We believe that young people should feel represented and included in the music that they study. So, in summer 2021, we asked over 300 music students for their views on studying music, on diversity, and on their passion for the subject.

What’s your motivation to study music?

45% of students said that their love of playing musical instruments, performing or recording was their biggest motivation to studying music.

There were many other motivations too...

“I was good at music and saw it as something I could do well in” 19%

“I want to have a career in music in the future” 17%

“I enjoy listening to and understanding music” 10%

“My teacher is great and they encouraged me to choose the course” 5%

Were there any barriers that made it harder to choose music compared to another subject?

“COVID and physical disability making it difficult to learn instruments and learn the curriculum”

“Not enough funding for music means not many schools offer music as a course”
How important are the inclusion of diverse artists and composers?

74% of students surveyed said this was ‘important’ or ‘very important’ to them.

“A diverse range of composers being included makes for a more relatable learning experience for students of colour”

“Studying only a small number of songs and/or genres with similar purposes would limit one’s understanding of music as a whole”

“It’s so important to see music from different types of people and different cultures, as it widens our knowledge on the subject”

“The diversity of artists is important to gain more insight into the cultures around the world”

What’s most important when studying music?

A breadth of genres 79%
Diverse composers and artists 72%
Artists and composers from all over the world 72%

Students rate diversity and representation high in their list of priorities, understanding how learning from different perspectives and cultures can enhance their educational experience.

It’s also important to:

64% Learn about significant artists from the past
60% Study music that you can listen to and enjoy away from the classroom
56% Study music that challenges you
45% Study artists and composers that are still alive
33% Study music that relates to you personally
29% Study music your teacher enjoys teaching
25% Study British artists and composers
28% Study music you can play yourself
21% Study music you can discuss at university
Qualification Design

Music needs to be studied around our chosen music, to give context and comparison, but if it were up to students, who should decide what music they study?

The teachers and students together should choose all the music the course covers (39%)

The exam board should recommend music teachers and students should choose from 39%

We’re committed to working together with schools and young people to drive change and create learning environments that inspire young musicians.

Our commitment

Supporting diversity, equity and inclusion in education
We believe in equal opportunity for all learners, whatever their background, ability, sexuality or identity – and we are committed to working together with schools and learners to create learning environments and qualifications that reflect the diversity of the modern world and its people.

Working with industry partners
To ensure our music qualifications remain relevant and market leading, we’re working with a number of organisations to share and develop best practice in the study of music qualifications in the UK.

Inspiration in Music
We’re working to improve the Music specifications across Pearson’s qualifications portfolio to ensure young people feel inspired by the range of composers they study. Our aim is to help all students shape their own work within music and inspire them into future careers in the music industry.

Find out more about the work we’re doing

Join the conversation
To join the conversation and share your feedback and suggestions, please get in touch with our subject advisor, Jeffrey Hole, or complete our short online form.

Contact us

A-level Music feedback form