

Queen Elizabeth's Community College (QECC)

Equal Access to Music Technology

This document presents the data gathered from 13 participants (12 students and 1 teacher) on the Music Technology BTEC course at Queen Elizabeth's Community College (QECC). Within the lens of accessibility, 22 questions were put to participants regarding all aspects of the course from: the application process; to the course itself; finance; support and environment.

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Applying

How easy was it to apply to the course?

'It was easy. Options booklet.'

Easy

'We were given a form that we just had to sign which made it very easy for us.'

Very Easy

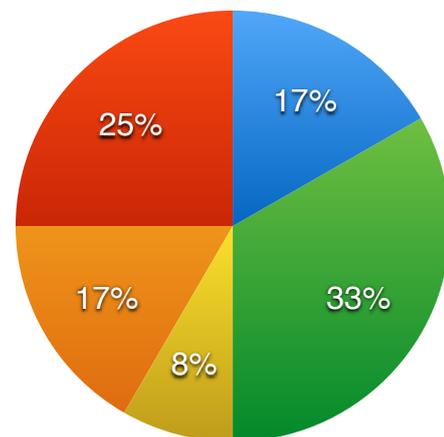
'At the start of the year we are given options. You can choose between BTEC and GCSE. As long as there is space you can get onto the course.'

'I don't think there were many requirements. Just a passion for music.'

While there are no requirements to enter onto the Music GCSE course, students state that without the ability to read music or play an instrument, you'd be at an immediate disadvantage. Whereas the music tech BTEC is more accessible in the sense you don't need to be able play an instrument or read music. Many aren't conventional musicians. One student produced the majority of work their in garageband.

The options booklet could be more accessible. It is almost exclusively written; there are few pictures and no audible elements. Terminology could be seen as slightly restrictive, e.g. ensemble.

- Very Easy
- Easy
- Relatively Easy
- Mentioned Form Without Reference To Difficulty
- Mentioned Course/s Without Reference to Difficulty

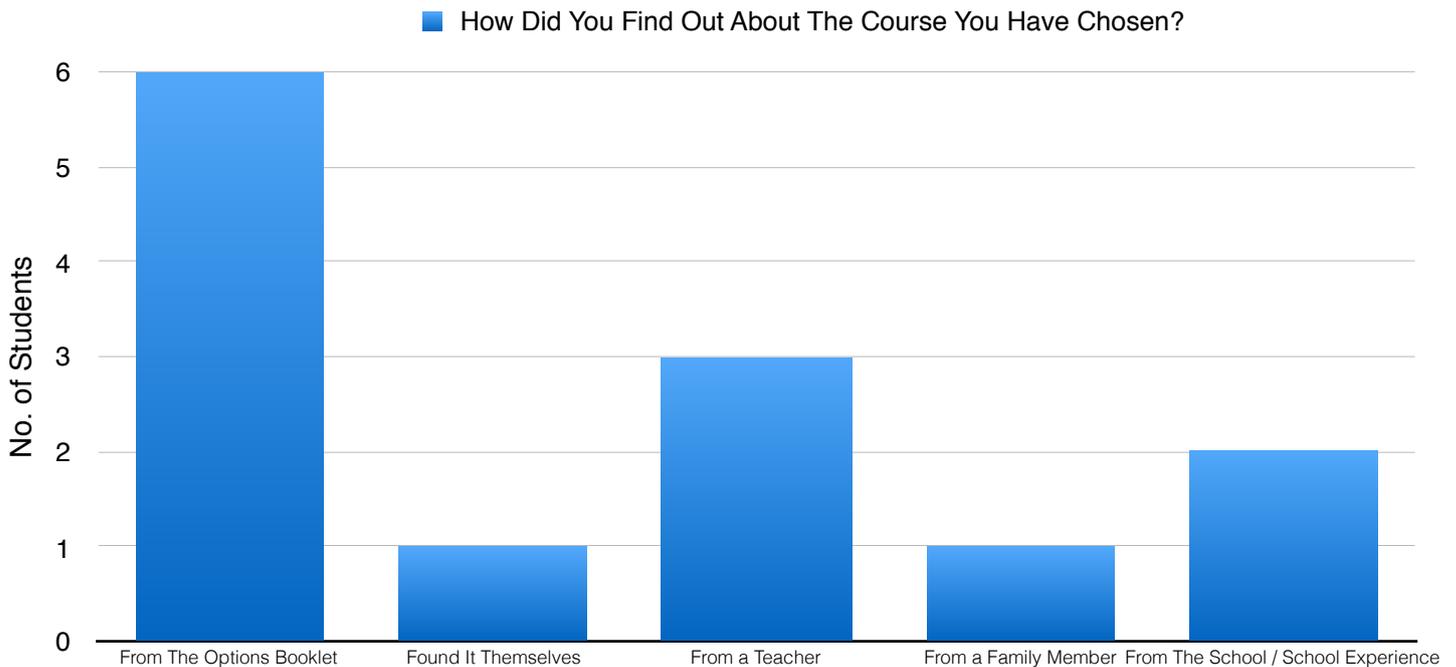


Relatively Easy

'It was very clear about what was in it and the requirements for it. I don't think there were many requirements. Just a passion for music.'

Comparing the information provided about both courses in the options booklet led to interesting conclusions. The Music GCSE page references career options, opportunities and university perceptions of music, whilst the Music Technology BTEC page makes no such references. It would be good to offer similar references to potential career options, etc. for the Music Technology BTEC course, thus showing aspiring students what they can expect.

How did you find out about the course?

