

Proposed Changes to WBP BMus Module Specifications for 2009-2010

Dear Professors

This academic year has seen some dramatic changes in the structure of the WBP department with Paul Archibald being appointed HoD, Richard Benjafield as Deputy HoD and Katy Gainham in an enhanced role to head the chamber music programme. As a team we feel that professional, high quality performance should be at the heart of what we do so, with this in mind, we would like to bring some substantial changes to the course.

In order to allow more time for and a greater emphasis on performance activities, the BMus activities need de-cluttering. It is proposed that these changes will start from September 2009-2010, for all undergraduate students.

By refining the many innovations introduced over the last few years, we aim to catch the essence of professors' expertise and distill it into a continuation of all that makes the Guildhall course distinctive and respected in the music profession. We also expect that the course will become more manageable, especially with the introduction of WBP online admin system (now being road-tested by Fiona) at www.guildhallschooladmin.co.uk/admin

Summary of changes to degree course

- 1 The amount of assessments will be reduced.
- 2 Written work, already excellently and thoroughly covered by Music Studies, will be concentrated in a single collection of work for each year.
- 3 Performance will receive a higher % weighting towards the BMus degree.
- 4 Contemporary Music classes will begin in Year 2.
- 5 Principal study hours to allow for independent study choices, increasing gradually through the course.
- 6 Chamber Music (no longer called Undirected Ensembles) has increased Credit Weighting and % of BMus mark, so that it is on a par with orchestral and solo performance.

The Detail

1 Assessments

- Yr 3 assessments will revert to mid-year technical and end-of year recital
- Yr 2 gains a short solo recital assessment, which will occur within the existing platforms.
- Yr 3 doubling assessment will cease - the solo piece will move to end-of year recital. The doubling excerpts can be assessed informally, or in Yr 4 mid-year as appropriate for each instrument.
- Written assessments will be reduced – elements of Directed Ensembles assessed project (all students), Undirected Ensembles Professional Portfolio (all students), and Yr 4 Contemporary Specialism will be incorporated into the new Repertoire Studies Folio. Nine assessment points will therefore be reduced to four.

2 Written work - The Tutorial Groups and Electives which are managed by the Department of Music Studies make ample and excellent provision for written work, so we propose that the current written formats in WBP will no longer exist. These are the Directed Ensembles assessed project, Undirected Ensembles Professional Portfolio, and Yr 4 Contemporary Specialism. Elements and aspects of each will form a new year-long study project, Repertoire Studies. The student will produce a folio of work each year, with a week-long deadline window for submission (which is compulsory). Incomplete folios will be returned for completion. A Viva Voce is used for assessment, and gives the entire mark for Repertoire Studies. Non-submission of the folio results in the Viva Voce mark being capped at 40%.

The folio contents vary from year to year, according to the focus for each year, with items drawn from:

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Practice diary
Chamber music activity diary
Repertoire list
Listings of concerts attended (there will be a minimum requirement)
Programme notes
Contemporary Music project (supported by classes from year 2)
Essay on a research topic
Self-assessment

The aim of the repertoire Studies folio is to maintain the students' relationship between performance and informed research, deepening their understanding of the music they learn and perform, contextually, stylistically and reflectively.

Practice diary - works alongside Yr 1 Performance Matters (managed by Professional Development), encouraging self-reflection on the learning experience from the start of the course. The Performance Matters assessment is focused on the student's reflection on their experiences, and the diary will assist in the recording of information and drawing of conclusions.

Chamber music activity diary supports the emphasis on chamber music in year 2 (it is the end-of-year assessment). It encourages self-reflection on the nature of small ensemble work.

Repertoire list is a record of all repertoire the student has learnt and performed - it exists for their benefit in keeping a trail of their activity.

Listings of performances attended - it has been noticed how infrequently the majority of students attend Guildhall performances. The culture of participation needs a change to include listening (and supporting peers) as a first, and continual, step towards learning and the development of curiosity. No-one likes to play to a small audience. It will be a student's responsibility to attend eight to ten performances and account for them in their folio with a simple listing. Performances outside Guildhall, and in other art forms, are encouraged as much as the performances in the building.

