Musicians are three times more likely to experience depression, according to study

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MENTAL HEALTH AND THE HE MUSICIAN
Purpose

“music educators, administrators and policy makers must play an active role in providing supportive environments where health and wellbeing is considered integral to expert music training.”

With suicide rates among students on the rise and a sharp increase in demand for mental health support – as much as three-fold in some institutions – universities have acknowledged in a report that current services are letting students down.
Definition – why autism as a filter?

I am autistic and it’s just like being a parent!

Conditions comorbid to autism:

Anxiety

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder

Bipolar Disorder

Obsessive compulsive disorder

Sensory problems

Numerous non-assessed disorders (phobias, depression)

Grand Challenges

Challenges expressed by students in study:

- Attendance
- Access to curriculum
- Comprehension & purpose
- Productivity/Motivation
- Group/ensemble work concerns
- Fear of missing lectures, seen to be a ‘bad student’

* Everyone, shown in orange; university students shown in green; university staff shown in blue.

* Standard deviation presented in brackets.

Methodologies

Living Education Theory (LET)

"[It is] a critical and transformational approach to action research. It confronts the researcher to challenge the status quo of their educational practice and to answer the question, 'How can I improve that I'm doing?'

- (Atkins and Wallace, p. 131)

- Six students across two modules, all with ASC – 5/6 declared
- Modules focus on sound composition and production with visual media
- Action research, community of practice
- Qualitative analysis (questionnaires, group discussions with students)
Methodologies

Timeline of study

- **Weeks 1-5**: Normal curriculum
- **Week 6**: Mid module evaluation, formation of focus group
- **Weeks 7-12**: Ongoing development of curriculum – review feedback & action cycle undertaken
Moodle/NG Learning Environments

The 2017 NMC Horizon report identified Mobile Learning as a key adoption of HE learners, with next generation Learning Management Systems (LMS) launching within the next two to three years, which suggests that emerging technologies can offer the tools to provide tailored variations of learning materials that put the student first in how they choose to interact with any given curriculum.

http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2017-nmc-horizon-report-he-EN.pdf
Items created (colour, contrast)

**Visual Essay**

30% (3-4 minutes)

3-4 minute video

Produce a visual essay that presents a narrative to include both critique and context of the production process that you undertook to create your items. This video should evaluate your project and analyse your working practice. This minimally should outline:

- Your influences and decisions behind your creative choices
- A technical account of your production covering use of hardware, software & facilities
- A reflection on the methods you used to edit and process your audio, discussing any specific functions you have implemented or challenges you may have faced
- A critique of your production output in comparison to existing broadcasters or channels, making specific reference to relevant content & production aesthetics

Students are encouraged to develop this visual essay in post-production, without restriction, if they wish to incorporate support evidence/contextual materials from multiple sources.

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What did the students think?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you like about the module?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Clear weekly structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Every week, up-to-date content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clear and concise module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effective learning methods</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What don't you like about the module?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• IT SYSTEMS ARE SHITE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PROJECTOR LOOKS SHITE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CHAIRS FALL OVER 2 EVERY TIME</td>
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<th>What do you like about the module?</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Content organisation (moodle is lecture)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Andrew is a fabulous teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lectures are fun, enjoyable and engaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Andrew being aware of different learning techniques and suggesting ways to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moodle is amazing for resources and being able to look at; and coming lecture so you can grasp it easier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Swearing and personality :) is good on the presentations</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What don't you like about the module?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• facilities &amp; early morning!</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>If you were running the module, what would you do differently?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• more examples of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• more peppers</td>
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<th>If you were running the module, what would you do differently?</th>
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<tr>
<td>• At times some of us in class don't get work before others, it would be nice perhaps have an optional extra task that would expand our understanding of the book.</td>
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<tr>
<th>If you were running the module, what would you do differently?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Change the time :)</td>
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</table>
Observations, conclusions

- Alternative colouration of lectures was popular, but not demonstrably effective given this project
- Students engaged more with the online learning resources, were more communicable – but likely due to focus of study
- Overall mid-module feedback given for online resources (from autistic & NTs) was very positive, likely due to clarity of formatting
- Conversational style ‘how to’ training/skills videos seemed to be preferred (*analogue experience*)
- Staffing/multi agency approach was considerably helpful: Faculty Administrator, Learning Technologist, Student Helpzone, Equality & Diversity Officer, HR
- With further consideration and collaboration we might be able to develop a virtual environment that removes the obstructions that might be faced by learners who find accessibility, comprehension, collaboration and socialisation difficult when approaching creative work.
Next steps & questions

This short study has given me a framework to progress, but much more investigation is required.

- A larger sample of students
- More robust methodology
- More specific music focuses (*practice, performance, composition, production*)
- Connect with associated bodies (*Help Musicians UK, Music Minds Matter, In Music We Trust*)
- Take these limited findings to my academic colleagues around the UK and try to find more ways to help students study without fear of mental health being an obstacle to the classroom