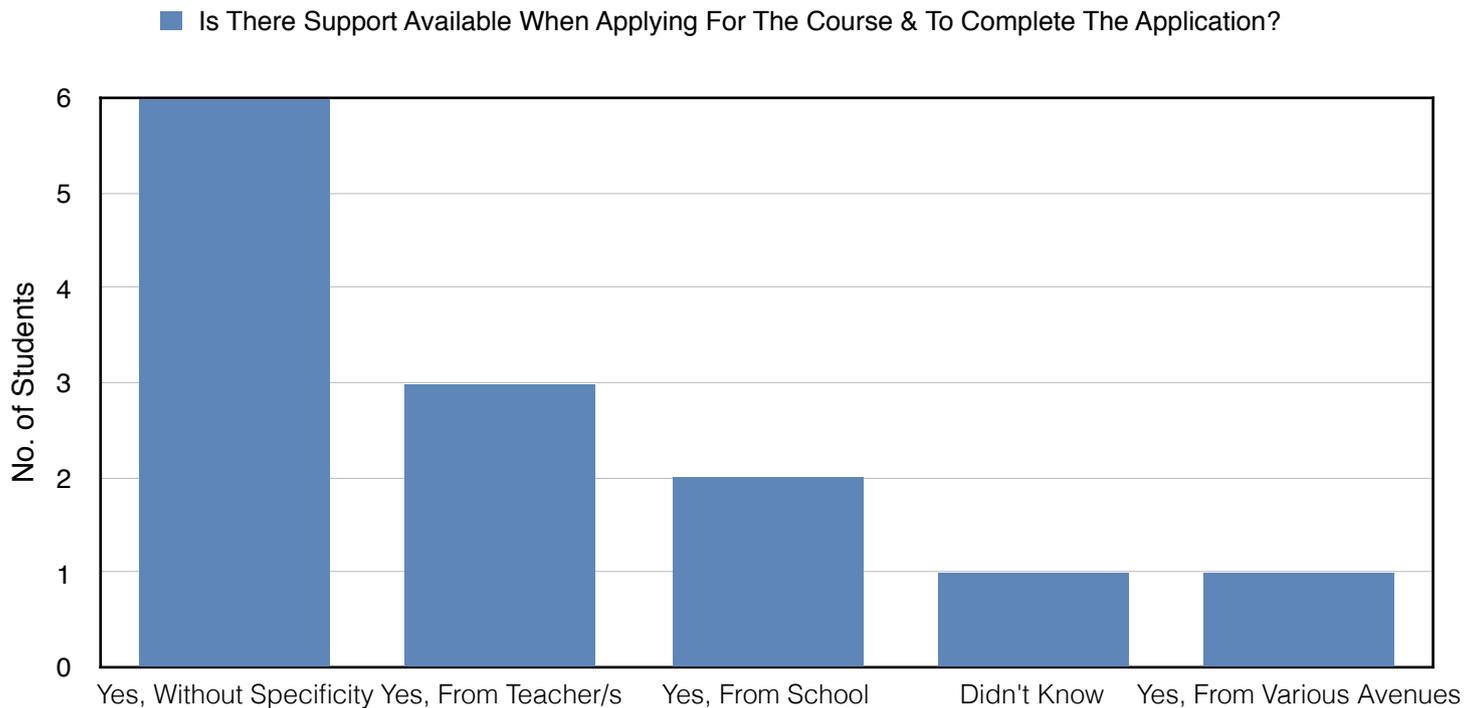


The majority found out about the course from the options booklet, so having an accessible booklet seems very important. To the right is how the Music Tech BTEC is presented online in the options booklet. The booklet itself can be accessed here: <https://www.qe.devon.sch.uk/assets/Documents/KS4-Options-Booklet-2019.pdf>.

From the Options Booklet



Is there support when applying for the course and to complete the application form?



‘You can talk to the teachers who will tell you about it and support you.’

Yes, From Teacher/s

‘All year 9 students receive guidance from their tutors. However this is sometimes not helpful as they are advised against taking it by non-musical staff.’

The Course

What Music Tech Experience Did You Have Before Starting The Course?



‘We had lessons in year 7/8/9.’

‘Music lessons in year 7/8/9.’

Participants make reference to the curriculum, which can be viewed at: <https://www.ge.devon.sch.uk/assets/Documents/Download-Curriculum-Booklet-Here.pdf>. In year 9, 3 modules make reference to music technology:

Music for The Moving Image– Students have the opportunity to develop their musical technology skills. They will study the techniques and devices used in creating a soundtrack and will then have the opportunity to create their own soundtrack to a short movie using garageband.

Dance Music Since Disco- Students are able to further develop their music technology skills through the study of dance music. Students have the opportunity to create their own dance track using garageband.

Plan, Develop, Deliver! - The final project brings together the skills learned from year 7-9. Students have the opportunity to compose and perform material for an album, which they record and market.

All students then should have some experience with music technology before starting the BTEC. 23% make direct reference to Garageband. In terms of accessibility, Garageband is one of the most accessible DAWs because:

- It is free
- It uses symbols
- It shares many similarities to its more advanced version, Logic. It is a teaching tool and stepping stone in terms of progression.

31% had experience of music technology outside of school.

‘I have messed around with garageband in school and at home’

‘I liked making music at home on my computer.’

‘Before starting the course, I did music as part of the curriculum. I have messed around with garageband in school and at home, as well as other recording/editing software.’

‘I had used garageband in years before.’

How adaptable/flexible are the courses to your own interests? Please give an example of when the course has been adapted or flexible to suit your interests or strengths.

The course is laid out as follows:

You will study three components that reflect the nature of the music industry in the 21 Century:

Component 1: Exploring the Music Industry (internally assessed)

Component 2: Music Skills Development (internally assessed)

Component 3: Responding to a Commercial Music brief (externally assessed).

