700 creative workers in the Netherlands, Australia and Canada, where she found that business acumen was the aspect most needed by new graduates. Bennett states that evidence also points to a number of essential fundamentals needed across higher education which may also resonate with music educators including 'a basic knowledge of legal rights and responsibilities, small business skills, management and technological acuity, personal attributes that enable graduates to confidently express, market and apply their skills and knowledge, and entrepreneurial thinking' (ibid: 391). Bennett concludes by asserting that in order to develop employability for music higher education graduates, collaboration must take place across three fronts: 'enhancement of the ways in which employment outcomes are defined and measured; initiatives that engage students in career- and life-relevant activities; and advocacy work by educators, significant others and industry to re-align stakeholder perceptions of graduate work and employability' (ibid: 393).

My study investigates the values and expectations of students and staff in respect of higher education music programmes in Ireland through considering

findings such as those of Pitts (2013), Simones (2015) and Bennett (2016) in respect of higher education music curricula and graduate employability.

### 2.4.3 The Irish Context

Gwen Moore, researcher and Lecturer in Music Education at Mary Immaculate College at the University of Limerick, discusses how 'scant attention has been paid to the musical knowledge and skills needed in [...] higher music education within the Irish context' (Moore, 2014: 249). In her study of music students and teachers in higher education environments, Moore investigates whether the knowledge and skills required for the study of music in Higher Education, relate to the content and assessment of the subject at Leaving Certificate Level. She also sets out to examine the extent to which difficulties in the transition to higher education relate to unequal access to the prerequisite knowledge and skills. The author further asserts that if students are to have equal access to musical knowledge and skills then the extent to which this is provided for in curricula at post-primary level needs to be considered (ibid: 252).

Moore cites Hurry (1997) and Winterton & Russ (2009) as providing evidence from the UK that more knowledge in tonal harmony, history of music, music theory, analysis and composition is needed in the transition from music as a school subject to music in higher education. Such a requirement benefits those who have the privilege of access to private music tuition. According to Moore, 'without equality of condition, students who have sufficient economic, social and cultural capital can not only continue to avail of and access private music education in childhood but also have *real* choice in terms of accessing knowledge and skills within the public and private systems' (ibid: 251).

Moore discusses how, in 1996, the Leaving Certificate Music syllabus for post-primary schools in Ireland was changed to include a compulsory performance component worth up to 50% of the final grade. Moore points out that responsibility for preparation of the performance component lay with the classroom teacher. This reflects observations made by Stephanie Pitts in the context of the UK (Pitts, 2000). Pitts refers to the different skills required to



organise a musical performance in schools. Such skills, she observes, are now 'assumed to be part of the average music teacher's professional equipment' (ibid: 215). As a direct result of changes to the music syllabus in Ireland, Moore states that there was an increase in uptake of Music at Leaving Certificate Level. She observes that subsequent to the syllabus changes, exam grades, when compared with subjects with similar student numbers such as Art or Physics, were found to be higher in the case of Music. According to Moore, 'it could be suggested, therefore, that music's popularity, as evidenced by the increase in candidates, may be attributable to the overall change in content and assessment of the syllabus and the potential for higher grades' (Moore, 2014: 254).

Moore also observes that the reshaping of the curriculum at second level in favour of more performance has had a 'knock-on effect on overall curriculum design in higher education' (ibid: 264). In an earlier publication (2012), Moore has discussed how changes to the Leaving Certificate syllabus resulted in deliberations amongst academics in Ireland at that time, regarding the suitability of the syllabus for those wishing to study music in higher education. In particular, the expected falling standards in respect of technical skills and theoretical knowledge for students entering music degree programmes was considered potentially problematic (Moore, 2012: 66). Moore's investigations subsequently confirmed this to be the case. She found that lecturers had negative views of the Leaving Certificate music course with the majority believing that a facile level of musical knowledge left most students deficient. Lecturers also commented on the consequences for higher education music teaching and learning of this perceived lack of knowledge and skills amongst students (Moore, 2014: 262).

O'Flynn's research into performance, transmission and identity amongst Ireland's new generation of traditional musicians (O'Flynn, 2011), offers an insight into their experiences of learning Irish music within the Irish music education system. O'Flynn notes that for the most part, statutory music education had minimal influence on the musicians' development as traditional players primarily because teachers were felt to have come from classical backgrounds and the curriculum content was considered 'out of touch with performance' (ibid: 262). With the exception of three named colleges, O'Flynn's

research found a lack of connection between university music programmes and the performance practices of traditional musicians. University music courses were also largely regarded as irrelevant to the needs and aspirations of young traditional musicians. Interestingly however, the majority of the musicians had been exposed to classical methods of teaching and learning and found advantages to having learned literacy and instrumental technique. They also tended to favour one-to-one teaching over group teaching. In the case of one musician, Ciara, who also taught traditional music, her tuition often included formal elements such as instructions on tuning and instrument holding and the use of sheet music (ibid: 263-264).

Moore points to a prevalence of classical training in the music departments of Irish universities (G. Moore, 2012) and an understanding of the Irish music education system as one that developed out of the western classical tradition. Moore's study of the experiences of undergraduate music students in a music department in Ireland, examines how such experiences are constructed within the context of a HEI where the genre of western classical music predominates. Results from questionnaire data showed that students placed most importance on skills to do with notation, rudiments, harmony, counterpoint and composition, over skills such as improvisation, playing by ear and music technology. Moore's premise is that skills associated with the classical tradition are deemed more important than skills associated with more informal practices in the context of higher education in Ireland (ibid: 71). Her findings also showed that students who were challenged by course content exhibited issues in relation to self-confidence, anxiety and self-doubt (ibid: 72) and indicate that 'students whose musical backgrounds are not predominantly western classical have different but arguably, less relevant cultural capital in the socio-cultural context of the music department at Institution X, than those who have had a more formal background in a school of music or conservatoire' (ibid: 75). In reflecting on the 'colonial-nationalist dialectic' of Irish musical culture as a primarily bi-musical one comprising the western art tradition and the Irish music tradition (McCarthy, 1999), Moore states that while 'an overemphasis on a dualistic notion of Irish culture/heritage and art has predominated music education discourse, the diverse musical cultures within contemporary Irish

society have been to a great extent lost and neglected in Irish educational policy' (Moore, 2012: 65).

Such discussions highlight the ways in which 'contested ideologies of musical value' (Moore, 2012: 66) have become an issue in Irish music education. In response to Barra Boydell's statement (then Professor of Music at NUI, Maynooth) that 'the new [Leaving Certificate] syllabus may encourage musical self-expression and creativity, but in a manner that does not demand more than the most basic ability to read or write music' (Boydell, 2001), Moore argues that comparing the value of self-expression and creativity with music literacy highlights an assumption that 'knowledge and skills associated with the western classical tradition (music literacy) are superior to that of popular music (aurally based)' (ibid: 67).

Findings such as those of O'Flynn (2011) and Moore (2012), suggest that the learning of folk and popular music genres, are at odds with the teaching and learning experiences of students and the value system of HEIs in Ireland. It has therefore now become pertinent to ask, how the Irish higher education system values students with multiple genre interests and diverse musical backgrounds. My research investigates this further by analysing the teaching and learning practices, values and expectations of music staff and students in higher and further education in Ireland.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have identified and critiqued a number of themes in relation to popular music education and which are relevant in providing a context for my research project. These include informal learning amongst popular musicians, notions of authenticity, musicians' use of social and online media, teaching and learning in higher music education, values and expectations in relation to the study of music and the current context for higher music education in Ireland. I have argued that significant gaps exist in our understanding of how popular music education is approached in higher and further education institutions in Ireland. These gaps provide the context for the design of my research study, which is described in detail in Chapter 3.

## Chapter 3.0 Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

My research project examines the teaching and learning of popular music in higher and further education in Ireland through an investigation of the perspectives, experiences and reflections of students and teachers. In this chapter, I will present the methodological approach I took to the design of this study and discuss my mixed methods approach, which included questionnaires, classroom observations, focus groups, interviews and diary analysis. I will also provide a summary of the ethical considerations and outline how the research data was collected from higher and further education institutions. Finally, I will present how Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used as the analytical framework for my case study data. Furthermore, I will detail my model of data analysis which consisted of open coding, developing themes and assessing outcomes.

### 3.2 Methodological Approach

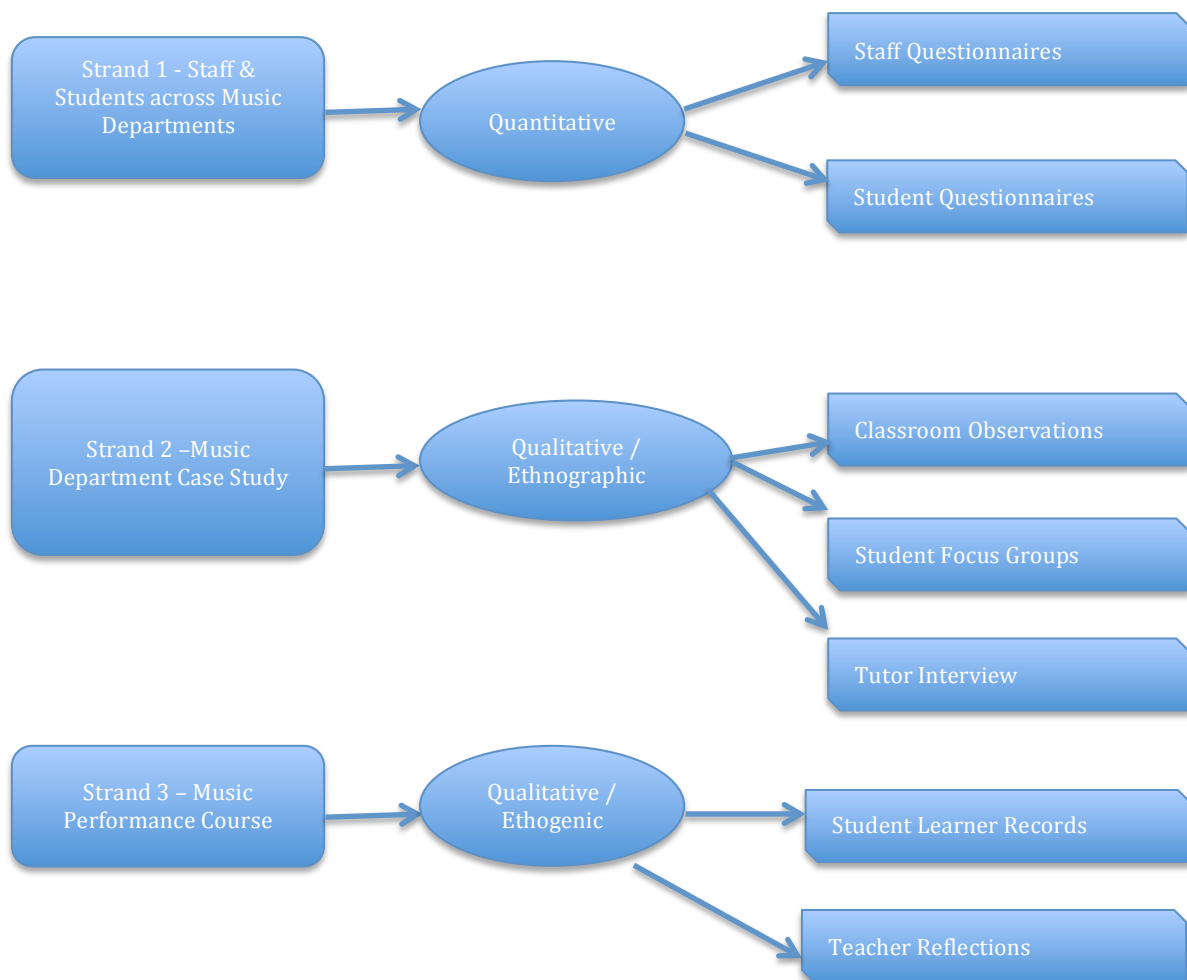
#### 3.2.1 Mixed Methods

For my research study, I adopted a sequential mixed methods design comprising three strands (Fig. 3.1) as follows:

- Strand 1 – Survey of staff and students across Music Departments.
- Strand 2 – Case study of students and their music performance tutor in a Music Department.
- Strand 3 – Reflections from students and teacher on a college music performance course.

I based my choice of methodological approach on its suitability for a series of sequential studies such as my own, which required different design methods. In defining mixed methods research, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2009)

suggest that it involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a study or series of studies investigating the same phenomenon. They refer to mixed methods research as ‘confirmatory and exploratory’ and inclusive of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a ‘pragmatist paradigm’ (2005a) (cited in Cohen et al., 2011: 21-23). Denscombe (2008) further defines this pragmatic research approach as ‘practice-driven’ with a methodological focus on ‘what works’ as long as the research is rigorous and answers the research questions (cited in Cohen et al., 2011: 21). Other benefits of adopting a mixed methods approach include the ability to engage in richer analysis, for example, by comparing themed responses (Bazeley, 2009).



**Figure 3.1 Sequential mixed-methods design**

### **3.2.2 Strand 1: Questionnaires**

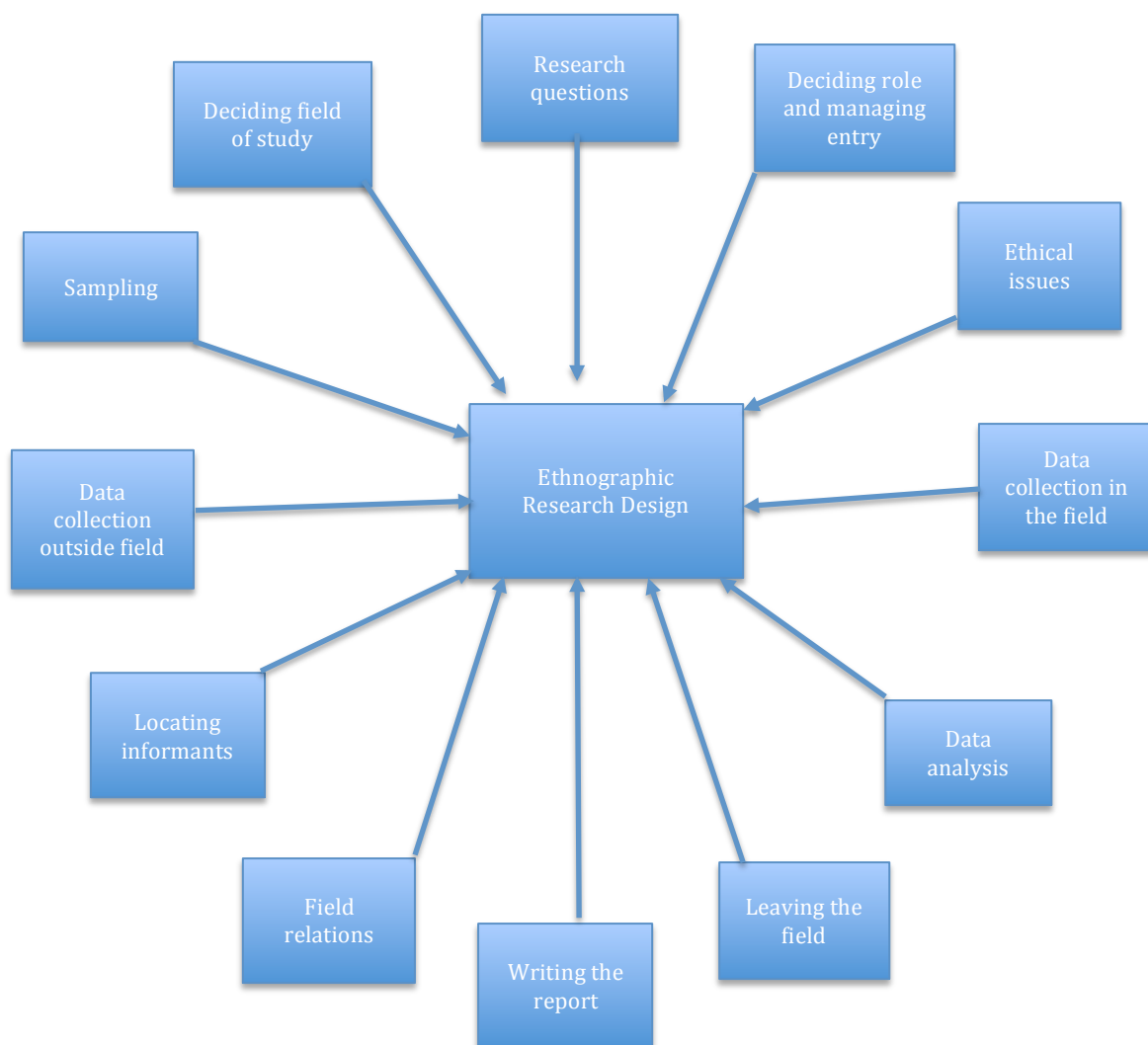
Research commenced with a quantitative study in the form of questionnaires designed to assess general attitudes and approaches to learning amongst a sample of academic staff and undergraduate students in music departments in higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland. As Ireland has a relatively small number of higher education institutions offering music courses to undergraduates, responses could be given anonymously and respondents were not required to provide any details, which could identify them or their music department. This was done in the hope that staff and students would provide open and honest answers to the questions, thereby ensuring the quality and reliability of data for analysis. Questionnaires were identified as the most appropriate way to get a general feel for the type of learning environments that prevailed in Irish HEIs and represented a form of theoretical sampling. The data was subsequently used to inform the direction of Strands 2 and 3 of the study.

### **3.2.3 Strand 2: Observations, Focus Groups and Interview**

In order to build on the findings from the quantitative study, the second strand of this research project comprised an investigation into the learning culture of undergraduate music performance students through studying the case of one Music Department. I conducted focus group discussions and observations of student learning and performance practices in the setting of a higher education institution. In discussing the different ways to participate in observation studies, Cohen et al. refer to a 'continua' where approaches by researchers vary along a scale from participant observation to non-participant observation (Cohen et. al., 2011: 458). As objectivity and distance were key considerations for this part of the study, my role was that of a non-participant observer.

Naturalistic, qualitative and ethnographic research can be undertaken in a series of stages. In small-scale qualitative research 'not all of these stages may

apply, as the researcher may not always be staying for a long time in the field but might only be gathering qualitative data on a *one-shot* basis' (ibid: 223-4). Planning and design considerations for this strand of the research project included time spent deciding on the field of study, the mapping of research questions, identification of a suitable participant group, negotiating and managing entry into the field, deciding on the role of the researcher, the collection of data, maintaining field relations and final analysis and write-up of the resultant data (Fig 3.2).



**Fig. 3.2 The ethnographic research design approach (adapted from Cohen et al., 2011)**

### 3.2.4 Strand 3: Diaries and Reflections

My role as classroom teacher on a music programme in a College of Further Education in the Republic of Ireland, facilitated an ethogenic approach for the final strand of the study. In referring to the work of Ron Harre, the foremost exponent of the ethogenic approach, Cohen et al. (Cohen L, Manion L, 2011) describe ethogenic studies as another method in the study of social behavior. Specifically they discuss how accounting for actions and focusing on actors' intentions, enables researchers to understand human beings as individuals who make plans, self-monitor and have an awareness of goals and what is required to achieve them (ibid: 444). Narrative accounts can include personal records of events, conversations, letters and diaries and can be used by researchers to further explain actions by individuals. As part of this study, I analysed the narrative discourse in student learner records as well as my own documented accounts of activities undertaken by students during music performance-related modules.

### 3.2.4 My Role as Practitioner-Researcher

My role throughout the timeframe of this project fluctuated between that of a researcher and a practitioner. During Strands 1 and 2 of the project, I assumed the role of objective researcher and therefore held an 'outsider' perspective in relation to the HEIs investigated. During Strand 3, my perspective changed to that of an 'insider' in the College of Further Education where I worked as a music teacher and course coordinator. In discussing the role of *teacher as insider*, Finney asserts that relevant research can shine a light on the practical realities of the music classroom (Finney, 2013). He states that 'considerable responsibility is placed on those supervising this learning, and they need much knowledge not only of research-based ideas but also of classroom practice and current issues facing the classroom music teacher' (ibid: 6). Whilst previously having held a lecturing role for over a decade in a HEI in Ireland, the students taught by me had not included popular musicians. The perspectives I



gained therefore through my research into learning amongst popular musicians informed my teaching practice and enabled me to engage with my students on a deeper, more reflective level when supervising their learning and analysing their diaries.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

#### **3.3.1 Ethical Approval**

In October 2012, prior to the commencement of any research involving human participants, a University Research Ethics Application Form was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Sheffield. Ethical considerations for the project included data protection such as the anonymity of institutions and participants, how personal data would be used and stored and consent to the use of audio-visual recordings. I used my network of contacts in the field of music education as well as my role as an educator to seek participants for the study. Participants were recruited with the knowledge that they would be volunteering, their names would be anonymised and that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time. For each strand of research, specific Information Sheets and Consent Forms were provided for each participant group (Appendices A-C). Ethics approval was sought in respect of the quantitative, ethnographic and ethogenic research elements of the research project. The Ethics Committee was also made aware of any changes to data collection methods throughout the duration of the project. The Ethics Application was reviewed and approved by the University of Sheffield.

#### **3.3.2 Higher Education Institutions**

Questionnaires were distributed to a broad sample of academic staff and undergraduate students engaged in teaching and learning on undergraduate music degree courses across the Institute of Technology (IoT) and University sectors in the Republic of Ireland<sup>9</sup> (Table 3.1). I made contact with a number of

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<sup>9</sup> Central Applications Office data (2012) [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)

music departments representing a range of music degree programmes. These included BA/BMus degrees and programmes in areas such as Music Technology, Popular Music, Jazz Performance and Irish Traditional Music. The questionnaires were compiled using the LimeSurvey online open source application. Both the staff and student questionnaires consisted of 10 questions (Appendices D & E). The link to the staff questionnaire was distributed by email in December 2012, with a follow-up reminder sent out a week later. I received 49 completed questionnaires from teaching staff (**n = 49**). Initial analysis of responses commenced the following January. In October 2013, a link to the student questionnaire was forwarded by email to music department administrators who disseminated it to students. I received 113 completed questionnaires from students (**n = 113**). Analysis of those responses commenced that same month.

**Table 3.1 Music degree course offerings in IoTs and Universities in Ireland**

Music Undergraduate Degree Programmes	Genre Specialisations
<b>BA in Irish Music and Dance</b>	Irish Traditional
<b>BA in Voice and Dance</b>	
<b>BEd</b>	Music Education
<b>BA Music Technology</b>	Music Technology
<b>BMus</b>	Ethnomusicology, Irish Traditional, Popular, Jazz,
<b>BA Arts with Music</b>	Classical
<b>BMus</b>	Community Music, Music Therapy, Popular music
<b>BA in Popular Music (Guitar, Drums, Keys or Voice)</b>	
<b>BA Music</b>	Classical, Irish Traditional, Jazz, Popular
<b>BA in Music Performance (RIAM)</b>	Classical
<b>BA in Composition (RIAM)</b>	Acoustic / Electro-Acoustic
<b>BA / BEd</b>	Music Education
<b>BA in Religious Education with Music</b>	Music Education
<b>BA / BMus</b>	Ethnomusicology, Musicology, Performance
<b>BMus</b>	Performance, Musicology, Music Technology,
<b>BMusEd</b>	Music Education, Popular
<b>BA in Commercial Modern Music (BIMM)</b>	
<b>BA Music</b>	Classical, Music Technology, Composition
<b>BA</b>	
<b>BA in Jazz Performance</b>	Jazz
<b>BA Music Technology</b>	Musicology, Irish Traditional, Music Technology
<b>BA Music</b>	
<b>BA in Applied Music</b>	Irish Traditional, Music Technology, Performance
<b>BA in Music and Audio Production</b>	

### 3.3.3 Music Department Case Study

Over the period January to April 2016, I contacted teaching staff at selected Higher Education Institutions with a view to identifying a group of undergraduate music students to participate in the ethnographic study. At Institution 'X', although staff members were very supportive of the research, they were unable to identify a suitable group of music performance students who could be made available in the timeframe needed. Staff expressed concerns about the short duration of the students' modules, their pre-existing workloads and the potential impact and repercussions of using class time for the conducting of research. Contact between myself and the Institution continued back and forth over a number of weeks. Eventually, after failing to make any progress in getting access to a suitable student cohort, it was decided I should make contact with another Higher Education Institution.

I subsequently contacted Institution 'Y'. At this Institution, a lecturer with responsibility for performance modules identified a potential student group for the study. At that time, the students were preparing for a charity concert and final year performance and were engaging in formal and informal learning as part of the performance preparations. A series of contacts took place between the lecturer and I by phone and email. Due to the busy work schedules of both parties, a face-to-face meeting was not possible at that time and the lecturer agreed to speak with the students on my behalf. An initial plan was put in place to conduct the ethnographic research over the course of April 2016. However, the week before the research was due to take place, the students expressed concerns at their workload and impending exam deadlines and requested that they not proceed with the study. It was suggested that the study might take place the following academic year. A subsequent face-to-face briefing meeting between the lecturer and I took place in July 2016. It was agreed at this meeting that the research could commence in semester one, AY 2016/2017, pending agreement with a suitable group of undergraduate students. The student cohort would be identified and briefed by the lecturer at the start of term with a face-to-face meeting between the students and I, planned for early in the semester.

