



# Music Students' Experiences of Workload, Stress, and Coping in Higher Education



TUULA JÄÄSKELÄINEN



94

STUDIA  
MUSICA

SIBELIUS ACADEMY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS HELSINKI 2023

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Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki  
Studia Musica 94

Sibelius Academy Faculty of Music Education,  
Jazz, and Folk Music Doctoral School (MuTri)  
Research Study Programme

Music Students' Experiences of Workload,  
Stress, and Coping in Higher Education

Musiikin opiskelijoiden kokemukset kuormituksesta,  
stressistä ja selviytymisestä korkeakoulutuksessa

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Cover image: Mikko Paartola

Cover design: Satu Grönlund

Figures and tables in dissertation: Tuula Jääskeläinen

Layout: Janne Ketola

Printhouse: Hansaprint

ISBN 978-952-329-299-4 (printed)

ISSN 0788-3757 (printed)

ISBN 978-952-329-298-7 (E-book)

ISSN 2489-8155 (E-book)

Helsinki 2023

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*Music to me is everything.  
I guess music is my life.  
I wouldn't be who I am today without music.*

Interview participant



## ABSTRACT

Jääskeläinen, Tuula. (2023). *Music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping in higher education*. Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki.

Over the past decades, the practices and policies of higher music education have been shaped by the rapid global changes affecting curricula, pedagogies, and students' employability. At the same time, the rates of psychological distress and illness among students have been rising. Thus, higher music education institutions urgently need to understand music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping in order to support their learning, well-being, and future careers. Music students' studying experiences differ from other students' experiences, as part of studying music has specific characteristics deriving from the traditional master-apprentice model, such as one-to-one tuition, practising, and performing. As part of the cross-national Music Student Workload project in Finland and the United Kingdom, this article-based doctoral dissertation investigates music students' experienced workload, stress, and coping.

The four international peer-reviewed publications included here report on and synthesise the explanatory stage of the research project. Extended meta-ethnography was used to synthesise 29 qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies in the first article, which is a systematic review of the literature on students'—and particularly music students'—experienced workload. A transcendental phenomenological approach was combined with multistrategy methodology (quantitative and qualitative) when examining music students' experienced workload and stress in connection to music students' use of proactive coping styles in the second article, and in connection to music students' life and livelihoods in the third article. A qualitative methodology was used in the fourth article, which recommends tools that teachers can use to support music students in managing and coping with their experienced workload. In the second, third, and fourth articles the data consisted of responses to the Workload, Stress, and Coping questionnaire from a total of 155 music students (108 in Finland and 47 in the United Kingdom), of which 29 participated in subsequent interviews.

The results and findings were synthesised to make recommendations for students, teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services as to how to deal with music students' workload. It is recommended that good practices should be identified to support music students' proactive coping skills in higher music education institutions. It is also crucial to find solutions to the unequal workload and stress experiences between low-income and well-off students, different genders, and different study programmes. In addition, teachers' continuing professional development must be ensured, particularly in learner-centred pedagogical approaches.

This dissertation recommends investments in longitudinal, cross-cultural, and interventional research on music students' experiences that can inform educational policies and pedagogical practices in higher music education. Furthermore, specific challenges and resources associated with music students' coping with workload and stress should be acknowledged in general educational theories concerning students' workload.

**Keywords:** Coping, educational policy, experience, higher education, mixed methods, multistrategy approach, music student, pedagogical practice, stress, transcendental phenomenology, workload.

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Jääskeläinen, Tuula. (2023). *Musiikin opiskelijoiden kokemukset kuormituksesta, stressistä ja selviytymisestä korkeakoulutuksessa*. Taideyliopiston Sibelius-Akatemia.

Maailman nopea muuttuminen on vaikuttanut musiikin korkeakoulutuksen käytäntöjen ja koulutuspoliittisten toimien muotoutumiseen viime vuosikymmenten aikana. Muutos on koskenut niin opetussuunnitelmia kuin pedagogiikkaa ja opiskelijoiden työllistymistä. Tässä tilanteessa opiskelijoiden psyykkinen stressi ja muut sairaudet ovat lisääntyneet. Musiikkia opettavissa korkeakouluissa onkin tärkeää ymmärtää musiikin opiskelijoiden kokemuksia, jotka liittyvät kuormitukseen, stressiin ja niistä selviytymiseen. Tämä ymmärrys voi auttaa oppilaitoksia tukemaan opiskelijoiden oppimista, hyvinvointia ja tulevaisuuden työuria. Musiikin opiskelijoiden opiskelukokemukset eroavat muiden opiskelijoiden kokemuksista, sillä osa musiikin opiskelua perustuu perinteiseen mestari-kisälli -malliin, kuten henkilökohtainen opetus, harjoittelemine ja esiintyminen. Tämä artikkeliväitöskirja, joka on osa kansainvälistä Music Student Workload -projektia Suomessa ja Iso-Britanniassa, tutkii musiikin opiskelijoiden kokemuksia liittyen kuormitukseen, stressiin ja niistä selviytymiseen.

Tähän väitöskirjaan sisältyvässä neljässä kansainvälisesti vertaisarvioidussa julkaisussa raportoidaan ja kootaan yhteen tutkimusprojektin selittävä (explanatory) vaihe. Ensimmäisessä artikkelissa, joka on systemaattinen kirjallisuuskatsaus korkeakouluopiskelijoiden ja erityisesti musiikin opiskelijoiden kokemasta kuormituksesta, käytettiin laajennettua metaetnografiaa syntetisoimaan 29 kvalitatiivista, kvantitatiivista ja monimenetelmällistä (mixed methods) tutkimusta. Toisessa artikkelissa yhdistettiin transsendentaalisen fenomenologian lähestymistapa monimenetelmälliseen metodologiaan (kvantitatiivinen ja kvalitatiivinen) tutkittaessa musiikin opiskelijoiden kokemaa kuormitusta ja stressiä sekä niiden yhteyttä heidän käyttämiinsä proaktiivisiin selviytymistapoihin. Samaa lähestymistapaa hyödynnettiin kolmannessa artikkelissa, jossa tarkasteltiin, miten musiikin opiskelijoiden toimeentulo vaikutti heidän kokemaansa



kuormitukseen ja stressiin. Neljännessä artikkelissa, jossa käytettiin kvalitatiivista metodologiaa, suositellaan työkaluja opettajille musiikin opiskelijoiden tukemiseen heidän kokemansa kuormituksen hallinnassa ja siitä selviytymisessä. Toisessa, kolmannessa ja neljännessä artikkelissa aineisto koostui Kuormitus, stressi ja selviytyminen -kyselyyn annetuista vastauksista yhteensä 155 musiikkiopiskelijalta (108 Suomessa ja 47 Iso-Britanniassa), joista 29 osallistui myöhempiin haastatteluihin.

Tulokset siitä, miten musiikin opiskelijoiden kuormitusta kannattaa käsitellä, koottiin yhteen suositukseksi opiskelijoille, opettajille, hallinnolle sekä opiskelijoiden terveys- ja hyvinvointipalveluille. Suosituksissa ehdotetaan, että musiikin korkeakoulutuksen oppilaitoksissa pyritään tunnistamaan hyviä käytäntöjä musiikin opiskelijoiden proaktiivisten selviytymistaitojen tukemiseksi. On myös tärkeää löytää ratkaisuja epätasaisiin kuormitus- ja stressikokemuksiin vähävaraisten ja vauraampien opiskelijoiden, eri sukupuolten sekä eri koulutusohjelmien välillä. Lisäksi opettajien jatkuva ammatillinen kehittyminen on varmistettava erityisesti oppimiskeskeisissä pedagogisissa lähestymistavoissa.

Tässä väitöskirjassa suositellaan investoimaan musiikin opiskelijoiden kokemuksia käsitteleviin pitkittäistutkimuksiin, kulttuurien välisiin tutkimuksiin sekä interventiotutkimuksiin, joilla voidaan ohjata musiikin korkeakoulutuksen koulutuspolitiikkaa ja pedagogisia käytäntöjä. Lisäksi yleisissä opiskelijoiden kuormitusta koskevissa koulutusteorioissa pitää huomioida musiikin opiskelijoiden erityishaasteet ja voimavarat liittyen kuormituksesta ja stressistä selviytymiseen.

**Asiasanat:** Kokemus, korkeakoulutus, koulutuspolitiikka, kuormitus, monimenetelmäisyys, monistrateginen lähestymistapa, musiikin opiskelija, pedagogiset käytännöt, selviytyminen, stressi, transsendentaalinen fenomenologia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the many individuals who have supported me throughout my doctoral journey and the completion of this dissertation. First and foremost, my sincere thanks go to all the music students who participated in this study by generously sharing their time and experiences with me. Without your contributions, this research would not have been possible.

I would like to thank my supervisors for their invaluable guidance, support, and mentorship throughout my doctoral studies. Their expertise and feedback have been crucial to the success of this dissertation, and I am deeply grateful for their contributions as co-authors in the articles. Thank you so much, my primary supervisor Docent, Dr. Guadalupe López-Íñiguez. I have learnt so much from you as a researcher. Your constructivist approach as a supervisor has made possible for me to acquire skills and knowledge that I would not otherwise have been able to master without your mentoring. You understood my wishes and ideas right away and encouraged me to reach for my limits—and even more. Our research journey together (including adventures abroad) has included hard work, but also so much joy and lovely memories. Thank you, supervisor Prof. Heidi Westerlund for your wisdom and all your practical and collegial support with my development as a doctoral researcher. You said “yes” every time when I asked for funding for one more extra course at other universities, and thus had a significant impact on my professional career. Thank you, supervisor Dr. Kai Lehtikainen for your insightful ideas about neoliberalism and coping, which became crucial parts of the articles and this dissertation, and for your warm support throughout these years. Thank you, Dr. Michelle Phillips; without you my research project would not have been international. Your encouraging supervision during my exchange studies in the United Kingdom and your skills as a co-author have been invaluable. Thank you, Prof. Marja-Leena Juntunen, Prof. Anna Parpala, and Prof. Emeritus Noel Entwistle for your invaluable supervision in the first years of my doctoral studies. Thank you, Prof. Biranda Ford from Guildhall School of Music and Drama and Prof. Andrea Creech from McGill University for the

pre-examination of the dissertation. Thank you, Prof. Jane Ginsborg from the Royal Northern College of Music and Dr. Anna Zabuska for providing your expertise as opponents in the 90% seminar. Your profound comments helped me to develop the clarity and quality of this dissertation. In addition, I am very grateful for you Prof. Jane Ginsborg for seeing and believing in my potential during my time as an exchange student at the Royal Northern College of Music in the United Kingdom. Thank you, Dr. Catherine Grant and Dr. Leah Coutts for your inspiring supervision during my exchange studies in the Queensland Conservatorium in Australia. For the statistical supervision, I am very grateful to Dr. Christian Hakulinen at the University of Helsinki, Prof. Samantha Low-Choy at Griffith University, Dr. Kimmo Vehkalahti at the University of Helsinki, and Dr. Matti Vuorre at Oxford University. I am also grateful to the blind reviewers of the published articles for their sharp comments and excellent suggestions.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Faculty of Music Education, Jazz and Folk Music at the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, which has supported my career not only as a doctoral researcher but also as an administrator. I would like to acknowledge the support of my colleagues and friends who have provided encouragement, advice, and a sense of community throughout my doctoral studies in the MuTri doctoral school. Thank you Elina Arlin, Hanna Backer Johnsen, Dr. Cecilia Björk, Analiá Capponi-Savolainen, Sunny Choi, Lisa Fornhammar, Martin Galmiche, Sigrid Jordal-Havre, Dr. Liisamaija Hautsalo, Dr. Marja Heimonen, Dr. Alexis Kallio, Hanna Kamensky, Dr. Olli-Taavetti Kankkunen, Dr. Sanna Kivijärvi, Dr. Taru Koivisto, Dr. Minja Koskela, Dr. Anna Kuoppamäki, Neea Lamminmäki, Dr. Tuulikki Laes, Johanna Lehtinen-Schnabel, Katri Liira, Dr. Laura Miettinen, Dr. Susanna Mesiä, Dr. Sari Muhonen, Kati Nieminen, Dr. Hanna Nikkanen, Hanne Närhinsalo, Prof. Albi Odendaal, Dr. Aleksi Ojala, Prof. Heidi Partti, Timo Pihkanen, Simo Rantanen, Dr. Guillermo Rosabal-Coto, Mikko Seppänen, Dr. Eeva Siljamäki, Antti Snellman, Dr. Katja Thomson, Dr. Vilma Timonen, Linda Toivanen, Dr. Danielle Treacy, Tuulia Tuovinen, Prof. Lauri Väkevä, and others. I especially want to thank our writing therapy group: Thank you for your love and support, Susanna, Laura, Eeva and Katja, and our coach Dr. Carol Kiriakos.

In addition, Taru and Danielle, I am extremely thankful for your emotional and practical support in the finalising stage of this dissertation.

I am very thankful to Elina Laakso for her warm support during my working and studying years at the Sibelius Academy, to Dr. Hannele Ketomäki for her collegial support, to Dr. Natalie Lewandowski-Cox for her care and friendship in Australia, to Liisa Jaakonaho for her peer-support and a memorable conference journey in New Zealand, to Hannu Tolvanen for responsibly administrating the doctoral study process, to Henri Wegelius for his support finalising this dissertation, to Dr. Christopher TenWolde for his high-quality work with revising the English language in the articles and in the kappa, to Janne Ketola for the layout of the dissertation, to Satu Grönlund for designing the cover, to Harri Ollikainen and Ryan Weymouth for the library services during my research process, and to Heta Muurinen and Karoliina Pirkkanen for great help in disseminating the research results. I would like to thank the faculty members and students in the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, in Australia, and in the Royal Northern College of Music, in the United Kingdom for lovely study experiences as a doctoral exchange student. My warm thanks also goes to all of my colleagues at the University of the Arts Helsinki, Aalto University, and University of Helsinki, where I was working as an administrator at the same time as I was conducting my doctoral studies. In addition, thank you team members in AW Academy training and Sofigate for your encouragement and support in the final stage of this dissertation.

Finally, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to my family for their love, encouragement, and unwavering support throughout my academic journey. Thank you, my dear children. Thank you Milja for your visual artwork in the article, thank you Jere for your help as a programmer in the statistical analysis, and thank you Mikael for showing me a real-life example of what it is to be a higher education student in these days. Thank you Lauri for being an example of persistence in studying, and thank you Sakari for being an example of hard working in life. Thank you, my daughter-in-law Mari for all the intellectual discussions. Thank you, my dear twin sister Tiina Kärki, you have supported me always and in everything throughout my life. Thank you,

my dear big brother Mikko for your beautiful artwork in the cover of this dissertation. Thank you, my dear little brother Timo for important moments that gave me the strength to go through the final steps to get the dissertation ready. My dear parents, mom Arja and dad Erkki, thank you for your unconditional love and support in my life. Finally, thank you Jouni, you are such a loving and supporting husband. Your endless encouragement and belief in me have made the completion of my doctoral journey possible.

My lovely granddaughters Siiri and Sara—you are my sunshine. I dedicate this work to you.

Espoo, March 2023

Tuula Jääskeläinen



ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ORIGINAL ARTICLES

This dissertation is based on the following four original publications, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals (Articles I–IV):

- I. Jääskeläinen, T., López-Íñiguez, G., & Phillips, M. (2022). Music students' experienced workload in higher education: A systematic review and recommendations for good practice. *Musicae Scientiae*. [https://doi.org/ 10.1177/10298649221093976](https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649221093976) (As found in Appendix 1)
- II. Jääskeläinen, T., López-Íñiguez, G., & Lehtikainen, K. (2022). Experienced workload, stress, and coping among professional students in higher music education: An explanatory mixed methods study in Finland and the United Kingdom. *Psychology of Music*. [https://doi.org/ 0.1177/03057356211070325](https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356211070325) (As found in Appendix 2)
- III. Jääskeläinen, T., López-Íñiguez, G., & Phillips, M. (2020). Music students' experienced workload, livelihoods and stress in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom. *Music Education Research*, 22(5), 505–526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2020.1841134> (As found in Appendix 3)
- IV. Jääskeläinen, T., & López-Íñiguez, G. (2022). Tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education. *Frontiers in Education*. [https://doi.org/ 10.3389/feduc.2022.895090](https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.895090) (As found in Appendix 4)

## **Electronic data sets and published protocols of the dissertation**

Jääskeläinen, Tuula. (2020). Music students' experienced workload, livelihoods and stress in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom [Anonymised data set]. In Music Education Research (Vol. 22, Number 5, pp. 505–526). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2020.1841134>

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## Additional published articles by the author relevant to the dissertation

Jääskeläinen, T. (2022). “Music is my life”: Examining the connections between music students’ workload experiences in higher education and meaningful engagement in music. *Research Studies in Music Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X221104296>

Jääskeläinen, T. (2022). Music students’ workload, stress, and coping in higher education: Evidence-based policymaking. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.846666>

Jääskeläinen, T. (2022). Using a transcendental phenomenological approach as a model to obtain a meaningful understanding of music students’ experienced workload in higher education. *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, 23(6), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.26209/ijea23n6>

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Backer Johnsen, H., ... Jääskeläinen, T., & al. (2020). Collaboratively navigating liminality in music education doctoral studies. In T. Laes & L. Hautsalo (Eds.), *Remarks on a visionary’s journey: An anthology celebrating Heidi Westerlund* (pp. 194–220). Helsinki: Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki.

Jääskeläinen, T., & López-Íñiguez, G. (2017). How about equality and equity in higher music education? A theoretical framework for researching quality of music teaching and learning. (Awarded as “HEAd2017 Best Doctoral Student Paper”) In J. Domenech, M.C. Vincent-Vela, E. de la Poza & D. Blazquez (Eds.) *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd’17)*. Valencia, Spain: Universitat Politècnica de València, 775–783. <https://doi.org/10.4995/HEAd17.2017.54>

Jääskeläinen, T. (2016). Tavoitteena opetuksen kehittämistä tukevan luotettavan tutkimustiedon tuottaminen Sibelius-Akatemiassa – tapausesimerkkinä opiskelijoiden kokeman kuormittavuuden pilottitutkimus [Aiming to produce reliable research findings for supporting development of teaching in the Sibelius Academy – Pilot study in students’ experiences of workload as a case example]. *Finnish Journal of Music Education*, 19(1), 60–67.

## **Awards relevant to the dissertation**

Graduate Award at the International Symposium on Performance Science (ISPS 2021). Montreal, Canada. October 26–30, 2021.

Best Doctoral Student Paper Award at the 3rd International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'17). Valencia, Spain. June 21–23, 2017.

## **Presentations by the author relevant to the dissertation**

### *Keynote address*

Jääskeläinen, T. (2021). Music students' workload, stress and coping in higher education: Evidence-based policymaking. (Awarded as "ISPS 2021 Graduate Award"). Online presentation. International Symposium on Performance Science. Montreal, Canada. October 26–30, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UD4eIsdhs-I>

### *Conference presentations*

Jääskeläinen, T. (2022). Exploring students' workload experiences in higher music education: Visions for equity in pedagogical practices. Online roundtable presentation. International Society for Music Education 35th ISME World Conference. Brisbane, Australia, July 17–22, 2022.

Jääskeläinen, T. (2021). Music students' experienced workload, livelihoods and stress in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom. Online presentation. Mini-Symposia on Bayesian Statistics. Brisbane, Australia. March 23, 2021.

Jääskeläinen, T. (2021). Promoting equality and well-being by researching students' experienced workload in higher music education. Paper presentation in the plenary panel of Art, health, welfare and care: Reflections on some results in the ArtsEqual research initiative. 11th Midterm Conference of the European Sociological Association Research Network Sociology of the Arts. Helsinki, Finland. March 9–12, 2021.

Jääskeläinen, T., López-Íñiguez, G., & Phillips, M. (2019). Students' experienced workload in higher music education. A mixed methods systematic review. Poster presentation by G. López-Íñiguez on behalf of the research team. 7th International Symposium on Performance Science. Melbourne, Australia. July 16–20, 2021.

Jääskeläinen, T., & López-Íñiguez, G. (2019). Students' experienced workload in higher music education. Poster presentation. 11th International Research in Music Education Conference. Bath, the United Kingdom. April 23–26, 2019.

Jääskeläinen, T. (2017). Researching students' workload in pursuing a more holistic approach to equality and equity in higher music education. Paper presentation. 7th World Arts Alliance for Education Conference "Engaging with Communities: Creative Pedagogies". Auckland, New Zealand. November 22–25, 2017.

Jääskeläinen, T., & López-Íñiguez, G. (2017). La carga de trabajo de los estudiantes de música como factor de equidad en los estudios superiores. Poster presentation. 1st International Conference on Music Psychology and Music Performance CONPSIMUSICA "La Psicología en la Música: Creación, Prácticas Educativas e Interpretación". Madrid, Spain. October 5–7, 2017.

Jääskeläinen, T., & López-Íñiguez, G. (2017). Students' workload as an equity factor in higher music education. Poster presentation. 6th International Symposium on Performance Science. Reykjavik, Iceland. August 30–September 2, 2017.

Jääskeläinen, T., & López-Íñiguez, G. (2017). How about equality and equity in higher music education? A theoretical framework for researching quality of music teaching and learning. Paper presentation. 3rd International Conference on Higher Education Advances. Valencia, Spain. June 21–23, 2017.

Jääskeläinen, T. (2016). Aiming to produce reliable research findings for supporting development of teaching in the Sibelius Academy: A pilot study in students' experiences of workload as a case example. Paper presentation. 21st Nordic Network for Research in Music Education Conference "Technology and Creativity in Music Education". Hamar, Norway. March 7–10, 2016.

Jääskeläinen, T. (2015). Researching approaches to learning in higher music education. Paper presentation. 20th Nordic Network for Research in Music Education Conference "Activism in Music Education". Helsinki, Finland. March 3–5, 2015.

Jääskeläinen, T. (2014). Evaluating quality of learning in higher music education. Paper presentation. 19th Nordic Network for Research in Music Education Conference "Knowledge Formation in Music". Stockholm, Sweden. April 23–25, 2014.

## **Funding statement**

This research was partially conducted as part of the ArtsEqual (Arts as a Public Service: Strategic Steps Towards Equality) research initiative funded by the Academy of Finland's Strategic Research Council (n:o 314223/2017). It has also been funded by the Center for Educational Research and Academic Development in the Arts (CERADA) and the MuTri Doctoral School at the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki. I have also received travel grants from the Sibelius Academy Foundation and Sibelius-Akatemian opettajat ja virkailijat ry. The research project involved an exchange student period in 2018 (four months at the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, Australia, and four months in the Royal Northern College of Music, United Kingdom) that was funded by the Sibelius Academy Foundation and the University of the Arts Helsinki. Funding for the layout of this summary kappa was received from the Sibelius Academy Foundation and Sibelius-Akatemian opettajat ja virkailijat ry.

## **Statement of co-authorship**

I co-authored Articles I and III with Guadalupe López-Íñiguez and Michelle Phillips, Article II with Guadalupe López-Íñiguez and Kai Lehtikainen, and Article IV with Guadalupe López-Íñiguez. López-Íñiguez and Lehtikainen were members of the supervision steering group of the research project, and co-writing with them formed a part of the supervising process. Phillips acted as an external supervisor during my doctoral exchange studies in the United Kingdom. As the first author of all the articles, I was responsible for the overall structure, core content, and conclusions of the studies, as well as carrying out the projects from the beginning to the end. The writing processes were equal and collaborative.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation reports on an investigation of music students' experienced workload, stress, and coping in higher education. Higher music education institutions have experienced rapid global changes over the last 30 years. These changes have resulted in a need to enhance students' employability, develop curricula and pedagogies to support learning in contemporary and future contexts, and strengthen the "student voice" so as to be able to act on students' expressed wishes (Gaunt, Duffy, et al., 2021, p. 2). Thus, there is a need to gather the most current evidence on the various types of music students' experiences during their years of study in higher education

Central to this dissertation is the importance of increasing the understanding of the higher education context for music students, because it differs in many ways from that of students in other disciplines. Classical music practices developed in music conservatories in the nineteenth century constitute the foundation of higher music education institutions,<sup>1</sup> and studying music even today tends to follow these traditions: for example, one-to-one tuition,<sup>2</sup> practising, and performing (e.g., Bull, 2019; Gaunt, López-Íñiguez, et al., 2021; Kingsbury, 1988; Pozo et al., 2022). Music students usually start studying music during childhood (Norton, 2016). Thus, they have a more prolonged engagement with the subject than students who choose it when entering higher education. In higher education, music students have the same sources of stress as other students, such as general life issues, time management, and coursework, but also high performance expectations (McConkey & Kuebel, 2022). For example, performing music students are constantly scrutinised by peers, teachers, performers, and the general public

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in the United Kingdom, where part of this investigation took place, we can find institutions such as the Royal Academy of Music (established 1822), the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (1880), the Royal College of Music (1882), the Birmingham Conservatoire (1886), the London College of Music (1887), the Glasgow Athenaeum School of Music (now the Royal Scottish Conservatoire, 1890), and the Manchester College of Music (now the Royal Northern College of Music, 1893) (see, Bull, 2019, p. 57).

<sup>2</sup> In this dissertation, one-to-one tuition refers to individual tuition, a key teaching and learning method in the instrumental and vocal training of musicians (Carey & Grant, 2015).



on the basis of their performances or rehearsals, which are often publicly seen and heard (e.g., López-Íñiguez & Burnard, 2022; Nielsen, 2004). These social-evaluative stressors can negatively affect music students while increasing their sense of control and reducing their self-consciousness (Guyon et al., 2022). For example, music students seem to show higher levels of performance anxiety determined by social evaluation in solo public performances than in group public performances, or when practising (Cox & Kenardy, 1993). In addition, performing music students are exposed to high degrees of competition due to the individualistic nature of the master-apprentice tradition and the characteristics of the traditional conservatoire model (Long et al., 2012; López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020). The social environment can also cause pressures in studying music, because ensembles and other groups have expectations, such as the amount of time and commitment that a music student should contribute (Park et al., 2007).

One way to approach these specific educational practices and policies in higher music education is to investigate music students' workload experiences. The topics of music students' health and well-being have been widely researched (e.g., Ginsborg et al., 2009), including during the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Habe et al., 2021), and the results have been utilised to support music students' study practices (e.g., Joukamo-Ampuja et al., 2007; Matei et al., 2018). However, despite the great amount of research evidence available on student workload in general fields in higher education, findings regarding *music students' experienced workload*<sup>3</sup> in higher music education settings are lacking. The evidence from general educational fields indicates that students' workload greatly affects their experiences in studying and well-being (Salmela-

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<sup>3</sup> In this dissertation, students are defined as people studying at higher education institutions, and music students as students registered in an academic degree programme within a university music department or at a superior/high conservatoire, with the aspiration of becoming a professional musician or working in a music-related profession (e.g., orchestral, chamber, or church musician; solo singer or performer; conductor; composer; music teacher; festival manager). In such a context, experienced workload refers to (music) students' experiences of their studies. These experiences include students' perceptions of the components of workload, its contributing factors, and its (positive and negative) consequences. For a more profound definition see Article I (Appendix 1).

Aro & Read, 2017). The results point to specific causes inside and outside higher education for the students' heavy workload, such as stress, lack of time management skills, working alongside studying, and life issues (Bowyer, 2012). The importance of researching student workload has been justified by the fact that unmanageable workloads may lead to student burnout and other harmful consequences, such as students' decreased engagement and motivation, an increased risk that students will drop out, and extended years of study (Bowyer, 2012; Chambers, 1992; Dews & Williams, 1989; Jagodics & Szabó, 2022; Marsh, 2001).

Recommendations based on the findings of such research to pay attention to student workload in higher education have been available since the early 1970s (Clift & Thomas, 1973). Despite that, pressures on students have become an even stronger part of the current academic culture (Salmela-Aro & Read, 2017). Research conducted in contexts relevant to this dissertation in Finland and the United Kingdom exemplify this trend. For example, research in the context of higher education in Finland has shown an alarming growth in students' psychological distress, which may be connected to various and increased environmental and institutional demands on students (Oksanen et al., 2017). In the United Kingdom, findings in the Mental Health Report 2018 (see Pereira et al., 2019) show that more than one-third of higher education students have experienced a severe psychological issue for which they felt they needed professional help. The rates of psychological distress and illness among students are rising.<sup>4</sup>

My interest in researching music students' experienced workload has evolved from my viewpoint as an administrator. After graduating with a Master of Education degree, I have worked twenty years in higher education administration at different universities in Finland. In my administrative work I first worked in multidisciplinary and science faculties. After that, I looked

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that when the COVID-19 pandemic caused stressful environmental changes affecting students' learning and coping strategies in higher education (Rogowska et al., 2021), there were increased levels of psychological distress reported, in particular among musicians (Cohen & Ginsborg, 2021; Spiro et al., 2021).

for new career opportunities and started to work in music faculties in 2011.<sup>5</sup> While doing so, I noticed a gap in the knowledge of how unique it is to study music compared to those fields in which studying is merely based on academic studies (Jääskeläinen, 2016; Jääskeläinen & López-Íñiguez, 2017). In addition, I often witnessed how many study-related decisions taken by administrators and teachers (directly impacting students' workload) were made without robust evidence. Moreover, I have seen much valuable data gathered from the students through innumerable questionnaires during their years of study. However, very little of that data is analysed and then utilised to develop pedagogical practices and educational policies.

In addition, although the data for this study was collected one year before the COVID-19 pandemic started, the crisis highlighted the need to investigate the everyday positive and negative experiences of professional musicians, including students (e.g., Cohen & Ginsborg, 2021; López-Íñiguez et al., 2022; Spiro et al., 2021). Likewise, it pointed out the need for tools that help assess multidimensional student workload in educational institutions (Therisa Beena & Sony, 2022). Thus, as much as this dissertation has been a project to produce knowledge of music students' experiences, it has also been a way for me to contribute to developing both my own and other personnel's work in higher education. This dissertation reports on my doctoral research and its implications for practice in the form of recommendations for higher education institutions (particularly for managerial, administrative, and teaching staff, student health and well-being services, and students) and educational policymakers.

This dissertation is structured in seven parts, the first (1) of which is this introductory chapter outlining my motivations to conduct the study and the relevant research and scholarly discussions that form the foundations of the dissertation. The second chapter (2) introduces the Music Student Workload

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<sup>5</sup> In higher music education, the study programmes vary between institutions and faculties. In this dissertation, the survey respondents were junior, bachelor, master, and doctoral level students from study programmes in classical music (including different classical instruments, vocal music, and opera), music education, and other programmes (including church music, composition, conducting, folk music, global music, music technology, popular music, and arts management).

project, and the third chapter (3) outlines research in relevant topic areas adopted for this research project. The research questions, research design, and the specific research methods I used for this investigation are presented in the fourth chapter (4). The fifth chapter (5) wraps up the results and findings of the research reported in the four articles, which are included as appendices to this dissertation, as well as the evaluation of the Workload, Stress, and Coping questionnaire. The sixth chapter (6) extends this discussion to broader matters of supporting music students' coping with their experiences of workload and stress in higher education. The final chapter (7) summarises the main contribution of this dissertation, namely offering practical implications for the field of higher music education.



## 2 THE MUSIC STUDENT WORKLOAD PROJECT

This chapter presents the Music Student Workload (MSW) project, of which this dissertation and its related publications and dissemination presentations are the outcomes. In this dissertation, music students' experienced workload is approached as a human phenomenon and an everyday issue wherein students try to cope with the demands of higher education studies. The MSW project was established in 2017 as a research collaboration between the University of the Arts Helsinki in Finland and the Royal Northern College of Music in the United Kingdom.

The MSW project had two main aims. The first aim (1) was to investigate how the music students themselves experience their overall workload while enrolled in diverse higher music education study programmes. The second aim (2) was to contribute to pedagogical practices and educational policies by providing recommendations for higher music education institutions to support music students coping with their workload and stress. The non-comparative cross-national study design in Finland and the United Kingdom provided a fruitful context for this research topic. For example, the tuition fee systems differ profoundly between Finland and the United Kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1 shows the research stages and publications in the MSW project. In the *pilot stage* (before the research collaboration with the Royal Northern College of Music started), I worked as a head of academic development in the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, in Finland. As a part of my work, I could conduct a pilot study in two departments at the Sibelius Academy (Jääskeläinen, 2016) to test the standardised study workload and stress section of the Learn questionnaire used in the Finnish higher education context (i.e., Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). Furthermore, in the pilot stage, the potential theoretical and methodological

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<sup>6</sup> For example (see Jääskeläinen, 2021), the higher education system in the United Kingdom changed in 1998 from being publicly funded to being funded by tuition fees supported by an income contingent loan system for students. Higher education in Finland did not have a tuition fee system before 2010, and after that only students outside the European Union and the European Economic Area are required to pay tuition fees for Bachelor and Master level programmes (taught in English), although all Bachelor and Master level students pay a small annual student union fee (approximately 100 euros).

approaches to investigate music students' learning were also discussed in a conference presentation that was later developed into an article (Jääskeläinen & López-Íñiguez, 2017).

The MSW project was a cross-national research project. Therefore, it was important to take a closer look at the similarities and differences between higher music education systems in different countries and understand how these systems might be connected to educational equality, equity, justice, and cultural reproduction. This topic was scrutinised in a theoretical article (Jääskeläinen, 2021) that was a part of the *exploratory stage* of the MSW project. The exploratory stage also included a methodological article (Jääskeläinen, 2022b) providing a detailed description of how music students' lived experiences can be approached and analysed through transcendental phenomenology, which yielded an essential method for the MSW project to obtain a meaningful understanding of music students' experienced workload. In addition, one qualitative study was part of the exploratory stage. Its findings were reported in an article (Jääskeläinen, 2022c) discussing how the MSW project's interview participants' workload experiences were connected to their constructed meanings of engaging in music. Although the exploratory sequential design is usually used for developing quantitative tools (e.g., survey) after first collecting qualitative data (Creswell, 2008), in the MSW project the exploratory stage was particularly essential and necessary for my development as a researcher in this specific topic. I had working experience as an administrator in music faculties, but not as a professional music student in music study programmes.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the exploratory stage increased my understanding of the characteristics and essence of studying music in higher education and helped me to find a suitable methodological approach for this topic.

The next stage was the *explanatory stage*, which took place simultaneously with the exploratory stage. The purpose of this dissertation is to report the explanatory research that I conducted by taking a multistrategy approach, as it integrated quantitative and qualitative research to answer

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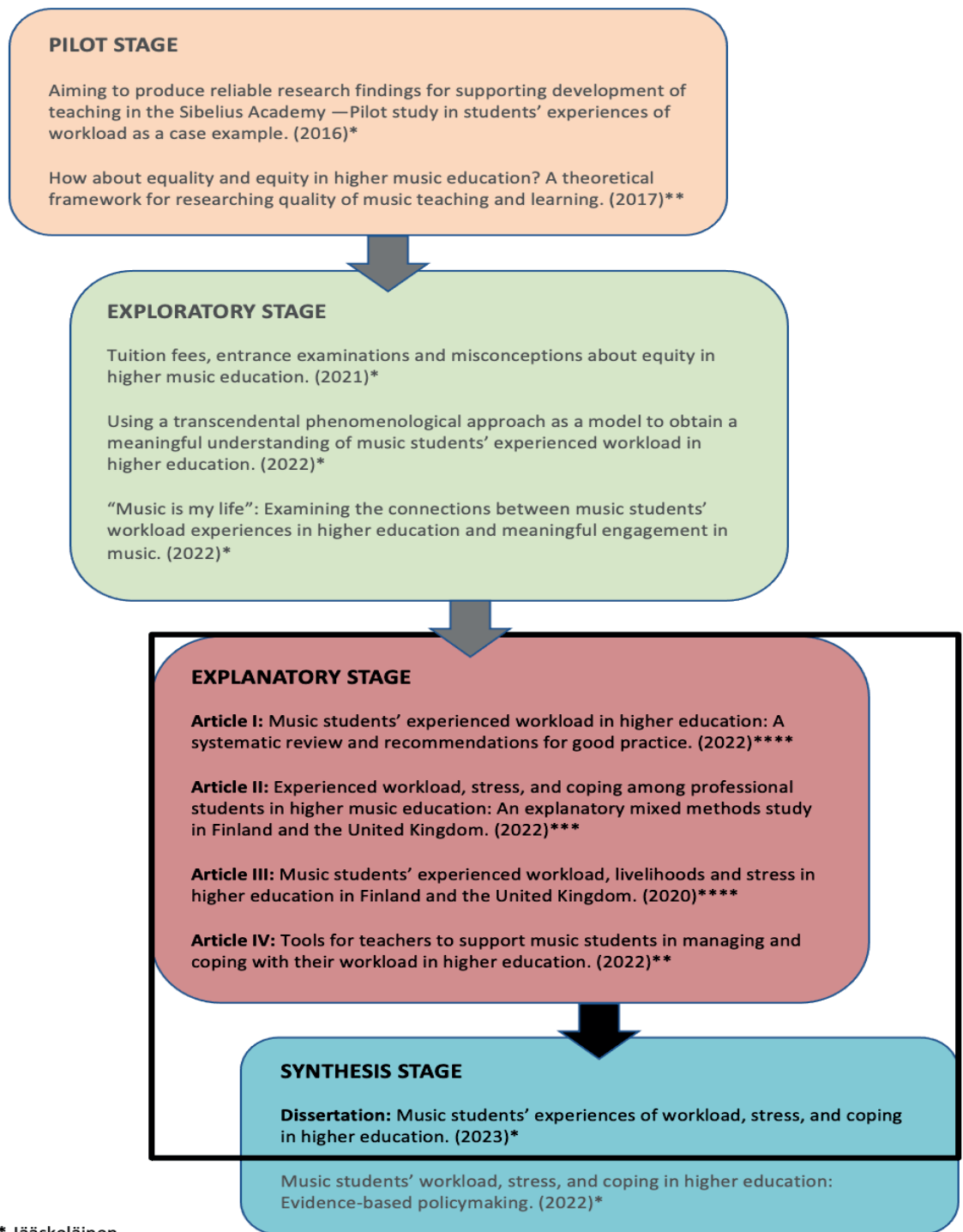
<sup>7</sup> The concept of a "study programme" is used in this dissertation because it is widely used in the higher education institutions in Finland. However, in the higher education institutions in the United Kingdom the concept used is "programme of study".

the overarching research question: *What are music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping in higher education?* The details of the studies I carried out to answer this question, and the recommendations I made based on the results and findings of each study, are presented in the four articles that form the appendices (hereafter, these four studies are referred to as Articles I–IV) and in the evaluation of the Workload, Stress, and Coping questionnaire used in the MSW project. In multistrategy research, it is crucial to present the rationale and how quantitative and qualitative research approaches were combined in practice (Bryman, 2006). Typically, in a mixed methods sequential explanatory design, the quantitative data are collected and analysed in the first sequence and the qualitative data in the second sequence—to support understanding of the quantitative results—and the two sequences are then connected (Ivankova et al., 2006). In the MSW project, however, the quantitative and qualitative data were equally important, as the aim was to gain both a wide and deep understanding of music students' experiences. In addition to the overarching research question mentioned above, four research sub-questions were formulated to guide the sub-questions in each article (see the details and relationships between research questions in the fourth chapter). The quantitative and qualitative data were collected both concurrently using a systematic literature search (Article I) and a survey (Articles II–IV), including open-ended items and validated questionnaires, and sequentially using the interviews (see Williamon et al., 2021). I then analysed the data using appropriate methods that are detailed in the fourth chapter. In the systematic literature review (Article I), the quantitative results and qualitative findings of the selected studies were synthesised. With the studies using participants' responses, I also synthesised the quantitative results and qualitative findings and interpreted them together (Articles II and III). The qualitative study (Article IV) complemented these analyses by providing practical recommendations as “tools for teachers” based on the findings of the participants' experiences. Finally, I evaluated the questionnaire that was used in order to show how it could be developed and used in future research projects in higher music education (see Appendix 9).

This extended summary of the dissertation, which can also be read independently of the attached articles, is a part of the *synthesis stage* of



the MSW project. In addition the synthesis stage includes an article in which I report meta-synthesis findings to provide policy and intervention recommendations for supporting music students coping with workload and stress in higher education (Jääskeläinen, 2022a).