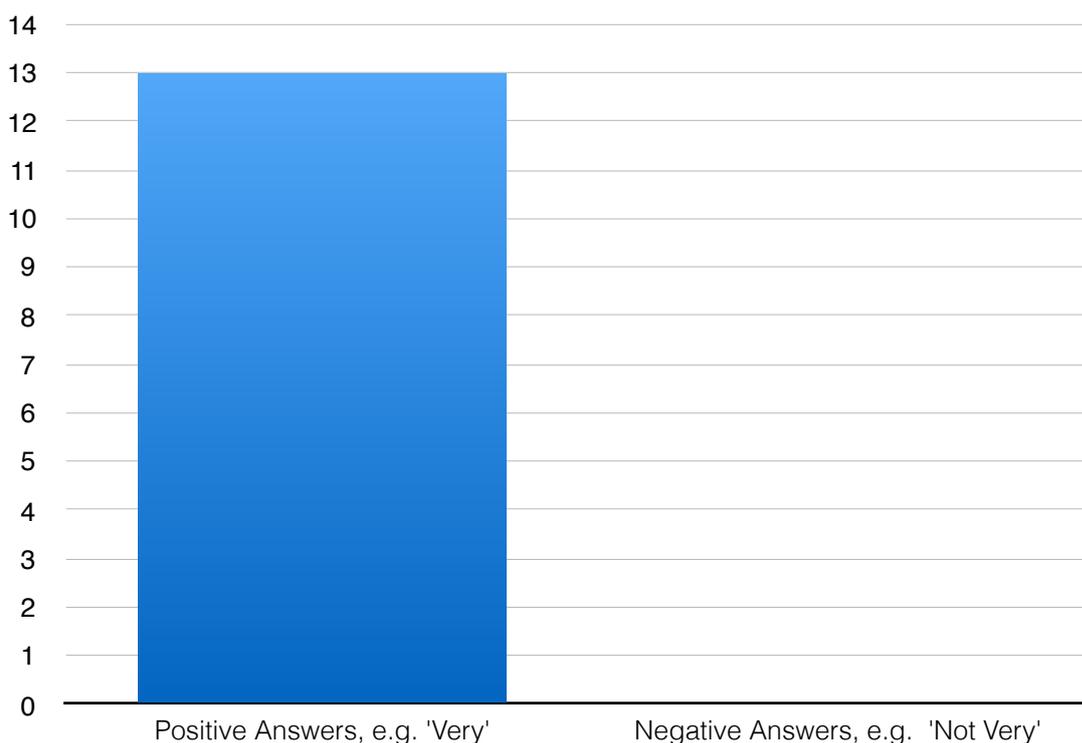
How is the course structured?

The two-year course will consist of project work for all three components. As a team you will organise their own live event and develop an understanding of the different job roles that are required to make the event a success. Students will also compose/arrange, record and market your own class EP. Finally, you will develop your performing skills as a solo and ensemble performer.

Within these components, participant response was very positive that the course was adaptable to their own interests:

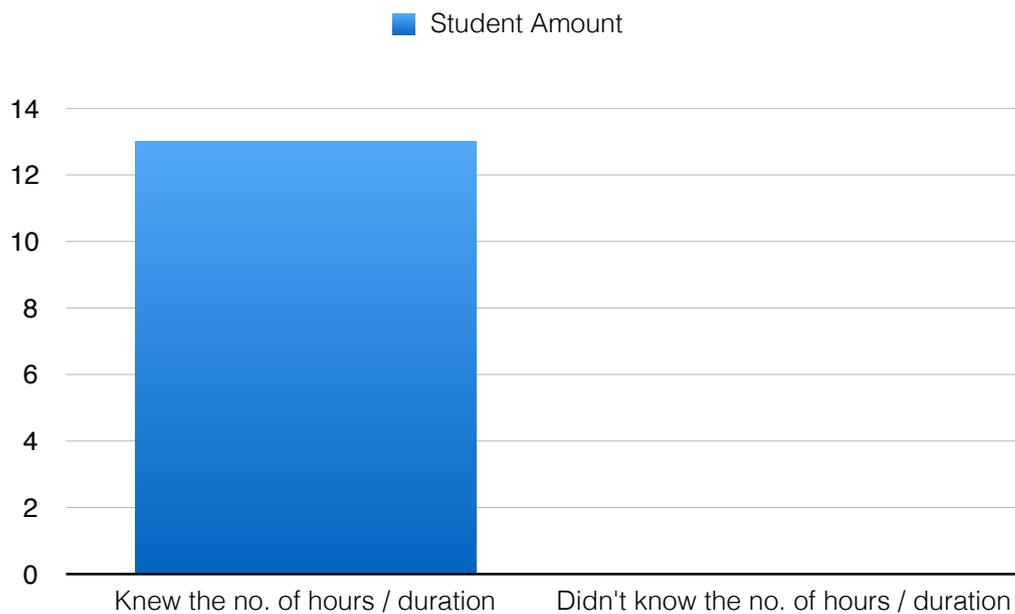
'This course allows a lot of musical freedom. You are given some set objectives, for example, you are asked to create a music album cover, but you are allowed to do it in a design you want it to be.'

■ How adaptable/flexible are the courses to your own interests?



How long is the course? (number of hours each week, length of time to achieve a qualification)

**‘2 to 3 hours a week.
2 years altogether.’**



How do you get feedback from lecturers; how is it presented and how do you remember the feedback received?

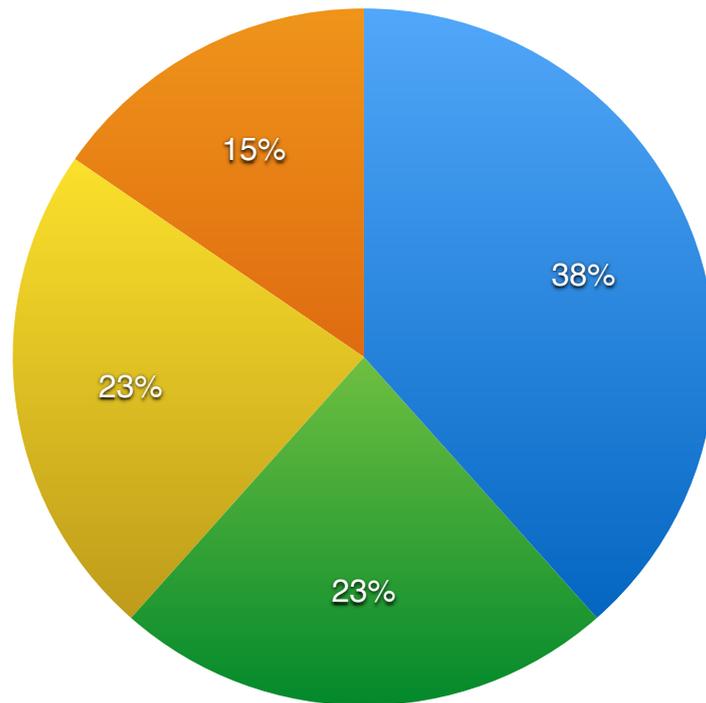
There was some dispute over how marks were received, possibly suggesting that some participants were unaware of where to access feedback. In terms of accessibility, could there be a online resource where all feedback is stored so it can be accessed outside of the class and revisited? Is there potential for audio and video feedback?