The ethnographic research study finally commenced at Institution ‘Y’ in October 2016. While it was initially planned that the participant cohort would be selected from students in their third year of a BMus programme, due to the scheduling and time constraints of those students, a suitable group of first year students were instead identified by staff. The design of the study into the performance and learning practices of those students included focus groups and observations.

Classroom observations were conducted in October 2016. I was invited to attend scheduled performance ensemble classes with student musicians and their class tutor. Three classes took place over a three-hour period in one afternoon. Over the course of three classes, 25 students were observed (**n = 25**). Just under half the students were female (48%) and 52% were male. During the class, students participated in the selection and arrangement of popular songs with their tutor and performed and rehearsed their ideas as a group. Throughout the three sessions, I remained in the practice room as a non-participant observer, watching the sessions and taking field notes. Field notes were typed up in-situ on an iPad. The field note template used was an adaptation of a checklist by Spradley (1980; cited in Cohen et. al., 2011:467) (Box 3.1).

### **Box 3.1 Field note template used by the researcher**

<p><b>Space:</b> The physical setting</p> <p><b>Actors:</b> The people in the situation</p> <p><b>Activities:</b> The sets of related acts that are taking place</p> <p><b>Objects:</b> The artefacts and physical things that are there</p> <p><b>Acts:</b> The specific actions that participants are doing</p> <p><b>Events:</b> The sets of activities that are taking place</p>
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**Time:**

The sequence of acts, activities and events

**Goals:**

What people are trying to achieve

**Feelings:**

What people feel and how they express this

Focus group sessions with the students were conducted a month later in November during another scheduled afternoon of performance ensemble classes, agreed in advance with the tutor. I facilitated the sessions with the students. Two sessions took place and 15 students participated overall (**n = 15**). The class tutor was not present during either session. The discussion consisted of a number of general topics related to students' experiences of learning music for performance in their Higher Education Institute. I also prepared a Focus Group Topics checklist to guide the discussion (Appendix F).

I attended the end-of-semester practical performance Summer Exams scheduled in May 2017. The class tutor, along with another member of academic staff, acted as Internal Examiners. The performances took place in a small concert hall in the Music Department building. Students performed in accordance with a timetable agreed in advance with the tutor. No audience members were present with the exception of the Internal Examiners and myself. Occasionally class members waiting to perform would sit in for a performance. I observed over two hours of performances by the first year undergraduate cohort.

A semi-structured interview was conducted with the class tutor upon completion of the module delivery. The interview was conducted off-site in a local coffee shop in the urban centre. An Interview Guide checklist was prepared (Appendix G). Topics included a discussion around the role of the performance tutor as well as general questions regarding student learning, technology and perceptions on the value of a music degree.

### 3.3.4 College of Further Education

My professional role as a course coordinator and music teacher in a College of Further Education (Institution 'Z') enabled me to undertake classroom observations on a regular basis with my own students throughout the academic year 2017/2018. Students were set assignments in accordance with the QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) national standards for Level 5 programmes in approved institutions. In the case of two specific QQI modules, Music Performance (5N1301) and Event Production (5N1374), assessment strategies included the submission of Learner Records (diaries) in partial fulfillment of the overall modules. Learner Records were submitted by students and assessed according to the defined quality assurance standards of the college. Upon submission, I provided the students with Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms for use of the Learner Records for the purposes of research at a later date. Once all quality assurance checks in relation to assessment were complete and student results awarded, I was given access to the Learner Records for the purposes of research and analysis. I received 13 fully-completed student Learner Records which were used for analysis (**n = 13**).

### 3.3.5 Data Triangulation

Throughout the research project, consideration was given to the reliability of data. The mix of research methods ensured *methodological triangulation* in investigating the primary research questions of this study. Methodological triangulation uses different methods on the same object of study and has been defined by Denzin (1970) as 'the use of more than one method in the pursuit of a given objective' (Cohen et al., 2011: 196-197). This mixed methods approach has also been described as bringing datasets 'into dialogue' rather than 'triangulating on the assumption of a corroborative relationship' (Miles & Sullivan, 2012: 312).

The data collection was undertaken over a six-year period between 2012 and 2018. The extended research timeframe enabled me to revisit and tailor the research process during each phase. As observed by Cohen et al., 'many studies

in the social sciences are conducted at one point only in time, thereby ignoring the effects of social change and process' (cited in Cohen et al., 2011: 196-197). The nature of my research project therefore facilitated cross-sectional *time triangulation* where data investigating the same phenomenon was collected at different points in time. This method provides what Kirk and Miller (1986) describe as 'synchronic reliability' through seeking similarity of data (ibid).

The study also provided for *combined levels of triangulation* through the conducting of analysis across the three principal levels used in the social sciences: the individual, group and organisation (Cohen L, Manion L, 2011). This was achieved through methods such as diary-keeping and interviews, which focused on the individual, focus group and observation studies, which examined processes evident in musical groups, and staff questionnaires, which concentrated on the organisational viewpoint.

### **3.3.6 Data Management Tools**

Mendeley, a reference management software tool, was used during the project to store pdf articles and bibliographic details in relation to secondary source material. The tool facilitated the automation of source citations and a reference list. An MS Word table was also created to store my own memos, annotations and reflections in relation to pertinent literature. As identified by Bazeley, the researcher's reflective writing becomes 'a critical source of interpretive understanding as concepts are dissected and ideas explored' (Bazeley, 2009: 18).

LimeSurvey, an open source online tool, was used to store and disseminate questionnaires. The tool also provided a platform for the collection of responses. MS Excel was used to store and code data. Data was analysed and codes applied in tabular format. Frequency statistics were calculated and graphs and charts generated. To facilitate a more detailed analysis of data and the comparative development of themes, I decided to also use NVivo, a data management system with the capability to generate complex queries and matrices. Bazeley describes how matrix displays can be an extremely useful way of examining patterns in data and where text has been coded using software such as NVivo, those codes can be used to construct matrix displays (Bazeley,

2009: 13-14)<sup>10</sup>. However, despite attending a training course on the use of the tool and spending a number of months transferring data and setting up case nodes, I ultimately found the tool to be unwieldy and discontinued its use. A summary of the software tools used to manage data throughout the project is provided in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Data Management Tools used during project research**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Function of Tool</b>	<b>Project Use</b>
<b>Mendeley</b> <i>(Desktop)</i>	Reference Manager	<b>Literature Review</b> Storing literature; managing library of PDFs; in-text citation formatting; storing bibliographic details.
<b>LimeSurvey</b> <i>(online - open source)</i>	Storing of Surveys	<b>Questionnaires</b> Online questionnaire generation; collection of responses; statistics; chart generation; data export function.
<b>MS Excel</b> <i>(Desktop)</i>	Data Analysis Tool	<b>Data Analysis</b> Sorting of data for thematic coding; formula generation; chart generation.
<b>NVivo</b> <i>(Desktop)</i>	Data Management System / Data Analysis Tool	<b>Data Analysis</b> Sorting of data for thematic coding; use of database queries and generation of matrices.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

#### 3.4.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

The methodology I adopted for analysis of the case study data in Strands 2 and 3 was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, developed by Jonathan Smith in the mid-1990s, is an approach to qualitative research in the fields of psychology, health and social sciences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). It incorporates phenomenology (how

<sup>10</sup> Figure 4.9 in Chapter 4 is an example of a matrix I constructed using NVivo



things appear to us in experience), hermeneutics (the theory of interpretation) and psychology (the study of mind and behavior).

The primary concern of IPA is with how reality appears to the individual and how that individual has experienced the phenomenon under investigation. 'Comparing cases is also usually (though not always) part of the process but the comparison tends to be fine-grained, illustrating the different textures and nuances within related personal accounts' (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008: 6). Willig and Stainton-Rogers also describe the practice of IPA as follows:

- *Directing questions towards aspects of lived experience.*
- *Data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews, life histories and diaries.*
- *An iterative and inductive analysis process leading to the description of themes.*
- *Levels of interpretation from rich description to abstract and conceptual.*
- *A narrative which includes the perspectives of both the researcher and the participant.*

The essence of IPA lies in its analytic focus (Smith et al., 2009). 'Although the primary concern of IPA is the lived experience of the participant and the meaning which the participant makes of that lived experience, the end result is always an account of how the analyst thinks the participant is thinking' (ibid: 80). Analysis steps include the reading and re-reading of transcripts, taking notes and making commentaries on the data (from the descriptive to the interpretative), using notes to help develop emergent themes, comparing cases to look for patterns and divergences and finally, deciding on outcomes.

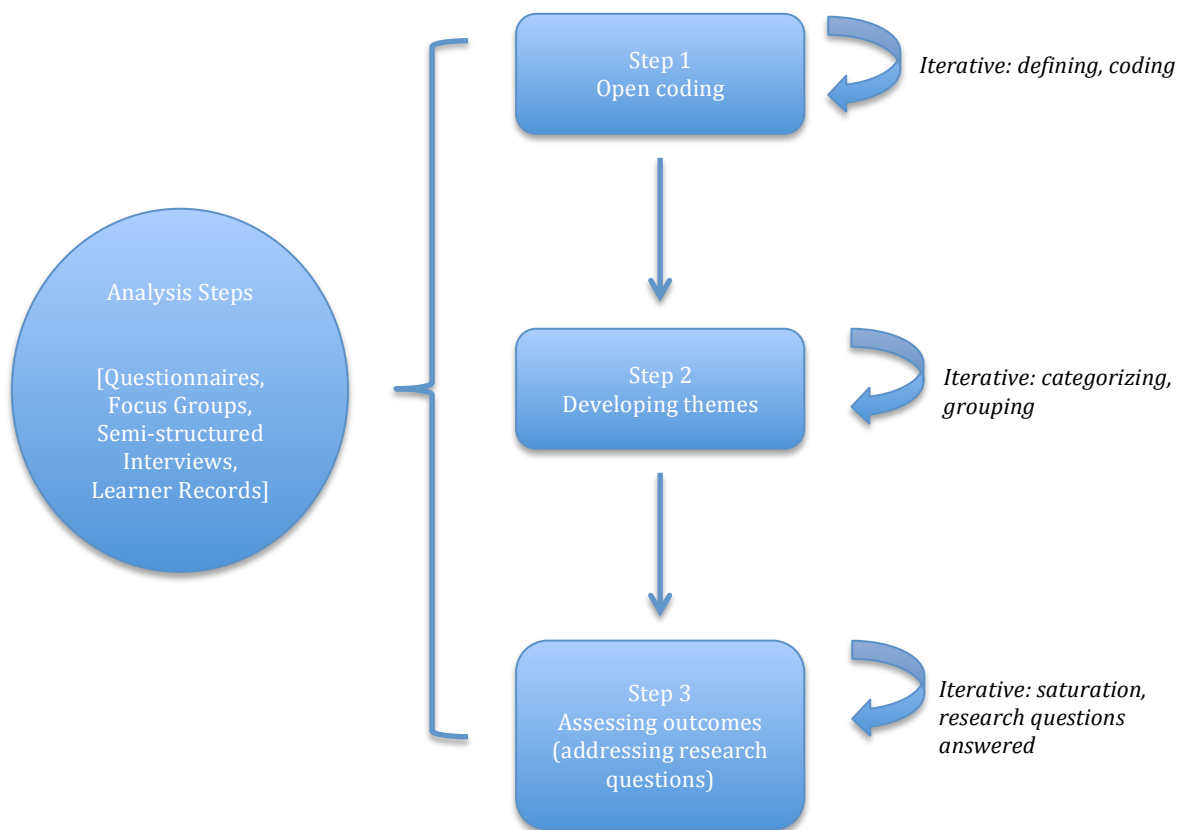
Grounded Theory was initially considered as a possible methodology for my research project. Glaser (1996) defines this method as the 'systematic generation of theory from data' (cited in Cohen et al., 2011: 598). It is described as an 'inductive process in which everything is integrated and in which data pattern themselves rather than having the researcher pattern them' (Cohen L, Manion L, 2011: 598). Due to my professional experience as both a music

performer and educator, I was already in a position to generate initial theories in respect of musical learning, which provided the starting point for my research questions and investigations. On that basis therefore, I decided that Grounded Theory was not a suitable methodology for my research.

As the purpose of IPA is to try to understand phenomena from the perspective of the individual, a limitation of the methodology is that it is difficult to use in a quantitative way to analyse larger volumes of data. I mitigated this limitation by using a quantitative approach in Strand 1 of my study to gather general survey data on the attitudes and approaches to music teaching and learning across higher education institutions. My objective in Strands 2 and 3 was to capture a rich and descriptive narrative of the processes of teaching and learning in popular music education from the perspective of individual students and tutors. This concern with understanding meaning also facilitated my own reflections as both practitioner and researcher over the course of the study. IPA therefore proved the most suitable framework for understanding the perceptions, lived experiences and reflections of music students and teachers across my case study samples in higher and further education.

#### **3.4.2 Model of Data Analysis**

An overview of the approach I took to the analysis of data is summarised in Figure 3.3 (overleaf) and examples provided in subsequent sections.



**Figure 3.3 Model of data analysis**

### 3.4.3 Open Coding

In Strand 1, the demographic and biographical details of study participants provided me with contextual data related to course titles and modules, number of years teaching experience, stages of study, instrumental experience and music genres. Responses from multiple-choice questions were coded to identify specific types of musical learning engaged in by participants. Responses to Likert scales supplied data on student autonomy and skills, frequency of performance activities and staff perceptions (Appendices D & E).

Open questions on questionnaires provided qualitative data in relation to staff perceptions on the benefits of musical learning in higher education as well as advice for students on their learning approaches (see Box 3.2a for open-ended questions). Open questions on student questionnaires provided qualitative data in relation to aspects of musical learning in higher education, such as learning

methods and approaches, as well as students' own perceptions on the value and benefits of undergraduate study (see Box 3.2b). A sample of how responses were coded in Step 1 of the analysis of staff data is provided in Table 3.3.

**Box 3.2a Open questions on aspects of musical learning (staff)**

Q9	In your opinion, what benefits to their musical learning can students gain through pursuing music studies in higher education?
Q10	If you were to offer one piece of advice to your students regarding how best to approach their musical learning, what would it be?

**Box 3.2b Open questions on aspects of musical learning in HE (students)**

Q8	Which of the above learning methods are you <u>most likely</u> to adopt when learning a new performance piece?
Q9	Do your approaches to learning new performance pieces differ depending on the environment (e.g. college, home, community)? If so, briefly describe how.
Q10	What career path do you hope to follow after graduating and how do you feel your undergraduate studies are preparing you for that career?
Q11	Overall, how do you feel you are benefiting from studying Music in Higher Education?

**Table 3.3 Example of open coding during analysis of staff questionnaires**

<b>ID</b>	<b>In your opinion, what benefits to their musical learning can students gain, through pursuing music studies in higher education? RESPONSE</b>	<b>Code Abbrev.</b>
A6	Increased awareness of differing approaches to music, different genres, analytical skills, group work, social interaction	ACAD, ANAL, SOC
A13	Development of knowledge base of subject Instrumental/vocal technique Stage craft Performance opportunities (solo, chamber music, orchestra, choral society, chamber choir, range of ensembles) Working in an environment where critical thinking takes place Independent learning and practice Team building opportunities Creative thinking Confidence and self-esteem	PERF, ANAL, SOC, CREA, PERS

A18	Development of and potential to pursue specialised skills- exposure to a higher level of instrumental and academic performance and introduction to a number of pedagogical methods	PERF, ACAD, PEDAG
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CODE KEY: (PERF) performance and technical musical skills, (ACAD) academic knowledge, (COMP) composition skills, (ANAL) skills of analysis and criticism, (SOC) social skills, (BUS) knowledge of the music business, (CREA) creativity, (PERS) personal development skills, (PEDAG) pedagogy, (REF) reflective skills, (TEC) knowledge of music technology

In Strand 3, the demographic details noted in relation to Further Education students included course title (Music Performance or Music Technology), instrumental experience and music genres. Reflections in Learner Records were used to identify specific types of musical learning engaged in by participants during the Music Performance module. Data was analysed using the same code categories applied during the analysis of the learning preferences of higher education students in Strand 1. Where additional learning preferences were noted amongst the FE student cohort, new codes were created. For example, for the Event Production module student Learner Records, data was coded for reflections related to group interactions and instances of teamwork as well as the likes and dislikes of working as part of a team. Student perceptions on their most and least useful skills and attributes were also coded. Table 3.4 provides an example of the codes applied during Step 1 of the analysis of student Learner Records.

**Table 3.4 Example of open coding during analysis of student Learner Records**

What personal skills and attributes did you feel were <i>most useful</i> to you in planning and producing the event?		
CODE	MENTIONS (by number of students)	%
COMMUNICATION SKILLS	6	46
PLANNING / ARRANGEMENT SKILLS	6	46
WILLINGNESS TO LEARN	4	31
MUSICALITY / CREATIVITY	3	23
ADAPTABILITY	3	23

SELF-MOTIVATION / DETERMINATION	3	23
LISTENING SKILLS	2	15
ABILITY TO WORK WITH OTHERS	2	15
ABILITY TO ACCEPT CRITICISM	2	15

#### 3.4.4 Interim Findings

I presented the findings from the analysis of staff and student questionnaires at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of the Society for Music Education in Ireland (SMEI) held at St. Patrick’s College, Dublin City University, in November 2013. My paper entitled ‘Music teaching and learning in Irish HEIs’ was presented as part of a symposium on *The Content and Pedagogy of Music in Higher Education Institutions in Ireland* with fellow conveners Dr. Gwen Moore (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick), Dr. John O’Flynn (St. Patrick’s College, DCU) and Dr. Alison Hood (NUI, Maynooth). The paper reflected the interim findings at that point of the analysis as well as highlighting gaps and areas for further research. I found the sharing of initial results and the subsequent discussion of the findings with peers to be a very valuable experience. It also helped to inform the ensuing direction of the research project.

#### 3.4.5 Developing Themes

In Strand 2, responses from the student focus group sessions and the tutor interview were sorted into themes in accordance with the topics discussed. In some cases, a theoretical framework was applied to the thematic coding of data. For example, in relation to students’ perceptions of the authenticity of their Ensemble Class, responses were categorized to reflect Simone Kruger’s *Signifiers of Authenticity* (2009) (Table 3.5).

Responses from the tutor interview were also coded to reflect identified themes. Where themes overlapped with those discussed by the students, new comments were collated and a fuller picture emerged. A comparable approach was applied to the coded data from student learner records in Strand 3 with the identification of new themes such as, for example, personal effectiveness.

**Table 3.5 Example of thematically grouped focus group responses from students**

Student (Pseudonym)	Space	Instruments / Resources	Musical styles	Transmission	Tutor
<b>David</b>		Poor quality of instrument resources			Tutor is relaxed in class
<b>Sean</b>				Not enough practical time for music;	
<b>Brian</b>	Difficult to book room; All resources in one main ensemble room;	"Shambolic"; Poor quality of instrument resources; Even basic percussion instruments like shakers there were none in the building and [tutor] had to go and buy them himself; 4 microphones but only 3 microphone stands;	Can choose own material to perform; You've to compromise;		Tutor available in class to help and to give ideas
<b>Emma</b>	Ensemble room is the only place to practice as a group	More equipment needed - there are just some things that aren't here	You can end up doing songs that other people pick		
<b>Shauna</b>	You have to get up early to book it [the room] to make sure no one takes your slot	Not enough microphones for singers; Could be waiting an hour for the microphones because they're shared with students using them in the studio;			
<b>Jack</b>	'To book it [the room] you have to physically come up [to the department] and write your name on the door'	Microphones not kept in the performance room; No kettle leads for amps for first few weeks; Equipment is very old;		Group sizes are very big and some people are left out and not doing anything	

### 3.4.6 Assessing Outcomes

In the final analysis step, themes identified over the three strands of the research project were mapped back to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. Overall findings were summarised, discussed and presented in Chapter 7. The assessment of outcomes also included themes and findings not initially anticipated in the setting of questions and topics during the research design phase. In conclusion, areas for further research were also outlined.

### 3.5 Conclusions

The design approach adopted for this research project was a sequential mixed-methods design comprising a number of approaches including questionnaires, classroom observations, focus groups, interview and reflective diaries. Data was made robust due to factors such as methodological triangulation, the extended research timeframe and the conducting of analysis across a number of levels such as individuals, groups and organisations. Data was also collected from across a wide range of educational institutions. The data collected was properly managed using various software tools and applications. The methodological approach taken to the analysis of case study data was that of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This was reflected in the design of the model of data analysis to include open coding, the development of themes and the assessment of overall outcomes.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will present the data findings from this research project. Each chapter will present a different strand of the research data. In Chapter 4, the quantitative findings from the staff and student questionnaires are presented to give an overview of the perceptions of study participants with regard to music teaching and learning. Chapter 5 presents a richer layer of qualitative data in relation to the teaching and learning of popular music by presenting case study findings from observations, focus groups and interviews conducted in a Higher Education Institution (Institution 'Y'). In Chapter 6, a further, deeper understanding of teaching and learning is presented in the form of qualitative student diary and teacher reflections in a College of Further Education (Institution 'Z').



## Chapter 4.0 Perceptions: *Music Staff and Students in Irish Higher Education Institutions*

### 4.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents a summary of findings from questionnaire data collected during Strand 1 of my research study into music teaching and learning in higher education. I will firstly provide a background into the learning environments of music departments by presenting the performance experiences and learning approaches of staff and student respondents. I will then discuss the specific learning techniques adopted by students in higher education such as how students learn for performance and how they adapt their learning according to specific learning environments. I will also present findings into the use of technology as a learning tool in higher education. Finally, I will present both staff and student perceptions on the value of learning music in HEIs.

### 4.2 The Learning Environment of HEIs

#### 4.2.1 Study Sample

In Strand 1, survey data responses were collected from staff (**n = 49**) and students (**n = 113**) across a broad spectrum of higher education institutions (see Table 3.1 in Chapter 3)<sup>11</sup>. Respondents consisted of 5 first years, 48 second years, 38 third years and 22 fourth years. Just under half of respondents (49%) stated they were undertaking a BA or BMus degree while 51% were registered on BA degree programmes in areas such as Popular Music / Commercial Modern Music, Jazz Performance, Music Technology or Irish Music & Dance. This amounted to an approximately 50/50 split in the data in terms of responses from students specialising in a particular genre versus those taking a broader range of music modules.

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<sup>11</sup> Data regarding overall numbers of staff and students engaged on music programmes across Institutions nationally was not available. It is therefore not known how representative these samples are.

#### 4.2.2 Musical Genres and Performance Experience

Staff participants in music departments across HEIs were found to teach a wide range of subjects in many genres. Teaching areas included Music Technology, Composition, Music Education, Performance Studies, Musicology, Music Theory & Musicianship, Irish Traditional Music, Ethnomusicology, Film Music, Commercial & Popular Music, Jazz, Music Therapy, Community Music, Creative Arts, Dissertation / Research Supervision. Both staff and student participants reported playing many types of instruments (including voice), across genres such as Irish Traditional Music, Western Art Music, Popular, Rock, Jazz, World Music and Electro-Acoustic Music (Table 4.1). Over half of all student respondents were multi-instrumentalists and reported playing two or more instruments. None of the students who participated in the survey appeared to be conversant in instruments from non-Western music traditions.