\* Jääskeläinen

\*\* Jääskeläinen & López-Iñiguez

\*\*\* Jääskeläinen, López-Iñiguez, & Lehtikoinen

\*\*\*\* Jääskeläinen, López-Iñiguez, & Phillips

**Figure 1.** Research stages and publications in the Music Student Workload project. The frame around the explanatory stage and synthesis stage shows the publications reported in this dissertation (blue), including Articles I–IV (red).



### 3 MUSIC STUDENTS' EXPERIENCED WORKLOAD, STRESS, AND COPING

This chapter outlines research on music students' experienced workload, stress, and coping in higher education. The systematic literature review (Article I) formed a starting point for the explanatory stage of the MSW project and this dissertation. The purpose was to become familiar with theories and research in the broad topic area of students' workload, and to identify a particular gap that the research in the explanatory stage could fill. The 29 studies included in this review were conducted in the United States ( $n = 8$ ), the United Kingdom ( $n = 5$ ), Australia ( $n = 3$ ), Finland ( $n = 3$ ), Hong Kong ( $n = 2$ ), New Zealand ( $n = 2$ ), Belgium ( $n = 1$ ), China ( $n = 1$ ), Italy ( $n = 1$ ), Pakistan ( $n = 1$ ), Puerto Rico ( $n = 1$ ), Spain ( $n = 1$ ), and Sweden ( $n = 1$ ). The findings showed that much research on students' workload was available, but not on music students' workload. In addition, the previous research concentrated on objective, subjective, and perceived workload, but not on *experienced* workload. It was thus evident that research on music students' experiences would be needed.

From the literature, the experiences of studying were identified as a challenge for music students, but also a source of positive learning experiences, such as enjoyment and flow. Extended meta-ethnography (EME, a method of systematic review developed by Booker, 2010, p. 59) was used to create a synthesis revealing specific themes that offered recommendations for good practices for students, teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services as to how to deal with music students' workload: (1) music students' experienced workload and their ability to manage it, which they may have developed by themselves and/or with some support from their teachers and institutions, (2) workload in relation to, or arising from, interactions between teachers and music students, and 3) workload associated with the social and environmental factors involved in studying music in higher education, and ways in which institutions could help students cope with the experienced workload by focusing on their agency and, thus, increase their engagement in and satisfaction with learning. The next step for the explanatory stage of the MSW project was to refine these three recommendations for good practices by

carrying out original research (Articles II–IV) investigating music students’ self-reported experiences of workload—including workload-related stress—and the strategies they use to cope with it.

It is worth noting that published previous research has shown relatively similar categorization of student workload components, as Kyndt et al. (2014, p. 686) approached the students’ constructed perceptions of qualitative workload through components divided into three main categories: (1) characteristics of the teaching and learning environment, (2) characteristics of the assignment, and (3) personal characteristics of the learner (see also Kember & Leung, 2006). Likewise, Bowyer’s (2012, p. 248) approach consisted of six components: (1) institutional factors, (2) inherent difficulty, (3) assessment difficulty, (4) time, (5) student characteristics, and (6) student effort.

The empirical research for the first recommendation for good practice is reported in Article II, which reflects the first of the themes emerging from the systematic review aiming to explore music students’ experienced workload and their ability to manage it. Article II was informed by previous research on student workload, such as the factors influencing students’ perceived workload, and research on coping strategies (e.g., Greenglass et al., 1999, 2008) in connection with the research on the psychological and physical demands of studying music (e.g., Bernhard, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Williamon & Thompson, 2006). Within the second recommendation for good practice, concerning the interactions between teachers and music students, the framework for the empirical research in Article IV includes the research mentioned above on students’ experienced workload connected with the research on the constructivist approach in teaching and learning music (e.g., López-Íñiguez & Pozo, 2016; Pozo et al., 2022). Within the third recommendation for good practice, concerning the social and environmental factors involved in studying music in higher education, the framework for the empirical research in Article III is constructed through critical reflection on the effects of neoliberalism on educational systems (e.g., Fanghanel, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2019; Lewis, 2005; Thornton, 2012), and connected with the research on institutional learning cultures in higher music education (e.g., Papageorgi et al., 2010a, 2010b).

In summary, three overarching themes were drawn from the systematic

literature review (Article I) concerning (1) music students' experienced workload and their ability to manage it, (2) music students experienced workload related to interactions between teachers and music students, and (3) music students' experienced workload related to the social and environmental factors involved in studying music in higher education. These three themes were explored in empirical research using a survey and interviews, which produced a single dataset. To answer the overarching research question and four research sub-questions, the sub-questions related to each theme were raised separately, and they were addressed using different methods in order to analyse different components of the dataset in separate articles (Articles II–IV). Each article drew on slightly different literature to provide one or more sub-questions and a rationale for the methodological approach and methods used.

### **3.1 Music students' experienced workload and their ability to manage it**

The first theme drawn from the systematic literature review was music students' experienced workload and their ability to manage it. In that regard, higher education institutions have been called to support students to cope with their workloads (Kember, 2004), for example, through orientation or induction programmes, counselling, and stress-, life-, and time-management techniques (e.g., Bernhard, 2010; Kausar, 2010; Renard & Snelgar, 2015). Previous research shows that workload affects students' engagement with studying (Chambers, 1992), their quality of learning (Kyndt et al., 2014), and students' mental health in higher education (Porru et al., 2022). Although a heavy workload often has negative connotations among students (Kyndt et al., 2014), a bigger workload is not necessarily bad. Thus, Marsh (2001) argues that defining a good or bad workload depends on how it affects students' learning. According to Karjalainen et al. (2008), the aim should be to create circumstances in which the workload is appropriate for students to have enough time for studying within their individual capacity as a learner. In addition, the timing and number of assessments should be feasible (Giles, 2009). An overload may also harm the students' well-being and study success (Hernesniemi et al., 2017). On the other hand, an overly light workload may

lead to students losing interest in learning (Marsh, 2001). Thus, studying conditions with an appropriate workload may encourage students to find their own interest in learning. That, in turn, motivates them to take a deep approach to studying (Chambers, 1992), and to explore even more commitments and challenges within their studies (Marsh, 2001).

In previous research, student workload has been categorised as *objective* workload (number of hours spent on studying as an average student) and *subjective* workload (a particular student's characteristics and experience connected to the given circumstances for studying) (Bowyer, 2012). Kember and Leung (1998) argue that the objective workload explains only a very small part of the variance of students' perceived workload. Therefore, instead of measuring students' actual study time, they suggest investigating students' perceived workload (Kember, 2004; Kember & Leung, 2006). The perceived workload—or subjective workload—is a complex combination of the demands of studying and the effect of these demands on the student (Kyndt et al., 2014).

Following these suggestions about perceived workload, the MSW project concentrated on investigating music students' subjective, personal, and individual experiences of workload rather than reporting objective measures (such as time spent studying, completed credits, grades, or effects on memory and cognition). Thus, in line with previous research on students' perceptions of workload, in this dissertation, workload is considered a complex construct as suggested by Kember and Leung (2006), composed of various components and effects. The approach is holistic, considering the nature, meaning, and components of workload, students' curriculum-related workload (e.g., attendance at lectures, rehearsals, and practice sessions), and extracurricular activities that may contribute to experienced workload (e.g., paid and unpaid work). The interest is in all aspects of the students' positive, negative, or neutral experiences of workload in their studies. These experiences include students' perceptions of the components of workload, its contributing factors, and consequences.

As such, the workload definition is derived from the Finnish term *kuormittavuus* (load). According to the Finnish Thesaurus and Ontology Service (Finto, 2022), this encompasses the burden related to work under-

and overload, and includes both physical (e.g., musculoskeletal strain) and psychological (e.g., cognitive, ethical, emotional, mental, and psychosocial) aspects of workload. This dissertation considers that these aspects of workload can potentially be experienced in positive, neutral, or negative ways to different degrees.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, in this dissertation the particular interest is in the effects of the institutional practices in a specific field—namely, in higher music education—on music students’ experienced workload. According to Westerlund (2003), music students’ meaningful experiences while studying consist of both agency and social interaction. Thus, the lived and the practical perspective of the everyday life of students should be the starting point when exploring music in education, as well as studies in higher music education. “The musical experience is not a question of pure acoustic perception but is a much more complex mixture of musical doings and undergoings within the social and cultural environment” Westerlund (2003, p. 233) states.

### *3.1.1 Music students’ workload*

Experienced workload differs between students because perceptions are strongly connected to students’ personal experiences (Kyndt et al., 2014) and are specific to the individual (Pardos et al., 2022). Likewise, the perceptions of workload in a higher education context for music students differ from those in other disciplines, as they entail specific aspects and social contexts that are unique to music students. For example, bodily experiences are especially important in higher music education (Bresler, 2005), as music is made through and with the musician’s body, and skill development in music is likely to

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that in the Finnish language the concept of workload (*kuormittavuus*) is often considered as a neutral experience—more like an ideal and balanced load. In the research collaboration between Finland and the United Kingdom, it became evident that, in the English language, the concept of workload is considered more like overload than balanced load. There is another concept of workload in the Finnish language (*kuormittunut*) which refers to being overloaded, however that wording was not used in the Finnish research materials, in order to allow the participants to think about their workload experiences in as comprehensive a way as possible.



be more complex than in many other fields. When compared to many other learning environments, higher music education is a more competitive social environment, as it includes public juries, auditions, and competitions for music students (e.g., Long et al., 2012).

Moreover, music students face many physical and psychological demands that affect their well-being in studying. There is a growing amount of research available examining the issues specific to them, such as music students' painful musculoskeletal conditions (e.g., Cruder et al., 2018; Ginsborg et al., 2009; Zetterberg et al., 1998), health issues (e.g., Araújo et al., 2017; Perkins et al., 2017); performance anxiety (e.g., Matei & Ginsborg, 2017); and burnout (e.g., Zabuska et al., 2018). In the previously published research on studying music, workload is connected to the negative consequences that difficult or unmanageable study situations may result in for music students, such as burnout (Bernhard, 2007a) and mental illness (Koops & Kuebel, 2021). Students may have a heavy workload, measured objectively, but this is not necessarily experienced as a negative thing if they are passionate about their work and choose to do it. For example, music students' experiences of meaningful engagement in music, such as their passion and love for music, can be positive aspects of their workload (e.g., Bonneville-Roussy & Vallerand, 2020; Park et al., 2007). On the other hand, even if the source of workload is positive for music students, such as the enjoyment of playing an instrument, the consequences for well-being can be harmful, for example musculoskeletal pain (Cruder et al., 2018).

Research on student workload could be used to identify good practices to support students' learning, develop teaching, and create proper administrative systems in higher education (Smith, 2019). In addition, if music students' health, well-being, learning (Koops & Kuebel, 2021), and future careers (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2021) are to be supported, it is essential to gain a better understanding of the pressures on them and the resources available to them, ideally by finding out about their experiences directly from them.

### *3.1.2 Music students' stress*

Students' overload experiences are often connected to stress (Holloway et al., 2020). Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 19) define stress as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being”. Because workload and stress are combined in a complex way, scholars investigating students' workload emphasise that more research is needed: in particular about students' time and stress management, and how increasing coping skills can affect students' ability to deal with workload, learning, distress, and burnout in higher education (Amirkhan & Kofman, 2018; Jacobs & Dodd, 2003; Kember, 2004). For example, Deasy et al. (2014) found in their study on psychological distress and coping among higher education students that many students' reported stress was related to their perceived workload. These authors suggest that “real recognition of the deleterious impact of student stress is needed in order to foster more proactive engagement with student stress by higher education providers” (Deasy et al., 2014, p. 19).

Indeed, studying in higher education includes many pressures connected to workload that cause stress for students, such as exams, overlapping deadlines, negative feedback (Holloway et al., 2020), curriculum (Kember, 2004), student life, finance-related issues, and balancing work with studying (Pereira et al., 2019). The workload can be experienced as stressful, but it is not always a negative experience if the stress leads to increased motivation and better attainments in studying (Smith, 2019). However, suppose students' psychological distress—a transient emotional response to stress—is left untreated. This can cause depression and anxiety and lead to risky behaviour, physical illness, and more serious mental health disorders (Deasy et al., 2014). Previous research indicates that there are specific stressors affecting music students' studies, such as performance anxiety (Matei & Ginsborg, 2017), perfectionism (Bernhard, 2007a), stage fright (Nogaj, 2017), critical incidents (López-Íñiguez & Burnard, 2022), and career concerns as musicians (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2021). In addition, differences in stress have been reported, particularly between genders; female music students report experiencing more stress than male music students (Zetterberg et al., 1998).

### *3.1.3 Proactive coping styles*

In addition to time load and psychological stress, Pardos et al. (2022) suggest investigating multi-faceted student workload in higher education with the component of mental effort, which influences the strategies used to deal with the complexity and cognitive difficulty of completing a task. Indeed, students' psychological well-being can be supported by teaching them to use effective coping skills, which they can also utilise in their future careers (Deasy et al., 2014). For example, in effective coping, students proactively utilise preventive strategies before they face stressful situations or their workload accumulates to an unmanageable level. Students cope differently with their workload and stress—some students use positive methods such as seeking social support and leisure activities; however, some students use maladaptive strategies such as substance use, comfort eating, or ignoring stressful situations (Deasy et al., 2014). Understanding music students' coping with diverse experiences of workload and stress is crucial for institutions to support students' proactive coping in multiple positive ways, as described above. Thus, in order to find and demonstrate positive ways for institutions to support music students' coping, this dissertation utilises proactive coping styles with seven dimensions, as defined by Greenglass (2002): (1) proactive coping, (2) reflective coping, (3) strategic planning, (4) preventive coping, (5) instrumental support seeking, (6) emotional support seeking, and (7) avoidance coping (Table 1).<sup>9</sup> According to Greenglass (2002), proactive coping styles benefit individuals because they support health and life quality when individuals utilise social resources to achieve goals, meet challenges, support personal growth, and increase control.

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<sup>9</sup> In previous research, the dimension of avoidance coping has been understood either as an effective coping method when reflecting “one’s tendency to wait, reflect and see things more clearly before directly dealing with a problem” (Rocha et al., 2014, p. 474), or as a maladaptive coping method if one’s tendency towards avoiding behaviour leads to procrastination (Verešová, 2013). In the MSW project, the dimension of avoidance coping was included and understood as an effective coping method. However, some scholars have decided to exclude it from the proactive coping inventory (see, e.g., Renard & Snelgar, 2013).

**Table 1.** Proactive coping styles (Greenglass et al., 1999, pp. 6–7)

Dimension	Description
Proactive coping	Combines autonomous goal setting with self-regulatory goal attainment cognitions and behaviour.
Reflective coping	Describes simulation and contemplation about a variety of possible behavioural alternatives by comparing their imagined effectiveness and includes brainstorming, analysing problems and resources, and generating hypothetical plans of action.
Strategic planning	Focuses on the process of generating a goal-oriented schedule of action in which extensive tasks are broken down into manageable components.
Preventive coping	Deals with anticipation of potential stressors and the initiation of preparation before these stressors develop fully.
Instrumental support seeking	Focuses on obtaining advice, information, and feedback from people in one's social network when dealing with stressors.
Emotional support seeking	Is aimed at regulating temporary emotional distress by disclosing to others feelings, evoking empathy and seeking companionship from one's social network.
Avoidance coping	Eludes action in a demanding situation by delaying.

### **3.2 Music students' experienced workload related to interactions between teachers and students**

The second theme drawn from the systematic literature review was music students' experienced workload related to the interactions between teachers and students. Norton (2016) emphasises the complexities of the relationship between music teachers and students, which is typically highly influential on the latter. She points to the importance of clarifying the extent to which teachers should be considered responsible for their students' general and musical development. Renard and Snelgar (2015) suggest that teachers should provide constructive feedback on assessments and support students struggling to cope. Teachers' behaviour in their interactions with students influences students' motivation to study (Jagodics & Szabó, 2022). A deep approach to learning can be supported when students' appropriate workload is connected to a learner-centred learning environment, for example when teachers support students by providing individual study paths (Baeten et al., 2010). Previous research indicates that teachers can increase both the demands and quality of learning without increasing students' perceived workload if they can maintain a constructive, cooperative atmosphere in the class (Kember & Leung, 2006), and when the assessment supports students' learning processes (Hernesniemi et al., 2017). In addition, if the curriculum and teaching support students' personal

growth and career opportunities, they feel that the learning is useful for them, which may increase their engagement in studying (Jagodics & Szabó, 2022).

Research in instrumental music teaching and learning at elementary levels has shown that teachers' beliefs and practices have a great impact (both positive and negative) on students' learning strategies and lived experiences, teaching and learning beliefs, studying autonomy, and a sense of engagement in the classroom (López-Íñiguez & Pozo, 2014a, 2014b, 2016). Conceptions held by teachers and students about teaching and learning can be considered to be some of the most relevant factors in pursuing the change in educational practices; thus, research on the beliefs and practices prevalent in teaching and learning music may offer essential knowledge for pursuing this kind of conceptual change at all levels of education, including music schools, conservatoires, and music universities (see Pozo et al., 2022). However, studies on the conceptions and practices of teaching and learning music show that instruction still largely focuses on transmitting the musical and technical knowledge needed to produce the correct sound (e.g., Bautista et al., 2010; López-Íñiguez & Pozo, 2014b; Marín et al., 2013).

In that respect, López-Íñiguez and Pozo (2014a, 2014b) have shown that studies of how teachers and students conceive the learning and teaching of instrumental music when the students are still children tend to identify two extreme instructional positions: one focusing on the transmission of established knowledge, usually called traditional or direct, and the other, usually known as constructive, focusing on the students' knowledge and capabilities. The latter approach fosters cooperation through more dialogical learning spaces and promotes student metacognition and self-regulation. Moreover, López-Íñiguez and Pozo (2014a, 2014b) have found a relationship between teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning and the way their students process musical scores, such that conceptions correspond to processing levels. For example, constructive conceptions would promote more complex ways of understanding scores than traditional conceptions. Teaching according to constructivist principles requires activating, stimulating, and developing the student's mental processes through reflection and scaffolding. Thus, one of the aims of learner-centred pedagogies that are linked to music students' coping with studying

music is to empower students to learn to regulate and manage their own cognitive and motor processes autonomously and to develop their individual musicianship under the guidance and supervision of teachers who focus on students' reflective, metacognitive, emotional, and affective processes (in line with López-Íñiguez, 2017).

Holistic and learner-centred teaching can promote “a deep understanding based on the integration of students' prior knowledge and curricular outcomes, as well as helping students to take metacognitive control of their own learning” (López-Íñiguez et al., 2014, p. 158). Such an approach can support student agency (e.g., Westerlund, 2003) and make teaching and learning more engaging and satisfying for both teacher and student (López-Íñiguez & Pozo, 2016). These approaches have also been identified across the lifespan of diverse people engaging in instrumental and vocal music learning (Gaunt, López-Íñiguez, et al., 2021). However, according to Pozo et al. (2022), even though teachers are aware of the theoretical assumptions underlying constructivist models, they are often unable to successfully put them into practice in the music classroom (see also Gaunt, 2008). Therefore, the practical examples of music students' experienced workload in this dissertation may help teachers better understand learner-centredness from the students' point of view.

### **3.3 Music students' experienced workload related to social and environmental factors involved in studying music in higher education**

The third theme drawn from the systematic literature review was music students' experienced workload related to social and environmental factors involved in studying music in a higher education context. There are elements of students' lives that affect their workload and over which teachers and course administrators have no control. For example, changes in how higher education institutions are funded or rising tuition fees have resulted in financial concerns for students. As a result, they may have to take on (more) extracurricular paid work. Coupled with inequalities between students from different levels of family income and support, these are potential sources of stress (Beban & Trueman, 2018). In addition, sudden, unexpected and stressful changes in

learning circumstances, such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, may also affect music students' well-being (Habe et al., 2021), practice habits and behaviours (López-Íñiguez et al., 2022), and everyday life (Rosset et al., 2021). These changes may, in turn, affect their experiences of workload.

The viewpoint of music students' experienced workload connected to educational arrangements and inequalities may offer a way to lighten the load placed solely on students' shoulders. It is also crucial to address concerns about students' workload, due to higher music education practices and policies that still largely follow the nineteenth-century traditions of music conservatoires (Bull, 2019). By identifying elements within the teaching and learning environment that can support or hinder student learning, potential problems can be found and changes can be implemented to facilitate more positive environments (Rusticus et al., 2022). Furthermore, elements that are identified as critical strengths can continue to be supported and fostered. Thus, it is crucial to contextualise the teaching and learning environment that affects music students' experienced workload. After the effect of traditions deriving from the nineteenth-century conservatoire system, contemporary neoliberalism's influence on higher music education is the second topic that requires critical scrutiny. Neoliberalism is defined here as "the set of intellectual streams, policy orientations and regulatory arrangements that strive to extend market mechanisms, relations, discipline and ethos to an ever-expanding spectrum of spheres of social activities" (Pinson & Morel *Journal*, 2016, p. 137), including higher education.

In 2005, in higher education in Finland and many other European countries, the Bologna Declaration standardised the measure of student workload (Kolari et al., 2006). In Finland, the Bologna process introduced neoliberal university reform "aiming at a wholesale control of knowledge and education under the context of internationalised market economy and global capitalism" (Pekkola, 2009, p. 3). Similarly, neoliberalism has influenced higher education policies in many countries (Gyamera & Burke, 2018), leading to a situation where economic ideals guide students' choices in studying, graduating, and working life (Johnston, 2011). For example, in the United Kingdom, the implementation of a neoliberalisation policy agenda increased tuition fees for



public higher education (Maisuria, 2014). Higher education in Finland does not have a similar tuition fee system. However, according to Lund (2020), neoliberal university reform has expanded social inequalities between genders and social classes in higher education institutions.

Although egalitarianism as an element of social progression has become a familiar and self-evident concept in educational policies (Kalalahti & Varjo, 2012), current educational systems, with their business-minded administrations and expectations for productivity and efficiency, may nevertheless include elements that enhance or even introduce new inequalities (Reay, 2017). For example, the Bologna process aimed at producing a learner-centred system. However, the reality has shown that the tendency among teachers is to add more things to the course contents instead of removing things, which in turn leads to increased workload for the students (Kolari et al., 2006).<sup>10</sup>

The neoliberal university culture can be a challenging learning environment for students—especially for women and minority group students with heavy workloads—when they try to find the optimal balance between study and their livelihoods (Beban & Trueman, 2018). The neoliberal university agenda has led to a situation where part-time work is becoming essential for students in order for them to manage their finances (Mitchell, 2020) and to prepare for their future careers while studying (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2021). However, some students struggle to balance paid work and other issues in life, which can impact retention, quality of academic learning, burnout, and achievement—especially with students who have less academic or less well-resourced family backgrounds (Yahanpath & Burns, 2011).

Notably, this kind of university culture of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Slote, 2012), and the associated neoliberal agendas in academia have faced increasing criticism in recent years (see, e.g., Fanghanel, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2019; Lewis, 2005; Thornton, 2012). Thus, in this dissertation, the neoliberal agenda in the current practices and policies in higher music education institutions is scrutinised by mirroring it to the music students' experienced workload.

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<sup>10</sup> See the definition of student-centred and teacher-centred approaches in music teaching and learning in Pozo et al. (2022).





## **4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DESIGN, AND METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the research questions, research design, and the specific research methods used in the multistrategy approach to the research project.

### **4.1 Research questions**

The aim of this summary is to report on the explanatory stage of the research in the MSW project, and synthesise the results and findings in order to make recommendations for good practices for students, teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services as to how to deal with music students' workload. The overarching research question is:

What are music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping in higher education?

To answer the overarching research question, the research sub-questions are the following:

- 1) How does the previous international research define music students' experienced workload in higher education?
- 2) How do music students in Finland and the United Kingdom experience workload and stress and use coping styles in their studies, their teaching and learning environments, and their interactions with teachers?

- 3) To what extent are experienced study workload, stress, and proactive coping associated with gender,<sup>11</sup> level of degree, genre group,<sup>12</sup> and study programme among music students in Finland and the United Kingdom?
- 4) How could this dissertation's results and findings about music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping be used to develop pedagogical practices and educational policies in higher music education?

As seen in Table 2, separate sub-questions related to the four research sub-questions were addressed for each article (Appendices 1–4).

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<sup>11</sup> In this dissertation, gender does not refer to music students as “socially assumed” males or females “based on appearance” nor does it refer to any biological category of sex (Lehikoinen & Turpeinen, 2022, p. 210). Instead, gender is based on how they choose to report their gender identity. In the questionnaire used in the MSW project (see Appendix 7), the participants had seven options to choose which gender identity they most identify with: 1) female, 2) male, 3) transgender female, 4) transgender male, 5) gender-variant/non-conforming, 6) not listed (please specify), and 7) prefer not to answer. There were only a few respondents who reported most identifying with transgender female, transgender male, gender-variant/non-conforming, or a not-listed gender. Therefore, for the data analysis, these gender options were combined into a non-binary gender to protect participants' anonymity.

<sup>12</sup> In this dissertation, the term “genre” does not refer to purely musical genres. Instead, it is used to refer to the main focus of the study programme. Possible options included: 1) classical music, 2) music education, and 3) all other study programmes combined into one group. With these three genre groups, the aim was to explore the possible differences between a singular instrumental focus in classical music study programmes and the versatility and multiple study- and instrument-specific demands related to professional requirements in a music education study programme. Indeed, music education study programmes includes multiple musical genres; thus, they are not a one-genre group in the same way as any of the classical music study programmes.

**Table 2.** Overarching research question, four research sub-questions, and sub-questions in each article

What are music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping in higher education?							
		1. How does the previous international research define music students' experienced workload in higher education?	2. How do music students in Finland and the United Kingdom experience workload and stress and use coping styles in their studies, their teaching and learning environments, and their interactions with teachers?	3. To what extent are experienced study workload, stress, and proactive coping associated with gender, level of degree, genre group, and study programme among music students in Finland and the United Kingdom?	4. How could this dissertation's results and findings about music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping be used to develop pedagogical practices and educational policies in higher music education?		
<b>Article I:</b> systematic review	1. What factors have an impact on students' experienced workload? 2. What are music students' experiences of workload in relation to their studies?				Theme for Article II: Music students' ability to manage and cope with their workload	Theme for Article IV: Tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload	Theme for Article III: Developing learner-centred environments in higher music education
<b>Article II:</b> multistrategy study (combining quantitative and qualitative methods)	How do students in higher music education in Finland and the United Kingdom experience workload and stress and use proactive coping styles? a) What are the prevalences of music students' experienced study workload, experienced stress, and proactive coping styles among genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programmes? b) Can music students' experienced stress be predicted by their experienced study workload and proactive coping styles? c) What are the determinants of experienced workload, experienced stress, and proactive coping styles for music students?						
<b>Article III:</b> multistrategy study (combining quantitative and qualitative methods)	1. Are there any relationships between music students' experienced main subject (or principal study) workload and livelihoods (including socio-demographic characteristics, working whilst studying, funding and loans) and experienced stress in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom? 2. What environmental factors determine music students' experienced workload in higher education in these two countries? 3. How could the predictors and determinants of environmental factors affecting music students' workload inform the development of university cultures and educational policies?						
<b>Article IV:</b> qualitative study	What constructive tools for teachers can support music students in managing and coping with their experienced workload in higher education?						

## 4.2 Research design and methodology

For the explanatory stage of the MSW project, the programme of research, including the four studies reported in this summary, was carried out to address the overarching research question, four research sub-questions, and separate sub-questions in each study. Two broad methodological approaches were used: multistrategy (quantitative and qualitative) and qualitative. The four studies reported on the four articles approached the research questions from various conceptual and empirical perspectives in higher music education (see Appendices 1–4).

Article I is a systematic review of the literature in Finnish and English on students’—and particularly music students’—experienced workload. A systematic literature search was conducted in 23 electronic databases and 19 music research journals following the guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) (Moher et al., 2009). Eligibility criteria consisted of the design, sample, the phenomenon of interest, evaluation, and type of research. Twenty-nine qualitative, quantitative, and multistrategy studies fulfilled the inclusion criteria. The data from these was gathered and formatted, and the quality of the studies was appraised. Extended Meta-Ethnography (EME) (Booker, 2010) was used to create a synthesis.

Article II is a mixed methods study informed by the systematic review findings reported in Article I. The sequential mixed methods design was used to explore music students’ experienced workload, experienced stress, and their use of proactive coping styles. First, a survey was administered consisting of two standardised questionnaires and demographic and open-ended items. The questionnaire data was analysed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Pearson’s correlations, and linear regression. Second, the open-ended data was analysed together with the interview data collected using thematic analysis.

Article III is a mixed methods study informed by the systematic review findings reported in Article I. Music students’ experienced workload, experienced stress, and life and livelihoods were examined. First, the questionnaire data was analysed using descriptive statistics, Kendall’s correlations, and Bayesian ordinal probit regression modelling. Second, the

open-ended data was analysed together with the interview data collected using thematic analysis.

Article IV is a qualitative study informed by the systematic review findings reported in Article I. Teachers' ways of supporting music students in managing and coping with their experienced workload were explored through the open-ended data together with the interview data collected using thematic analysis.

Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach—which is based on Husserl's (1931) transcendental phenomenology—was chosen as a research methodology for the MSW project. This methodology offered an effective qualitative approach to obtaining a meaningful understanding of the essence of human experience, particularly when researching experiences of everyday life in order to support individuals or groups who have similar experiences (Jääskeläinen, 2022b). In addition, Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology provided detailed steps that were useful when attempting to find a model for a compact and practical research-based analysis procedure for processing and incorporating students' feedback into administrative and teaching developments and educational policies. In the research plan and data collection stages prior to the data analysis procedure, Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach was adapted following other scholars' procedures (e.g., Creswell, 2007; Creswell et al., 2007; Dell et al., 2014; Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004) (see Table 3).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Jääskeläinen (2022b) for a full explanation of the adaptation of the methodology of transcendental phenomenology.

**Table 3.** The adaptation of Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach used in this dissertation prior to the data analysis procedure

<b>Phases 1–3 of the adaptation of the transcendental phenomenological approach</b>	
1. Determining the methodological approach	<p>Rationale for adopting transcendental phenomenology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a step-by-step approach to qualitatively capture the insights and key features of music students’ experiences.</li> <li>• Suitable for examining different contexts of multiple educational institutions across both Finland and the United Kingdom that had expressed an interest in participating in the study.</li> <li>• Compatible with the practical time constraints (researcher’s full-time work alongside doctoral studies) and the scope of the study.</li> <li>• It would have been possible to include more countries if the researcher had the ability to devote more time to data collection.</li> </ul>
2. Identifying a phenomenon of interest to study	<p>The workload experiences of music students in higher education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researcher’s familiarity with the phenomenon due to experience working in music study programmes within university administration.</li> <li>• The topic of student workload appeared to be both an important and a neglected area of study in higher music education, according to the literature review.</li> </ul>
3. Practising epoche	<p>Bracketing of researcher’s own experiences; identifying hidden assumptions, and remaining persistently curious about the phenomena (LeVasseur, 2003):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practising reflection (Alvesson &amp; Sköldberg, 2009) to identify the hidden assumptions (e.g., workload is often understood as including only negative aspects of overload and stress).</li> <li>• Practising reflexivity (Bolton, 2010) to ensure that these hidden assumptions do not interfere with the study (e.g., remaining open about different nuances of music students’ workload that may differ from general assumptions about students’ workload).</li> <li>• Recalling the researcher’s own experiences in relation to playing piano as a hobby and working in the university administration, to become more aware of the researcher’s own biases.</li> <li>• As a researcher, acknowledging the advantages of not having a music background (e.g., no interference from related biases and preconceptions, such as assigning stereotypes to different instrumentalists) as well as the disadvantages (e.g., difficulties in achieving an in-depth understanding during discussions with participants).</li> <li>• As a researcher, preparing myself before the interviews and data analysis to be able to recognise and acknowledge the participants’ unique experiences (e.g., discussing unclear matters with supervisors and colleagues in the doctoral community, observing music students in the classes, and interviewing music teachers).</li> </ul>

(Continued)

<b>Phases 4–6 of the adaptation of the transcendental phenomenological approach</b>	
4. Data collection of individual experiences of the phenomenon	<p>Gathering data on music students' individual experiences of their workload:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtaining ethical approvals from the related research ethics committees (Uniarts Research Ethics Committee in Finland and Conservatoires UK Research Ethics Committee in the United Kingdom), and research permissions from the seven randomly chosen higher music education institutions in Finland and the United Kingdom.</li> <li>• Sending an invitation to participate voluntarily (and without compensation) via participating institutions' student email lists and newsletters.</li> <li>• Collecting data through both a survey and interviews (with both including an information sheet and consent form).</li> </ul>
5. Two general-purpose questions for the interviewees	<p>Conducting the semi-structured in-depth interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing on a one-to-one basis (with the author of this dissertation as the interviewer), either in face-to-face sessions on campus or remotely via Skype and WhatsApp (spanned from 30 to 90 minutes).</li> <li>• As part of the MSW project, focusing on two general-purpose questions (Creswell, 2007) about the experiences of the phenomenon and the associated contexts (such as the learning environments and the university culture) in order to gain a common understanding of the participants' experiences: 1) What has the participant experienced with regards to the workload of their studies? And 2) Which contexts have influenced the participant's experiences of the workload for their studies?</li> <li>• Subdividing these two broad questions into several questions (informed by current research, e.g., Deasy et al., 2014) that focused on the music students' experiences of coping with workload and stress in higher music education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Please tell me what it is like to be a student at the higher music education level.</li> <li>○ How would you characterise your experience of being a student in terms of the workload for your studies?</li> <li>○ How do you cope with the workload?</li> <li>○ If you think about your own workload experience, is there anything stressful about being a student?</li> <li>○ What is that stressful/workload experience like?</li> <li>○ How do you cope with stress? Do you have any strategies?</li> <li>○ How has your participation in this research affected your experience in terms of increasing your awareness and your ability to better cope with your study workload?</li> <li>○ Other topics associated with study workload and life in general, depending on the themes that arose from the participants' interests (see Rubin &amp; Rubin, 2012).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
6. Validation	<p>Ensuring the quantity and quality of the collected data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-recording the interviews (20 hours in total) which were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher (10%) and a transcription service (90%) (406 double-spaced pages in total).</li> <li>• Sending the transcripts to the participants to be corrected before undergoing data analysis.</li> </ul>



### 4.3 Research methods

In the explanatory stage of the MSW project—following the systematic literature review (Article I)—a multistrategy approach was taken in which two mixed methods studies (Articles II and III) and one qualitative method study (Article IV) were carried out, which involved different analyses of the same data. Combining quantitative and qualitative data helped provide a more holistic picture of music students’ workload, stress, and coping experiences than using a single method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Hearing the students’ stories was essential to understanding the quantitative results.

The Workload, Stress, and Coping (WSC) questionnaire was created by adapting and combining sections from two well-known, validated questionnaires used in the learning sciences (Appendix 7). The first is the standardised Study Workload and Stress section of the Learn questionnaire used in the Finnish higher education context (i.e., Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). The second is the Proactive Coping Inventory for Adolescents (PCI-A) (i.e., Greenglass et al., 2008), developed for use in Canadian higher education. For exploring music students’ experiences, demographic items and open-ended questions about experienced study workload, stress, coping, and the students’ interactions with teachers were added to the survey. The study workload scale included two positively- and three negatively-worded items. It assessed students’ workload experiences when considering studies in their main subject (e.g., “I must work very hard with my main subject studies”).<sup>14</sup> For the analysis, positively-worded items were recoded and reworded so that higher scores indicated a greater experienced workload. Responses to items were scaled from 1 = *Not at all true* through 4 = *Completely true*. A single item assessed students’ current feelings of experienced stress. Although single-

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<sup>14</sup> The concept of “main subject studies” is widely used in the higher education institutions in Finland. However, in the higher education institutions in the United Kingdom the concept used is “principal studies”. The WSC questionnaire also included a question about “other than main subject studies”, but there were not many responses, and some of the respondents mentioned in their open-ended answers that they did not understand what “other studies” referred to. Thus, statistical analyses were not computed with the responses to the question of other studies, however, the respondents’ open-ended answers to that question were included in the qualitative data.

item measures for psychological phenomena have been argued to raise issues in terms of reliability and validity, a single-item measure is acceptable if the measured construct is narrow (Freed, 2013). In this case, the construct of feeling stress was considered narrow because it was described clearly in the questionnaire as referring to feeling anxious, restless, nervous, or distressed, or having difficulties sleeping because their problems were continuously preying on their mind. Item responses ranged from 1 = *Not at all* through 4 = *All the time*. The study workload and stress items were pilot tested on students in higher music education. Cronbach's alpha coefficient, measuring the reliability of the study workload scale, was 0.75 in the pilot study (Jääskeläinen, 2016). In the studies reported in this dissertation (Articles II and III), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.63. These indicate an acceptable internal consistency.

The proactive coping section included seven scales assessing the use of proactive coping styles (e.g., "I plan my strategies to change the situation before I act"): proactive coping with 14 items, reflective coping with 11 items, strategic planning with four items, preventive coping with 10 items, instrumental support seeking with eight items, emotional support seeking with five items, and avoidance coping with three items (PCI-A, see Greenglass et al., 2008). Responses to items were scaled from 1 = *Not at all true* through 4 = *Completely true*. The Proactive Coping Inventory's scales have high internal consistency—the Cronbach's alpha coefficient reported for the Canadian student sample ranged from 0.71 to 0.85 for all seven scales—and good item-total correlations and acceptable skewness as an indicator of symmetry around the mean (Greenglass et al., 1999). In the study reported in this dissertation (Article II), Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the seven scales ranged from 0.63 to 0.83 (acceptable internal consistency).

All instructions and items in the questionnaires were available in English. These were translated into Finnish for the data collection in Finland by following the guidelines recommended by van Widenfelt et al. (2005). Thus, the author (i.e., the author of this dissertation) and an official academic translator produced two independent English-Finnish translations. After agreement on the final Finnish translation was reached, documents were translated back into English, and the Finnish documents were revised when inconsistencies were

found. The translated documents were pilot tested with Finnish and English-speaking music students and higher music education teachers to validate the items. The final documents were refined by their feedback—for example, the wording of the three items in the PCI-A was changed after obtaining written permission from Professor Greenglass (compare items 38, 39, and 43 in Appendix 7 with the original wordings in Greenglass et al., 2008).

#### **4.4 Research ethics**

The ethical statements for this study were approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Arts Helsinki in Finland (September 18, 2018) and the Conservatoires UK (CUK) Research Ethics Committee in the United Kingdom (February 26, 2019). The Committees reviewed the research tools and consent forms, and participant information sheets, which clarified the voluntary nature of participation and the protection of anonymity (Appendix 5). In addition, permission to undertake the research was obtained from the participating institutions in Finland and the United Kingdom (to protect participants' anonymity, the details of the institutions and how they were divided by countries are not available). Participants were informed that they provided their consent by submitting the WSC questionnaire, and interview participants provided written consent (Appendix 6). Participants were not compensated for their time. The research followed the Responsible Conduct of Research guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2019), the ethical guidelines of the University of the Arts Helsinki (UNIARTS, 2022), and the code of ethics of the European Commission in Research (All European Academies. ALLEA, 2017).

#### **4.5 Participants**

The survey data was gathered online through an institutional Surveypal questionnaire. A total of seven higher music education institutions were randomly selected in Finland and the United Kingdom. (To protect participants' anonymity, the details of the institutions are not available). Because the higher music education institutions are usually relatively small, and in Finland there

are only a few faculties educating music students, carrying out data collection in two countries in several higher music education institutions made it possible to gather a larger sample of participants for this research project. An invitation to participate in the research was sent via student email lists, thus potentially reaching over 7,000 music students. The invitation email included a brief outline of the study and the survey. An information sheet was also provided, including the study's nature and purpose (Appendix 6). Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was assured. Reminder invitations were sent via email to encourage students to participate. Responses were received from a total of 155 music students (108 in Finland and 47 in the United Kingdom) from five different institutions attended by 5,900 music students. Students could express their willingness to be contacted for further research in the WSC questionnaire, and 29 music students volunteered to participate in the interviews. The survey was originally targeted at bachelor level and master level music students. However, there were also several responses from junior level<sup>15</sup> and doctoral level music students, whose answers emphasised the need for and importance of this kind of research. Thus, in the data collection stage—including both survey and interviews—the study was extended to include them. The total response rate was relatively low (9% in Finland and 1% in the United Kingdom), which is quite common in online surveys among students because they are typically asked to complete so many surveys that they are at risk of suffering “survey fatigue” (Porter et al., 2004, p. 63). The demographic characteristics of the participants are given in Table 4.