**‘Regular verbal feedback - post it
note feedback on written work.’**

**‘All
verbal.’**

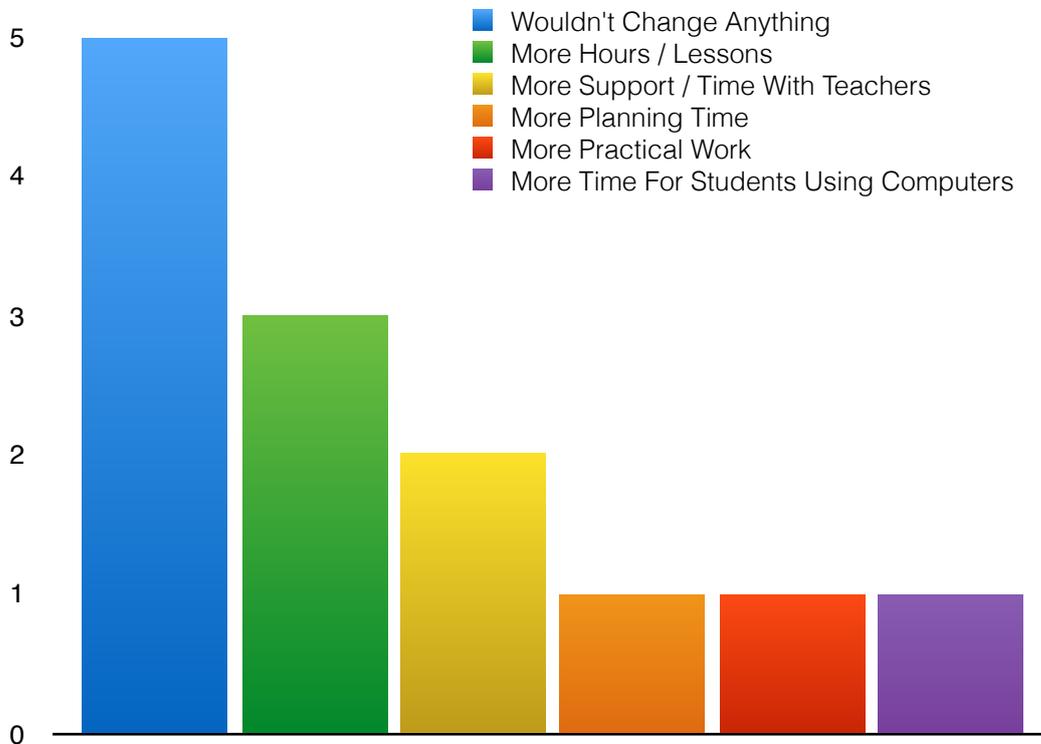
‘We were talked to individually and as a class.’

- Verbally
- From The Teacher, Without Specification
- Verbally & Written
- Without Specification



- 'Making teaching accessible by making it interesting and fun. Don't stay on one subject too long. Allow you to independently learn, but help when needed. Keeps criticism constructive.'
- 'Being able to see the POV from student and be able to understand how they can improve their work. Feedback gives key idea or answer.'
- 'A good teacher does a lot of helping the students and encourages the students.'
- 'Showing me corrections and where to improve.'
- 'When a teacher sees your point of view, and instead of telling you what to do, they suggest how to do it.'
- 'Consistent individual feedback + guidance at regular intervals.'
- 'Someone who can adapt their teaching to different kinds of student.'

If you could change anything about the course structure or the way it is taught, what would you change?



‘Equal amount of focus on students using instruments and students using computers. More support needed for students using computers.’

What Makes A Good Lecturer Good?

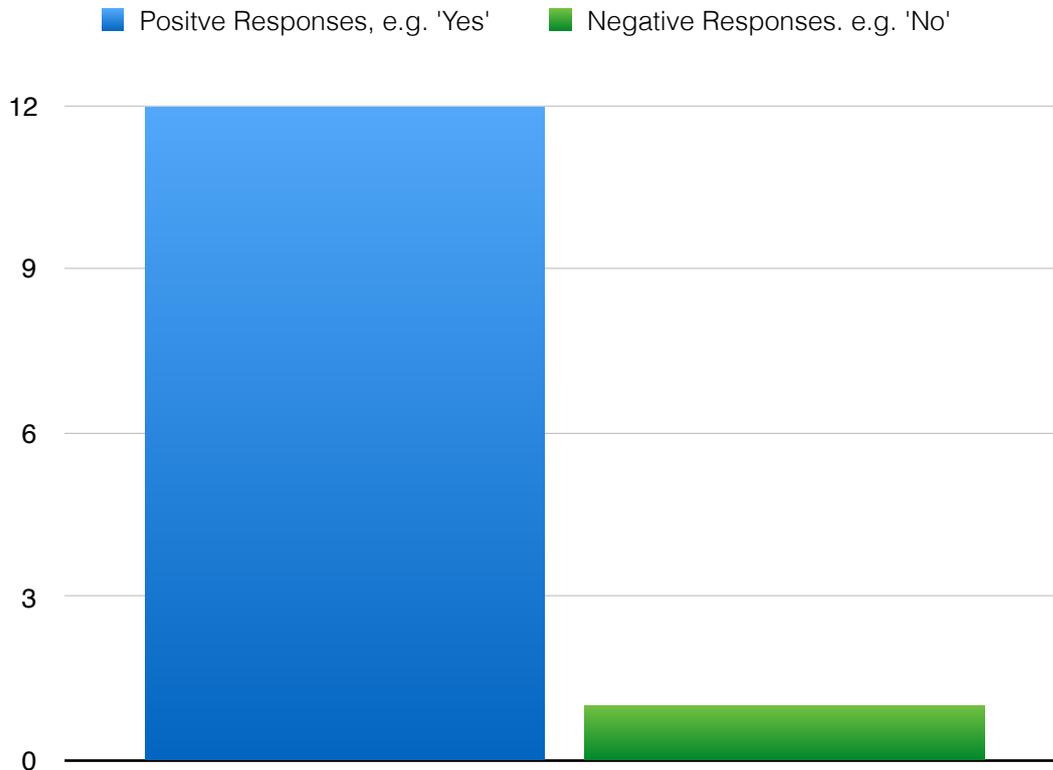
‘Little bit more planning as some students were very rushed from others.’