**Table 4.1 Variety of instruments played by staff and students in music departments**

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Instrumental Experience</i>	
	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Students</i>
<b>Irish Traditional Music</b>	Mandolin, banjo, fiddle, accordion, tin whistle, uilleann pipes, harp, bouzouki, bodhrán, guitar, traditional flute.	Piano, flute, tin whistle, uilleann pipes, bodhran, fiddle, concertina, piano accordion
<b>Western Art Music</b>	Cello, double bass, piano, organ, trombone, bassoon, clarinet, bass clarinet violin, viol, viola, viola da gamba, baroque recorder, recorder, flute, trumpet, woodwinds, harp, pitched percussion.	Voice, classical guitar, harp, cello, violin, viola, piano, recorder
<b>Pop / Rock / Jazz</b>	Piano and keyboards, guitar, bass, drums, percussion, vocals, bass guitar (electric), alto and tenor saxophones, ukulele.	Vocals / songwriter, drums, percussion, cajon, bass guitar, double bass, guitar, piano / keyboards, harmonica, ukulele, mandolin, banjo, saxophone, trumpet
<b>World Music</b>	Indian percussion, Javanese Gamelan, South Indian singing, feet – step dancing, self-made instrument	

<b>Electro-Acoustic</b>	Laptop guitar, computer, music technology related devices.	Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI), Digital Audio Workstation (DAW), Synthesizer / electronic musical instrument, DJ turntable
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Teaching experience in the field of music education ranged from a minimum of 2 years to a maximum of 40 years with average experience of 15.67 years. A majority of staff (80%) had experience in classical music performance with pop/rock performance experience cited by 59% and traditional/folk by 33%. Performance experience in other musical genres such as jazz and world music was 29% and 27% respectively. The majority of students had experience in pop and rock genres (67%), followed by jazz (49%), traditional/folk (39%) and classical (36%). The diverse mix of musical performance experiences reflects the broad spectrum of departmental course offerings across music degree programmes in Ireland. The findings also point to a predominance of classical training in the backgrounds of academic and tutoring staff. The majority of student learners entering higher education were experienced in pop/rock genres. Also, a greater percentage of staff had experience in world music performance while significantly more students than staff, were experienced in electro-acoustic music (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2 Musical genre performance experiences of staff and students**

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Students</i>
<b>Classical</b>	<b>80%</b>	36%
<b>Pop / Rock</b>	59%	<b>67%</b>
<b>Trad / Folk</b>	33%	39%
<b>Jazz</b>	29%	47%
<b>World</b>	27%	14%
<b>Electro-Acoustic</b>	4%	27%

### 4.2.3 Approaches to Learning

Participants were asked to select the types of musical learning practices they engaged in and were given a selection of answers ranging from formal methods of learning such as ‘one to one lessons with expert tutors’, ‘scores/notation’ and ‘individual private practice’, to group ‘peer/collaborative learning’ and informal practices such as ‘aural (learning by ear)’, ‘jamming/informal performances with other musicians’ and learning through ‘online forums’ and ‘social media’. Almost all staff (96%) had experienced formal learning methods such as individual private lessons and private practice. These methods ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in terms of being the most common learning practices engaged in by staff. The next highest ranked learning methods for staff included learning from ‘scores / notation’, learning through ‘observing live performances by other musicians’ and learning from ‘books or published instrument guides’ (Table 4.3). Such methods could be seen to reflect the classical training backgrounds of the majority of teachers.

A majority of students had also experienced formal learning methods such as ‘one to one lessons’ (86%) and learning from ‘scores/notation’ (84%), which ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. However, ‘aural’ learning was selected by 87% of respondents making it their top ranked learning method. Aural learning is an important feature of musical transmission in Ireland as it is widely used as a means of learning repertoire from the indigenous music tradition. Its importance to students can also be seen to reflect their primary performance experiences in popular music genres where such a method of learning is frequently used.

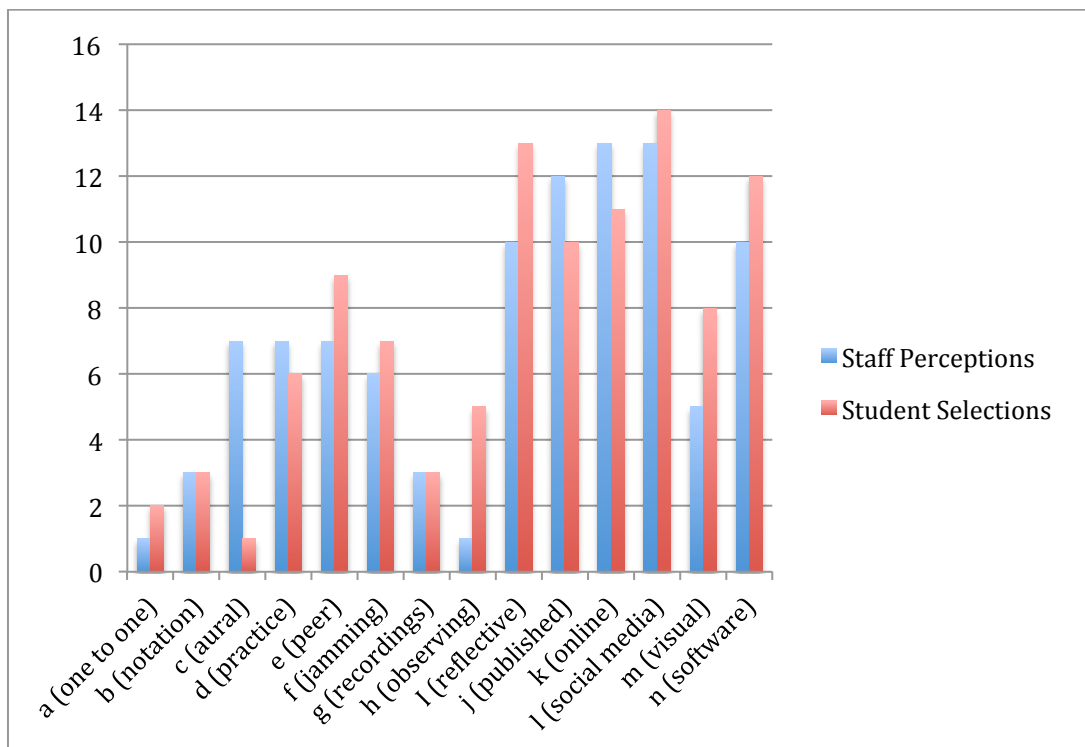
The informal practice of ‘listening to and copying recordings’ also ranked in students’ top 3 approaches to learning. The majority of staff (90%) engaged in aural learning although it ranked as only their 6<sup>th</sup> most commonly used learning method. Also, the practice of ‘listening to and copying recordings’ did not rank as highly amongst staff (Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3 Approaches to learning by participants**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Staff</i>		<i>Response</i>	<i>Students</i>	
	<i>%</i>	<i>Ranking</i>		<i>%</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
<b>One to one lessons with expert tutors</b>	96%	1	<b>Aural (learning 'by ear')</b>	87%	1
<b>Individual private practice</b>	96%	1	<b>One to one lessons with expert tutors</b>	86%	2
<b>Scores / notation</b>	92%	3	<b>Scores / notation</b>	84%	3
<b>Observing live performances by other musicians</b>	92%	3	<b>Listening to and copying recordings</b>	84%	3
<b>Books or published instrument guides (including websites)</b>	92%	3	<b>Observing live performances by other musicians</b>	82%	5
<b>Aural (learning 'by ear')</b>	90%	6	<b>Individual private practice</b>	81%	6
<b>Visual media (e.g. video / DVD / YouTube)</b>	78%	7	<b>Jamming / informal performances with other musicians</b>	75%	7
<b>Peer / collaborative learning</b>	76%	8	<b>Visual media (e.g. video / DVD / YouTube)</b>	69%	8
<b>Listening to and copying recordings</b>	76%	8	<b>Peer / collaborative learning</b>	66%	9
<b>Jamming / informal performances with other musicians</b>	65%	10	<b>Books or published instrument guides (including websites)</b>	65%	10
<b>Computer software (e.g. music or instrument instruction)</b>	61%	11	<b>Online forums (e.g. tutorials / blogs / discussion groups)</b>	52%	11
<b>Reflective practice / journals / diaries</b>	59%	12	<b>Computer software (e.g. music or instrument instruction)</b>	51%	12
<b>Online forums (e.g. tutorials / blogs / discussion groups)</b>	47%	13	<b>Reflective practice / journals / diaries</b>	41%	13
<b>Social media (e.g. Facebook / Twitter)</b>	35%	14	<b>Social media (e.g. Facebook / Twitter)</b>	40%	14

An additional question to staff asked them to select which of the listed learning methods they believed their students engaged with. The majority of

staff (88%) believed the most common learning approaches of students to be ‘one to one lessons with expert tutors’ and ‘observing live performances by other musicians’. A large majority (84%) also selected ‘scores/notation’ and ‘listening to and copying recordings’ as additional learning methods engaged in by students. A comparison between these ranked results with those of students’ own selections reveals some discrepancies between how teachers perceive students to be learning and how students are actually learning (Fig. 4.1).

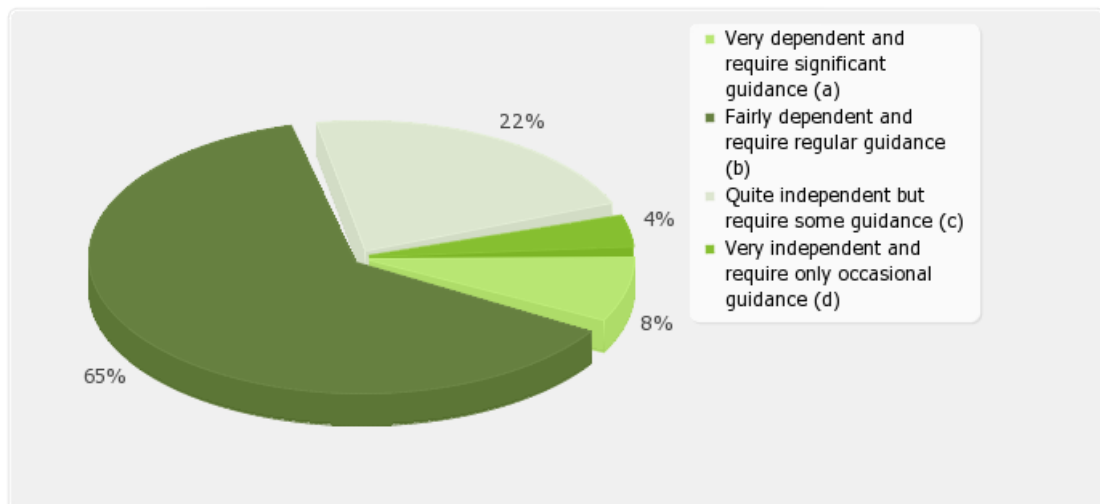


**Figure 4.1 A comparison between staff perceptions of students’ approaches to learning and students’ own learning approaches [Ranked from 1 (high) to 14 (low)]**

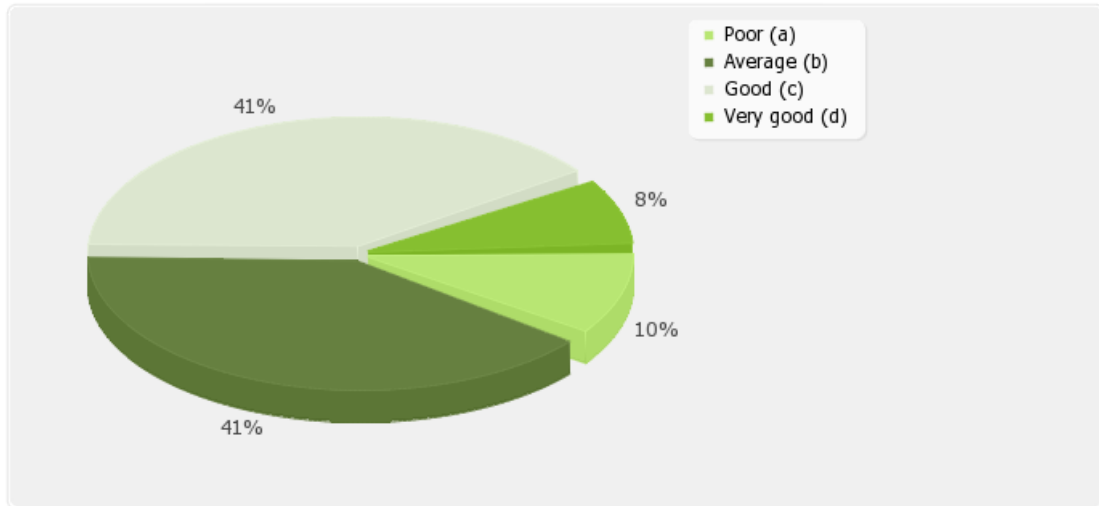
For example, an analysis of student responses shows ‘one to one lessons with expert tutors’ ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> while ‘observing live performances by other musicians’ ranked 5<sup>th</sup>. In particular, the importance of aural learning for students (ranked 1<sup>st</sup> - Table 4.3) compared with how staff perceived this type of learning to be used by students (ranked 7<sup>th</sup> – Fig 4.1) further highlights an important difference in learning approaches between both groups.

#### 4.2.4 Learning Autonomy and Skill Levels

Staff respondents were asked to categorise the general learning autonomy and musical skill levels of their students. A majority of staff (65%) reported their students as generally dependent learners and in need of regular guidance (Fig. 4.2). A total of 82% stated the general skill level of their students as either average (41%) or good (41%) with only 8% believing their students to be very good upon entering higher education (Fig. 4.3). The findings suggest a perception amongst teaching staff that students are neither sufficiently skilled as musicians nor sufficiently independent as learners, upon entering higher education.



**Figure 4.2 Autonomy of students as learners (as identified by staff)**

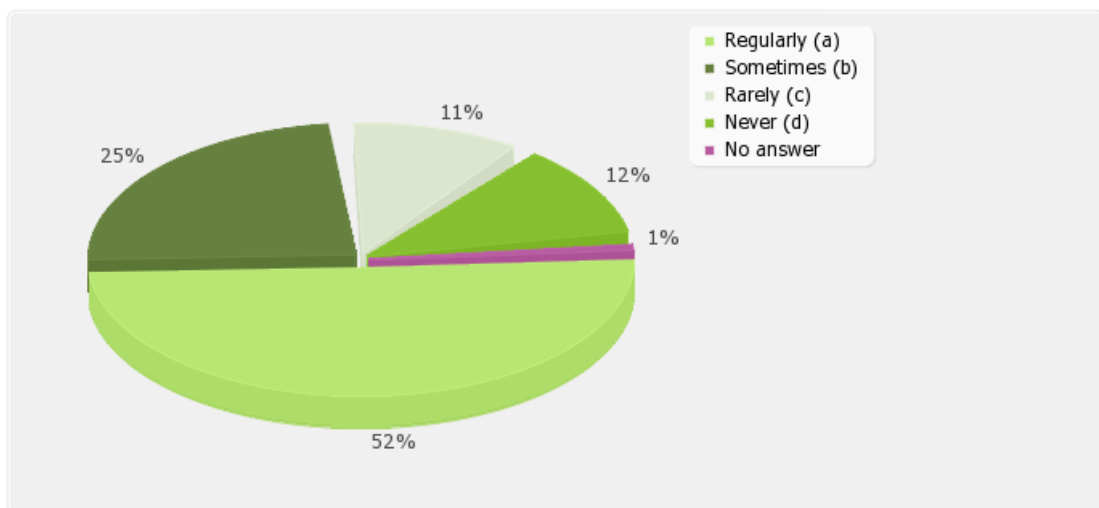


**Figure 4.3 Skill levels of students upon entering higher education (as identified by staff)**

### 4.3 Student Learning Techniques

#### 4.3.1 Learning for Performance

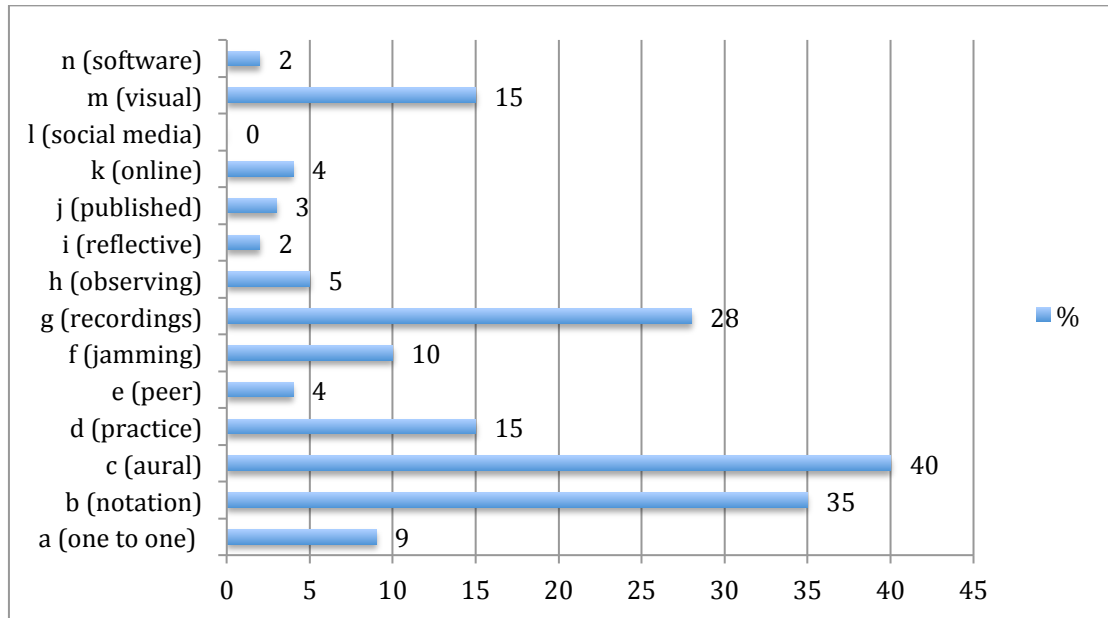
The majority of student respondents stated that they either ‘regularly’ or ‘sometimes’ engaged in performances as part of their undergraduate coursework (77%) (Fig. 4.4).



**Figure 4.4 How often students engage in performances as part of coursework**



When asked to select which learning practices they were *most likely to use* when learning a new performance piece, the top three techniques identified by percentage of respondents were ‘aural learning’ (40%), learning from ‘scores/notation’ (35%) and ‘listening to and copying recordings’ (28%) (Fig. 4.5).

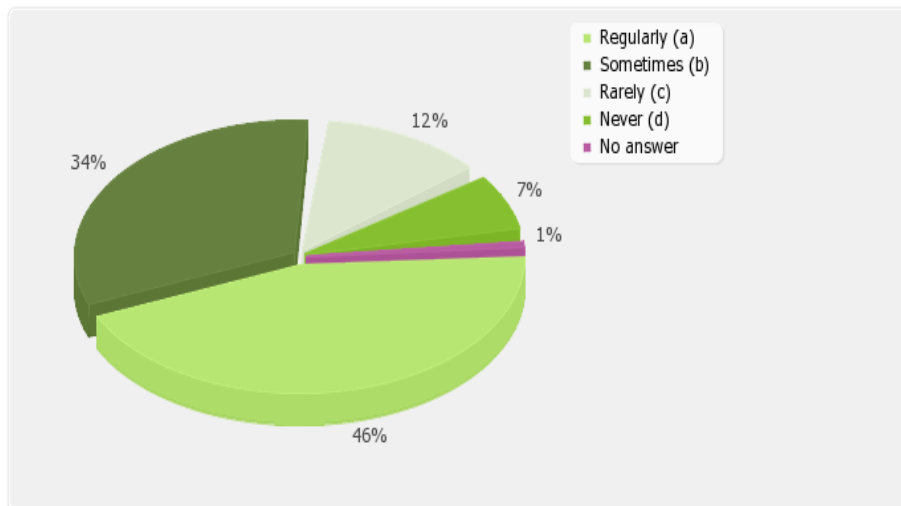


**Figure 4.5 Techniques students are most likely to use when learning a new performance piece (% of students)**

These findings reflect the top 3 common learning practices of students identified in Table 4.3 and highlight how students might approach their musical learning through both formal and informal means.

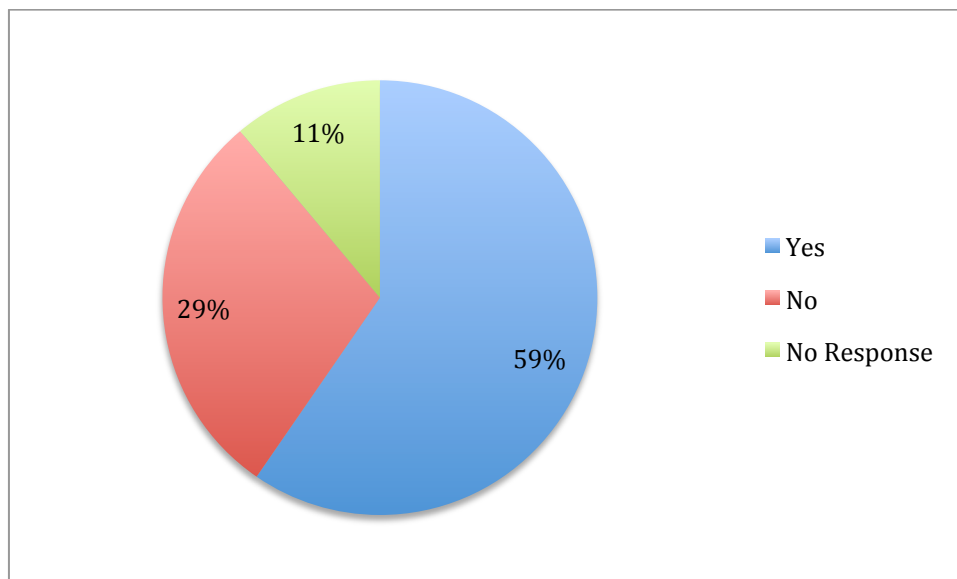
### 4.3.2 Adapting Learning

The majority of students (80%) were either ‘regularly’ or ‘sometimes’ engaged in performances through extra-curricular activities (Fig. 4.6).



**Figure 4.6 How often students engage in extra-curricular performances**

Over half of students (59%) also stated that their approaches to learning new performance pieces differed depending on the learning environment i.e. whether in a formal college setting or an informal home or community setting (Fig. 4.7). While the specifics of such adaptations were not provided, a summary from respondents who provided additional commentary, suggests that learners are most likely to engage in individual private practice in their home environments while availing of the support of a peer group for collaboration in higher education settings (Table 4.4).



**Figure 4.7 Do your approaches to learning new performance pieces differ depending on the environment (e.g. home, college, community)?**

**Table 4.4 How student approaches to learning new performance pieces differ depending on the environment [college, home, community] (% of students)**

<i>Learning Approaches</i>	<i>College</i>	<i>Home</i>	<i>Community</i>
Scores / Notation	<b>11%</b>	6%	2%
Aural	4%	5%	<b>4%</b>
Individual private practice	4%	<b>13%</b>	1%
Peer / Collaboration	<b>11%</b>	0%	2%
Feedback	4%	0%	0%
Jamming	2%	0%	1%
Recordings	3%	4%	0%
Online / Blogs / Discussion Groups	0%	2%	0%
Visual Media / DVD / Youtube	2%	2%	0%
Software	0%	1%	0%

### 4.3.3 Role of Technology

The use of web forums as learning tools was not generally widespread amongst respondents, with the use of online tutorials, blogs and discussion groups ranking 13<sup>th</sup> for staff and 11<sup>th</sup> for students. However, 51% of staff perceived that students were using online forums and social media sites as learning tools. In fact, the use of social media as learning tools only ranked 14<sup>th</sup> for students. This perhaps highlights a perception amongst staff that students are regularly using the web as an aid to their learning. Negative attitudes by staff to social media were also apparent in some of the comments made in relation to learning values. Such comments included, ‘Stop trying to make short cuts and spend less time on online social media and get on with the work to learn from the experts in their field that we provide as teachers’ (A54), and ‘Listen deeply, concentrating on what they are doing, rather than as background on the iPod when they’re reading on the top of the bus’ (A16).

It is possible, given the average number of years the staff respondents had been teaching (15.67), that teachers might not have had the opportunity to engage with social media as part of their own learning as students or on teacher

training programmes. Further analysis of the staff data revealed that amongst the respondents who had been teaching for between 15 and 25 years, only 25% reported using social media. This can be compared to responses from less experienced (and possibly younger) teachers with music education experience of between just 2 and 5 years, where 50% reported engaging in learning through social media.

Over half of all students used other forms of new technology and media such as 'computer software' (51%) and 'visual media' (69%). As a learning tool, the use of 'visual media' ranked 8<sup>th</sup> for students and 7<sup>th</sup> for staff. 80% of staff also perceived 'visual media' to be a common approach used by students. The figures suggest that both visual and technological aids such as computer software, DVDs and YouTube, were typically being used as learning tools.

While very little information was gleaned from the student questionnaires regarding attitudes to the value of technology and social media as learning tools, specific investigations into the use of such technology amongst students in higher and further education will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

## **4.4 Value of Learning Music in Higher Education**

### **4.4.1 Staff Perceptions**

A majority of staff (68%) stated that the advancement of performance and technical musical skills were the main benefits of pursuing a music degree. One educator referred to the benefits of getting 'access to high quality tuition on an instrument in an intensive environment' (A31). Others commented on the opportunity students were given to experience a wide range of music:

'They have an opportunity to explore a variety of music they may not otherwise have access to' (A26)

'Can open their minds to other musics, advance their musicianship' (A49)

Over half of staff respondents (57%) also referred to how higher education enhanced the pursuit of academic knowledge about music. Comments

referring to higher education as an opportunity to be ‘indulgent in learning your craft’ (A19) and an environment which enhances ‘skills on all levels’ (A54) would perhaps suggest that staff felt there were benefits to studying music in an institution that could not be gained in other learning environments.