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<sup>15</sup> Junior students are those who are in secondary school education (pre-higher education) but are attending a course of study at a higher education institution alongside their school studies (usually on weekends). These students are 18 years of age or younger, and study in the same higher education music environment as those pursuing degree study. They are taught by the same teachers as those who teach degree courses, and are exposed to many of the same environmental factors as those studying for higher education qualifications. The experience of these junior students was therefore considered relevant and important for the current study.

**Table 4.** Demographic characteristics of all participants in the sample ( $N = 155$ )

Background (%)	Main subject studies (%)	Livelihoods (%)
<i>Country</i>	<i>Genre group</i>	<i>Work alongside studying</i>
Finland (69.7)	Classical music UG/PG (43.2)	Not working (31.6)
United Kingdom (30.3)	Music education UG/PG (24.5)	Working * (68.4)
<i>Gender</i>	Other genres (32.3)	Work related to music ** (58.7)
Female (68.0)	<i>Study programme</i>	Work not related to music *** (21.9)
Male (30.1)	Classical string (13.5)	<i>Funding (scholarship/family/other)</i>
Non-binary gender (2.0)	Classical wind (9.7)	No funding (43.5)
<i>Level of degree</i>	Classical piano (6.5)	Partial funding (29.9)
Undergraduate = UG (52.9)	Classical early music (3.2)	Full funding (26.5)
Postgraduate = PG (42.6)	Classical other instruments (3.2)	<i>Loan to cover study and/or living costs</i>
Other = junior/doctoral (4.5)	Classical voice and opera (7.1)	No loan (56.5)
	Music education (24.5)	Loan (43.5)
<i>Interviewees n = 29 (18.7)</i>	Composition (7.7)	<i>Weekly working hours</i>
Finland $n = 20$	Church music (12.3)	* $M = 12.56$ , $SD = 10.03$
United Kingdom $n = 9$	Folk and global music (4.5)	** $M = 9.31$ , $SD = 8.38$
Female $n = 21$	Other programmes (3.9)	*** $M = 14.4$ , $SD = 9.40$
Male $n = 8$	Doctoral programmes (3.9)	

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in 2019 by the author, either in face-to-face meetings or remotely, and lasted between 30 minutes and 90 minutes. The interviews aimed to obtain a deeper understanding of participants' answers to the survey. Before the interview, the participant's answers in the WSC questionnaire were read. However, when reporting results and findings, the interview data was not linked to their personal survey data. The previous research informed the interview guide on student workload (Article I) and students' coping with stress (e.g., Deasy et al., 2014). The interview questions encouraged students to reflect on their workload, stress, and coping as students in higher music education (see Appendix 8 for the interview guide and Appendix 10 for excerpts of interviews and the open-ended answers to the WSC questionnaire).

## 4.6 Analysis procedures

The WSC questionnaire data was analysed using SPSS (version 23) and RStudio (RStudio Team, 2020) with the R language and environment (R Core Team, 2020). The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim (10% by the author and 90% by the transcription service). Atlas.ti (version 9.0.7) was used to code and analyse the qualitative data, which included open-ended answers to the WSC questionnaire and transcribed interviews. The analysis was performed in collaboration between the author and her responsible supervisor Dr. Guadalupe López-Íñiguez, who ensured the validity and reliability of the process by coding a 5% selection of the entire dataset that the author had previously coded. The inter-rater agreement of the coding was calculated using Holsti and Krippendorff's Alphas, which were favourably calculated as .924 and .918, respectively—both considered highly satisfactory levels of reliability.

### 4.6.1 *Quantitative data analysis*

In the quantitative data analysis, data from 155 respondents to the WSC questionnaire was used. Three of the 155 respondents had missing values in the most proactive coping styles scales, and their responses were removed from the statistical analyses in the Article II. The remaining 152 respondents had only a few missing values, which were replaced with the mean value of the scale concerned. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were computed for demographic characteristics. Inferential statistics were computed as follows. First, experienced study workload, experienced stress, and the seven scales of the PCI-A were tested for the assumptions of parametric statistics using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. Scores were calculated to summarise the extent to which study workload, stress, and each type of coping style were used when differentiated by genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programmes. Next, (parametric) one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used with the normally distributed scales. With the scales that were not normally distributed, both the above-mentioned parametric

test and non-parametric test (Kruskal–Wallis test) were used. In addition, the Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons was used. With the stress, study workload, and seven proactive coping styles scales, bivariate analyses with scatterplots, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression were used.

In Article III, the data of the 155 respondents to the WSC questionnaire was used for a different analysis to answer different sub-questions. Descriptive statistics were computed for demographic characteristics (country, gender, level of degree, genre group, working while studying, funding, and loans), and bivariate analysis with Kendall's rank correlation was computed to examine the relationships between study workload and stress scales. The Bayesian approach was utilised to build models to predict music students' responses to experienced study workload and stress, and multiple covariates were included for evaluating their potential effect on these experiences. In addition to a participant's country, their gender, level of degree, and genre group were also included. The participants' responses to working while studying, funding, and loans were added to analyse music students' livelihoods as predictors in the model. Bayesian mixed effects ordinal probit regressions were performed for model evaluations and to identify variation across each study workload item and the stress item, as well as variation across individual responses.

#### *4.6.2 Factor structure of the questionnaire*

Exploratory Factor Analysis (Appendix 9) was carried out to explore the factor structure of the WSC questionnaire and to determine whether its nine-factor structure holds for the sample of music students. Three respondents were excluded because they had missing values in most of the proactive coping styles scales. Thus, the factor analysis was conducted with a sample of 152 respondents. Principal Axis Factor (PAF) with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation was conducted to minimise the number of variables that have high loadings on each factor. The factorability of the 61 items was examined. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were computed. The communalities were examined, and variables with insufficient factor loadings were excluded. Finally, the Alpha values for the scales in the

WSC questionnaire and the scales in the new factor structure were examined. In addition, the respondents' feedback about the WSC questionnaire (see item 87 in Appendix 7) was utilised to evaluate the general structure of the questionnaire.

#### 4.6.3 Qualitative data analysis

In the qualitative data analysis (see Appendix 10), a thematic coding framework was built on 13 codes, four categories, and three overarching themes deduced from the systematic review (Article I). Fourteen codes drawn inductively from the interview data were added to the thematic coding framework in order to clarify and incorporate music students' lived experiences of workload while studying. The adaptation of the analytical process of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) was followed in seven phases<sup>16</sup> :

- 1) Through *horizontalisation* (Moustakas, 1994), all the music students' responses that were relevant to their workload were listed, grouped, and coded using 13 literature-based and 14 interview-based codes, and then separated within each interview and WSC questionnaire participant's data.
- 2) Through reduction and elimination, only relevant references were selected as significant statements. Two questions were used to select these significant statements: 1) Does this quote illuminate the music student's experiences of workload? and 2) Does this quote highlight any connections between the music student's experiences of workload and the linked code(s)? These questions served to refine the data set by eliminating all irrelevant, repetitive, and overlapping statements.
- 3) Through clustering and thematising, the selected 1,584 significant statements were arranged according to linked codes into four categories (drawn from 13 literature-based and 14 interview-based codes). Each significant statement was then assigned a theme describing the context of the student's experienced workload: student, teacher, or environment. Through this process, three overarching theme groups were formulated: music students' ability to cope with their workload, tools for teachers

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<sup>16</sup> An example of a full procedure, with the transcendental phenomenology approach applied to the methodology across six phases of the research plan and data collection and seven phases of data analysis procedure, is presented in Jääskeläinen (2022b) and Jääskeläinen (2022c).



to support music students to manage and cope with workload, and developing learner-centred environments in higher music education.

- 4) Through validation, the three overarching theme groups were compared with the original transcripts to ensure that these themes had adequately captured the participants' experiences of their workload in relation to the linked code(s) and categories. Some adjustments were made in this phase, such as linking some of the significant statements from one code to another code and moving some codes from one category to another category.
- 5) Individual textural and structural descriptions were constructed by going through each participant's significant statements and creating narratives of their experienced workload (textural description) in connection with the relevant contexts of workload (structural description): student, teacher, or environment.
- 6) Composite textural and structural descriptions were constructed for each overarching theme group, including the students' experiences of their workload as textural descriptions of what occurred, and the context of workload as structural descriptions of how it occurred. This process involved combining the textural and structural descriptions from all participants together and distilling them into expressions of music students' workload in each of the three contexts. During this phase, some significant statements were selected to be utilised in articles as examples of music students' experiences of workload.
- 7) Through intuitive integration, the composite textural descriptions and the composite structural descriptions were synthesised together to create a universal description of the phenomenon. Finally, recommendations for good practice related to music students' workload in higher education were constructed and findings were then reported in three separate articles, in this dissertation, and as policy and intervention recommendations (see Jääskeläinen, 2022a)

The thematic coding framework, including the number of significant statements, is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Thematic coding framework including the number of significant statements in questionnaire (Q) and interview (I) participants' data

13 literature-based codes * (Q:526+I:327=853)		14 interview-derived codes (Q:354+I:377=731)		Four categories of different workload meanings drawn from columns 1 and 2 (Q:880+I:704=1,584)		Three overarching themes of proposed recommendations for good practice related to music students' workload in higher education
Structure of student workload (Q:82+I:20=102) Work (Q:41+I:25=66)	+	Competition (Q:4+I:12=16) Funding (Q:14+I:22=36) Musician career (Q:16+I:73=89) Social media (Q:0+I:4=4)	→	Structure of workload (Q:157+I:157=314)		Music students' ability to cope with their workload (including excerpts related to 'the student' in four of the categories to the left) *** (Q:197+I:276=473)
Approaches to learning (Q:56+I:29=85) Experiences in the first year of study (Q:4+I:15=19) Flow (Q:2+I:6=8) Time management (Q:27+I:51=78)	+	Coping (Q:86+I:53=139) Enjoyment (Q:16+I:15=31) Meaning of musicianship ** (Q:2+I:30=32) Practising (Q:24+I:33=57) Religion (Q:2+I:2=4)	→	A student's workload (Q:219+I:234=453)		Tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload (including excerpts related to 'the teacher' in four of the categories to the left) **** (Q:455+I:157=612)
One-to-one tuition (Q:106+I:36=152) Teaching and learning environments (Q:71+I:40=111)	+	Assessment (Q:12+I:25=37) Curriculum (Q:45+I:35=80) Group tuition (Q:131+I:23=154) Student feedback (Q:1+I:39=40)	→	Workload relating to teaching and learning environments (Q:366+I:209=575)	→	Developing learner-centred environments in higher music education (including excerpts related to 'the environment' in four of the categories to the left) ***** (Q:228+I:271=499)
Burnout (Q:8+I:14=22) Health (Q:25+I:25=50) Musculoskeletal problems (Q:5+I:19=24) Performance anxiety (Q:9+I:22=31) Stress (Q:90+I:25=115)	+	Physical exercise (Q:1+I:11=12)	→	Psychological and physiological issues (Q:138+I:116=254)		
Results and findings reported in *Article I (2022), **Jääskeläinen (2022b, 2022c), ***Article II (2022), ****Article IV (2022), and *****Article III (2020).						



## 5 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results and findings of the explanatory stage of the MSW project's research, as reported in the four peer-reviewed journal articles that are included as appendices to this dissertation (Appendices 1–4). In this chapter, each article is presented independently with its sub-questions. The order is not chronological, as it follows the order of the research design outlined in the fourth chapter. In the sixth chapter the results and findings of all of the articles will be combined to discuss the overarching research question: What are music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping in higher education? The discussion is guided through the four research sub-questions shown here:

- 1) How does the previous international research define music students' experienced workload in higher education? (Article I)
- 2) How do music students in Finland and the United Kingdom experience workload and stress and use coping styles in their studies, their teaching and learning environments, and their interactions with teachers? (Articles II–IV)
- 3) To what extent are experienced study workload, stress, and proactive coping associated with gender, level of degree, genre group, and study programme among music students in Finland and the United Kingdom? (Articles II and III)
- 4) How could this dissertation's results and findings about music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping be used to develop pedagogical practices and educational policies in higher music education? (Articles I–IV)

In addition, this chapter presents the results of the evaluation of the factor structure used in the WSC questionnaire and the respondents' feedback.

## **5.1 Article I: Music students' experienced workload in higher education: A systematic review and recommendations for good practice**

The first article included in this dissertation (Appendix 1) is a systematic literature review that concentrates on students' experienced workload—and particularly music students' workload concerning their studies—in higher education. This article was co-authored by the author of this dissertation and Dr. Guadalupe López-Íñiguez (responsible supervisor) and Dr. Michelle Phillips (a collaborator in the MSW project at the Royal Northern College of Music in the United Kingdom). It was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Musicae Scientiae* (2022).<sup>17</sup> The article posed the following sub-questions:

- 1) What factors have an impact on students' experienced workload?
- 2) What are music students' experiences of workload in relation to their studies?

A preliminary literature search indicated extensive research on student workload in higher education in other disciplines and professional fields. However, research on music students' experienced workload were largely lacking although the research on music students' health, well-being, and learning—which are important topics related to workload—has been a growing trend in recent decades. In the systematic literature review, the interest was in all aspects of students' workload during their years in higher education, such as the nature, meaning, and components of their workload. The interest was also in

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<sup>17</sup> I had the idea for an article about reviewing previous research in order to build a theoretical framework as part of this dissertation. Dr. Guadalupe López-Íñiguez (GLI) as a supervisor recommended conducting a systematic literature review. Dr. Michelle Phillips (MP) was the second supervisor in the review and manuscript writing process. I prepared the protocol. GLI and MP critically revised the protocol. I performed the literature search and selection. After that, GLI again performed part of the literature search and selection in order to assess the reliability, and MP made decisions on literature search and selection where the disagreement was found. I conducted the data analysis and meta-synthesis and discussed the different stages of the process with GLI and MP to make decisions collaboratively. GLI and MP actively participated in interpreting the data and drawing the conclusions of synthesis. I drafted the manuscript, tables, and figures. GLI and MP critically revised the work. MP edited the language of the final manuscript.

more concrete aspects of student workload while studying (such as attendance at lectures, rehearsals, and practice sessions), and at other times (such as paid and unpaid work). Ultimately, the aim was to offer recommendations for students, teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services on how to deal with music students' workload.

When searching for literature related to the first sub-question, English and Finnish variations of the term *workload* in combination with keywords related to *student* and *higher education* were used. The results of the search were included in the first screening stage if the studies explored *student workload in higher education*, and in the second screening stage if they explored *experiences of workload*. Studies were also considered relevant if they concerned students' perceptions of workload. The search terms used to explore 23 databases in relation to the first sub-question did not identify any relevant studies about music students. Therefore—to find studies focused on investigating music students' experiences of workload—slightly different search terms were used to explore 19 music research journals in relation to the second sub-question: English and Finnish variations of the term *experience* in combination with keywords related to *student* and *higher music education*. The results were included in the first screening stage if the studies explored *studying music in higher education*, and in the second screening stage if they explored *music student workload*. Eight codes related to workload were identified in the 12 studies addressing the experience of students regardless of discipline, namely: 1) approaches to learning, 2) burnout, 3) experiences in the first year of study, 4) stress, 5) structure of student workload, 6) teaching and learning environments, 7) time management, and 8) (extracurricular paid and unpaid) work. In addition, five codes related to workload were identified in the 17 studies addressing the experiences of music students, namely: 1) flow, 2) health, 3) musculoskeletal problems, 4) one-to-one tuition, and 5) performance anxiety.

These thirteen codes were clustered into four categories: 1) structure of workload, 2) a student's workload, 3) workload relating to teaching and learning environments, and 4) psychological and physiological issues. These four categories were further reorganised into three themes including the sources of students' experienced workload: 1) a student's experienced workload, 2)

workload arising from interactions with teachers, and 3) workload arising from the environment. Finally, the synthesis revealed three overarching themes offering 10 recommendations for good practice relevant to students' experienced general (i.e., not music-specific) workload (see Table 6) and 14 recommendations for good practice related to workload, specifically concerning studying music in higher education (see Table 7).

**Table 6.** Recommendations for good practice relevant to students' experienced general (i.e., not music-specific) workload

<b>Students' ability to cope with their workload</b>	<b>Tools for teachers to support students to manage and cope with workload</b>	<b>Developing learner-centred environments in higher education</b>
1) Orientation to studies 2) Counselling 3) Stress management skills 4) Time management skills	1) Continuing professional development for teachers 2) Assessment that supports learning processes 3) Constructive cooperative teaching	1) Understanding the demands and challenges of combining studying and working life 2) Discussing students' workload problems in the institution 3) Developing systems for collecting feedback from students

**Table 7.** Recommendations for good practice related to workload, specifically in relation to studying music in higher education

<b>Music students' ability to cope with their workload</b>	<b>Tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload</b>	<b>Developing learner-centred environments in higher music education</b>
1) Encouraging feedback 2) Discipline-specific counselling 3) Support in dealing with psychological and physical issues 4) Knowledge about music learning	1) Develop students' metacognitive abilities and psychological skills 2) Teach methods of coping with performance anxiety 3) Develop one-to-one tuition methods 4) Support for practising 5) Learner-centred teaching	1) Introductory classes to help students cope with discipline-specific workload 2) Utilising knowledge of music students' experienced workload when developing curricula 3) Developing an inspirational learning culture 4) Understanding discipline-specific workload 5) Understanding discipline-specific workload related to psychological and physical issues

In addition to presenting 24 recommendations for good practice (see Table 6 and Table 7), the findings strengthened the understanding of the characteristics of music students' experienced workload. This evidence-based framework can be utilised in higher music education institutions to make informed decisions when planning optimised teaching and learning environments for music students, and to help music students overcome challenges associated with studying and resolving health issues. Furthermore, music students may find the findings helpful for reflecting on and coping in healthier ways with their workload. The findings indicated that more research using high-quality designs is needed to investigate music students' discipline-specific experienced workload. As a response to this need for more research, the three overarching themes were further investigated in the explanatory stage of the MSW project and reported in Articles II–IV:

*Article II: Music students' ability to cope with their workload*

*Article III: Developing learner-centred environments in higher music education*

*Article IV: Tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload*

## **5.2 Article II: Experienced workload, stress, and coping among professional students in higher music education: An explanatory mixed methods study in Finland and the United Kingdom**

The second article included in this dissertation (Appendix 2) is a multistrategy study that concentrates on the overarching theme of music students' ability to cope with their workload. This article was co-authored by the author of this dissertation and two supervisors, Dr. Guadalupe López-Íñiguez (responsible supervisor) and Dr. Kai Lehtikainen. It was published in the peer-reviewed



journal *Psychology of Music* (2022).<sup>18</sup> It was hypothesised that proactive coping styles might help students deal with their study workload and stress in healthier ways. This explanatory mixed methods study involved the participation of 155 students at higher music education institutions in Finland and the United Kingdom. The article posed the following sub-questions:

How do students in higher music education in Finland and the United Kingdom experience workload and stress and use proactive coping styles?

- a) What are the prevalences of music students' experienced study workload, experienced stress, and proactive coping styles among genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programmes?
- b) Can music students' experienced stress be predicted by their experienced study workload and proactive coping styles?
- c) What are the determinants of experienced workload, experienced stress, and proactive coping styles for music students?

In the quantitative analysis phase, frequentist statistics, including both descriptive and inferential analyses, were used. The results of the descriptive analysis showed the prevalence of music students' experienced study workload, experienced stress, and seven proactive coping styles as differentiated by genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programmes. The results of the bivariate analysis (one-way ANOVA and Bonferroni correction for

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<sup>18</sup> I had the idea for the article as part of this dissertation to explore music students' experiences of workload and stress in higher education. As a supervisor, Dr. Guadalupe López-Íñiguez (GLI) guided the data collection and recommended conducting a mixed methods study to acquire wider and deeper evidence on the topic. Dr. Kai Lehtikainen (KL) was the second supervisor for the article and guided the addition of students' coping styles to the research questions. I conducted the data collection and analysis in both the quantitative and qualitative phases. GLI followed my work in the quantitative data analysis and ensured the validity and reliability of the process in the qualitative data analysis by coding a 5% selection of the entire dataset that I had previously coded. I discussed the different stages of the process with GLI and KL to make decisions collaboratively. GLI and KL actively participated in interpreting the data and drawing conclusions regarding the mixed methods synthesis. I drafted the manuscript, tables, and figures. GLI and KL critically reviewed the work. KL edited the language in the final manuscript.

multiple comparisons) showed differences in music students' experienced study workload, experienced stress, and seven proactive coping styles as differentiated by genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programmes. To show the potential prediction of music students' experienced stress by their experienced study workload and each of the seven proactive coping styles, Pearson's correlation analysis was performed. In addition, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed to predict music students' experienced stress based on their experienced study workload and seven proactive coping styles. The results of the quantitative analysis are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Results of the quantitative analysis phase in Article II

Methods	Analyses	Statistically significant results
One-way ANOVA and Bonferroni correction	Differences in experienced study workload based on genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programmes	Students in the music education genre group experienced more study workload than students in the classical music genre group. Students in the church music study programmes experienced more study workload than students in the classical piano study programmes. (There were no statistically significant differences between groups in study workload based on genders, and in study workload based on levels of degree.)
One-way ANOVA and Bonferroni correction	Differences in experienced stress based on genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programmes	Female music students experienced more stress than male music students. Students in other genres group (i.e., other than the music education genre group and classical music genre group) experienced more stress than students in the classical music genre group. Students in the doctoral study programmes and composition study programmes experienced more stress than students in the classical piano study programmes. (There were no statistically significant differences between groups in stress based on levels of degree.)
One-way ANOVA and Bonferroni correction	Differences in the use of seven proactive coping styles based on genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programmes	Within the seven proactive coping styles, emotional support seeking was used the most, followed by preventive coping, instrumental support seeking, proactive coping, reflective coping, strategic planning, and avoidance coping. Male music students used proactive coping more than female music students. Non-binary gender music students used emotional support seeking less than female and male music students. (With reflective coping, strategic planning, preventive coping, instrumental support seeking, and avoidance coping, there were no statistically significant differences between genders. With levels of degree, genre groups, and study programmes, there were no statistically significant differences between groups in using the seven proactive coping styles.)
Pearson's correlation	Relationship between experienced stress, experienced study workload, and the seven proactive coping styles	There was a negative correlation between stress and instrumental support seeking, and between stress and emotional support seeking; using these coping styles may help reduce stress. There was also a negative correlation between study workload and proactive coping, and between study workload and reflective coping; thus, using these coping styles may help reduce study workload. (Other intercorrelations between stress and proactive coping styles, or between study workload and proactive coping styles, were not statistically significant.)
Multiple linear regression	Prediction of experienced stress by experienced study workload and the seven proactive coping styles	Study workload was a predictor of stress. Proactive coping and strategic planning negatively predicted stress; thus, using these coping styles may help reduce stress. (Reflective coping, preventive coping, emotional support seeking, instrumental support seeking, and avoidance coping were not statistically significant predictors of stress.)

In the qualitative analysis phase, thematic analysis (see the adaptation of the analytical process of transcendental phenomenology used in the MSW project in the fourth chapter) was used to identify the determinants of music students' experienced workload, stress, and coping. The findings indicated specific concerns for music students, such as working alongside studies, that caused overload, and struggling with funding caused stress. Such situations can lead to burnout when combined with too many course selections. On the other hand, when music students are not overloaded, studying music can be a source of enjoyment. Music students have their specific ways of coping with workload and stress. For example, music students use:

- proactive coping in finding suitable approaches to learning, and in planning schedules for practising;
- reflective coping, especially with their experiences in the first years of study, in finding their individual meaning of music, and in assessment situations;
- strategic planning in time management, in selecting courses from the curriculum, and in managing pressure with competition between music students;
- preventive coping in psychological preparation for performance anxiety, in taking care of their health, and in physical exercising;
- preventive coping in psychological preparation for performance anxiety, in taking care of their health, and in physical exercising;
- instrumental support seeking in asking practical advice from teachers in one-to-one tuition and group tuition, and in finding methods and techniques for musculoskeletal problems;
- emotional support seeking in discussing their problems with peer students and study psychologists, and in successfully interacting with teachers in music lessons, which may result in the feeling of flow, and in religious or spiritual experiences; and
- avoidance coping in thinking of their musician careers in the future, in handling pressure caused by social media, and in being careful when giving honest feedback because of the fear that they can be identified from the feedback.

The integration of results and findings showed that it is essential to identify common music-specific ways for coping with studies in higher education. Nevertheless, there are differences in experienced study workload, experienced stress, and use of proactive coping styles between different genders, between different genre groups, and between different study programmes. These differences should be discussed in higher music education institutions to find ways to better support music students as individuals in their studies, to further their well-being, and to prepare them for their future careers.

### **5.3 Article III: Music students' experienced workload, livelihoods and stress in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom**

The third article included in this dissertation (Appendix 3) is a multistrategy study that concentrates on the overarching theme of developing learner-centred environments in higher music education. This article was co-authored by the author of this dissertation and Dr. Guadalupe López-Íñiguez (responsible supervisor) and Dr. Michelle Phillips (a collaborator in the MSW project at the Royal Northern College of Music in the United Kingdom). It was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Music Education Research* (2020).<sup>19</sup> It was hypothesised that neoliberal educational policies—viewing students' lives as human capital, as economic investment for the labour market, and as consumer power—may increase music students' experienced workload. Thus,

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<sup>19</sup> I had the idea for the article as part of this dissertation to explore environmental factors influencing music students' experiences of workload and stress in higher education. As a supervisor, Dr. Guadalupe López-Íñiguez (GLI) guided data collection and recommended conducting a mixed methods study to acquire wider and deeper evidence of the topic. Dr. Michelle Phillips (MP) was the second supervisor for the article and guided data collection in the United Kingdom. I conducted data collection and analysis in both the quantitative and qualitative phases. GLI followed my work in the quantitative data analysis and ensured the validity and reliability of the process in the qualitative data analysis by coding a 5% selection of the entire dataset that I had previously coded. I discussed the different stages of the process with GLI and MP to make decisions collaboratively. GLI and MP actively participated in interpreting the data and drawing conclusions regarding the mixed methods synthesis. I drafted the manuscript, tables, and figures. GLI and MP critically reviewed the work. MP edited the language in the final manuscript.

music students' experienced workload was examined in connection with their experienced stress and life and livelihoods. This explanatory mixed methods study involved the participation of 155 students at higher music education institutions in Finland and the United Kingdom. The article posed the following sub-questions:

- 1) Are there any relationships between music students' experienced study workload and livelihoods (including socio-demographic characteristics, working whilst studying, funding and loans) and experienced stress in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom?
- 2) What environmental factors determine music students' experienced workload in higher education in these two countries?
- 3) How could the predictors and determinants of environmental factors affecting music students' workload inform the development of university cultures and educational policies?

In the quantitative analysis phase, descriptive statistics were computed for demographic characteristics, and bivariate analysis with Kendall's rank correlation were computed to examine the relationships between study workload and stress scales. In order to build models to predict music students' responses to experienced study workload and stress, multiple covariates were included for evaluating their potential effect on these experiences. In addition to a participant's country, their gender, level of degree, and genre group were also included. To analyse music students' livelihoods as predictors in the model, their responses to working while studying, funding, and loans were added. Bayesian mixed effects ordinal probit regressions for the model evaluations were performed to identify variation across each study workload item and the stress item, and across individual responses. The results indicated that countries have a negligible effect on music students' study workload and music students' stress when additional predictors were not included in the model. However, modelling all predictors (experienced study workload, gender, level of degree, genre group, and livelihoods) at the same time increased the effect of countries on stress from negligible to positive, indicating that music students in the United Kingdom were more likely to experience stress than music students in

Finland. This contradictory result shows that environmental factors may have an effect on music students' stress experiences. Thus, it would be useful in the future to evaluate music students' experienced stress by modelling other predictors related to their experiences of studying in higher education. The detailed results are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Results of the quantitative analysis phase in Article III

Methods	Analyses	Results
Kendall's rank correlation	Relationship between five experienced study workload items and one experienced stress item	Correlations between items ranged from weak negative ('workload is hard' and 'workload does not align with credits') to strong positive ('overload' and 'too intense pace').
Bayesian ordinal probit regression	Simplified mixed effects models: Influence of countries on experienced study workload and influence of countries on experienced stress	There was a negligible effect of countries on music students' total study workload and on music students' stress. However, there was a non-negligible effect of countries across each study workload item and stress item. The effect on four study workload items ('overload', 'workload is not easy', 'workload does not align with credits', and 'too intense pace') and one stress item was greater in Finland than in the United Kingdom, and the effect on one workload item ('workload is hard') was greater in the United Kingdom than in Finland.
Bayesian ordinal probit regression	Larger mixed effects model: Influence of countries on experienced study workload evaluated in relation to experienced stress, gender, level of degree, genre group, and livelihoods (i.e., work related to music, other work, amount of work, funding, and loans)	Modelling all predictors at the same time slightly increased the effect on the study workload observed in the simplified model in relation to countries. However, the effect still remained negative. Stress was the strongest predictor of study workload. Music students with partial funding or no funding at all were less likely to experience study workload than music students with full funding. Work related to music had a greater effect than work not related to music, but the total amount of work undertaken alongside studies had a negligible effect on the study workload. Female music students were likely to experience more study workload than male or non-binary gender music students. The level of degree, in general, had a relatively small impact on the results. However, undergraduate music students were likely to experience more study workload than postgraduate music students or junior and doctoral music students. The genre group had little influence on the level of study workload, although studying music education had a greater effect compared to other genres group (i.e., other than music education genre group and classical music genre group), whereas the classical music genre group had negligible effect. Having or not having a student loan did not lead to any noteworthy effects.
Bayesian ordinal probit regression	Larger mixed effects model: Influence of countries on experienced stress evaluated in relation to experienced study workload, gender, level of degree, genre group, and livelihoods (i.e., work related to music, other work, amount of work, funding, and loans)	Modelling all predictors at the same time increased the effect of countries on stress from negligible (observed in the simplified model) to positive, indicating that music students in the United Kingdom were more likely to experience stress than music students in Finland. The study workload was the strongest predictor of stress. There was also a noticeable effect of gender, such that female music students were more likely to experience stress than male music students. With non-binary gender there was a positive effect on stress, which was contradictory to the negligible effect on study workload in the larger study workload model. Both work not related to music and the total amount of work undertaken alongside studying had a small effect, but work related to music did not have an influence on stress. Junior or doctoral music students were much more likely to report stress than postgraduate music students or undergraduate music students, which contradicts the larger study workload model in which being an undergraduate music student had more influence on study workload. The genre group had no effect on stress, nor did funding and loans.



In the qualitative analysis phase, thematic analysis (see the adaptation of the analytical process of transcendental phenomenology used in the MSW project in the fourth chapter) was used to find further predictors of music students' experienced workload and stress, to be utilised in the developmental work in higher music education institutions and educational policies.

- Further predictors of the impact of the structure of music students' workload:
  - work related to music is felt to be enjoyable, and even invaluable, for music students' future careers;
  - an equality issue indicating a large gap between well-off students (e.g., full scholarship or support from family) compared to low-income students who have to work long hours to earn their living;
  - pressure within the field of music negatively affecting music students' beliefs regarding their abilities as professional musicians;
  - idealisation of talented musicians;
  - competition and comparison in performing music;
  - social media strengthening the myth of innately talented artists in society; and
  - characteristics that may be unique to those students who have been devoted to a career in music since early childhood.
- Further predictors of the impact of music students' workload while studying:
  - approaches to learning when the curriculum and timetable in relation to a study programme are overloaded;
  - the competitive atmosphere of the neoliberal university, its ideal world composed of individuals skilled in multitasking, and its lack of collegiality, in comparison to advocating realistic possibilities for coping with studies;

- o time management in studying music, which includes many additional commitments, such as rehearsals and gigs, compared to other disciplines in higher education;
  - o experiences during the first year of study, which can be a traumatic transition phase in a music student's life;
  - o challenges connected with practising, such as practice room reservations and scheduling rehearsals for ensembles;
  - o flow experiences, indicating positively-experienced workload
  - o the meaning of professional musicianship, and this form of study as a unique and holistic experience for music students; and
  - o enjoyment arising from playing both alone and with other performers
  - o religion, especially nowadays when universities are multicultural learning environments including students with diverse religious backgrounds, as a way to find the tools and community to help students to cope with stressful periods.
- Further predictors of the impact of music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments:
    - o how the course, which helps music students to develop their time management skills, could impact music students' experienced workload;
    - o the unique and sometimes challenging relationship between a music student and their one-to-one instrumental or singing teacher;
    - o compulsory courses (academic studies and some group tuition) with strict regulations for permissible amounts of non-attendance;
    - o the unpredictable and sometimes very intense workload in the curriculum;
    - o meaningless versus meaningful ways to utilise assessment; and

- o university culture and the nature of behaviour in the music profession hindering music students from giving honest feedback, as students may be afraid of jeopardising their future careers.
- Further predictors of the impact of psychological and physiological issues in studying music:
  - o serious consequences of stress on music students' ability to study and the impact of stress on their self-image as students and musicians;
  - o music students' experiences of burnout;
  - o performance anxiety as a particular factor in studying music;
  - o university support for music students' musculoskeletal problems;
  - o the positive impact of active and regular exercise on decreasing music students' experienced stress; and
  - o the fact that most music students need help from a student counsellor or a longer period of intensive therapy at some stage in their university studies.

The integration of results and findings showed that where neoliberal university culture impacts music students' livelihoods alongside their studies, this is likely to increase experienced stress but not necessarily influence the experienced study workload. However, stress has a notable effect on music students' experiences of workload. Therefore, attention should be paid to certain aspects related to workload in higher music education institutions, such as the gap between well-off students and low-income students who need to work, and stress, particularly with female and non-binary gender students. Furthermore, to counter and eliminate the negative impact of neoliberalism on music students' well-being while studying, institutions should find ways to change the competitive atmosphere towards a more cooperative one, and music students' experiences should be utilised to further both the development of institutional cultures and educational policies.

#### **5.4 Article IV: Tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education**

The fourth article included in this dissertation (Appendix 4) is a qualitative study that concentrates on the overarching theme of tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload. This article was co-authored by the author of this dissertation and Dr. Guadalupe López-Íñiguez (responsible supervisor). It was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Frontiers in Education* (2022).<sup>20</sup> The study involved the participation of 155 students at higher music education institutions in Finland and the United Kingdom. The article posed the following sub-question:

What constructive tools for teachers can support music students in managing and coping with their experienced workload in higher education?

In the thematic analysis (see the adaptation of the analytical process of transcendental phenomenology used in the MSW project in the fourth chapter) of the interview data and answers to the open-ended survey items, the music students' workload experiences in the interactions with their teachers were grouped into four categories. A total of 43 tools for teachers were created, so that each of them mirrored one or more participants' experiences. These tools were then categorised so that they could help teachers to develop their interaction with students according to the constructivist principles in teaching practice in music education (e.g., López-Íñiguez, 2017; Pozo et al., 2022). The recommendations for tools for teachers to support music students in managing

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<sup>20</sup> I had the idea for the article as part of this dissertation to explore how the interactions between teachers and students influences music students' experiences of workload in higher education. As a supervisor, Dr. Guadalupe López-Íñiguez (GLI) guided the data collection. I conducted the data collection and qualitative data analysis. GLI ensured the validity and reliability of the process in the qualitative data analysis by coding a 5% selection of the entire dataset that I had previously coded. I discussed the different stages of the process with GLI to make decisions collaboratively. GLI actively participated in interpreting the data and drawing conclusions. I drafted the manuscript, tables, and figures. GLI critically reviewed the work. Language editor Dr. Christopher TenWolde revised the language in the final manuscript.

and coping with their workload in higher education are presented according to these four categories in Tables 10–13.

**Table 10.** Recommendations for tools for teachers concerning the structure of music students' workload

<b>Structure of music students' workload and tools for teachers</b>
1) Teachers could acquire more knowledge about the whole structure of workload in studying music in higher education. Studying in higher education brings along overload, overlapping schedules, and performance anxiety for music students, particularly at the bachelor level. Research-based evidence on music students' experiences could help teachers better understand students' multifaceted circumstances with workload in their studies.
2) Teachers could have open discussions with music students about students' experienced workload. Students feel that these discussions could help them to cope with their workload.
3) Teachers could be aware of students' circumstances in relation to funding and working, in order to be able to understand students' different situations and possible difficulties in devoting time and energy to studying.
4) Teachers could be clear and reasonable with their expectations for students, and balance these expectations with the students' circumstances regarding their workload. Very often students feel pressure from teachers' expectations for success.
5) Teachers could try to decrease the competition between music students. The field of music has a long tradition of competitive practices in studying music and performing, and nowadays social media increases the competitive atmosphere among students even more.
6) Teachers could give more individual support to music students with their musician career planning. Students wish that they could also learn about different career paths than the teachers' own careers.

**Table 11.** Recommendations for tools for teachers concerning a music student's individual workload

<b>A music student's individual workload and tools for teachers</b>
1) Teachers could best support students' approaches to learning by treating them as autonomous individuals. Students also need teachers' clear advice, for example with technical aspects in practising that are tailored to their needs. Instead of the traditional master-apprenticeship model, where teachers have an authoritative role, students would like to receive such advice through personalised discussions in a learner-centred way.
2) By creating a secure and safe atmosphere, one-to-one teachers in particular could maintain a very close relationship with students. In addition to focusing on musician's skills, students would like to get teachers' mental support with specific music-related issues.
3) Teachers could show an interest in and understanding of students' situations with their workload. This might even help students to increase their workload and efforts in studying.
4) One-to-one teachers and teachers in academic studies and other studies could collaborate in developing their teaching and courses in order to better understand the total workload that practising and studying entail for students. This may help students to enjoy both practising and studying academic courses.
5) Teachers in group tuition could try to find ways to better support students according to their prior knowledge and skills, for example by dividing the big group into smaller groups. Students could then choose the group which best supports their learning.
6) Teachers could support students' enjoyable experiences in studying by helping them find suitable coping methods for specific workload connected to practising and performing, such as emotional aspects that follow after performing.
7) Teachers could acquire skills to solve possible emotional conflicts with students, as such unsolved conflicts may negatively affect students' coping with their workload while taking up their time and decreasing their energy for studying and practising.
8) Teachers could be trained to support students with their time management skills, thus helping students proactively discuss their workload and plan their courses and schedules for studying.
9) Teachers could give specific understanding and support for students with their experiences in the first year of study to help them find their individual study paths and to learn needed coping methods for the workload in studying at the higher education level.
10) To adjust course requirements to support students' healthy practising methods, teachers could be more aware of the mental and physical load that practising in addition to studying at the higher education level causes to students.
11) Teachers could aim to increase positive interaction with students, because these moments can create circumstances for students to feel flow and enjoyment in studying and affect students' meaning of musicianship.
12) For teachers, it is good to know that students may also have personal coping methods, such as religion (or spiritual orientations) that they do not necessarily discuss in their interactions with their teachers, despite such being an important part of their identities.

