

Addressing hidden curriculum in higher education music: a UDL approach to accessible music industry pathways



Visible course requirements:

The tools used to communicate expectations to students.

- study plan
- rubrics
- timetables
- unit guides
- assessment briefs
- learning outcomes
- learning management system
- course framework
- policies and procedures

Assumed student experience

It is assumed that the course requirements provide accessible learning options for all students.

...but this is not accessible to everyone!

Expected course outcomes

- retention
- progression
- completion
- projected attrition

Music industry readiness

facilitating entry into a music industry career

Alternative course outcomes

- attrition
- prolonged course completion
- long-term financial impact
- reduced pathways

Proposed evidence base:
student feedback, progress and retention data, assessment review data, patterns in student support requests, course evaluation insight

Hidden barriers

These hidden expectations can create barriers for students with executive function challenges and can result in inequitable participation

for those who are:

culturally diverse

or entering via

neurodivergent

non-traditional pathways

Impact of barriers

- reduced motivation
- diminished mental health and wellbeing
- student disengagement
- disengagement from course, networks and music making.
- inequitable assessment

Career pathway divergence

Music relegated to hobby with broader impact on career opportunities.

+ Hidden curriculum

Invisible and implicit requirements

- planning skills
- strategic thinking
- academic capabilities
- problem-solving skills
- interpersonal skills
- critical and creative thinking
- self-direction
- reflective practice
- organisational skills
- collaboration skills
- digital literacy
- presentation skills

Barriers could be reduced with a UDL-informed course design to make the implicit explicit

Centring student agency

Engagement

- Student directed learning plans to increase motivation, sustain engagement
 - ~ blended learning options
 - ~ project choice
- iterative assessment design
 - ~ assessment tools that explicitly teach success

Representation

- multimodal briefs
- task exemplars
- explicit expectation guides
- scaffolded, formative activities
 - ~ build academic literacy

Action and expression

- iterative assessment
- assessment scaffolding
- flexible assessment modes
 - ~ asynchronous assessment
- progress monitoring

Intended course outcomes

- retention
- progression
- completion
- projected attrition

Career pathway target

- diverse music industry opportunities
- sustainable portfolio careers
- lifelong learning