‘More time / more support to allow for more one-to-one time.’

There appears to be a disconnect between some that believe enough time is given and others than don't. An appropriate level, amount of support and time given needs to be reached to support the “musical proficiency” of everyone in the class.

There could be an uneven amount of time dedicated to those using computers, versus those using conventional instruments.

Do you feel you have enough time and support to learn something new and explore your ideas?



Given the vocational nature of the BTEC course and how it is accessed (coursework), it is more likely that participants are to feel they have enough time to explore their ideas, as reflected by the quantitative graph above - rather than be rushed by exam settings that may not truly reflect ability.

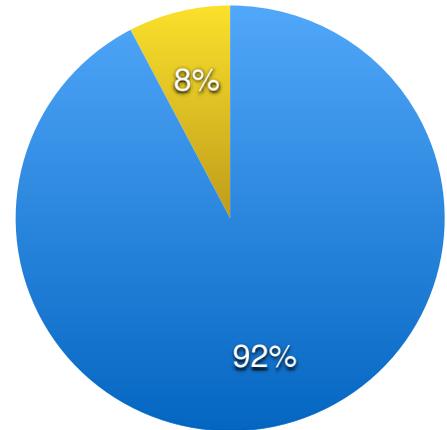
‘We are given lots of time to be creatively free. A lot of it is our responsibility. We are given enough independence to explore ideas but support is always there.’

‘We have a lot of freedom which encourages us to learn new things.’

Do you get enough opportunity to share ideas with your peers?

'Yes. It's quite an independent course. It's up to you if you want to share ideas. You can share ideas with peers but aren't forced to.'

- Positive Answers, e.g. 'Yes'
- Negative Answers, e.g. 'No'
- Unanswered

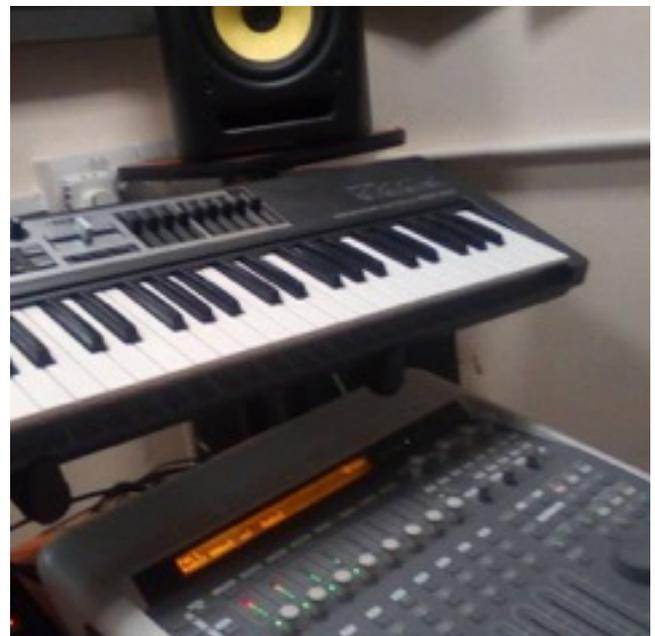
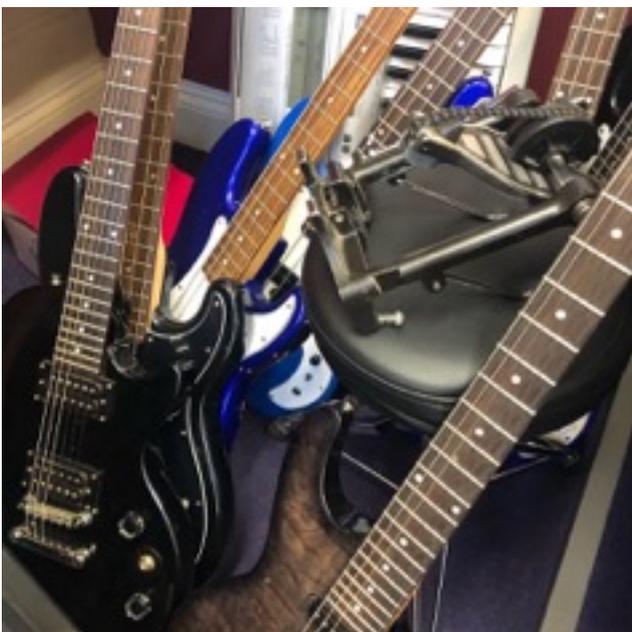


Unanswered

Yes

'Yes, especially at the start of the course we all discussed our ideas.'

Collaboration here appears based on confidence and ability to communicate ideas to others. Those that are less confident may struggle to create opportunities for collaboration.



Are there alternative methods for presenting and reflecting on your work and progress, such as videoing?

‘You can submit a video instead of a written report.’

‘Yes. Written, video, peers.’

‘Video evidence is part of the course but a certain amount of written work is compulsory.’



‘Throughout various projects, you will keep a logbook and build a portfolio of evidence, which may include written work, recordings, videos and photographs.’

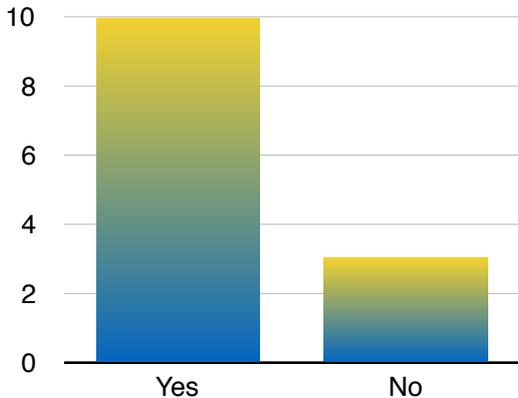
Only a small amount of written work is required which makes the course fairly accessible. The course is mainly practical based work too given its BTEC status.