**Table 12.** Recommendations for tools for teachers concerning music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments

<b>Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments and tools for teachers</b>
1) It is important for teachers to understand that students have mostly positive learning experiences in their teaching and learning environments, but some students have or have had unfortunate, unfavourable, or even abusive experiences at the hands of their music teachers, and these experiences may affect students' current workload.
2) Teachers' pedagogical skills, which increase and maintain good relationships with students, are experienced by students as an important part of good teaching and learning environments for enhancing their learning.
3) Teachers could try to find ways to plan and arrange compulsory academic studies and other studies so that schedules are informed in advance and the workload is appropriately in balance with students' practising and one-to-one lessons.
4) In constructive one-to-one tuition teachers are able to: (a) support students' motivation to learn the specific subject, but also students' ability to love music and be enthusiastic about it, (b) give guidance as advanced musicians to help students to develop their skills, creativity, identity, and self-confidence as musicians, (c) acknowledge students' learning and improvement, and maintain an open, caring, and nurturing relationship by having "student's best in their heart", (d) have constructive teaching methods, (e) give honest but friendly feedback that encourages students to be persistent and try to exceed their limits, (f) support students with their challenges, but at the same time place the main responsibility for learning on students themselves, (g) give practical suggestions for repertoires and technical advice on how to solve problematic matters by approaching them in little parts, and (h) provide tips for time management, practising, and future careers.
5) One-to-one teachers could find ways to be demanding "in a good way" that motivates students to practise harder and to be productive, as too much pressure and demands may cause anxiety and stress for students and hinder feeling enjoyment in studying.
6) One-to-one teachers could be aware of those situations in which students feel that negative interaction takes place between them and their teachers. This happens when one-to-one tuition teachers: (a) use hierarchical power and do not have pedagogical skills to support learner-centredness, (b) do not develop and update their methods, (c) are dismissive, cruel, and too critical, (d) do not accept any criticism from the students, and are difficult to communicate with, (e) are not able to give mental support, and (f) are not clear about the desired learning outcomes.
7) It is important that teachers understand how meaningful the relationships with the one-to-one teachers are for students, thus it is very frustrating for the students if the chemistry in that relationship is not working well.
8) In group tuition, students find the content useful if teachers plan the courses to be connected to learning practical skills as a musician and their future careers. For example, students think that well-being courses are meaningful because they are useful to students themselves.
9) Teachers could plan group tuition courses to be: (a) interesting, (b) flexible in regards to compulsory attendance, and (c) well-prepared with regard to desired outcomes, content, and assignments.
10) Teachers could find ways to create a safe learning environment, so that students have the courage to be active among their peer-students.
11) Teachers could be careful to plan their courses so that the credits and workload are in balance.
12) Teachers could be aware that there is variation in students' opinions about group tuition and academic studies. Some students enjoy these courses, but some students do not consider them to be useful at all because of the content or the teacher's pedagogical skills.
13) Teachers could be active in curriculum development work in order to understand the total workload that all of the compulsory and elective courses and practising entail for students. By pursuing such developmental work, teachers would also have the possibility to affect the curriculum and students' workload. Very often there are too many courses and deadlines packed into the same time at the end of the semesters; thus, developing more intensive courses that take place throughout the semesters could ease students' workload.
14) In assessment situations, teachers could provide higher quality feedback for students. Students are glad to receive feedback from teachers, and they want assessments to be clear, easy to understand, focused, and constructive.
15) It is important for teachers to understand that harsh and overly critical feedback affects students' mental health. Good feedback encourages and motivates students to practise even harder, and constructive critical feedback pushes students to increase practising time. When students are overloaded, they are not able to handle feedback of any sort.
16) Teachers could engage students in discussion to a greater degree, and also ask their opinions in the assessment situations. Students also find it useful to learn how to give constructive feedback. In exam concerts, students could better utilise feedback if they could record the process for later review.
17) Teachers could be involved in developing student feedback systems, because students often think that the questions in the feedback forms are too general. In addition, it is important that students' anonymity is fully protected in feedback systems, so that they can give honest feedback.
18) Teachers could encourage students to give more feedback, because it can change traditional conceptions of teaching toward a more constructive teaching culture.

**Table 13.** Recommendations for tools for teachers concerning music students' psychological and physiological issues

<b>Music students' psychological and physiological issues and tools for teachers</b>
1) It is important to teach students in higher education how to deal with stress, because too much stress is often connected to overload and affects most of the students' physical and mental health, and can even lead to burnout.
2) Teachers could be aware of causes of stress in students, such as relationships with peer-students, teachers' teaching approaches, friend and familial issues, financial issues, cumulative assignments with deadlines, unclear expectations, exam concerts, performing, and finding time and space for practising. Stress causes many symptoms, such as sleeping problems, physical issues, unhealthy eating habits, panic attacks, anxiety, and feeling paralyzed. Teachers could adjust their teaching so that it does not cause too much stress for students.
3) Teachers could actively search for information about well-being courses and psychological support for students, so that they can guide students to seek help with overload, stress, and burnout. Students do not easily speak about their feeling of stress with teachers.
4) Teachers could be aware of different aspects of students' performance anxiety, which is connected to both psychological anxiety and depression and to physical bodily reactions. Support from teachers in defining reasonable expectations could help students to cope with performance anxiety. Providing time to get used to performing also helps to decrease performance anxiety.
5) Teaching body awareness and practising and playing techniques could help students to avoid musculoskeletal problems in practising and performing. Support from teachers is important when students' musculoskeletal problems force them to interrupt their practising schedule and plan everything in a new way.
6) Teachers could discuss with students about ergonomics and practical ways to do physical exercises for increasing well-being as musicians.
7) Teachers could get training to support students with their health issues. Students appreciate teachers' understanding when mental or physical health issues or other challenges in their life affect their studying and practising.

The findings suggested that the higher music education institutions should make action plans to specify who are responsible and what resources are available to make all teachers—including hourly-paid teachers—aware of the structure of music students' workload, as well as who should be responsible for making the individual teachers aware of each individual student's workload. Collaboration and cooperation between professionals within institutions should be enhanced to raise awareness of providing or signposting students to well-being courses and psychological support. On the basis of the findings, institutions could select the most important tools depending on the current situation related to their students' workload and disseminate those tools to teachers via policy documents, informative papers, and websites.



## 5.5 Evaluation of the Workload, Stress, and Coping questionnaire

Exploratory Factor Analysis (Appendix 9) was carried out to explore the factor structure of the WSC questionnaire to determine whether its nine-factor structure holds for the sample of 152 music students. Thus, a Principal Axis Factor (PAF) with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation was conducted to minimise the number of variables that have high loadings on each factor. The factorability of the 61 items was examined. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy suggested that the sample was factorable ( $KMO = .687$ ) because it was above the commonly recommended value of .60, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that there were enough correlations ( $p = .000$ ). The communalities were all above .30 (.311 – .780).

After excluding five variables with insufficient factor loadings less than .30, the analysis yielded five distinct factors:

- 1) *Social support seeking* (comprising seven variables of Instrumental support seeking and five variables of Emotional support seeking).
- 2) *Goal-oriented problem solving* (comprising nine variables of Proactive coping, one variable of Reflective coping, two variables of Strategic planning, and one variable of Instrumental support seeking).
- 3) *Preventive reflecting* (comprising nine variables of Reflective coping and five variables of Preventive coping).
- 4) *Proactive attitude in decreasing workload and stress* (comprising four negatively loaded variables of Study workload, one negatively loaded variable of Stress, one variable of Proactive coping, and one variable of Reflective coping).
- 5) *Active future-oriented planning* (comprising three variables of Proactive coping, two variables of Strategic planning, two variables of Preventive coping, and three negatively loaded variables of Avoidance coping).

The Cronbach's Alpha values for the scales in the WSC questionnaire and for the scales in the new factor structure are presented in Table 14.

**Table 14.** Cronbach's Alpha values for the scales in the WSC questionnaire and for the scales in the new factor structure

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha
<i>Factors in the WSC questionnaire</i>	
1. Study workload	.63
2. Stress	.66 *
3. Proactive coping	.77
4. Reflective coping	.76
5. Strategic planning	.67
6. Preventive coping	.71
7. Instrumental support seeking	.83
8. Emotional support seeking	.82
9. Avoidance coping	.63
<i>New factors</i>	
1. Proactive attitude in decreasing study workload and stress	.32
2. Goal-oriented problem solving	.83
3. Preventive reflecting	.83
4. Social support seeking	.90
5. Active future-oriented planning	.43
* Stress scale included only one item, thus Alpha value indicates the combination of Study workload scale and Stress scale.	

From the total of 155 respondents, 53 music students (34%) wrote feedback in the WSC questionnaire. Respondents' feedback was coded and grouped into seven categories to evaluate the general structure of the questionnaire (Table 15).

**Table 15.** Respondents' ( $n = 53$ ) feedback of the WSC questionnaire grouped into seven categories

Categories with the content of feedback	Number of respondents
<i>1. General</i>	
Thanking for the survey/research on student workload	18
<i>2. Topic</i>	
Important/valuable/needed topic	17
Interesting topic	7
<i>3. Experience</i>	
Easy/nice to answer to the questions	5
Hard/difficult to answer to the questions	2
<i>4. Length</i>	
Good length	1
Too long	3
<i>5. Items</i>	
All items were good	9
Selecting multiple options should be possible in gender identity	1
Items consisting of two questions were difficult to answer	1
Some open-ended items were unclear (e.g., item 15 'other studies')	4
Some multiple-choice items were unclear	2
Item 73 'when you have family' should be formulated better	2
Item 84 'experiences of teaching and learning' was difficult to answer	2
<i>6. Item scales</i>	
Range from 1 to 4 is not enough (e.g., the middle option is needed)	5
The option of 'I do not know' is needed	2
<i>7. Other remarks</i>	
Increased students' reflection (e.g., on proactivity and social support)	6
Note for ensuring anonymity	1
Suggestion for providing incentives	1

In their feedback on the WSC questionnaire, respondents pointed out that:

- studying music differs from reading, writing, and sitting in lectures because practising and performing are a large part of the degree in higher music education;
- music students' workload depends on their circumstances and that makes it challenging to choose the answers objectively;
- music students have learnt to practise persistently and to set high standards for themselves since their childhood; thus, they might be a more homogeneous group than students in other fields in higher education;
- the field of music has structural problems, such as admiring talent, that place pressure on music students;
- it is important to highlight that many music students work and study at the same time;
- this kind of research supports an open discussion of preventing music students' burnout; thus, it further establishes music students' well-being in the future;
- there could be more questions related to the higher music education institutions, so music students could better express their feelings about experiences in their institutions; and
- several issues in music teaching need to be addressed.



## 6 DISCUSSION

This chapter extends the results and findings presented in the previous chapter—consisting of the four articles and the evaluation of the WSC questionnaire—to enable an integrated discussion of broader matters of music students’ experienced workload, stress, and coping in higher education. The chapter has four sections that follow the four research sub-question guiding this dissertation to answer the overarching research question: What are music students’ experiences of workload, stress, and coping in higher education?

### 6.1 Music students’ experienced workload in higher education

The first research sub-question in this dissertation was: *How does the previous international research define music students’ experienced workload in higher education?* Article I reported a systematic review of published previous research on students’ experiences of workload, and particularly that of music students. Three overarching themes were identified, which included a total of 23 recommendations for good practices to: (a) increase music students’ ability to cope with their workload, (b) provide tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload, and (c) develop learner-centred environments in higher music education. The findings provided more detailed insight into music students’ experienced workload and showed how students could be better supported, as studying music includes workload—for example, concerning one-to-one tuition, practising, and performing—that is different in many ways from that in other fields of education.

The findings show that music students experience workload both as a challenge and as a source of positive learning experiences. Similarly, Giles (2009) found that students’ experiences of workload are related to various issues in the teaching and learning environment. Thus, much more evidence is needed to make informed changes in educational institutions to support students’ coping with the workload. Further, the participants’ feedback in the WSC questionnaire emphasised that music students’ workload is a valuable research topic, and it is vital that music students’ experiences are listened to in higher music education institutions.

## 6.2 Music students' experiences in Finland and the United Kingdom

The second research sub-question in this dissertation was: *How do music students in Finland and the United Kingdom experience workload and stress and use coping styles in their studies, their teaching and learning environments, and their interactions with teachers?* In Articles II–IV the study design was cross-national. A total of 155 music students in five higher music education institutions in Finland and the United Kingdom responded to the WSC questionnaire, and 29 of them participated in interviews. This data deepened the understanding of the characteristics of music students' experienced workload. In the MSW project, the data between these two countries was compared only to highlight the context-based differences as environmental factors that should be addressed in connection to music students' experiences. There are differences in higher education systems between countries that affect students' lives; for example, in contrast to the United Kingdom, higher education institutions in Finland have low tuition fees (Jääskeläinen, 2021). Article II presented music students' experienced workload and stress in connection to music students' use of coping styles. Article III shed light on music students' experienced workload and stress in connection to life and livelihoods. Finally, Article IV utilised music students' experiences to recommend tools that teachers can use to support music students in managing and coping with their experienced workload.

In Article III, about music students' study workload and stress, for which the country of study and the music students' livelihoods (understood in their everyday meaning as working and earning resources for living) were combined as predictors, the aim was to analyse whether the different university cultures affect music students' experienced workload and stress. The quantitative results showed that there is variation in music students' experiences of study workload between Finland and the United Kingdom. When looking at the effects, music students in the United Kingdom reported that they had to work hard in their studies. In comparison, music students in Finland found that their studies overloaded them, and this part of their study programme did not mesh well with their overall workload. In addition, their experiences indicated that the number of credits did not correspond to the overall course workload,

and that the pace of study was too intense within the study programme. The results also indicated that a neoliberal university culture with high tuition fees, which thus impacts students' livelihoods alongside their studying, is likely to increase music students' experienced stress but not directly impact their experienced study workload.

The differences between university cultures in Finland and the United Kingdom were not elaborated on in the qualitative analysis phase. However, the findings provided useful insights into music students' lived experiences of coping with workload and stress in these two countries. The full sets of quoted music students' lived experiences can be found in Articles II–IV. Because the short summaries of findings presented in the previous chapter cannot comprehensively express music students' lived experiences, the three quotations below exemplify music students' experiences in Finland and the United Kingdom. The quotations were chosen to emphasise those issues that the respondents pointed out in their feedback in the WSC questionnaire: pressure because of the competitive atmosphere in the field of music, the need to work while studying, and addressing issues related to music teaching. The first example of a participant's quotation in Article II mirrors *music students' experienced workload and stress and use of coping styles in their studies*. It illustrates a music-specific way of using strategic planning to cope with the competition between peer students:

*So, no one wants to perform worse than what their skills are. There is also group pressure because nobody wants to show that kind of failure or the unfinished stage of training. It feels much better to show after I have practised something very well. And on the other hand, very few people see the phase when I practise, repeatedly, hours after hours, to perform it well. I just spoke about this with my peer students. When you start in a new place, everybody has enormous pressure to show right away that, by the way, I am very good. Mainly because it is a very different thing in music. Because it is very personal and if you are failing in it or something like that. Like playing badly or singing incorrect notes or forgetting*



*words or breaking your voice. The voice is like yourself and your personality as an instrument. In a way, music is, I don't want to say it is dangerous, but studying in the field of music includes much more workload because it is connected to your personal life and personality too.*

The second example of a participant's quotation in Article III mirrors *music students' experienced workload and stress and use of coping styles in their teaching and learning environments*. It shows the structure of music students' workload concerning their current and future livelihoods, which cause the need and desire to work in the field of music alongside studying:

*For me, it is the financial need in particular which forces me to work alongside studying. But the workload is also partly caused by me enjoying being able to work in my own field. I think that the same reason applies to many other students. Although they know that work during weekends and holidays causes extra commitments in the calendar, working is very beneficial for my current studies and for my future career.*

The third example of a participant's quotation in Article IV mirrors *music students' experienced workload and stress and use of coping styles in their interactions with teachers*. It shows how teachers could best support a music student's individual workload through their approaches to learning:

*They [good teachers] have this kind of sincere will to help a student to improve, in a way [laughing], take the next steps right in the place where the student is at the moment.*

The integration of the results of the quantitative analysis in Article III and the findings of the qualitative analyses in the Articles II–IV indicates that music students have their own issues and ways to cope with workload and stress. Their methods of coping with workload and stress include competing with peer-

students, handling information on social media, working alongside studying, and finding support for music-specific physical and psychological problems. The university culture impacts students' ability to cope with workload and stress through the overall atmosphere and any collaboration between music students in the institutions, and in the field of music more generally. In addition, music students' livelihoods may increase stress and affect music students' relationship with studying and being a musician. Previous studies highlight that teachers should be aware of these pressures and show empathy for those students who have commitments other than studying, for example, part-time work and family responsibilities, which make time management challenging and can cause stress for students (Beban & Trueman, 2018; Giles, 2009). For example, the participants' experiences—in both the results of the quantitative analyses and the findings of the qualitative analyses—confirmed that stress has a significant effect on students' experiences of workload. The findings also highlight concerns about the unequal workload and stress experiences between low-income students working while studying and well-off students. However, at the same time, working may be beneficial and invaluable for music students' future careers (e.g., López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2021).

### **6.3 Experienced study workload, stress, and proactive coping associated with gender, level of degree, genre group, and study programme**

The third research sub-question in this dissertation was: *To what extent are experienced study workload, stress, and proactive coping associated with gender, level of degree, genre group, and study programme among music students in Finland and the United Kingdom?* The results of Article II indicated that music students' experienced study workload is a statistically significant predictor of experienced stress. The more students use proactive coping style and strategic planning, the less they experience stress. Using instrumental support seeking and emotional support seeking may also help reduce stress. In addition, the more students use proactive coping and reflective coping styles, the less they experience a study workload. By establishing a relationship between the use of proactive coping styles and a decrease in reported stress,

it is possible to respond to the critiques on focusing excessively on students as vulnerable and stressed individuals in education (e.g., Ecclestone & Hayes, 2019).

The results also showed associations between music students' experienced study workload, stress, and proactive coping styles in relation to demographic variables. Female music students experience statistically significantly more stress than male music students. Male students use proactive coping style statistically significantly more than female students. Non-binary gender students use emotional support seeking statistically significantly less than female and male students. There were no statistically significant differences between groups in study workload or stress at the undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels. When comparing genre groups, students in the music education group experience statistically significantly more study workload than students in the classical music group. Students in other genres group (i.e., other than the music education genre group or classical music genre group) experience statistically significantly more stress than students in the classical music group. When comparing study programmes, students in church music experience statistically significantly more study workload than students in classical piano. Students in doctoral or composition study programmes experience statistically significantly more stress than students in classical piano study programmes.

In Article III, the results increased the understanding of the predictors of music students' experienced study workload and their connection to livelihoods (including socio-demographic characteristics, working while studying, funding, and loans) and stress in higher education. Female students are more likely to experience significant study workload and stress than male or non-binary gender students. Non-binary gender is associated with a negligible effect on study workload, but a noticeable effect on stress. Level of degree and genre group only have a small effect on music students' experienced study workload. Undergraduate students report experiencing a greater study workload but less stress than postgraduate students and junior or doctoral students. Students studying music education are more likely to experience a high level of study workload than students studying classical music or other genres (i.e., other than

the music education genre group or classical music genre group). However, none of these groupings affected experienced stress.

The integration of the results of the quantitative analyses in Articles II and III indicates that some groups of music students experience significant workload and stress in higher education. Thus, there is a need to pay attention to genders regarding study workload (female students), stress (female and non-binary gender students), and use of proactive coping styles (female students in relation to proactive coping style and non-binary gender students in relation to emotional support seeking); levels of degree regarding study workload (undergraduate level students) and stress (junior and doctoral level students); genre groups regarding study workload (students in the music education genre group) and stress (students in other genres group, i.e., other than the music education genre group or classical music genre group); and study programmes regarding study workload (students in church music study programmes) and stress (students in doctoral or composition study programmes).

These results show that particular groups of music students in Finland and the United Kingdom experience significant study workload and stress. They also confirm the same needs that music students highlighted in their feedback in the WSC questionnaire: student burnout should be openly discussed in higher music education in order to find ways to prevent it. Supporting music students' proactive coping styles could be one way to prevent student burnout. Using proactive coping and reflective coping styles can help reduce study workload, and using proactive coping style and strategic planning can help reduce stress. It is worth noting that female students experienced more study workload and stress than male students; a similar result was found already 25 years ago by Zetterberg et al. (1998). However, male students used a proactive coping style statistically significantly more than female students. Using instrumental support seeking and emotional support seeking may also help reduce stress. Thus, an alarming result is that non-binary gender students used emotional support seeking statistically significantly less than female and male music students, although the non-binary gender was associated with a noticeable effect on stress. These differences in experienced study workload, stress, and proactive coping styles between genders may resonate invisible structural

inequalities in the higher music education system stemming from the classical music traditions from the nineteenth century (Bull, 2019). The concern about structural problems and the need to address issues in music teaching and within the institutions were also mentioned in the respondents' feedback in the WSC questionnaire. In addition, the differences between genre groups and between study programmes need to be emphasised. Particularly in music education and church music, students have multiple study- and instrument-specific demands, since the related professions require multi-instrumentalism—which may create challenges to being able to concentrate properly on learning—compared to classical music study programmes. In addition, the junior and doctoral levels seem to be associated with stressful studying, which may be related to the fact that junior students study music while in high school, and doctoral students often have other work and family commitments.

#### **6.4 Development of pedagogical practices and educational policies**

The fourth research sub-question in this dissertation was: *How could this dissertation's results and findings about music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping be used to develop pedagogical practices and educational policies in higher music education?* The results and findings in Articles I–IV about music students' experienced workload, stress, and coping provide valuable data to be utilised in developing pedagogical practices and educational policies. In addition, the evaluation of the factor structure of the WSC questionnaire showed how the questionnaire could be developed for further use in higher music education contexts.

Article I presents an overview of the relevant research on music student workload, which will hopefully ease access to the research for higher music education institutions. These institutions can then use the suggested 23 recommendations for good practices to inform students, teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services as to how to deal with music students' workload. This includes planning for learning and teaching environments and support systems that optimise music students' learning, well-being, and health. Music students may also benefit from this knowledge, which

can help them understand and reflect on their experienced workload and make changes as necessary to cope better with it in higher education.

In addition, all of the quotations concerning music students' lived experiences in Articles II–IV provide valuable material for strengthening music students' voices when developing pedagogical practices. Excerpts from the participants' lived experiences show how music students have issues concerning the structure of their workload, music students' individual workloads, the workload relating to their teaching and learning environments, and psychological and physiological issues. Article II shows music students' particular ways of coping with workload and stress, and Article III presents predictors of music students' workload and stress that could be further investigated. As practical tools for developing pedagogical practices, Article IV provides 43 constructive ways for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with workload in higher education.

By adopting a constructive approach to teaching and learning, teachers could provide more spaces for learner-centredness in the classroom and support students' agency in learning. Practical tools can particularly help those teachers and students who have trouble consciously accessing their cognitive and metacognitive processes, when the stability and internalisation of their conceptions make them strongly resistant to change (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000; Pozo et al., 2022). Integrating knowledge of students' workload, stress, and coping into teachers' continuing professional development can support the development of instruction towards more democratic practices between master and apprentice in higher music education (e.g., Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013).

The integration of the results of the quantitative analyses in the Articles II and III, and the findings of the qualitative analyses in the Articles I–IV—as well as music students' feedback in the WSC questionnaire—indicate significant development needs regarding workload, stress, and coping in higher music education. Institutions need to meet these needs in order to better support music students in having successful, healthy, and enjoyable study experiences that prepare them for their careers. In particular, issues and differences in the experienced workload and stress, for example, between genders and low-income and well-off students, for example, should be considered in developing

higher music education systems and curricula. Such development is needed to ensure that higher music education institutions can provide a study environment that makes workload and stress experiences feasible for all music students. Music students' individual proactive coping skills should be better supported to help them manage the workload and stress in their studying. That could be done by understanding students' experiences in connection with specific learning cultures and country-specific educational policies. The knowledge of music students' experiences developed in this dissertation, when connected with the development of pedagogical practices in higher music education, can support the efforts of teachers and administrators to gain a deeper understanding of the diversity in their student populations and the individual circumstances of their students. The next chapter provides four recommendations that will allow higher music education institutions to support music students in better coping with their workload and stress. The recommendations focus on developing pedagogical practices and educational policies that acknowledge music students' particular ways of coping with workload and stress.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents practical implications along with the recommendations, limitations, and conclusions of the main contributions of this dissertation, and suggestions for further research.

### 7.1 Practical implications

The MSW project aimed to generate an understanding of music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping during their studies in higher education. Given the practical implications of the explanatory and synthesis stages of the project, this dissertation provides four recommendations for good practices that will allow higher music education institutions to better support music students in their efforts to cope with their workload and stress (see Figure 2). These include

- a) supporting music students' proactive coping skills;
- b) finding solutions to the unequal workload and stress experiences between low-income and well-off students, different genders, and different study programmes;
- c) ensuring teachers' continuing professional development, particularly in learner-centred pedagogical approaches; and
- d) investing resources in more longitudinal, cross-cultural, and interventional research investigating music students' discipline-specific experiences of workload and stress.

#### *7.1.1 Music students' proactive coping skills*

The first recommendation suggests that higher music education should support music students' proactive coping skills. Students' study skills and well-being can be developed through institutional practices that support students' use of positive coping strategies that minimise their distress and maladaptive coping during their studies (Deasy et al., 2014). Previous research suggests that time is only one aspect of workload (Kember, 2004). Indeed, students' motivation



and interest in studying greatly affect their perceptions of workload (Kyndt et al., 2014). Thus, it is vital to provide music students with proper support for coping and strengthening their study motivation. Studying music has its own unique characteristics compared to other fields in higher education. Article II can be utilised in higher music education institutions, as it illustrates music students’ particular ways of using proactive coping styles. For example, learning strategies for coping with stress connected to stage fright is particularly important for music students (Nogaj, 2017). The article also shows that there are differences between genders in using proactive coping styles, and these differences should be acknowledged in order to develop better support systems for music students.



**Figure 2.** Practical implications of the dissertation

### *7.1.2 Developing learner-centred environments*

The second recommendation suggests that higher music education institutions should find solutions to the unequal workload and stress experiences between low-income and well-off students, different genders, and different study programmes. Previous research has shown that although student-centred teaching has generally replaced teacher-centred curricula in higher education, it is not evident that it decreases student workload (Kyndt et al., 2011), nor that it has made equal progress in the music studio (Pozo et al., 2022). According to Kyndt et al. (2011), a student-centred setting requires more students' initiative and autonomy from students, which may lead to insecure feelings if the teaching does not provide enough information to support students in completing assignments. That, in turn, may influence students' approaches to learning. In addition, when teachers aim to provide suitable materials to students' individual needs in the courses, this may lead to an increased workload, because it is difficult to remove materials from the curriculum when there are increasing requirements both inside and outside institutions for the courses (Kember et al., 1996).

There are several ways to develop learner-centred environments. Higher music education institutions could utilise research on music students' health (Ginsborg et al., 2009; Williamon & Thompson, 2006) to tackle the negative impact of university culture on students' well-being. They could also acknowledge students' diverse backgrounds and circumstances and consider specific actions, such as changing a competitive atmosphere to a more co-operative university culture (Fernández-Herrería & Martínez-Rodríguez, 2016; Fitzpatrick, 2019). For example, some participants in the MSW project experienced extracurricular paid work as a benefit, despite its contribution to a greater workload, if it could be linked to future career goals. This finding could have interesting implications for the development of programmes where paid music internships would be embedded in the curriculum structure; could institutional partnerships with ensemble and music professional contacts create opportunities for music students to both earn money and develop networks and at the same time experience contextual work-based training? Indeed,

study programmes could be developed by utilising more diverse sources of knowledge, as Cannella and Koro-Ljungberg (2017) suggest:

Diverse knowledges, multiple ways of being/living, critical multiculturalism, justice education, and practices of reconceptualization connected with support for performances that directly counter commodification and profiteering provide a range of locations from which to counter, resist, even become without, neoliberalism in higher education. (p. 6)

#### *7.1.3 Tools for teachers to support music students to cope with workload*

The third recommendation suggests that higher music education should ensure teachers' continuing professional development, particularly in learner-centred pedagogical approaches. Understanding music students' experienced workload may enable teachers to improve their students' learning experiences more generally. Constructivist learning theories suggest that it is possible to support students being active learners when the teaching is connected to their prior knowledge and students have enough time to process new information (Kolari et al., 2006). The emphasis on researching music students' workload experiences may offer a way to strengthen students' experiences to be integrated into developmental work in teaching. This understanding could be utilised in changing teacher-centred and product-oriented methods of teaching music to learner-centredness in teacher training that promotes music students' activity and a deep understanding in their learning (López-Íñiguez et al., 2014). In addition, learner-centredness should be discussed in relation to the music profession and the degree to which higher music education instantiates the work ethics, practices, and values of the music profession.

#### *7.1.4 Methodological implications*

The fourth recommendation suggests that higher music education should invest resources in providing more longitudinal, cross-cultural, and interventional

research investigating music students' discipline-specific experiences of workload and stress. The methodological implications—both strengths and challenges—arising from this dissertation can be utilised when planning future projects to research music students' workload.

The first methodological implication is related to the relatively small sample size usually available when conducting research in institutions where the student population and student groups in study programmes are small, and response rates are often low. A common assumption is that survey non-response bias may lead to inaccurate population estimates. However, according to Fosnacht et al. (2017), low response counts—such as 50 respondents—can provide reliable estimates. Even a response rate of 5% can be considered reliable when at least 1,000 students have been contacted to ask them to participate. Furthermore, “it is not representativeness of the study subjects that enhances the generalisation, it is knowledge of specific conditions and an understanding of mechanism for a proper generalisation” (Rothman et al., 2013, p. 1013). While increasing sample size can reduce sampling error, it will not necessarily increase representativeness or reduce systematic error called bias. In that line, an ideal sample is representative when it is similar to the target population in every conceivable way. For example, 2% of 155 respondents in the WSC questionnaire were non-binary gender music students. They reported using an emotional support seeking coping style statistically significantly less than female and male students. Although the number of non-binary gender music students is too low to generalise this result, it raises the concern that non-binary gender students may not find suitable support for themselves in the current educational structures. Similarly, Pereira et al. (2019) note that the proportion of students identifying as other regarding their gender has increased in higher education. They may face exceptionally high pressures when transitioning to higher education, simultaneously studying and processing their gender expression. Thus, support systems should acknowledge the particular needs of this group of students. Gaining an understanding of these needs requires further research with a larger sample size in which the number of non-binary gender students is greater than in the MSW research project. This same concern should be extended to all marginal and minority groups in higher music education institutions.

The second methodological implication concerns ways to explore music students' experiences. It is vital to produce evidence on the different aspects of music students' experienced workload and stress, because these experiences differ from the workloads in other fields. Music students' responsibilities include demonstrating their musical progress and managing coursework (Bernhard, 2007a). According to Hallam and Papageorgi (2016), it is also essential to nurture music students' love and enjoyment of music alongside their studies. Thus, it is crucial to understand what engaging in music means to music students in relation to their experienced workload during their studies in higher education (Jääskeläinen, 2022c). That may introduce knowledge that better informs higher music education's future administrative, teaching, and curriculum developments. In addition, a practical model could help music institutions to gather and analyse this particular set of qualitative data on music students' workload experiences during their studies (Jääskeläinen, 2022b). This dissertation also showed (Article III) how, in the context of higher music education institutions where the number of students in the study programmes is relatively small, a Bayesian approach is a good option for analysing the quantitative data. It can produce valid results for small samples, and combine quantitative and qualitative feedback from students (Low-Choy et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the third methodological implication for higher music education is that institutions should consider employing a researcher who can conduct longitudinal, cross-institutional, cross-national, cross-cultural, and interventional research on music students' workload, stress, and coping. It would then be possible to incorporate students' feedback as accurate results and findings to contribute to the developmental work in the institutions (Jääskeläinen, 2022b).

## **7.2 Limitations**

There are certain limitations to this dissertation. First, the music students' experiences, as captured in this dissertation, can only reflect a particular time, context, and specific group of participants. Furthermore, the empirical data in Articles II–IV was gathered in Finland and the United Kingdom; therefore,

caution should be exercised when attempting to generalise the results and findings outside these countries as this was not a broadly comparative study. In addition, the sample size was small and uneven, which is the second limitation of the study. Extending the statistical representativeness of sample sizes would increase the generalisability of the results. The third limitation includes using a single-item measure of feeling stress. Although the stress was carefully defined in the WSC questionnaire, multiple items may better measure the particularity of experienced stress in future research. The fourth limitation concerns the use of self-reported experiences by music students. This limitation could be overcome by combining self-reported and biophysical data on stress levels in interventional and longitudinal research (e.g., Asikainen & Katajavuori, 2021). In addition, it could be useful to collect complementary data on teachers' and administrative staff's experiences of students' workload in order to triangulate the students' self-reported experiences. Finally, the lack of contextual information about the participants can be considered a fifth limitation. However, following the ethical committees' strict anonymity requirements for a small sample data set, which included sensitive details about the participants connected to their health issues, may also be a strength. This may encourage music students to participate in future research, when they feel that they can trust that they will not be identified, for example, by their instruments being revealed in the quotes.

### **7.3 Conclusions**

Four international peer-reviewed publications, included in this dissertation, reported on and synthesised the explanatory stage of the MSW project. The results and findings presented in the articles provide recommendations for good practices for students, teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services, as well as policy recommendations for higher music education institutions regarding how to support music students in coping with their experienced workload and stress in higher music education. In addition, the evaluation of the WSC questionnaire showed how to develop the questionnaire for the future research projects in the context of higher music education.

Students often talk about experiencing an overly heavy workload (Kyndt et al., 2014). Thus, it has been essential to investigate students' individual workload experiences in this dissertation. Students may also benefit from learning within an evidence-based framework that can help them reflect on their workload and make changes as necessary to cope better with it. This dissertation can support informed decisions when planning learning and teaching environments to optimise students' learning and health (Perkins et al., 2017). It may also show where efforts should be made to help students overcome challenges associated with studying and to resolve health issues (Ginsborg et al., 2009). At the same time, when looking at these critical aspects of higher education from the student's perspective, the evidence presented in this dissertation can promote equality, equity, and justice—both in higher music education and in society more generally (Bull, 2019; Jääskeläinen, 2021). For example, the respondents mentioned in their feedback in the WSC questionnaire that this kind of research advances open discussion about music students' burnout, thus potentially supporting students' health in the future.

First, this dissertation provided a comprehensive literature review of the subject. This work not only informed the explanatory stage and synthesis stage of the MSW project, but can also be utilised in future research to develop more suitable support systems for music students' workload (Article I). Pereira et al. (2019) suggest increasing psychological support services for students in higher education to proactively support students' resilience and well-being, which may prevent severe problems in their future life.

Second, a transcendental phenomenological approach to music students' workload experiences was adopted. It was beneficial to understanding and supporting specific characteristics of music students' learning (Reid, 2001), in terms of helping them cope with different and specific types of workloads in higher music education. This approach can be utilised in higher music education administration when processing student feedback, particularly open-ended answers. Such feedback should be more properly utilised, as it is a highly valuable resource. Thus, this particular methodological approach could be a way to more fully utilise such data for developmental work in higher education institutions.

Third, this dissertation's study of music students' coping with their study workload and stress provided statistically significant results, such as illustrating the differences between genders and study programmes (Article II). These differences should be discussed in connection with the development of curricula and higher music education systems, in order to investigate more thoroughly why these unequal differences exist and how these issues can be overcome, so that all study programmes have the appropriate workload for students. As the Exploratory Factor Analysis (Appendix 9) and participants' feedback in the WSC questionnaire showed, music students' use of proactive coping styles also deserves further attention. The study of music has unique characteristics compared to other fields in higher education. Therefore, the proactive coping styles presented in previous research—proactive coping, reflective coping, strategic planning, preventive coping, instrumental support seeking, emotional support seeking, and avoidance coping (i.e., Greenglass, 2002)—might need adjusting to fit music students' ways of using coping strategies. The qualitative data in this dissertation has identified music students' particular ways of coping with their studies, which were presented in the fifth chapter. These findings may serve as valuable models for students in higher music education. Coping skills can benefit students in their studies, but also in their lives overall. For example, Pardos et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of supporting students' ability to cope with stress in their course load, but also to plan their time load in studying in a way that also allocates time to leisure activities. In addition to supporting students' individual proactive coping skills, it might be useful to identify institutional protective factors to support music students' ability to cope with high workload demands in line with Holloway et al. (2020), who identified, for example, positive and supportive feedback on assessments and well-structured timetables.

Fourth, the results of this dissertation (Article III) suggest that a neoliberal university culture with high tuition fees that impact students' livelihoods alongside studying is likely to increase music students' experienced stress, but not directly impact the experienced study workload. However, experienced stress greatly affects students' experiences of their workload. Therefore, it is important to foster an academic culture that encourages more



positive learning environments to meet the specific needs of music students (Papageorgi et al., 2010a). Similarly, Blackwell et al. (2020) argue that evidence on teaching conditions that increase students' well-being experiences may be an efficient way to improve teaching and learning environments in higher music education. This knowledge may then result in practical implications for administrators and teachers. For example, institutions could organise workshops that train and encourage students to focus less on perfectionism and tradition in their musical practice and craftsmanship, and more on maintaining mental and physical sustainability for the long-term, as well as more diverse approach to finding meaningful future careers across their lifespans (Jääskeläinen, 2022b). A total of 27 codes of music students' experienced workload in higher education were identified in the systematic literature review (Article I) and empirical data (Articles II–IV). These codes could be utilised as topics in future workshops: 1) approaches to learning, 2) assessment, 3) burnout, 4) coping, 5) competition, 6) curriculum, 7) enjoyment, 8) experiences in the first year of study, 9) flow, 10) funding, 11) health, 12) group tuition, 13) meaning of musicianship, 14) musculoskeletal problems, 15) musician career, 16) physical exercise, 17) practising, 18) religion, 19) social media, 20) stress, 21) structure of student workload, 22) student feedback, 23) teaching and learning environments, 24) time management, 25) one-to-one tuition, 26) performance anxiety, and 27) (extracurricular paid and unpaid) work.

Fifth, this dissertation has presented tools for teachers to take a constructive approach that would provide more space for learner-centredness and agency for music students (Article IV). When connected to the principles of conceptual change (in line with Vosniadou, 2013), this empirical research on student workload may support teachers' interactions with music students. Pardos et al. (2022) found in their recent study among higher education students that the credit hours specified by teachers are not a sufficient measure of course load. Therefore, they suggest using course workload analytics to measure the workload more accurately. Indeed, Karjalainen et al. (2008) suggest that teachers should regularly monitor and receive current feedback on students' workload in order to further develop their teaching strategies, because an optimal workload is a prerequisite for quality learning. They suggest that the

tools for monitoring workload should not be too complicated; for example, using students' time diaries could be a good tool for that.

As this dissertation indicates, the key to designing adequate support for students is a good understanding of the circumstances and prevalence of their methods of coping with workload and stress. As conclusions for future directions in higher music education institutions, the results and findings presented in this dissertation suggest gathering and analysing students' experiences and using this information as a decision-making tool. This suggestion is not only to better support music students' ability to cope, learn, sustain their well-being, and pursue future careers as musicians, but also to support the preparedness of higher music education teachers, administrators, and health and well-being services, as well as broader educational policies in higher music education and the development of more equitable and just education systems. Similarly, Brooks et al. (2022) suggest that

charting change in understandings of students is important—not only as an intellectual endeavour—but because of its implications for both policy and practice within higher education: to engage with students effectively, as a policymaker, member of HE staff, or even a member of the public, it seems critical that we comprehend *their* perspectives on the world, and *their* understandings of what it means to be a contemporary HE student. (p. 171, emphasis original)

## **7.4 Further research**

Prior to the MSW Project there was practically no research on music students' workload experiences in higher music education. This dissertation has increased the knowledge of music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping as a source for developing pedagogical practices and educational policies in higher music education institutions. However, more research is needed on this specific topic, for example to guide and inform curricular decisions (Koops & Kuebel, 2021). By identifying elements within learning environments that can support or hinder student learning, potential strengths and problems can be

identified to create more positive teaching and learning environments (Rusticus et al., 2022). Although the qualitative data in this study indicated that many music students found that constructivist teaching supported their ability to cope with their experienced workload better than traditional teaching, both in the one-to-one lessons and in group tuition, caution should be exercised in making claims based on fairly limited evidence concerning the extent to which students were experiencing different pedagogical approaches. Therefore, future research could measure the effect of constructivist versus traditional teaching on music students' experienced workload, and data should also be collected from teachers in higher music education, for example following the research designs by López-Íñiguez and Pozo (2014a, 2014b). A longitudinal study design could examine how different proactive coping styles affect music students' learning and well-being, for example in different learning cultures (Casas-Mas et al., 2015). Further research is needed to find the reasons for increased stress amongst female and non-binary gender students, to better support them as music students and musicians in higher education. Further comparative research is also needed to establish inter-disciplinary differences in the experience of workload and student coping strategies. In addition, there is a need for more detailed descriptions of what different courses entail, including objective course handbook measures of hours and credits, to check that the objective curriculum is not overloaded in the first place (Rivadeneyra, 2022). The results of this dissertation indicated that the country of study affects the variation between different aspects of music students' experienced study workload and experienced stress. Therefore, it is essential to produce more evidence of students' experiences with higher education systems and country-specific educational policies.

