



The BA (Hons) in Professional Musicianship



Location **BIMM Brighton** and **BIMM Bristol**

Outline of Course and Rationale (Instrumental Streams: Drums, Bass, Guitar, Vocals)

Introduction

The BA (Hons) in Professional Musicianship is designed specifically for performing artists, songwriters, music teachers and those running commercial music projects who want to gain a degree level qualification while at the same time fulfilling their creative and commercial potential. The course encourages musicians to develop realistic and attainable career goals using a deadline-driven project management approach, keeping focus on the individual's aspirations.

Validation by the University of Sussex

The BA (Hons) in Professional Musicianship is validated by the University of Sussex. All successful graduates will therefore receive the award of Bachelor of Arts from the University of Sussex, as the degree-awarding body. The University of Sussex is responsible for assuring the quality of the degree course, ensuring that the curriculum content and all teaching, learning and assessment is at an appropriate level for the award. The University also ensures that BIMM has mechanisms for assuring and enhancing the delivery of the course and the overall quality of the student experience. Students are registered directly with BIMM, which is responsible for all aspects of student support and administration.

Route to the BA (Hons) Qualification

Year One: BIMM Professional Diploma in Modern Music

The BIMM Professional Diploma in Modern Music is a stand-alone qualification in its own right but since the course is accredited at Level 4 of the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, it can be used to contribute to the first 100 credits of the degree course. On the Professional Diploma course you will develop high-level instrumental or vocal skills, demonstrating professional levels of technique and performance.

Year One: Programme Planning, Learning From Experience

Additional bridging modules on the Professional Diploma must be taken to enable progression. The transition from the Professional Diploma to the second-year of degree study is structured around two mandatory twenty-credit modules that bring your credits to 140 at Level 4, specifically:

- **Learning from Experience**
- **Programme Planning & Study Skills**

Students will learn the basic principles of research and discuss the general construction of the course including the required academic standards such as referencing, note taking, and essay writing. There will be considerable timetabled space for one-to-one discussion during this formative period in the course.



During this year you will be asked to negotiate and decide on your Professional Project topic, which might include:

- Touring with live bands
- Session work
- Commercial composition
- Teaching
- Band management
- Tour management
- Writing and recording for music magazines
- Commercial gigging
- Clinic performances

Year 2 Modules

All students take the following mandatory modules in their second year of study:

- **Research Methods** - Musicians undertake a research project that supports their planning for the Professional Project module. For example, a vocalist could research the techniques involved in getting a vocal sound in the studio, or a band musician planning a national tour could prepare a case study on a relevant breaking act or important venue.
- **Cultural Perspectives** - A comprehensive history of popular music from 1900 to 1970, that analyses the social and political conditions that influenced the development of the art form, as well as evaluating key releases from influential artists.
- **Professional Musicianship** - This class focuses on high-level technical development on guitar, bass, drums, vocals or song writing. In addition to the lectures on technique musicians will need to choose an area with which to specialise in. This will be chosen in negotiation with the tutors and should support the final Professional Project aims.
- **Theory & Transcription** - This module assists musicians with ear training, transcription skills and notation. It discusses broad theoretical issues and introduces non-western and 'classical' techniques of composition, analysis and performance.

Select two options from the following modules (one from group A and one from group B):

Group A Modules:

- **Performance in Context** - In this class musicians map their own performances against professional work using original and cover material. Performances are routinely videoed and critically assessed in small group settings.
- **Session Skills** - Practical styles analysis for guitar, bass, drums and vocals. Again, in addition to the lectures on essential session styles, musicians will opt to study an area of specialism. This will be chosen in negotiation with the tutor and should support the final professional project aims.
- **Commercial Band Management** - This class helps musicians understand how to run a commercial covers band as a business. Musicians will develop and gig projects under the direction of professional musical directors and agents.



Group B Modules:

- **Studio Recording** - This module is designed to help studio musicians understand basic engineering principles and take responsibility for the sonic direction of their recordings. With this knowledge, any musician should be able to get a quality tone in even the most basic of studios. This module also covers studio-based arrangement skills.
- **The Songwriter/ Producer** - This module will address the musical and technological aspects of writing and producing popular songs, and will include focus on song forms/structures (AABC etc); cadences and chord progressions; modulation; writing and harmonising melodies, lyric writing and applying learning to original material. Closely linked to this theme we will introduce technical training in the use of Digital Audio Workstations (DAW), which have become the mainstay of this discipline.

Year 3 modules

All students take the following mandatory modules in their third and final year of study:

- **Personal and Business Development** - Musicians are encouraged to consider their own personal and business development. This is an essential module for band players and singers. Topics covered include effective team working, stress management, time management and goal setting.
- **Analytical Perspectives** – This module examines the history of popular music from 1970-2000. It looks at the work of significant artists and examines the lineage of their influences through the different generations of popular music.
- **Professional Project** - Two years of hard work come together in the realisation of the student's final year project. Elements of the final term will be delivered on site, but the module will mainly be undertaken via self-directed study and implementation of project ideas. For example, a musician may take a project on the road, combining touring with an album release and press campaign. Extensive tutorial support is offered through telephone and email consultation.

Select two options from the following modules (one from group A and one from group B):

Group A Modules:

- **Solo Performance** - Musicians perform either on their own or using backing tracks. A clinic style presentation could work well in this module. Again, work is compared to professional material and students must critically assess their progress and attainment.
- **Ensemble Performance** - This class gives musicians a final chance to hone a set before commencing the final professional project. Musicians map their work against that of professionals and make recommendations for future working practice.
- **Commercial Songwriting** - This module will further address the musical and technological aspects of writing and producing popular songs, and will include focus on composition for the media and moving image alongside the commercial concerns and production values vital to this discipline. Musicians will continue to develop technical skills along with creative techniques common to working with sound and image.



Group B Modules:

- **Music Business Studies** - This module involves a thorough investigation into the music business, with detailed analysis of contracts and music business structures. There will also be high profile guest speakers.
- **Music Teaching Practice** - This module deals with the development of sound teaching skills, from one-to-one tuition to large group classroom work. Small teaching practice business models are discussed and musicians can investigate full-time teaching as a career option either in mainstream education or as a private practitioner.

In addition to practical and academic lessons, course delivery is supported by BIMM's comprehensive tutorial system that enables every musician to benefit from widespread access to music industry professionals for expert help and advice. There are also many extra-curricular activities including rehearsing, recording and performing in public, and visits from high level professional musicians and other music industry personnel.

BIMM Degree students also have access to Study Direct, Sussex University's online learning resource.

Please refer to www.bimm.co.uk for more information on student accommodation.

Success in all modules will lead to the award of a BA (Hons) in Professional Musicianship. Possible further study options include progression onto BIMM Post Graduate Certificate in Further and Higher Music Education at BIMM Brighton (also validated by Middlesex University, subject to accreditation by SVUK).