learning the music business

evaluating the ‘vocational turn’ in music industry education

A positioning report for UK Music

By Toby Bennett (King’s College, London)

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**Toby Bennett** is a PhD researcher in the Department of Culture, Media and Creative Industries at King’s College London. His primary research focuses on the changing nature and understanding of work in the major record labels of the UK’s music industry. [about.me/tgpbennett](http://about.me/tgpbennett)

**UK Music** is a campaigning and lobbying group, which represents every part of the recorded and live music industry. The UK Music Skills Academy is the first music specific training initiative launched in tandem with Creative & Cultural Skills. The Music Academic Partnership is a ground-breaking collaboration between a select group of educational institutions and the membership of UK Music. Its focus is on preparing individuals who want to build careers out of their passion for music. [ukmusic.org](http://ukmusic.org)

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1. introduction

1.1 This report responds to the ‘vocational turn’ in music education at British universities. This term groups together a number of recent developments, including: the rising ‘employability’ agenda in Higher Education; the growing importance of internships and work placements as part of degree courses; and the increasing interaction between universities and businesses, through knowledge exchange, teaching, and training. In music, the vocational turn is most visible in the raft of undergraduate courses that have appeared since the turn of the millennium specifically aimed at preparing students for work in the music industry.

Policy-makers look to ensure universities offer value to their students and that creative industries receive the training support they need. On the other hand, educators are often concerned that vocationalism risks undermining the quality and standards of an academic degree. Debates continue. With the recent launch of the Music Academic Partnership, UK Music is seeking to address both of these concerns.

1.2 But there is a problem – one that has risen into view only recently. Despite their popularity, such courses are often criticised for apparently failing to equip their graduates with the necessary skills to work in music.

Before research began for this project, this viewpoint was heard in scattered anecdotes from music professionals gathered through my on-going doctoral research and, separately, by representatives at UK Music, in their day-to-day dealings with the industry. It is also reflected in policy and academic literature.¹

1.3 It would be easy to reduce this perception to caricature (for instance: the fusty and snobbish academic in an ivory tower versus the idealistic A&R man educated at the ‘university of life’) and hence to ignore it as hopelessly behind the times. But – even if it were possible to find examples that live up to such caricatures – the problem is rather more deeply entrenched.

Over the period that these courses have surged in number, the ‘creative industries’ (a term that did not exist before 1997) have come to the forefront of the UK’s economic and political agenda, such that once informal and hidden creative activities are now seen as key contributors to GDP. The music industry in particular has reinvented itself in a digital light, in response to widespread and rapid technological innovation, opening up to new business models and forms of consumption. At the same time, universities have experienced drastic changes to their funding, while simultaneously being encouraged to ‘widen participation’, demonstrate ‘impact’ and improve ‘employability’. These are not unrelated phenomena.

¹ See sections 4 and 7.
1.4 The vast majority of music industry practitioners have not been involved in the development and implementation of the policies and initiatives experienced in higher education. Indeed, many will be entirely unaware of them. Yet they have seen their effects very clearly – significantly, through the influx of a large number of young employees who have recently passed through a form of training that did not previously exist.

The two sectors continue to transform and interact in a number of ways. UK Music has recently positioned itself at the centre of these transformations. It is therefore incumbent on researchers, industry representatives and policy-makers to take stock of the existing situation in the development of future initiatives.

1.5 This report seeks to make a contribution along these lines. This contribution is presented in two parts. The first offers a literature review, bringing to light the complexity of issues. It argues that a clear conceptual framework is necessary for understanding these issues and makes some tentative steps towards a broader mapping exercise. The second part articulates a range of individuals’ attitudes towards the music industry degree and interrogates the justifications they draw on. The report makes recommendations throughout which are summarised in full at the end.

The report is intended to feed into the development work being carried out by UK Music. It is also hoped to benefit academics and educators, as well as music education bodies (such as IASPM and JAMES), in their own activities. It will enable future work to be sensitised to the perceived problems, resistances and contradictions that may be faced, as well as the clear opportunities that exist.
2. recommendations in brief

2.1 DEVELOP A SKILLS ECOSYSTEM
Skills policy should update the ‘pipeline’ metaphor and framework into an ‘ecosystem’, concerning interactions between multiple disciplines, professional roles and industry sectors.

Educational policy should consider skills development in terms of knowledge and practices that relate to the ‘craft’, ‘commerce’, ‘culture’ and ‘mechanics’ of music – not purely as (a vaguely defined) job-training.

Work placements should be firmly embedded within broader understanding. Partnerships between practitioners and academic should be developed.

2.2 CONDUCT FUTURE RESEARCH
The provision of music industry education in universities should be mapped to show:
- programmes, courses, modules
- flows of people (students into work; practitioners in academia)
- resources (personnel, expertise, facilities, technologies)
- work experience: opportunities and best practices
- research and knowledge exchange: opportunities and best practices.

Research into student career trajectories should reach beyond ‘opportunities’ in the job market and explore the quality of working life itself, as well as the experiences of those who are less successful.

Attitudes, values and perceptions should be more directly taken into account in the design and implementation of survey-based research.

2.3 BUILD COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS
Collaborative networks should support the skills ecosystem and work to build trust between HE and industry.

This could involve:
1) Practitioner-educator consultancy to explore shared values and conflicts.
2) Developing a vocabulary around these values that can be used in promotional and media materials, and future research.
3) Working together on course content, collaborative research initiatives, and funding drives.
4) Developing partnerships between industry institutions and academic bodies like IASPM and the HEA.

See section 13 for these recommendations in more detail.
3. the ‘problem’

3.1 The ‘problem’, as perceived by industry practitioners, is dual-layered.

Put simply, there is a mismatch between the requirements of the music business, the provisions of university education, and the expectations of students. This implies three key areas of lack in prospective employees.

Individuals do not:

- **know** how the industry works;
- **understand** the realities of working life;
- possess the required **skills**.

A music industry degree might aim to systematically address each of these areas. Music education policy works to try and support institutions and educators in this ambition – and some may be more successful than others.

3.2 But there is a more fundamental issue at stake – indicated in the empirical work presented in part II of this report. At heart, the manner in which the university operates – e.g. the *institutional structure* in place, the *methods of learning* it values – is often considered to undercut its very ability to improve these areas. This raises severe doubts about the value to the music industry of higher educational courses as a whole.

3.3 The problem with the problem...

This second layer of the problem rests on a set of perceptions about the purpose of a university degree and the experience of undergraduate life. These perceptions undervalue the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. More significantly perhaps, they can often be outdated or simply false.²

Part I of this report explores this in more depth.

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² *c.f.* recent commentaries from academic researchers engaged with the creative industrie: Oakley (2013); Hesmondhalgh (2014).
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>UNDERSTANDING</th>
<th>SKILLS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem 1: Individuals wanting to work in the music industry may not:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Know what kinds of opportunity exist within the industry.</td>
<td>Have realistic expectations of what working life involves.</td>
<td>Possess either:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They may not be aware of the variety of tasks, roles and functions within the industry, both formal and informal, or how they interlink.</td>
<td>They may not understand how to gain employment, or the type of work they are likely to be required to perform once they do.</td>
<td>a) the specific technical skills necessary to perform certain tasks;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>b) the range of skills necessary to fulfil the flexible demands of certain roles.</td>
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<td><strong>There is a belief that educators can help by:</strong></td>
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<td>Articulating the complexity of the industry; introducing students to the variety of its operations and showing how they function as a whole.</td>
<td>Clarifying the realities of working life; emphasising the balance of skills necessary across the sector.</td>
<td>Equipping students with the key skills necessary to operate in it and the capacity to update and complement these skills in future.</td>
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<td><strong>Problem 2: There is a new danger that such courses give a false impression:</strong></td>
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<td>That the industry operates according to formalised sets of rules that can be systematically studied, learned and applied.</td>
<td>That acquiring a qualification purporting to demonstrate a mastery of certain rules and skills will automatically lead to a job.</td>
<td>That anyone can learn to succeed in the industry – whereas success relies on talents that are beyond definition or replication.</td>
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4. rationale and overview of the report

4.1 This report is positioned to aid the development of programmes such as UK Music’s Skills Academy and Music Academic Partnership, as well as evolving practice in Higher Education (HE). In particular the report responds to two recent documents which address these matters.

**The Music Blueprint (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2011)**

**Taking Notes: Mapping and Teaching Popular Music in Higher Education (HEA, 2012)**

4.2 The Music Blueprint raises as a central concern the mismatch between ‘apparently highly-qualified individuals’ coming from the formal education sector on the one hand, and ‘what the music industry actually needs’ on the other. They say employers have nonetheless resigned themselves to this situation.³

Government echoes this, saying that academia should be ‘equipping students with the skills they need to make the most effective contribution they can to the creative economy’.⁴ And the CBI remarks that policy should ‘reflect the range of skills required by creative businesses and ensure these are delivered through secondary and higher education’.⁵

4.3 This report argues that language such as this – ‘qualifications’, ‘needs’ and ‘delivery’ – is not currently adequate to *either* sector. Outside of the professions (e.g. law and finance), there is no standard qualification for industry careers.

The Music Blueprint does not account for differences between HE courses or in industry professions and contexts. These differences are evident in the different infrastructures, values and expectations underlying the forms of education and training engaged in by educators and institutions, as well as those supported by industry.

4.4 The report argues for new collaborative approaches to be developed that recognise the requirements of *both* sectors.

In order to do so appropriately, a mapping study of music industry education in HE is recommended. A useful foundation is ‘Taking Notes’ – a recent mapping report of Popular Music Studies for the Higher Education Academy. This latter, more academic study also identifies problems across HE courses that prepare students for

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³ Creative & Cultural Skills (2011), p.18
⁴ DCMS (2008), p.25.
⁵ CBI (2010), p.4.
work. But its methodology falls down by relying too heavily on art/commerce and theory/practice binaries, which restrict its application.

A new conceptual framework is proposed that does not rely on such binaries but unites learning with skills. Mapping should take account of the knowledge and practice of music in terms of its: craft; commerce; culture; and mechanics.

4.5 It should be considered a priority to balance the perceived ‘needs’ of industry with: the diverse reality of educational provision on one hand; and the plurality of work opportunities and practitioner attitudes on the other. These two aspects are addressed in each of the report’s two parts in turn.

Part 1 sets the policy context in music and HE (sections 5 & 6), highlighting deep sectoral change in both and their skills consequences. The challenges of mapping the working relationship between the two sectors are addressed in order to propose a new framework (section 7).

Part 2 presents the findings from the empirical study – interviews with practitioners and educators. Methods (section 8) are followed by discussion of practitioners working with HE (section 9). An overall typology of attitudes towards education (section 10) raises the core concern of industry’s distrust towards of HE’s capacity to deliver appropriate skills. The assumptions behind this are explored (section 11) and attitudes to HE outputs of knowledge, understanding and skills are presented in more depth (section 12). Finally, findings are summarised and recommendations presented (section 13).

4.6 Caveat on SMEs and music.

In feedback, an objection has been raised that attitudes presented in the report are not specific to the music industry but instead reflect the predominance of SMEs and micro-enterprises in the sector. This must be borne in mind. However, there are certain aspects which do seem to be specific to music, in both a commercial and educational context. These include: resistance to codified knowledge; a related emphasis on practice; and a wish to protect the ‘art’ of music. These aspects are addressed particularly in sections 7 (‘learning the music business’) and 12 (‘knowledge, understanding, skills’).
PART I: LITERATURE REVIEW

The terrain of Higher Education has changed; so too has industry and the broader economic and political landscape; as well as the cultural context in which young people are immersed. Too often, our understanding of the relationship between these elements is lacking and/or fails to take account of these changes.

Part I aims to rectify this.
5. policy context: music industry

5.1 Industry Overview

5.1.1 The music industry is complex. Although organised around an ostensibly simple goal (broadly: the creation and monetisation of music) it encompasses an incredibly diverse range of sub-sectors, companies and institutions, each comprising a diverse range of functions, roles and activities. It is usually far more accurate to talk in terms of multiple music industries – even if this is rarely done.  

5.1.2 The Music Blueprint survey offers the broadest recent attempt to take account of the music industry’s diversity, defining its workforce as, ‘anyone involved in performing, creating, producing, recording, promoting and selling music in the UK’. This definition includes, ‘musicians and composers, national and regional orchestras, the recording industry and its retail and distribution arms, royalties and collection societies, live venues and festivals (both commercial and subsidised), music publishers, artist management and promotion, and the audio sector’, as well as ‘music professionals who work in educational settings’ and ‘those involved in the production and repair of musical instruments and audio equipment’.  

5.1.3 By contrast, the definition of the UK music industry arrived at by UK Music in its reappraisal of the sector’s economic contribution makes a more functional distinction between a ‘core’ and ‘wider’ music industry. The ‘core’ music industry encompasses all activities relating to four ‘commercial assets’: 1) the musical composition; 2) recording; 3) performance; and 4) artistic brand. This excludes such activities as retail, physical distribution, merchandising, and the manufacture of instruments and equipment, which contribute to the ‘wider’ context. This narrower definition is, they argue, still poorly served by existing Standard Industrial and Occupational Classifications (SICs/SOCs).  

5.1.4 The Music Blueprint survey’s broad sweep offers an excellent overview of the sector as a whole. However, it also makes it easy to draw generalisations which miss the fine-grained details. UK Music’s recent redefinition of the ‘core’ industry demonstrates the scope to nuance this broad appraisal. This report adopts their definitions.

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6 Williamson and Cloonan (2007). The rationale for focusing on the particular sections of the industry discussed in this report is explained in section 8.1. As the bulk of this report is primarily descriptive rather than classificatory, the singular ‘industry’ has been favoured for consistency, in line with the habits of practitioners, trade bodies and educators. Efforts are made to make clear distinctions between subsectors and functions where appropriate.  


8 UK Music (2013b), pp.13-18
5.2 Music and Policy

5.2.1 Although certain sections of the sector have a long-standing relationship with the state (e.g. via the Arts Council), commercial popular music and policy have historically been uneasy bedfellows. Not infrequently has the government found itself in opposition to marginal and ‘anti-establishment’ voices; at the same time, the industry’s creative principles have tended to encourage entrepreneurialism and align broadly with market dynamics, rather than turn to the state.\(^9\) On the surface, attitudes informed by these practices remain broadly in place.

5.2.2 But, since the 1990s, the relationship has evolved. In 1998, the ‘creative industries’ were defined as a coherent group of activities for the first time, with a dedicated government department (the DCMS).\(^10\) The New Labour government’s renewed approach to cultural policy emphasised the social and economic role of creativity.\(^11\)

5.2.3 Sector Skills Councils formed part of the DCMS’ support programme for creative industries. The case for specific research and support for skills in the music industry was swiftly made. Developing education and training was viewed positively by the sector and calls identified to develop possibilities for collaboration.\(^12\) Cultural & Creative Skills was established in 2004; in 2008, British Music Rights expanded its remit to represent the wider interests of the industry, transforming into UK Music.