This dissertation has demonstrated different methods to research music students' workloads. For example, this dissertation provided an example of a Bayesian ordinal probit regression modelling process. It showed how students' experiences could be analysed to offer valuable evidence for future developmental work in universities and in relation to educational policies. In music universities where the number of students in the study programmes is relatively small, a Bayesian approach is a good option, because it can produce

valid results for small samples and combine quantitative and qualitative feedback from students (Low-Choy et al., 2017). With suitable methods, it should be possible to pursue research about learner-centred and active engagement strategies in order to increase students' motivation and identify actual student workload through meaningful survey instrument design (Pollock, 2021). To avoid speculation about the self-selection bias, robust research evidence is needed about to what extent students who are experiencing stress and overload may be encouraged—or discouraged because they do not have time—to take part in this kind of research. In addition, future research could be designed as a Bayesian evaluation of music students' behaviour changes, in order to provide evidence on the impacts of interventions concerning experienced workload (in line with Heino et al., 2018). Also, more research is needed to examine multicultural factors impacting music students' experiences of workload and stress in higher education. For example, research focusing on exchange and international students who have studied in more than one university, as well as equality issues, for example the experiences of marginal and minority groups.

In general, more longitudinal, cross-cultural, and interventional research using high-quality designs should be produced to investigate music students' discipline-specific experiences of workload and stress. This dissertation can provide a practical model for addressing music students' experiences by using a transcendental phenomenology approach. This model could be utilised in incorporating students' feedback into curricula-related improvements and future administrative and teaching developments in higher music education institutions. These institutions should more profoundly analyse and report their already gathered data—nowadays there are large amounts of student feedback data in such institutions. A practical model could help in this process. This might even help avoid, or at least ameliorate, students' survey fatigue, if they perceive that their responses matter and are utilised in the developmental actions of their institutions.

Indeed, music students' feedback in the WSC questionnaire highlighted that music students' experiences in higher music education institutions should be carefully scrutinised in relation to workload. Therefore, it is necessary to

continue research on these areas of workload, stress, and coping in order to better support music students' ability to have successful, healthy, and enjoyable study experiences in higher education as they interact with their teachers and their peers.

Finally, there is an urgent need for interventions to counter and eliminate neoliberalism's negative impact on students' well-being while studying. Such interventions should utilise research on music students' health (Ginsborg et al., 2009; Williamon & Thompson, 2006) in connection with possible alternative courses of action, such as changing the competitive mindset within an institution to a more cooperative one (Fernández-Herrería & Martínez-Rodríguez, 2016; Fitzpatrick, 2019), and revising the aims and contents of study programmes regarding diverse sources of knowledge (Cannella & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017). Acquiring this kind of knowledge would help construct visions for equity, because when music students' unique and meaningful experiences are heard and appreciated, these experiences can inform research in higher music education (Jääskeläinen & López-Íñiguez, 2017). In the future, the perspectives of teachers and administrative staff also need to be studied, as this can have implications for the feasibility of the recommendations proposed in this dissertation. For example, another research topic could be to what extent teachers have been able to use education research in the past as a tool of development. Indeed, there is a danger that focusing solely on students' needs might end up fuelling neoliberal values that position students as consumers and teachers as service providers.

In addition, specific challenges and resources associated with music students' coping with workload and stress should be acknowledged in general educational theories concerning students' workload. Indeed, when planning future research projects investigating music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping in higher education, the starting point should be, as mentioned by one of the interview participants: "I wouldn't be who I am today without music".





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## Appendix 1: Article I

Jääskeläinen, T., López-Íñiguez, G., & Phillips, M. (2022). Music students' experienced workload in higher education: A systematic review and recommendations for good practice. *Musicae Scientiae*, 10298649221093976. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649221093976>



# **MUSIC STUDENTS' EXPERIENCED WORKLOAD IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOOD PRACTICE**

## **Abstract**

While there is extensive research on student workload in higher education, research-based findings relating to music students' workloads are, to a great extent, lacking. In this study, we aim to review the literature systematically (a) to identify the factors that have an impact on students' experiences of workload (*experienced workload*) and (b) to better understand music students' experiences of their workloads in relation to their studies. The overall aim is to offer recommendations for students, teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services as to how to deal with music students' workload. We conducted a systematic search of literature in 23 electronic databases and 19 music research journals following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews guidelines. Eligibility criteria consisted of design, sample, phenomenon of interest, evaluation, and type of research. Twenty-nine qualitative, quantitative, and multistrategy studies fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Data were extracted and the quality of the studies was appraised. Extended meta-ethnography was used to create a synthesis revealing specific themes offering recommendations for good practice to (a) increase music students' ability to cope with their workload, (b) provide tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload, and (c) develop learner-centered environments in higher music education. In addition to presenting recommendations for good practice, we conclude that more research using high-quality designs is needed to investigate music students' discipline-specific experienced workload.

## **Keywords**

copmg, extended meta-ethnography, stress, synthesis, themes

Higher education is a vast and complex field to study, particularly when examining students' perceptions and experiences of their studies.



Research by Salmela-Aro and Read (2017) indicates that studying in higher education can be a demanding task—often related to workload—which influences students’ overall academic experience and well-being. For instance, in the context of higher education in Finland over recent years, psychological distress among university students has increased, which may reflect growing multifaceted environmental and institutional demands on them (Oksanen et al., 2017). In fact, recent research by the Finnish Student Health Service on students attending Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences (polytechnics) (e.g., Salmela-Aro & Read, 2017) suggests that burnout increases and engagement decreases as a student progresses through their program of study at the university.

The higher education context for music students differs from that of students in other disciplines, as it entails specific field-related challenges. For example, studying music may include performance anxiety, perfectionism, and career concerns that can cause discipline-specific sources of stress (e.g., Bernhard, 2007a). Painful musculoskeletal conditions and other health issues are also common concerns for music students (e.g., Ginsborg et al., 2009). Various aspects of the physical and psychological demands on music students have been examined in recent studies, such as music students’ perceptions and behaviors concerning their health (Araújo et al., 2017); levels of burnout and engagement and their effects on music students’ well-being (Zabuska et al., 2018); location and level of pain among musicians (Cruder et al., 2018); and music performance anxiety in classical musicians (Matei & Ginsborg, 2017). Also, Perkins et al. (2017) indicate that research is needed on the challenges, for students, of receiving feedback on their performance in high-pressure situations. The findings of an increasing body of research on music students’ workload may help to improve learning and teaching environments and better support music students’ well-being, learning, and future careers.

### **Defining students’ workload in educational contexts**

In educational research, workload is often defined objectively in terms of the hours that students spend in classes and independent study. In a qualitative study of students’ perceptions of workload and the factors influencing it,



Kember (2004) found that perceived and objectively measured workload were only weakly related and suggests that workload should be considered a complex construct, influenced by the teaching and learning environment. Kember and Leung (2006) therefore tested the hypothesis that perceived workload is influenced by seven elements of this environment, in a study using structural equation modeling (SEM), and found that it is directly (if weakly) influenced by teaching and teacher–student relationships. Given the impact of workload on students’ daily lives, it is therefore worth exploring not only hours of study but also other elements of the teaching and learning environment. Thirty years ago, Chambers (1992) suggested that these should include the view held by the higher education institution on what constitutes a reasonable workload. Research published since then has addressed factors that have an impact on student workload, such as motives, expectations, interests, skills, abilities, and previous experience (Lockwood, 1999). Marsh (2001) defined good workload (hours spent on class believed to be valuable) as being useful in a student’s development and education, whereas the effects of bad workload (total hours minus good hours) are negative. Karjalainen et al. (2008) considered an appropriate workload to be represented by students having enough time to complete tasks as part of their studies, when their own capacity to complete this work is taken into account. Bowyer (2012) suggested that student workload could be thought to consist of

the time needed for contact and independent study, the quantity and level of difficulty of the work, the type and timing of assessments, the institutional factors such as teaching and resources, and student characteristics such as ability, motivation and effort. (p. 240)

However, to our knowledge, no prior studies have focused on different degrees of workload associated with students’ positive, negative, or neutral experiences during their programs of study. It may also be useful to consider the effects of specific disciplines on students’ perceived workload. For example, bodily experiences are important in higher music education (Bresler, 2005), as music is made through and with the musician’s body, and skill development in music may be more complex than in some other fields.

Kember (2004) argued that higher education institutions should pay attention to what is taught, and how, if students are to be supported to cope successfully with their workloads. Previous research on students' health and well-being also gives recommendations for supporting students to manage their studies through orientation or induction and counseling, and stress-, life-, and time-management techniques (e.g., Bernhard, 2010; Kausar, 2010; Renard & Snelgar, 2015). For instance, Renard and Snelgar (2015) recommend that students use both proactive coping styles and stress management techniques, such as "avoiding overloading, spending time on things of importance, avoiding interruptions and procrastination, keeping a diary, being assertive, and developing a problem-solving mode of thinking" (p. 180).

Norton (2016) emphasizes the complexities of the relationship between music teachers and students, which is typically highly influential on the latter. She questions the extent to which teachers should be considered responsible for their students' general as well as musical development. Renard and Snelgar (2015) suggest that teachers should provide constructive feedback on assessments and support students who are struggling to cope. Holistic and learner-centered teaching that promotes "a deep understanding based on the integration of students' prior knowledge and curricular outcomes, as well as helping students to take metacognitive control of their own learning" (López-Íñiguez et al., 2014, p. 158) can support student agency and make teaching and learning more engaging and satisfying for both teacher and student (López-Íñiguez & Pozo, 2016). The aim is for students to learn to regulate and manage their own cognitive and motor processes autonomously, and to develop their own individual musicianship, under the guidance and supervision of teachers who focus on their students' reflective, meta-cognitive, emotional, and affective processes (López-Íñiguez, 2017).

There are elements of students' lives affecting their workload over which teachers and course administrators have no control. For example, changes in the way higher education institutions are funded, and rising tuition fees, have resulted in financial concerns for students. They may have to take on (more) extracurricular paid work. Coupled with inequalities between students from different levels of family income and support, these are potential sources

of stress (Beban & Trueman, 2018). Sudden, unexpected changes in learning circumstances such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may also affect music students' well-being (Habe et al., 2021), practice habits and behaviors, and everyday life (Rosset et al., 2021), and these changes may, in turn, affect their perceptions of workload.

Research on students' experiences of their studies, including perceived workload, can provide knowledge that may be valuable for institutions when making decisions that have an impact on the academic community, and seeking to enable staff to support students as effectively as possible. We refer to students' experiences of their studies as *experienced workload*, since these experiences include students' perceptions of the components of workload, the factors contributing to it, and its consequences. We therefore conducted a systematic review to identify research on music students' experienced workload and offer recommendations for students, teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services as to how best to manage this. We defined *students* as people studying at higher education institutions and *music students* as students registered on an academic degree program, in a university music department or at a conservatoire, with the aspiration of becoming a professional musician or working in a music-related profession (e.g., orchestral, chamber, or church musician; solo singer or performer; conductor; composer; music teacher; festival manager). We defined *teachers* as people teaching music students at higher education institutions.

### **Aims of the study and research questions**

In this study, we were interested in all aspects of students' workload during their years of study. We took a holistic approach, considering the nature, meaning, and components of workload, and how it is described in the published literature. We also considered students' curriculum-related workload (e.g., attendance at lectures, rehearsals, and practice sessions), and extra-curricular activities that may contribute to experienced workload (e.g., paid and unpaid work). We deliberately sought research revealing students' subjective experiences of workload and its consequences, rather than reporting objective measures (such as time spent studying, completed credits, grades, or effects on memory

and cognition). Our definition of workload derived from the Finnish term *kuormittavuus* (load). According to the Finnish Thesaurus and Ontology Service (Finto, 2021), this encompasses the burden related to work under- and overload and includes both physical (e.g., musculoskeletal strain) and psychological (e.g., cognitive, ethical, emotional, mental, and psychosocial) aspects of workload, which can be experienced in positive, neutral, or negative ways to different degrees. Thus, in line with previous research on students' perceptions of workload (e.g., Bachman & Bachman, 2006; Hernesniemi et al., 2017; Jacobs & Dodd, 2013; Kember, 2004; Kember & Leung, 2006; Parkinson et al., 2006), we considered workload not in terms of objectively measured hours of study but as the complex construct suggested by Kember and Leung (2006), with a range of components and effects.

We aim to review the literature on students' workload systematically, focusing on music students' experiences of workload associated with their studies, so as to inform recommendations likely to be helpful for teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services in supporting students to cope with their workload and plan their own studies. The following research questions (RQs) guided the review:

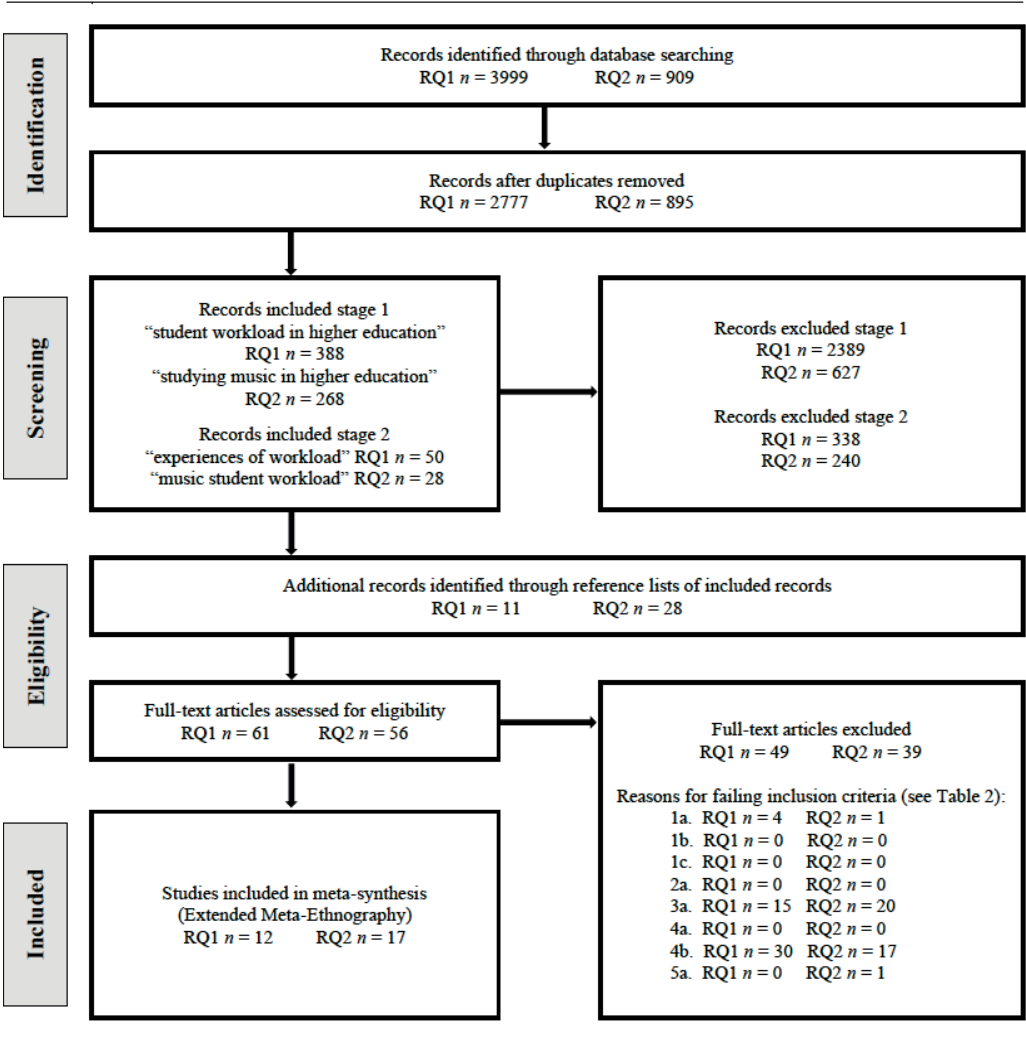
1. What factors have an impact on students' experienced workload?
2. What are music students' experiences of workload in relation to their studies?

## **Method**

We conducted an extended meta-ethnography (EME), a method of systematic review developed by Booker (2010, p. 59) as an application of Creswell's (2003) concurrent nested strategy and Noblit and Hare's (1988) seven-phase meta-ethnography. Noblit and Hare pioneered meta-ethnography as a review method for synthesizing ethnographic and interpretive qualitative studies to create holistic interpretations as an alternative to meta-analysis based on quantitative studies. EME differs from Noblit and Hare's meta-ethnography in that quantitative studies are also reviewed. Instead of using data from primary

studies, EME aims to aggregate and give meaning to previous studies by identifying and consolidating the findings of qualitative studies and interpreting and discussing those of quantitative studies. Our seven-phase EME is described in detail in Supplemental Appendix 1 and presented in figures and tables.

Having defined the research topic in Phase 1, we selected the relevant studies in Phase 2. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) flowchart for the process of selecting studies is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Process of selecting studies grouped by RQs in PRISMA flowchart (Moher et al., 2009)

In Phase 2, we conducted the systematic literature search and drew up eligibility criteria for selecting the studies to be reviewed. When searching literature in relation to the first RQ, we used English and Finnish variations of the term *workload* in combination with keywords related to *student* and *higher education*. The results of the search were included in the first screening stage if the studies explored *student workload in higher education* and in the second screening stage if they explored *experiences of workload*. Studies were also considered relevant if they concerned students' perceptions of workload. When searching existing literature in relation to the second RQ, we used English and Finnish variations of the term *experience* in combination with keywords related to *student* and *higher music education*. The results were included in the first screening stage if the studies explored *studying music in higher education* and in the second screening stage if they explored *music student workload*. Details of how the searches were conducted are shown in Table 1 and the eligibility criteria are listed in Table 2.

**Table 1.** Search dates, terms, databases and music research journals used in the literature search in English (EN) and in Finnish (FI)

Research Question 1	Research Question 2
Search dates: November 18–20, 2018 (EN) and January 11, 2019 (FI)	Search dates: February 2, 2019 (EN) and February 3, 2019 (FI)
Search terms: EN and FI variations of the term workload (i.e., workload, work-load, overload, and load) in combination with keywords related to student (i.e., student, undergraduate, and postgraduate) and to higher education (i.e., higher education, university, tertiary, college, and academic)	Search terms: EN and FI variations of the term experience (i.e., experience, perception, concept, conception, motivation, perspective, attitude, and opinion) in combination with keywords related to student (i.e., student, undergraduate, and postgraduate) and to higher music education (i.e., higher education, university, tertiary, college, academic, and conservatory)
Databases: 1. A+ Education (EN) 2. Cochrane Library (EN) 3.–7. EBSCOhost (Australia/New Zealand Reference Centre; Business Source Complete; CINAHL; MEDLINE; Music Index) (EN) 8. Embase (EN) 9.–13. ProQuest (Central; Dissertation & Theses; ERIC; Music Periodical Database; Performing Arts Periodicals Database) (EN) 14. PsycInfo (EN) 15. PubMed (EN) 16. SAGE Journals Online (EN) 17. Science Direct (EN) 18. Scopus (EN) 19. Web of Science (EN) 20. ARTO (FI) 21. Finna (FI) 22. Helka (FI) 23. Melinda (FI)	Music Research Journals: 1. <i>Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education</i> (EN) 2. <i>Australian Journal of Music Education</i> (EN) 3. <i>British Journal of Music Education</i> (EN) 4. <i>Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education</i> (EN) 5. <i>International Journal of Music Education</i> (EN) 6. <i>Journal of Music Teacher Education</i> (EN) 7. <i>Journal of New Music Research</i> (EN) 8. <i>Journal of Research in Music Education</i> (EN) 9. <i>Medical Problems of Performing Artists</i> (EN) 10. <i>Musicae Scientiae</i> (EN) 11. <i>Music Education Research</i> (EN) 12. <i>Music Educators Journal</i> (EN) 13. <i>Music Performance Research</i> (EN) 14. <i>Psychology of Music</i> (EN) 15. <i>Research Studies in Music Education</i> (EN) 16. <i>The Journal of Musicology</i> (EN) 17. <i>Update: Applications of Research in Music Education</i> (EN) 18. <i>Visions of Research in Music Education</i> (EN) 19. <i>Finnish Journal of Music Education</i> (FI)

**Table 2.** Eligibility criteria to identify studies to be included or excluded

Criteria	
1. Design	
Research Questions 1 and 2	
<p><b>1a. Place of publication:</b>  <i>Included:</i> Studies with full-text availability included in peer-reviewed journal articles, peer-reviewed conference proceeding articles, and PhD dissertations.  <i>Excluded:</i> Studies without full-text availability included in conference proceeding abstracts, project reports, bachelor's and master's theses.</p> <p><b>1b. Study design:</b>  <i>Included:</i> All types of research designs with or without control groups.  <i>Excluded:</i> Expert opinion papers and theoretical papers without empirical data.</p> <p><b>1c. Language:</b>  <i>Included:</i> The initial database search was limited to publications written in the English and Finnish languages. The given restriction was chosen because Finnish is the first author's primary language, all authors use English fluently as their working language, and English is the third author's primary language.  <i>Excluded:</i> Publications in languages other than English and Finnish.</p>	
2. Sample	
<p>Research Question 1</p> <p><b>2a. Students in higher education:</b>  <i>Included:</i> Students in higher education. If the study presented a participant group comprising both students in higher education and another group or groups (such as teachers and other staff in higher education, students in other educational levels, participants outside education), the study was included.  <i>Excluded:</i> Studies of groups other than students in higher education.</p>	<p>Research Question 2</p> <p><b>2a. Music students in higher education:</b>  <i>Included:</i> Music students in higher education. If the study presented a participant group comprising both music students in higher education and another group or groups (such as teachers and other staff in higher education, students in other educational levels, participants outside education), the study was included.  <i>Excluded:</i> Studies of groups other than music students in higher education.</p>
3. Phenomenon of interest	
<p>Research Question 1</p> <p><b>3a. Students' experiences of workload in higher education:</b>  <i>Included:</i> Studies that examined students' subjective experiences of workload in higher education. Experience, in this context, includes perception, conception, concept, motivation, perspective, attitude, and opinion (or equivalent). Studies including time or grades of workload in relation to students' experiences of workload in higher education were also included.  <i>Excluded:</i> Publications that only examined the following aspects: measured credits, time or grades of workload without students' experiences of workload in higher education, students' perceptions of measured credits.</p>	<p>Research Question 2</p> <p><b>3a. Music students' experiences of studying in higher education:</b>  <i>Included:</i> Studies that examined music students' subjective experiences of studying in higher education. Experience includes, in this context, perception, conception, concept, motivation, perspective, attitude, and opinion (or equivalent).  <i>Excluded:</i> Publications that only examined pre-service classroom teachers' experiences of studying music in higher education.</p>
4. Evaluation	
<p>Research Question 1</p> <p><b>4a. Quantity and quality of students' workload in higher education:</b>  <i>Included:</i> Studies that examined quality or both quantity and quality of students' workload in higher education. Studies did not have to include the precise term "workload" to meet the criterion. Terms such as "load," "study load," "student load," "academic load," "course load," and "overload" may have also been used.  <i>Excluded:</i> Studies that examined cognitive load or memory load, or only quantity of students' workload in higher education.</p> <p><b>4b. Applicability to music students in higher education:</b>  <i>Included:</i> Studies in which the outcome indicated that the method used was applicable to higher education in general or in the music learning and teaching context. Studies did not have to include participants in the field of music.  <i>Excluded:</i> Studies in which the outcome was not generally applicable because it was related to specific students, field, study program, or course in higher education.</p>	<p>Research Question 2</p> <p><b>4a. Quantity and quality of music students' experiences of studying in higher education:</b>  <i>Included:</i> Studies that examined quality or both quantity and quality of music students' experiences of studying in higher education. Studies did not have to include the precise term "experience" to meet the criterion. Equivalent terms introduced in criterion 3a may have also been used. Quantity and quality of music students' experiences of studying could include field-related workload, such as health, well-being, one-to-one tuition, practicing, performing, performance anxiety and assessment issues (or equivalent).  <i>Excluded:</i> Studies that examined students' musical experience which was not related to studying or workload.</p> <p><b>4b. Applicability in general to music students in higher education:</b>  <i>Included:</i> Studies in which the outcome indicated that the method used was applicable to music students in higher education in general or in the music learning and teaching context.  <i>Excluded:</i> Studies in which the outcome was not generally applicable because it was related to specific music students, music field, music study program, or music course in higher education.</p>
5. Research type	
Research Questions 1 and 2	
<p><b>5a. Data analysis:</b>  <i>Included:</i> Studies presenting qualitative, quantitative, or multistrategy analysis of the data.  <i>Excluded:</i> Literature reviews, expert opinion papers, and theoretical papers without analysis of empirical data.</p>	



In Phase 3, we read the studies to be included in the review and extracted the data by appraising the quality of their RQs and methods using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT; Hong et al., 2018). We also conducted a thematic content analysis. The results are shown in Table 3.

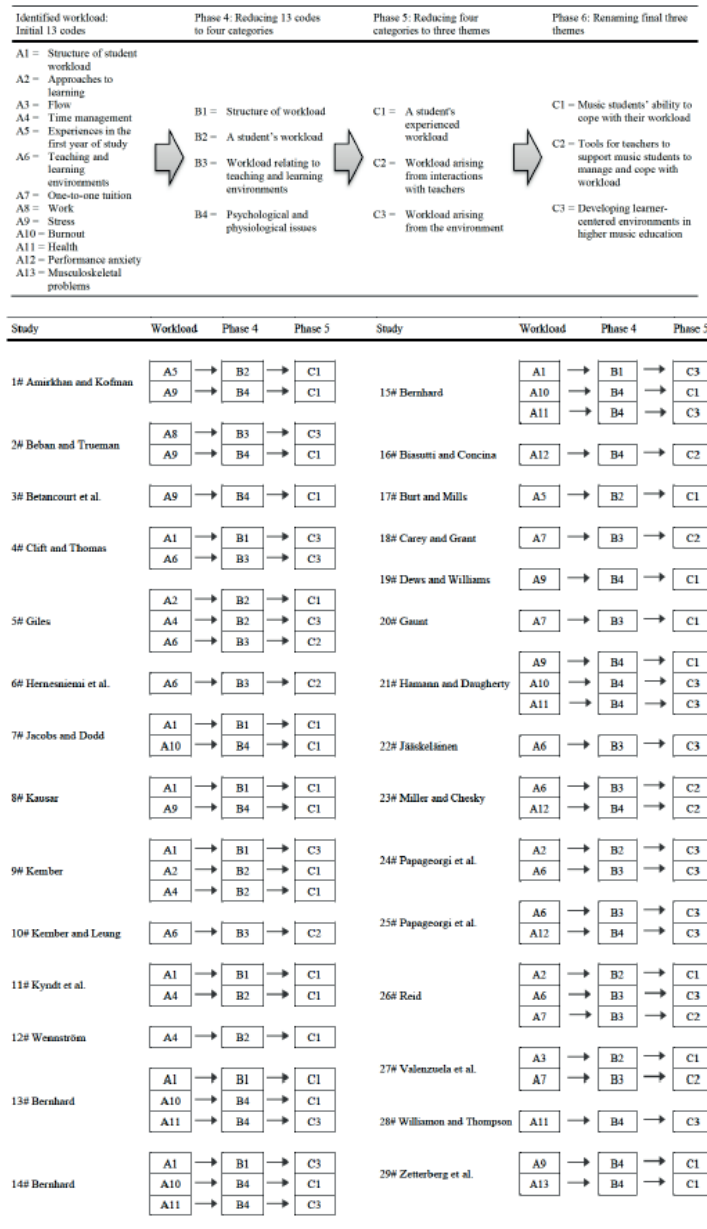
**Table 3.** Extended meta-ethnography Phase 3: Reading the studies to be included in the review and extracting the data

Research Question 1 Description of studies included in data extraction:									
	Author(s) (year)	Title of study	Design	Country	Participants	Sample	Data collection	Quality appraisal	Identified workload
1	Amirkhan and Kofman (2018)	Stress overload as a red flag for freshman failure and attrition	Quantitative	USA	University students	1200	Survey	Satisfactory	Stress
2	Beban and Trueman (2018)	Student workers: The unequal load of paid and unpaid work in the neoliberal university	Qualitative	New Zealand	University students	151	Survey, interviews	Satisfactory	Work
3	Betancourt et al. (2013)	Non-medical use of prescription drugs and its association with socio-demographic characteristics, dietary pattern, and perceived academic load and stress in college students in Puerto Rico	Quantitative	Puerto Rico	University students	252	Survey	Satisfactory	Stress
4	Clift and Thomas (1973)	Student work loads	Qualitative	Australia	University students	395	Survey, day diaries	Unclear relevance	Structure of student workload
5	Giles (2009)	An investigation of the relationship between students' perceptions of workload and their approaches to learning at a regional polytechnic	Multi-strategy	New Zealand	University students	299	Survey, interviews	Satisfactory	Approaches to learning
6	Hemesniemi et al. (2017)	Perception of workload and its relation to perceived teaching and learning environments among Finnish and Chinese university students	Quantitative	Finland and China	University students	5344	Survey	Satisfactory	Teaching and learning environments
7	Jacobs and Dodd (2003)	Student burnout as a function of personality, social support, and workload	Quantitative	USA	University students	149	Survey	Satisfactory	Burnout
8	Kausar (2010)	Perceived stress, academic workload and use of coping strategies by university students	Quantitative	Pakistan	University students	150	Survey	Satisfactory	Stress
9	Kember (2004)	Interpreting student workload and the factors which shape students' perceptions of their workload	Multi-strategy	Hong Kong	University students	5	Diaries, interviews, case studies	Satisfactory	Structure of student workload
10	Kember and Leung (2006)	Characterising a teaching and learning environment conducive to making demands on students while not making their workload excessive	Quantitative	Hong Kong	University students	3320	Survey	Satisfactory	Teaching and learning environments
11	Kyndt et al. (2014)	"Time is not enough." Workload in higher education: a student perspective	Qualitative	Belgium	University students	40	Interviews	Satisfactory	Structure of student workload
12	Wenström (2006)	Haluaisin kyllä ymmärtää. Selvitys humanistisen tiedekunnan opiskelijoiden ensimmäisen lukukauden ajankäytöstä ja oppimiskokemuksista	Qualitative	Finland	University students	30	Survey (open-ended questions)	Satisfactory	Time management

**Table 3. (Continued)**

Research Question 2 Description of studies included in data extraction:									
No.	Author(s) (year)	Title of study	Design	Country	Participants	Sample	Data collection	Quality appraisal	Identified workload
13	Bernhard (2007)	Comparison of burnout between undergraduate music and non-music majors	Quantitative	USA	University students and music students	320	Survey	Satisfactory	Burnout
14	Bernhard (2007)	A survey of burnout among college music majors	Quantitative	USA	University music students	203	Survey	Satisfactory	Burnout
15	Bernhard (2010)	A survey of burnout among college music majors: a replication	Quantitative	USA	University music students	229	Survey	Satisfactory	Burnout
16	Biasutti and Concina (2014)	The role of coping strategy and experience in predicting music performance anxiety	Quantitative	Italy	University music students	97	Survey	Satisfactory	Performance anxiety
17	Burt and Mills (2006)	Taking the plunge: The hopes and fears of students as they begin music college	Qualitative	UK	University music students	20	Survey	Satisfactory	Experiences in the first year of study
18	Carey and Grant (2015)	Teacher and student perspectives on one-to-one pedagogy: Practices and possibilities	Qualitative	Australia	University music students	18	Interviews, focus groups, observation	Satisfactory	One-to-one tuition
19	Dews and Williams (1989)	Student musicians' personality styles, stresses, and coping patterns	Quantitative	USA	University music students	201	Survey	Satisfactory	Stress
20	Gaunt (2010)	One-to-one tuition in a conservatoire: the perceptions of instrumental and vocal students	Qualitative	UK	University music students	20	Interviews	Satisfactory	One-to-one tuition
21	Hamann and Daugherty (1985)	Burnout assessment: The university music student	Quantitative	USA	University music students	248	Survey	Satisfactory	Burnout
22	Jääskeläinen (2016)	Tavoitteena opetuksen kehittämistä tukevan luotettavan tutkimustiedon tuottaminen Sibelius-Akatemiasa—tapausselmerkkinä opiskelijoiden kokeman kuormittavuuden pilotitutkimus [Aiming to produce reliable research findings for supporting development of teaching in the Sibelius Academy—Pilot study in students' experiences of workload as a case example]	Multistrategy	Finland	University music students	28	Survey	Unclear relevance	Teaching and learning environments
23	Miller and Chesky (2004)	The multidimensional anxiety theory: An assessment of and relationships between intensity and direction of cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and self-confidence over multiple performance requirements among college music majors	Quantitative	USA	University music students	71	Survey	Unclear relevance	Performance anxiety
24	Papageorgi et al. (2010)	Institutional culture and learning I: Perceptions of the learning environment and musicians' attitudes to learning	Multistrategy	UK	University music students	170	Survey, interviews, focus groups	Satisfactory	Teaching and learning environments
25	Papageorgi et al. (2010)	Institutional culture and learning II: Inter-relationships between perceptions of the learning environment and undergraduate musicians' attitudes to performance	Multistrategy	UK	University music students	170	Survey, interviews, focus groups	Satisfactory	Teaching and learning environments
26	Reid (2001)	Variation in the ways that instrumental and vocal students experience learning music	Qualitative	Australia	University music students	14	Interviews	Satisfactory	Approaches to learning
27	Valenzuela et al. (2018)	Self-determination theory applied to flow in conservatoire music practice: The roles of perceived autonomy and competence, and autonomous and controlled motivation	Quantitative	Spain	University music students	162	Survey	Satisfactory	Flow
28	Williamson and Thompson (2006)	Awareness and incidence of health problems among conservatoire students	Quantitative	UK	University music students	63	Survey	Satisfactory	Health
29	Zetterberg et al. (1998)	Musculoskeletal problems among male and female music students	Quantitative	Sweden	University music students	227	Survey	Satisfactory	Musculoskeletal problems

In Phase 4, we further analyzed the studies we reviewed, and in Phase 5, we compared them. In Phase 6, we constructed an overall analysis, and in Phase 7, we finally formulated a complete synthesis of all of the interpretations emerging from previous phases. This process is presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Extended meta-ethnography: Phase 4 (Analyzing the studies), Phase 5 (Comparing the studies), and Phase 6 (Constructing an overall analysis)

### *Description of the process*

Having defined the research topic in Phase 1, we selected the relevant studies that would form part of Phase 2. In Phase 3, we read the studies to be included in the review and extracted the relevant data to be used in the subsequent phases. The 29 studies included in this review were conducted in the United States ( $n = 8$ ), the United Kingdom ( $n = 5$ ), Australia ( $n = 3$ ), Finland ( $n = 3$ ), Hong Kong ( $n = 2$ ), New Zealand ( $n = 2$ ), Belgium ( $n = 1$ ), China ( $n = 1$ ), Italy ( $n = 1$ ), Pakistan ( $n = 1$ ), Puerto Rico ( $n = 1$ ), Spain ( $n = 1$ ), and Sweden ( $n = 1$ ). A total of 13,596 students took part in the 29 studies, of whom 2,261 were music students. The search terms used to explore 23 databases in relation to the first RQ did not identify any relevant studies about music students. Therefore, the number of music students is based on the studies that were identified using the search terms to explore 19 music research journals in relation to the second RQ. We did not apply date boundaries in the article search because we did not find previous evidence indicating that relevant studies had been reported during a specific time period. This resulted in some outdated studies being included, for example, some that were published before the beginning of the 21st century. However, we felt that it was important to include these early studies as they provided evidence of when researchers began to be interested in students' experienced workload in higher education, and how this field of interest has developed since those initial studies. Most of the studies were quantitative ( $n = 16$ ), with the remainder either qualitative ( $n = 8$ ) or multistrategy, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches ( $n = 5$ ). Data were collected via surveys (24 studies), one-to-one interviews (9 studies) and focus groups (3 studies), case studies (1 study), daily diaries (1 study), and video-recorded lesson observations (1 study). Using the quality appraisal categories developed by Dixon-Woods et al. (2007), we did not find any key papers. However, most studies were assessed as being of satisfactory quality ( $n = 26$ ), although the relevance of three papers was unclear, and there were no studies deemed flawed or irrelevant.

Using EME, we identified 13 codes across the 29 studies that related to students' experienced workload. Eight codes were identified in the 12 studies addressing the experience of students regardless of discipline: *approaches to*

*learning, burnout, experiences in the first year of study, stress, organisation and management of a student's workload (hereafter structure of student workload), teaching and learning environments, time management, and extracurricular paid and unpaid work.* Five additional codes were identified in the 17 studies addressing the experiences of music students: *flow, health, musculoskeletal problems, one-to-one tuition, and performance anxiety.*

To analyze the 29 studies in Phase 4, we clustered these 13 codes into four categories: *organisation and management of workload (hereafter structure of workload), a student's workload, workload relating to teaching and learning environments, and psychological and physiological issues.* To compare the studies in Phase 5, we reorganized these four categories into three themes including the sources of students' experienced workload: *a student's experienced workload, workload arising from interactions with teachers, and workload arising from the environment (i.e., studies and paid and unpaid work both inside and outside the institution, and society).* Finally, we constructed an overall analysis in Phase 6 that revealed three new overarching themes: *music students' ability to cope with their workload, tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload, and developing learner-centered environments in higher music education.* On the basis of these themes, we formulated a complete synthesis with 24 recommendations that are presented in Table 4 and, in more detail, in the "Results" section.

**Table 4.** Recommendations for good practice

Recommendations for good practice		
<i>Recommendations relevant to students’ experienced general (i.e., not music-specific) workload:</i>		
Students’ ability to cope with their workload	Tools for teachers to support students to manage and cope with workload	Developing learner-centered environments in higher education
1. Orientation to studies 2. Counseling 3. Stress management skills 4. Time management skills	1. Continuing professional development for teachers 2. Assessment that supports learning processes 3. Constructive cooperative teaching	1. Understanding the demands and challenges of combining studying and working life 2. Discussing students’ workload problems in the institution 3. Developing systems for collecting feedback from students
<i>Recommendations related to workload, specifically in relation to studying music in higher education:</i>		
Music students’ ability to cope with their workload	Tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload	Developing learner-centered environments in higher music education
1. Encouraging feedback 2. Discipline-specific counselling 3. Support in dealing with psychological and physical issues 4. Knowledge about music learning	1. Develop students’ metacognitive abilities and psychological skills 2. Teach methods of coping with performance anxiety 3. Develop one-to-one tuition methods 4. Support for practicing 5. Learner-centered teaching	1. Introductory classes to help students cope with discipline-specific workload 2. Utilizing knowledge of music students’ experienced workload when developing curricula 3. Developing an inspirational learning culture 4. Understanding discipline-specific workload 5. Understanding discipline-specific workload related to psychological and physical issues

**Results**

*Music students’ ability to cope with their workload*

The first overarching theme concerned students’ general workload and their ability to manage it, which they may have developed by themselves and/or with some support from their teachers and institutions. It is essential to help students cope with experienced (general, i.e., not music-specific) workload because this is related to surface approaches to learning (Kember, 2004).