Staff also commented on the benefits of pursuing music studies in higher education for the development of non-musical skills such the social skills of group work and communication. Such benefits featured in 40% of the responses. Personal development skills were reflected in 38% of the responses. The benefits of music studies for the development of creativity and composition skills was cited by 17% and 13% respectively. Relatively small numbers referred to the benefits of learning about the music business (11%) and gaining knowledge of music technology (9%).

These findings suggest that many of the skills required of popular musicians, such as originality and creativity as well as knowledge of the music industry, networking, communication skills and music technology skills, are not as highly valued by staff teaching on higher education music programmes. Table 4.5 provides an overview of responses in relation to staff perceptions of the types of benefits to be gained through pursuing music studies in higher education.

**Table 4.5 Benefits to pursuing music studies in higher education (staff )**

<i>Code</i>	<i>Abbrev.</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percentage</i> <sup>12</sup>
Performance and technical musical skills	PERF	32	68%
Academic knowledge about music	ACAD	27	57%
Social skills such as group-work and communication	SOC	19	40%
Personal development skills	PERS	18	38%
Skills of analysis, criticism and reflection	ANAL	18	38%
Creativity	CREA	8	17%
Composition skills	COMP	6	13%
Knowledge of the music business	BUS	5	11%
Knowledge of music technology	TEC	4	9%
Pedagogy	PEDAG	3	6%

<sup>12</sup> n = 47. Two records have been excluded from these figures due to an incomplete or non-response for Q9.

An additional open question asked staff to offer one piece of advice to students on how they might best approach their musical learning. Findings show that responses were broad with no one particular theme discussed by the majority. The highest number of responses related to practice and hard work (38%) followed by being open-minded (29%). The importance of spending time developing musical skills and knowledge was mentioned by 27% of respondents. Staff also discussed the importance of listening (17%) and critical thinking (15%). Only a small minority of 6% referred to the importance of collaborating with other musicians and being creative or original in their responses. Table 4.6 lists the themes that emerged in response to advising students on how to approach their musical learning.

**Table 4.6 Advice regarding approaches to musical learning**

<i>Code</i>	<i>Abbrev.</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percentage</i> <sup>13</sup>
Practice, work hard	PRAC	18	38%
Be open-minded	OPEN	14	29%
Develop musical skills and knowledge	SKILL	13	27%
Listen	LIST	8	17%
Reflect, think critically	REF	7	15%
Be passionate, joyful	PAS	6	13%
Be proactive, take action	ACT	4	8%
Be creative, show originality	CREA	3	6%
Collaborate with other musicians	COL	3	6%
Engage in extra-curricular / non-musical activities	EX	2	4%
Have patience	PAT	1	2%
Attend live performances	LIVE	1	2%

#### 4.4.2 Student Perceptions

The top 3 identified themes from students in relation to the value of pursuing a music degree included the advancement of performance and technical skills (34%), personal development (24%) and social skills (14%).

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<sup>13</sup> n = 48. One record has been excluded from these figures due to a non-response for Q10.

Some of the comments in relation to the advancement of performance and technical skills included:

‘I feel like I am becoming a more comfortable musician in both performance and writing’ (B7)

‘I am being challenged and pushed by my peers to get better at my instrument’ (B28)

‘It gives me a well-rounded musical education’ (B100)

Students also wrote about their improved confidence levels as performers as a result of undertaking music studies in higher education as evidenced in comments such as ‘I improve as a musician all the time’ (B64) and ‘this course gives me the opportunity to perform both as a soloist and with others’ (B100). In the area of personal development, students were also quick to recognise the benefits. One student remarked how positive it was to be ‘doing something I love in college’ (B39) while another stated ‘it makes me very happy’ (B105).

Compared to staff however, students were much less in agreement about the specific benefits of studying music with only one third of respondents agreeing on any one theme (Table 4.7). Only 13% of students felt their studies were useful for gaining academic knowledge about music. Just 2% of students reflected on the creative benefits of pursuing a music degree.

**Table 4.7 Benefits to pursuing music studies in higher education (students)**

<i>Code</i>	<i>Abbrev.</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Performance and technical musical skills	PERF	38	34%
Personal development	PERS	27	24%
Social skills such as group-work and communication	SOC	16	14%
Academic knowledge about music	ACAD	15	13%
Knowledge of the music business /professionalism	BUS	10	9%
Skills of analysis, criticism and reflection	ANAL	7	6%
Composition skills	COMP	3	3%
Creativity	CREA	2	2%
Knowledge of music technology	TEC	1	1%

Although not directly asked to discuss areas where they were dissatisfied with their chosen degree path, 23% of students cited concerns about their experiences of learning music in higher education. A primary area of disquiet was the perceived lack of opportunities for musical creativity. One student described how the music degree was undertaken in a very competitive environment with much of the performance work geared towards 'exams and competitions' (B113). Another student stated, 'if I could do it again, I would still study music, but in another institution where creativity and actual practice are preferred to theory alone' (B95). Yet another felt that while the degree improved knowledge of music theory, it was a 'disadvantage' to creativity (B86). Some students were dissatisfied with course content and in particular with what they perceived as general music modules:

'I feel I have developed a much more holistic view of music in general but less so the focused expertise that one would expect a 3<sup>rd</sup> level music course to provide' (B37)

'I get to learn about loads of different areas of music but none in detail' (B40)

'I think it could be better to have less material on the course which would allow people to master that material, giving people a solid foundation' (B52)

Another area of dissatisfaction for students was the relevance of courses to planned careers:

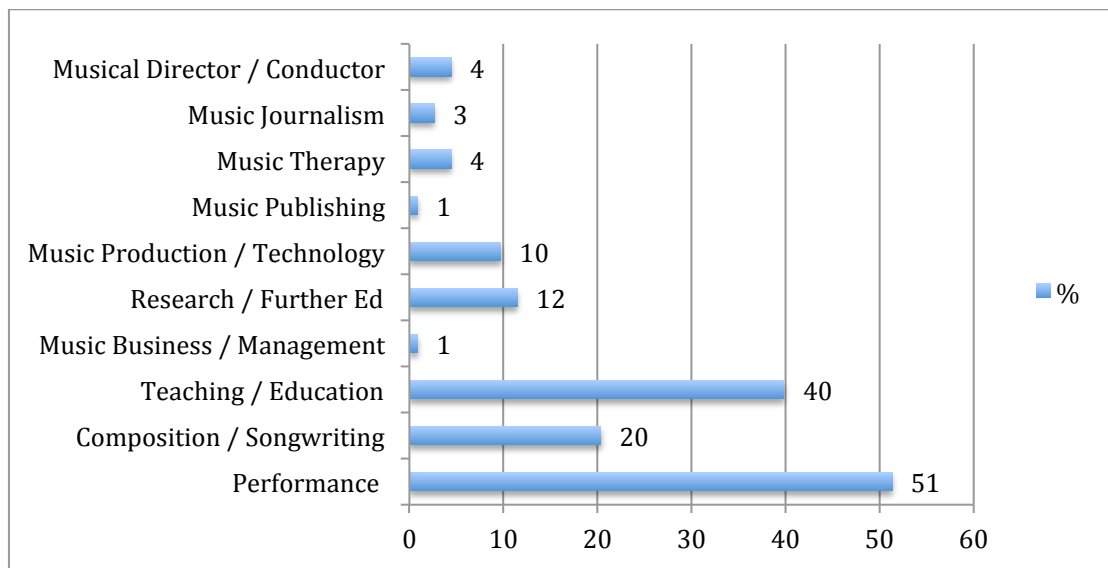
'With regards to my future and career, I am not quite sure how much it may help me' (B39)

'As for a future career I don't know whether it will benefit me' (B105)

Students were asked a direct question in relation to their planned career paths and whether they felt their undergraduate studies were preparing them for those careers. Over half of students (51%) stated that they were planning performance careers. Careers in teaching and education were planned by 40% and 20% hoped to follow careers in songwriting or composition. Smaller numbers planned to go into research or further education (12%), music



production or music technology (10%), music therapy (4%), conducting (4%), music journalism (3%), publishing (1%) and band management (1%) (Fig. 4.8).



**Figure 4.8 Career plans of undergraduate music students**

Just under half of all respondents (48%) stated that their undergraduate studies were preparing them for their chosen careers. Issues in relation to practical performance and musical creativity were a common dissatisfaction amongst students who felt that their courses were not adequately preparing them for future careers as performers:

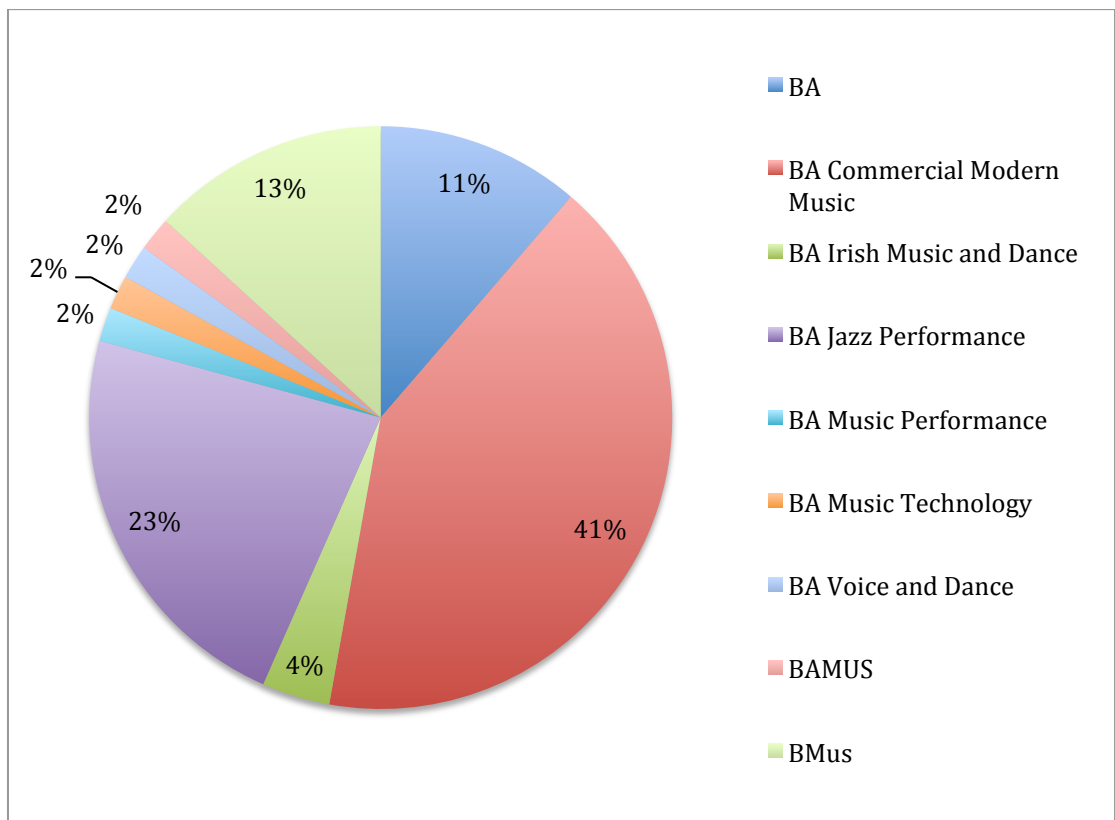
‘They have prepared me for the theory side of things but no where close near the playing practical part!’ (B84)

‘How one could potentially graduate with a general BMus degree and still not know how to write a decent melody / arrangement / composition is beyond me’ (B90)

‘I feel that I have been sort of ‘hard done by’ because performance and expression is such a huge part of music and I don’t get the privilege to do it’ (B94)

‘Initially hoped to pursue a career in performance and I found this was not really catered to as well’ (B114)

Degrees on which students appeared most satisfied with the development of their performance and technical musical skills included specific programmes in the areas of popular or jazz music such as the BA in Commercial Modern Music (41%) and the BA in Jazz Performance (23%) (Fig. 4.9).



**Figure 4.9 Degrees most likely to develop performance and technical musical skills**

#### 4.5 Conclusions

Findings from the general survey of staff and students across music departments raised a number of questions in relation to the authenticity of some educational institutions as learning environments for students from popular music backgrounds. Whilst the findings point to learning environments rich in diverse musical knowledge and teaching experience, the question remains whether the backgrounds and attitudes of academic staff, a majority of whom

favour traditional and formal learning approaches, impacts on the student learning experience.

The findings also reveal that opportunities for popular musicians to engage in informal or 'authentic' learning practices such as aural, collaborative and social learning through musical enculturation, social media and technology, do not appear to be widely supported or facilitated across many of the institutions investigated. In fact it was not clear whether the use of the web or social media as learning tools was generally encouraged or facilitated at institutional level. The findings highlight a need for music departments to ensure they can adequately support students' performance activities and facilitate opportunities for their creative development.

Findings in relation to the perceptions of staff regarding student learning and the stated practices of students themselves revealed inconsistencies. The apparent disparate attitudes of staff and students in relation to the value of studying music in higher education, and in particular the issues raised by students regarding the relevance of their studies to their future planned careers, requires further investigation.

Chapter 5 will present a more detailed investigation into the learning experiences of undergraduate music students and the teaching approaches of staff through a case study focus on teaching and learning in Institution 'Y', a Higher Education Institution in the Republic of Ireland.

## Chapter 5.0 Lived Experiences: A Music Department Case Study

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present my findings from focus group and observation data collected during Strand 2 of my case study research into music teaching and learning and the experiences of popular musicians at Institution 'Y'. I will provide a background into the learning environment and participant profiles and discuss approaches to music performance, assessment and feedback within the Music Department. I will also discuss approaches to learning including learning techniques and the use of technology as well as examining the authenticity of the educational experience for the learners. Finally, I will examine the perceived value of studying music at Institution 'Y' as expressed by the research participants.

### 5.2 The Higher Education Music Department Learning Environment

#### 5.2.1 Institution 'Y'

Institution 'Y' was established in Ireland in the mid-C19th and at the time of research, catered for over 21,000 students across a range of disciplines such as Arts, Commerce, Engineering, Education, Languages, Law and Medicine <sup>14</sup>. The Institution provides programmes from Levels 7 to 10 on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) <sup>15</sup>. Based in a major urban centre in the Republic of Ireland, students of the Institution can also avail of the many cultural events and activities that take place regularly throughout the year.

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<sup>14</sup> All information in respect of the Institution accessed via the Institution's own website (November 7<sup>th</sup> 2018)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.nfq-qqi.com/> provides a graphic of the Irish NFQ and the award types across levels 1-10 (Accessed July 9<sup>th</sup> 2018)

### 5.2.2 Music Degree Programme

Upon successful completion of a Music Entrance Test, incoming first year music students at Institution 'Y' register on a BA degree programme. In Year 1 students undertake a number of foundation modules in Music to the value of 30 credits in addition to two Arts subjects. In Year 2, music students are offered the choice of remaining on the BA Arts-Music programme or transferring to the BMus programme to take 60 credits of Music modules each year. To be eligible for the NFQ Level 8 Major Award of BA (Hons) (Arts-Music), students must achieve a total of 180 credits over three years (60 credits per academic year). Students choosing the BMus pathway must achieve a total of 240 credits over four years for the NFQ Level 8 Major Award of BMus (Hons).

The College Calendar at Institution 'Y' provides more detailed information on individual degree programmes. In the case of the BA and BMus programmes the information provided included subject choices and credit requirements for each academic year. While no overarching objective or purpose of a Major Award in Music was found in the College Calendar, a broad course outline for both the Arts-Music and BMus programmes was provided on the Institution's website. The course outline included the type of profiles music students could expect to develop if choosing to study at Institution 'Y'. The profiles were very broad and included those of 'composer, songwriter, performer, producer, educator or worker within the cultural and music industries'<sup>16</sup>.

### 5.2.3 Performance Module

The Institution's Book of Modules states that the objective of the 5 credit Performance module is to develop performance skills. The module runs throughout the academic year across two semesters. No pre-requisite or co-requisite courses are listed. Teaching methods include individual instrumental / vocal tuition and ensemble workshops. Assessment is continuous with a maximum of 50% of marks awarded for a solo performance exam and 50% for

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<sup>16</sup> Information accessed via the Institution's own website (June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

an ensemble performance exam. The following learning outcomes are defined for the Performance module:

1. *Successfully execute a performance at the relevant level of competence and in an appropriate style*
2. *Demonstrate experience and understanding of specific performance styles*
3. *Demonstrate an ability to perform sympathetically and intelligently within the context of a group*
4. *Demonstrate a critical understanding of the act of performance*

#### 5.2.4 Participant Profiles

The participants in the Music Department case study comprised 15 first-year undergraduate students registered on the BA Arts-Music programme along with their performance tutor (**n = 16**). There were a total of 6 male and 9 female student participants all taking the Performance module, which was the focus of classroom observations and focus group research. The class tutor was a professional male bass player with over 30 years' performance experience in popular and jazz music. During that period, he had also spent 23 years as a tutor. He held a BMus and was qualified to Masters Degree level. He described his own BMus as 'classical-based' and 'completely different' to the BA his students were undertaking.

The most common musical performance genre of the students was pop / rock, with bands and artists such as The Beatles, Michael Jackson, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Mark Knopfler providing some of their musical inspiration. Smaller numbers stated that they also performed other genres such as musical theatre (n = 5), classical (n = 3) or jazz (n = 2). One student also performed as a DJ and was influenced by the UK hip-hop and Grime scene. Instruments played by the students included typical rock instruments such as guitars, keys / piano, bass and vocals. A small number of students had some prior performance experience of playing in bands with friends from school or performing on stage in theatre productions.

## 5.3 Performance, Assessment and Feedback

### 5.3.1 Individual Tuition

Students were encouraged to develop their solo performance skills by availing of tuition in their chosen instrument. A lesson reimbursement scheme was available through the Institution whereby students had to seek out and pay for private lessons themselves before then claiming reimbursement from the Music Department once all lessons had been completed. A small number of students stated that they were availing of this scheme. However, the fact that they had to pay privately in advance was of concern. For example, one student stated that she had not budgeted for having to pay for private lessons and was therefore not availing of the opportunity.

### 5.3.2 Ensemble Performance

The class tutor described the delivery of the Performance module as a 'collaborative effort' with students encouraged to pick out songs and come up with original arrangements. Students were facilitated in selecting their own repertoire as much as possible in order to give them 'more of an incentive to learn' (tutor). They were then expected to rehearse the songs together outside of class and come back with an arrangement ready for the tutor to critique. The tutor described how he would advise students on 'what works' and 'what doesn't work' in the hope that as each week went by, they would learn 'how to arrange and work together as a group'.

Ensemble classes were conducted in a dedicated performance room with instruments and PA equipment. Instruments and equipment in the room included a piano, keyboard, electric and acoustic guitars, bass guitar, drum-kit, Cajon and percussion instruments, as well as microphones and amplifiers. Students sat casually in various locations around the room beside an instrument or microphone. The tutor directed the ensemble class. The class was divided into three separate groups, each timetabled for approximately one hour. Student numbers in each ensemble group were between 7 and 9.

The objective of the classroom performance activities was to select and arrange popular songs and performance pieces for an upcoming concert. On the day the classroom observations were conducted, the groups were working on classic pop and rock songs such as *Come On Eileen* (group 1), *Beat It* and *Teenage Kicks* (group 2) and *Sweet Dreams* and *Don't Fear the Reaper* (group 3). The timetabled class was the only scheduled weekly performance class for the first year music students.

Students were observed to casually play and chat throughout the class. They regularly asked questions of each other as they decided how their song would be performed, often using colloquial phrases rather than musical ones such as 'then it goes into', 'that's that part', 'it goes into the bit where'. Students collaborated together to figure out instrumental parts, often engaging in unstructured periods of playing, singing, chatting and trying out riffs. Students actively encouraged and supported each other. In one instance, a student gave a guitar player who arrived late to class, guidance on his instrumental part. The two engaged in casual conversation, swapped the guitar over and back and discussed the chords to be played. In another instance, I observed a drummer giving advice to some singers regarding the rhythm of a song. More confident students were able to take the lead from other group members. A Cajon player, who informally assumed the role of bandleader, led one of the ensemble groups as they worked through a song arrangement. The Cajon player counted them in and as they played, the ensemble members were observed taking their cues from each other as they performed the song.

In observing how students expressed how they were feeling during class, I noted that the dynamic between the students varied from group to group. Ensemble group 1, for example, appeared very uncertain and asked lots of questions. They encouraged each other regularly and became noticeably more motivated around each other as their song came together. Ensemble group 2 appeared much more self-assured, engaging fully from the outset and were very clear about how they wanted to perform their songs. The students in ensemble group 3 were by far the most confident and relaxed as was evidenced by the fact that they were happy for a fellow classmate to take the lead during their rehearsals. They appeared to really enjoy their time in class together, often



laughing and making jokes in each other's company. Box 5.1 provides a sample of the field note observations made in relation to activities during the learning of a song in an ensemble class.

### **Ensemble Group 3**

*Cajon player starts group off*

*Keyboard player knows part by heart*

*One guitar player looking at his phone but not playing*

*Group play a verse*

*Tutor says, 'it's too full'*

*Group discuss what they did the previous week*

*Keyboard student says she recorded it on her phone*

*Tutor plugs phone in through speakers*

*The group listens to themselves from the previous week on the recording*

*Tutor advises on dynamics and texture*

*Group watch each other for cues and start again*

*The group discusses together how they would like to arrange the piece*

*Cajon player takes role of bandleader*

*Tutor advises on guitar playing style (finger picking)*

*Group discuss tempo*

*Cajon player counts them in and they start again*

*Tutor then advises on arrangement and instrument textures for various parts*

*Group starts again and goes through a verse*

*They agree that they like the new arrangement and the highlighting of the vocals*

### **Box 5.1 A sample of field note observations in relation to an ensemble class**

The role of the tutor was to coordinate each group and guide and facilitate student performance activities in class. While the established role was a formal one, the approach taken was very much informal and more akin to a band rehearsal session. The tutor was often observed chatting with individual students about a part and checking that they were comfortable with what they were expected to do, at one point asking a keyboard player, 'are you ok with

that?’ and encouraging a group performance with the phrase, ‘that sounds nice’. The tutor was a valuable source of knowledge for the students, bringing his professional skills in performance and arrangement to the classroom setting. I observed the tutor counting in songs, discussing suitable tempo and rhythm patterns, demonstrating riffs and giving advice on structure and arrangement. There was also clearly an expectation by the tutor that student musicians were practising outside of class time as observed when he asked the first ensemble group if they had rehearsed. Boxes 5.2(a) and 5.2(b) below provide samples of the observations made which illustrate the role of the tutor during ensemble classes.

### **Ensemble Group 1**

*Class commences*

*Tutor asks if group have rehearsed*

*Some have*

*Some casual playing and singing, chatting about how the piece will be performed*

*Group listens to the opening melody on the recording*

*Melody line played on keyboard*

*Tutor gives some encouragement, ‘that sounds nice’*

*Discussion on starting chord, tempo, style*

*Tutor offers a suggestion, demonstrating on the bass*

*One student says, ‘that’s nice’*

*Group figure out how to play the drum part*

*Tutor counts them in*

*Drum kit, Cajon and guitar lead to start*

*Tutor discusses intro with keyboard player*

*Tutor guides group, ‘we’ll go around once’*

*He hums the riff*

*Students ask questions as they decide how to play the song*

*Tutor leads the group, gives advice on notes to be played and rhythm style*

*Tutor guides using his own instrument the bass – ‘follow what I’m doing’*

**Box 5.2(a) A sample of field note observations in relation to the role of the tutor**

## **Ensemble Group 2**

*Class commences*

*Tutor asks if they remember what they did?*

*Says jokingly he should have recorded it because he can't remember*

*Group messing around on instruments and playing riffs*

*Tutor chats to piano player*

*They discuss the chords*

*Tutor leads, gets the group to start*

*Lead singer reads lyrics from phone*

*Guitar player reads chords from phone*

*Tutor talks to bass player and claps out rhythm for him as others perform the song*

*Tutor takes bass and demonstrates during a performance*

*Group perform while tutor continues to demonstrate to bass player*

*Tutor checks what chords guitar and piano player are using*

### **Box 5.2(b) A sample of field note observations in relation to the role of the tutor**

#### **5.3.3 Formal Assessment**

At the end of the academic year, students underwent a scheduled performance exam in the formal environment of the Music Department. The main music hall where the performance exams were scheduled, appeared to also be used informally by students as a rehearsal space. I observed on the day of the exam, that a handwritten timetable had been pinned to the door with group rehearsal slots from the previous day. The music hall consisted of a raised stage area (with instruments, PA equipment, microphones and stands) and a seated area for audience members. Two internal examiners sat in the back row for the performance exam. They included the class tutor and an additional member of staff at the Music Department. During each performance, the students being assessed were observed by the examiners who took notes and occasionally made comments to each other.