5.2.4 The commercial music industry remains less reliant on public subsidy than some other creative industries (e.g. Film or Visual Arts).\(^13\) Nonetheless, the interests of musicians and politicians have become more closely aligned, supported indirectly by a broad range of policies. The very existence of UK Music is itself a product of this alignment and it offers an active voice in a number of these areas. These include IP, net regulation, venue licensing, urban regeneration, work, welfare and education.

5.2.5 Despite the financial autonomy of large segments of the industry, it is therefore crucial not to isolate internal sectoral change from much broader questions of public policy and their on-the-ground developments.

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\(^9\) Either through individuals or collectively through trade representatives. Cloonan (2007). New Labour’s first culture secretary Chris Smith (1998) picked out the popular music industry as a ‘fine example’ of ‘cultural activities that can thrive and survive on their own’. See also Jones (1999)

\(^10\) Department of Culture, Media and Sport: see DCMS (1998). The process of reclassifying creative industries ‘to meet the needs of the modern knowledge economy’ is on-going (Creative Skillset, 2013: p.3).

\(^11\) Not always successfully and often controversially (Hewison, 2014).

\(^12\) Dumbreck et al. (2003).

\(^13\) Again, however, there is an internal imbalance: smaller companies (record labels and live venues alike) are more likely to seek government money than large corporations. This is largely through application for one-off sums rather than on-going investment, however. See Cloonan (2007).
5.2.6 Two examples illustrate this:

- At the industry-wide end of the scale, recorded music consumption may not have been affected so deeply by digital at the turn of the millennium without government’s commitment to rolling out high-speed broadband infrastructure to meet the demands of a growing knowledge economy.\(^\text{14}\)

- At the individual end, performing musicians are now enabled, encouraged, and often required, to build networks and make commercial and marketing decisions – traditionally the domain of managers, record labels and publishers. In developing a more entrepreneurial approach, they must make use of educational, financial, and infrastructural support from outside the traditional industry.\(^\text{15}\)

Changing technology and work conditions are treated in turn.

5.2.7 Music and technology

Technological innovations have driven considerable changes in patterns of production, distribution and consumption, which do not need to be rehearsed here.\(^\text{16}\)

Two trends should be highlighted for their skills impacts: the first horizontal and the second vertical.

First, digital technologies have facilitated convergence across industries – e.g. an increased emphasis on brand partnerships and secondary exploitation opportunities to monetise recorded music. Convergence demands greater literacy across media and business functions, offers greater flexibility in terms of career-paths, and leads to new specialisms opening up.

Second, the distance between production and consumption, and the direction of flow between them, has become unsettled. Audiences are often seen as co-creators – collaborating in the production of cultural and economic value – rather than simply consumers or amateurs. Opportunities for outsiders to enter the field have grown. The ability to creatively manage and nurture the consumer relationship is seen as an increasingly vital skill.

5.2.8 Work and Skills

Macro-economic factors, social norms and technological innovations continue to transform the nature of work as a whole, with careers increasingly characterised by flexibility, creativity and blurred work-life boundaries. The creative industries are understood to be at the forefront of these changes. In 2012, they were identified as

\(^{14}\) See for example: DTI (1998).

\(^{15}\) Hracs (2013); Leyshon (2014), pp.154-171.

\(^{16}\) See Leyshon (2014) for a comprehensive account.
critical to the UK economy and ‘industry ownership of investment in skills’ as a primary target on the way to economic recovery.\textsuperscript{17}

Music industry policy has usually focused on questions of how to promote growth in the sector over those regarding its working conditions. This imbalance has begun to alter more recently: through research on demographic equality and diversity;\textsuperscript{18} and the association of internships with free labour becoming mainstream.\textsuperscript{19} New initiatives are beginning to address these issues.

CC Skills published its Music Blueprint in 2011 – a comprehensive survey overview of the industry’s skills needs.\textsuperscript{20} Responding to government’s call for industry ownership of skills programmes, UK Music launched the CBI-backed ‘Music Skills Academy’ in 2013: ‘a national network of people, business, education institutions and organisations committed to skills and training to support the next generation of talent’.\textsuperscript{21} The ‘Music Academic Partnership’ (MAP) was launched in 2015, a pioneering ‘collaboration between a select group of educational institutions and the membership of UK Music’.\textsuperscript{22}

However, policy still tends to focus on improving access to work – rather than working conditions themselves. Despite a long tradition of research suggesting otherwise, work in industries like Music is often assumed by both policy-makers and potential practitioners to present a model of ‘good’ work – freely-chosen, creative and fulfilling. Ways in which it can be precarious, exploitative, and prone to inequality can remain hidden.\textsuperscript{23}

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5.3 Section Summary

- Defining which activities constitute the music industry is difficult but necessary. This report takes UK Music’s definition of a Core, based around four commercial assets, and a wider industry as a useful basis for balancing breadth with precision.
- Music is affected infrequently by specific policies but continually by attempts at ‘joined up’ approaches to governance.
- Skills are affected by technological innovation, which has facilitated change on the horizontal (industrial convergence) and vertical (production-
consumption). The hard skills needs of today are not necessarily those of tomorrow.
- Working patterns have been disrupted. This has begun to be addressed but policy tends to focus on access to the job market rather than working conditions themselves.
6. policy context: higher education

6.0 In sharp contrast to commercial music, HE\textsuperscript{24} has been closely intertwined with government policy since at least the mid-twentieth century.\textsuperscript{25} Inevitably, this involves financial subsidy. UK universities retain ‘institutional autonomy’: they self-govern in internal matters of organisational and financial structure as well as academic content.\textsuperscript{26} However, balancing this with perceived ‘public benefit’ is bound up with the prevailing political agenda of the day.

The general complexities facing HE are inevitably poorly understood by non-specialists, including young people choosing a course of study and industry practitioners hiring graduates or entering into collaboration with universities. It is certainly important for an industry body to acknowledge this complexity – particularly as HE changes through structural reform – as well as the misperceptions surrounding it.

6.1 Higher Education Overview

Universities are expected to be all things to all people: agents of social mobility, drivers of urban regeneration, centres of fundamental research, partners in business, exemplars of teaching, hubs of inward investment. For our top-flight institutions this is all do-able but many middle-ranking universities, unable to compete on cost or quality, will suffer.

Tristram Hunt MP\textsuperscript{27}

6.1.1 Just as the music industry is plagued by myth, HE is entangled in a web of conflicting expectations. In a political context we often hear of ‘performance’ and ‘prestige’ while a populist-media discourse tends to favour ‘ivory towers’ or ‘Mickey Mouse degrees’. But, as with music, it is too simple to imagine HE either as a market of equal providers, or as a coherent whole with shared aims. This is particularly the case in the hugely varied degree programmes that tend to lead into creative industries positions.

6.1.2 Institutions and Degrees

History and geography shape the character of a particular educational environment, affecting the individuals it attracts, the types of learning it cultivates and the

\textsuperscript{24} Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) comprise post-compulsory education, typically after the age of 16. The former offers training and qualifications immediately above secondary level (GCE A Level, PGCE, NVQ, BTEC, HND, Foundation Degree, etc); the latter offer Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral degrees.

\textsuperscript{25} Collini (2012).

\textsuperscript{26} In principle at least, UK HEIs have been able to exercise greater freedom regarding internal matters than most other European countries (EUA: 2010).

\textsuperscript{27} Quoted in McGettigan (2013), p.62.
resources available to support it in doing so. An undergraduate degree such as Music is delivered in a variety of ways – both in educational content and in institutional terms. Influences on these variations include:

- volume of annual student intake;
- students’ prior academic attainment and selectivity (with demographic consequences);
- ability of the HEI to support appropriate forms of teaching (lecture, seminar, tutorial, practice-base, private study);
- ability to meet student needs (accommodation, student services, social life) and government targets (research quality, impact, employability);
- availability of internal capital with which to support these aims.

Courses across a diverse array of HEIs cannot ‘meet industry’s needs’ in a uniform or systematic way. Variation between institutions creates obstructions and the macro-economic context is changing. Policy initiatives should be sensitive to this.

The job market is sometimes imagined as an efficient sorting system: young people pick the ‘best’ course for their chosen career and those who succeed educationally should then succeed professionally. In law, accounting, or medicine there may be some purchase to this idea. In arts and creative contexts, quite simply, it doesn’t work like that.28

Young people interested in music enter HE with a host of different intentions. Some but not all will be directly linked to employment. The institutional context in which they find themselves massively shapes their development. The job market they enter is notoriously difficult to predict.29

6.1.3 Structural Change

Of course I recognise there is more to education than being a consumer. Nevertheless there are important similarities with conventional consumers which we can harness to strengthen the student voice and the quality of the student’s education.

David Willetts, MP 30

The HE sector continues to evolve. Since 1992 modifications to the university system have distanced it from an elitist past and moved towards a mass model. These structural changes are complicated and cannot be detailed here – but key amongst these modifications are:

- Widening Participation and internationalisation agendas;31

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28 Cultural economist Ruth Towse (2006) systematically shows how the ‘human capital’ assumptions on which many labour markets are based – such as their dual ability to enable prospective candidates to ‘signal’ their talents and employers to ‘screen’ candidates effectively – are challenged at their core in the arts.

29 Towse (2006), Oakley (2013)

30 Willetts (2013).

31 This is the twin drive to ‘increase the participation in HE of students from more disadvantaged communities’ and ensure ‘social background does not inhibit access to, and success within, HE’. HEFCE (online).
Changing eligibility criteria for the ‘university’ classification;

The introduction and restructuring of finances: tuition fees, loans and bursaries (student-facing) and funding allocation (institution-facing);\(^{32}\)

Changing university governance and accountability measures;\(^{33}\)

Nascent technological possibilities of digital learning, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).\(^{34}\)

The most marked outcome to date has been the rapid educational enfranchisement of large sectors of the population who would previously have not considered university study an option – accompanied by an equally rapid growth in the number of institutions.\(^{35}\)

This harbours the potential for industry to benefit from a more diverse workforce. But it has a direct impact on the capability of music industry courses to thrive.

It is difficult to speculate about the long-term effects of these changes,\(^{36}\) commentators point particularly to the following:

1) The formation of ‘a more calculating relationship between students, HE and the labour market’, in which professionalisation, collaboration with industry, and the marketing imperative gain prominence and intensity;\(^{37}\)

2) Prospective students – particularly those from lower socio-economic groups – who are \textit{far more likely} to choose courses based on apparent return on investment while being \textit{far less prepared} to move away from home in order to explore unknown educational terrain;\(^{38}\)

3) The new possibility of institutional insolvency has been argued to deepen divisions between ‘old’ institutions (selective, high-prestige, research-intensive, ‘academic’), and ‘new’ ones (more focused on accessibility, teaching, practice-led learning, vocational training).\(^{39}\)

The ‘commercial contract’ instituted by tuition fees places pressure on arts and creative subjects.\(^{40}\) Courses that specifically appeal to students aiming to make a living in the music industry are likely to continue to be popular, and to grow in number. They will face demanding pressures on their ability to provide appropriate resources and infrastructure. They can be expected to become more competitive as a result. Meanwhile, divisions between profession-focused and ‘academic’ courses seem likely to intensify.

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\(^{32}\) More detail on the student-facing and institution-facing elements of money-flow in HE is in Appendix 1.

\(^{33}\) Such as the Research Excellence Framework and its predecessor, the Research Assessment Exercise. For discussion, see McGettigan (2013), pp.151-4.

\(^{34}\) Not explored here but digital tools must certainly form a part of future HE mapping exercises.

\(^{35}\) See appendix 1 for more detail.

\(^{36}\) Though see appendix 1 for some predictions.


\(^{38}\) HEFCE (2009).

\(^{39}\) McGettigan (2013), pp.77-78.

\(^{40}\) Ofield-Kerr, Simon (2013)
6.1.4 Impact for Creative Industries

There is a disparity between what is available through the formal education sector and what the music industry actually needs. CC Skills Music Blueprint, p.18

Historically, HE has indirectly found itself to be an incubator for creative industries workers. Kate Oakley argues: ‘the experience of going away to college, full student grants, and the chance for a period of cultural and personal experimentation’ developed individuals who went on to succeed ‘primarily as a by-product of their teaching [...] rather than the implementation of public policy’.41 Policy has aimed to address and enhance this ‘by-product’ in recent years.

But Oakley notes a paradox. On the one hand, ‘a particular kind of [HE] milieu in which cultural industries often thrived’ is routinely invoked by policy-makers; on the other hand, clearly ‘assumptions about the student experience, common even 20 years ago, no longer apply’.42 Employers should be aware of the inconsistencies between common perceptions and on-the-ground reality.

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6.2 Section Summary

- The expansion in HE is evident in the rapid growth in number of both universities and students over the past twenty years. Clearer course positioning and accountability is coupled to employability and impact. New academic disciplines have emerged. Engagements with public and private sector are more prominent.
- Degree courses focusing on the music industry are attractive to HEIs because they are popular with students and have visible vocational throughput, both of which are increasingly important. But employment is not the only motivating factor for either students or educators.
- The learning environment is complex and unstable. Educational ‘packages’ offered by HEIs are shaped by aims, contexts and infrastructures that vary hugely. Their future is, as yet, unknown. If industry’s perceptions, attitudes and expectations of HE remain static, they will increasingly diverge from reality.
- The job market in which employers meet graduates is unsettled. HE providers cannot simply adjust to meet outside ‘needs’ – of industry or of students – as if either of these groups’ needs were unified or complementary. This is particularly the case in an emerging educational context – like the music industry degree.

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41 Oakley (2013), p.25
42 Oakley (2013), p.27
7. learning the music business

7.0 The previous sections recount the shifting terrain of music industry and Higher Education. This section draws on this context to enable a clearer account of the way in which the industry (in all its manifestations) is currently understood, treated and taught within HE.

7.1 Music Industry and Higher Education

7.1.1 The volume of available music courses has expanded substantially since the turn of the millennium, as have opportunities to study industry in particular. This expansion is welcomed in some corners and lamented in others. This growth is not purely driven by vocational incentives. Studying the music industry is not the same as either wanting, or being ‘qualified’, to work in it.

7.1.2 Nonetheless, HE has a growing role to play in the music industry’s future (and vice versa) as it grapples with the challenges of innovation and a changing economy. UK Music has a dual commitment to the flourishing of music: to support growth in the music industry in all its diversity; and to develop education, training and skills that enable young people to flourish in that industry.

7.1.3 But the prospect of a more formalised relationship between the two sectors – particularly via the standalone music industry degree – is still relatively new and untested ground. It involves the negotiation of significant tensions and disagreements both between and inside the two sectors.