Workload predicts perceived stress overload (Kausar, 2010), potentially leading to failure and attrition (Amirkhan & Kofman, 2018). To help students cope with their workload, we recommend that institutions provide the following for students:

1. *Orientation to studies.* At the beginning of the academic year, an orientation or induction session can familiarize students with learning, evaluation, and grading processes (Kausar, 2010). It is also important for every course to provide orientation regarding the course's expectations and requirements that the students must fulfill (Kyndt et al., 2014).
2. *Counseling.* Counseling should be readily available for students to help them to cope more effectively with everyday challenges in their studies (Kausar, 2010) and to develop generic study skills (i.e., those that are necessary for students to be able to succeed in their studies, such as writing skills for assignments and reading skills in preparation for exams; Giles, 2009).
3. *Stress-management skills.* Good peer relationships seem to help students to cope with stress experienced in relation to their studies, and leisure activities can support students to reduce stress when studying (Kyndt et al., 2014). Negative coping strategies may intensify stress and cause problems with alcohol intake, lack of sleep, lack of exercise, and less time spent with friends and family (Beban & Trueman, 2018) and increase the non-medical use of prescription drugs (Betancourt et al., 2013). Students should therefore be offered stress management programs.
4. *Time-management skills.* Students need time-management skills for setting priorities and planning to use their time efficiently. It helps if they understand that their experienced workload may be different from their actual workload (Kyndt et al., 2014). For example, Wennström (2006) found that students in their sample who felt that they had a heavy workload used only half of the time allocated to study in the curriculum for studying.

More research is needed to understand how daily activities and stress management and time management skills may be related to students' workload, learning, stress, and burnout in higher education (Amirkhan & Kofman, 2018; Jacobs & Dodd, 2003; Kember, 2004).

This theme also included music-specific workload and, in particular, music students' ability to cope with it. Some aspects of music students' workload may be discipline-specific so it is important to identify these aspects when developing suitable support systems; the nature and amount of work music students are required to complete in the course of their studies should be acknowledged. Bernhard (2007a, 2007b, 2010) found that more academic and performance demands are made on music majors than non-music majors, especially at the undergraduate level. They are therefore likely to experience high levels of psychological problems such as performance anxiety, perfectionism, and career concerns. There can also be differences attributable to program of study, music genre, and sex or gender. For example, in a study of university music students by Zetterberg et al. (1998), those studying to be church musicians had the highest psychosocial demand scores (evaluated by work environment factors influencing mood, bodily tension, and somatic symptoms), and women experienced more stress than men. To help music students manage their music-specific experienced workload, we recommend that institutions provide:

1. *Encouraging feedback.* It is crucial to give encouraging feedback to students, especially at the beginning of their studies, to support them in giving their first performances, and to help them to cope with possible feelings of inadequacy, given that they will find themselves among many outstanding musicians (Burt & Mills, 2006).
2. *Discipline-specific counseling.* Music students may need the support of specialized counselors who are familiar with the demands of the music profession and the unique challenges associated with studying music (Dews & Williams, 1989). Counseling is important—even for what might be perceived as minor workload and stress-related issues—to prevent student burnout and provide support for students in dealing with other issues, which have an impact on students during their studies and also after they graduate (Hamann & Daugherty, 1985).
3. *Support in dealing with psychological and physical issues.* Music students need support not only to deal with psychological issues such as performance anxiety, but also to manage any physical issues that may arise, as music students experience a high incidence of musculoskeletal problems, especially in areas such as the shoulders, neck, wrists/hands, and thoracic spine (Zetterberg et al., 1998).



4. *Knowledge about music learning.* Administrative staff in higher education institutions, as well as teachers, should have some understanding of music students' practice habits and interactions with music teachers. Better knowledge of how students learn music may help institutions improve teaching and learning environments so that students are better supported as individual learners and have more positive experiences of their workloads. Institutions could do this by creating more carefully designed course content, using more diverse teaching methods, and investing more in support systems for students. Reid (2001), for example, recommends adapting teaching strategies and techniques to the needs of individual students. In addition, research on flow among music students by Valenzuela et al. (2018) shows that perceived competence and motivation affect variations in flow. This knowledge may help the teacher set optimal challenges for each student and give them more effective feedback, thus promoting students' competence and intrinsic motivation, which may then result in improved student well-being, high-quality performance, and persistence.

#### *Tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload*

The second overarching theme concerned workload in relation to, or arising from, interactions between teachers and students. To help teachers support their students to manage their experienced workload, we recommend that institutions and teachers (as appropriate) provide:

1. *Continuing professional development for teachers.* According to Giles (2009), teachers can support students to manage their workload by continually updating their own professional knowledge and pedagogical skills. Professional development can involve learning how to review and develop curricula and assessment and/or how to create more stimulating and responsive methods of instruction, for example, by being enthusiastic about a subject, and showing empathy and understanding when students encounter difficulties. Professional development can also help teachers to create networks within the community of an institution and students to develop important skills for studying.
2. *Assessment that supports learning processes.* According to Hernesniemi et al. (2017), those modes of assessment that align with the students' learning journey may help students to feel that their workload is suitable. For example, assessments could involve students being

required to engage in peer assessment throughout a module consisting of multiple activities, rather than students being required to complete multiple-choice and essay examinations at the end of the module.

3. *Constructive cooperative teaching.* When teachers deliver what Kember and Leung (2006) describe as “constructive cooperative” teaching (p. 195), they can expect more of students without making them feel overloaded. For example, teachers can give the students attending the course a sense of belonging by aiming to form warm and supportive relationships with them, and encouraging such relationships between students.

Specific recommendations for teachers to help music students manage their experienced workload are as follows:

1. *Develop students’ metacognitive abilities and psychological skills.* Biasutti and Concina’s (2014) results highlight the importance of understanding the psychological processes underlying the study of music and music performance in higher education. Music teachers wishing to support music students’ well-being should also focus on developing their metacognitive abilities and psychological skills, for example, helping them to cope with the psychological challenges associated with performing.
2. *Teach methods of coping with performance anxiety.* Miller and Chesky (2004) compared music students’ and teachers’ perceptions of performance anxiety by measuring intensity and direction of cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and self-confidence in relation to music students’ performance requirements. One issue highlighted by their results is that teachers may find it hard to recognize music students’ performance anxiety. Miller and Chesky suggest that, once it has been acknowledged, performance anxiety can be reduced by using methods directed at the particular type of anxiety that is experienced. For example, cognitive anxiety affects undergraduate students and women in particular, so it is vital to include cognitive strategies in interventions to prevent performance anxiety. Other methods for reducing or preventing the symptoms of performance anxiety experienced by some music students include mindfulness strategies (Czajkowski et al., 2020). Matei and Ginsborg (2017) emphasize that the complex relationship between performance quality and performance anxiety needs to be acknowledged when investigating these methods.

3. *Develop one-to-one tuition methods.* One-to-one instrumental/vocal tuition is a large and essential part of music students' training. According to Carey and Grant (2015), although one-to-one tuition has benefits for instrumental and vocal teaching and learning, it could be improved. For example, teachers could enhance their relationships with their students by considering their individual needs, dependency, and self-sufficiency. In addition, the dominant position of one-to-one tuition could be reconsidered in the context of collaborative teaching-learning environments.
4. *Support for practicing.* Within the one-to-one model of tuition, teachers can help students with their practice, especially in their learning of techniques, such as recommending warm-ups and exercises to be performed prior to singing or playing that are based on the learner's current needs and circumstances (Gaunt, 2010).
5. *Learner-centered teaching.* Students learn in different ways, so teaching approaches and methods should be tailored to them as individuals, to support their learning (Reid, 2001) and agency (López-Íñiguez & Pozo, 2016). Teachers can do this by understanding their students' individual psychological needs and providing optimal challenges for promoting their perceived competence and intrinsic motivation, which may increase their experience of flow when practicing and playing (Valenzuela et al., 2018).

### *Developing learner-centered environments in higher music education*

The third overarching theme of learner-centered environments related to workload associated with the social and environmental factors involved in studying music in higher education, and to ways in which institutions could help students cope with experienced workload by focusing on their agency and thus increase their engagement in and satisfaction with learning. These include:

1. *Understanding the demands and challenges of combining studying and working life.* To fully understand the experience of students in higher education, generally, the complex, often contradictory, subjectivities of students navigating the neoliberal university and the world of work (Beban & Trueman, 2018) must be acknowledged. If the workloads associated with combining studying with both paid and unpaid work were understood better, institutions would be more likely to find ways of supporting students' engagement in their studies.

2. *Discussing students' workload problems in the institution.* It should become policy and practice in higher education institutions that administrative staff, teachers, and students discuss the workload problems of students in relation to teaching and learning environments, curricula, assessment, capacity of students to study, and support services for students (Clift & Thomas, 1973; Giles, 2009). Such discussion could focus on students' capabilities and knowledge, which, in turn, could increase their satisfaction with learning. For example, Kember (2004) suggests that "by making effective use of feedback and evaluation data teachers can work towards the implementation of courses which do encourage students to put in many hours of study towards quality learning ends" (p. 182).
3. *Developing systems for collecting feedback from students.* Systems should be developed for collecting feedback from students on multiple aspects of the curriculum. Such feedback should be gathered using what Kember (2004) calls an "open approach" (p. 182). For example, students could provide feedback in focus group interviews about specific aspects of the curriculum, and be encouraged to suggest changes that may help them to meet the course learning outcomes.

Specific recommendations for helping music students to manage their experienced workload by developing more learner-centered environments include the following:

1. *Introductory classes to help students cope with discipline-specific workload.* Introductory classes focusing on the demands of studying music in higher education could help first-year students to develop coping strategies to support their learning. Such classes could help them manage a healthy lifestyle, gain support and respect in the community, and deal with music-specific challenges to studying, such as performance anxiety, perfectionism, and obtaining a balance between practical music-making and academic studies (Bernhard, (2007a). These should also be available to students from the second year onwards, either as part of the curriculum or as an extracurricular activity (Bernhard, 2007b, 2010).
2. *Utilizing knowledge of music students' experienced workload when developing curricula.* Course credits should reflect the amount and quality of work that students are expected to do (Bernhard, 2010). They

may be prevented from learning by programs that are too intensive, courses that are overloaded, and scheduling conflicts (Jääskeläinen, 2016). Staff should discuss methods that could be built into institutional systems and procedures for preventing burnout in students and helping music students to cope with its symptoms (Hamann & Daugherty, 1985). Curricula that allow for reasonable workloads may help students regulate and manage their own learning autonomously.

3. *Developing an inspirational learning culture.* Students may have positive experiences of learning when they see themselves as members of an inspirational learning community, for example, when the institutional culture is such that they have opportunities to meet and work with other musicians, and when it supports their personal interests and development as both academic and performing musicians (Papageorgi et al., 2010a).
4. *Understanding discipline-specific workload.* Music students have varying self-efficacy beliefs and coping strategies for performance anxiety (Papageorgi et al., 2010b). It is essential for higher education institutions not only to teach music but also to develop students' skills for coping with the stress of performing and the mental challenges of studying music, and practicing techniques (Papageorgi et al., 2010b). This may help students to hone their metacognitive skills. In addition, they should be familiarized with artistic, social, political, and cultural debates and topics during their studies to help them find their own approaches to learning music and ways of becoming musicians (Reid, 2001).
5. *Understanding discipline-specific workload related to psychological and physical issues.* Many music students experience physical pain and psychological problems associated with performing and intensive practice (e.g., Williamon & Thompson, 2006), so higher education institutions should pay particular attention to such problems. Students are more likely to seek initial advice from their teachers rather than experts in physical and psychological health. To promote students' self-regulation, it is essential for institutions to provide students and teachers with knowledge of music-specific workload and sources of professional help for students with physical and psychological issues.

More research into music students' workload is needed. Institutions aiming to develop more learner-centered teaching of music should have the resources to acquire and utilize research-based knowledge of music students' workload, medical problems, health, and well-being (Williamon & Thompson, 2006).

## **Discussion**

This systematic review explored the published literature reporting research on students' workload in higher education. Its aims were, first, to understand experienced workload better, particularly that of music students, and second, to inform recommendations likely to be helpful for teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services in supporting music students to cope with their workload and plan their own studies. RQ 1 asked what factors have an impact on students' experienced workload. To answer this question, we selected publications describing the general workload of students in all disciplines including music. RQ 2 asked about music students' discipline-specific experiences of workload, and to answer this question, we selected publications describing the experiences of music students only.

The 29 studies included in this systematic review were conducted in 13 countries. Sixteen of the studies were quantitative, eight were qualitative, and five used a multistrategy approach. We identified eight codes in the 12 studies, all of which addressed the experience of students of a variety of disciplines, which suggests that this research topic has already been investigated widely. Five additional codes that did not appear in studies of students' general workload were identified in the 17 studies addressing the experiences of music students in particular. In the 29 studies included in this systematic review we did not find any entirely novel results related to students' coping strategies, teachers' pedagogical methods, or institutional structures. However, we were able to gain more detailed insight into music students' experienced workload. Crucially, we were able to show how students could be supported to cope more effectively with their studies, as musicians typically use coping strategies that are different in many ways from those required in other fields of education.

The overall analysis of the 29 studies revealed three overarching themes on the basis of which we formulated a complete synthesis to make specific—

and in some cases overlapping— recommendations for good practice. The first theme, *music students' ability to cope with their workload*, highlights the need for institutions to provide orientation (or induction) sessions and counseling, and teach stress- and time-management skills; also, for more research to be carried out in the institutions themselves, on this topic. Perceptions of workload are only weakly influenced by time spent studying (Kember, 2004); students may feel that they have a heavy workload even though they do not use all their allocated study time (Wennström, 2006). Jacobs and Dodd (2003) claim that it is the subjective experience of overload, which is related to personality, rather than measured workload, that often contributes to burnout. Workload-related interventions, such as teaching students to use all of their allocated study time efficiently and cope with stress, can help students to develop their study skills. However, Beban and Trueman (2018) argue that workload is not just a personal problem for students. Rather, neoliberal policies recently introduced in higher education have increased students' (already extensive) paid and unpaid work commitments, which may contribute to high stress levels and lead to structural inequalities in their experiences as students. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate and understand students' experienced workload, to be able to provide suitable social support for them and to create institutional programs promoting greater academic and personal fulfillment for students (Jacobs & Dodd, 2003).

In relation to music students' ability to cope with workload, it is wise to provide encouraging feedback, offer discipline-specific counseling and support for psychological and physical issues in studying music, and gather more knowledge about music learning. Bernhard (2010) has shown that university students' perceptions of workload—rather than workload as it is measured—relate to burnout. If burnout is related to personality, as suggested by Jacobs and Dodd (2003), then their individual study needs must be considered (Burt & Mills, 2006) as the consequences of burnout can include health problems, dropping out of studying, and even suicide (Hamann & Daugherty, 1985). It is crucial that teachers and administrators in higher education institutions understand the discipline-specific characteristics of music students including perfectionism, motivation for studying music, and major stressors such as



the psychological issues associated with practicing and performing, conflicts between musical and personal life (Dews & Williams, 1989), the challenges of balancing studying and working, and career concerns (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020).

The second theme, *tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload*, points to the importance of teachers' continuing professional development, assessment that supports learning processes, and constructive cooperative teaching (Kember & Leung, 2006). Excessive workload can have a negative effect on students' well-being and success in their studies (Hernesniemi et al., 2017), so it is worth trying to reduce it. When teachers promote a cooperative atmosphere in their teaching, for example, they can both make more demands on students and improve the quality of their learning without increasing their perceived workload (Kember & Leung, 2006).

To support music students, in particular, to cope with their workload, it may be helpful for teachers to develop students' metacognitive abilities and psychological skills, teach methods of coping with performance anxiety, develop methods for delivering one-to-one tuition and more learner-centered teaching, and provide support for practicing. One-to-one tuition is essential in music education and is appreciated by music students but can limit learners' autonomy (Gaunt, 2010; López-Íñiguez et al., 2014). Problems can occur when teachers' practices and students' expectations diverge (Carey & Grant, 2015). Music students typically experience performance anxiety, so higher education institutions should offer courses on coping skills in relation to music performance (Biasutti & Concina, 2014). Institutions should also utilize evidence-based approaches to developing music students' self-confidence (Miller & Chesky, 2004). Teachers should be aware of research findings on flow in one-to-one tuition to be able to present optimal challenges to their students and increase their perceived competence; both of these are crucial to flow experiences (Cohen & Bodner, 2021; Valenzuela et al., 2018).

The third theme, *developing learner-centered environments in higher music education*, underlines the importance of understanding the demands and challenges of combining studying and working life, discussing students'



workload problems in the institution, and developing systems for collecting feedback from students on their experiences. Beban and Trueman (2018) argue that the neoliberal university culture can be a challenging learning environment for students trying to find an optimal balance between studying, paying bills, managing debt, caring for family members, and securing their future employability in an uncertain world. Women with large unpaid work commitments, students from minority groups and lower-socioeconomic backgrounds working long hours are particularly likely to experience more stress than their fellow students. This may result in poorer academic outcomes and fewer career opportunities for them, thus reproducing social inequality in the institutional culture. However, it is possible to increase students' motivation and the time they devote to learning if workload is considered carefully when designing curricula, teaching, and assessment (Kember, 2004).

Teachers can help music students to cope by offering introductory classes on managing their discipline-specific workload, utilizing knowledge of music students' experienced workload when developing curricula, developing an inspirational learning culture, and understanding discipline-specific aspects of music students' workload including performance and its associated psychological and physical issues; in addition, more research on music students' workload is needed and institutions should have the resources to make use of it when developing curricula. These should be examined and revised to optimize both workload and musical expectations to the likelihood of music students experiencing burnout, and help them manage their academic and personal lives better (Bernhard, 2007a, 2007b, 2010). Although Zabuska et al. (2018) found in their sample of 331 music performance students that only one in ten could be classified as burned out, they highlight the importance of raising awareness of its symptoms and the coping strategies that students can use to avoid or mitigate it. Institutions can also help to reduce burnout in music students by considering individual students' goals (Hamann & Daugherty, 1985).

A transparent curriculum, including a clear outline of its content and how it has been designed with music students' workload and associated needs in mind, can help students to cope. It is essential to offer appropriate financial support and assistance to students when needed. It is important for the

development of learning and teaching processes in music settings that students are encouraged to participate in educational research and can give feedback, and that teachers should show themselves willing to acknowledge and act on it (Jääskeläinen, 2016). The institutional environment should promote student collaboration and initiate learning activities that allow students to flourish and realize their potential (Papageorgi et al., 2010b; Reid, 2001). Finally, universities should provide teachers and students with up-to-date findings regarding musicians' and music students' health and well-being (Williamon & Thompson, 2006; Zetterberg et al., 1998).

### *Limitations*

The limitations of this systematic review must be acknowledged. First, we selected studies only in English and Finnish, which means that we probably did not review all the research that has been published on the topic. The findings of research reported in other languages might shed more light on students' experienced workload. Second, future reviews could consider different definitions of music students' experienced workload. Third, methodological differences between studies, and the fact that several dealt with experiences in both educational and musical contexts and used non-replicable methodologies, meant that we could not conduct a meta-analysis as is more typical in medical and health sciences. Instead, we used EME. Fourth, we did not take account of when studies were published, so some of the studies we analyzed are now out of date. In addition, further research may have been published since we searched the literature.

### *Implications for further research and interventions*

It is worth noting that, for the past 20 years and more, some higher education institutions at least have offered lectures and counseling on health issues and lifestyle management that could help music students to cope with their experienced workload (e.g., Joukamo-Ampuja et al., 2007; Matei et al., 2018). Conducting research using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to studying students' workload would produce further information on how to

develop teaching and learning environments to help them. It is essential to provide research evidence for teachers to help them to develop their pedagogical practices to plan suitable workloads for students. This could be done through promoting relevant research at learning and teaching conferences and in other institutional events (e.g., staff conferences). Conducting, analyzing, and interpreting longitudinal studies, in particular, with samples more representative of the population, would provide further evidence to support the planning of effective interventions to help students to cope with their studies. Longitudinal studies are also needed to test potentially causal relationships between music students' strategies for coping, such as time- and stress-management, and experienced workload. Future studies should explore the characteristics of those studying music and their relationship with students' experienced workload, including sex and gender, degree level, music genre, and program of study. Given the rise of globalization, research on music students' experiences in multicultural societies may help identify culture-specific musical and pedagogical factors, and their connections with workload (e.g., Westerlund et al., 2015).

### *Conclusions*

The findings of this systematic review support those of previous research in different learning domains by strengthening the understanding of the characteristics of music students' experienced workload. The findings give rise to the recommendation that teachers, administrative staff, and student healthcare personnel should make informed decisions when planning learning and teaching environments to optimize students' learning and health (Perkins et al., 2017). They also show where efforts should be made to help students overcome challenges associated with studying and resolve health issues (Ginsborg et al., 2009). Students too may benefit from learning within an evidence-based framework that can help them to reflect on their workload and make changes as necessary to cope better with it. More research using high-quality designs is needed to investigate music students' discipline-specific experienced workload.

## Acknowledgements

The protocol for this systematic review was registered on January 21, 2020 on PROSPERO [CRD42020140497]. The authors would like to give special thanks to the following people for their involvement in the review: Ryan Weymouth and Harri Ollikainen for their assistance in preparing the protocol and search strategy; Kimmo Vehkalahti for his consultation in considering different methods for data analysis; and Heidi Westerlund and Kai Lehtikainen for their expertise as co-supervisors of the first author. They also thank the anonymous reviewers and the editor-in-chief of *Musicae Scientiae* for their useful suggestions.

## Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was undertaken in the Sibelius Academy Music Education Doctoral Programme and supported by the Center for Educational Research and Academic Development in the Arts (CERADA), University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland.

## Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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Supplemental material for article “Music students’ experienced workload in higher education: A systematic review and recommendations for good practice” (Jääskeläinen, T., López-Iñiguez, G., & Phillips, M.)

**How the procedure for undertaking Extended Meta-Ethnography (EME, originally developed by Booker, 2010) was adapted**

See all references in the main document

**Phase 1: Defining the research topic**

The research topic under investigation was music students’ experienced workload so as to provide students, teachers, administrators, and student health and well-being services with recommendations for potential good practice. To define the research topic of “workload”, we used the term “kuormittavuus” (“load” in English) in Finnish Thesaurus and Ontology Service (Finto, 2021) (see <http://www.yso.fi/onto/tsr/p7148>). This definition encompassed concepts including, for example, work burden with work underload and work overload, and it included both physical aspects of workload (such as musculoskeletal strain) and psychological aspects of workload (such as cognitive, ethical, emotional, mental, and psychosocial workload).

**Phase 2: Selecting the relevant studies**

Relevant studies were identified and screened, and their eligibility for inclusion in the review was assessed using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). The PRISMA flowchart is presented in Figure 1 in the main document.

*Search strategy*

- The first author searched literature relevant to Research Question 1 (RQ1) in 23 electronic databases (19 in English and four in Finnish) and literature relevant to Research Question 2 (RQ2) in a further 19 music research journals available in 18 English databases and one Finnish database. In RQ1, used search terms were English and Finnish variations of the term “workload” in combination with keywords related to “student” and to “higher education”. In RQ2, used search terms were English and Finnish variations of the term “experience” in combination with keywords related to “student” and to “higher music education”. Search dates, terms, databases and journals are shown in Table 1 in the main document.
- Only peer-reviewed scholarly journals, research reports, conference proceedings, and master’s and doctoral theses in English or Finnish were included, with no constraints as to date of publication. On January 21, 2019 and March 4, 2019, the second author conducted tests of reliability on four (20%) of the databases and four (20%) of the music research journals, respectively. The first author chose the search criteria and provided instructions for the reliability testing. According to Cohen’s Kappa there was perfect agreement ( $\kappa = 1.00$ ) between the two authors on both tests.

*Eligibility criteria*

- Eligibility criteria were chosen to identify studies to be included in the review of literature relevant to the two research questions. These are shown in Table 2 in the main document.

*Screening references and assessing full texts*

- When the search was complete, the first author imported all selected records into the RefWorks literature manager (see *Identification* in Figure 1 in the main document) and removed duplicates and screened the records. In the first screening stage, only titles, abstracts, and lists of keywords were screened. Records related to RQ1 were included if they explored “student workload in higher education” and records related to RQ2 were included if they explored “studying music in higher education”. The second author conducted tests of reliability on four (20%) of the databases and four (20%) of the music research journals, as before. Agreement between the two authors was very strong (RQ1:  $\kappa = .99$  and RQ2:  $\kappa = .97$ ). Where there was disagreement between them, the third author decided whether a record should be included.
- In the second screening stage, full texts of the remaining records (RQ1: 388 items; RQ2: 268 items) were imported into RAYYAN software for systematic literature reviews and the eligibility criteria presented in Table 2 were applied (see *Screening* in Figure 1 in the main document). Records relating to RQ1 were included if they explored “experiences of workload” (as students’ subjective workload experiences) and records relating to RQ2 were included if they explored “music student workload”. The second author conducted tests of reliability on a proportion of imported texts (RQ1: 50 items; RQ2: 28 items), as before. Agreement between the two authors was strong (RQ1:  $\kappa = .84$  and RQ2:  $\kappa = .80$ ). Where there was disagreement between them, the third author decided whether a record should be included.
- In the next stage, the first author screened the reference lists of the remaining studies to identify relevant research not previously found in the search of the databases and music research journals (see *Eligibility* in Figure 1 in the main document). The eligibility criteria were applied to the full texts and all studies that were not eligible were removed. The second author assessed all the full texts of the studies that were eligible ( $n = 117$ ). According to Cohen’s Kappa there was perfect agreement between the two authors on the literature relevant to both RQ1 and RQ2 ( $\kappa = 1.00$ ).
- Finally, 12 studies addressing RQ1 and 17 studies addressing RQ2 were considered most relevant to the topic and included in the review (see *Included* in Figure 1 in the main document).

### Phase 3: Reading the studies to be included in the review and extracting the data

#### *Data extraction*

- After reading the studies included in the dataset, the first author extracted the data by transferring them into a Microsoft Excel file (see description of the studies included in the data extraction in Table 3 in the main document). Data of interest included a) theme, type and focus of the study; b) participant characteristics, selection criteria and data analysis; c) aims, methodology, and methods of the study; d) findings, conclusions, suggestions for further research, and any reported bias; and e) page numbers and Google Scholar citations. To obtain an overview of the data and identify the main themes of each study, the first author scrutinized the data by a) type of study and study design (theory, methodology, and methods); b) content and themes of included studies; and c) focus of study and participant characteristics (music student or other student, higher education context, programme of study).

#### *Quality appraisal*

- The extracted studies included qualitative, quantitative, and multistrategy (combining quantitative and qualitative) research designs. The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), version 2018 (Hong et al., 2018), was used to estimate the quality of the studies as it is designed especially for systematic reviews including multistrategy studies. The first author imported the MMAT criteria into a Microsoft Excel file, which was then used to record quality appraisal ratings made independently by the first and second authors for all studies. The MMAT appraisal begins with two screening questions in relation to the research questions, followed by five questions concerning research methods. Responses as to whether the study meets criteria consist of “Yes,” “No,” and “Can’t tell.” Next, five predetermined quality appraisal categories developed by Dixon-Woods et al. (2007) were combined with the results of MMAT appraisal. These categories were 1) key paper, 2) satisfactory paper, 3) paper with unclear relevance, 4) flawed paper, and 5) irrelevant paper. According to Cohen's Kappa there was perfect agreement between the two authors on the quality appraisal of literature relevant to both RQ1 and RQ2 ( $\kappa = 1.00$ ), as shown in Table 3 in the main document.

#### *Thematic content analysis*

- The first author read the findings and discussions of the included studies multiple times, took phrases verbatim from passages addressing the research questions, and assigned 13 codes emerging from the 29 studies. The codes were labelled using narrative descriptions as follows: approaches to learning, burnout, experiences in the first year of study, flow, health, musculoskeletal problems, one-to-one tuition,\* performance anxiety, stress, structure of student workload,\*\* teaching and learning environments, time management, and work.\*\*\* In addition, the methodological approach, nature of the sample, data collection, and details of the setting for the research were specified for each study (see Table 3 in the main document).

\* By *one-to-one tuition* we mean individual tuition, a key teaching and learning method in the instrumental and vocal training of musicians (Gaunt, 2010).

\*\* By *structure* of student workload we mean *organisation and management* of a student's workload, such as the general description of student workload (Clift & Thomas, 1973), the nature of student workload (Kember, 2003) and the meaning and components of student workload (Kyndt et al., 2014).

\*\*\* By *work* we mean extra-curricular paid and unpaid work.

### Phase 4: Analysing the studies

The first author analysed the 29 studies using four categories: structure of workload, a student's workload, workload relating to teaching and learning environments, and psychological and physiological issues (see Figure 2 in the main document).

### Phase 5: Comparing the studies

The first author compared authors' accounts of each other's studies, in relation to the four categories that had been identified. Through this process three themes emerged: a student's experienced workload, workload arising from interactions with teachers, and workload arising from the environment (see Figure 2 in the main document).

### Phase 6: Constructing an overall analysis

The first author analysed each of the studies in connection to the three themes that had been identified to construct an overall picture of the findings. Sometimes she moved topics initially identified as belonging to one category to another category. It was through this process that she amended the three themes that had emerged in Phase 5 so as to make them more specific, in terms of offering recommendations for potential good practice: music students' ability to cope with their workload, tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload, and developing learner-centered environments in higher music education (see Figure 2 in the main document).

### Phase 7: Formulating a complete synthesis

The first author formulated a complete synthesis by confirming and extending her preliminary interpretations of the 29 studies, and those identified in previous phases of the research. She then discussed the synthesis with the second and third authors before producing a summary of extended meta-ethnography findings (see Table 4 in the main document).









## Appendix 2: Article II

Jääskeläinen, T., López-Íñiguez, G., & Lehtikainen, K. (2022). Experienced workload, stress, and coping among professional students in higher music education: An explanatory mixed methods study in Finland and the United Kingdom. *Psychology of Music*, 50(6), 1853–1876. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356211070325>



# **EXPERIENCED WORKLOAD, STRESS, AND COPING AMONG PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS IN HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION: AN EXPLANATORY MIXED METHODS STUDY IN FINLAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM**

## **Abstract**

Proactive coping styles may help students deal with their study workload and stress in healthier ways. In this explanatory mixed methods study, data were gathered among professional students in higher music education in Finland and the United Kingdom about their experiences of workload, stress, and proactive coping. Bivariate analyses were used to explore prevalence of study workload, stress, and seven proactive coping styles among genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programs, and investigate whether stress is predicted by study workload and proactive coping styles. Music students' lived experiences were analyzed to find the determinants of their workload, stress, and coping. Results indicate significant differences between genders and study programs and specific concerns for music students, such as working alongside studying and physical and psychological problems. Higher music education institutions can utilize this evidence to better support music students in their studies and professional careers.

## **Keywords**

coping, higher education, learning experience, mixed methods, professional music student, stress, workload

There is a growing need for research and interventions concerning professional students' workload experiences in higher music education.<sup>1</sup> For example, previous research in higher education indicates that workload is interrelated with approaches to learning (Kember, 2004) and predicts perceived stress overload (Kausar, 2010), which can lead to failure and attrition (Amirkhan & Kofman, 2018). According to Deasy et al. (2014), "significant levels of psychological distress have been reported in higher education students globally,

who experience greater psychological distress than the general population” (p. 2). In higher music education, students may face discipline-specific workloads. Bernhard (2007a, 2007b, 2010) shows that music majors likely experience higher levels of psychological problems than nonmusic majors. These include performance anxiety, perfectionism, and career concerns because of music studies’ potentially increased academic and performance requirements. There can also be differences in experienced stress, particularly between genders, and in mood, bodily tensions, and somatic symptoms between music students studying in different programs (Zetterberg et al., 1998).

Therefore, more research is needed to understand how daily activities and skills for managing time and stress may be related to a student’s workload, learning, distress, and burnout in higher education (Amirkhan & Kofman, 2018; Jacobs & Dodd, 2003; Kember, 2004). Research-based evidence on music students’ learning experiences, when connected to the development of teaching and learning environments, may support the music students’ higher education studying. For example, developing ways to support music students’ positive experiences connected to their workload may help students concentrate on more meaningful aspects of music with more sophisticated and high-quality learning (Reid, 2001). Indeed, research on flow<sup>2</sup> among music students shows that autonomous motivation and perceived competence affect flow variations (Valenzuela et al., 2018).

In our earlier research (Jääskeläinen et al., forthcoming), we conducted a systematic review to map previous research on music students’ experiences of workload in higher education and recommendations for interventions. As a result, a framework of music students’ experienced workload was constructed based on three contexts where developmental actions could be recommended in higher music education: (1) music students’ studying and coping strategies, (2) teachers’ interaction with music students, and (3) aspects in teaching and learning environments, such as university institution and livelihoods. This study focuses on the first developmental action by investigating music students’ experiences of coping with workload and stress.<sup>3</sup>

### *Supporting music students to cope with workload and stress*

Folkman and Lazarus (1980) define *coping* as “the cognitive and behavioral efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them” (p. 223). According to American Psychological Association (2020), *coping strategies* refer to actions, sets of actions, or thought processes utilized in unpleasant or stressful situations or relating to such situations. Usually, they entail conscious choices to deal with challenges in concrete ways. Previously, coping strategies in higher arts education have been studied, for example, in dance education concerning male dance students’ anxieties that they may experience with theatrical dance, often taken as a feminine realm, and the stereotype of effeminate male dancers (Lehikoinen, 2006). Lehikoinen and Turpeinen (2022) note that such strategies can help students maintain their self-worth and pride and provide self-protection. In higher music education, many students try to find the optimal balance between paid and unpaid work and studying to succeed academically and financially (Jääskeläinen et al., 2020). Particularly neoliberal education policies view “students’ life as human capital, economic investment for the labour market and consumer power” (Jääskeläinen et al., 2020, p. 505) as required by global markets (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2021). Such balancing between working and studying can lead to negative coping strategies that intensify the stress, such as drinking, missing sleep, skipping exercise, and less time with friends and family (Beban & Trueman, 2018). It can also increase the nonmedical use of prescription drugs (Betancourt et al., 2013).

Previous research indicates several effective research-based ways to support students with their higher education workload. It is vital to provide an induction session (1) at the beginning of the academic year to familiarize students with learning, evaluation, and grading processes (Kausar, 2010). Orientation (2) is also essential to offer students transparent and clear information about the study program’s expectations and requirements (Kyndt et al., 2014). Counseling (3) should be readily available for students to help them to cope more effectively with everyday challenges in their studies (Kausar, 2010) and to adopt a developmental approach to improving generic skills (i.e.,



those context- and subject-specific study skills that are necessary for students to be able to succeed in their studies, such as writing skills for assignments and reading skills in preparation for exams; Giles, 2009). In addition to stress management skills (4) (Betancourt et al., 2013), encouraging a good peer relationship (5) seems to help students to cope with stress, and leisure activities (6) can support students to reduce stress in studying (Kyndt et al., 2014). Time management skills (7) are crucial for students to set priorities and plan efficient schedules by understanding that their quantitative perceived workload differs from objective workload (Kyndt et al., 2014). For example, the research findings of Wennström (2006) show that only half of the allocated time in the curriculum was used for studying by students who felt that they had a heavy workload.

It is crucial to offer encouraging feedback to music students—especially at the beginning of their higher education studies—on their first music performance (8) (Burt & Mills, 2006). In addition to formal assessment, teachers’ and peer students’ informal comments should be given in safe learning spaces, such as small groups (Burt & Mills, 2006). Constructive feedback, both negative and positive, can help students to progress and cope with the possible feelings of inadequacy typically identified among many outstanding musicians (Burt & Mills, 2006). It can also create a supportive community of learning which may increase students’ confidence and enjoyment in performing (Perkins et al., 2017). Student burnout affects students during studies and after graduation (Hamann & Daugherty, 1985). Therefore, music students may need support from specialized counselors (9) familiar with the music profession’s demands and the unique challenges in studying music (Dews & Williams, 1989). In addition to cognitive and psychological issues such as performance anxiety (10) (e.g., Kenny, 2011), music students need support with physical issues (11). They have a high incidence of musculoskeletal problems, especially with the shoulders, neck, wrists/hands, and thoracic spine (Baadjou et al., 2016; Williamon & Thompson, 2006; Zetterberg et al., 1998).

### *Proactive coping styles*

Our previous research indicates that music students’ experienced workload,

especially overload, is often connected to stress (Jääskeläinen et al., 2020). According to Nogaj (2017), “coping with stress, including stage fright, is one of the fundamental competences indispensable for a young musician” (p. 280). However, students cope differently with varying levels of success (Deasy et al., 2014). Therefore, research-based evidence of music students’ experiences of workload, stress, and coping is crucial for institutions to support these students in the best possible ways.

Greenglass and Fiksenbaum (2009) argue that because the focus in traditional psychological research has been on “negative states, their determinants, and consequences” (p. 29), most of the stress-related research provides results of reactive strategies to use after getting stressed (e.g., Deasy et al., 2014; Nogaj, 2017). This study focuses on preventive strategies that can be proactively utilized before facing stressful situations. *Proactive coping strategies* “generate positive affect” (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000, p. 652), which is directed to increase “general resources that facilitate promotion toward challenging goals and personal growth” (Schwarzer & Taubert, 2002, p. 9). Greenglass (2002) defines proactive coping as a complex construct with seven dimensions: proactive coping, reflective coping, strategic planning, preventive coping, instrumental support seeking, emotional support seeking, and avoidance coping. According to Greenglass (2002), *proactive coping styles* benefit individuals in supporting health and managing life quality, particularly by utilizing social resources to achieve goals, meet challenges, support personal growth, and increase the feeling of being in control. Proactive coping may also play an essential role in reducing burnout symptoms (e.g., Greenglass, 2005).

### *Aim of the study and research questions*

Our aim in this mixed methods study was to explore workload experiences, experiences of stress, and proactive coping styles used by music students. The sample consisted of students in randomly selected higher music education institutions in Finland and the United Kingdom as a combined group.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, we addressed the following research question and subquestions:

How do professional students in higher music education in Finland and the United Kingdom experience workload and stress and use proactive coping styles?

- *Subquestion 1:* What are the prevalences of music students' experienced study workload, experienced stress, and proactive coping styles among genders, levels of degree, genre groups,<sup>5</sup> and study programs?
- *Subquestion 2:* Can music students' experienced stress be predicted by their experienced study workload and proactive coping styles?
- *Subquestion 3:* What are the determinants of experienced workload, experienced stress, and proactive coping styles for music students?

## **Method**

### *Study design*

In this mixed methods research study, we used a sequential explanatory design consisting of two distinct data collection phases for subsequent combination for analysis purposes: quantitative followed by qualitative (Ivankova et al., 2006). Combining quantitative and qualitative data helped us provide a more holistic picture of music students' workload, stress, and coping experiences than using a single method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Indeed, we considered the qualitative data crucial for this sensitive topic, which caused the need to connect emotionally with the students and hear their stories to understand the quantitative results on a deeper level.

### *Questionnaire*

The assessment instrument Workload, Stress, and Coping (WSC) questionnaire was created by combining and adapting sections from two renowned, validated questionnaires from the learning sciences. The first instrument was the standardized study workload and stress section of the Learn questionnaire used in the Finnish higher education context (i.e., Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). The second instrument was the Proactive Coping Inventory for



Adolescents (PCI-A) developed in Canadian higher education (i.e., Greenglass et al., 2008). The WSC questionnaire also included demographic items and open-ended questions about workload, stress, coping, and the students' interaction experiences with teachers.

The experienced study workload scale (see Supplementary Materials 1 online) included two positively and three negatively worded items. The scale assessed students' workload experiences when considering studies as a whole in their main subject (e.g., "I must work very hard with my main subject studies"). For the analysis, positively worded items were recoded and reworded so that higher scores indicated greater experienced workload. Responses to items were scaled from 1 = *Not at all true* through 4 = *Complete true*. A single item assessed students' current feelings of experienced stress. Although single-item measures for psychological phenomena have been argued to raise issues in terms of reliability and validity, a single-item measure can be sufficient in cases where the measured construct is narrow (Freed, 2013). Therefore, we considered a single item as sufficient with the concept of feeling stress because in the questionnaire it was described clearly as the situations in which students had felt anxious, restless, nervous, or distressed or when they have had difficulties sleeping because their problems were continuously playing on their mind. Item responses ranged from 1 = *Not at all* through 4 = *All the time*. The study workload and stress items were pilot-tested among students in higher music education, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient measuring the reliability of the study workload scale was .75 in the pilot study (Jääskeläinen, 2016). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .63 on the study workload scale.