Having a portfolio of work compliments the industry-facing nature of the course and having a portfolio built as a consequence of studying can certainly compliment those aiming to be practitioners. In terms of barriers it also means the first step to working via portfolio based, self-employed work is done with assistance.

It would be interesting to see if and how the marking criteria differs for work handed in via video and photographs, as opposed to written work.

If you miss a session for any reason, is there additional support available to ensure you do not ‘fall behind’?

■ Is There Additional Support If You Fall Behind?



‘No, other than the teacher going back over it.’ - Teacher

There isn't dedicated support if you miss a session, you have to see the teacher which means they need to go back over it.

The majority believe that additional support is available. However dedicated catch-up sessions aren't available, catching up requires the teacher to revisit the content at their own discretion. Revisiting the content could put current classes behind.

‘At break-time or lunchtime we can see the teachers and have the opportunity to use classrooms to catch up. Teachers are accessible through email.’

The majority of participants state you can revisit content, so support is available if missed, but dedicated resources would aid accessibility for those unable to regularly attend and would mean the teacher isn't having to revisit content which could be inconvenient, add stress and/or put future lessons behind.

‘Depends if it's a busy class or not.’

‘Not directly, however asking is always an option.’

‘Yes, miss helps us catch up with any lessons missed.’

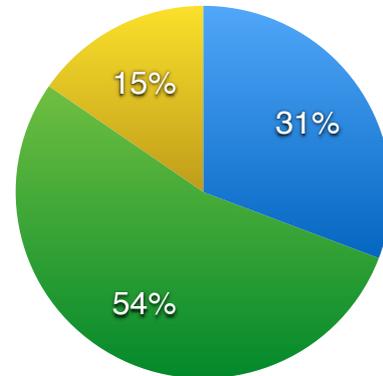
Finance

How much does the course cost?

● Nothing / Free ● Unanswered
● Equipment Costs

Free

Although the course is free to attend, 15% of participants highlight hidden costs, such as headphones and software.



Equipment Costs

Some might not be able to afford headphones and some can afford better headphones than others. Having better headphones allows the wearer to have a better perception of the mix. Being able to hear and therefore get a better mix of songs could lead to achieving higher grades.

‘Getting a nice pair of headphones so you can work at home if needed.’

Having access to technology at home means you’ll have the advantage of having more time with the projects than others might have. Those that can’t afford the most recent versions / updates of software could potentially be learning irrelevant or outdated skills, given how fast-moving the music technology environment is. Does the BTEC course receive enough funding to have up to date software and hardware, ensuring students receive industry relevant skills?

Additionally, there’s no mention of costs in the options booklet.

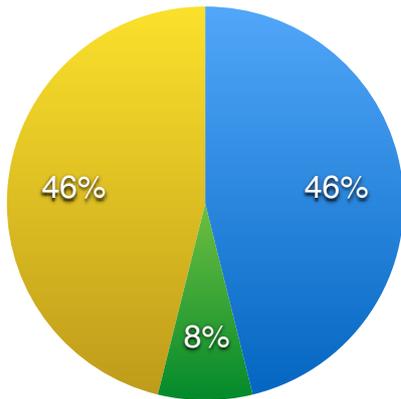
Are there any music technology related extra-curricular courses?

What funding is available, and is there support available to access that funding?

None of the participants knew what funding or support to access funding was available.

‘None That I Know Of’

● 'None' ● 'None That I Know Of'
 ● Unanswered



Possibly having a lesson on funding / accessing funding would be really useful. Further, lessons on funders, community hubs, etc. could make students aware of funding / extracurricular / additional opportunities outside of the school environment.

The student support section on the website makes reference to Finance Officers, but given the practical nature of the course to prepare participants for industry, knowing how to access funding for themselves could be a useful skill.

Finance Officers who can arrange financial assistance and support for transport costs.

Support

Is there enough skilled support available in and outside of lectures?

‘The teachers are skilled in instruments / technology. They know how to use and are very good at teaching skills.’

‘Yes because we help each other.’

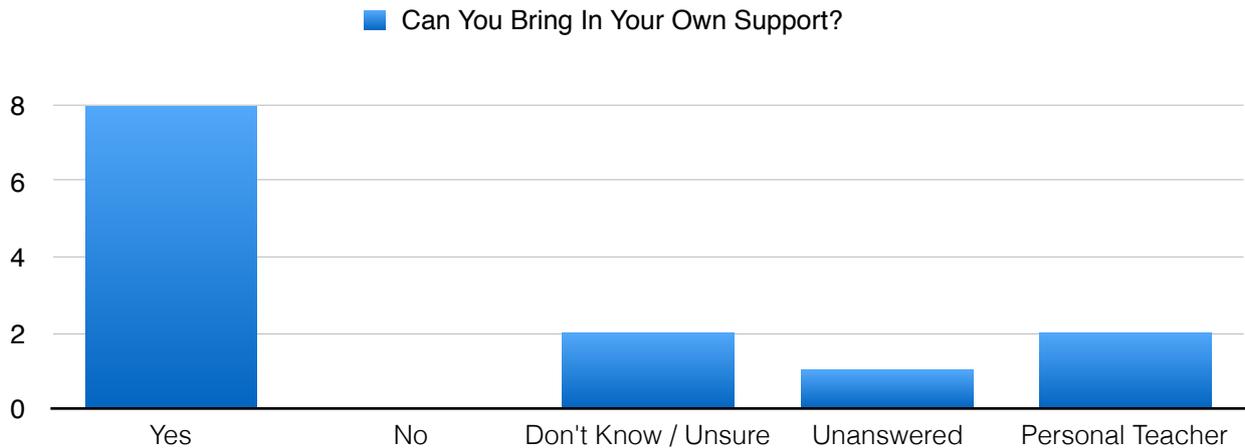
‘There is enough support but you have to go out there and find it.’

‘The teachers are skilled in instruments / technology. They know how to use and are very good at teaching skills. No in class needs support outside.’

100% of participants felt the support offered possessed the skills to answer any questions they had. A participant also noted that if they had an issue they could ask a peer, reducing the need of additional support.