7.1.4 UK Music’s twin commitments should not undermine each other. The aim to improve access both to education and to industry must meet with the fact that there is no single ‘right way’ to reconcile competing stakeholder interests.

7.2 Mapping Music Education

7.2.1 The consumerist language of ‘availability’, ‘choice’ and ‘needs’ – such as that found in the Music Blueprint – is not good enough. It cannot do justice to the multi-faceted set of alignments between industry and education; it does not promote a future-oriented skills perspective. Developing the core knowledge, skills and understanding on which the music sector is built requires a far clearer conceptual framework than currently exists, and a coherent strategy to sit within it.

7.2.2 The framework must grasp the depth and the breadth of HE programmes currently offered. It should underpin the development of support and guidance much needed by the two sectors. It should not presume that HE has an even distribution of resources to provide that support, or that the skills-needs of today’s industry will be those of tomorrow.
7.2.3 In the case of “music industry studies” – a ‘broad church’ term that does not refer to a settled field – mapping will make hidden complexity more visible. It should not just be descriptive (“this is what’s out there”) or prescriptive (“you must do this”). Its terms should be flexible enough to grow with time, rather than tying that terrain down to one particular moment in history.

7.2.4 The following makes some steps towards constructing the kind of framework that might best support this mapping. Two key sources are drawn on:

- **The Music Education Directory (MED)**, an annually-updated database of music programmes in HE. Possibly the most complete catalogue of courses available, the MED offers a vital resource to help orient students interested in pursuing music.  

- **Taking Notes: Mapping and Teaching Popular Music in Higher Education**, a 2012 study by academics Martin Cloonan and Lauren Hulstedt for the Higher Education Academy (HEA).  

7.3 Growth of the Music Industry Degree

7.3.1 The expansion of HE has witnessed a multiplication of music degree subjects, in both name and number. The MED’s database of bachelors- and masters-level courses offers some longitudinal perspectives on the growth in music courses. In particular, the MED data from the last fifteen years demonstrates at a glance the explosion of ‘business and cultural theory’ courses. It difficult to isolate business-specific courses for classificatory reasons discussed below. However, programme titles containing ‘management’, ‘business’, ‘industry’, or ‘promotion’ currently account for roughly half of this category.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic year</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research undertaken</td>
<td>2001/02</td>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>2012/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total qualifications</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1343</td>
<td>1177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Cultural Theory</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Music Education Directory/Allan Dumbreck (2015)

43 Developed by Allan Dumbreck in 1996 in collaboration with the BPI. Currently hosted by UK Music, at: [http://www.ukmusic.org/skills-academy/music-education-directory/](http://www.ukmusic.org/skills-academy/music-education-directory/)

44 The full report is available at Cloonan and Hulstedt (2012). This report draws primarily from Cloonan and Hulstedt (2013), which is a more descriptive and reflective article presenting data gathered from the HEA research. Cloonan (2005) offers a more discursive, though less methodologically rigorous, prior attempt to map PMS. Cloonan and Hulstedt draw on and revise the latter’s three categories of ‘musical’, ‘vocational’ and ‘theoretical’ courses.

45 I am grateful to Allan Dumbreck at UWS for providing these figures and for his guiding comments regarding the MED more generally.
N.B.: Between 09/10 and 13/14 the sector saw a slight contraction in the total number of courses overall (down 12 percent) and of business-specific (down 25 percent). This could be a ‘natural correction’ in the market. It is also likely that structural changes identified in the previous section will have had an impact on decisions to close courses, though any correlation would have to be shown. The expansion is still significant and rapid – though possibly beginning to decelerate.

7.3.2 Opportunities to study music industry became widespread in under ten years. The subject is ‘doubly new’: as little as twenty years’ ago the music business degree, as a standalone subject, did not exist at all – and neither did many of the institutions in which they are predominantly taught.

7.4 Popular Music Studies

7.4.1 PMS is not the same as a Music degree – though there are overlaps. Nor is it a Music Industry degree – though these form an increasingly substantial corner of the field. Whether or not PMS can be thought of as a coherent discipline at all is debatable.

7.4.2 Nonetheless, ‘Taking Notes’ addresses issues faced by educators delivering on a wide range of courses aiming to equip students for a career in the industry. It is instructive for the purposes of this report.

7.4.3 Cloonan and Hulstedt’s mapping exercise focuses on ‘entire [undergraduate] degree programmes orientated towards popular music’. Surveying 73 degree programmes, they aim for breadth by including titles like ‘Popular Music, Popular Music Performance, Commercial Music, Music Business, Music (Industry) Management [and] Music Journalism and Broadcasting’. Notably, they exclude Jazz and Music Technology, which were considered to ‘distort an emphasis on popular music’.

7.4.4 The authors acknowledge that their survey design and engagement presents difficulties for detailed analysis. Broadly however, they conclude:

- PMS is taught in 73 degree programmes across 47 HEIs.
- The field has a strong practice base (over 40%) – with clear resource and staffing implications. However, the majority of courses were described as ‘less than 33%’ vocational.

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46 This is the conclusion of Allan Dumbreck who compiles the MED.
47 As Cloonan and Hulstedt (2013) note with regard to PMS.
48 See appendix 2.
49 Cloonan and Hulstedt (2013), p.64.
- All programmes ‘face common problems of resources, curriculum and vocationalism’ – but these are disproportionately distributed between ‘old’ and ‘new’ universities.\textsuperscript{50}
  - ‘Teaching loads remain higher in the new universities and often restrict the time for research’.
  - ‘Traditional’ theoretical and analytical approaches to PMS are the domain of relatively few courses, primarily those located in the ‘old’ universities.
  - New universities attract ‘non-traditional’ students who often require more institutional support.
- The field is characterised by its variety and there is no clear ‘core’. Expectations over what should be taught, how, and with what aims in mind can be vague.
- The idea that universities exploit young people’s love of music and career aspirations, despite a perceived lack of available jobs, should be roundly rejected. Educators’ ‘commitment to their students and their area of study’ shows investment in PMS at HE level ‘cannot simply be reduced to a market relationship’.
- There is robust demand to strengthen the discipline via greater levels of collaboration – both internally as well as with industry.

\textbf{7.4.5} On this last element, Cloonan and Hulstedt asked PMS programme leaders in what ways an HEA-supported PMS network might improve their practice and pedagogy.\textsuperscript{51} They identified six practical suggestions to improve the discipline as a whole. These relate to the general study of popular music but the resonances for industry-specific education are clear.

1) \textbf{Sharing of best practices and resources}, including online or magazine presence
2) \textbf{An annual conference} to disseminate best practices, continue debate and network
3) \textbf{Non-standard pedagogic practice and assessment} techniques to be explored more closely by the HEA
4) \textbf{The pursuit of benchmarks and kitemarking}: ‘what [can] PMS graduates be expected to know and do?’\textsuperscript{52}
5) \textbf{Developing ties with the music industries} (potentially via UK Music): including forging ‘a set of shared (broadly liberal) values across both HE and the music industries’\textsuperscript{53}
6) \textbf{Developing opportunities for research}; connecting practitioners to researcher.

\textsuperscript{50} See Appendix 1 for clarification on this distinction.
\textsuperscript{51} Cloonan and Hulstedt (2013), pp.72-73.
\textsuperscript{52} This is ‘obviously problematic for an area as diverse (and hard to define) as PMS’, while ‘the guarding of institutional autonomy may limit how far these can be achieved’. Cloonan and Hulstedt (2013), p.73.
\textsuperscript{53} Cloonan and Hulstedt (2013), p.73.
These propositions from the HE sector map very closely onto (UK Music’s) MAP initiative – particularly 4, 5 & 6 – and should be pursued creatively and collaboratively.

7.5 Problems of classification

7.5.1 Classification of courses – what to include/exclude and how to go about it – is the most troublesome methodological aspect. There is huge variation within music. It is important whether the focus is on: classical, popular or jazz forms; academic, artistic or vocational learning; musicology, cultural theory, or business studies methods; whether musicianship, formal qualifications, or entrepreneurial experience are a condition of entry – and so on.

7.5.2 The problem of classification also points to real tensions and confusions within the field. There is a historical aspect here. In UK universities, music is historically embedded in the Western classical tradition of instrumental performance. Institutions and infrastructures have developed in its image. Yet classical music is not now what comes to mind in talk of music industry – which is more closely wedded to commercial popular music. This offers at least a partial explanation for some of the challenges of attempting to teach industry matters in a university context.

7.5.3 Whether music is approached as creative expression, cultural formation, media object, or commercial practice demands a different set of intellectual and practical tools. These tools will often generate different emphases depending on disciplinary orthodoxy.

7.5.4 In terms of creative production, for instance, the role of individual artists, of teams of workers, and of the conditions in which they find themselves, may be more or less visible. Questions of moral duty, freedom of expression, authenticity, or market viability are given more or less attention. Aspects such as these are treated as central, irrelevant, or taken for granted. All of which reproduces deep and longstanding real-world disputes over practices and skills. It also makes differing demands on institutional finances and resources.

7.5.5 Music Education Directory

The MED is split into three categories:
- Performance and Songwriting;
- Production and Technology;
- Business and Cultural Theory.

Broad-brush categories – roughly: ‘creativity’, ‘technology, and ‘everything else’ – are useful as a database. They are profession-oriented and designed to appeal to

54 As is the Music Publishing commercial subsector, of course.
students’ interest and aspirations. Analytically, however, they are a blunt instrument. The distinctions between categories are unclear and they cannot account for business elements within other courses.

Decisions to measure business in the same stroke as cultural theory, or to separate those that teach composition from those with a production emphasis, now appear outdated. Industry modules within performance degrees are obscured. It is also unclear where one would look to pursue music therapy – or, if the subject is excluded, then why. Finer-grained analysis – which might account for variations within categories, overlaps, or developing fields – is difficult.

7.5.6 Taking Notes

Cloonan and Hulstedt are sensitive to terminology. They note that terms like ‘popular music’, ‘Higher Education Institution’, and ‘degree’ – to which could be added ‘work’, ‘skills’ and ‘employability’ – are prone to shifting meanings.

Collating the courses together, they choose not to divide between different course-types. Instead, they produce an analytic distinction based on elements of taught curriculum. These are:

- ‘Practical’ (grounded in performance, composition, musicianship and production);
- ‘Critical’ (grounded in social sciences, humanities and cultural studies);
- ‘Vocational’ (grounded in business and non-performance employment).

This process is inclusive of institutional variety but is more attentive to the different disciplines that PMS draws on than the MED. The report draws attention to divisions within the field and articulates their effects. Consequently they can foreground differences in terms of teaching approach, institutional resources required, and expected outcomes.

7.5.7 Conceptual Binaries: theory/practice and art/commerce

Cloonan and Hulstedt’s definitions are based on unhelpful binaries, however, between theory/practice (or thinking and doing) on the one hand, and art/commerce on the other. This abstracted model reproduces an outdated set of norms and values. It does not help to reflect contemporary everyday reality – especially not in the creative economy – and should be refined.

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55 Although he acknowledges such categories will necessarily be ‘somewhat blurry’ in practice. Cloonan (2005), p.83.
The practical-musical and critical-theoretical strands are presented as internal branches in an evolving academic conversation. So, they are ‘legitimate’ within a university context. The ‘vocational’ strand is, however, seen almost exclusively as a response to external pressures – government policy, employability agendas, student demand. It implies an ‘illegitimate’ influence.\(^{56}\) It is not clear how these strands can be reconciled, if at all.

At the same time, one response to their survey – ‘we do not teach popular music “studies”, we teach popular music’ – indicates that stark theory/practice tensions exist within the field.\(^{57}\) It has been suggested that IASPM ‘could do more to engage with those already teaching popular music practice’, meaning non-traditional academics who ‘may not have substantial research experience, drawing instead on a background in professional music practice’.\(^{58}\)

So, the terminology may reflect the traditions and approaches of particular disciplines (the binaries are also present in the MED). From a certain ‘academic’ stance, the ‘vocational’ strand looks suspiciously over-reductive; from a practitioner stance, the ‘critical’ stance seems suspiciously over-theoretical. It seems that _artistic creation_ is the only element everyone is happy with!

In reality, people do not always behave according to abstract binaries. The authors acknowledge that the model does not capture nuance well and presents severe restrictions to mapping. It does give insight into tensions and confusions within the field. But it obstructs understanding of how these might be overcome and how new best practices might be developed and shared.

This is particularly clear in the context of work and professional skills.

### 7.6 Vocationalism: theory, practice, work

#### 7.6.1 Cloonan and Hulstedt’s research suggests there is confusion over what counts as ‘work’ in a diverse sector – where _ad hoc_ employment and portfolio careers prevail – and therefore confusion over what counts as ‘vocational’ within PMS. Vocational pressures are real although the vast majority of the PMS programme

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\(^{56}\) See Cloonan (2005) for deeper discussion along these lines – though it should be noted that this article is now ten years old and the landscape has since changed. In 2013, Cloonan and Hulstedt are more charitable – but they do not update the terminology. A somewhat less sympathetic opinion of vocationalism in relation to media industry studies more widely is found in Hesmondhalgh (2014) and Ramsey and White (2015).

\(^{57}\) Cloonan and Hulstedt (2013), p.72.

\(^{58}\) Till (2013), p.10.
leaders considered less than 1/3 of their course to be directly vocational. Nevertheless, they stressed that their programmes were indeed ‘preparing students for work in the music industries’. 59

7.6.2 This apparent contradiction is the result of vagueness over the conceptual framework being used. A respondent to their survey highlights the ‘blurry’ categories:

the playing of an instrument can be seen as putting theory to practice, while the refinement of musical skills can also be seen as being vocational in that it may aid employment prospects.

There is no consensus over how PMS practitioners can prepare students for work – because different forms of work are not easily distinguished. Developing commercial acumen, creative practice and critical agility involve differing sets of skills. But none are necessarily more ‘vocational’ than any other. They all involve a reflexive process of translating theory into practice and vice versa. And they are all in constant evolution.

7.6.3 In contrast to music, some creative subjects – like media/journalism and design – have been characterised from the outset by the negotiation of theory and commercial practice. 60 This does not necessarily translate into greater employability. But it may reflect a longer tradition of practice-base and apprenticeships; and/or a lesser concern with preserving ‘authenticity’. In this context, vocationalism and interaction with industry is less about resisting the ‘distortions’ that commerce inflicts on art than of maintaining appropriate ‘standards and value’ alongside nurturing space for criticism and reflection. 61

7.7 Lessons Learned: From PMS to Music Industry Studies

7.7.1 Any mapping exercise should avoid two fundamental misunderstandings where possible.

1) **Concentrating exclusively on one set of disciplinary practices over another:**

Writers, performers, producers, recording artists and the music they create are the lifeblood of the ecosystem. Without them, there would be no music industry. But the craft of music-making is one component in an interdependent network of individuals, practices and institutions. Likewise, this network would be wholly unsupportable without the finely-honed business expertise of executives, managers and accountants. But the value of music extends well beyond commercial imperatives.