The proactive coping section (see Supplementary Materials 1 online) included seven different scales assessing proactive coping styles (e.g., "I plan my strategies to change the situation before I act"): proactive coping with 14 items, reflective coping with 11 items, strategic planning with 4 items, preventive coping with 10 items, instrumental support seeking with 8 items, emotional support seeking with 5 items, and avoidance coping with 3 items (PCI-A; see Greenglass et al., 2008). Responses to items were scaled from 1 = *Not at all true* through 4 = *Complete true*. The Proactive Coping Inventory's subscales have high internal consistency—Cronbach's alpha coefficient reported

for the Canadian Student sample ranged from .71 to .85 for all seven scales—and good item-total correlations and acceptable skewness as an indicator of symmetry around the mean (Greenglass et al., 1999). Cronbach's alpha coefficient in the current study ranged from .63 to .83 for all seven scales.

All instructions and items in the questionnaires were available in English. They were translated into Finnish for the data collection in Finland by following guidelines recommended by van Widenfelt et al. (2005). Thus, two independent English–Finnish translations were produced by the first author and an official academic translator. After agreement on the final Finnish translation was reached, documents were translated back into English, and the Finnish documents were revised when inconsistencies were found. We pilot-tested the translated documents with Finnish- and English-speaking music students and higher music education teachers to validate the items. The final documents were refined by their feedback—for example, we reformulated the wording with three items in PCI-A after obtaining permission from Professor Greenglass (see Items 38, 39, and 43 in Supplementary Materials 1 online and the original wordings in Greenglass et al., 2008).

### *Interviews*

The first author conducted the semistructured in-depth interviews either in contact meetings or remotely and used time varied from 30 to 90 min. The interviews aimed to obtain deeper understandings concerning the participants' open-ended answers in the questionnaire. The interview questions were informed by previous research (e.g., Deasy et al., 2014). The topics consisted of questions that encouraged students to reflect on their workload, stress, and coping as professional students in higher music education (see Supplementary Materials 1 online).

### *Sample*

The data were gathered online through an institutional Surveypal questionnaire (see Supplementary Materials 1 online for data collection instrument). We randomly selected seven university-level music institutions in Finland and the

United Kingdom (to protect participants' anonymity, the details of institutions and how they were divided by countries are not available). We sent the invitation to participate in the research via student email lists, thus potentially reaching over 7,000 music students. The invitation email included a brief outline of the study and the questionnaire. Also, an information sheet was provided, which included the nature and purpose of the study. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of information was assured. We sent reminder invitations via email to encourage students to participate. A total of 155 music students (108 in Finland and 47 in the United Kingdom) completed the questionnaire in five different institutions (including total of 5,900 music students). Students could express their willingness to be contacted for further research in the questionnaire, and 29 music students volunteered to participate in the interviews. The total response rate was relatively low (9% in Finland and 1% in the United Kingdom), which is quite common in online surveys among students because of the survey fatigue they are typically exposed to (Porter et al., 2004).

It is a common assumption that survey nonresponse bias may lead to inaccurate population estimates. However, according to Fosnacht et al. (2017), low response counts—such as 50 respondents—can provide reliable estimates, and a response rate of 5% can be considered reliable when at least 1,000 students have been contacted to ask them to participate. Furthermore, “it is not representativeness of the study subjects that enhances the generalization, it is knowledge of specific conditions and an understanding of mechanism for a proper generalization” (Rothman et al., 2013, p. 1013). While increasing sample size can reduce sampling error, it will not necessarily increase representativeness or reduce systematic error called bias. In that line, an ideal sample is representative when it is similar to the target population in every conceivable way. Demographic characteristics of the participants given in Table 1 include a variety of genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programs typically found in higher music education institutions.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of all participants in the sample ( $N = 155$ )

Background	%	Main subject studies	%
<i>Country</i>		<i>Genre group</i>	
Finland	69.7	Classical music (UG or PG)	43.2
The United Kingdom	30.3	Music education (UG or PG)	24.5
<i>Gender</i>		Other genres	32.3
Female	68.0	<i>Study program</i>	
Male	30.1	Classical string	13.5
Nonbinary gender	2.0	Classical wind	9.7
<i>University level</i>		Classical piano	6.5
UG	52.9	Classical early music	3.2
PG	42.6	Classical other instruments	3.2
Other (junior or doctoral)	4.5	Classical voice and opera	7.1
		Music education	24.5
<i>Interview participants (n = 29)</i>	18.7	Composition	7.7
Finland (n = 20)		Church music	12.3
The United Kingdom (n = 9)		Folk and global music	4.5
Female (n = 21)		Other programs	3.9
Male (n = 8)		Doctoral programs	3.9
UG: undergraduate; PG: postgraduate			

### *Ethical statement*

The University of the Arts Helsinki's Research Ethics Committee, in Finland, and Conservatoires United Kingdom Research Ethics Committee granted the approval after reviewing the methods, the research tools, and the participant informed consent and information sheets that clarified the voluntary nature of participation and the protection of anonymity. We obtained research permissions from participating institutions in Finland and the United Kingdom. We informed study participants that they provided their consent by submitting the questionnaire. Interview participants provided written consent. The participants were not compensated for their time.

### *Data analysis*

We analyzed the questionnaire data with the SPSS (Version 23). Three respondents of 155 participants in the WSC questionnaire had missing values

in most proactive coping styles subscales, and their responses were removed from the statistical analyses. The remaining 152 respondents had only a few missing values, which were replaced with the concerned scale's mean value. After descriptive analysis with demographic characteristics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations), we computed inferential analyses. Study workload scale, stress scale, and seven proactive coping styles subscales were tested for parametric statistics assumptions using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and the Shapiro–Wilk tests. Scores were calculated to summarize the extent to which study workload, stress, and each type of coping style were used by genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programs. The parametric test (one-way analysis of variance [ANOVA]) was used with the normally distributed scales. With the scales which were not normally distributed, both the aforementioned parametric test and nonparametric test (Kruskal–Wallis test) were used. Because there were no differences between the results, we will report the results of the parametric tests. In addition, the Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons was used. With the stress scale, study workload scale, and seven proactive coping styles subscales, bivariate analyses with scatterplots, Pearson's correlation, and multiple linear regression were used. We used a significance level of  $\alpha = .05$ , which corresponds to a 95% confidence interval.

We used the ATLAS.ti (Version 9.0.7) to code and analyze the qualitative data concerning the answers to open-ended questions in the WSC questionnaire and transcribed interviews. The first author performed the analysis in collaboration with the second author, who ensured the validity and reliability of the process by coding 5% of the data. The interrater agreement of the two independent coding choices was calculated by using Holsti's method and Krippendorff's Alpha, and were favourably calculated as 0.924 and 0.918 respectively, with both values indicating very high levels of reliability. A thematic coding framework was built on 13 codes, 4 categories, and 3 overarching themes derived from the systematic review mentioned above (deductive analysis). Following the analytical process of transcendental phenomenology (see full procedure presented in Jääskeläinen, 2022b), we added further depth into the framework by including the 14 codes extracted

from the interview data (inductive analysis) to clarify and incorporate students’ lived experiences concerning workload while studying in higher music education. The analysis continued through the process of horizontalization (i.e., Moustakas, 1994). All the interview transcripts and open-ended answers in the questionnaire were read and relevant expressions concerning workload were listed, grouped, and coded. Coded expressions were grouped according to three overarching themes based on the context of the student’s experienced workload: student, teacher, and environment. The thematic coding framework is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Thematic coding framework

13 literature-based codes <sup>a</sup>		14 interview-derived codes		Four categories of different workload meanings drawn from Columns 1 and 2		Three overarching themes of proposed recommendations for interventions related to music students' workload in higher education
Structure of student workload Work	+	Competition Funding Musician career Social media	→	Structure of workload	→	Music students' ability to cope with their workload (including excerpts related to "the student" in four of the categories to the left) <sup>b</sup>  Tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload (including excerpts related to "the teacher" in four of the categories to the left) <sup>d</sup>  Developing learner-centered environments in higher music education (including excerpts related to "the environment" in four of the categories to the left) <sup>e</sup>
Approaches to learning Experiences in the first year of study Flow Time management	+	Coping Enjoyment Meaning of musicianship <sup>c</sup> Practicing Religion	→	A student's workload		
One-to-one tuition Teaching and learning environments	+	Assessment Curriculum Group tuition Student feedback	→	Workload relating to teaching and learning environments		
Burnout Health Musculoskeletal problems Performance anxiety Stress	+	Physical exercise	→	Psychological and physiological issues		

<sup>a</sup>Results reported in Jääskeläinen et al. (forthcoming).  
<sup>b</sup>Results reported in the present study.  
<sup>c</sup>Results reported in Jääskeläinen (2022a, 2022b).  
<sup>d</sup>Results reported in Jääskeläinen & López-Iñiguez (2022).  
<sup>e</sup>Results reported in Jääskeläinen et al. (2020).

For this study, we continued the analysis with the extracts linked to the overarching theme of student. The Finnish participants' quotes were translated from Finnish into English by the first and third authors who speak both languages fluently.

## **Results**

### *Quantitative results*

Table 3, which shows the results of the descriptive analysis, answers to the first subquestion about the prevalence of music students' experienced study workload, experienced stress, and seven proactive coping styles among genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programs. High scores indicate that the student often experienced study workload or stress or used the proactive coping style described by that scale. This table also presents the bivariate analysis' (one-way ANOVA for genders, levels of degree, genre groups, and study programs) key findings and statistically significant differences in subscales concerning demographic variables.

**Table 3.** Differences in professional music students' experiences of study workload, stress, and proactive coping styles in relation to demographic variables

Study workload, stress, and proactive coping styles scales: Mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and p-value (p) of bivariate analysis																				
Workload and Stress scales [M (SD)]																				
Variable	Category	n	Workload 2.56 (0.57)		Stress 3.01 (0.40)		ProC 3.01 (0.40)		RefC 3.00 (0.40)		StrP 2.90 (0.58)		PreC 3.05 (0.40)		ISS 3.04 (0.52)		ESS 3.14 (0.65)		AvoC 2.51 (0.66)	
			M	p	M	p	M	p	M	p	M	p	M	p	M	p	M	p	M	p
Gender		150		.043		.001		.011		.159		.242		.172		.078		.022		.152
	Female	101	2.63		2.98		2.97	2.96		2.96	2.90		3.01	3.08		3.18	3.18		2.58	
	Male	46	2.42		2.48		3.15	3.10		3.10	2.93		3.13	2.99		3.12	3.12		2.41	
	Nonbinary	3	2.13		3.33		2.67	2.97		2.97	2.35		3.23	2.42		2.13	2.13		2.00	
Level		152		.869		.120		.316		.443		.379		.665		.381		.339		.519
	Undergrad.	82	2.54		2.80		3.03	3.01		3.01	2.94		3.07	3.09		3.18	3.18		2.51	
	Postgrad.	64	2.58		2.79		2.97	2.97		2.97	2.83		3.02	2.97		3.11	3.11		2.55	
	Doctoral	6	2.60		3.50		3.21	3.18		3.18	3.08		3.15	3.00		2.80	2.80		2.22	
Genre		152		.015		.007		.565		.940		.860		.125		.657		.124		.259
	Classical	66	2.41		2.60		2.97	3.05		3.05	2.93		3.13	3.04		3.08	3.08		2.50	
	Music ed.	37	2.72		2.92		3.03	2.94		2.94	2.89		2.98	3.09		3.32	3.32		2.66	
	Other	49	2.64		3.06		3.05	2.97		2.97	2.87		3.00	2.99		3.07	3.07		2.42	
Progr.		152		.031		.008		.654		.150		.942		.403		.881		.535		.690
	Cl. string	20	2.58		3.00		2.93	3.03		3.03	2.85		3.03	3.01		3.02	3.02		2.67	
	Cl. wind	15	2.34		2.39		2.93	2.82		2.82	2.83		3.07	3.20		3.21	3.21		2.46	
	Cl. piano	10	2.04		2.08		3.13	3.19		3.19	3.10		3.25	3.06		3.02	3.02		2.23	
	Cl. early	5	2.27		2.57		2.87	3.09		3.09	2.75		2.98	2.93		3.16	3.16		2.67	
	Cl. other	5	2.59		2.60		3.14	3.47		3.47	2.95		3.24	2.95		2.96	2.96		2.40	
	Cl. voice	11	2.45		2.82		2.93	3.06		3.06	3.04		3.27	2.97		3.07	3.07		2.48	
	Music ed.	37	2.72		2.92		3.03	2.94		2.94	2.89		2.98	3.09		3.32	3.32		2.66	
	Compos.	12	2.54		3.33		2.95	2.96		2.96	2.90		3.10	2.86		2.85	2.85		2.47	
	Church	19	2.82		2.89		3.00	2.95		2.95	2.86		2.93	2.99		3.15	3.15		2.54	
	Folk	7	2.34		2.57		3.27	2.95		2.95	2.65		2.96	3.29		3.40	3.40		2.19	
	Other	5	2.78		2.80		2.97	2.87		2.87	3.05		2.97	2.90		3.20	3.20		2.33	
	Doctoral	6	2.60		3.50		3.21	3.18		3.18	3.08		3.15	3.00		2.80	2.80		2.22	
Bold values mean the difference is significant at the 0.05 level. Two participants did not specify their gender. Undergrad. = Undergraduate, Postgrad. = Postgraduate. Genre refers to the main focus on the program of study. Classical = undergraduate and postgraduate classical music, Music ed. = undergraduate and postgraduate music education, Other = all other study programs combined to a one group. Progr. = Study programs are combined from respondents in five different institutions. Study program groups are formulated based on at least five respondents in a group. Undergraduate and postgraduate programs: Cl. string = classical music string instruments, Cl. wind = classical music wind instruments, Cl. piano = classical music piano, Cl. early = classical music early music, Cl. other = classical music other instruments including guitar, organ, kantele and percussions, Cl. voice = classical music vocal music and opera, Music ed. = music education, Compos. = composition, Church = church music, Folk = folk music and global music, Other = other undergraduate and postgraduate programs including popular music, conducting, music technology and arts management. Doctoral programs: Doctoral. Stress = stress scale, Workload = study workload scale, ProC = proactive coping scale, RefC = reflective coping scale, StrP = strategic planning scale, ISS = instrumental support seeking scale, ESS = emotional support seeking scale, AvoC = avoidance coping scale.																				



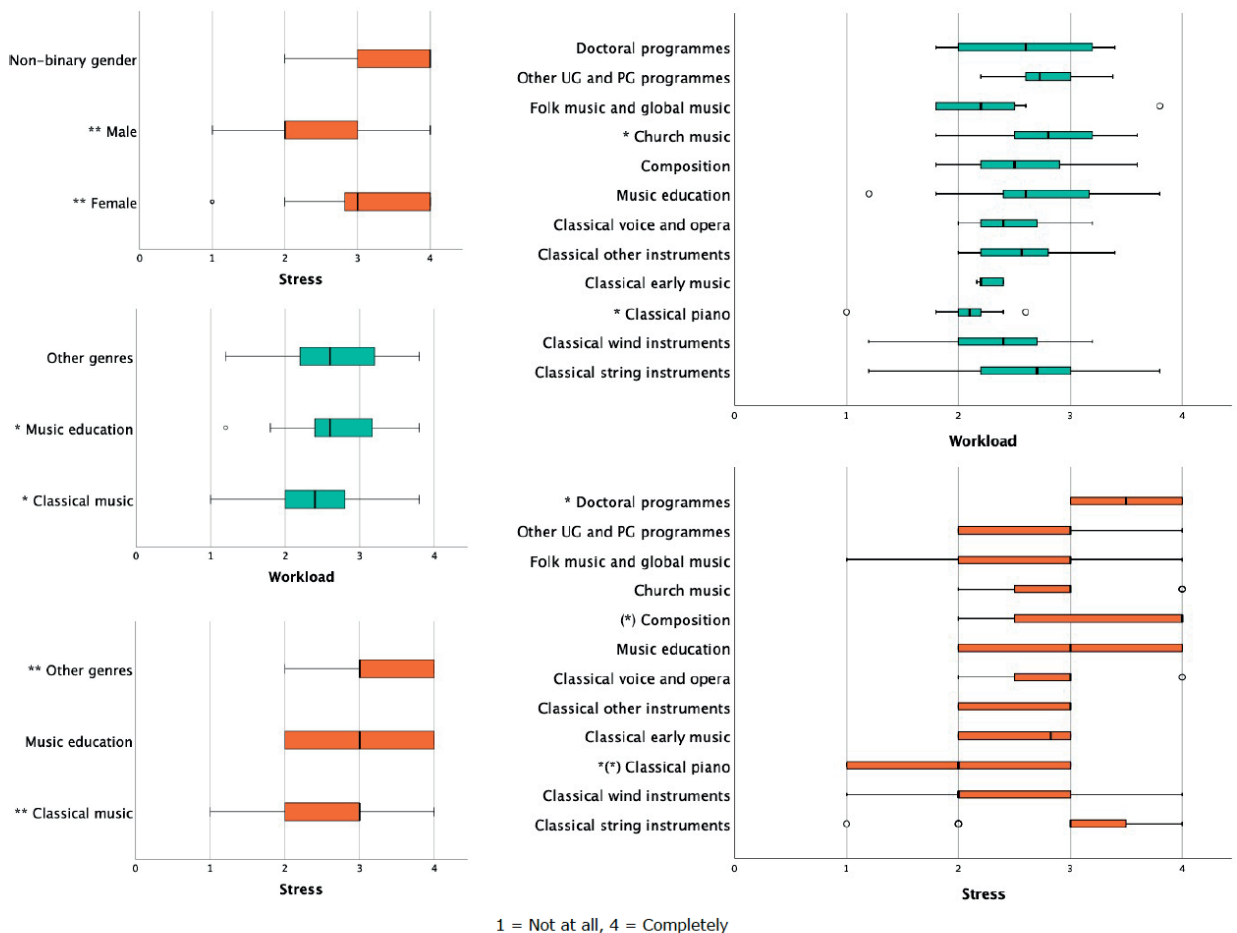
With females, males, and nonbinary gender, the ANOVA results indicated statistically significant differences between groups in study workload,  $F(2, 147) = 3.214, p = .043, \eta^2 = .042$ . However, the Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons did not show any significant pairwise contrasts. There was a statistically significant difference among females, males, and nonbinary gender in stress,  $F(2, 147) = 4.288, p = .001, \eta^2 = .085$ . The Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons indicated statistically significant differences so that females ( $p = .002$ ) experienced more stress than males.

There were no statistically significant differences between groups in study workload and in stress with *undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels*.

With *genre groups*, there were statistically significant differences in study workload,  $F(2, 149) = 4.354, p = .015, \eta^2 = .055$ , and stress,  $F(2, 149) = 5.064, p = .007, \eta^2 = .064$ . The Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons indicated statistically significant differences so that students in the music education genre group ( $p = .024$ ) experienced more study workload than students in the classical music genre group. Students in the other genres group ( $p = .008$ ) experienced more stress than students in the classical music genre group.

With *study programs*, there were statistically significant differences in study workload,  $F(11, 140) = 2.020, p = .031, \eta^2 = .137$ , and stress,  $F(11, 140) = 2.433, p = .008, \eta^2 = .160$ . The Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons indicated statistically significant differences so that students in church music ( $p = .028$ ) experienced more study workload than students in classical piano. Both students in composition ( $p = .017$ ) and students in doctoral programs ( $p = .039$ ) experienced more stress than students in classical piano.

Figure 1 shows the statistically significant results of the professional music students' experienced study workload and experienced stress.

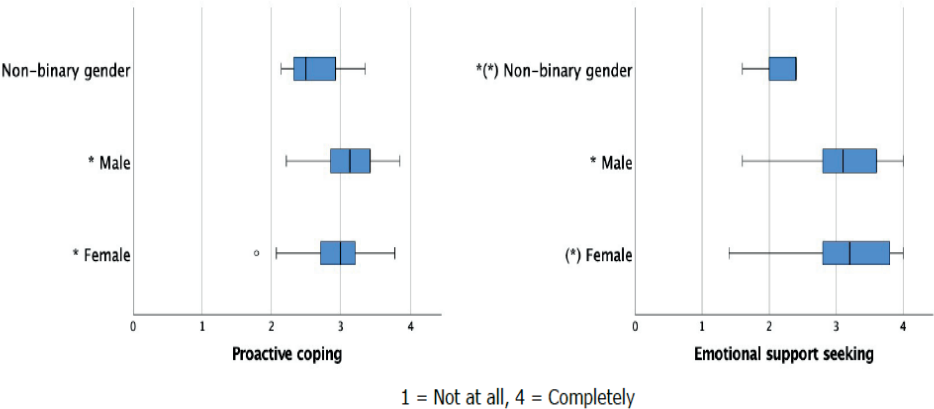


**Figure 1.** Statistically significant results of the professional music students' experienced study workload and experienced stress

Box plots illustrate statistically significant results of the professional music students' experienced study workload and experienced stress according to genders (upper box plot chart on left-hand side), genre groups (two lower box plot charts on left-hand side), and study programs (two box plot charts on right-hand side). Within each box, vertical black lines denote median values. Boxes extend from the 25th to the 75th percentile of each group's distribution of values. Horizontal extending lines denote adjacent values (i.e., the most extreme values within 1.5 interquartile range of the 25th and 75th percentile of each group). Dots denote observations outside the range of adjacent values. UG = undergraduate, PG = postgraduate.

\* $p < .5$ ; (\*) $p < .5$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

With *seven proactive coping styles*, emotional support seeking was used the most, followed by preventive coping, instrumental support seeking, proactive coping, reflective coping, strategic coping, and avoidance coping. There were statistically significant differences among genders in using proactive coping,  $F(2, 147) = 4.697, p = .011, \eta^2 = .060$ , and emotional support seeking,  $F(2, 147) = 3.940, p = .022, \eta^2 = .051$ . The Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons indicated statistically significant differences so that males ( $p = .031$ ) used proactive coping more than females. Both females ( $p = .017$ ) and males ( $p = .030$ ) used emotional support seeking more than nonbinary gender. With reflective coping, strategic coping, preventive coping, instrumental support seeking, and avoidance coping, there were no statistically significant differences between genders. With the level of degree, genre group, and study program, there were no statistically significant differences between groups in using seven proactive coping styles. Figure 2 shows the statistically significant results of the used proactive coping styles by the professional music students.

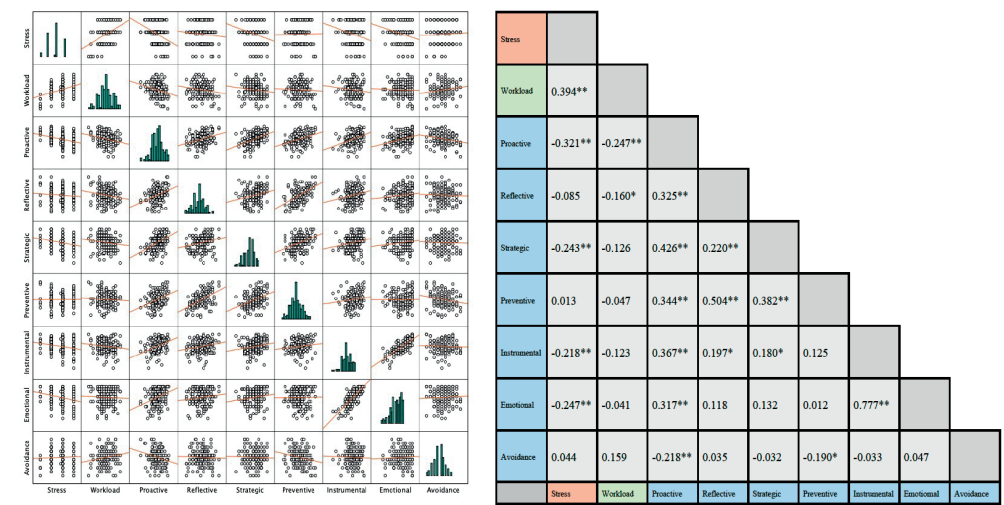


**Figure 2.** Statistically significant results of the used proactive coping styles by the professional music students

Box plots illustrate statistically significant results of the used proactive coping styles by the professional music students according to genders. Within each box, vertical black lines denote median values. Boxes extend from the 25th to the 75th percentile of each group's distribution of values. Horizontal extending lines denote adjacent values (i.e., the most extreme values within 1.5 interquartile range of the 25th and 75th percentile of each group). Dots denote observations outside the range of adjacent values.

\* $p < .5$ ; (\* $p < .5$ ).

To answer the second subquestion about the potential prediction of music students’ experienced stress by their experienced study workload and each of the seven proactive coping styles, we performed Pearson’s correlation analysis (see results in Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Distributions, interconnections, and bivariate relationships of the scales for experienced stress, experienced study workload, and seven proactive coping styles (N = 152)

Stress = experienced stress scale; Workload = experienced study workload scale; Proactive = proactive coping scale; Reflective = reflective coping scale; Strategic = strategic planning scale; Preventive = preventive coping scale; Instrumental = instrumental support seeking scale; Emotional = emotional support seeking scale; Avoidance = avoidance coping scale. A scatterplot matrix (on left-hand side) shows distributions and intercorrelations of the scales for experienced stress, experienced study workload, and seven proactive coping styles. A correlation matrix (on right-hand side) shows bivariate relationships between the scales for experienced stress, experienced study workload, and seven proactive coping styles. Correlation coefficients (r): \* $p < .5$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

We also performed a multiple linear regression analysis to predict music students’ experienced stress based on their experienced study workload and seven proactive coping styles (see results in Table 4).

**Table 4.** Multiple linear regression of professional music students’ experienced study workload and seven proactive coping styles as predictors of students’ experienced stress

Multiple linear regression						
Predictor	SC $\beta$	$t$	$p$	$F$	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$
Workload	.337	4.456	<b>&lt;.001</b>	6.539	.268	.227
ProC	-.178	-1.969	<b>.051</b>	–	–	–
RefC	.002	0.025	.980	–	–	–
StrP	-.164	-1.974	<b>.050</b>	–	–	–
PreC	.145	1.586	.115	–	–	–
ISS	.052	0.443	.658	–	–	–
ESS	-.197	-1.689	.093	–	–	–
AvoC	-.015	-0.193	.847	–	–	–

SC  $\beta$ : standardized coefficient;  $p$ : two-tailed observed significance levels for the  $t$  statistics;  $R^2$ : squared multiple correlation coefficient; Adjusted  $R^2$ : adjusted squared multiple correlation coefficient.  
 Bold vales mean the difference is significant at the .05 level. The predictors workload and seven proactive coping styles (independent variables) were used to predict stress (dependent variable): Workload = experienced study workload scale, ProC = proactive coping scale, RefC = reflective coping scale, StrP = strategic planning scale, PreC = preventive coping scale, ISS = instrumental support seeking scale, ESS = emotional support seeking scale, AvoC = avoidance coping scale.

It was revealed in the multiple linear regression that music students’ study workload and seven proactive coping styles accounted for 27% of the variance. Music students’ study workload was a significant predictor of stress. Within seven proactive coping styles, proactive coping and strategic planning emerged as significant predictors, and they predicted stress negatively.

*Qualitative findings*

To answer the third subquestion concerning the determinants of experienced workload, experienced stress, and proactive coping styles for music students, we analyzed qualitative findings by looking at the excerpts consisting of the answers to open-ended questions in the WSC questionnaire from 155 participants and transcribed interviews from 29 participants. Qualitative findings resulted in recurrent ideas, which were categorized to themes according to 13 codes from deductive analysis and 14 codes from inductive analysis (see Table 2). These 27 themes were separated into four thematic groups: (1) structure of workload in studying music (see six themes in Figure 4), (2) a music student’s workload (see nine themes in Figure 5), (3) music students’ workload relating to teaching and learning environments (see six themes in Figure 6), and (4) psychological and physiological issues in studying music (see six themes in Figure 7).

### Structure of workload in studying music

1. In general, the *structure of student workload* is not necessarily a problem because “it’s more in the way that the students get to deal with stress”, thus music students need to “find ways of de-stressing”.
2. Extra-curricular *working* causes overload for music students and lead to difficulties in “finding that kind of balance between working and studying”.
3. Struggling with *funding* causes stress for music students so that “money is one of the biggest issues”.
4. Another stress-related topic is *competition* between music students. Such an atmosphere may lead students to disguise how much strategic planning beyond practising or studying there is behind a successful performance or any other professional output within the music industry when “very few people see the phase when I practise, repeatedly, hours after hours, to perform it well”.
5. Music students use avoidance coping with handling pressure when seeing their peer students’ success in *social media* where “they’re posting all these pictures of them doing these amazing gigs and amazing concerts they’re recording”.
6. Music students use avoidance coping also with managing their insecure feelings when thinking of their *musician careers* after graduating when they are “bit scared because it’s the real world, and I think it’s not the best environment for freelancing in the arts at the minute”.

**Figure 4.** The findings of qualitative analysis in the thematic group “structure of workload in studying music” concerning professional music students’ experiences of workload, stress, and proactive coping styles according to six themes (in italics) which are illustrated with participants’ words verbatim.

### A music student’s workload

1. Music students experience a positive workload by *enjoying* music playing and they mention that “I wish I could feel that kind of enjoying all the time in my doing”, but overloaded schedules may hinder this enjoyment.
2. A proactive coping style helps music students find suitable *approaches to learning*, for example by realising that “the less can be ok and, indeed, enough”.
3. Using proactive *coping* strategies supports music students to find realistic expectations, such as “it goes as well as it can go in that moment”.
4. By planning proactively weekly schedules helps music students to gain as good as possible results with *practising*: “I decide the number of hours and the content of practising and how I divide them between days”.
5. Reflective coping style is a way to find the music student’s own individual *meaning of musicianship* for themselves, which they described to be something that “is more connected to my own wishes at the moment, for example, what kind of music I would like to work with or what type of music is attracting me”.
6. Reflective coping skills also helps music students to adjust themselves during their *experiences in the first year of study* to the independent studying required in the higher education level where “it’s very much, this is what you will have to do, and when you do it is up to you and how you do it is up to you”.
7. With strategic planning, music students get tools for *time management*. For example writing task lists reduces their stress “when you visualise things in that way and make the realistic amount of work concrete for yourself, you can overcome that depressing stress and feeling of failure”.
8. The music itself decreases workload by offering music students a way for emotional support seeking in music lessons by interacting with their teacher which may result in a feeling of *flow* “when you play a piece together with your teacher, it goes well, leading to your experience of succeeding”.
9. For some music students *religion* works as an emotional support seeking coping style and helps cope with stress: “But when I express with music, when God speaks through music. Then I feel succeeding, which helps me reduce stress quickly if the level of stress is rising.”

**Figure 5.** The findings of qualitative analysis in the thematic group “a music student’s workload” concerning professional music students’ experiences of workload, stress, and proactive coping styles according to nine themes (in italics) which are illustrated with participants’ words verbatim.

### Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments

1. Reflective coping style is a way for music students to prepare for, handle and learn from the *assessment* situation, which is unique in the field of music, particularly in performing which includes pressured workload in a short moment: "I feel like, it is a bit unfair that we are marked in that way, based on literally just one performance, and it just depends on how well you feel in that hour, in those 30 minutes or whatever".
2. Strategic planning helps music students to prevent overload and burnout, for example, by avoiding selecting too many courses from the *curriculum*, for example "maybe the solution could be to increase the elective courses earlier, or some pondering about my interests".
3. Music students use instrumental support seeking as a coping style when seeking teacher's practical advice in *one-to-one tuition*, such as getting "an excellent technical basis from the teacher and very concrete support with some problematic situations and things".
4. Music students would also like to get practical advantages in *group tuition* that they sometimes do not experience to be beneficial for their learning when "listening to those kinds of lecture series which are not meaningful to me".
5. In emotional support seeking, music students get help in their *teaching and learning environments* by discussing their concerns with peer students and also by making use of study psychologist's services. Nowadays almost every student needs and utilises professional psychological help in some stage of their higher education studies and even "recommend to each other that there is this kind of study counsellor where you can go".
6. With *student feedback*, music students use avoidance coping when they do not give feedback when experiencing that there is no use for it at the end of courses. They also fear that giving feedback can be harmful to them if they can be identified from the feedback: "I have heard these kinds of wild stories that when you give feedback to certain people, it may affect your career."

**Figure 6.** The findings of qualitative analysis in the thematic group "music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments" concerning professional music students' experiences of workload, stress, and proactive coping styles according to six themes (in *italics*) which are illustrated with participants' words verbatim.

### Psychological and physiological issues in studying music

1. Usually, the end of the semester is a period that causes lots of *stress* for music students when the workload is heavy with many assignments and performance exams at the same time "when you must get those certain things ready before a holiday or start doing other things".
2. If music students have selected too overloaded study plans, it can even lead to *burnout*: "Then I started to reduce the number of the courses and then, after all, I needed a total break without any course."
3. In studying music, music students use preventive coping in taking care of their *health*. For example, when feeling overloaded they "just need to stop, break it apart, break it down, slow it down. And just, put the building blocks back together. You realise you can do it. It just takes time".
4. Music students use preventive coping also for avoiding physiological injuries in playing instruments and with psychological preparation, for example, with *performance anxiety* which they experience "in the run up to it, rather than when I'm actually performing in itself".
5. Also, *physical exercise* helps music students to handle stress when "at the same time, it gives you something else to do, which takes your thoughts away from those things which are causing stress".
6. Music students use instrumental support seeking coping style to find tools, such as techniques and methods in ergonomics, with *musculoskeletal problems*: "So I do Alexander technique, and we're offered four free lessons a year at the university".

**Figure 7.** The findings of qualitative analysis in the thematic group "psychological and physiological issues in studying music" concerning professional music students' experiences of workload, stress, and proactive coping styles according to six themes (in *italics*) which are illustrated with participants' words verbatim.



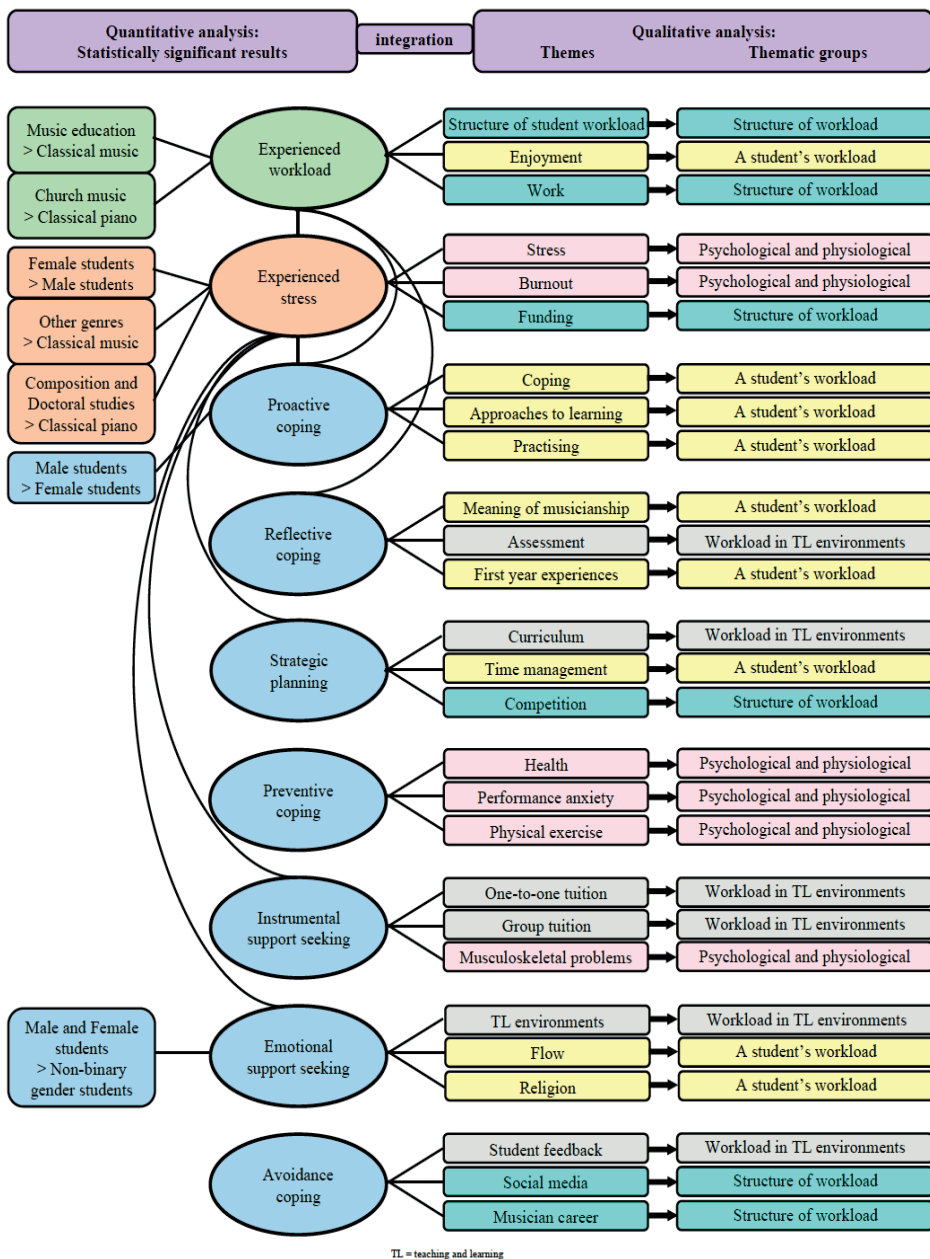
More extensive examples of excerpts from participants reflecting the determinants of experienced workload, experienced stress, and proactive coping styles for the professional students in higher music education are arranged by themes and thematic groups in Supplementary Materials 2 online. In the “Discussion” section, we integrate these qualitative findings with the quantitative results.

## **Discussion**

Our primary research question was as follows: How do professional students in higher music education in Finland and the United Kingdom experience workload and stress and use proactive coping styles? To answer this question, we will next integrate the statistically significant quantitative results and qualitative findings through previously formulated recurrent themes and four thematic groups (see Figure 8).



## Professional music students' experiences of workload, stress, and proactive coping styles



**Figure 8.** Integration of the results of quantitative analysis and the findings of qualitative analysis concerning professional music students' experiences of workload, stress, and proactive coping styles

### *Structure of workload in studying music*

Linear regression shows that music students' experienced study workload is a statistically significant predictor of experienced stress. Proactive coping and strategic planning negatively predict music students' stress, which means that the more students use these coping styles, the less they experience stress. Also, there is a statistically significant negative correlation between stress and instrumental support seeking coping style and between stress and emotional support seeking coping style. Thus, using these coping styles may also help reduce stress. Excerpts from the participants reveal that the *structure of student workload*, in general, is not necessarily a problem, but music students need to "find ways of de-stressing." *Working* besides studying causes overload, and struggling with *funding* causes stress for music students. Another stress-related topic was the *competition* between music students. Such an atmosphere based on global market demands may lead students to disguise how much strategic planning beyond practicing or studying there is behind a successful performance or any other professional output within the music industry. In this regard, Burt and Mills (2006) found in their research that music students in higher education have specific experiences concerning competition with their peer students. Indeed, music students in our study mentioned that they need support to cope with their potential feelings of inadequacy when "studying in the field of music includes much more workload because it is connected to your personal life and personality too." Music students used avoidance coping with handling pressure when seeing their peer students' success in *social media* and managing their insecure feelings when thinking of their *musician careers* after graduating. The study therefore confirms that it is vital for higher education institutions to promote "a culture of well-being" through institutional practices that support students in using positive coping strategies which minimize their distress and maladaptive coping during their studies, thus affecting their future careers (Deasy et al., 2014, p. 16).

### *A music student's workload*

There is a statistically significant negative correlation between music students' study workload and proactive coping style and between study workload and reflective coping style. Such a correlation suggests that the more students use these coping styles, the less they experience a study workload. Music students experience a positive workload by *enjoying* music playing, but overloaded schedules with courses may hinder this enjoyment. A proactive coping style can help music students find suitable *approaches to learning*, for example, by realizing that "the less can be ok and, indeed, enough," and *coping strategies for practicing* to gain as good as possible results in their studies. Reflective coping style is a way to find the student's *meaning of musicianship* for themselves, such as "what kind of music I would like to work with or what type of music is attracting me." Moreover, this kind of meaningful engagement in music can help students manage their workload in studying music (Jääskeläinen, 2022a). Reflective coping skills can also help music students to adjust themselves during their *experiences in the first year of study* to the independent studying required in the higher education level. With strategic planning, students get tools for *time management* which can reduce their stress. Indeed, more research is needed to understand the connection between students' daily coping, time management, and burnout during their university studies (Jacobs & Dodd, 2003). The music itself can decrease workload by offering a way for emotional support seeking in music lessons when students interact through music with the teacher. A student mentioned this kind of interaction "leading to your experience of succeeding" which results in a feeling of *flow*. According to the findings by Valenzuela et al. (2018), music students' perceived competence was the strongest predictor of flow variations. The researchers suggest teachers acknowledge this to motivate their students. In our study, *religion* also worked as an emotional support seeking coping style and helped some students cope with stress.