A participant felt the support was good enough, however felt that it could be more accessible as they had to search to find the support.

Can you bring in your own support or do you rely on the support there?



Student Support

Each student has a personal tutor, who you meet regularly. The personal tutor oversees your progress and study programme and is the first point of contact for parents. Every student also has a named Principal Tutor who provides additional support to maximise success and to ensure that you fulfil your potential.

‘We can get help from our personal teachers.’

‘Yes, you can bring in your own teacher.’

‘You can bring in your support, but there is more than enough support available at the school.’

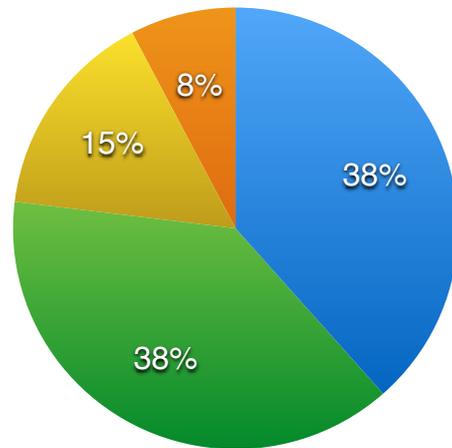
The majority of participants were aware that they could bring in their own support if required. 15% however, were unsure or didn't know whether they could bring in their own support. Possibly having the information somewhere clear, or a dedicated lesson on support would ensure that all participants are then aware that they can bring in their own support.

If you wanted support, do you know where and how to access it?

‘Yes - teachers tell you exactly how and where to get the support you need.’

The answers suggest that support can be accessed through the teacher, however some students were unsure of how to access support, suggesting it could be better signposted / more easily available.

● Yes, Without Specificity ● Via The Teacher
● Don't Know ● Unanswered



‘Not me personally no.’

‘In exams if you’re dyslexic or not able to write in any way you can have a ‘scribe’ to write for you.’

One participant makes reference to scribe services. Assuming that The Inclusion Support Team can be contacted through the teacher, then the majority would indeed know where and how to access support.

The Inclusion Support Team provides support to students with medical, physical or sensory difficulties, students with literacy or numeracy needs or students who need some additional support to access their learning.

The student support section of the QE website can be found at: <https://www.qe.devon.sch.uk/school-information/student-support/learning-support/>

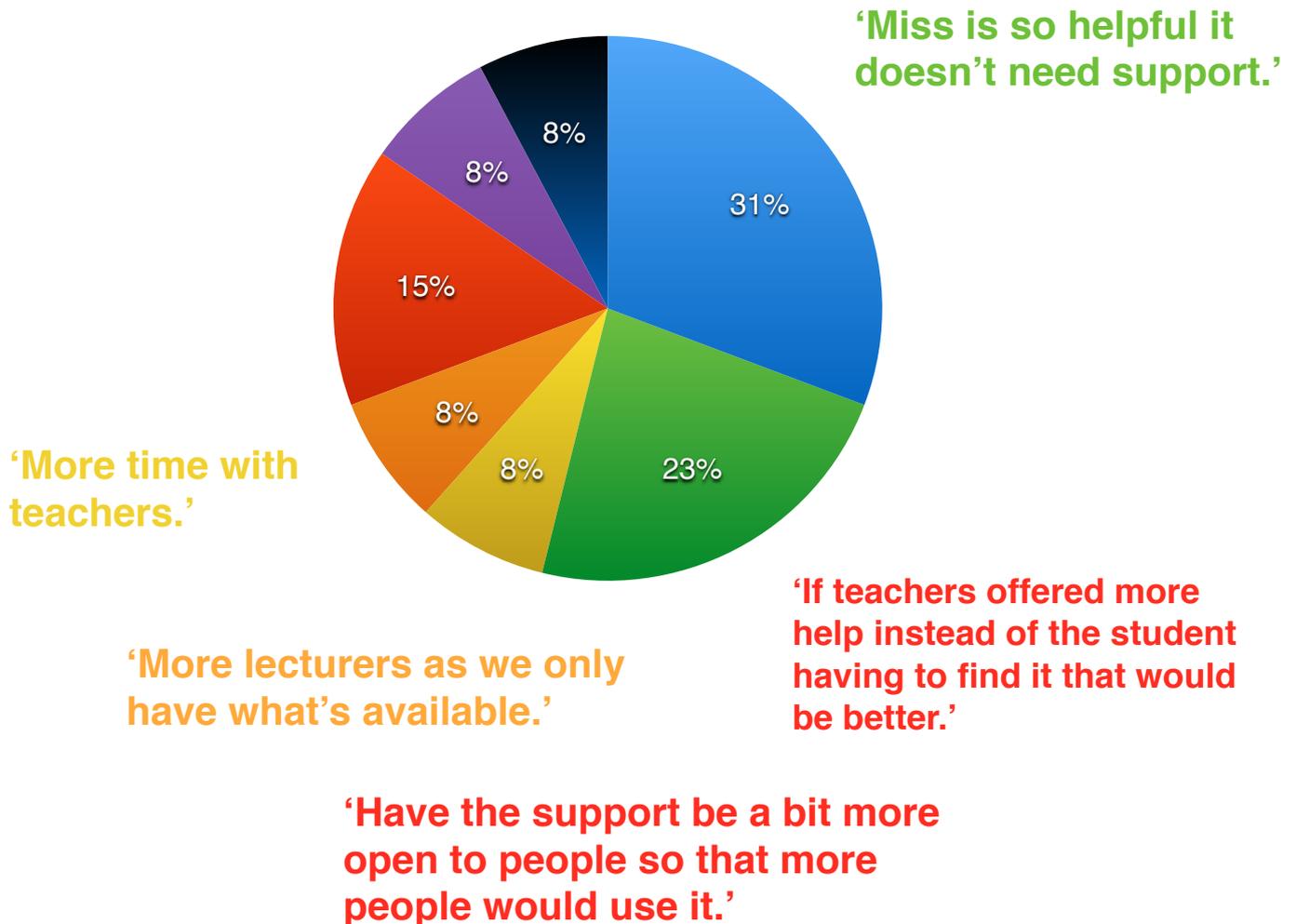
‘I don’t really know where but would ask teachers / staff.’