I attended the final exams and participated as an audience member during the performances of the first year students. The performances were not private and the hall was open to others to sit in and observe. Occasionally one or two students from the first year class would sit in the audience during performances by their classmates. Few other audience members were present and I did not observe any other students, family members or department staff over the course of the scheduled performances with groups performing primarily for the examiners.

Students were called to perform by their tutor according to a scheduled timetable. Student groups were given ten-minute slots to perform a number of songs. Students collaborated on arrangements. It was typical for more than one student to be assessed during the performance of a particular piece. Songs included both original compositions and covers of popular songs. Student arrangements were similar in style. The primary instruments used were those typically associated with pop and rock performances and included vocals, guitar, piano / keyboard, drum / percussion. Through observing the body language of the students, it appeared that their confidence levels varied across performances with the male students seeming more confident on stage than the females.

The first ensemble consisted of a female vocalist and a guitarist who performed a very accomplished cover of a *Case of You* by Joni Mitchell. The second group to perform sang *Landslide* by the Dixie Chicks and *Count on Me* by Bruno Mars. Both songs were sung by female vocalists. The cover of *Landslide* included piano accompaniment while *Count on Me* was accompanied by a pianist, bassist, guitarist and backing singers. In comparison to the first group, this ensemble appeared less confident and there was little in terms of on-stage interaction or performance cues. The third group performed *Scar Tissue* by the Red Hot Chilli Peppers and *Stuck in the Middle With You* by Stealers Wheel. *Scar Tissue* was performed by a male vocalist and accompanied on guitar and drums. The group were observed performing quite independently of each other, with very little performance cues or interaction between them.

The fourth ensemble group comprised a male singer/songwriter and guitarist accompanied by an electric guitar player and a drummer. The group performed an original song as well as a cover of *Undercover Martyn* by Irish indie

rock group, Two Door Cinema Club. The all-male ensemble gave a very accomplished and assured performance and appeared very confident on stage. They even took their time setting up and tuning before starting their performance. The fifth group to perform consisted of seven students who collaborated on a number of songs including originals and covers. Cover songs included *S.O.S* by Abba, *Creep* by Radiohead, *Crazy* by Gnarls Barkley and *The Boxer* by Paul Simon. Instruments included piano, guitar (acoustic and electric), drum and percussion and a number of different vocalists (male and female). The students changed around the arrangement for each song with different groups of instrumentalists and vocalists performing on different songs. The final song from this ensemble was an original composition written and performed by the drummer who was also a pianist and vocalist. I observed that the interaction between this group was very good and it was clear that they had some experience of gigging together regularly (this was later confirmed by the class tutor during his interview). The final performances of the afternoon were by two male singer/songwriters and guitarists who each sang original songs. The performances were very confident and assured.

In observing how students expressed how they were feeling, I noted that while some students were clearly nervous and unsure of themselves as musicians, those with performance experience outside of college were significantly more self-assured with more developed group dynamics and stage performance skills. Males also generally appeared to be more confident than females and had much better stage presence. The male students appeared to more readily identify themselves as musicians as was evidenced in an observation made later that evening when I saw two male students performing some of their exam repertoire while busking in the urban centre.

#### **5.3.4 Grades and Feedback**

There was very little understanding amongst the students about the approach to performance assessment at the Institution. When questioned about assessment, students were very unclear about how and when they would be graded. At the time the focus group sessions were conducted, the students had just completed a public performance at a local venue. They appeared confused

when asked about whether the performance contributed to their overall assessment. Emma stated, 'I think we are getting graded at Christmas' while Shauna remarked that they wouldn't be graded until the end of the year when they would have to perform two contrasting pieces at an exam recital. This resulted in another student expressing surprise that the ensemble module was running over two semesters. Brian perhaps expressed it best when he admitted, 'we don't know how the assessment really works'.

Performance feedback was primarily given informally to students on an ongoing basis by the tutor during class rather than through any official means or formal discussion. The tutor described how he would take time during class to discuss the points that the performers needed to work on. Students discussed how the tutor used colloquial language such as 'that sounds cool' or 'that was great', when giving verbal feedback. Sean stated that if he wanted to know how he was getting on with practical performance he could 'just ask'. The tutor described how providing feedback was a delicate matter due to the students' egos as outlined in his comments below:

'You can't say, *it's really bad*, in front of everyone else. That's humiliating and I wouldn't have liked anyone to do that to me' (Tutor)

The feedback provided to students by the tutor was found to be largely positive and was delivered as an implicit part of the learning process through the verbal pleasantries exchanged during ensemble performance classes.

## 5.4 Approaches to Learning

### 5.4.1 Learning Techniques

Approaches to learning amongst the students included many informal practices such as 'learning by ear', 'peer / collaborative learning', 'jamming / informal performances' and 'listening to and copying recordings'. The tutor confirmed that students were primarily learning by ear during class. He

discussed how learning aurally was an approach he himself was also very conversant with:

‘I just learn the piece by ear until I know it and then play it. It’s what people did fifty, sixty years ago in jazz except it’s easier now because now you have the technology to slow everything down’ (Tutor)

Peer learning and teamwork was a natural part of the learning process for students. As observed by Charlotte, much of the ensemble work undertaken in class was ‘mostly just jamming’. Shauna described how during class they would ‘bounce ideas off each other and help each other out’. The tutor also referred to the importance of peer learning and collaboration within the group. He discussed how it was expected that students would take responsibility for getting together and rehearsing outside of class each week. Although many of the first years struggled with collaboration, the tutor discussed how their teamwork was one of the main improvements he saw in them after a year in higher education and commented, ‘you can see the ones that are jamming together because every week they get much better’. He also referred to the benefits of teamwork and how it could help students in their future careers ‘regardless of whether they do music or not’.

The use of scores was not prevalent amongst the students. While the students did not discuss the reasons for this, it was the tutor’s belief that scores intimidated them and that they were not prepared to put in the time due to their ‘shorter’ attention spans. The tutor observed that self-taught musicians, while ‘quite flashy’ as performers, often struggled with the basics of theory and sight-reading.

‘Even a couple of the piano players now they don’t read music and I find that to be strange’ (Tutor)

He felt that students with classical music backgrounds were at an advantage in having ‘more of a grounding’ in theory.

When students were asked to discuss how their experiences of learning within the Institution compared to learning in other settings, Michael described how learning with friends was ‘mostly aural’ and collaborative. Brian stated that playing outside of college with friends was much more laidback and less stressful as there were no deadlines. This sentiment was echoed by Jack, who stated, ‘you’re not getting marked at a gig’. The formality of learning in the college environment was commented upon by a number of students. Michael, who also gigged with a band, talked about how, for him, the image of music in college was ‘pen and paper’ whereas music anywhere else involved ‘actually playing your instrument’. Sean discussed how he felt music was ‘less effective’ in college as there was no scope for self-expression. Aine described how her performance activities in college were very classically based when compared with the kind of popular and contemporary music she felt was being played by students in other institutions.

#### 5.4.2 Authenticity

The performance space available to students was limited to one ensemble room in the Music Department. Students spoke about the difficulties of getting access to the room to rehearse, as it was also used as a classroom throughout the day. Shauna described how she would have to get up early to book the ensemble room while Jack also stated that students had to physically go to the department to write their name on the door of the room. Emma confirmed that the ensemble room was the only place where the students could practice together as a group. Brian also described how difficult it was to get access to the room despite all the instruments and resources being kept there.

The quality and availability of instruments and equipment was less than satisfactory to the students. They spoke about the poor quality of instrument resources. Jack, for example, described the equipment as being ‘very old’ and that for the first few weeks of term, there were no leads available to plug in the amplifiers. David stated that there was a lack of equipment and described the guitars as ‘banjaxed’. Emma also said that more equipment was needed and that there were basic items that weren’t available. Brian confirmed that access to



instruments and equipment was 'shambolic' and described a situation where the class tutor had to purchase a set of basic percussion instruments, as none were available in the Department. Brian also described how there were only three microphone stands for use with four microphones. Shauna confirmed that there were not enough microphones for all the singers. She described how getting access to microphones could sometimes take up to an hour as they were shared with students using them in the recording studio during class time.

The students were, however, pleased with the support provided by their ensemble tutor. They described the tutor as providing 'expertise' (Brian), being 'relaxed in class' (David) and providing direction (Sean). The tutor made a streaming playlist available to the students to help them choose from a broad range of performance material. As stated by Brian, the tutor also gave help and ideas to the group during ensemble classes each week. However, in terms of choosing the kind of repertoire they liked, students did not always appear to share each other's preferences or those of the tutor. According to Brian, while students could choose their own material to perform, they tended to have to 'compromise'. Emma stated how students could end up doing songs that other people had picked while Sean remarked, 'it's difficult to find people who want to play the same music as you'.

While very satisfied with the support and expertise provided by their ensemble tutor, the students described how the professional experience of the tutor did not extend to introducing them to the live music scene outside the Institution. Both Charlotte and Jack described the urban location of the Institution as a great place for live music with a busy calendar of music events taking place throughout the year. Jack also believed it to be a good location for getting gigs. However, opportunities for them to engage with the local music industry did not appear to be facilitated by the Institution. Sean perhaps best described this when he stated that the local music scene was a 'very difficult market to get into', and that the college should facilitate opportunities for learning through networking. 'Music', he further stated, 'isn't a college with four walls, it's outside with other people'. Charlotte wanted teachers at the Institution to put her in contact with people in the industry while Brian confirmed that there were no real connections being made outside of the Institution. By

comparison, the students were aware of another music institution locally that did provide opportunities for students to play gigs in the urban centre during the academic year.

### 5.4.3 Technology

When using resources such as notation, lyrics or chord sheets in class, students primarily used apps or websites on their smartphones. In one such instance, during the classroom activities of the first ensemble group, I observed a keyboard player and guitar player referring to their chords on a small phone that they had placed between them. The tutor also spoke about the use of smartphones and discussed how, at the start of the academic year, he had asked students to print out their music notation and lyrics before coming to class. However, from early on, the students began favouring their phones for sourcing chords and lyrics. The tutor commented on how the students would 'get fidgety' without their phones to the point where the use of them became a distraction during class. He stated, 'if I turn away and talk to someone else, they'll go on social media' and found it to be a particular problem for the first year students when compared to more experienced groups:

'The third years just come in and play. They use phones sometimes but not as much. You might get one or two of them that would use it but some of them wouldn't look at their phone for the whole class' (Tutor).

While the use of social media amongst first years during class was problematic, students also used Facebook and group messaging apps for acquiring social capital and as a means of keeping in touch outside of class time. The tutor remarked on how they found it much easier to coordinate rehearsals once they had set up social media groups.

Students were observed referring to song recordings together when working out parts to play in class. As the performance room was not equipped with a computer, projector or Internet access, students used music streaming apps on their own phones to listen to songs. Some also used phones to record

their ensemble rehearsals, which they would then listen back to during class. The tutor also played recordings of songs on his phone and would regularly prepare for class by downloading songs beforehand. He commented on the unreliability of getting Internet access in the performance room and described 'printed lyrics on paper' as the most effective way to access resources during class. For chords and instrument notation, the tutor also stated that he wanted students to write out charts for other people to play before committing them to notation software, as he believed this to be 'more like real life'.

Outside of class, students used online technology and software applications as learning tools. These included apps for chords and tablature, backing tracks, software notation, music production tools and music sharing platforms such as YouTube. Students seemed particularly engaged when using such tools as evidenced in a comment by Emma who described getting '140,000 views' of tablature she had shared on a music forum. Jack also commented on how easy it was for him to record music and share it online using music production software. The class tutor also used technology as a learning tool and discussed how he was using recording technology to avail of jazz improvisation lessons from a renowned pianist in the US.

'I'm taking lessons from a piano player in America. He sends me stuff. I play it on the bass and record it and send it back to him. One-on-one jazz lessons. He emails me the lesson on mp3. He critiques my recordings' (Tutor)

As a professional bassist, the tutor also described how he would use YouTube as a tool when learning new material for performance.

'If I haven't got time I'll go on YouTube and find some fella who has worked it out and look at what he's playing and learn it from that' (Tutor)

The tutor's approach to learning new material therefore reflected the approaches adopted by students.

## 5.5 Value of Studying Music in Higher Education

### 5.5.1 Musical Performance

The practical performance value to be gained from studying music in higher education was discussed by students during the focus group sessions. Students confirmed that they had only one compulsory performance module per week in the first semester with time playing together under the direction of a tutor, equating to just under one hour per week each. Other performance electives available to music students included Irish Traditional Music, Classical, Jazz Ensemble, Choir, Songwriting and Javanese Gamelan. The students confirmed that while they had the option of taking additional performance electives, it was often very difficult for them to do so due to timetable clashes with other subjects.

The students' attitude to the amount of time given to practical performance at the Institution was largely negative. Most of the students believed that they should have been spending much more time performing music. David, commenting on the lack of playing and performance at the Institution, said that he 'thought there would be a broader range of teachers for different instruments' and that he felt he learned more at home when it came to practical work. Charlotte also agreed that she learned more at home when it came to practical performance. She compared her experience of studying music at the Institution with that of her drama module which she said included 'nine hours of practical drama a week' compared to one hour of practical music performance. Sean felt that learning music at the Institution gave him 'no scope for self-expression'. While Jack confirmed that there was an expectation to rehearse outside of class, Aoife described how this was rarely possible due to timetable clashes. She stated it was 'really hard to find the time that suits everyone to practice outside of this class'.

The tutor also confirmed the students' interest in performance and stated, 'some of them just want to do performance, they want to be performing'. He felt that performance classes at the Institution gave them an opportunity to do something they enjoyed and provided a break from what he described as their

'normal' learning. The tutor also discussed how students found non-music modules more challenging. 'They struggle with modules that wouldn't be orthodox music modules', he said, 'they don't see the relevance'. He went on to describe how in other modules 'they're being told what to do whereas in my class I want it to be enjoyable and for them to be part of the group'. He further stated, 'what they're doing now in University, I did in bands when I was growing up'. The tutor described how one of the first year ensemble groups had really developed their group work skills and were now taking responsibility for song arrangements and set lists in class as well as getting their own gigs. This was despite the fact that they did not know each other prior to starting the course.

The tutor compared the benefits to those he experienced himself as an undergraduate music performance student:

'I met a lot of people through the degree'  
'I got to play a lot more interesting music'  
'It opened more doors for me'

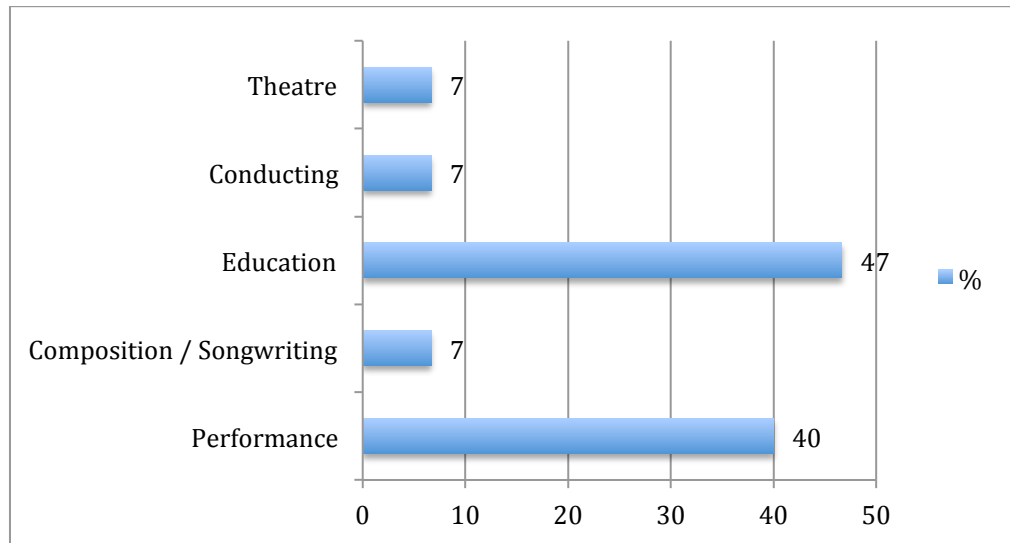
He also cited other benefits for students learning music in higher education including the learning of theory and harmony and learning to be disciplined and set goals. In terms of what advice he would give to students regarding how to approach musical learning in higher education, the tutor advised the following:

- Practice and study
- Rehearse
- Make the most of the time
- Get experience
- Get gigs
- Enjoy it!

### 5.5.2 Future Careers

When asked to discuss how their degrees were preparing them for their planned career paths, the students who were primarily interested in careers in teaching or education (47%) (Fig. 5.1) seemed most satisfied with the course

content. For the students interested in performance careers (40%), the lack of practical performance content was discussed as a primary concern.



**Figure 5.1 Future career plans of students at Institution 'Y'**

Smaller numbers of students such as those hopeful of careers in conducting (7%) or composition / songwriting (7%) were also dissatisfied with the choice of modules on offer at Institution 'Y'. Sean spoke about how he felt he was in the wrong environment to be studying music for composition - 'If I want to pursue my career path, I really don't think this is the right course for me at all.' He further stated, 'I'm not getting towards my goal here'. In terms of preparing for a career in conducting, Brian remarked that while music notation and music literacy was important, outside of that he felt there was nothing at the Institution to help him for a career in conducting. While the fact that the students were only in their first year at the Institution might have had a part to play in their dissatisfaction with the course offerings, there was clearly a disconnect between the perceived value and benefits of their degree choice and the students' career plans, particularly for those hoping to embark on performance-related careers.

## 5.6 Conclusions

Findings from the case study at Institution 'Y' highlighted the many informal learning practices engaged in by music performance students such as peer and aural learning. In particular the important role played by technology was frequently observed during classroom activities. The performance tutor was also found to replicate those learning approaches both in his personal learning and during ensemble classes.

Students were found to have made a very clear distinction between their common and everyday learning practices as musicians and the formal environment of the institution. Of concern was the fact that they were quite disengaged from the formal institution and largely unaware of what was expected of them as learners. Findings point to Institution 'Y' as a largely inauthentic place of learning for popular musicians. This was most evident in terms of the poor provision of instrument resources, performance spaces and 'real world' performance experiences. While little value was placed on performance and creativity within the institution, it was highly valued by students. The particular music degree programme on offer and the emphasis on theory and academic content was found to be most suited to students hoping to pursue a career in education although this was not made clear in the College Calender or website.

In Chapter 6, I will provide an alternative perspective and deeper insight into teaching and learning through presenting reflective data from students and my own reflections as a music performance teacher in Institution 'Z', a College of Further Education in the Republic of Ireland.

## Chapter 6.0 Reflections: *Music Teaching and Learning in Further Education in Ireland*

### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present findings from Strand 3 of my research analysing the learner records of music students at Institution 'Z'. I will give an alternative perspective through providing a background into the learner profiles and learning environment of a College of Further Education. Through an analysis of student diaries, I will present reflections on learning, collaboration, teamwork and personal effectiveness in respect of music performance activities. I will also reflect on the use of technology and social media as aids to student learning. My discussion will include reflections on my own observations and practices as a music teacher.

### 6.2 The Further Education Learning Environment

#### 6.2.1 PLC Courses and QQI

Colleges of Further Education in Ireland (also known as PLC or Post-Leaving Certificate Colleges) provide courses at Levels 5 and 6 on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)<sup>17</sup>. Post Leaving Cert courses focus on vocational training and the development of technological skills and provide a period of work experience for learners looking to enter the workforce or progress to further training. The courses also provide opportunities for adults to undertake a one or two year programme before committing to a longer period of study in a Higher Education Institute. Major awards can be used as an alternative to the Leaving Certificate when calculating points for access to higher education through the CAO (Central Applications Office).

Responsibility for validation, certification and quality assurance of Further Education and Training courses in Ireland lies with the agency QQI

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.nfq-qqi.com/> provides a graphic of the Irish NFQ and the award types across levels 1-10 (Accessed July 9<sup>th</sup> 2018)



(Quality and Qualifications Ireland). Established as an independent State agency in 2012, QQI aims to promote 'quality and accountability in education and training services in Ireland' through maintaining and developing the NFQ, approving and validating programmes and providers, regulating the quality of programmes, providing advice on recognition of qualifications nationally and internationally and liaising with the Department of Education and Skills regarding national education and training policy <sup>18</sup>.

### 6.2.2 Music Major Awards

QQI Major Awards in the area of Music and Music Technology at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 include *Music* (Level 5 Awards 5M2011, 5M20599 and Level 6 Award 6M20602) and *Sound Production* (Level 5 Award 5M2149). To achieve a Major Level 5 Award learners complete 120 credits from a mix of mandatory and elective modules known as Minor Awards. Learners can choose to complete the major award in one academic year or over additional academic years through the accumulation of minor awards and credits. General content and assessment strategies for Major Awards are defined by the QQI and outlined in Certificate Specifications which are available online. Specifications include a description of all learning outcomes as well as the techniques that must be used in assessing the component in question. Standard assessment techniques include Projects, Assignments, Collections of Work, Learner Records, Skills Demonstrations and Exams.

The stated purpose of the Major Award in Music (5M2011) as defined in the QQI Certificate Specification is as follows <sup>19</sup> :

*The purpose of this award is to enable the learner to acquire the knowledge, skill and competence to work independently and under supervision as a practitioner in the music industry and or to progress to further and or higher education and training.*

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<sup>18</sup> The QQI website provides full details on the role and functions of this State agency – [www.qqi.ie](http://www.qqi.ie). Accessed July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018

<sup>19</sup> See [https://www.qqi.ie/sites/docs/AwardsLibraryPdf/5M2011\\_AwardSpecifications\\_English.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/sites/docs/AwardsLibraryPdf/5M2011_AwardSpecifications_English.pdf). Accessed June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

### 6.2.3 Institution 'Z'

In 2017 I was appointed to a teaching position in Institution 'Z', a College of Further Education in the Republic of Ireland and tasked with the coordination and delivery of QQI Level 5 Major Awards in Music (5M2011) and Sound Production (5M2149). I was one of three specialist teachers delivering modules across both Major Awards. Providers of QQI-approved courses define specific module descriptors for minor awards being delivered within their own institutions by providing indicative module content as well as mapping specific learning outcomes to assessment techniques. Table 6.1 outlines the course modules delivered by me at Institution 'Z' along with their credit values and assessment techniques. Three other 15-credit modules delivered to the students by specialist teachers included Communications (5N0690), Music Technology (5N1640) and Sound Engineering and Production (5N1900).

As Music Performance and Event Production were the two course modules concerned with the development of music performance skills, I used the Learner Record assessment technique for those modules to set a number of reflective tasks for the students regarding their learning. Throughout the academic year, I collected research data from the students' reflections as well as my own reflections on my teaching practice.

**Table 6.1 Music modules delivered 2017/2018**

<i>Module Title</i>	<i>Credits &amp; Award(s)</i>	<i>Assessment Techniques</i>
Music Theory & Practice (5N1849)	Credits: 30 Major Award(s): Music	Skills Demonstration (30%) Assignment (30%) Written Exam (40%)
Music Industry Studies (5N1458)	Credits: 15 Major Award(s): Music Sound Production	Project (50%) Assignment (50%)
Work Experience (5N1356)	Credits: 15 Major Award(s): Music Sound Production	Collection of Work (40%) Skills Demonstration (40%) Learner Record (20%)
Ethnomusicology (5N1443)	Credits: 15	Assignment (50%)

	Major Award(s): Music Sound Production	Project (50%)
<b>Music Performance (5N1301)</b>	Credits: 15 Major Award(s): Music Sound Production	Assignment (10%) Skills Demonstration (60%) <b>Learner Record (30%)</b>
<b>Event Production (5N1374)</b>	Credits: 15 Major Award(s): Music Sound Production	Project (40%) Skills Demonstration (30%) <b>Learner Record (30%)</b>

Music modules were delivered in a building a short walk from the main campus. A room within the building was provided as a dedicated space for the music students during class time. The music room was equipped with a PC, projector, Internet access and a sound system. Available instruments included two digital pianos, a number of acoustic guitars, a bass guitar and amplifier, a Cajon and various percussion instruments. Students also had access to a PA system that included four microphones and stands. No separate rehearsal space was available but students were given access to the music room at lunchtimes. For modules in Sound Production and Music Technology, students had access to a fully equipped recording studio one morning a week during term time at a nearby education institution.

