

ranking. As a grouping, however, the subjects place 37th this year, with almost two-thirds of graduates (65.1%) in high-skilled employment and/or furthering their studies within 15 months. Those with a degree in Middle Eastern and African studies degrees earn £28,000 graduate salaries, on average, ranking the subject in the top 20 of our pay index.

Middle Eastern and African Studies	Teaching quality %	Student experience %	Research quality %	Entry standards (UCAS points)	Graduate prospects %	Overall score
1 Oxford	80	52.5	62.3	193	—	100
2 Cambridge	87	67	45.2	196	—	98.6
3 Exeter	83.7	78.1	65.8	146	77.2	97.6
4 SOAS London	79.5	70.7	60	145	84.8*	97
5 Leeds	79.8	78.7	52	150	—	94.4
6 Edinburgh	75.7	70.8	51.7	162	—	93.5
7 Manchester	74.7	64.4	52.5	154	—	91.9
Employed in high-skilled job	49%	Employed in lower-skilled job	17%			
Employed in high-skilled job and studying	5%	Employed in lower-skilled job and studying	1%			
Studying	10%	Unemployed	10%			
High-skilled work (median) salary	£30,000	Low-/medium-skilled salary	N/A			

## Music

"Studying music as a performer or creator means learning to be playful in your work every day. It means collaborating, problem-solving, listening – and really hearing. It means fast reactions and dedicated repetition. These are all skills associated with play, but also with the best of leaders," says Armin Zanner, vice-principal and director of music, Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Reflecting music's many contrasting genres, courses in our subject ranking vary considerably in style and content – from the practical and vocational programmes in conservatoires to the more theoretical degrees in older universities, via sonic arts, creative sound design and everything in between elsewhere. After three years of rising applications, demand cooled a little in 2023's admissions cycle and 37,345 applied to music courses. The number of students enrolling dropped more steeply to 8,955 – down 5% on the year before and 11% lower than four years before in 2019.

In 16th place overall, Guildhall School of Music and Drama ranks first out of the seven specialist institutions, followed by the Royal College of Music in 21st place, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (23rd), Royal Academy of Music (36th), Royal Northern College of Music (41st), Trinity Laban (47th), and Leeds Conservatoire (66th).

But Cambridge's strength in undergraduate music provision is the most eminent this year, its rank buoyed by strong performance across all five metrics in our table without topping any of them individually. Last year's No 1, Manchester, has slipped to sixth place. King's College London is up seven places to tie in the runner-up position with Durham, formerly a regular in the No 1 spot. Royal Holloway, in fourth place overall, achieved the best results in music in the Research Excellence Framework 2021, while Westminster (57th in our main table) is not far behind it for research quality. Entry standards tip over the 200 UCAS tariff point mark at three universities – Glasgow, Edinburgh and Durham – though there are also plenty of places to be found with a broad spectrum of entry standards, which reach down to 99 points at Canterbury Christ Church.

The best rates of student satisfaction are often found at post-1992 universities – in music's

case this year at De Montfort (26th overall) which comes top for both metrics in our new National Student Survey analysis. Following it on each measure is Oxford Brookes (32nd overall), while Surrey (11th) is third for teaching quality and York (=12th) is third for the wider experience. At the opposite end of the student satisfaction scale is Anglia Ruskin.

King's College London had the best-employed graduates when surveyed 15 months after their degrees, with 96.5% in high-skilled jobs and/or further study. Five of the seven specialist institutions rank in the top 20 for graduate prospects: the Royal College of Music, Royal Academy of Music, Royal Northern College of Music, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Music invariably ranks above the other performing arts in our employment table, as it does this year in 49th place. In the earnings table music ties with art and design (and another four subjects) in 61st place out of 70 subject areas.