We provide extensive additional support for students in several different areas:

- Behaviour
- Attendance
- Counselling
- Careers Information, Advice and Guidance
- Health advice and guidance

How could support be improved to make sure more of your needs are met?

- Don't Know
- Doesn't Need Improvements
- More Time With Teachers
- More Teachers
- More Open Support
- More Grouped Lessons
- Unanswered



Generally results are very positive. At 15%, suggested changes to make accessibility to support easier received the highest percentage. This also correlates with the previous question where 15% didn't know where or how to access support.

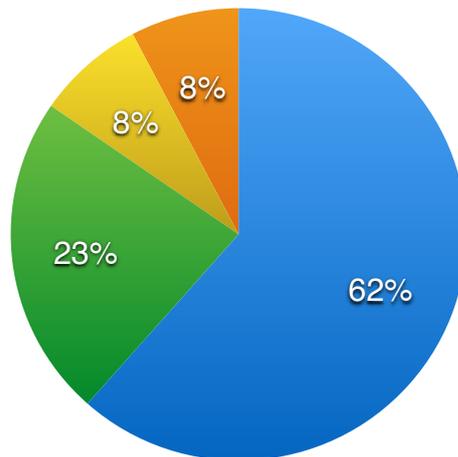
8% suggest more grouped lessons would be useful. While results were generally positive towards being given enough time for collaboration, maybe more time spent learning together would be useful for this individual.

8% also suggest that having more teachers would be useful. Given that 100% of participants felt that the teachers were skilled enough to answer any questions participants had, perhaps this instead links to not having enough one-to-one time teachers. If the assumption is correct, then the two primary support barriers according to participants are not having enough one-to-one time with teachers and not having open enough support.

Environment

Does the environment suit your needs?

- Yes, Without Specificity
- Yes, With Reference to Space and Resources
- Yes, With Reference to Location
- 'Pretty Well'



‘Yes. Equipment is accessible and there is a lot of space available.’

‘Yes, they have all the instruments / technology you need. If you want to work in peace have one of the soundproof rooms. There are recording studios if you want to record.’

‘Yes. We have practice rooms where we can practice privately and we have a studio where we can record songs.’

92% of participants are satisfied with the environment. Multiple participants make reference to the space offered and being able to work in peace in the soundproofed rooms. 8% however, believe that there could be more individual practice rooms for individuals to work alone.

‘Pretty well. Could use more individual practice rooms for the solo practical work.’

8% were satisfied that resources were both on location at the school and were what they needed to successfully complete modules / fully explore their ideas.

Is distance learning an option? If so, do you know how to access it?

‘Yes, we get emailed work.’

‘I can get it sent to me via a friend.’

‘No, I have not heard of distance learning being available with this course.’

‘Yes, know how to access.’

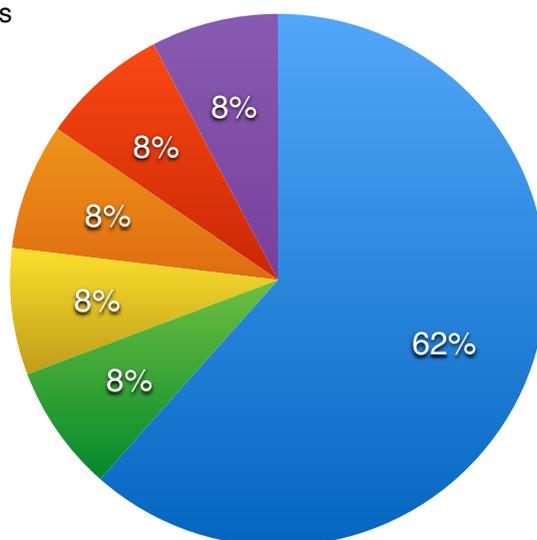
There appears some confusion as to the definition of distance learning with this question. Again, any catch up sessions appear to be at the discretion of the teacher as opposed to dedicated learning materials accessible from anywhere. However, given the equipment requirements to study music technology, perhaps music technology distance learning is inherently financially inaccessible to some.

What would make learning at the music campus more accessible for you?

- Nothing
- Don't Know
- Wider Variety of Instruments
- Opening Music Room at Break and Lunch
- More Music Teachers and More Music Focus
- Unanswered

Nothing

Wider Variety of Instruments



Opening Music Room at Break and Lunch

70% of participants felt that either nothing could be improved, or didn't know what could be improved to make learning more accessible.

8% felt that opening the music room at break and lunch would make learning more accessible to them. This could correlate to the previous question on the environment suiting individual needs of having a quiet place to think and work. Further, of having enough time to work on and finish coursework. Opening up the music rooms at break and lunch would address both issues.

As has been a recurring suggestion in regards to accessibility, 8% suggested having more music teachers would make learning on campus more accessible.

8% felt that having a wider variety of instruments would make learning at the campus more accessible. Having lessons on where to access instruments, funding, hubs, etc. could offer participants directions to where they could potentially access the instruments they would rather experiment with and learn.

Conclusions:

- A lot of the obstacles for participants are going to be bigger for someone with weaker social skills or social anxiety, given that many opportunities for collaboration or feedback involved reaching out to others.
- Initial comments regarded the lack of support, TTTP being there meant that additional staff, with knowledge and ability to provide effective, informed and versatile support to those with labels meant that the lack of support was addressed.
- The knowledge of TTTP staff specialising in music technology reinforced the traditional music knowledge of existing staff. This also meant that there was staff familiar with music technology in both academic and professional settings, able to facilitate the outward facing nature of the course.
- Having visitors from TTTP, a CIC that purports equal access to all will have addressed the issue of the support not being open enough.
- Given TTTP's network of collaborators, such as Devon Music Education Hub (DMEH), TTTP's staff was able to offer participants useful information on local networks and building connections in a thoughtful way, again addressing the outward facing nature of the course.
- Those more pliable to suggestions from others may be more easily influenced by the bias of some teachers suggesting that they shouldn't study the music technology BTEC, as such, making them miss out on the opportunity. TTTP staff, differing from regular QE teachers would have meant they could have offered a neutral perspective.