Learning about the music industry, in a vocational context or an academic one, is inherently interdisciplinary: it draws equally from the study of music, social

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62 Hesmondhalgh (2014)
science, media and communication, and business practice; it increasingly brushes up against other disciplines, from languages to the hard sciences.

**Mapping should attempt to take account of learning diversity.**

2) *Conflating all music industry study with ‘vocationalism’*: As an interdisciplinary venture, music industry studies form a coherent field in their own right – not a simple vocational ‘bolt-on’ to existing fields of study. Of course, the *vocational thrust* of recent years is a key driver of academic change. Though related, this should be kept conceptually distinct from a *thematic thrust* to expand the scope of understanding and practice of music into an economic sphere.

Studying the music industry has always been an attractive prospect. But learning about how the music industry works is not the same as training individuals to work in music. These two aspects inevitably complement each other. Making practice speak to theory, and vice versa, is rarely as simple a matter as it outwardly seems.

**Mapping should take account of different attempts to cross the theory-practice divide.**

7.7.2 Repeating these misunderstandings risks reproducing disciplinary ‘ghettos’. Categories along art/commerce and theory/practice lines make the conservatoire and the business school talk at crossed purposes, while thinking and doing are seemingly incompatible activities.

7.7.3 But no form of music education, however creative or theoretical, aims to produce unemployable graduates. Cross-pollination should be explored and supported precisely because it *already happens in practice*.

7.7.4 The value (whether intellectual, cultural, professional or economic) of either new or existing courses should not be judged according to totally different and conflicting quality standards that reproduce naive and outdated barriers. Value should be created by forging new ground and introducing opportunities for dialogue across the entirety of what I will call the ‘skills ecosystem’.

**7.8 Skills and Education: From Pipeline to Ecosystem**

7.8.1 Surveys of degrees offer some insight into the complexity of interfaces between education and industry. In some courses, commercial concerns remain an aspect of professional development that is secondary to core curriculum (e.g. instrumental tuition). Where they are addressed more directly and extensively, some

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63 On the dangers of reproducing the outdated notions of music-as-art, wherein its expressive authenticity is distorted through transformation into music-as-commodity – see Frith (2000). On the dangers of conflating the economic activities of the music industry (as both professional practice and object of study) with the very real pressures of vocationalism (from policy, industry and students themselves) – see Hesmondhalgh (2014).
courses will do so within a primarily critical-reflective framework; others conceive of themselves as primarily career- and skills-focused; still others seek to combine all of these dimensions.

7.8.2 This is not to forget the wider context of applied interdisciplinary degrees (e.g. arts/media management and creative industries), as well as other relevant disciplines in fine arts, liberal arts, business, economics, geography, and so on. These all make significant contributions to developing understanding of the music business in ways that a core music degree may find difficult.

7.8.2 Providing musicians with a better understanding of the commercial environment they are likely to find themselves in is one thing; equipping students with the knowledge and skills to perform complex and specialised administrative or managerial tasks is quite another. Developing the kind of self-knowledge and multi-skilled entrepreneurialism that is increasingly necessary for all young people starting out in this industry, is yet another.

7.8.3 It is common to talk of a ‘skills pipeline’ but this metaphor is misleading. It implies a linear movement from A to B, with a sharp break between education and employment, endlessly delivering human capital into the workplace. Where music is concerned, the relationship between HE and industry is not simply a case of funnelling students into the right jobs.

7.8.4 Students of the music industry require a diverse palette of skills. The most important skill they can develop is the ability to self-monitor and continue developing. This is especially true in a digital context, where the need for hard technology skills, dependent on particular technologies, can fade quickly. Developing a digital-specific but technology-independent skill-set alongside these hard skills can be more enabling.

7.8.5 Instead of a pipeline, we should think of a skills ecosystem. An ecosystem brings together the material and social worlds (of people, places and physical resources; expertise, networks and reputations) in a particular interlocking arrangement. The ecosystem contains multiple parties in reflexive relationships. It flourishes, not when it is sealed off from the rest of the world, but precisely when it

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64 The ‘ecosystem’ metaphor brings with it a rich literature. I want to make particular reference to recent recommendations from Pratt (2014), who conceives of knowledge exchange clusters as a ‘learning ecosystem’, and the Warwick Commission (2015), who recommend conceptualising the cultural and creative industries as a whole as an interdependent ecosystem. I would argue for a strong distance between the term as it is used here and the ‘digital ecosystems’ of Google, Apple or Amazon. These latter knit together hardware and software environments, encourage internal fluidity, and retain a strong sense of overarching identity. But as consumer-focused ecosystems, they downplay the specificity of people and place and obscure behind-the-scenes activities of production or manufacturing and so represent only a partial view, which would be unhelpful in a skills context. As ‘walled gardens’, they are also famously closed systems that withdraw from communicating with one another.
retains a coherent form while being open and accessible to the broader context it is situated in.\textsuperscript{65}

\section*{7.9 A New Conceptual Framework}

\subsection*{7.9.1 Once again, the purpose of developing a conceptual framework is to aid understanding through mapping and spot practical opportunities for improvement. It is not to dictate curriculum content or rank courses. Educators themselves are the best people to understand how to educate – not already-overburdened industry practitioners.}

\subsection*{7.9.2 But, whether we talk about classical in the conservatoire or pop in the polytechnic, little work has been done to map the skills ecosystem, and the variations this brings about in HE curriculum content, in depth.}

\subsection*{7.9.3 Mapping should:}
- Account for existing practices but not be bound to them
- Explore what skills and resources are needed by whom and in what contexts
- Be applicable to a range of genres (jazz, electronica, folk, opera...), accounting for their attendant infrastructures (studios, venues, labels, funders...)
- Be relevant at different scales of employment (freelance management, start-up, collective, global enterprise)
- Not presume divisions between theory and practice

\subsection*{7.9.4 With this in mind, I advocate a conceptual framework that is not bound to a particular subject or job function. It should map music education according to the different and distinct knowledge-practices and skills domains that they produce.}

The important question is: \textit{what do we do when we do music?}

I believe there are four main answers to this question (in no order):

- Craft and Creativity: We create and appreciate music as a craft
- Culture and Identity: We socialise and develop identities through music
- Work, Industry and Economy: We support music by building an infrastructure
- Properties and Principles of Sound: We investigate the physical capacities and effects of sound and music

In shorthand, I refer to music's: Craft; Culture; Commerce; and Mechanics.

Together these comprise the main domains of knowledge, understanding and skills in the ecosystem that exists between academia and industry.

\textsuperscript{65} The broader context is outlined in the previous section of this report.

\textsuperscript{66} Or indeed the many, many examples of courses that do not adhere to such stereotypes!
7.9.5 The distinctions are deliberately thematic, in order to explore connections between education and professional practice rather than treat each sector in isolation. They indicate the kinds of specific hard skills that are commonly required and all four categories have vocational outcomes. Each could be approached from a perspective that is a mix of directed/experimental or applied/reflective. Links between categories should be explored – which is, of course, what happens every day within the industry’s ecosystem – because this is where skills needs become murky.

7.9.6 Many of the programmes surveyed in the MED and IASPM reports that purport to prepare students for industry careers are primarily based in developing skills for music as craft and culture. Those with a more explicit ‘commerce’ focus may be isolated from the other skills domains. Arguably, courses which develop a scientific understanding of music’s mechanics are increasingly vital – but remain specialist vocations. It is the connections between fields which are the important bits.

7.9.7 This model could more clearly show the distribution of interactions between industry and academia. This involves HE programmes, courses and modules; people flows (students’ entry into work; practitioners’ movements into academia); resource needs; work placement opportunities. It could identify areas of saturation and those with room for improvement. It could support sharing of best practices.

7.9.8 This framework is tentative. It is for others to take forward, test out, improve, replace elements – or discard entirely! As a starting point, however, it suggests there is potential for a mapping exercise which is both more comprehensive and more precise than previous attempts.
PART II. EMPIRICAL STUDY
8. methodology

8.0 Part II of this report presents primary findings from qualitative research carried out between August and November 2014. This section outlines the method, sampling rationale, and some initial comments based on these.

8.1 Definitions: ‘industry’ and ‘skills’

8.1.1 This report focuses on the working activities – and hence skills – involved in the exploitation of Commercial Assets 1 (the work), 2 (the recording) & 4 (the artist-brand), which remain relatively poorly understood at policy level. Particular attention is given to the relatively recent emergence/expansion of such domains as synchronisation, digital marketing, and brand management. These occur at the intersection of publishing, recording and artist representation.

8.1.2 The live music sector (that is, activities relating to Commercial Asset 3 in UK Music’s definition) is excluded from the empirical study. There are two reasons for doing so:

1) **Existing attention.** Live music has received more policy attention. Many of the Music Blueprint’s ‘next steps’ – particularly the National Skills Academy – relate specifically to the commercial live music sector.

2) **Methodological practicality.** Hard skills involved in the artistic craft of performance and the technical craft of live music production produce very specific needs, which go beyond the means of this report.

8.1.3 The Music Blueprint’s focus on relatively ‘hard’ skills – those involved in musicians’ creative activity (e.g. instrumental or compositional expertise) or the technical crafts of record production and engineering – masks the distinct subtleties involved in educating and training individuals for other parts of the sector. By contrast, particular soft skills have been identified in research that accounts for the sector as a whole.

8.1.4 This report does not seek to codify the ‘right’ skills. It aims to orient future research towards support for skills in emerging areas, particularly those pertaining to the application of specific knowledge and understanding outside of the live sector.

8.2 Method: interviews and discourse analysis

8.2.1 Fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted. These took place with key individuals whose background and continued experience represent a range of roles in both the music industry and academic contexts. These interviews were initiated by

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67 This emerges from and is supplemented by background research taken from the project lead’s doctoral research, focusing on the ‘major’ UK record companies.

68 As evidenced in Cloonan and Hulstedt (2013) – see section 7.6.

a brief overview of the perceived problem (see section 3), before asking for reflections and some biographical history. They were otherwise conversational and free-flowing.

8.2.2 As far as possible, participants were encouraged to describe, explore and elaborate some of the assumptions lying behind this problem in their own words – rather than being led by the interviewer’s own assumptions. They were also invited to discuss their own education and professional life. At the analytic stage, the data (i.e. interview transcripts) were aggregated and common themes and contradictions identified.

8.2.3 Interviews and coding focused on perceptions of: reasoning for pursuing an industry degree; purpose of an industry degree; contemporary workplace skills (hard and soft); traits of professional success/failure. The aim is simply to reconstruct prevailing attitudes across the group and articulate the kinds of discourse circulating within the sector as a whole.

8.2.4 Where direct quotation is used, a decision was made not to associate individuals’ words with their name or biographic details. There are three reasons for doing so:

- to guarantee anonymity and allow respondents to speak freely;
- to avoid conflation of the views of individuals with those of the role, company or sector they happened to inhabit at the time;
- to enable a generalised focus on discourse over individual experience.

8.3 Why?

The value of this method is in the ability to mediate between anecdote and individual experience on the one hand, and broad statistical sweep or general principles on the other. This raises awareness of attitudes, perceptions and values, which can sensitise future research by identifying problem areas. For example: surveys are not always constructed or interpreted in a manner sympathetic to the values of those surveyed. Understanding of the problem in question may be skewed as a result.

8.4 Sample

8.4.1 Fourteen practitioners were interviewed, approached for their employment experience in the recording, publishing and artist management subsectors, at different levels of seniority.

8.4.2 Twelve interviewees had experience across a number of roles (including activities related to live and the wider sector, not cited above). Three had primary experience (i.e. full time employment) as educators on music industry courses; three had experience as students.
Practitioner Roles (Core Music Industry) [N=14]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A&amp;R</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist Management</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
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<td>Data Analysis</td>
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<td>Distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Insight</td>
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<td>Legal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Licensing</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing and promotion</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Press</td>
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<td>Songwriting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Synchronisation</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Talent Scout</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Experience**

- Student
- Educator
- Music Professional

**Industry Sector**

- Recording
- Publishing
- Management
- Other Non-Core

**Company Size**

- <10
- <50
- <100
- >100

**Gender**

- Male
- Female

**Age**

- <30
- >30

**NB:** No attempt has been made to ensure the sample is statistically representative of the sector as a whole. The intention is not to examine the full scale of the issues in play but to set out their underlying terms. The data presented here is done so in order to demonstrate the breadth of experience referred to in the following document, alongside its limitations, rather than as analytically significant in its own right.

8.5 Comments on the Research Sample

8.5.1 The below aspects are significant:

- The sample exemplifies the well-known fluidity between music practitioners’ multiple roles and identities. Most respondents from both sectors have worked in more than one area and, in many cases, perform two or more roles simultaneously (formally and informally).
- The sample also unintentionally provides evidence of increasing fluidity between sectors. All of those who have worked as educators have experience in a music profession. Several respondents who identified primarily as industry practitioners also had experience working with university courses – e.g. in an advisory capacity, or as a ‘guest lecturer’. Others spoke of wishing...
to do so in future. This aspect is interesting enough to merit further comment in Section 9 (Career Movement Between Sectors).

8.5.2 However, the following caveats should be borne in mind:

- The sample unintentionally reproduces certain demographic imbalances that have been identified in the music sector – of gender and ethnicity for example\(^{70}\) – which may be inadvertently representative statistically but also means that under-represented voices may, for the moment, remain hidden.
- The majority of respondents have, at some point, worked for a large company (>100 employees), which may not be representative of the typical career trajectory. It may further contribute to the perceived disproportionate influence of the ‘majors’ in a sector predominated by micro- small- and medium-sized businesses.\(^{71}\)
- Similarly, all respondents work in London, which is perceived to have disproportionate standing in the nation’s cultural and creative industries as a whole (with regard to policy focus, for example).\(^{72}\)
- Respondents predominantly represented the commercial popular music industry. It was not possible within the timeframe to find willing respondents representing classical, jazz, folk, or other more niche styles (though attempts were made).

8.6 Findings

8.6.1 The Music Blueprint recommends that practitioners get more involved in HE. This report suggests this is already happening and should be developed with care.

8.6.2 The fact that few businesses ‘put their recruitment issues down to a problem with appropriate qualifications’ is deemed to demonstrate employers’ resignation to this problem.\(^{73}\) On the contrary, irrespective of educational ‘quality’, there exists an influential strand of discourse in the industry where the value of qualifications is not recognised at all.