Music	Teaching quality %	Student experience %	Research quality %	Entry standards (UCAS points)	Graduate prospects %	Overall score
1 Cambridge	87.1	64.3	71	196	87.8	100
=2 King's College London	83.9	77.2	72.2	163	96.5*	99.5
=2 Durham	84.7	74.5	59.5	202	88.1	99.5
4 Royal Holloway	81.6	74.2	78.5	172	90.6	99
5 Bristol	88.8	84	64.2	165	86.6	98.4
6 Manchester	78	70	66.5	199	88.7	98.1
7 Oxford	86.6	66.3	49.2	191	88.7	97
8 Sheffield	81	76.8	57	164	88.5*	95.1
=9 Glasgow	74.9	69.3	60.5	208	78.4	94.9
=9 Birmingham	86.8	78.5	50.2	171	81.2	94.9
11 Surrey	93.2	87.5	43.8	155	79.3	94.8
=12 York	91.8	88.9	54.8	152	73.7	94.4
=12 Leeds	78.1	72.5	65.2	182	78.6	94.4
14 Cardiff	85.8	83.1	50.5	153	84	94.1
15 Southampton	86.3	78.3	58.8	170	73.3	94
16 Guildhall School of Music and Drama	85.8	74.6	61.3	147	82	93.7
=17 Huddersfield	87.9	85.6	71.5	124	77.6	93.6
=17 Edinburgh	79.9	72.3	59.2	204	67.2	93.6
19 City	85.6	71.9	66.5	147	—	93.2
20 Liverpool	89.1	84.5	43.8	157	76	92.9
=21 Royal College of Music	86	76.5	45.5	125	93.9	92.5
=21 Nottingham	84.3	75.4	62.7	137	81.2	92.5
23 Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	81.8	70.2	35.2	172	82.5	91.3
24 Coventry	87.7	83.8	55.5	119	79.2	91.2
25 Brighton	91.3	85.5	53	117	—	91
26 De Montfort	97.3	94.5	45	120	65.3	90.4
27 Birmingham City	86.3	71.3	46.5	145	75.8	90.1
28 Newcastle	82.6	70	59.2	155	68.4	90
29 Edinburgh Napier	89.1	85.3	8.5	191	68.6	89.8
=30 Plymouth	86.8	83.5	49.8	124	—	89.5
=30 Bangor	81.8	74.2	42	—	80	89.5
32 Oxford Brookes	95	91.3	21.5	—	68.6*	89.4



# Music cont.

	Teaching quality %	Student experience %	Research quality %	Entry standards (UCAS points)	Graduate prospects %	Overall score
=33 Sussex	84.6	77	48	136	—	89
=33 Queen's, Belfast	81.9	76.7	46.8	152	71	89
35 Ulster	86.2	85.3	49	121	72.9	88.9
36 Royal Academy of Music	84.6	70.6	20	134	92	88.8
37 West of England	92.5	86.1	48.2	117	65.2	88.5
38 Salford	84	77.2	30.2	143	78.4	88.4
39 Kingston	88.7	78.3	45	121	—	88.3
40 Aberdeen	84.2	75.1	31	172	64.4	87.8
41 Royal Northern College of Music	80.6	67.9	34	135	82.8	87.4
42 Goldsmiths, London	76.6	61	46.8	136	81.1	87
43 Lincoln	91.9	79.6	37.2	122	62.9	86.3
44 Portsmouth	88.5	85.2	30.2	127	63.8	85.6
=45 Winchester	90.9	82.2	32.5	123	61.4	85.4
=45 South Wales	86.2	74.4	35.8	127	66.7	85.4
47 Trinity Laban	81.9	65.4	38	125	73.7	85
48 West London	79.6	68.7	32.2	131	74.6	84.8
49 Canterbury Christ Church	89.9	83.2	38.5	99	65.3	84.7
=50 Nottingham Trent	91.4	84.5	—	126	72.5	84.3
=50 Chester	84.7	66.5	21	143	68.8	84.3
52 Chichester	85.4	70.4	13.2	140	71.9	84.2
53 Staffordshire	85	75.3	31.5	130	63.1	84.1
=54 Falmouth	83.8	77.9	48.8	110	60	83.7
=54 Greenwich	88.9	82.2	—	142	67	83.7
56 Hull	—	—	35	124	67.3	83.4
=57 York St John	84.4	69.8	33.2	116	66.2	83.1
=57 Westminster	65.1	63.1	75.5	126	63.6	83.1
=59 Bath Spa	80.8	74.9	26	119	71.3	83
=59 East London	86.2	78.4	13	127	67.4	83
61 Bedfordshire	87.5	71.5	—	128	75	82.8
62 Leeds Beckett	85.7	82.9	15.8	117	64.4	82.1
63 Hertfordshire	85.8	77.2	24.2	111	63	81.8
64 West of Scotland	80.6	76	19.2	152	55.7	81.7
65 Bournemouth	81.4	66.5	38.5	108	62.5	81.1
66 Leeds Conservatoire	85.7	69.9	—	138	64.4	80.8
67 Anglia Ruskin	64.7	53.4	61.8	—	65.7*	80.1
68 Gloucestershire	72.6	61.9	23.8	122	69.6	79.3
69 Solent, Southampton	88.9	83	—	119	52.5	78.5
70 Middlesex	79.1	68.2	26	102	—	78.2
=71 Wolverhampton	83.5	63.4	6.8	123	58.6	77.8
=71 Leeds Arts	79.2	61.4	2.8	138	—	77.8
73 Northampton	76.1	62.7	12.2	124	—	76.8
74 Liverpool Hope	80.7	73.7	17.5	118	44.9	75.9
75 Central Lancashire	71.6	56.9	19	124	59	75.8
76 Edge Hill	71.3	65.6	—	134	57.4	74.6