#### 6.2.4 Music Performance and Event Production Modules

The stated aim of the 15 credit minor award in Music Performance is to 'equip the learner with the knowledge, skill and competence to perform music in a variety of contexts' (QQI, 2017). In Institution 'Z' students were assigned two contact hours per week for Music Performance. Class activities included the selection, arrangement and rehearsal of popular songs and pieces for performance. Students performed in ensemble contexts such as in-class performances and regular lunchtime recitals in the college canteen. The following learning outcomes are defined for the Music Performance module (ibid):

1. *Identify resources required for effective rehearsal and performance*
2. *Identify a range of music genres*
3. *Choose suitable repertoire for performance*
4. *Outline the skills required to run an effective rehearsal*
5. *Plan and structure a series of rehearsals*
6. *Use musical language competently to effectively communicate with other musicians*
7. *Give and receive musical direction*
8. *Develop instrumental techniques in the context of a series of performances*
9. *Perform in a variety of contexts within a chosen musical genre*
10. *Perform in a musically competent manner paying particular attention to tuning, timing, dynamics and ensemble*
11. *Evaluate the effectiveness of structured rehearsals and performances to inform each subsequent series*
12. *Evaluate own role within the performance process considering planning, preparation, objectives and time management*

The aim of the 15-credit minor award in Event Production is to ‘equip the learner with the knowledge, skill and competence to organise and produce an event while working independently and with others within a specific vocational context’ (QQI, 2017). In Institution ‘Z’ students were assigned two contact hours per week for Event Production. Class activities included the preparation and completion of an event plan and the production of a concert event. The following learning outcomes are defined for the Event Production module (ibid):

1. *Examine the different elements which create an event to include clients brief, lighting, sound, display, staging, multi-media and audience*
2. *Explore the various stages of running an event to include planning, pre-publicity, logistics, implementation and evaluation elements*
3. *Summarise current fire and safety and insurance regulations in respect of venues and public spaces*
4. *Explain the concept, types and impact of teamwork on the organisation and production of an event*
5. *Examine the key documentation of event production to include contracts, schedule of fees, time and action plans and budgets*
6. *Describe the functions of personnel involved in production of an event to include production manager, event director and administrator*
7. *Apply effective teamwork skills in the production of an event*
8. *Demonstrate the communication skills both orally and in writing required to organise and produce an event*
9. *Prepare an event production plan to include health and safety aspects, venue floor plans, equipment listings, pre-production meetings and rehearsal schedules and evaluation plans*
10. *Produce an event under supervision, demonstrating the ability to work in a self-disciplined and responsible manner, setting objectives and adhering to timelines and or deadlines*

11. Evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses as a team participant in organising and producing an event.

Tables 6.2 and 6.3 list the reflective tasks I required each student to complete as part of the Learner Record assessments for each of the modules. The Learner Records of 13 individual students taking both modules were analysed (**n = 13**).

**Table 6.2 Learner Record reflective tasks – Music Performance Module**

Module Learning Outcomes (LO)	Reflective Tasks
<b><i>LO1 Identify resources required for effective rehearsal and performance</i></b>	- What resources were used during the rehearsal or performance (consider instruments, equipment, music files, YouTube clips, chord sheets, lyric sheets, video-recording and analysis)?
<b><i>LO4 Outline the skills required to run an effective rehearsal</i></b>	- Describe what group activities took place during each rehearsal or performance
<b><i>LO11 Evaluate the effectiveness of structured rehearsals and performances to inform each subsequent series</i></b>	- What facilitation skills were in evidence (consider preparation, provision of resources, group work, time management etc.)? - How did the pieces benefit from having been previously rehearsed or performed by the group?
<b><i>LO12 Evaluate own role within the performance process considering planning, preparation, objectives and time management</i></b>	- Assess your own role in each rehearsal or performance (consider your function within the ensemble, your objective, activities undertaken, planning, preparation, time management)

**Table 6.3 Learner Record reflective tasks – Event Production Module**

Module Learning Outcomes (LO)	Reflective Tasks
<b><i>LO2 Demonstrate an understanding of the various stages of running an event</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe the planning that took place for the concert event (consider plan documents, meetings, song arrangements, rehearsals, marketing etc.)</li> <li>- Discuss the role(s) you had on the day of the concert event (consider performances, sound, technical support, stage-hand, script-writing, emcee etc.)</li> </ul>
<b><i>LO4 Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts, types and impact of teamwork</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe your interaction with other students and the teamwork you engaged in during the planning and execution of the concert event</li> <li>- What did you <u>like</u> about working as part of a team?</li> <li>- What did you <u>dislike</u> about working as part of a team?</li> </ul>
<b><i>LO11 Apply appropriate evaluation skills both personally and of the work carried out</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How well do you feel you contributed to the production of the event?</li> <li>- What personal skills and attributes did you feel were <u>most useful</u> to you in planning and producing the event?</li> <li>- What personal skills and attributes did you feel were <u>least useful</u> to you in planning and producing the event?</li> <li>- If you were to get involved in the production of an event again in the future, what would you do differently?</li> </ul>

### 6.2.5 Student Profiles

Six students were registered on the Music course and nine students were registered on the Sound Production course. A percentage of students (40%) were classified as mature (age 23+). All students performed pop/rock music. Instruments included voice, guitar, bass, keyboard, percussion and brass. The majority (78%) also performed electronic music. Other genres performed by

students included classical (20%), jazz (20%), trad/folk (7%) and world music (7%). Table 6.4 outlines the instrument and genre preferences of all the students registered on the Music and Sound Production courses (**n=15**).

**Table 6.4 Instruments and genre preferences of students**

<i>Student ID</i>	<i>Major Award</i>	<i>Genres</i>	<i>Instruments</i>
D1	Music	Pop/Rock	Vocals
D2	Music	Pop/Rock	Guitar, bass, electronic
D3	Music	Pop/Rock, Jazz, World	Guitar, bass, vocals
D4	Music	Pop/Rock, Trad/Folk	Guitar, vocals
D5	Music	Pop/Rock, Electronic	DJ, electronic
D6	Music	Pop/Rock, Classical, Jazz	Trumpet
D7	Sound Production	Pop/Rock, Electronic	Vocals, electronic
D8	Sound Production	Pop/Rock, Electronic	Guitar, vocals, electronic
D9	Sound Production	Pop/Rock, Classical, Jazz, Electronic	Trombone, piano, electronic
D10	Sound Production	Pop/Rock, Classical, Electronic	Piano, electronic
D11	Sound Production	Pop/Rock, Electronic	Vocals, DJ, electronic
D12	Sound Production	Pop/Rock, Electronic	Guitar, vocals, electronic
D13	Sound Production	Pop/Rock, Electronic	Percussion, electronic
D14	Sound Production	Pop/Rock, Electronic	Percussion, DJ, electronic
D15	Sound Production	Pop/Rock, Electronic	Piano, Vocals, electronic

## 6.3 Reflections on Learning

### 6.3.1 Approaches to Learning

**Table 6.5 Approaches to learning as discussed by students**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Students</i>	
	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
a) Scores / notation / chord sheets / lyrics	100%	1
e) Jamming / informal performances with other musicians	100%	1
l) Visual media (e.g. YouTube)	100%	1
d) Peer / collaborative learning	92%	4
c) Individual private practice	69%	5
f) Listening to and copying recordings	62%	6
b) Aural (learning 'by ear')	46%	7
h) Reflective practice / journals / diaries	23%	8
m) Computer technology / Smartphone apps	23%	8

In reflecting on how they engaged with their weekly Music Performance classes, students discussed the various ways in which they learned new songs. The top ranked approaches identified included the use of visual media to watch performances of the songs by other artists, written notation, such as chord sheets, lyrics or score sheets and jamming and the informal practice and performance of the songs with their classmates (**n = 13**) (Table 6.5). All students referred to those learning methods in their Learner Records. Table 6.6 details some of the statements made by students with regard to the top three learning methods identified.



**Table 6.6 Student reflections in relation to their top three learning methods**

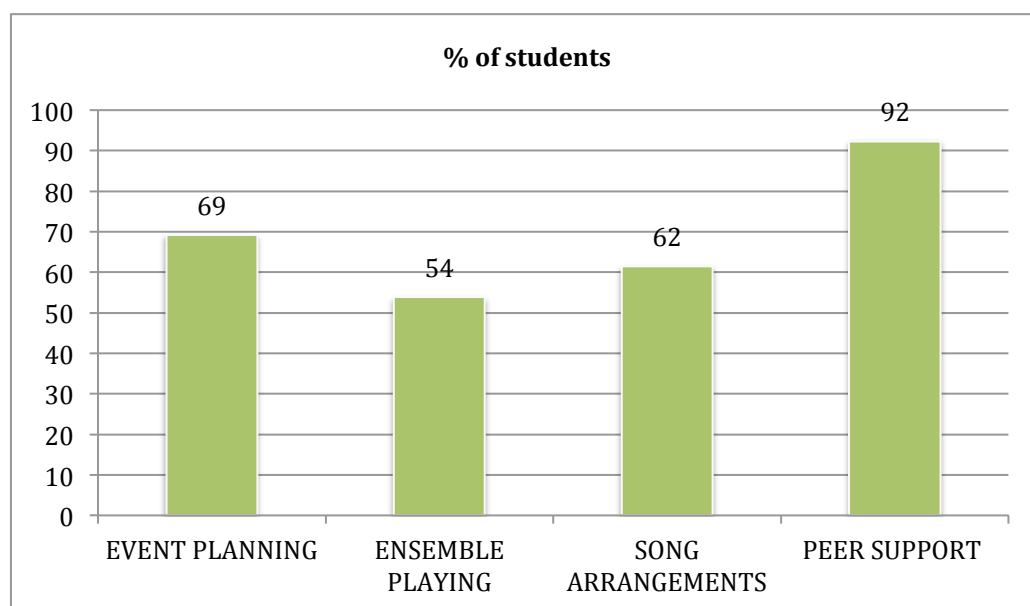
<i>Learning Method</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<b>Scores / notation / chord sheets / lyrics</b>	<p>‘Websites were called upon for chord charts for songs as well as their lyrics. I, personally either wrote my parts for trombone into a manuscript copy or used an online program’ (D9)</p> <p>‘The scores were provided by the person in charge of the song, they had scores for the brass, percussion sections and for the keyboard’ (D13)</p>
<b>Jamming / informal performances with other musicians</b>	<p>‘I think being able to practice playing and communicating with the other musicians and singers in the class during rehearsals, made it easier for us to play together on stage’ (D8)</p> <p>‘We ran threw [sic] the song a few times to make sure we understood the flow of the song and for the musicians to become familiar with what they were playing’ (D1)</p> <p>‘I feel today the group clicked really well when we played the song for the first time’ (D2)</p> <p>‘A few of us practiced songs unplugged in the canteen to warm up’ (D3)</p>
<b>Visual media (e.g. YouTube)</b>	<p>‘When we ran into difficulty with our songs or there was a part that we were having trouble with, we would use YouTube’ (D8)</p> <p>‘I picked Sir Duke as the song I want to perform with the class. We listened to it on YouTube and had to give it a good few tries just to get the feel for it’ (D11)</p> <p>‘When we were rehearsing some people didn’t know the song so we put it on YouTube so they could listen to it and see how the song went’ (D14)</p>

Peer learning also ranked highly amongst the students. In Learner Records, 92% of students discussed how they engaged in peer learning when working out new songs. A significant amount of class time involved students discussing how particular song arrangements might work and supporting each

other when playing through parts. One trumpet student discussed how he and the trombone player were able to support each other because they played similar parts. They ‘sat beside each other helping one another during each song’ (D6). An accomplished and experienced guitar student reflected on how his role included ‘teaching guitar or bass parts to a few of the students’ (D3). Peer learning and collaboration ensured that ‘suggestions flowed and experimentation commenced’ (D4). Peer learning also enabled students to ‘make suggestions as to how each other’s parts should sound’ (D9) as observed by a vocal student when putting together one of her songs - ‘we decided it sounded very nice with just a piano and we also added harmonies to the chorus’ (D1).

### 6.3.2 Collaboration and Teamwork

Collaboration and teamwork was especially relevant when it came to the planning, preparation and production of a music concert event by the students for the Event Production module. When asked to reflect on the interaction they had with each other during the planning and execution of the charity concert, four key themes emerged from the students’ Learner Records - event planning, ensemble playing, song arrangement and peer support (**n = 13**)(Fig. 6.1) <sup>23</sup>.



**Figure 6.1 Interactions between students when working on the charity concert event**

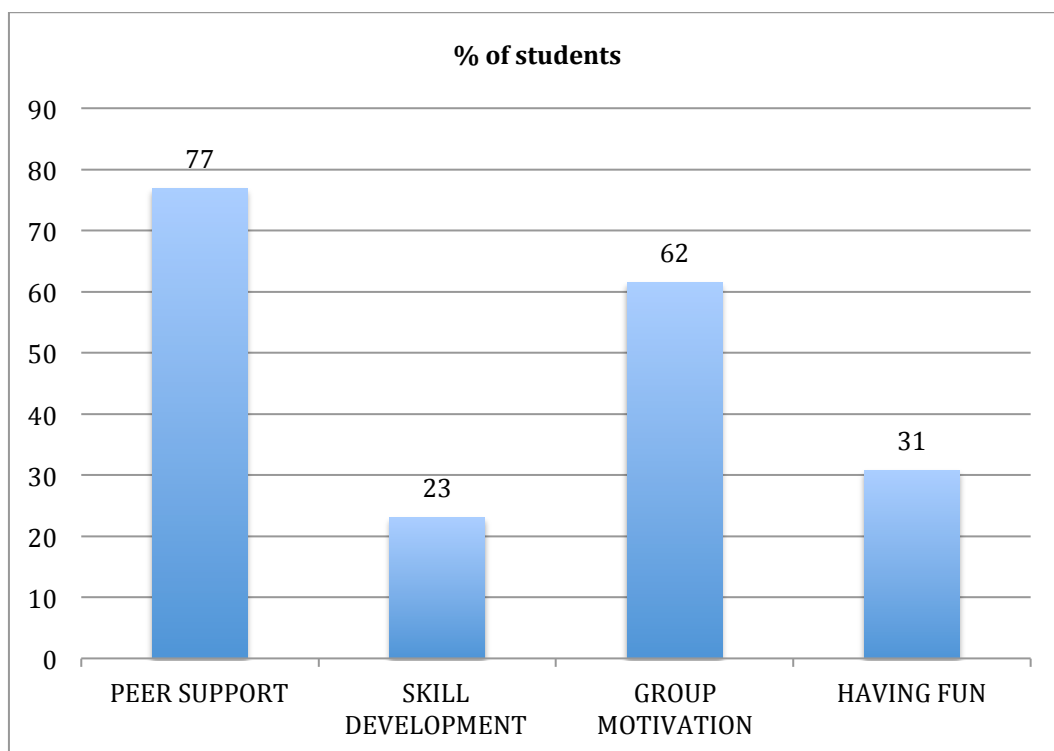
<sup>23</sup> Percentage marks represent the percentage of students who referred to each theme.

The majority of students (69%) discussed how their teamwork involved activities related to event planning and concert production such as ‘whole-class discussions’ and ‘meetings’ (D9) and deciding on the ‘different songs on the set list and the order of how the songs played out’ (D2). Arranging songs and ensemble playing emerged as two other key themes in which students collaborated and worked together. Providing support for each other generally was of primary concern to students throughout the event production process with 92% reflecting in their Learner Records on the various ways in which they collaborated in order to help each other out. Table 6.7 provides a sample of statements from students highlighting the practical ways in which they helped one another. The statements also show how hugely important it was to them to have the support of their peers.

**Table 6.7 Student reflections in relation to peer support**

<i>Comment</i>	
<b>Peer Support</b>	<p>‘When setting up the sound equipment I found it difficult at the beginning as I did not know how to do a lot of it. By talking to others and asking them to show me how to do it I slowly learned how to do it’ (D13)</p> <p>‘When we were learning songs I offered assistance’ (D11)</p> <p>‘The personal discussions I had covered specifics about how the equipment was set up as well as conversations about how different songs would be arranged’ (D9)</p> <p>‘The group of students were so supportive and helpful in so many ways’ (D1)</p> <p>‘I thought our willingness to work together was very clear from the start and everyone was very open to helping each other out’ (D8)</p> <p>‘Before the concert we all shook hands to wish us luck and told each other ‘<i>don’t mess up</i>’ as a joke’ (D6)</p> <p>‘We were all there to help each other out and make this event as stress free as possible which we did’ (D2)</p>

The majority of student reflections (77%) also identified peer support when they were asked to discuss what it was they most liked about being part of a team (Fig. 6.2). These findings further highlight the importance of peer support for the student musicians. Other themes identified in the students' reflections included being part of a motivated group (62%) and having fun (31%). Interestingly, the development of skills was mentioned by only 23% of students as something they liked as part of their teamwork suggesting that skill development does not rate as highly as the acquisition of social capital when students work together in teams.



**Figure 6.2 What students liked about being part of a team**

Although being part of a group was clearly something the students valued, working with others was also found to be a source of frustration for them. The majority of students (85%) reflected on various issues that they felt impacted on their ability to get things done as a group. In response to what they disliked about working as part of a team, one student referred to team members getting 'distracted' or not doing 'their part' (D9). Students discussed disliking 'when people fight with each other over small things' (D6), 'not having a choice over things' (D15), people having a 'different opinion about certain things' (D10) or

'too many in the team' (D12). A further source of frustration was in relation to the unreliability and poor attendance of other students as evidenced in the following statements:

'Some people missed a lot of classes and so left the work up to the rest of the class' (D13)

'The one thing I didn't like about working as part of a team was the fact that some days certain members wouldn't show up and it kind of threw the rest of the group especially when we had a certain song arranged a certain way and then we had to put the extra energy towards rearranging the song' (D3)

'What I didn't like about working in a group were the inconsistencies with some people not showing up for rehearsals then not knowing their parts, and I feel that slowed the rehearsal process down a bit' (D11)

These findings demonstrate that while students enjoyed teamwork and learning with peers, their strategies for dealing with conflict within teams were not well developed.

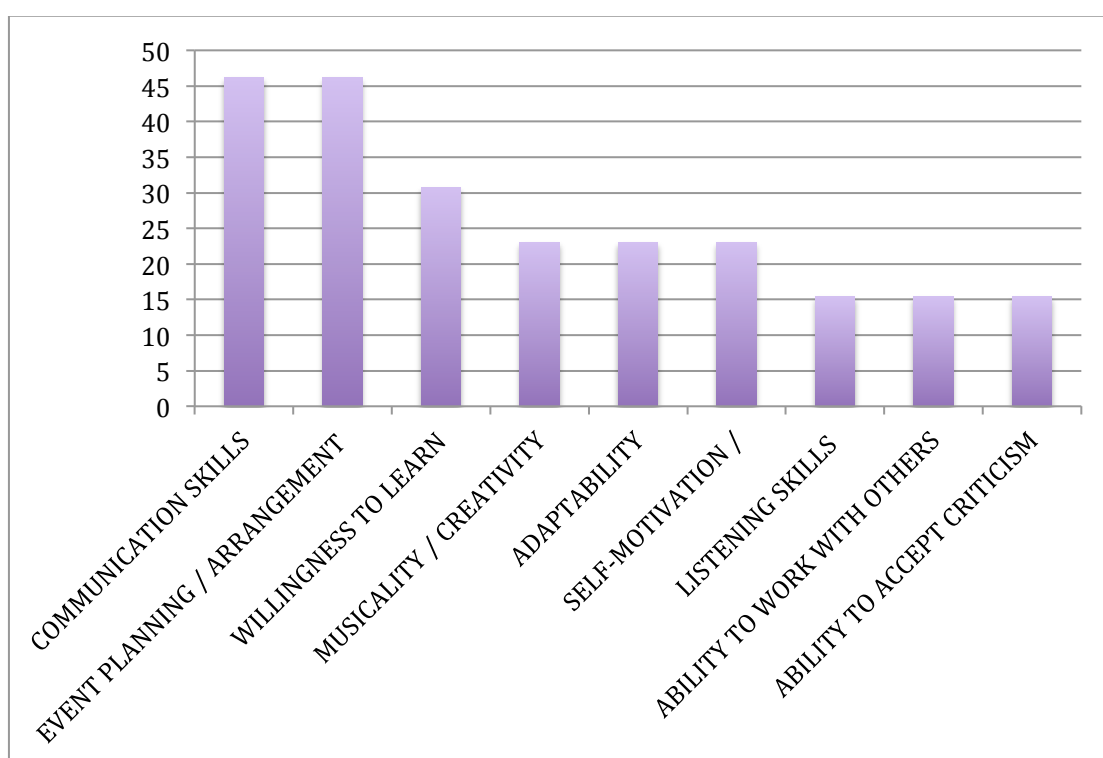
### **6.3.3 Personal Effectiveness**

Students' Learner Records for the Event Production module included reflections on their roles and practical contributions to the execution of the event as well as an evaluation of their personal efficacy in the planning and production of the music concert. The most useful personal skills and attributes as identified by students, can be seen in Figure 6.3. Having good communication, event planning and arrangement skills were identified as the most useful by 46% of the students. One vocal student shared the following in relation to the usefulness of her communication skills:

'I believe the personal skills and attributes I felt were most useful to me in planning the event would be listening and verbal communication. In my opinion I am a good listener, so during the production of the event I would listen to what my co-ordinator and classmates had to say and take all their notes on board. I also found myself voicing my opinions and views about ideas for the event making sure I am heard'.  
(D1)

Another student discussed how his communication and planning and arrangement skills helped him in his preparation for the final performance:

‘I felt that my communication and planning skills were important during the event, you needed to be able to communicate to each musician during a song with hand signals, eye contact and counting out the rhythm for the musicians to follow, before the event we needed to plan songs and be well prepared before the event so we could sound good and be able to give a good solid performance’. (D6)



**Figure 6.3 Most useful personal skills and attributes identified by students for planning and producing a music event (%)**

A number of students (31%) discussed how their willingness to learn new things helped them in contributing to the production of a successful concert event as evidenced in the following reflection by a student who had very little previous experience of music performance prior to commencing the course:

‘I think the fact I want to learn new things about what I am doing helped me with this event. For example learning how to play the Cajon so that I could be involved in the musical side of the event or learning how to set up the equipment and asking questions. I think all of this helped especially on the day as I felt I could do both of those things’. (D13)

Surprisingly, only 23% of students wrote about the usefulness of their musical or creative skills, which as a theme, ranked equally with personal skills such as the ability to be adaptable, self-motivated and determined. For example, one very capable young singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, neglected to mention the usefulness of her musical abilities in her reflection:

‘During the rehearsals I felt my most useful personal skill was my ability to adapt to new things. I’ve found that I am someone who is always willing to learn new things so when someone came in with a new song or changed a part in their song I thought I adjusted to it well. When trying out the bass for *Havana* I was very determined to get it right so it would work in well with the song’. (D8)

Other useful skills and attributes mentioned by students included the ability to work with others (15%) and the ability to accept criticism (15%).

In relation to personal attributes that did not prove useful for students, the primary theme identified was in relation to poor confidence or a lack of assertiveness. One student commented on how it took ‘a while to eventually build up the courage and perform in front of the class’ (D1). Another described how ‘lacking confidence made planning and producing the event more difficult’ (D13). A student also reflected on how it ‘may have been more constructive to demonstrate my skills and abilities more emphatically’ (D4).

## 6.4 Reflections on Teaching

### 6.4.1 Approaches to Teaching

The student cohort registered for the Music and Sound Production courses, comprised a mixture of young school leavers with limited performance

experience and more mature students with some semi-professional experience. A small number of students had previously attended or completed further or higher education programmes (for example, one student had already achieved a Level 9 Masters Degree in an unrelated area). In addition, some students were also accessing student support services for general or specific learning difficulties. As the students' teacher, I was very cognizant from the outset of the mixed abilities of the group.

In respect of delivery of the Music Performance module, the approach I took was to adopt informal learning methods in the classroom to facilitate and support the students' musical learning. In the early weeks of the first semester, classroom activities included learning about and listening to various styles of popular music. I also facilitated discussions about popular music and encouraged students to reflect on their own experiences as both music consumers and performers. In class, students were encouraged to talk about the kind of music they enjoyed listening to and select examples for their classmates to hear. An early written assignment gave students the opportunity to research and discuss a musical genre of their choosing. In the early part of the academic year, only the most confident musicians were comfortable performing in front of their classmates.

Students were encouraged to start working on a 'set-list' that they could draw upon over the course of the year for various performances. In the beginning, I presented the group with a number of popular songs that they might like to learn. In class, students watched the songs on YouTube and were shown various websites where song lyrics and chords could be accessed. They were also shown different versions of the same song performed by other artists. Song arrangements were discussed in class as well as what instruments or vocals might work for their own performance of the pieces. Students were also encouraged to choose songs they themselves would like to perform and provide the resources needed for the group (recordings, lyrics, chord sheets etc.).

It took a number of months to build confidence in the younger musicians before they began to volunteer to perform or come up with song suggestions of their own. Conversely, some of the more experienced musicians were already regularly performing in the college canteen at weekly 'lunchtime concerts' with



the result that the same few musicians tended to dominate performance activities in the early part of the year. It wasn't until the end of the first term that the students began to work well together as a group. By that stage, most of them had completed and performed a number of songs in small ensembles in the public space of the college canteen. Students were assessed on an ongoing basis throughout the year through the demonstration of their skills during rehearsals and performances.