8.6.3 There exists a strong strand of individualism in the industry which may hold back the development of a learning culture. Practitioners may be resistant to sharing knowledge.

8.6.4 Individualism may exert a ‘common sense’ influence on recruitment and career development. This has knock-on consequences for equality and diversity.

8.6.5 There is nonetheless an appetite for working more closely with HE in order to gain beneficial short- mid- and long-term effects for industry.

\(^{70}\) Creative & Cultural Skills (2011), p.15
\(^{71}\) Williamson and Cloonan (2007)
\(^{72}\) The imbalance between London and the rest of the UK in the DCMS’ central and regional cultural policies, as well as its organisational structure, over the period 1997-2014 is documented throughout Hewison (2014).
\(^{73}\) Creative & Cultural Skills (2011), p.18
9. career movement between sectors

9.1 CC Skills recommend that practitioners ‘should be encouraged to get involved in the development and delivery of courses claiming to prepare someone for a career in the sector’. Practitioner involvement is vital. Former students interviewed for this report (now working as practitioners) recalled lecturers whose knowledge was embedded in experience and communicated through anecdote. They also remembered teachers who were inspirational or unorthodox in their delivery.

One I had was mental, I don’t know why they employed her but best lecturer I ever had. She’s the reason why I’m working here. She was so passionate about rights, contracts, etc. She’s the reason I’m so passionate about piracy, about musicians being paid.

9.2 But for a practitioner to move into an academic space can be viewed as regressive or unorthodox.

I always wondered: Who are the people employing the lecturers? What do they know about music?

[After returning to HE] I know a lot of my colleagues probably look down their nose and go ‘oh why did he do that’, you know, probably think it’s all pretentious.

I think that academia’s a couple of steps removed because they’re writing about an industry from a particular perspective... I think they can take a kind of broader view of things cos they’re not so kind of caught up in the thrust of it but also they don’t really have that smell of blood in their nostrils! But there’s a degree of ivory tower-ism to a certain extent with some academics.

9.3 However, the sample of interviewees here includes current industry practitioners who are or have been involved in Higher Education and current HE practitioners with backgrounds in the music industry. This was not intentional and suggests that intersectoral fluidity is already more widespread than commonly assumed. Certainly, the upsurge in HE music industry courses offers workers new opportunities to leverage the very specialist knowledge they have accumulated over their careers. From the HE side, there is the appetite to enable this.

9.4 In terms of motivation, several respondents spoke of their desire to ‘give something back’. Working to encourage the next generation of young music practitioners is generally seen as a fulfilling use of knowledge and experience in itself.

I’ve got some giving back to do. So I’ve always been keen to speak at conferences, to meet with students. Giving time to that is important to me.

Well, actually, the reason I came into academia, I should explain, was more because – I’ve often been described as a teacher anyway – I have this need to explain. I want my client to understand why things happen... So, you know, I have that need. And then, really, the advent of the internet and the impact that had on the industry, I wasn’t getting

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74 Creative & Cultural Skills (2011), p.34
the answers for questions I had from the industry. So I thought, ‘I’m going to go into academia’.

So, alongside altruism, there is also a sense of wanting to be involved in shaping the narrative of understanding. Educators should take care, however, when invoking industry models of ‘thought leadership’ and ‘knowledge influence’ in an HE setting.

9.5 Giving is not the only motivation, however. Music is an industry in which workers often have multiple career strands and a climate which is not known for being supportive to those who are older or who have family commitments. Respondents’ comments reflected this.  

9.6 In the context of a general scepticism towards HE courses (see section 10), this suggests an inclination to view HE rather more opportunistically: as a relatively frictionless addition to a portfolio of skills and income-streams; or perhaps as a chance to develop a longer-term ‘fallback’ option in a less demanding or antagonistic professional environment.

9.7 The assertion that industry practitioners ‘should be encouraged to get involved’ is vague. It may imply that exposing students to those with industry knowledge and experience is enough to inspire and to educate appropriately. This downplays the specific and wide-ranging expertise that HE professionals develop, through pedagogy (e.g. teaching student cohorts of diverse backgrounds, aspirations and abilities), course design, assessment, research supervision, administration, and so on.

9.8 Industry practitioners certainly add value to HE music industry courses by bringing the concrete benefits of their experience. This does not mean they are inherently adept at transitioning into teaching. At the very least, these new educators require help training and integrating into the existing educational framework. This also goes for aspirations to improve that framework. Taken together, the two halves of this report suggest further that there may be clashes of values and assumptions to negotiate. An underlying framework to ensure quality of teaching delivery could therefore be very important.

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75 See Section 11.3.
76 Ashton (2013).
10. typology of attitudes

10.1 This section presents an overview of attitudes and perceptions, codified into 4 categories. These character positions each represent the aggregated characteristics of a range of perspectives on music industry education in Higher Education.

10.2 They do not reflect the stance of any one particular individual. Interviewees rarely rehearsed a consistent viewpoint: most expressed different opinions at different points in the conversation and in relation to different aspects under discussion; some individuals had first-hand experience of courses, while others only indirectly. Nor do they refer to any particular existing degree course. They have not been weighted.

10.3 The four positions move from broadly antagonistic to broadly supportive of university-level study of the music industry. Respectively, they consider it to be:

1) An unnecessary distraction: HE can only ever eat into valuable time and energy that could be spent gaining experience in the real world;
2) Unworkable in practice: it’s a nice idea but ultimately the two sectors are incompatible and get in each other’s’ way;
3) A useful supplement: a formal education will provide a useful foundation – but is no substitute – for the practical experience of work;
4) Necessary progress: university education represents a positive step towards professionalisation, offering a holistic approach which could produce real benefits for the industry as a whole.

What this implies

10.4 These broad attitudinal typologies are useful for understanding the terrain of discourse as a whole. They indicate the range of attitudes – but identifying which, if any, is more prevalent than any other, has not been attempted.

10.5 Instead, they paint a starker picture. Nowhere is a full and unreserved endorsement of the concept of a music industry degree to be found. From practitioners both with and without a university education, to recipients of music industry degrees and educators themselves – no-one felt confident in the university track alone as a primary route into working in music.

10.6 This may be related to a view wherein a university, dedicated to the furthering of human understanding, in which knowledge is considered a good in itself, is essentially disconnected from commercial practice (see sections 11.4.3 and 12.1).

10.7 There is, however, a clear sense that a collaborative educational environment could be a valuable pursuit in the long term, bringing benefits to individuals, companies and the wider industry. This and more specific issues are addressed in the remainder of the report.
1. Unnecessary distraction
There’s no need for a music industry degree at all (or any kind of degree in fact)...

The music industry is too complex and the only way to learn it is to be in it; a degree is a distraction from real work.

We’re dealing with art! You can’t teach this, you’ve either got a feel for it or you haven’t; any attempt at formalisation is doomed to failure and discourages creative potential. Theories and concepts over-complicate what should be inbuilt and innate; they may even undermine individuals’ self-confidence.

Degrees mislead people about how the industry works. They produce graduates with a formulaic understanding, who overvalue the information they have learned and undervalue their innate talents.

2. Unworkable in practice
A music industry degree is a nice idea but in practice it could never work...

Education as a whole is a good thing and certain individuals in the music business do lack key skills.

However, their respective timescales and end-points (i.e. long-term study leading to assessment versus exploiting opportunities to gain employment) are incompatible; any attempt to formally combine the two will always see one side suffer.

Their values are also different. Higher education excels in structured, standardised and systematic learning; the best music industry operators are individuals: a particular type of person whom you cannot manufacture.

BROADLY ANTAGONISTIC
3. A useful supplement

Specific skills and general knowledge are great but experience and personality will always trump qualifications.

A university can broaden the mind, create a space to experiment and give access to resources; it is up to the individual to make their own opportunities.

Higher education can only offer a simulation of reality – it can only ever be a supplement to practical experience.

Very few young adults are ready for the workplace. The ‘journey’ is important: character formation and a rounded education are important to succeeding in the profession.

HE institutions offer opportunities for networking and gaining experience, while learning important technical skills, knowledge and joined-up understanding – a combination that is difficult to achieve while exclusively working.

The music industry would benefit from cultivating a ‘culture of learning’ and a developmental attitude towards its staff.

BROADLY SUPPORTIVE

4. Necessary progress

A music industry degree could potentially be a valuable professional qualification and fast-track a career...
11. core assumptions

11.0 Different individuals, working in different contexts at different times, will articulate different assumptions about what exactly constitutes the industry. All respondents considered the music industry to be complex and changing. But many also emphasised certain underlying constants, specific to their business. These assumptions have an effect on the attributes and skills that are valued, and which they consider necessary to work well in the industry. These discursive aspects are worth articulating in advance.

    We don’t make Kinder Buenos, we make stuff that people talk about.

    This is not an architect’s practice or an engineering firm. This is a human business. It’s a specialist industry, it’s a creative industry, it’s a complex industry.

    We are a company that’s about culture, about contemporary culture, about creating culture.

11.1 ‘Nobody knows’: the structure of the industry

11.1.1 The dominant conception of how the industry works is that it is organised around two value-generating poles: the creator-content and the audience-consumer. The transactional relationship between these two poles is understood to be inherent to music. It is not artificial – but it is negotiable. The expertise of the music professional lies in their ability to support and grow this relationship to the benefit of all parties. Various technologies may make their job easier (or harder) but these are in no way essential to it.

    The industry has changed immeasurably [but] it’s still entirely dominated by selling. Publishing may be slightly different but recorded music is still about taking the content, the music that we have, and in one way or the other, trying to create demand, and then exploiting that demand: to create compelling products that consumers are prepared to pay money for, whether it’s via subscription, or via tethered download, or via a boxset – I don’t think I’m fussy.

11.1.2 Since neither creativity nor music tastes are rational or predictable (what is sometimes called the ‘nobody knows’ principle), we do not know in advance what will turn out to be significant, popular, innovative, and so on. Workers must therefore be wholly adaptable and reactive to external needs.

11.1.3 Demographic data analytics tools can be useful in researching and targeting the right channels to reach the appropriate market. They can, however, create a

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77 NB: I highlight again here that ‘industry’ singular is used, with an understanding that it comprises multiple subsectors and functions; the live sector is excluded from the definition of ‘the industry’ as used in this report.

78 In economic terms, the former of these two poles translates into the four core commercial assets identified by UK Music (2013b). The value of the latter may be understood in terms of a marketing demographic to be courted, or as a ‘true fan’ to be cultivated (Kelly, 2008; Lovell, 2013).

79 Caves (2000).
false sense of certainty. Passion, strength of belief, and the ability to speculate and
to convince are deemed more significant attributes.

If someone says, ‘I will be sensible with the opportunity that is presented to me based on
the available data’, at that broad level, absolutely use data. [...] The risk is, it goes too far,
and it becomes a disqualification criteria rather than an enhancer and an enabler. In a
world where I can’t find the right words to tell you how I feel about the band I manage,
who I’m expert in, there is a right place for, ‘I can’t even tell you why, boss, but it’s gonna
be amazing’.

11.1.4 There is no template to this process. Workers must combine their intuitive
knowledge as a consumer with their own brand of creative ingenuity.

It’s all about initiative and it’s about doing things differently and thinking differently. That’s
why companies like this thrive.

11.1.5 But respondents also tended to downplay their own important role in the
process. They must be innovative and ‘unfussy’ in ‘maximising opportunities’ – but
their input must never overshadow that of creators or consumers.

There’s all this stuff going on and people have different opinions, people in boardrooms
and brainstorm, and meetings about meetings... Really, the leadership, the rudder, the
agenda is being set by a great new song. And it’s just about the way that you can
maximise the possibility of that song. The rest of it's academia really.

11.1.6 The consequences of this conception of the industry’s operations include the
following.

- Many of the routine administrative elements of the business are sometimes
portrayed as constraints, rather than in terms of their potential enabling
capacities.
- The sector’s ‘entrepreneurial business spirit’ is laudable but it also means
practitioners ‘may not be fully equipped to plan or govern strategically’.80
- Finally, while there is a principled sense of modesty to their position, it also
plays into the personality-driven individualisation of work in the music industry
which can act as a barrier to the growth of a developmental culture.

11.2 The ideal worker

11.2.1 While creativity may be irrational, interviewees tended to envisage career
planning as a rational decision-making process. Many responses suggest that
individuals should be pre-formed as industry-ready, and that they have a full
understanding of the consequences of their choices.

It’s kind of about how you use what you’re given. And some people will go into those
courses and that will be a basis for a million other things that lead them to having a very
successful career and other people it will be a complete waste of time.

[If] they hire somebody from our programme, it’s gonna be an informed person who’s ready to go but I think that person also needs to have that aggressiveness and self-belief in order to succeed in the music business. And I try to encourage that in people but not everybody has that, I’m sorry to say.

### 11.2.2 The emphasis is frequently on individuals’ use of reason and forethought to make the most appropriate choice, alongside the strength of character required to carry it through. This displaces the accountability for success away from the learning institution or wider context and onto the individual student-worker. This attitude can actively inhibit individuals from creating or seeking professional development opportunities.

It’s so much about the individual, this industry. [...] You can have three people who’ve learned exactly the same thing, it doesn’t make any difference.

I think you’ve touched on it when you said, ‘do you see [Continuing Professional Development] as a formal responsibility [for companies]’. There is something about the individual mindset and the thirst... the thirst for learning. You know, are you a thirsty learner just by default?

There are a lot of people at entry level – who sometimes are actually interns – who are put in a position where they’ve got to make very big decisions, and are responsible for delivering them an enormous amount, without proper support.

Everything I’ve learned is off my own back. I didn’t have me [to offer support].

### 11.2.3 However, ex-students’ experiences of their learning motives were less premeditated and far more exploratory in tone.

But my expectations were of a glamorous industry. I realised this wasn’t wholly the case and that rights were the most interesting area to me. That’s what oriented me to find my path. You’re 18-20, you study an area, then you focus.

I remember there was one particular lecture focusing on music and film – and I thought it was just amazing and I just thought that’s what I wanna do. Just because I thought... I never really thought about that being a job. [But] in a way, it’s what I do now.

### 11.2.4 Similarly, the majority of experienced practitioners were ambivalent about their own incentives and expertise upon entry into the industry, often speaking of having ‘fallen into’ their particular industry niche.

A job came up and I thought ‘OK, that could be really interesting’. Didn’t understand the music industry at all. I knew nothing of PRS or MCPS, couldn’t tell you the distinction between the two, even at the time of the interview.

Eventually I got bored of doing my degree and I thought, ‘well, what else can I do with my life?’ And I realised that I was already kind of doing something, just not getting paid for it. So I pursued a career in music. Didn’t really know what in music I wanted to do...

When I started, I didn’t have a clue but I started at the same time as my boss, who was also new, and he was like, ‘well I don’t really know anything anyway, we’re both learning together’.
Overall, the notion that actually I had a set of skills that enabled me to do the work? No.