Employed in high-skilled job	49%	Employed in lower-skilled job	26%
Employed in high-skilled job and studying	4%	Employed in lower-skilled job and studying	1%
Studying	6%	Unemployed	6%
High-skilled work (median) salary	£25,000	Low-/medium-skilled salary	£20,000

# Natural Sciences

Natural sciences degrees give students the benefit of studying across different scientific disciplines as well as the flexibility to specialise in areas of specific interest as programmes progress. Some universities offer the opportunity to transfer to a single science after a year, if a student decides their interests lie in one particular direction. "As scientists we want to explore the universe and everything in it, but the universe isn't divided into biology, chemistry and physics," explains Professor Geoffrey Nash, head of natural sciences, University of Exeter. "Through studying natural sciences we look for the connections between areas of science, allowing us to harness their power to make a difference to people's lives, to make the world a better place."

Now in its fourth year, the Natural Sciences table is topped by Cambridge for the fourth time. In a convincing lead overall, Cambridge is first for research quality, entry standards and graduate prospects. Runner-up Exeter is in front for student satisfaction – topping the table for teaching quality and the wider experiences in our latest National Student Survey analysis. Natural sciences attracts high grades throughout the table: entry standards are no lower than 165 points (at Loughborough). The subject's interdisciplinary approach provides a breadth of knowledge and practical skills likely to serve graduates well in their careers in industry or postgraduate research. Four of the 11 universities tabled had at least 90% of graduates employed in high-skilled jobs and/or further study within 15 months and none had less than 80% achieving these outcomes. As a subject, natural sciences ranks 15th out the 70 groupings in our employment index and at =5th place for salaries, it compares more favourably still for earnings.

# Natural Sciences

	Teaching quality %	Student experience %	Research quality %	Entry standards (UCAS points)	Graduate prospects %	Overall score
1 Cambridge	86.9	81.2	73.5	222	94.3	100
2 Exeter	93.8	89.9	59.3	179	90	94.9
3 Durham	81.6	74.6	53	207	89.4	92.7
4 University College London	76.6	71.4	64	188	92.6	92.6
5 York	81.4	73.5	66	188	83	91
=6 Lancaster	88	82	68.2	170	80	90.7
=6 Leeds	82.2	71.4	50.2	181	91.7	90.7
8 Bath	85.9	81.1	49.2	189	85.3	90.6
9 Nottingham	79.5	75.9	57.9	174	86.7	89.6
10 Loughborough	89.9	85	41	165	85	88.4
11 East Anglia	78.3	73	56	173	—	88.2

Employed in high-skilled job	50%	Employed in lower-skilled job	7%
Employed in high-skilled job and studying	6%	Employed in lower-skilled job and studying	0%
Studying	22%	Unemployed	6%
High-skilled work (median) salary	£30,700	Low-/medium-skilled salary	N/A