Programme notes - students currently have to write programme notes for solo and chamber recitals in years 3 & 4. Repertoire Studies makes programme notes a focus for research on repertoire across all years. Templates, models and guidelines will be provided. Programmes will be required for panels for all assessed performances from year one.

Contemporary Music project (supported by classes from year 2) spreads the written requirements of the current Yr 4 Contemporary Specialism project across Years 3 & 4.

Essay on a research topic will be in year 4. The student will need to choose a research question on a subject of significance to their ongoing development as a performing artist.

Self-assessment will be a summary part of the folio, with the student required to account for their engagement. It will be presented in the form of questions requiring direct answers, leading to the possibility of deeper self-reflection.

3 Final recital - how much the mark is worth

	% of Yr 4 mark	% of degree
WBP current	45% or 55%	21% or 25%
WBP proposed change	55% or 70%	25% or 31.75%
Strings current	60%	27%
Keyboard current	75%	33.75%

Note: in WBP, the lower % is when the student chooses chamber music or orchestra for their Yr 4 major pathway, the higher % when solo performance is the major pathway.

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Fact

Existing WBP BMus award: Performance content is currently 47% of the total degree mark. These changes will increase it to 58%.

4 Contemporary Music

Contemporary Music is under-represented and currently taught too late in the course. Teaching the Contemporary Specialism classes in yr 4 only gives the students two terms to gather understanding of rep before making a choice of what to play in their final recital . . . The requirement for Contemporary piece in final recital will now become post-1945 (“when it starts to get interesting”, commented a colleague) instead of the current “in the last 25 years”.

Classes will start in Year 2, which will focus on ideas, with a starting point for contemporary music placed about hundred years back in history. Year 3 will be about the gradual extension of expressive and technical facility, and its application to repertoire. By Year 4 students will be assimilating knowledge and applying it to their personal repertoire. There will be an overall emphasis on professional skills, as well as the artistic endeavour involved. It is also anticipated that this part of the course will influence students’ engagement with the Professional Studies Folio in Year 4 (managed by Professional Development).

5 Principal study hours will cater for independent study choices. The standard allocation of ten hours per term for each student will be supplemented by a ‘free choice’ of 3, 6, 9 and 15 hours each, from year 1 to year 4. Free choice might include doubling instruments, second study, further chamber coaching, additional hours with an accompanist, to name the essentials. ‘Free choice’ is always made in consultation with WBP staff. Having this choice allows students to direct their study in a more independent pathway if it is appropriate and beneficial to their development.

Summary

WBP Course

- MORE performance, LESS written work
- Encourages professors to be creative and play to their strengths
- Course becomes manageable, and benefits from implementation of departmental admin system

Overall

- WBP professors work as a team, not in isolation.
- WBP re-focuses on world-class performance standards of artistic and creative excellence
- Reinforces Guildhall School as arts centre on Barbican campus, also delivering a high-quality degree course.

WBP Online Admin System

www.guildhallschooladmin.co.uk/admin

This system is a web-based application that allows the department to monitor the activities of our students, both in their lessons and their performance projects, and targets the information into the student’s individual calendar and the overall WBP calendar. It also allows professors to allocate the lesson times online and for the students to book accordingly. Using this system, students can manage their own diaries and ensure that they book a time that reduces clashes with other departmental activities. It also allows the student to swap lessons with each other should the need arise, thus reducing the admin involved for each professor. Over the course of the year the information is retained so that we have a true picture of the performances each student gives, ensuring fairness but at the same time rewarding hard work and high quality performance.

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The website can be accessed from any computer using any internet browser. I am very happy to go through this system with any professor in order to help a smooth transition. This can be done either at the School or via phone using your own computer.

May we also take this opportunity of thanking you for all the commitment and work you have put in for the benefit of our students. Your influence and expert tuition is fundamental to the students future careers as professional musicians and is the foundation on which we build our activities within the department.

Best wishes

Paul Archibald and Richard Benjafield