11.2.5 Ideas of natural aptitude, determination and shrewdness are routinely valorised – but often in terms of an unteachable capacity to succeed. In this dominant discourse of individual talent, there is a risk of conceiving of education simply as a resource: one instrument amongst many which the informed and ambitious student-customers can choose as part of a focused and targeted approach to ensuring career success. But this conception may not reflect the experience of many – and perhaps the majority.

11.2.6 The industry places great value on individuals and is highly ‘personality-led’. Understandings of the industry and the ideal worker are frequently shaped by individual experience. Respondents displayed a tendency to draw on a personal biography in justifying their opinions: their overall attitude towards HE was generally consistent with whether or not they had attended a university; the will to support junior members was often shaped by the support they had received. There is a will to ‘remake’ the industry in their own image: to reproduce the conditions that happened to be favourable to them.

11.2.7 But this is problematic:

- These conditions are not evenly distributed – not all opportunities are equal.
- Conditions change over time – what may have been the case ten years ago may not be the case today.
- Just as success is individualised, there is a tendency for ‘failure’ to be perceived in individual terms on the same grounds.

Individualisation constitutes a considerable barrier to instituting widespread cultural change.

11.3 Consequences for Equality and Diversity

11.3.1 Individualisation impacts on how the industry is reproduced. For instance, it informs the hiring process at CV and interview stage.

So yeah, we are talking about a certain person here. [...] What do you look for in an individual? If you’re in music, what's gonna sell? If you’re in the music business, who’s gonna work? It's all the same thing. You can tell, looking at a two-page CV... You can tell whether that individual is… cut from the right stone. It's about cultural capital, in the end of the day. A turn of phrase, a reference to an experience, the way something looks … It might sound woolly but it feels like a very, very acute sense of what and who is going to work in a particular environment.

This expressive account of the hiring process comes from a senior executive with twenty years’ experience working across the sector. It articulates an understanding of ‘what works and what doesn’t’ that is difficult to put into words – based on a sensitivity and intuition that has been finely honed through sustained immersion in
the music industry world. It is, by any standard, an indispensable skill for building a workforce that is dynamic and engaged.

11.3.2 But there is a danger here. Creative workers are often understood to be judged on meritocratic and egalitarian grounds.\(^81\) Talent is supposedly independent of gender, ethnicity, or any other demographic grouping. But this rhetoric, alongside the informality of many creative workplaces, can obscure the ways in which inequalities are reproduced – by, for example, ignoring ways in which perceptions of ‘talent’ are socially formed; or forgetting ‘hidden’ pressures that can affect certain groups more than others.

11.3.3 It can be difficult for those with families and young children to balance their needs with the social aspects of working life and the precarious nature of work causes further worry. This is evidently correlated with age and gender. Certain offhand remarks – all from respondents for whom retirement is still some way in the distance – give a flavour of the anxieties produced by a precarious and competitive environment.

- I hope the younger guys don’t see us, who’ve been there a long time, as, you know, ‘when are they gonna shuffle off…?’

- My long term future? I don’t know. I think if definitely if I, if I was out tomorrow, whether I left tomorrow or... I wouldn’t be coming back into the business.

- Well I hope they’re transferable [skills] to an extent because when I get sacked from this job [laughing] I’m going to have to try and plough my furrow somewhere else!

11.3.4 Indeed, there is often a gendered nature to the more entrepreneurial elements of the discourse, with talk of ‘aggressive’, ‘strong-willed’ characters, ‘hustling’ and ‘fighting battles’ – which often forms a subtext to descriptions of the ‘particular type of person’ that is being looked for.

- Hopefully, the reason I’ve got this job is because I’m quite good at [...] knowing which battles to fight.

- You’ve kind of got to hustle. Every player that I know does that.

Clearly these are not characteristics that are limited to men. Their connotations are nonetheless strongly gendered: it may be more socially acceptable for men to exhibit these traits than women, for instance.

11.3.5 On the other hand, the university is talked about as an alternative to industry using a more ‘feminine’ language of ‘nurture’ and ‘care’, drawing on expectations that may not reflect the reality. As a result, some responses revealed a perception that the HE pathway would be better suited to those who lacked these characteristics or weren’t already confident in their own abilities – and particularly women.

\(^{81}\) Gill, Rosalind (2002).
The business in general – is so much about: get out, sign the acts, break the acts – you know, a jungle mentality [...] There is not enough of a developmental personality to this business.

I actually think academia is a real place for nurturing.

We tended to think we were gonna get a lot more young women than young men because of the academic profile of the course. That has happened in some years but it doesn’t happen every year.

[The course] has been overwhelmingly populated by females. The guys we have are really good but they’re more like, you know, ‘I’m just gonna get in the business. I’m gonna start at the bottom and I’m gonna be aggressive about it. What’s school gonna teach me, I really wanna learn it the way it is in the real world’.

11.4 The Music Industry Degree: measuring success

Given the above, there has been much debate over the goal of a degree specialising in the music industry. The potential product of this particular form of education – by which its success can be measured – is talked about in terms of five outputs:

11.4.1 SHORT-TERM: A qualification leading to a job.

There is a clear sense of antagonism over the value qualifications currently bring to the workforce. However, there are also associated notions of professionalisation and quality standards that signify the industry’s ‘maturity’, enabling it to be ‘taken seriously’ at a national economic level as well as forming viable career pathways for a broader pool of talent.

This is the key question: can we get to a point with these courses where companies are taking people on at a level which is higher than interns or juniors, as a direct result of them doing the course? Is there a direct relationship between doing a course and getting a decent job of a certain calibre?

The industry could professionalise its own workforce. Professionalising industry engagement will actually, in a sense, make it – not more academic – but bring you into the academic framework where you benchmark the content. You say, ‘yeah, this is worth this’.

‘Professionalisation’ is not as simple as it sounds. Qualifications are only valuable when employers recognise them to be. Industry practitioners must trust in the value produced by awarding institutions. Otherwise, in an over-saturated job market, qualification requirements simply produce further barriers to entry. Trust is missing.

Consequently, despite the rhetoric around vocational learning and post-degree employability, the potential for HE to accelerate candidates into a first job is almost entirely dismissed. There are some misgivings regarding the suitability of the university to provide necessary skills training. More commonly, there are
doubts over the value a qualification adds to students’ in-built qualities and a perceived bureaucratic conflict between the commitment necessary to complete a course of study and the pragmatic flexibility needed when seeking opportunities for work.

The industry’s stance is vocational: ‘we just want someone to be able to do this job’.

I think the last report said 90% of our graduates had meaningful work six months after graduation.

I wonder whether, because universities have to sell themselves much more, whether there’s the implication that by doing this course you’ll get a job. [...] People seem to think there’s a lot more work available at the end of it than there is. And that doing the course is enough. But it really isn’t.

Not even employment agencies wanted to take me on. I rang them up like, ‘right I’ve got a music media degree, when can I start?’! [laughter]

What the colleges are trying to train kids to do, they can’t let them do whilst they’re at the college.

Further, many candidates will not be looking for a ‘graduate job’. They may be using their education to supplement a career as a musician. Or they may be looking to self-employ. Or music may simply be one strand of their income. The views of employers are not the only measures of success.

11.4.2 MID-TERM: An individual well-placed to develop a lasting career.

CC Skills note that 50% of entrants in to the music sector have left within five years. Longevity is associated with entrepreneurial talent and a command of basic transerferable skills that are adaptable to future situations. There is a strong emphasis on rounded education and character-formation as a result.

It’s about creating an individual that’s by design not fully-formed. [...] Unless the people working within an organisation have a true understanding of the creative product that they’re working with, and a rapport with the other people in the organisation and the artists that they’re working with, then it’s just not going to work. And therein lies the challenge for a music industry degree.

It’s not our job to make them into absolutely ready employees that are gonna slot into their companies. We round them out and then they learn how that particular company works. [...] There’s a lot more that you want students to get. You want them to be able to think critically, write critically, have a sense of history and background, they’ve gotta be able to think on their feet… I think students realise there’s more at stake here than just a job. They want to be enriched and enlarged.

We want managers who understand publishing and records and live; we want people in the live industry who can understand the record industry and so on; who understand marketing but understand numbers.
There is a sense of graduates having better overall knowledge of the sector and bringing a broader range of abilities. Universities were viewed as good at developing individuals and it was felt that course content should reflect these merits, cultivating well-rounded individuals with professional staying power.

The outcome would always be that you’re making a living in the music industry. [...] Education, in the broader sense of the term, is not only academic, it’s also building a skill set and value set that prepares you for a professional career. If any of those three are lacking, then it’s not education.

It’s not about getting that first role, it’s about surviving and developing a career in the industry so that you can go on to become successful, either running your own business or working for a fairly large, or very large, employer. These require very different skills.

11.4.3 LONG TERM: Knowledge production and industry impact.

Finally, there is a danger of abandoning the core notion of the university as expanding the scope and depth of human understanding.

There’s an awful lot to be gained by way of Insight. Industry gives us the questions we want to ask. ‘These are the issues we’ve been wrestling with, what do you think?’ There are ways in which we can enable that kind of level of Insight, which I think is really profound and meaningful, but we wanna go beyond that.

However, respondents did not communicate the idea of knowledge as a good in itself with much substance at all. Perhaps this is unsurprising: it is certainly consistent with a view in which academia is not traditionally ‘relevant’ to industry (but could be made to be so). The university was not generally seen as a space that should retain a critical distance from the immediate pressures of industry. The sense that knowledge forged in commercial practice can also feed back into what we understand about the wider world and how we act within it is missing.

This ‘absent core’ should be viewed with some considerable concern.

Much more so, the emphasis on developing intellectual skills was seen as vital to a changing sector. It was felt that increased numbers of individuals with an HE background is likely to foster a much-needed culture of learning. Links with HE were seen as opportunities to combat short-termism in the music industry.

As an industry, I don’t think there’s enough people that are pro-learning. Maybe because it’s living hand-to-mouth – and I think that’s a very, very important counter-argument – but there is not enough of a developmental personality to this business. And that’s what I want to see more of.

There’s a specific thing about the music industry. The support’s not there. I wish I was better and had more time [for my staff]. In-house training is not as key as in other industries.

A lot of people used to get very, very quickly accelerated through the ranks, as it were, because you’re perceived as having ‘the touch’ and this mystical ability to spot talent
early. You get promoted very quickly and then expected to run a team based on it, and haven’t got any of the skill set to be able to see that through. So the record industry has really suffered.

Particularly if the industry’s struggling to understand the impact, long-term, of wholesale filesharing, copyright infringement – what is the impact of that long-term?

I would argue that there is definitely a gulf between education and industry in the creative industries that somehow needs to be… There’s a lot of people trying to do it and I think there’s been giant strides forward. But I wonder if it’s as streamlined as it could be.

I think the future of work and education is that they will work closer together. We would really like to do much more with industry. I think solutions for the industry require people to really understand the greater, bigger picture.
12. knowledge, understanding, skills

Outputs of an HE-level degree are often articulated in terms of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin practice. The following section articulates how respondents saw these attributes in relation to working in music.

In brief:

- ‘Knowledge’ is generally seen as stable and codified – a fixed ‘thing’ that can be transferred from one place to another. It is treated with some wariness on these grounds;
- ‘Understanding’ is valued more highly but is challenging to express. It is treated as innate and considered difficult to learn;
- A range of ‘skills’ are acknowledged in different circumstances but there is resistance to skills rhetoric. ‘Hard’ skills are said to be less valuable than ‘soft’ in this context. However, a number of concrete skills are identified as missing in the industry.

These opinions are aggregated at the end of the section into a sketch of four core pillars of a music industry education which, despite their skepticism, practitioners would nonetheless seem to value.

These are: ‘big picture’; ‘theory’; ‘technical skills’; and ‘praxis’.
12.1 knowledge

12.1.1 Knowledge is considered a key output of the academic sphere and an assumed component of any qualification. Thanks to music’s unpredictability in terms of its production and consumption (the ‘nobody knows’ principle), however, knowledge has an uncertain status within the music industry.

12.1.2 Using some classic distinctions, it is clear that practitioners tend to value, on the one hand, knowledge that is lived and implicit (‘tacit’) over exchangeable information (‘codified’); and on the other hand, problem-solving activities (‘Mode 2’ knowledge production) over pure research (‘Mode 1’). Whether or not the kind of knowledge that is important for working well in the industry can be codified and applied productively is a topic of much debate.

The stuff you get taught in a textbook – some of which is useful, you know, especially on the publishing side – but it also doesn’t prepare you for the fact that nothing works like that. I think there are rules that you learn in university and then in the industry those rules are broken almost on an hourly basis. I guess it’s good that you know that they’re there but it’s completely insane to think that the industry runs like that.

Insight is a new, ‘fashionable’ area. It’s something that people are supposed to be doing now. If you were to look at the relative number of breakthrough acts that record companies have had in the last fifty years and looked for a statistically significant relationship between that and the breakthrough of big data and consumer insight as fashionable business disciplines, I don’t think you’d see a relationship.

12.1.3 There is a further assumption that the university is a place for Mode 1 knowledge production – research for research’s sake – and the generation of codified theories, ill-suited to the applied, project-based and transdisciplinary problem-solving Mode 2 activity required for commercial application.

The complexity that exists, that you see from the inside, actually exceeds what the academics see. […] And it’s quite incredible to watch how theory is applied badly to the real world, rather than watching the real world and seeing theory in action.

At the end of the day, as a practitioner, they know they’re in it, they have to make money. They have to be able to take the practical view and not just a kind of purely theoretical, academic view. They have to come up with solutions, in other words, which is what I think the industry tends to value more than anything else.

A degree course which purports to be vocational will struggle to be that when it’s related to an industry that is inherently complex. And the music industry – one thing it is, is complex.

12.1.4 The industry is, as is often argued, messy and complex and it is important not to reduce this complexity to simple theoretical models. On the other hand, appeals to

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82 Polanyi (1983); Nowotny et al (2001)
complexity should not function as a ‘get-out clause’, obscuring the need to understand (and, if necessary, reappraise) existing structures and practices.\(^{83}\)

12.1.5 Practitioners habitually draw a distinction between the kind of tacit knowledge necessary for understanding the industry and that which is presumed to be more ‘academic’. Though they may not deploy this technical language to do so, dualisms like these are themselves an example of a theoretical mindset in action; but typically they are recycled in a way that does not reflect how knowledge develops ‘in action’.