For delivery of the Event Production module, I spent the first term working with the students on an event production plan for the charity concert event, scheduled for the second term. Event planning ensured students were familiar with the roles and resources required for the various stages of an event. They were also made aware of regulations in relation to fire, health and safety, and had drawn up action plans, budget plans and floor plans for the event. Each student was also given the task of selecting, arranging and leading the performance of one song on the set list on the day of the event as well as participating as ensemble performers on songs arranged by their classmates.

I also organised a number of music performance talks and workshops for the students throughout the year. These included a professional singer and music technologist working in the local music industry, a recording studio owner, a young up-and-coming singer/songwriter signed to a national label and an experienced composer and performer staying in the region as part of a Musician-in-Residence initiative with the local County Council. The outside expertise gave the students a valuable insight into what it was like to work in the music industry while also supporting the learning outcomes of two other course modules they were taking, namely Work Experience and Music Industry Studies.

Wherever possible, I worked with colleagues to provide opportunities for students to share assignments and project work on related modules. For example, a shared project was set to meet some of the learning outcomes across three modules, Music Industry Studies, Sound Engineering & Production and Music Performance. The students' project work involved spending time in a recording studio, recording and producing songs for a CD and participating in a CD launch and performance at the end of the college year.

Feedback was provided to students both formally and informally. Formally, students received assignment grades and feedback comments from me on a periodic basis throughout the year. Skills Demonstrations were typically graded at the time of the assessment and the student informed of the result immediately afterwards. Informally, student progress in practical performance classes was discussed during rehearsals or after performances.

#### **6.4.2 Music Performance Activities**

Scheduled classes for the Music Performance module were held once a week in a 2-hour practical session. The class was timetabled to finish at the lunchtime break to encourage students to participate in the lunchtime concert sessions that took place on campus immediately afterwards during term time. As the academic year progressed, scheduled class time was used by the students to arrange and rehearse songs for performances at upcoming events such as the weekly lunchtime sessions, the charity concert event, an annual college open day and a further education and training fair. By the second term, the 2-hour weekly Event Production class was also being used to rehearse for the scheduled charity concert event.

On the morning of the concert event, I observed the students to be very excited and enthusiastic. Many of them arrived early to set up the PA system and run through a few of the songs. They set up all the instruments for the sound-check and brought along additional resources such as chords sheets, scores and lyrics. Two students with responsibility for acting as emcees took time to talk through their links in front of the microphones. Another student took responsibility for monitoring the sound during the event.

It was clear the students were very nervous but their support for one another throughout the sound check and rehearsal appeared to settle their nerves. By the time they came to perform the set list in front of an appreciative audience of fellow students, they appeared to have overcome their anxieties. The performance turned out better than any of their previous rehearsals and the delight in their achievement was clear to see. Undoubtedly, the bond they had

formed as a group over the previous months was a huge factor in the success of the event.

Once the main event was over and the formal assessment complete, the students became much more relaxed about performing. About a week later, a small number of them volunteered to perform at the college open day. A stage area was set up in the canteen while prospective students and their families visited course information stands. The music students performed a number of songs and instrumental pieces in the background. One of the students with DJ experience even brought his equipment to play sets in between live songs. As the students only had a small number of songs prepared, a colleague and I also took to the stage to perform some songs. As there had been no time to rehearse, the group worked together to quickly improvise arrangements using the chord and lyric sheets provided. The more experienced musicians flourished in the impromptu setting and afterwards expressed their delight at being given the opportunity to perform at the event.

Approximately a month later, in the final weeks of term, the students volunteered to perform their set list again at a further education and training fair at a local hotel. Most of the group were in attendance and so were able to perform many of the songs they had arranged in class during the year. At this stage, the confidence levels of the students seemed very high and it was clear that the many hours they had spent rehearsing and performing together during the year had benefited them. By the time the students came to do their final performance together at the CD launch night at the end of the academic year, they were visibly more relaxed and enjoying the occasion. The students performed to over two hundred members of the public at the launch event. The group worked extremely well together to perform the prepared set list alongside the impromptu performances of more experienced musicians and teachers.

### **6.4.3 Technology and Social Media**

Online resources used by the students when arranging songs in class included sharing platforms such as YouTube and chord and lyric websites <sup>24</sup>. The

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<sup>24</sup> Such as <https://www.azlyrics.com/> or <https://www.ultimate-guitar.com/> <Accessed August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018>

students also had access to their class notes online. I developed class notes for individual modules and stored them on the college cloud server. As well as content that the students were expected to read, online notes also included audio-visual material such as YouTube links to documentaries, interviews and music videos and links to relevant websites. Students were given college accounts to facilitate access to various applications via the cloud server and were also able to access their class notes and college emails from their own devices when not on campus. Students were found to rely heavily on their class notes for the completion of assignments. They did not generally purchase or borrow books even when books were listed in their class notes as useful sources of material. Whilst the College of Further Education did not have a library facility, students were entitled to become members of the library at the local HEI a short distance from the campus. However, with the exception of one mature student, none of the music students appeared to avail of this service and any sources referenced in student assignments were almost exclusively online.

The only exception was for students taking the Music Theory and Practice module. For this class, most students purchased a book recommended by me at the start of term. The book was inexpensive and proved a useful reference guide for the students when revising theory topics covered in class. Additionally, the students' online notes included links to music theory websites which some of them used to complete revision exercises. Where students discovered useful websites for music theory, they would also bring it to the attention of their classmates.

In terms of note taking in class, I observed that students rarely took notes by hand. Some did not even have any stationery with them in class. Others used smartphones to take photos of pertinent information not included in their online notes such as on flipchart paper. They also seemed to rely on memory or the memory of their classmates to fill them in on topics covered when revisiting them at a later date.

Socially, students used social media apps to connect with each other when not in class or when planning informal performances and rehearsals. The class representative (class rep) used instant messaging apps to send information to

students<sup>25</sup>. Students also used these methods of communication with each other whenever they had queries about college assignments or upcoming performances. They also used social media to send each other video clips of songs they were working on for their performances. The use of social media by students proved a very useful way for them to keep in touch with each other and share information. For example, if a student was missing from class and someone had a query regarding a song arrangement, a group member would immediately contact the person via an instant message.

However, as the students themselves set up the un-moderated group chats, issues sometimes arose with regard to online behavior. On one occasion, during a rehearsal session, the teacher observed a student 'check-in' on the potential whereabouts of another student by looking at her online activity. This led the student to conclude that 'she hasn't checked her messages since last night so she's probably still in bed'. Occasionally when checking in on group messages, a student would express exasperation at the 'tone' of the message of another student. On another more serious occasion, a message exchange resulted in a bullying complaint that had to be dealt with by the relevant college authorities.

Some students also had a Facebook page although the use of Facebook did not appear to be as prolific as the use of instant messaging. One semi-professional musician had an active 'artist' page to promote himself and his music. Other students had personal pages on Facebook. None of the students were actively blogging, vlogging or showcasing their work online. This also appeared to be the case for some of the more experienced musicians who did not have any obvious online presence.

Email was used in a much more formal way by students for communicating directly with me or with college administrators. Throughout the year, I observed that students rarely used their college email account and I often had to remind them to check their email for important information such as assessment deadlines or exam timetables. In this regard, students mainly relied on each other for sharing information either by word of mouth or through

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<sup>25</sup> The instant messaging apps being used by the students were WhatsApp and Snapchat

instant messaging, an informal approach which often resulted in students misinforming each other regarding assignment submissions or deadlines.

## 6.5 Conclusions

Findings from the research conducted at Institution 'Z' further highlight the informal learning methods used by students of popular music in formal education environments. In particular, peer and collaborative learning was found to be prevalent amongst these music students who also reflected on the benefits of developing 'soft' skills such as teamwork and personal effectiveness. Teaching methods included informal techniques such as aural learning, the use of visual media, jamming and informal performances. Findings also show that students were facilitated in engaging with the local music industry through invited guest speakers and regular public performances such as lunchtime recitals, college events and concerts in community and local venues. The facilitation of this industry engagement reflected the stated purpose of the music programme to prepare the learner to work as a practitioner in the music industry. The use of technology by students and in particular social media, featured strongly in Institution 'Z'. Interestingly, social media as a tool for knowledge acquisition was not referred to by students in their reflections perhaps highlighting its use as so commonplace, it has come to be considered a normal part of their everyday lives.

Chapter 7 will present a detailed discussion on the overall findings from the research studies presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The insights gained in relation to learning, authenticity and the use of technology and social media amongst students of popular music will be discussed along with findings in respect of the value of studying music in higher and further education settings in the Republic of Ireland. Implications and recommendations for the teaching and learning of popular music in higher and further education will also be presented.

## Chapter 7.0 Conclusions: *Discussion of Music Teaching and Learning in Higher and Further Education in Ireland*

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the overall findings of my research and provides a discussion on the outcomes in relation to the following key themes in respect of higher and further music education in Ireland:

- Learning practices amongst popular musicians.
- ‘Authentic’ learning and how it is facilitated.
- The use of technology and social media.
- Values of staff and students in relation to music education.

Throughout the chapter I situate my findings within existing literature in popular music and music education. I discuss the implications of my findings for higher and further music education in Ireland and provide recommendations on how issues might be addressed. I also contribute to research in the field of popular music studies by presenting a proposed new module in *Band Performance* to facilitate the learning requirements of popular music students identified in my research. I highlight research that is required to further understand approaches to popular music education in Ireland and in conclusion I present a final summary of my findings in response to my research questions as set out in Chapter 1.

### 7.2 Insights

#### 7.2.1 Learning

My research demonstrates a strong affiliation amongst Irish music students with informal learning practices. Student respondents in Strand 1 of my research strongly identified with aural learning such as learning by ear, from

recordings or from visual media platforms such as YouTube. The popular music students observed in Institution 'Y' also engaged in informal learning practices such as aural learning, peer learning and enculturation through collaborating and jamming. In particular, collaboration and teamwork was found to be a natural part of the learning process and very prevalent amongst popular music students particularly when it came to the planning and preparation of concerts and performance events as observed in Institution 'Z'. My findings in respect of Irish popular music students reflect the informal and peer learning practices amongst popular musicians identified by Green (2002).

Students were found to have made a very clear distinction between their common and everyday learning practices as musicians and the formal environment of the institution with over half of student respondents surveyed in Strand 1 stating that their approaches to learning differed depending on the environment. In Institution 'Y' learners reflected on how they were most likely to engage in individual private practice in their home environments while availing of the support of a peer group for collaboration in education settings. In community environments and performances with friends and musicians, learning was found to be mostly aural and collaborative with greater perceived opportunities for self-expression. My research reflects how popular music students have to adapt their learning styles to negotiate between the informal learning practices of community settings and the formal learning environment of the education institution. My findings in relation to learning amongst Irish popular music students, supports learning practices identified by other researchers in relation to popular and folk musics such as informal learning, peer learning and socially situated learning practices (Cope, 2002; Green, 2002; O'Flynn, 2011; Miller, 2016) and the need for informal learning in music education (Folkestad, 2006; Hallam et. al 2012).

With both staff and students in my Strand 1 survey perceiving musical practice and rehearsals as important activities in higher music education, provision for such informal learning activities at Institution 'Y' was found to be largely lacking. This was most in evidence with regard to inadequate time and space for performance, insufficient instrument and equipment resources and a lack of timetabled hours for rehearsals. My case study highlighted the negative



effects of inadequate resources at institutional level on the ability of students to engage in informal learning.

Despite the issues around inadequate resources and course content at Institution 'Y', the approach to teaching by the performance tutor was found to be in keeping with the learning needs of popular music students. The music performance tutor at Institution 'Y' for example felt that the tasks students were doing in ensemble class, such as arranging songs and set lists and taking responsibility for performance events, reflected what musicians were doing in 'real world' settings. The performance tutor at Institution 'Y' also shared a similar outlook to myself when it came to valuing the importance of performance and informal learning for my students in Institution 'Z'. The approach taken by the tutors at both institutions was that of *facilitator* and *role model* and balanced ideal teaching methods in creative subjects such as those discussed by Olssen (1997), Green (2008) and Burnard (2010) with the learning needs of music students (Papageorgi et. el, 2010).

### 7.2.2 Authenticity

In terms of Institutional support for creating authentic environments for students of popular music, and referring to two of Kruger's Signifiers of Authenticity (2009) *The Physical Space* and *The Material Space*, my study shows that students at Institution 'Y' did not have an authentic learning experience in terms of the learning environment, instruments and physical resources required for the performance of popular music. As a result students at Institution 'Y' were quite disengaged from their formal place of learning due to the lack of an available space and resources to facilitate their performance needs. This dissatisfaction with the authenticity of the students' learning environment, also supports the findings of Lonie and Dickens (2016) who discuss the need for appropriate spaces in a college in order to give greater ownership to students for their musical learning.

In research conducted by Papageorgi et. al (2010b) it was identified that an ideal learning environment for students of music should include opportunities to network and gain entry into an active music scene. My study

highlights a lack of authenticity and an inconsistent approach to the needs of popular music students in this regard. In Institution 'Y' students were not facilitated in engaging with the local music industry despite expressing a strong desire to do so. With the exception of one external performance at a local music venue over the course of the academic year, students at Institution 'Y' were not provided with any industry-related tasks or opportunities to participate in the local music scene. Those that did participate were already performing locally as semi-professional musicians and familiar to some extent with the local scene. They did not therefore gain any additional insight into the local music scene during their studies at Institution 'Y'. In contrast, at Institution 'Z', students were given regular performance opportunities within the local music scene as well as talks from industry experts. As the class tutor, I facilitated this through organising student performances at a number of local venues. However I felt that not enough time was allocated in the students' timetables for this activity which should ideally have taken place on a much more regular basis to help them identify as popular musicians through engaging in the local music scene.

In terms of *vocational and academic authenticity* in popular music education (Parkinson & Smith, 2015) results from Strand 1 of my study found that a common area of dissatisfaction amongst music students in higher education was the overall content of music programmes. During my case study at Institution 'Y' students also expressed concerns at having to take modules that were perceived to be 'general' in nature and unrelated to music. Indeed when I investigated this further I found that the overall aim for students undertaking the BA/BMus degree programme at Institution 'Y' was not clearly stated in the College Calendar or on the public website. Therefore in terms of providing an authentic learning experience for students of popular music in higher education in Ireland, programmes need to be much clearer in their stated objectives while also aiming to provide more practical content.

Overall my research found that students were most likely to experience authenticity when it came to the professional expertise of their performance tutors, in other words where the tutors were 'native' to the musical culture. This points to another of Kruger's Signifiers of Authenticity (2009), specifically that of *Ethnicity*, as also being relevant in understanding how popular music students

experience authenticity. As discussed in section 7.2.1, performance tutors were found to facilitate the use of informal learning methods in the classroom thereby providing authenticity with regard to learning amongst popular music students. Both the performance tutors at Institutions 'Y' and 'Z' were able to facilitate students' musical learning and performances through having significant experience as popular musicians themselves. In his study into how popular musicians teach, Robinson (2011) similarly observed that popular musicians tended to be very flexible and based their lessons around the music their students wanted to learn (Robinson, 2011). The approach of tutors in Institutions 'Y' and 'Z' also supports findings that highlight the authenticity of teachers who motivate and inspire their students (Papageorgi et. al., 2010b). Parkinson and Smith's (2015) observation that approaches to teaching and learning in higher popular music education (HPME) should reflect an *aspiration towards authenticity* was therefore certainly in evidence amongst the students and performance tutors observed in this study.

### 7.2.3 Technology and Social Media

In investigating the use of technology and social media as learning tools, my findings show widespread use amongst students and performance tutors at Institutions 'Y' and 'Z'. Students were found to use a broad range of technology such as computer software, applications for lyrics, chords and tablature, backing tracks, music production tools as well as various audio and video streaming platforms. Performance tutors were also found to make significant use of technology both in their teaching and personal learning. Personal smartphones were the devices most frequently accessed by students for independent knowledge acquisition in the classroom. This use of technology for informal learning amongst popular music students in my study also supports findings from studies conducted by O'Flynn (2011), Moore (2012) and Kenny (2013).

My research also shows however, that support for the resourcing of technology in the classroom was not consistent at institutional level. At Institution 'Y', for example, the performance classroom was not equipped with any computer hardware or an online connection. Students relied on their

smartphone network signals for access to online resources. Institution 'Z' on the other hand was equipped with full online access and the necessary computer and audio-visual hardware. In Strand 1 of my study I also found that the attitudes of staff to technology and social media in education settings was largely negative. In contrast however the performance tutors at both Institutions 'Y' and 'Z' had a very good understanding of the technological needs of their students and facilitated the use of technology and social learning as much as possible in the classroom. This was due not only to their own experiences as popular musicians and teachers but also to their interest in the development of their students as musicians and performers. These teaching approaches reflect research by Cremata who found such facilitation styles to be conducive to collaborative and inclusive musical learning environments (Cremata, 2017). I would therefore suggest that, contrary to the opinion of Simones (2015) who asserts that tutors have a limited interest in the curriculum due to the often precarious and casual nature of their own careers, performance tutors can have a better understanding of the needs of students 'as musicians' than the institutions in which they are enrolled.

The use of social media by student musicians for acquiring and maintaining social capital featured very strongly in my findings. Students at Institutions 'Y' and 'Z' used social networking websites and group messaging applications on a daily basis as a means of staying in touch with each other. Students were also found to make use of such applications for college-related activities and would regularly 'message' each other to coordinate rehearsals and activities for upcoming events and performances or to keep abreast of assignment requirements and deadlines. In fact the use of social media platforms by students at Institution 'Z' was found to have replaced more traditional forms of digital media, such as email, as a communication tool. My findings support previous studies into the use of online forums for socialising (Kibby, 2000), social networking websites for the accumulation of social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007) and the use of online forums by young musicians for collaboration and information sharing (Folkestad, 2006; Salavuo, 2006).

### 7.2.5 Value of Studying Music

The majority of staff surveyed in Strand 1 of this study valued practice and hard work as the best approach to musical learning in higher education. Given that the vast majority of teaching staff were also primarily classically trained musicians, my findings reflect studies by O’Flynn (2011) and Moore (2014) with regard to the importance still being placed on the acquisition of skills associated with the classical tradition in higher music education in Ireland. Disparate attitudes between students and staff in relation to the value of studying music in higher education were highlighted in my study. Whilst the development of performance and technical skills was ranked equally important by both staff and students, the perceived benefits of pursuing a music degree in a formal institution differed between the two groups. In particular, teaching staff in higher education settings were found to highly value the pursuit of academic knowledge *about* music. Such an attitude can be seen to support the findings of Weston (2017) who observed that theoretical modules on popular music courses were particularly valued by music teachers.

The facilitation of opportunities for collaboration and the acquisition of social capital was in evidence amongst students at both Institutions ‘Y’ and ‘Z’. While both staff and students in Strand 1 of the study reflected on the importance of developing social skills in higher education, students in Institutions ‘Y’ and ‘Z’ also reflected on the importance of their personal development and the acquisition of ‘soft’ skills such as the ability to communicate and learn, to listen to others and to work in teams. The findings of my study therefore support the notion that the attainment of transferable skills is a valued outcome of a music qualification (Green, 2002; Cloonan, 2005; Hunter, 2006; Gaunt & Papageorgi, 2010; Weston, 2017; NAMHE, 2019).

The opportunity to gain performance experience and engage in the local music industry was found to be of huge value to students in Institution ‘Z’. At Institution ‘Y’ students reflected on how they would have valued opportunities for industry engagement, networking and participation in the local music scene and expressed dissatisfaction that this was not the case. The findings therefore

reflect differing institutional values in relation to the provision of practical popular music performance opportunities at Institutions 'Y' and 'Z'.

An additional finding that came across very strongly in both the Strand 1 survey responses and the case study data from Institution 'Y' was the limited amount of time spent on performance activities and the lack of opportunity for creativity and self-expression. In terms of the benefits of a music degree for the development of skills of performance and creativity, students perceived the competitive and assessment-focused environment of the formal institution as stifling their creativity. Indeed from an institutional perspective, very little value was placed on performance and creativity by Institution 'Y'. This was evidenced in the single contact hour per week allocated to a 5-credit popular music performance module in the first year of the BA/BMus programme. Practical popular music performance therefore represented less than 10% of the overall module credits<sup>26</sup>. This was perceived by the students to be in stark contrast to the value placed on the practical content of other performing arts subjects at the same institution such as drama. It also contrasted with the approach taken at Institution 'Z' where students had two separate 15-credit practical performance modules encompassing both popular music performance and event production. The two modules combined represented one quarter (25%) of the overall music course credits at the college of further education<sup>27</sup>. The findings support other research studies such as that of Green (2008) and the need for music educators to recognise the importance of performance amongst popular musicians for learning and enculturation. The findings also support studies that highlight the value of playing and performing for students in higher education (Pitts, 2013) and the shared values between students and performance tutors in relation to practical skill development (Simones, 2015).

With regard to the career plans of students and the 'creative trident' discussed by Bennett in respect of potential occupations for music graduates (Bennett, 2016), my research found that the majority of music students planned to work as 'specialist creatives' and have future careers in performance. The survey data gathered in Strand 1 of my research showed that for many of those

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<sup>26</sup> 5 credits out of a total of 60:  $(5/60)*100 = 8.3\%$

<sup>27</sup> 30 credits out of a total of 120:  $(30/120)*100 = 25\%$

students the poor provision of practical performance content in their music degree courses was a primary concern for them. Case study data from Institution 'Y' found that students who were planning to embark on careers in education were most satisfied with the course content provided on the BA/BMus programme. The data gathered in Strand 1 also highlighted how students on more specialised degree programmes (such as in popular or jazz music), perceived that they were more likely to develop skills relevant to future careers as 'specialist creatives'. My findings demonstrate therefore that how students' valued their music degree programmes depended largely on their future career aspirations.

Overall my findings show that many of the skills required of popular musicians, such as originality and creativity as well as knowledge of the music industry, networking, communication skills and music technology skills, were not as highly valued by staff teaching on higher education music programmes in Ireland. This issue was also highlighted by Moore (2013) who asserts how there is a need in Irish higher music education for 'dialogue between the policy makers, heads of departments and all involved in teaching music in higher education in order to develop shared policies that acknowledge discipline-specific needs' (G. Moore, 2013: 26) .

### **7.3 Implications and Recommendations**

Informal learning techniques are inextricably linked to the identity of popular musicians both inside and outside the institution. The facilitation of such learning styles is paramount in popular music education and needs to be catered for on all courses that provide modules in popular music performance. Furthermore, the ideal learning environment for students needs to include several hours a week of performance activities in order to facilitate musical creativity and self-expression. Engagement with the local music industry through regular external performance opportunities should also be facilitated and supported at institutional-level in Ireland.

Higher and further education institutions in Ireland need to aspire to provide authentic learning environments for students of popular music. As well as regular performance opportunities, such environments need to include access to technology in the classroom, accessible performance and rehearsal spaces, appropriate physical resources, the facilitation of social and collaborative learning and access to organisations, venues and personnel within the local music industry.

The importance of online technology and social media for popular musicians needs to be embraced in formal learning environments. While both performance tutors and popular music students were found to use technology for teaching and learning, much less consideration was given to its use as an educational approach at institutional level in Ireland. Rather than view technology as a threat to the pursuit of academic knowledge, institutions should strive to harness the use of technology in the classroom in such a way as to engage popular musicians. A recommendation would be to provide continuing professional development training for music educators on the use of the smartphone as an aid to learning in the classroom and the everyday use of social media applications (such as instant messaging) as tools for social engagement and collaborative learning. While many educational establishments have policies and sanctions in place for social media use such as how to deal with bullying or inappropriate behavior, little consideration is given to the positive benefits of such tools for social learning and knowledge sharing amongst students.

The importance of music education for the acquisition of 'soft' and transferable skills is clearly valued amongst students of popular music in higher and further education in Ireland. Institutions need to clearly promote the importance of the acquisition of such skills and their relevance to 'real world' settings. Through providing work experience and facilitating students in collaborating with music industry organisations and personnel, education institutions can ensure that the acquisition of transferable skills is a valued part of popular music studies on music education courses. The valuing of traditional teaching and learning approaches such as those of the classical tradition needs to continue to be challenged in music education discourse in Ireland. Otherwise, a lack of aspiration towards authenticity in some music institutions could result in



more 'authentic' places of learning being perceived as a better option for students with an interest in popular music. Institutions need to be aware that regardless of whether a music performance course is general in nature or more specific (such as jazz or contemporary music courses) students expect their common and everyday learning practices to be valued and facilitated.

The importance of creating an ideal learning environment for students of popular music cannot be underestimated. To do so runs the risk that students will disengage from their formal music studies. Institutions should provide better course differentiation for music students to enable them to make informed choices on the basis of their future career plans. It is frustrating for students who find themselves on the wrong type of music course due to a lack of awareness of the skill sets being developed at a particular institution. My findings demonstrate that higher and further education institutions in Ireland need to provide potential students of popular music with honest and accurate information regarding career paths to ensure that their needs, expectations and aspirations as learners and popular musicians can be met.