12.1.6 However, although there is sometimes a disavowal of the value of specific knowledge, practitioners routinely construct or draw on relatively coherent ‘theories’ of their own in order to explain and justify their views and behaviour — some of which may go on to influence business strategy.\(^{84}\) There is a particularly strong vernacular appreciation for business models, behavioural economics, organisational strategy and socio-psychology. The rich seam of popular and ‘grey’ literature in circulation, aimed at informal and ‘DIY’ approaches to learning the music business (especially online), is further testament to this appetite.\(^{85}\)

> It’s kind of recognised that we’re gonna be living in an access-based world, rather than an ownership-based world, right? Although there’s been a gradual increase in vinyl sales, which does hint that we have a collector side to our nature as human beings.

> As this business has evolved and gone through periods of difficulty, actually a lot of the best people have stayed around. It’s become, I suppose, Darwinian.

> Charts is the ultimate feedback loop right? The radio play drives more visibility, which drives more popularity, which drives you to stay in the charts. And the industry thrives on that. It’s almost insider-outsider theory, if you look at it from an economic perspective — once you’re in, great you stay in.

12.1.7 Ultimately, these debates underline a need to consider knowledge not as ‘thing’ but as ‘relation’.\(^{86}\) Knowledge should not be considered a commodity (which is better served by more concrete terms like ‘information’); it cannot be bought and sold in the university marketplace, to then be ‘used’ in the workplace. Rather it is a lived and situated process combining theoretical and practical expertise. It is a dynamic ecosystem,\(^{87}\) dependent on the relations amongst individuals, and between individuals and their environment, which can be supported and nurtured given the right conditions.

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\(^{83}\) Law and Mol (2002)

\(^{84}\) Negus (1999)

\(^{85}\) Examples include well-regarded books with titles like ‘All You Need to Know About the Music Business’ (Passman, 2012), online ‘think tanks’ like Music Think Tank and Music Tank, as well as the ever-growing music industry conference circuit, from The Great Escape to Music Tech Fest.

\(^{86}\) Pratt (2014)

\(^{87}\) See section 7.8.
12.2 understanding

12.2.1 As used here, the term ‘understanding’ fuses ‘tacit knowledge’ with ‘soft skills’. It is something akin to ‘intuition’ of the working environment and draws attention to how a job cannot be reduced to the ostensible tasks it involves. It also involves a process of socialisation – into the industry and the workplace. It’s about ‘fit’ within a working culture. This manifests through understanding of music and professional understanding.

12.2.2 Understanding of music is not technical or theoretical knowledge of rhythm and harmony. It is knowing that music is meaningful – driving the artist’s passion and the fan’s obsession.

It might benefit to have spent a few hours in a record store, and a few years listening to good records, and to be surrounded by people that know good music. That’s education.

If you’re gonna be sat in the middle of an A&R department, you have to be happy having three or four different types of music blaring when you’re trying to negotiate on the telephone and if you’re not that type of a person, you just wouldn’t really fit, you know.

12.2.3 Professional understanding, on the other hand, is about understanding the codes and practices of the working environment. Some of these are industry-specific, including understanding the ‘realities’ of a career in music as well as communicating a love of music’s ‘eccentricities’.

My son wants to come and work in music – more fool him, I would say – but he’s not worked in music, he’s done a law degree, done a history degree, but he doesn’t understand the way the industry works.

The expectation is from that point [of getting the first job] on you’re being paid to be a professional. Whether you’re on twelve grand a year as a graduate or not… At that point, you’ve just got to be delivering. Or there’ll be somebody behind you who will.

12.2.4 At a more basic level, understanding involves acting professionally and being respectful and appropriate to peers, superiors and the wider industry.

Managers are the worst. You know, because everybody can be a music manager now. They don’t have the basic common sense. Not even common sense: it’s just understanding what’s important, and that in order to achieve something great, you have to do a lot of really boring stuff, a lot of the time.

If you go on and you tweet, ‘x artist is a dickhead and I’m sick of them’… You just shouldn’t do that. It’s unprofessional.

That’s why getting students into the offices and into the work experience platforms earlier works so well because they get thrown into those scenarios, where you suddenly realise actually you’ve got to be on top of your stuff.

12.2.5 ‘Understanding’ is a core output of work placements and apprenticeships where it goes beyond learning how to fulfil a specific task. This ‘situated learning’ is
difficult to communicate because it is internalised through observation, practice and sociality. It binds workers together in a joint enterprise, creating what has been termed a ‘community of practice’.

12.2.6 Consequently, understanding is enabling – because participants in the community are able to perform intuitively and therefore more efficiently. But it can also be disabling – where habits become taken for granted. In the latter instance, the community becomes difficult for outsiders to access or its practices become resistant to change.

12.2.7 The communities of practice model found in much music industry skills learning assumes a coherent community is in place, that novices have access to experienced professionals, and that their relationships are ongoing. In a fractured job market where short-term, freelance, or project-based work is common – as in much of the industry, broadly conceived – this is often not the case. Internships and apprenticeships cannot prosper without a stable community. But, particularly for those starting out, work is often transitory in nature or geographically dispersed.

12.2.8 The community also breaks down without a relationship of trust in place: this report argues that such a relationship is not yet in place between the music and HE sectors. Mutual understanding between the two sectors is, at present, poor. In other words, the skills ecosystem is not yet founded in a community of practice, which inhibits the music industry degree from becoming a ‘legitimate’ qualification.

12.2.9 Where understanding is taken for granted, a relationship with an educational establishment – which is subject to different rules and timescales – can make it more visible and more formalised. This could take place through more codified forms of teaching and learning and, eventually, credentialisation. It could also be performed through mutually beneficial research and knowledge exchange. This report is submitted in this spirit.

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89 Grugulis and Stoyanova (2011).
12.3 skills

Despite the Music Blueprint’s focus on ‘skills gaps’ and a ‘skills academy’, there is diversity of opinion (as with ‘knowledge’) over the utility of the term ‘skills’. Practitioners distinguish between so-called ‘hard’ skills – professional and technical expertise – and ‘soft’ skills – intellectual and interpersonal capacities.

Success in music has generally been about having a variety of different skills. Common sense would help. Being really determined and dedicated to the industry... Some of these are not skills, they are character traits.

12.3.1 Soft Skills

Though hard skills were readily identified for creative crafts (musicianship, record production), technical trades (studio engineering, stage rigging) and professions (legal, finance), there was ambiguity over the meaning and application of the term in the sections of the industry under particular consideration here. Consequently, references to softer skills like communication, passion for music, and a critical mindset were more common.

The people skillset, that was never taught, that was picked up along the way – and family takes as much credit for that as anything else – is crucial to surviving the industry. I’ve met data scientists, who I’m sure are really bright, who I would never let anywhere near anyone in the music industry. [...] Why we don’t teach social skills and interpersonal skills – particularly on computer science courses! – I have no idea.

Someone that automatically moves with the times and moves with radical changes in consumption and technology. That might be a learned behaviour – but it’s not something that necessarily sits on a curriculum anywhere.

I like people that are different and I like people that aren’t massively wanting to be in marketing or A&R. People who are honest, straightforward. I’m not bothered by degrees or graduates; I’m not a graduate… I look for whether they’ll be part of a team; that they’ll fit into the team. Whether they would divide a team or be divisive to a team.

I would probably want somebody who I saw out and about at gigs, or who ran club nights, or managed something, or who was already out there and doing something. And was connected.

How do you define the magic that occurs between what’s written on paper, what the specific tasks are and the nebulous stuff – what is creativity? what is integrity? what is rapport? what is savvy? what is entrepreneurialism? Where do those two things intersect?

It was acknowledged that specific skills will vary depending on role and context. There is a clear resistance to the idea of vocational ‘skills’ where they are associated with preparation for a formal division of labour – which would undermine a ‘jack of all trades’ mentality particularly valued by creative SMEs. The very notion of ‘skills’ is sometimes associated with a large company or even corporate environment.
I think when you work at a major, it’s a very different thing – it’s much more about skills that you have on a piece of paper. So it probably is really good that you know how to write reports or you know how to look at demographic statistics or those things. Those sorts of skills are gonna be more appreciated in a bigger organisation where the role you’re playing is more specialised and perhaps more conventional.

12.3.2 Hard Skills

However, there were several attempts to achieve a more generic description of the hard skills that might be necessary – and those that are lacking – throughout the industry.

12.3.2.1 Transferable And Administrative Skills

A number of respondents emphasised that administrative skills are perennially undervalued – from general numeracy and literacy, to logistics, time management, and data handling. They highlighted that these are often ‘picked up’ informally, rather than ‘learned’ and supported, such that this lack of value is reproduced.

I deal with contracts and I negotiate and do all the rest of it. But I probably didn’t realise how admin-heavy my job would be...

There are loads of people out and about, wheeling and dealing and being very vibrant and everything else – who have no common sense, no ability to get the thing done, can’t do any of the admin side of their jobs, even on a very basic level, and don’t have any interest in it. They’re arrogant: ‘oh I don’t need to know that stuff, because I’m so creative and witty’... It’s obviously utter nonsense. Because if you can’t do the basics – if you can’t be organised, if you can’t get people from A to B or, you know... I can’t even believe that we have to talk about it because it’s so obvious! But you do.

We, as a business, are not focused enough on basic professionalism and technical project management. And I don’t know whether a music industry degree focuses enough on Getting Shit Done.

Good operators will develop a system. I think somebody that just jumped straight out of education – unless they’ve developed their own ability to do that while on their degree course, a percentage of those people aren’t gonna be just jump-in effective. That’s why getting students into the offices and into the work experience platforms earlier works so well because they get thrown into those scenarios, where you suddenly realise actually you’ve got to be on top of your stuff, they start to develop their own systems, learn from other people about how they work.

Although they may be in a relatively junior position, they are inputting data into a machine that will have an end result that will affect how much an artist will get paid, or a label might make. And there may be an audit trail associate with that. So you really can’t afford for people to make mistakes. It’s not brain surgery but it’s very, very important. And that requires a meticulous approach.

[My first job] was actually quite structured. My manager at the time was very structured. I would have certain things to do on a Monday and then Wednesday was like invoice day... But then the longer I was there the more responsibility I was given. I think it taught me a lot. And I still use all the little tricks and tips and stuff, so it was really good.
12.3.2.2 Contractual And Financial Acuity

A facility with some legal and financial knowledge, specifically tailored to the industry, was often deemed important – either as a specific skill that can be applied as part of a job, or as a valuable level of understanding to aid communication and best practices. The ‘eccentric’ particularities of music were highlighted here.

The money-flow situation within the music industry is completely unique. Different rights-holders and all that sort of stuff.

It’s valuable to understand live contracts, to understand the money side of things. The music industry is still very eccentric. It’s useful that they can read royalty statements and all of those things, like a basic level of training.

Commercial entrepreneurialism. Financial awareness. Commercial understanding in terms of selling to retail and business partners – but also in terms of interactions with artist management. Where money is made in the business outside of recorded music... Serious complexities with regard to rights management; with regard to adaptation to technological change; when it comes to competition...

I had no idea that, you know, legal would take up such a major part of the music industry. It was explained to me, it’s not so much legal, it’s actually business.

There’s something as well about communications and being a part of that whole, rather than doing isolated tasks. It’s only when a photographer is suing you because you’ve used their artwork and you haven’t signed a contract that you realise the importance of your legal team.

There seems a massive gap in copyright awareness. I actually think the music industry is streets ahead of other creative industries, in terms of professionalising and educating its workforce to understand what it is, what it’s all about.

12.3.2.3 Management And Leadership

Respondents repeatedly considered the ability to manage others a core skill that was fundamentally lacking across the industry – whether they were speaking in the context of a large company or opportunities for lone individuals to develop through mentoring and leadership programmes. Positive examples were articulated as the result of chance rather than a holistic environment of support.

I think people management and team management, certainly within our industry, you know, it’s a rare individual who is very effective at that. When they are, you know it immediately. [...] But if you’re in a profit-based, high turnover company, most of the time you have enough problems developing your own staff, let alone investing in your future.

I think we’re very lucky because it’s a relatively small company – and when you do have a job here the people higher up are very interested to see where you’re gonna go within it. Although there’s stuff that has to happen, I think they give you real space to grow and find where your skills are.

I don’t have [opportunities for development] in my current job. It’s all basically just what PRS or MPA provide. There’s no core structure within the company.
There are certain courses that we work internally on here with the personal development people, the HR people, to help people along that road. They’re generally very short, they’re generally a few hours long, and they vary in terms of efficacy. They really really vary.

12.3.2.4 Digital Skills

Respondents identified three core digital skills. Perhaps due to the rapid rate of change, none of these referred to ‘this or that’ technology but were instead more general principles.

The first is a general digital literacy: a familiarity and competence with the digital world as a consumer which – for young people – is taken for granted.

I think what you’re looking at next is the erasure of ‘digital’, even as a concept. There’s just a marketing department, there’s a commercial department, you know. Digital is just part of that, it’s baked in.

If somebody came in for an interview and said, ‘I have digital skills’ – one, I wouldn’t know what they meant, and also I would be really shocked that anybody needed to tell me they had, if they were twenty. Because it would be like, if you don’t know how to use Twitter or Facebook or Hype Machine or Soundcloud or whatever... How could you interact with music?

The second is technical fluency: the ability to use certain more specialised and behind-the-scenes technologies and platforms (e.g. coding, data analytics, API integration) appropriately. Increasingly, given the open and social nature of many of these platforms, this too is expected – although not yet an assumed quality.

The core of the business is digital people. And I think everybody has an ability to use all of these systems and these things internally in a way that is effective. From where I’m sat at least, all of it’s quite common stuff and anybody that’s been born in the last twenty-five, thirty years is gonna pick it up.

These kids obviously intuitively understand digital technologies, so they understand what works. But more importantly, in terms of functionality, the way in which the industry actually uses and generates so much data, that’s the bit that we’re trying to address now. We’re not there yet, not by a country mile.

Thirdly, a critical, creative and interpretive facility is identified. This last skill is seen to be less common and therefore valued more highly.

The sheer volume of people who don’t understand data... I think the skillset doesn’t exist to know how it could be useful. Therefore the questions are never asked, so the IT guys can find you what you need to know but they don’t know the questions to ask.

It’s what Jeremy Silver calls the need for data journalism, that the world we’re going into will be utterly dominated by the staggering amount of data that’s out there. And they need people to interpret it and study it.
12.4 course content

12.4.1 Aggregating the above opinions gives an overview of the kinds of features of an HE music industry course that practitioners value. It should be recalled that most respondents were not aware of the specific content of courses outside their own experiences. Many had views of the university environment which are outdated given recent fundamental structural change.

12.4.2 However, the below aspects were potentially deemed to be most valuable pillars of developing a qualification that could engender trust – with the integrated whole more valuable than its constituent parts.

‘Big Picture’ – a general overview of the functions, companies, bodies, industries, sectors and subsectors deemed to be important.

*Definition*
Broad sector-specific knowledge; demystification, improving understanding; explaining purpose of and relations between sector components and the wider world.

*Issues*
What to include and what not to? Who decides what is relevant and important?

Theory – general principles and theoretical models

*Definition*
Developing an analytical research mindset using theories and concepts from multiple disciplines: business school; management theory; finance and economics; law; marketing; social theory.

*Issues*
There is a danger of treating knowledge as a ‘thing’: misunderstanding how theories are applied productively. How best to teach without taking an ‘algorithmic’ or ‘toolbox’ approach (‘given x, if you do y, then z will happen…’)?

There is a further risk of only finding time to learn ‘mainstream’ approaches which:
- are not sector-specific;
- can ignore internal disciplinary shifts and conflicts;
may uncritically reproduce orthodoxy – or be dismissed in times of crisis.\footnote{For example, see the report from the PCES (2014) arguing the risks of teaching only ‘mainstream’ forms of Economics.}

**Technical skills** – vocation-specific skills

*Definition*
Administration and transferable skills; legal and financial; management and leadership; marketing and promotion; digital and social media.

*Issues*
How specific? It is possible to organise teaching narrowly around one particular job: how to balance this focus with ensuring skills are flexible and transferable?

**Praxis** – ‘theory in action’

*Definition*
Experience: opportunities for applying and developing knowledge in a professional context – and vice versa. Not simulation exercises – nor divorced from academic development of knowledge and skills.

*Issues*
How best to pursue a collaborative approach which balances direct skills acquisition with intellectual engagement? How to address the challenge of integrating this into a developmental learning culture across the industry as a whole?

12.4.3 The intention here is not to recommend HE courses be developed according to the views of a very small sample of industry practitioners. It is to guide educators by indicating broad categories which are deemed to be most valuable.

12.4.4 These categories could (or should) be explored within the conceptual framework developed in Section 7 – the four interrelated domains of craft, culture, commerce, and mechanics of music. They may also be useful for mapping.

For example, technical skills might be restricted to one of these domains (learning an instrument; developing software; writing a business plan). Their application in practice would have to be developed in a far more interdisciplinary and intersectoral ‘joined up’ approach.
13. conclusions and recommendations

SKILLS

13.1 Skills requirements are unevenly distributed and dependent on professional context

> The needs of one section of the music industry (such as live) are not necessarily those of another; the needs of a young entrepreneur are not those of a large corporation; the skills challenges facing a classical musician are unlikely to be the same as those facing a tech-house DJ.

> Skills are affected by technological innovation, which has facilitated change on the horizontal (industrial convergence) and vertical (production-consumption). Working patterns have been disrupted. The hard skills needs of today are not necessarily those of tomorrow.

INDUSTRY CULTURE

13.2 The industry is characterised by its individualism: success and failure are viewed in terms of individual merits rather than wider conditions

> Practitioners exhibit the will to ‘remake’ the industry in their own image: to reproduce the conditions that happened to be favourable to them. This is evidence of a strong entrepreneurial spirit but this can easily become a barrier to understanding and supporting others.

> Practitioners may be resistant to sharing knowledge and best practices, consistent with the Music Blueprint’s assertion that practitioners are often not ‘fully equipped to plan or govern strategically’. This could obstruct the development of a learning culture.

> Concrete skills identified as missing in the industry include: administrative; legal; financial; management and leadership; and digital skills. This could be related to a view in which routine administrative elements of the business are seen as constraints, rather than in terms of their potential enabling capacities.
INDUSTRY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

13.3 Trust between HE and industry is currently too unstable for an industry ‘qualification’ to be valued in a meaningful sense

> The music industry degree is ‘doubly new’: twenty years ago these degrees did not exist at all – and neither did many of the institutions in which they are predominantly taught.
> It is clearly necessary to increase students’ exposure to practitioners and improve access to work opportunities. But overall, the immediate benefits of HE to industry (i.e. making students more ‘employable’) were rejected.
> Irrespective of the quality and reputation of specific degrees, there exists an influential strand of discourse in the industry in which the value of qualifications is not recognised at all.
> Practitioners commonly consider HE to obstruct professional learning rather than improve it. Educators commonly exhibit resistance to (what they view as) outside commercial pressures of industry.
> There is currently low confidence in the university track as a primary route into working in music. Music industry degrees have not been unreservedly endorsed by practitioners, educators or former students.
> The HE/industry relationship is evolving and opportunities to develop trust exist. A collaborative educational environment is felt to be a valuable pursuit. Investing in people, careers and research were considered to produce mid- and long-term benefits for individuals, companies and the wider industry.

13.3 Deep conflicts in aims, values and capacities between industry and HE obstruct collaboration

> ‘Theory’ is commonly rejected and ‘practice’ celebrated by both practitioners and educators. Their mutual reliance and integration is underemphasised and this forms a material and cultural barrier to development.
> The value of ‘knowledge’ is viewed with some scepticism on these grounds. Practitioners generally consider the pursuit of knowledge valuable only where there is a direct application.
> Intuitive ‘understanding’ is valued highly. What this means in practice is challenging to express and difficult to learn. Practitioners did not generally recognise the academic value of articulating taken-for-granted understanding.
> There is resistance to skills rhetoric. In the context under study, ‘hard’ skills are considered less valuable than ‘soft’. Particular technical skills may come and go; creativity and critical thinking are deemed to be distinguishing features. This perspective could be viewed as a point of commonality between the music industry and Higher Education.
> One consequence of a changing HE sector is that practitioners’ views of academia will be increasingly out of date if they are based exclusively on individual experience.

**13.4 Practitioners are increasingly involved in HE**

> Practitioners increasingly find it desirable to work with HE. Motivations include a wish to ‘give back’ as well as frustrations with industry.
> This practice should be researched and strengthened – with care.
> Practitioners are not necessarily the best educators. Experience in one part of the industry does not necessarily improve knowledge, understanding or skills for other parts.
> An underlying framework to aid integration and ensure quality of teaching delivery could be very important.

**13.5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

> The industry is famously competitive and precarious; it can be inhospitable to its workers. Meritocracy rhetoric can hide unintentional exclusionary practices.
> Thanks to widening participation in HE, university education could be one means of improving diversity in the industry.
> HE should not be viewed as a panacea to fix equality and diversity problems however. The HE sector is changing in ways that do not necessarily support non-traditional students.
> Policy tends to focus on access to ‘the job market’ rather than the challenges of work and its conditions. Access to the job market does not mean career success. A wider cultural shift is also necessary within industry.
> There is a tendency to view entrepreneurship and ‘working your way up’ in masculine terms. Education is viewed as a more ‘feminine’ alternative. This language could be off-putting or even lead to exclusionary hiring practices.
> Individualism may exert a ‘common sense’ influence on recruitment and career development that does not recognise the challenges faced by those with different backgrounds, or how conditions have changed over time.
RECOMMENDATIONS

SKILLS ECOSYSTEM
1) Skills policy should update the ‘pipeline’ metaphor by moving towards an ‘ecosystem’ model that recognises diversity and fluidity between disciplines, professional roles and industry sectors.

2) Policy should consider skills development, not in terms of academic subjects or particular professions, but in terms of knowledge and practices that relate to the ‘craft’, ‘commerce’, ‘culture’ and ‘mechanics’ of music.

3) Skills initiatives should make sure work placements are embedded within broader knowledge and understanding. Partnerships between a range of practitioners and academic disciplines should be developed.

FUTURE RESEARCH
1) Research should be conducted that maps out the diversity of music industry education in HE. It should consider adopting some of the frameworks proposed in this report and attend to disciplinary variety and theory/practice divisions.

2) It should show the distribution of knowledge and vocational learning across the ecosystem as well as interactions between industry and HE:
   o flows of people (students into work; practitioners in academia)
   o resources (personnel, expertise, facilities, technologies)
   o work experience: opportunities and best practices
   o research and knowledge exchange: opportunities and best practices.

3) It should map students’ successes beyond entry into a career – and explore working conditions, quality of life, and cultural integration once they reach employment.

4) Research should also explore the movement of practitioners into academia, their motivations for doing so, the support they receive, and their experiences.

5) Policy should be sensitive to research conducted across all stakeholders, not simply mainstream commercial/recorded music. It should acknowledge both the diversity and specificity of practitioners’ attitudes, values and perceptions.

6) Attitudes, values and perceptions should be more directly taken into account in the design and implementation of survey-based research.
BUILDING COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS
It is imperative that long term goals are pursued, going well beyond job-creation and towards supporting the skills ecosystem as a whole. This means overcoming conflicts between sectors, emphasising commonalities and building trust.

UK Music should work to connect key individuals within industry and academia in a spirit of mutual enquiry. Four steps to address this are recommended:

1) Practitioners and educators of all stripes should engage in a period of close consultancy in order to find shared values. There must be occasion for ongoing dialogue with each other.

   Both sides must be:
   - Clear in asserting what they want to gain from the relationship, alongside what they have to offer. Educators in particular need to articulate the value of HE learning in ways that go beyond vocational skills.
   - Respectful and generous in understanding points of disagreement.

   Conflicts of aims and values between sectors should not obstruct the recognition of individuals’ expertise.

2) All parties should work to find a vocabulary that expresses, justifies and celebrates these values – shared or otherwise – in terms that are acceptable to both sides.

   They should take care that this language is not implicitly exclusionary.

   They should work to promote cross-sectoral relationships using this language – through course marketing and delivery; employment literature; and media engagement.

   It could also be used to sensitisise future research

3) They should work together:
   - to shape and deliver course content that reflects shared aims but also respects differences
   - to create collaborative research initiatives that explore shared issues between the sectors (e.g. on gender and diversity)
   - to explore options for funding these activities creatively.

   They must be able to express and measure the value of these initiatives in terms that include but also exceed the economic.

4) There is opportunity for this network to intersect with the aims of IASPM and the HEA and share resources, knowledge, opportunities and best practices. Collaborative opportunities between these institutions and UK Music’s skills initiatives should be scoped and developed.
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15.1 appendix: structural change in he

The Changing University Landscape

- Prior to 1992, ‘almost two-thirds of the degree-granting institutions operating in the UK in 2011 did not even exist (at least as universities)’.
- The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act reclassified a large number of former ‘polytechnics’ as universities, initiating a period of widespread institutional expansion throughout the nineties;
- A further 30 institutions gained university charter in the first decade of this millennium.

Small, community-embedded providers of specific training opportunities (technical colleges, art schools, adult education) have tended to ‘evolve’ slowly and haphazardly, moving towards the assumed ideal of the large, national or international institution, innovating in multiple fields of research. In other words: balancing local needs with ‘higher learning’. While expansion of the sector continues, it is suggested this tendency may be set to reverse (McGettigan, 2013), due to the combined effect of recent changes to eligibility criteria (for degree-awarding powers, Quality Assurance and the ‘university’ title) and funding restructures (see below).

Widening Participation

- Participation rates have leapt since 1992 from around 15% to almost 50% of young adults.
- In 1980, 300,000 students were studying at 46 universities. In 2011, there were 2.25 million students attending 130 universities.
- The student community contains an increasing proportion of part-time, post-graduate, and international students, while female students (historically a minority group) now constitute the slight majority.
- Over the latter half of the twentieth century, there has been a steady drift in disciplinary popularity from arts and humanities to science and technology. The most heavily subscribed subject in 2009 was business studies and accountancy.

Restructuring Funding

- While the quantity, demographic make-up, and academic content of university courses as a whole, shifted considerably between 1992 and 2010, per capita income, on average, declined.
The 2010 HE reforms saw a substantial raise to the upper limit for tuition fees and a recalibration of the loan repayment system. Simultaneously, public funding for subject tuition outside the ‘Band A and B’ subjects of the core STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, Medicine) was withdrawn.

Outside of the STEM subjects, which remain subsidised, undergraduate tuition is now primarily financed through student fees, alongside any individual arrangements an HEI has in place (assets, endowments, private equity and borrowing).

Research continues to be publicly funded although the criteria for allocating it, found in the Research Excellence Framework (REF), are contested.

The net result is an aggregate increase in income from undergraduate teaching and a projected *per capita* increase, subject to recruitment targets being met.

Overall, university finances are currently in the best state they have been in for years. However, the increase in income and regained stability is felt more in STEM subjects than in arts, humanities and social sciences (the predominant domain of Music Industry related subjects). We should further note that the oldest institutions have the advantage of historical wealth, permitting a greater degree of self-sufficiency that is often hidden in comparisons of ‘income’ between HEIs.

Sources:

Banks and Oakley (2015)

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Universities UK (2013)
15.2 appendix: qaa subject statements

As an academic discipline, Popular Music Studies is generally understood to have been formed from two paths, converging from the 1970s through to the ’90s. While on one hand, the social context of youth and popular music was traditionally central to the emerging discipline of Cultural Studies; on the other, traditional Music studies began to be increasingly receptive to the ‘cultural’ and the ‘popular’ (Cloonan, 2005; Hesmondhalgh and Negus, 2002). The 2008 Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statements give greater insight into these differing traditions as they stand today.

Music Benchmark Statement

The QAA statement for Music puts the engagement with creative expression at its core. It begins from a classic distinction:

- what music is (creating music)
- what music does (musical communication)
- what music means (interpretation of music)

Approaches to these questions are commonly:

- ‘text-based’
- ‘practice-based’

The review group emphasise the additional value of historical, philosophical and scientific methods to musicology and music sociology. They note that these have challenged and redefined the boundaries of the discipline, bringing in ‘wider issues of music as cultural practice’ – particularly popular and non-Western forms, technology and media, and industry. They link these to the expansion of specialist courses since 1992.

Some indicative internal disciplinary divisions within music are listed as:

- performance and composition;
- musicology, theory and analysis;
- technology and acoustics;
- aesthetics, criticism and psychology;
- pedagogy, therapy and community music.

Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies

As with Music, the benchmark statement for Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies (CMFCS) stresses the diversity of the field. In contrast, however,
the CMFCS review group foreground the structural relationship between particular media and the social formations they exist within.

They note the common interest in shared collective experience, political and economic organisation, psychological and emotional life, tradition and future-planning, power and identity, and legal and ethical frameworks.

They mark a distinction between five disciplinary areas:

- communication, culture and society;
- cultural and technological histories;
- processes and practices;
- forms and aesthetics;
- culture and identity.

**Industry references:**

Tellingly, the QAA’s Culture and Media benchmark report contains more than twice as many references to business and industry when compared with the Music report. Terms like ‘business’, ‘commerce’, ‘econom’, ‘entrepreneur’, ‘financ’, ‘industr’ and ‘manag’ (that is: root words and derivatives) occur 21 times in the Music QAA report and 44 times in the CMFCS QAA report.

This does not necessarily reflect how these subjects engage with commercial and industry issues – simply that CMFCS is possibly more intimately entwined with these concerns than Music.