#### **7.4 Proposed Band Performance Module**

In response to my insights and recommendations, I have developed a proposed new *Band Performance* module as a key outcome in addressing the learning needs of popular music students upon entering higher or further education. The 15-credit module could be delivered at NFQ Level 6 as part of either a further education Major Award in Music Performance or in the first year of a higher education degree programme. Box 7.1 provides an outline module descriptor, the details of which are discussed below.

<b>Module Title</b>	Band Performance
<b>Module Aim</b>	To prepare students to perform in live settings within the music industry
<b>Credits</b>	15 credits
<b>Weekly Contact Hours</b>	6 ( <i>4 hours in class; 2 hours in live settings</i> )
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate and select suitable repertoire for band performance</li> <li>• Prepare resources required for rehearsals and gigs</li> <li>• Participate in rehearsals according to agreed role(s)</li> <li>• Promote live gigs</li> <li>• Perform in live settings</li> <li>• Document and evaluate own role within the context of the band</li> <li>• Conduct a local music industry case study</li> </ul>
<b>Indicative Content</b>	<p>Planning – lyrics, scores, chord sheets, arrangements, set lists  Rehearsals – weekly band rehearsals  Gig promotion – posters, fliers, social media  Live performance – in-house and external venues  Evaluation – videos, photos, blogs / vlogs, presentations  Industry engagement – guest speakers, fieldtrips, presentations</p>

### **Box 7.1 Proposed Band Performance Module**

The proposed **Module Aim** is *to prepare students to perform in live settings within the music industry*. The Band Performance Module aims to enable popular music students to not only focus on developing their ensemble performance skills but to do so as members of a band and as part of a local live music scene. Such a focus would provide a more authentic experience for

students and contextualise their formal learning by facilitating their engagement *as musicians* in the music industry.

The proposed module **Learning Outcomes** are defined as follows:

- *Evaluate and select suitable repertoire for band performances*
- *Prepare resources required for rehearsals and gigs*
- *Participate in rehearsals according to agreed role(s)*
- *Promote live gigs*
- *Perform in live settings*
- *Document and evaluate own role within the context of the band*
- *Conduct a local music industry case study*

**Indicative Module Content** to meet the above learning outcomes would include activities around planning and rehearsing for live events, participating in live performances, preparing for and promoting gigs, engaging with the local music industry through performances, case studies and guest speakers and student evaluations of their own role within the context of a band.

In my **Module Descriptor** I propose that the 15-credit module provides 6 contact hours per week for students (2 hours per 5 credit weighting). The allocation of 6 practical hours would address an important informal learning need identified in my research by providing more frequent and timetabled opportunities for popular music students to jam, collaborate and rehearse with peers. I propose that the 6 contact hours per week should be divided between 4 hours in the classroom and 2 hours in a live performance setting. The 4 allocated classroom hours would be used for planning activities such as preparing songs, arrangements and set-lists, band rehearsals, performance evaluations and project work. Live settings should include in-house performances as well as performances off-campus in local music and community venues.

In terms of **Resource Requirements** and to create an authentic learning environment for students of popular music, it is imperative that classroom resources for the delivery of this module would include all necessary PA equipment as well as basic band ensemble instruments such as percussion, guitars, keys and microphones. The instruments should be in good working

order, maintained and replaced when required. The class performance room should also be WiFi-enabled with a projector screen and sound system to enable tutors and students to access online learning resources such as YouTube performances. Students should be facilitated in using their own personal devices (e.g. smartphones, tablets, laptops) for accessing necessary online resources during class.

Throughout the module, students should be encouraged to take ownership for their learning by choosing suitable repertoire for gigs and collaborating with peers to work on arrangements. With the support of the performance tutor, students should also be facilitated in arranging live gigs both in the institutional setting and in local music and community venues thereby providing opportunities for them to participate as performers in the local music industry. Students should also be encouraged to promote and market upcoming gigs through various social media channels. The requirement for authentic learning experiences for popular musicians identified in my research should also be facilitated through engagement with the local music industry. Students could present a personal project by conducting a case study of a local artist, gig or venue and present the findings in the form of a presentation to peers. This would enable popular music students to not only acquire knowledge in respect of the local music industry but also provide them with the opportunity to network with other musicians and industry professionals. Guest speakers could also be invited by the class tutor to give talks to students.

I propose the following **Assessment Strategy** that prioritises the evaluation of popular music performance skills while also providing for personal reflections by students and music industry project work:

60% - Skills Demonstration (practical performance)
20% - Learner Record (personal evaluations)
20% - Project (case study of local music industry)

Learner Records should be facilitated through written, audio or video records, blogs, vlogs or presentations depending on the preferences and abilities of students.

## 7.5 Further Research

My primary proposal for further research as a result of this study is to pilot and evaluate my above proposed *Band Performance Module* with students of popular music. This research could be undertaken in a higher education institution or piloted as a new QQI module in a further education setting. My methodological approach as both researcher and practitioner during this study enabled me to take an in-depth look at approaches to music teaching and learning in higher and further education and present both an ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ perspective. While gaining a perspective as ‘insider’ was easily managed, the reluctance I encountered in acquiring access to higher music education settings to conduct research proved problematic (see Chapter 3). While the reasons for this are not clear, I believe that time constraints, job insecurity and economic pressures at educational institutions in Ireland have resulted in a reduced focus on research into teaching and learning particularly for creative subjects such as Music. This gives cause for concern with regard to higher music education research in Ireland particularly in relation to the practicalities of implementing my recommendation above and additional opportunities for further research in the area of popular music education, which I have outlined below:

1. Comparative research should be conducted into the experiences of music teaching and learning for popular musicians in other institutions of higher and further education in Ireland. Music degree programmes with more general music modules, such as on BA / BMus degrees, could be compared with courses offering more specialized content such as in jazz or popular music performance.
2. Research into emerging sub-genres of popular music such as electronic music, DJ-ing, rap and hip-hop is required to inform teaching and learning in higher music education in Ireland. In this regard, the higher education sector is beginning to respond with the recent appointment of the ‘first permanent’ lecturer in the field of Popular Music Studies at a university in

the Republic of Ireland<sup>28</sup> and the commencement of a 5-year research project funded by the European Research Council to study global hip-hop culture<sup>29</sup>.

3. Case study research should be conducted into institutions that offer periods of work experience and performance opportunities for students of popular music within the music industry in Ireland. Research could provide an insight into how education institutions engage with local music industry organisations and personnel and how students benefit from the experience. Such data would provide opportunities for sharing of best practice and ensure provision of 'authentic' popular music education for students.
4. The valuable role played by music performance tutors on popular music education courses and the insights they offer is worthy of further investigation. Through the conducting of interviews and classroom observations the experiences of tutors as both popular musicians and educators would inform music education in Ireland and ensure the learning needs of popular musicians are met within the formal environment of the institution.
5. Regular research studies into the specific uses of technology in the music performance classroom could provide ongoing and up-to-date data for music educators in higher and further education in Ireland. Empirical research could include investigations into the use of smartphones and other portable devices by students for the acquisition of musical knowledge. Studies could also consider how the facilitation of social

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<sup>28</sup> See <http://research.ucc.ie/profiles/A021/jgrollefson> <Accessed June 20th, 2019>

<sup>29</sup> Further details on the research project and a new hip-hop journal launch can be found in the following links:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/news/ucc-music-lecturer-wins-2-million-global-hip-hop-study-grant.html>

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/news/ucc-music-professor-to-launch-first-global-hip-hop-studies-journal.html>

<Accessed June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019>

networking at institutional level provides opportunities for acquiring social capital and facilitating social learning.

6. National data into the destinations of graduates of popular music in Ireland is needed in order to provide information for institutions on how best to support student musicians and their career aspirations. Detailed interviews with Irish popular music graduates and the gathering of oral histories would give an insight into where graduates end up and whether the knowledge and skills they acquired as students equipped them for their future careers.

## 7.6 Final Conclusions

Over the course of this project, I investigated six primary research questions in relation to popular music in higher and further education in Ireland (see rationale outlined in Chapter 1). In summary, my findings in response to each question are outlined below:

- **What learning techniques do students of popular music apply during the learning of performance pieces?**

Students of popular music in Irish higher and further education institutions primarily engage in informal learning practices. These practices include aural learning, collaboration and groupwork, jamming and informal playing with peers and the use of technology and social media as learning tools.

- **What constitutes 'authentic' learning for popular musicians?**

Irish popular music students have an expectation that learning environments are 'authentic' through access to performance spaces, adequate resources and time for rehearsals, engagement with the local music industry, academic authenticity and appropriate course content and professional and experienced role models.

- **How do music students adapt their learning styles to negotiate between formal education environments and informal community environments?**

Irish popular music students adapt their learning styles to negotiate between different learning environments. Students are more likely to avail of the support of peers in education settings, engage in private practice in home environments and jam in creative and expressive music sessions with friends in community settings.

- **What role does new technology and social media play in students' learning?**

Irish popular music students regularly engage with technology as part of their learning such as websites and apps as well as sharing and streaming platforms. They also acquire significant social capital from the use of social media.

- **How do institutes of education support student learning?**

In Ireland higher and further education institutions are inconsistent in supporting the authentic learning needs of popular music students. Performance tutors, however, tend to provide the most relevant support to popular musicians in institutional settings.

- **What value is placed on learning music in education settings?**

Disparate attitudes exist between staff and students in relation to the value of studying music in Irish higher and further education institutions. Irish popular music students place great value on performance, acquisition of social capital, the authenticity of the learning environment and the appropriateness of programme content to their planned future careers.

In conclusion, approximately EUR1.3bn in additional revenue is generated annually by the live entertainment industry in the Republic of Ireland<sup>30</sup>. Much of the industry is dominated by live popular music events. By

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<sup>30</sup> Figure cited in *Let's Celebrate: The Cultural and Economic Contribution of Live Entertainment Events in Ireland* (2017: 11). Available at <https://www.letscelebrate.ie/>. <Accessed June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019>.



addressing the recommendations of my research and improving educational experiences for popular musicians, we can ensure that music in higher and further education in Ireland is consistent in providing the necessary and relevant skills for popular musicians to meaningfully contribute to this vibrant industry.

[END]

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Strand 1 Participant Information Sheet

#### **To: Music Lecturers, Tutors and Students**

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project entitled *“Investigation into the ‘Authenticity’ of Institutes of Higher Education as Learning Environments for Students of Music”*. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Dr. Stephanie Pitts and Dr. Simon Keegan-Phipps of the University of Sheffield Music Department.

The research project will consist of two studies - a staff questionnaire (part A) and a student questionnaire, learning task and focus group (part B). A questionnaire distributed to academic staff, will collect information on current attitudes and approaches to the facilitation of student learning in higher education. The questionnaire data has been designed to elicit information regarding learning histories, engagement with musical genres and approaches to learning through the use of learning tools and techniques. Semi-structured interviews may also be conducted with teaching staff at a later date in the project if required.

A questionnaire will also be sent to students who have been studying music at higher level for at least one year. The questionnaire data has been designed to elicit information regarding learning histories, engagement with musical genres and approaches to learning and performance through the use of learning tools and techniques. A smaller student group will be selected to undergo a performance task to assess how musical knowledge is acquired during the learning and performance of a piece of popular music. The observation session will conclude with a focus group discussion, which will provide a forum for students to discuss their approaches to learning in higher education. Both the student learning task and the focus group will be recorded using audio-visual equipment.

Data will be protected through anonymised participant names and Institutes of Higher Education. Data, including audio-visual material, will only be available to persons connected with the research project (i.e. researcher, supervisors, relevant participants). Personal data will reside on a password-protected notebook owned by the researcher. Data will not be stored on any additional computers or devices save for periodic back-up to an external hard drive owned by the researcher. All personal data including email addresses, phone numbers and / or audio-visual material held by the researcher, will be deleted at the end of the project.



The project has undergone an ethics review and has been approved by the Department of Music at the University of Sheffield. You can withdraw from this project at any time and your data will be deleted accordingly. I appreciate that your involvement is entirely voluntary, and would like to thank you in advance for giving me your time as a project participant.

Any queries or issues in relation to the above can be directed to my project supervisors or myself.

## Appendix B1 – Strand 2 Participant Information Sheet

### To: Project Participants

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project entitled *“Investigation into the ‘Authenticity’ of Institutes of Higher Education as Learning Environments for Students of Music”*. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Prof. Stephanie Pitts and Dr. Simon Keegan-Phipps of the University of Sheffield Music Department.

The overall research project consists of a number of data collection methods including questionnaires, learning logs, focus group and observation studies and semi-structured interviews. Participants include undergraduate music students, lecturing and tutoring staff and professional graduate musicians.

You are asked to participate in this phase of data collection as part of a small group of undergraduate music students. You will be asked to reflect on your learning as an undergraduate music student and participate in a focus group and observation over the course of your performance module.

For the purposes of data analysis only, audio-visual recordings will be made during the focus group and observation. All data collected will be protected through the anonymising of participant names and institutions. Data, including audio-visual material, will only be available to persons connected with the research project (i.e. researcher, supervisors, technical support). Personal data will reside on password-protected devices owned by the researcher. Data will not be stored on any additional computers or devices save for periodic back-up to an external hard drive or cloud server belonging to the researcher. All personal data including email addresses and phone numbers held by the researcher will be deleted at the end of the project.

The project has undergone an Ethics Review and has been approved by the Department of Music at the University of Sheffield. At the commencement of this research study, you will be asked to sign a form consenting to your participation. You can withdraw from this project at any time and your data will be deleted accordingly. I appreciate that your involvement is entirely voluntary, and would like to thank you in advance for giving me your time as a project participant.

Any queries or issues in relation to the above can be directed to my project supervisor or myself.

## Appendix B2 – Strand 2 Consent Form

<p><b><u>Title of Research Project:</u></b> Investigation into the ‘Authenticity’ of Institutes of Higher Education as Learning Environments for Students of Popular Music</p>	
<p><b><u>Name of Researcher</u></b> Miranda Cournane</p>	<p><b><u>Name of Supervisors:</u></b> Dr. Stephanie Pitts      Dr. Simon Keegan-Phipps</p>

**Please initial box**

1	I agree to take part in the above study.	
2	I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet dated _____.	
3	I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.	
4	I agree to have audio-visual recordings made for use by the researcher only for the purpose of data analysis.	
5	I understand that my data will be anonymised and used by the researcher for the purposes of the above project only.	
6	I understand that any personal data retained for the purposes of the above research, will be deleted upon completion of the project.	

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Researcher <b>MIRANDA COURNA NE</b>	Date	Signature

## Appendix C1 – Strand 3 Participant Information Sheet

### **To: Project Participants**

I would like to invite you to be included in a research project investigating approaches to learning by student musicians in higher and further education. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Prof. Stephanie Pitts and Dr. Simon Keegan-Phipps of the University of Sheffield Music Department.

As part of your assessment strategies as defined by the QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) for a Level 5 Certificate, you have been asked to complete Learner Records reflecting on your learning over the course of your modules. Your Learner Records will be an invaluable source of information in the context of this research project and will supplement data already gathered from students through questionnaires and focus groups in the higher education sector.

All data collected will be protected through the anonymising of participant names and institutions. Data, including any audio-visual material, will only be available to persons connected with the research project (i.e. researcher, supervisors, technical support). Personal data will reside on password-protected devices owned by the researcher. Data will not be stored on any additional computers or devices save for periodic back-up to an external hard drive or cloud server belonging to the researcher. All personal data including email addresses and phone numbers held by the researcher will be deleted at the end of the project.

The project has undergone an Ethics Review and has been approved by the Department of Music at the University of Sheffield. You will be asked to sign a form consenting to your Learner Records being used for this research project. You can change your mind and request that your Learner Record be withdrawn from this project at any time. Your data will be deleted accordingly.

I appreciate that your involvement is entirely voluntary, and would like to thank you in advance for facilitating this research.

Any queries or issues in relation to the above can be directed to my project supervisor or myself.

## Appendix C2 – Strand 3 Consent Form

<p><b><u>Title of Research Project:</u></b> Investigation into learning by students of music in Higher and Further Education.</p>	
<p><b><u>Name of Researcher</u></b> Miranda Cournane</p>	<p><b><u>Name of Supervisors:</u></b> Dr. Stephanie Pitts      Dr. Simon Keegan-Phipps</p>

**Please initial box**

1	I agree to allow my student Learner Records be used by the researcher.	
2	I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet.	
3	I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I can request the use of my Learner Records be withdrawn at any time.	
4	I understand that my data will be anonymised and used by the researcher for the purposes of the above project only.	
5	I understand that any personal data retained for the purposes of the above research, will be deleted upon completion of the project.	

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Researcher <b>MIRANDA CURNANE</b>	Date	Signature

## Appendix D – Staff Questionnaire

### CONFIDENTIAL Staff Questionnaire

1. What type of undergraduate modules do you currently teach? (*i.e. genre, subject areas*).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. For how many years (approx.) have you worked in the field of music education?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What instruments (incl. voice), do you currently, or have you previously, played?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Which of the following musical genres are you conversant with as a musician / singer?  
(*Tick ALL that apply*).
  - a. Classical
  - b. Pop / Rock
  - c. Jazz
  - d. Trad / Folk
  - e. World
  - f. Other (please name) \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which of the following types of musical learning / learning tools have you engaged with? (*Tick ALL that apply*).
  - a. One to one lessons with expert tutor
  - b. Scores / notation
  - c. Aural (learning 'by ear')
  - d. Individual private practice
  - e. Peer / collaborative learning
  - f. Jamming / informal performances with other musicians
  - g. Listening to and copying recordings
  - h. Observing live performances by other musicians
  - i. Reflective practice / journals / diaries
  - j. Books or published instrument guides (including websites)
  - k. Online forums (e.g. tutorials / blogs / discussion groups)

- l. Social media (e.g. Facebook / Twitter)
  - m. Visual media (e.g. video / DVD / YouTube)
  - n. Computer software (e.g. music or instrument instruction)
  - o. Other (list any other learning approaches or tools you use and which are not listed above)
- 
- 

6. In general, how autonomous are your students as learners?

*(Tick ONE answer).*

- a. Very dependent and require significant guidance
- b. Fairly dependent and require regular guidance
- c. Quite independent but require some guidance
- d. Very independent and require only occasional guidance

7. Which of the following types of musical learning / learning tools do your students engage with? *(Tick ALL that apply).*

- a. DON'T KNOW
- b. One-to-one lessons with expert tutor
- c. Scores / notation
- d. Aural (learning 'by ear')
- e. Individual private practice
- f. Peer / collaborative learning
- g. Jamming / informal performances with other musicians
- h. Listening to and copying recordings
- i. Observing live performances by other musicians
- j. Reflective practice / journals / diaries
- k. Books or published instrument guides (including websites)
- l. Online forums (e.g. tutorials / blogs / discussion groups)
- m. Social media (e.g. Facebook / Twitter)
- n. Visual media (e.g. video / DVD / YouTube)
- o. Computer software (e.g. music or instrument instruction)

8. In general, how would you describe your students' musical skills when they commence their studies in higher education? *(Tick ONE answer).*

- a. Poor
- b. Average
- c. Good
- d. Very good
- e. Excellent

9. In your opinion, what benefits to their musical learning can students gain through pursuing music studies in higher education?

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10. If you were to offer one piece of advice to your students regarding how best to approach their musical learning, what would it be?

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## Appendix E – Student Questionnaire

CONFIDENTIAL Student Questionnaire:

1. Title of course (e.g. BMus, BA, BA Jazz Performance etc.)
2. Year of study (e.g. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>)
3. What instrument(s) (including voice) do you play?
4. What genre(s) of music do you perform? (*Tick ALL that apply*).

a. Classical	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Pop / Rock	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Jazz	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Trad / Folk	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. World	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Electronic	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Other (please specify) _____			
5. How often do you participate in performances as part of your coursework?  
i) Regularly  ii) Sometimes  iii) Rarely  iv) Never
6. How often do you participate in extra-curricular performances?  
i) Regularly  ii) Sometimes  iii) Rarely  iv) Never
7. Which of the following types of musical learning / learning methods have you engaged with? (*Tick ALL that apply*).

a. One to one lessons with expert tutor	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Scores / notation	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Aural (learning 'by ear')	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Individual private practice	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Peer / collaborative learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Jamming / informal performances with other musicians	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Listening to and copying recordings	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Observing live performances by other musicians	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Reflective practice / journals / diaries	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Books or published instrument guides (including websites)	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Online forums (e.g. tutorials / blogs / discussion groups)	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Social media (e.g. Facebook / Twitter)	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Visual media (e.g. video / DVD / YouTube)	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Computer software (e.g. music or instrument instruction)	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Other (list any other learning approaches or tools you use and which are not listed above)	

8. Which of the above learning methods are you most likely to adopt when learning a new performance piece?
9. Do your approaches to learning new performance pieces differ depending on the environment (e.g. college, home, community)? If so, briefly describe how.
10. What career path do you hope to follow after graduating and how do you feel your undergraduate studies are preparing you for that career?
11. Overall, how do you feel you are you benefiting from studying Music in Higher Education?

## Appendix F – Focus Group Topics

**Opening:** Each participant to state name, discipline, primary instrument(s) / performance genre, stage of study

Topic	Question	Tick
General	Discuss your experiences as students of music in higher education	
Institutional support	<p>Describe the role(s) of your tutor(s) in supporting your musical learning?</p> <p>How are you facilitated in learning in groups when preparing for a performance?</p> <p>What benefits do you get from learning in groups?</p> <p>What kind of feedback do you get on your performances?</p>	
Level of Autonomy	<p>How competent a musician were you prior to commencing your undergraduate studies (beginner, intermediate, advanced)?</p> <p>How competent a musician do you consider yourself to be at this stage (beginner, intermediate, advanced)?</p> <p>Do you select your own repertoire when learning performance material?</p> <p>What type of assistance do you require from your tutor(s) when learning performance material?</p> <p>How do you reflect on your learning?</p>	
Technology	<p>Describe the technology you use to help with your learning (e.g. websites / social media sites / apps / software)?</p> <p>Are you a member of any online music community or discussion group either within the institute or outside?</p> <p>How has engaging with technology benefitted your learning?</p>	

<p>Authenticity (<i>Kruger's Signifiers</i>)</p>	<p><i>In relation to Ensemble classes</i></p> <p>Describe the physical performance space(s) available to you?</p> <p>What kind of instruments / technology are prevalent in your ensembles?</p> <p>What kind of musical styles / music selections do you perform?</p> <p>How is the music transmitted – written notation / aural learning / recordings of performances / other)</p> <p>What is the experience level of your tutor(s) / mentor(s)</p>	
<p>'Authentic' learning</p>	<p>Who is your music idol and why?</p> <p>What do you think is the best way to learn new material?</p> <p>How does your experience of musical learning within the institution compare to how you learn in other settings (e.g. home or community)</p> <p>How did the extra-curricular study of an instrument or the study of music as a school subject prepare you for your studies as an undergraduate student?</p>	
<p>Value</p>	<p>What career plans do you have?</p> <p>How is your degree developing the skills you need for your future career?</p>	

## Appendix G – Tutor Interview Guide Questions

**Before the interview:** Explain purpose of interview. Reiterate anonymity, data protection.  
Ensure interviewee is clear about consent. Obtain signature.

**Begin recording:** State interviewee’s name.

Invite interviewee to state current profession, instrument(s) played, performance genre, length of time performing

### Guide questions

Topic	Question	Tick
Tutor Role	How long have you been teaching for? What areas do you teach? What type of music qualifications did you study for and where? What year(s) did you graduate? Describe your current role as tutor.	
Institutional support for students	During the music performance module, how often are students learning in groups together? Do students get one-to-one tuition as part of the module? How do students typically learn new performance material (written notation, aural learning, listening to recordings, jamming with musicians, other)? How do you give feedback on students’ learning / performances? How well do you feel the institution supports the students’ learning needs? How does this compare with how you were taught / learned music?	
Level of Autonomy	How competent are students as musicians prior to commencing their module with you (beginner, intermediate, advanced)? How autonomous are they (amount of guidance they require)? How much of an improvement would you typically see in them after a year of studying?	

Technology	<p>What kind of technology are students engaging with during class?</p> <p>Do you use any technology to help with your teaching (e.g. websites, social media, apps, music technology, discussion groups, other software)?</p> <p>Were you introduced to any technological tools as a music student yourself?</p>	
'Authentic' learning	<p>How do you learn new material? (e.g. one-to-one, notation, aural, practice, jamming / gigging, recordings, observing live performances, technology, social or online media?)</p> <p>Do you complete journals, diaries or engage in reflective practice?</p> <p>How do you think your students learn new material?</p>	
Value	<p>In your opinion, what benefits do musicians gain by studying music at third level?</p> <p>Why did you decide to study music?</p> <p>If you were to offer one piece of advice to your students regarding how best to approach their musical learning, what would it be?</p>	

**Ending of interview:** Thank the interviewee.