### *Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments*

When comparing genre groups, students in the music education study program group experience statistically significantly more study workload than students in the classical music study program group. Students in other genres group, which included all other study programs, experience statistically significantly more stress than students in the classical music study program group. When comparing study programs, students in church music experience statistically significantly more study workload than students in classical piano. Students in doctoral programs and composition experience statistically significantly more stress than students in classical piano. Particularly in music education and church music, students have multiple study- and instrument-specific demands—which may cause challenges to concentrate properly on learning—compared to classical music study programs. Also, Zetterberg et al. (1998) found in their research that students in church music experience more psychosocial demands and distress—also causing musculoskeletal problems—than students in other study programs. Reflective coping style is a way for a student to prepare for, handle, and learn from the *assessment* situation that is unique in music, particularly in performing, which includes pressured workload in a short moment. Also, previous research indicates that coping strategy to handle stress connected to performing is an inevitable skill for music students (Nogaj, 2017). Strategic planning can help students prevent overload and burnout, for example, by avoiding selecting too many courses from the *curriculum* when “pondering about my interests.” Music students use instrumental support seeking as a coping style when seeking a “technical basis from the teacher and very concrete support with some problematic situations and things” in *one-to-one tuition*. They would also like to get practical advantages in *group tuition* that they sometimes do not experience to benefit their learning. In emotional support seeking, music students get help in their *teaching and learning environments* by discussing their concerns with peer students and using study psychologist's services. Research conducted over 30 years ago by Dews and Williams (1989) indicated that friends were the most critical source of support for music students, and professional support was considered the last option. Participants

in our study pointed out that nowadays, almost every student needs and utilizes professional psychological help in some stage of their higher education studies. With *student feedback*, music students use avoidance coping when they do not give feedback when experiencing that there is no use for it at the end of courses or when fearing that giving feedback can be harmful to them and their future careers if they can be identified from the feedback.

### *Psychological and physiological issues in studying music*

In this study, female music students experience statistically significantly more stress than male music students. Such an alarming finding is in line with similar results found by Zetterberg et al. (1998). Using a proactive coping style can decrease stress; for instance, in our study, male students used a proactive coping style statistically significantly more than female students did. The differences between genders may be explained in line with research by Bull (2019), who found that the traditions in practices and aesthetics of classical music reproduce hierarchical gender roles in a way that there are different gendered pathways for men and women. The normative, unequal gender positions in music, which are built on “a raced, classed, and gendered hierarchy of value in which women and non-white others are associated with the bodily and white men with the cognitive, and the latter is valued over the former” (Bull, 2019, p. 23), may also connect with our result: nonbinary gender music students use emotional support seeking coping style statistically significantly less than female and male music students. Perhaps nonbinary gender music students cannot find suitable support for themselves in the current normative educational structures? Our results align with the growing need to conduct more research on students’ emotional well-being in higher music education (Araújo et al., 2017; Ginsborg et al., 2009), particularly attending to minority and marginal groups (Beban & Trueman, 2018). Usually, the end of the semester is a period that causes lots of *stress* for music students when the workload is heavy with many assignments and performance exams at the same time. If students have selected too overloaded study plans, it can even lead to *burnout*. Similarly, Bernhard (2007a, 2007b, 2010) highlights this in the burnout study among music students. In studying music, students use preventive coping in taking care of their *health*.

They use preventive coping also for avoiding physiological injuries in playing instruments and in singing and with psychological preparation, for example, with *performance anxiety* which students described as having “in the run up to it, rather than when I’m actually performing in itself.” Also, *physical exercise* helps students prevent and handle stress. Music students use instrumental support seeking coping style to find tools, such as techniques and methods in ergonomics, with *musculoskeletal problems*: “So I do Alexander technique, and we’re offered four free lessons a year at the university.”

### *Limitations*

We address certain limitations in our study. The first notion concerns the generalization of the results and findings. Because our empirical data were gathered in two countries, results and findings cannot be generalized outside those countries. The second limitation includes the use of a single-item measure of feeling stress. Although we carefully defined the stress in the questionnaire, multiple items may better measure particularly the experiences of stress in future research. The third limitation concerns the use of self-reported experiences by music students. This limitation could be overcome when combining self-reported and biophysical data, following the example with stress levels in the interventional and longitudinal research design by Asikainen and Katajavuori (2021). The fourth limitation is the small sample size: extending the statistical representativeness of sample sizes would increase the results’ generalizability. On the contrary, results by Fosnacht et al. (2017) challenge the assumption that low response rates among higher education students lead to biased results. Indeed, they encourage researchers to “spend less time worrying about achieving a high response rate and more time evaluating and using the data they collect” (p. 262).

### *Implications*

Our study has several developmental implications. The emphasis on music students’ experiences offers a way to strengthen students’ voices to be integrated into developmental work in teaching and higher education administration. The

research-based knowledge of music students' workload and stress provides significant aspects, such as differences between genders and study programs. These differences should be discussed in connection with the curriculum and higher music education systems to investigate more thoroughly why these unequal differences exist (Jääskeläinen, 2021) and how these issues can be overcome so that all study programs have the appropriate workload for students. Our study's main implication is to present how music students use proactive coping styles: proactive coping, reflective coping, strategic planning, preventive coping, instrumental support seeking, emotional support seeking, and avoidance coping (Greenglass, 2002). Indeed, studying music has its unique characteristics compared to other fields in higher education, and showing professional music students' particular ways to cope with their studies may serve as valuable models for students in higher music education. This is even more crucial when sudden, unexpected changes in learning circumstances such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic also affect music students' well-being (Rosset et al., 2021). More research is needed, mainly longitudinal study design, to examine how different proactive coping styles affect music students' learning and well-being, for example, in different learning cultures (Casas-Mas et al., 2015).

## **Conclusion**

This study provides both quantitative and qualitative research-based evidence on professional students' experiences of workload, stress, and proactive coping in higher music education in Finland and the United Kingdom. The results indicate that there are statistically significant differences among music students in genre groups and study programs in relation to experienced study workload, and also in genders, genre groups, and study programs in relation to experienced stress. In addition, there are statistically significant differences in genders in relation to use of coping styles. Music students' study workload is a significant predictor of stress. However, proactive coping and strategic planning can be used to reduce stress because they predict stress negatively. The professional music students have their issues and ways to cope with workload and stress concerning, for example, working alongside studying, competing with peer students, handling information on social media, and finding support

for music-specific physical and psychological problems. Integration of results and findings shows the areas where it is important to continue research on workload, stress, and coping to better support music students to have successful, healthy, and enjoyable study experiences in higher education which prepare them for their professional careers.

### **Acknowledgements**

We wish to thank all the university music students who participated in this study by generously sharing their experiences and time. We like to thank Michelle Phillips for her contribution to ethical approval and data collection procedures in the United Kingdom, and Matti Vuorre for his feedback on statistical methods. We would also like to thank Heidi Westerlund for her additional expertise as the first author's co-supervisor.

### **Declaration of conflicting interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was undertaken at the Center for Educational Research and Academic Development in the Arts (CERADA), University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland, and funded by the Sibelius Academy Music Education Doctoral Programme and ArtsEqual Research Initiative, supported by the Academy of Finland's Strategic Research Council under Grant 314223/2017. The data collection in the United Kingdom was funded by the Sibelius Academy Foundation travel grant.

### **Ethical statement**

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the University of the Arts Helsinki Research Ethics Committee in Finland and



Conservatoires United Kingdom Research Ethics Committee. All participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

### **Availability of data and material**

The anonymized datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

### **Supplemental material**

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

### **Notes**

1. In this article, *professional students* (hereafter *students*) are studying at higher education institutions. A *professional student in higher music education* (hereafter a *music student*) is defined as a student registered on an academic degree program in a university music department or at a conservatoire, with the aspiration of becoming a professional musician or working in a music-related profession (e.g., orchestral, chamber, or church musician; solo singer or performer; conductor; composer; music teacher; festival manager).
2. Flow is defined as an intrinsically rewarding mental state where the individual's thoughts, feelings, and intentions are completely and intensively focused on the present activity and a subjective experience of time may be altered (e.g., Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).
3. The second context of interaction with teachers is reported in Jääskeläinen and López-Íñiguez (2022), and the third context of aspects in teaching and learning environments is reported in Jääskeläinen et al. (2020).
4. Differences in workload and in stress between countries are reported in Jääskeläinen et al. (2020). It is not our aim to establish comparisons across countries in this study; we specify the countries involved for the sole reason of indicating the international research context where the study took place.
5. In this study, the term “genre” does not refer to purely musical genres. Instead, we use it to refer to the main focus of the program of study. Possible options in the current study included classical music, music education, and all other study programs combined into one group. With these genre groups, we wanted to explore the possible differences between singular instrumental focus in the classical music study programs and versatility and multiple musical and instrument-specific demands in the music education study program.

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Supplemental material for article “Experienced workload, stress and coping among professional students in higher music education: An explanatory mixed methods study in Finland and the United Kingdom” (Jääskeläinen, T., López-Íñiguez, G., & Lehtikoinen, K.)

Appendix 1 is available in this dissertation as “Appendix 7: Questionnaire”

Appendix 2

Excerpts from participants reflecting the determinants of experienced workload and experienced stress for the professional students in higher music education arranged by themes (in bold) and thematic groups (in italics)

Determinants of experienced workload and experienced stress

Experienced workload:

**Structure of student workload:** “They [university administration] make sure that everybody gets a certain amount of workload, so I think the problem isn’t in workload itself. I think it’s more in the way that the students get to deal with stress. So I think if students could find ways of de-stressing, then, I think, that would be probably the most beneficial thing.”

-> *Structure of workload in studying music*

**Enjoyment:** “I wish I could feel that kind of enjoying all the time in my doing. The workload increases from all those many things which are going on at the same time. It leads to just completing the tasks. Then I feel like I forget the purpose why I am doing this [studying music].”

-> *A music student’s workload*

**Work:** “And if it’s a two-year full-time master’s, that’s just not realistic [to complete]. And even a lot of my peers and I have struggled this year in terms of finding that kind of balance between working and studying. So yeah. It’s been quite pressurised, actually.”

-> *Structure of workload in studying music*

Experienced stress:

**Stress:** “The typical periods for stress are at the beginning of December and at the end of April. When you must get those certain things ready before a holiday or start doing other things. Indeed, I have felt every year that, yeah, next year I will take fewer tasks because I cannot manage this load ever again. However, then you just say to yourself that, okay, I have pretty much to do, and then you just start to paddle through that swamp. And then, at the point when I have managed to complete everything, I just conclude, that phew, again, I somehow managed to finish everything.”

-> *Psychological and physiological issues in studying music*

**Burnout:** “The first autumn term in the master’s studies was that kind of period when I chose lots of courses because I got excited and thought that now I could start this, this, and even this course. Yeah, I chose such many courses, and I even managed to get accepted to almost each of the enrolled courses. So, then suddenly I noticed that I couldn’t cope anymore. Then I started to reduce the number of the courses and then, after all, I needed a total break without any course.”

-> *Psychological and physiological issues in studying music*

**Funding:** “I think money is one of the biggest issues. If there were more funding for students at these sorts of institutions, there wouldn’t be that financial gap between those who have and can put all that time into performance and practice and those who have not. Who has to try to squeeze it in around everything else.”

-> *Structure of workload in studying music*

Excerpts from participants reflecting the determinants of proactive coping styles for the professional students in higher music education arranged by themes (in bold) and thematic groups (in italics)

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Determinants of proactive coping styles

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Proactive coping:

**Coping:** “Yeah, in a way, I have had to learn this kind of sentence which I love: ‘It goes as well as it can go in that moment.’ It is a very relaxing sentence and very realistic too. I mean, if you know what you have learnt when you go to the situations knowing that you could have been preparing better. And compared to those situations when you have been preparing as well as you can. So, there is a big difference in the stress levels when you know that you have done everything compared to knowing that you haven’t.”

-> *A music student’s workload*

**Approaches to learning:** “The most challenging thing [in maintaining the routines while studying] has been to internalise the fact that if you are not studying the planned one hour, for example, when you are a little bit late, and you have only 45 minutes left, it is as good. I mean, you don’t need to give up all your plans for studying if you cannot accomplish 100% of what you want. The less can be ok and, indeed, enough.”

-> *A music student’s workload*

**Practising:** “Maybe during my first study years, I was waiting for, or I was thinking, that practising must be somehow highly inspiring. And then I was waiting, and I was not practising if I wasn’t in that mood. But things started to accumulate when I chose to wait. Now I have learnt to take my distance from that kind of thinking. It does not always need to come from my heart, I mean the inspiration or the artistic feeling, to be able to start practising. However, you will always get that feeling in the moments during the concert when you have practised well and long enough, it comes there. So, I have that kind of weekly schedule for practising. I decide the number of hours and the content of practising and how I divide them between days. And I check in advance when I have lots of other duties, then I plan a shorter day for practising. Then I don’t have a bad conscience.”

-> *A music student’s workload*

Reflective coping:

**Meaning of musicianship:** “Yeah, it [reasonable workload] is connected to what I am doing when I practise alone, and it is not all the time defined by deadlines. Instead, it is more connected to my own wishes at the moment, for example, what kind of music I would like to work with or what type of music is attracting me. Indeed, it is maybe the core or the meaning why I, in general, want to work with music. Then you may be very easily drifted apart from that when you have many repertoires or when the repertoires have been chiefly, in practice, selected by someone else. It’s important to me that I can work with the pieces that, for some reason, affect me. Or, then I can decide to work with no piece at all and have a break from music if I wish so.”

-> *A music student’s workload*

**Assessment:** “And upon reflection, I have an idea of why and I think, a lot of it was to do with just not grounding myself, before not getting comfortable. I remember my family, and everyone was just kind of like, you know, you’re not, that one grade doesn’t define you, it just so happens that you’re having an off day. I think that perhaps there is, I don’t know, I feel like, it is a bit unfair that we are marked in that way, based on literally just one performance, and it just depends on how well you feel in that hour, in those 30 minutes or whatever. But I don’t know how they could change that.”

-> *Music students’ workload relating to teaching and learning environments*

**Experiences in the first year of study:** “In some extent, it was hard because you go from secondary education to college, at a younger age. There, everything is very much dictated, and you are told exactly what you have to do, when you have to do it by, and you’re given a timeframe to do it in. Whereas, when you go to university, it’s very much, this is what you will have to do, and when you do it is up to you and how you do it is up to you. So I think the adjustment of independence within work, I think that was the biggest struggle.”

-> *A music student’s workload*

(continues)

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Determinants of proactive coping styles

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Strategic planning:

**Curriculum:** “Maybe the solution could be to increase the elective courses earlier, or some pondering about my interests. Yeah, and even in the other way too. Because also the compulsory courses are so lovely and exciting, you want to take them all. And then, especially during the Bachelor studies, many of my friends do so that when something is interesting, they add that too. That causes the workload. When you have those nice compulsory courses, and then you want to do your own things too. That is maybe the typical recipe that causes overload, and you don’t know what to do and so on.”

-> *Music students’ workload relating to teaching and learning environments*

**Time management:** “It is essential to manage to make task lists and divide big entities into single tasks. Every week I prepare an A4 size list in which I categorise things connected to my different roles. I write under these titles everything I have in my mind concerning forthcoming tasks. I may weekly prepare even a few lists if many things are going on. Then if there is something left in the list, I remove it to a new list. Some tasks I delete if they are not any more meaningful to me or if I have passed them. I almost had burnout again last autumn when I felt that a million things were rolling in my mind. I was terrified that I could not complete them in time. But when you visualise things in that way and make the realistic amount of work concrete for yourself, you can overcome that depressing stress and feeling of failure.”

-> *A music student’s workload*

**Competition:** “So, no one wants to perform worse than what their skills are. There is also group pressure because nobody wants to show that kind of failure or the unfinished stage of training. It feels much better to show after I have practised something very well. And on the other hand, very few people see the phase when I practise, repeatedly, hours after hours, to perform it well. I just spoke about this with my peer students. When you start in a new place, everybody has enormous pressure to show right away that, by the way, I am very good. Mainly because it is a very different thing in music. Because it is very personal and if you are failing in it or something like that. Like playing badly or singing incorrect notes or forgetting words or breaking your voice. The voice is like yourself and your personality as an instrument. In a way, music is, I don’t want to say it is dangerous, but studying in the field of music includes much more workload because it is connected to your personal life and personality too.”

-> *Structure of workload in studying music*

Preventive coping:

**Health:** “I would say most of it tends to be in your head. A lot of it can be, you need to get out of your head, calm down, then focus on the task in hand. It’s very rare that I have a physical effect from the amount of practice and things that I do. Very occasionally, if I play my second instrument which is heavier, I can get this arm strain injury, but usually if I stop for a bit and then carry on, everything is fine. So, it’s very rare that the physical aspects of playing and practising affect the actual act in itself. It tends to be more that I can’t do this. I can’t do this, in my head and, just need to stop, break it apart, break it down, slow it down. And just put the building blocks back together. You realise you can do it. It just takes time.”

-> *Psychological and physiological issues in studying music*

**Performance anxiety:** Yeah, I’ve not met one musician that doesn’t get performance anxiety in some shape or form. I tend to have that in the run up to it, rather than when I’m actually performing in itself. I usually find that once I’ve picked my instrument and start playing, it just dissipates, and I just, I don’t know, I go somewhere else in my head. Although if you look at me, my hands are shaking from the adrenaline and things like that but, yeah, it’s always running up to but never, really, in the actual performance unless I haven’t practised enough. But yeah, it doesn’t really affect me, if I know I’m ready, then.”

-> *Psychological and physiological issues in studying music*

**Physical exercise:** “Absolutely, exercising sport is one of the things that help reduce stress. And at the same time, it gives you something else to do, which takes your thoughts away from those things which are causing stress. If you don’t do anything, your thoughts start easily rolling around the practising, endlessly. Sports help me extremely much.”

-> *Psychological and physiological issues in studying music*

(continues)

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Determinants of proactive coping styles

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Instrumental support seeking:

**One-to-one tuition:** “It [interaction with one-to-one teacher] is very, very nice. We, I and the teacher, have that kind of a system where we first play, and then I express verbally how successful it was, in my opinion. Then we raise some points there. And then the teacher can have something to add. Somehow both the teacher and I have very similar ways to understand music and express it. Also, I get an excellent technical basis from the teacher and very concrete support with some problematic situations and things. And advises for practising and tips and that kind of thing. So I would say that the interaction with the teacher is absolutely the best thing [laughing].”

-> *Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments*

**Group tuition:** “When thinking about my studies, the amount of sitting [causes the workload]. Sitting in those mandatory [group] courses which are not so important to me. That is something which I experienced to cause workload because at the same time I would have much more important, so to say, things, for example going to work. Or practise for the exam concerts. Put effort into those things which I have prioritised to be important for me. Instead of sitting three hours in the afternoon in a classroom. Listening to those kinds of lecture series which are not meaningful to me. I am sure it is a financial issue why those kinds of massive sitting classes are arranged. However, if they were organised in smaller groups and in general as more efficient learning modules, they would work much better.”

-> *Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments*

**Musculoskeletal problems:** “I’ve had quite tense wrists quite a few times. That's a common problem that I have, but nothing serious. So I do Alexander technique, and we’re offered four free lessons a year at the university, and I did it in high school as well. I mean, I kind of notice that it's more really to do with how I’m looking after my body than the way that I’m playing that affects it, so if I haven't done any exercise in a while, I’m more likely to get a tense wrist.”

-> *Psychological and physiological issues in studying music*

Emotional support seeking:

**Teaching and learning environments:** “I have got peer support from the other students. When you have heard that very many of your peer students have also had enormous stress. It has been very encouraging to notice that people also talk openly to each other about these issues. And also, for example, recommend to each other that there is this kind of study counsellor where you can go. In a way, still nowadays, going to psychotherapy is taboo, and you are not eager to admit, for some reason, when somebody asks where I am going when I say that I must go. However, it has been highly valuable when I have been brave enough to say it or somebody else has told me about going to therapy. I have noticed that, actually, very many of my friends are in therapy. And when you say it loudly, it becomes somehow more acceptable and cool. Although, indeed, going to therapy should not feel like I am worse than others. But anyway, it happens very easily.”

-> *Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments*

**Flow:** “I haven’t pondered this very much, but maybe one thing which reduces workload in classes is experiencing that kind of succeeding. For example, when you have practised the same thing and suddenly you manage to play it, and then you analyse it [with the teacher] and so on. And then that kind of pure feeling of joy in making music in classes. For example, when you play a piece together with your teacher, it goes well, leading to your experience of succeeding. So that also reduces [workload]. And, on the other hand, it rewards you from all the previous workload concerning practising.”

-> *A music student's workload*

**Religion:** “I don't care about minor mistakes when I am performing. I care about knowing exactly what I want to say with music to the audience. I mean enjoying that moment when the music affects everyone. My religion, I am a Christian, so my faith also helps me. For example, I don't care when I make a little mistake, for example, one note with my playing. But when I express with music, when God speaks through music. Then I feel succeeding, which helps me reduce stress quickly if the level of stress is rising.”

-> *A music student's workload*

(continues)

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Determinants of proactive coping styles

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Avoidance coping:

**Student feedback:** “I like to give feedback in those kinds of situations where I can give direct feedback because then it probably can help something. It is challenging for me to try to figure out some feedback afterward. You should remember the situation, how it went, and what things were connected to it. I can understand if somebody does not want to give direct feedback when there is a possibility of being hurt. I have heard these kinds of wild stories that when you give feedback to certain people, it may affect your career.”

-> *Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments*

**Social media:** “But I would say that the only times that I’ve really had any kind of mental stresses, have actually come from social media. Because, of course most of my friends on Facebook are musicians or they’re in the creative arts. And if you see them on your timeline or in Instagram and they’re posting all these pictures. Let’s say it’s another musician and they’re posting all these pictures of them doing these amazing gigs and amazing concerts they’re recording. And you’re just sitting there like, shit, why am I not doing this, you know? Am I a shit musician? So in order to safeguard myself, I ended up unfollowing literally all these. I’m still ‘friends’ with them on Facebook so I don’t wanna cause arguments, but I’ve unfollowed almost everyone on my Facebook news feed, so the only people I see now are like really close friends, family, and then like cat videos.”

-> *Structure of workload in studying music*

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**Musician career:** “Bit scared because it’s the real world, and I think it’s not the best environment for freelancing in the arts at the minute, especially with everything that’s going on in Europe. That’s a big stress. I’m worried about freedom of movement and being able to go and work in other places. It’s scary time, I think, for an art student.”

-> *Structure of workload in studying music*











### Appendix 3: Article III

Jääskeläinen, T., López-Íñiguez, G., & Phillips, M. (2020). Music students' experienced workload, livelihoods and stress in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom. *Music Education Research*, 22(5), 505–526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2020.1841134>



# **MUSIC STUDENTS' EXPERIENCED WORKLOAD, LIVELIHOODS AND STRESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN FINLAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM**

## **Abstract**

Neoliberal education policies—viewing students' life as human capital, economic investment for the labour market and consumer power—may increase students' workload in higher education. In this mixed methods study, we examined music students' experiences of workload in Finland and the United Kingdom in connection with stress and livelihoods. We used Bayesian mixed effects ordinal probit regression modelling to estimate effects of countries and livelihoods as predictors for music students' experienced workload in relation to their main subject of study (or principal study) and stress. We analysed music students' lived experiences of workload to find further predictors for the developmental work in universities and educational policies. Results indicate that where neoliberal university culture impacts on music students' livelihoods alongside their studies, this is likely to increase stress but not necessarily impact on the workload associated with their main subject of study. However, stress has a notable effect on students' experiences of workload. We suggest paying attention to certain aspects in universities in relation to workload, such as the gap between well-off students compared to low-income students who need to work, and stress, particularly with female and non-binary gender students. Furthermore, we propose alternative ways to navigate neoliberal university culture.

## **Keywords**

higher education, livelihoods, music student, stress, student experience, student workload

## **Introduction**

The Finnish Student Health Survey of students in higher education, between 2000 and 2012 (i.e. Oksanen et al. 2017), indicates an alarming 12-year trend of

increasing stress levels and symptoms. The results of the survey suggest that the main reason for this increase relates to ‘growing multi- faceted environmental demands’ (113), such as ‘rapid social and socioeconomic changes with effects on lifestyle, working life, employment and education’ (118). According to Leahy et al. (2010), similar trends have been reported in many other countries which may indicate that existing mental health treatment options may be inadequate or traditional support systems in student services not appropriate for students. In the field of music, the way that students experience their own workload in particular can have an impact on stress and how students cope with their studies (Jääskeläinen, López-Íñiguez, and Phillips 2020). Instead of measured objective load, workload in this context is understood as music students’ subjective experiences during their university studies. In addition, for music students, specific aspects of their workload based on their intense engagement with their musicianship arise, such as a holistic and life-long relationship with music (Jääskeläinen 2020b). Research by Jääskeläinen, López-Íñiguez, and Lehtikainen (2020) indicates that in higher education, music students, especially women, often feel distressed. Remarkably, male students in particular use proactive coping styles which seem to help reduce stress. However, music students’ experienced study workload and determination in their pursuit of a career in music is only one of the factors that may contribute to the stress that they experience.

Music students in higher education particularly enjoy studying their main subject, such as playing one or more instruments or singing, and many of them report having inspirational relationships with their teachers in their one-to-one tuition. This relationship with their performance or composition teacher remains very strong despite students being exposed to rather different teaching styles amongst tutors, and sometimes conflicting personalities and methods (Jääskeläinen and López-Íñiguez 2020). If workload in music studies and relationships with music teachers with diverse teaching styles is not causing music students a considerable overload, then it is important to explore which additional environmental and intra-individual factors may be connected to music students’ experienced workload in higher education. Exploring music students’ responses to multiple aspects of the workload involved in studying

their main subject, livelihoods and stress in two different countries—Finland and the United Kingdom<sup>1</sup>—offers an opportunity to learn more about this. Such an investigation may shed light more directly on whether differences in experienced workload are predominantly driven by environmental (e.g. the university system impacting on students’ livelihoods whilst studying) versus individual (e.g. gender) factors. This kind of approach may help educational institutions to improve the support systems for students and advance educational policies in Western countries.

According to Gyamera and Burke (2018), neoliberal agendas are guiding many governments and higher education policies—thus impacting also the curriculum—by advocating for the benefits of maximising market forces in human actions and in public life. In this kind of university culture of academic capitalism (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004; Slote 2012), students’ relationships to educational ideas, choices in studying, graduate attributes, work and lifelong learning are viewed as human capital, economic investment for the labour market and consumer power (Johnston 2011). It is notable that the neoliberal agendas in academia have faced increasing criticism in recent years (see e.g. Fanghanel 2012; Fitzpatrick 2019; Lewis 2005; Thornton 2012).

For instance, Lund (2020) argues that neoliberal university reform in Finland (see e.g. Pekkola 2009) has led to the reproduction of gendered and class-based social inequalities and also to an ever-widening gap between the people who succeed and those who fail to perform in line with the new quality standards. In the United Kingdom, the neoliberalisation policy agenda has reconfigured the public university by laying foundations for a fully marketised provision, for instance with variable tuition fees in higher education (Maisuria 2014). In contrast to the United Kingdom, higher education institutions in Finland have low tuition fees but selective entrance examinations which have an impact on the educational equality, equity and justice when linked to the cumulative advantage or disadvantage of the student’s family, school, and community circumstances (Jääskeläinen 2020a).

The neoliberal university culture can be a challenging learning environment for students—especially for women and minority group students with heavy workloads—when they try to find optimal balance between study



and their livelihoods (Beban and Trueman 2018). The neoliberal university agenda has led to the situation where part-time work is becoming essential for students in order for them to manage their finances (Mitchell 2020) and to prepare for their future careers whilst studying (López-Íñiguez and Bennett 2020). However, some students are struggling to balance paid work and other issues in life, which can impact on retention, quality of academic learning, burnout and achievement—especially with students who have less academic or less well-resourced family backgrounds (Yahanpath and Burns 2011).

Karlsen (2019) suggests that imagining and taking the world beyond neoliberalism in music education practice and academia can happen through activism and by embracing musicians' own vulnerability. In this study, our main aim is to listen to music students' vulnerabilities with regards to the predictors and determinants involved in students' lived experiences of workload. We approached this in relation to livelihoods and stress in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom. The following research questions were developed:

1. Are there any relationships between music students' experienced main subject (or principal study) workload and livelihoods (including socio-demographic characteristics, working whilst studying, funding and loans) and experienced stress in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom?
2. What environmental factors determine music student's experienced workload in higher education in these two countries?
3. How could the predictors and determinants of environmental factors affecting music students' workload inform the development of university cultures and educational policies?

### *Environmental factors affecting music students' experienced workload in higher education*

A systematic review conducted by the authors of the current study (Jääskeläinen, López-Íñiguez, and Phillips 2020) indicates that, in addition to developing (1) interventions to support music students' ability to cope with their workload and (2) tools for teachers to support music students' workload in the

best possible ways, it is important to (3) understand the environmental factors that relate to students' positive and negative experiences of workload in higher education. The results indicate that to support students, institutions should develop student feedback systems, discuss students' workload problems in the university, and recognise demands and challenges for students in combining studying and working life. In fact, Kember (2004) argues that it is possible to increase students' motivation and time devoted to learning if workload is appropriate.

Previous research shows that taking several steps in the teaching and learning environments can help music students in particular to cope with their workload in higher education. Research by Bernhard (2007a, 2007b, 2010) shows that it is crucial to examine and revise the music curriculum to develop ways in which required workload and musical expectations might be best optimised for helping music students to reduce burnout and to be able to manage their academic and personal lives. According to Hamann and Daugherty (1985), music student burnout can be reduced with guidance in relation to: (1) a student's individual goals in studying and (2) their professional development. This guidance should be accompanied with appropriate financial support and assistance, as well as a clear and transparent curriculum.

Other studies highlight that students and teachers in music settings should actively participate in producing and utilising research-based knowledge in the development of learning and teaching (Jääskeläinen 2016). Moreover, the institutional environment should promote student collaborations and initiate learning activities which allow students to flourish and realise their potential (Papageorgi et al. 2010a, 2010b; Reid 2001). It is important that universities provide teachers and students with research evidence and recent findings about musicians' and music students' health and well-being (Williamon and Thompson 2006; Zetterberg et al. 1998).

## **Method**

### *Hypotheses*

In this study, we hypothesise that students' experienced stress may be strongly

connected to their experiences of workload in the study of their main subject, and that there are differences between countries depending on the university culture. It is not our aim to compare the results from both contexts studied here, but to highlight context-based differences as environmental factors that should be addressed by the educational agents in charge of curriculum and policy development.

Thornton (2016) argues that consideration of the neoliberalisation of higher education as one of the main causes of stress has not been given the attention that it is due in the literature. This argument emphasises the fact that the neoliberal agenda impacts directly on the high level of tuition fees, larger-than-average group sizes of students in classes and is linked to an employment industry, which is ever more competitive. We might expect students who are more affected by the negative consequences of the neoliberalisation policy agenda in their countries, such as high tuition fees affecting their livelihoods, to experience more stress in higher education. This can also impact on their experiences of workload and the degree to which they cope with their workload in their studies. Thus, we consider livelihoods to be an essential environmental factor in this study and we might expect that students who are working as well as studying should report higher levels of experienced overload in their studies. Yet, as it seems that more and more music students are working alongside their studies, it remains unclear how the content and amount of paid work impact on students' study load.

In addition to working alongside studying, students' situations regarding funding and loans are crucial parts of their livelihoods which we expect to impact on their experienced workload. A person's livelihood is usually considered too narrowly when understood in the everyday meaning as working and earning resources for living (Weston in press). When thinking about music students, the concept needs to be defined more widely, as a university level course of study plays a crucial role in providing students with transferable skills and competences for their music careers (Bartleet et al. 2019). Still, neoliberalisation leads to a disregard for levels of stress, and instead these are left to the individual to deal with, or to the market to resolve (Thornton 2016). Thus, in this study, we expect that music students' experienced workload is



connected with their experienced stress and influenced by their livelihoods, such as working, funding and loans, including specific socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, educational level and music genre studied.

### *Research design*

Within this study, we used a sequential explanatory research design consisting of a quantitative stage followed by a qualitative stage (Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick 2006) to answer the first and second research questions respectively. We first analysed the data separately and subsequently grouped and analysed data together in order to address the third mixed methods research question. It should be borne in mind that the concept of music students' workload is a complex phenomenon and our systematic review mentioned above indicates that it has not yet been thoroughly explored. In light of this, our main motivation for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data in this study was to arrive at a richer and more thorough understanding of music students' experiences of workload than could be accomplished through either of these methods exclusively (e.g. Hesse-Biber 2015).

### *Participants*

*Sample.* We randomly selected seven university-level music institutions in Finland and the United Kingdom and the invitation to participate in this research was sent via student email lists. The invitation email included a brief description of the study and the questionnaire. Also, an information sheet which outlined the nature and purpose of the study was provided. Participation was voluntary and confidentiality of information was assured. Reminder invitations were sent via email to encourage students to participate. A total of 155 music students in five different institutions completed the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, students could express their willingness to be contacted for further research and 29 students volunteered to participate in the interviews. Socio-demographic characteristics of all participants are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics of all participants in the sample ( $N = 155$ )

Background	%	Main subject studies	%	Livelihoods	%
<i>Country</i>		<i>Genre</i>		<i>Work alongside studying</i>	
Finland	69.7	Classical music (UG or PG)	43.2	Not working	31.6
United Kingdom	30.3	Music education (UG or PG)	24.5	Working *	68.4
<i>Gender</i>		Other genres	32.3	Work related to music **	58.7
Female	68.0	<i>Study programme</i>		Work not related to music ***	21.9
Male	30.1	Classical string	13.5	<i>Funding</i> (scholarship/family/other source)	
Non-binary gender	2.0	Classical wind	9.7	No funding	43.5
<i>University level</i>		Classical piano	6.5	Partial funding	29.9
Undergraduate (UG)	52.9	Classical early music	3.2	Full funding	26.5
Postgraduate (PG)	42.6	Classical other instruments	3.2	<i>Loan</i> (to cover study and/or living costs)	
Other (junior or doctoral)	4.5	Classical voice and opera	7.1	No loan	56.5
		Music education	24.5	Loan	43.5
<i>Interview participants</i> ( $n = 29$ )	18.7	Composition	7.7		
Finland ( $n = 20$ )		Church music	12.3	<i>Weekly working hours</i>	
United Kingdom ( $n = 9$ )		Folk and global music	4.5	* $M = 12.56$ , $SD = 10.03$	
Female ( $n = 21$ )		Other programmes	3.9	** $M = 9.31$ , $SD = 8.38$	
Male ( $n = 8$ )		Doctoral programmes	3.9	*** $M = 14.4$ , $SD = 9.40$	

*Ethical statement.* Uniarts Research Ethics Committee in Finland and Conservatoires UK Research Ethics Committee in the United Kingdom granted approval for the current study after their review of the method, research tools, and participant informed consent and information sheet (the latter also had an invitation to take part in the study and made clear that participation was voluntary). Research permissions were obtained from participating institutions in Finland and in the United Kingdom. Study participants were informed that they provided their consent by submitting the questionnaire. Interview participants provided written consent. The participants were not compensated for their time.

*Quantitative phase*

*Data collection.* We created an assessment instrument entitled the Workload, Stress and Coping (WSC) questionnaire. In the quantitative phase of this study we utilised data collected with the Workload and Stress section which included

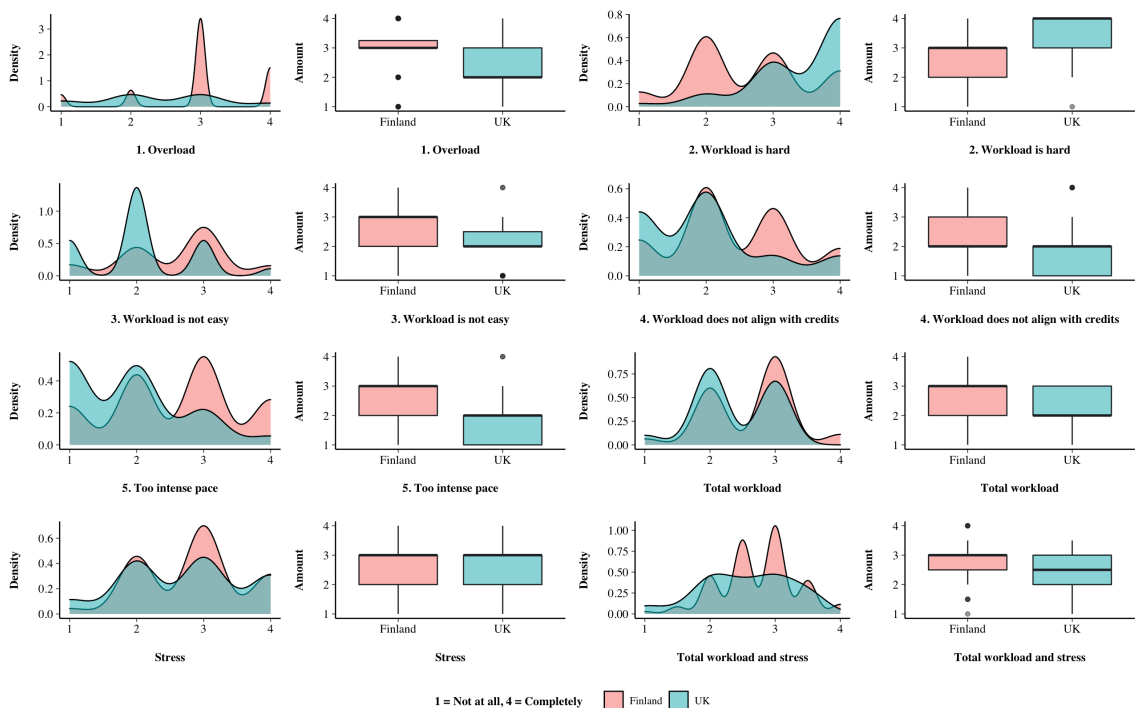
the standardised study workload and stress section of the Learn questionnaire used in the Finnish higher education context (see Parpala and Lindblom-Ylänne 2012). We gathered data online through SurveyPal-questionnaire (see Appendix for data collection instrument).

*Data analysis.* We utilised the Bayesian approach for conducting the statistical analysis by using RStudio (RStudio Team 2016) with the R language and environment (R Core Team 2017). According to Guckian et al. (2020, 13), ‘the Bayesian framework incorporates existing information about the subject matter (priors) with the observed data (likelihood) to generate estimates of interest (posterior)’. A compact introductory-level overview of the Bayesian approach to statistical inference with RStudio can be found in Heino, Vuorre, and Hankonen (2018).

The quantitative data sample in our study consisted of junior,<sup>2</sup> undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students from five university-level music institutions in Finland (108 students) and the United Kingdom (47 students). The response rates (9% in Finland and 1% in the United Kingdom) were relatively low which is quite common when conducting research in institutions where university students receive regular requests to volunteer to take part in survey research and when the prevalence of online surveys has increased survey fatigue (Porter, Whitcomb, and Weitzer 2004). However, even low response counts, such as 50 respondents, can provide reliable estimates and a response rate of 5% can be considered reliable when at least 1,000 students have been contacted to ask them to participate (Fosnacht et al. 2017). According to Low-Choy, Riley, and Alston- Knox (2017), when dealing with small samples and missing values as gaps in the data, Bayesian statistical modelling can provide valid results. Moreover, ‘a vaguely informative prior’ can help overcome issues with small data sets (320). For example, when we chose predictors for the modelling, our a priori knowledge was derived from our previous phases of research with a systematic review and theoretical and empirical studies and with our experiences of working with music students.

A single item assessed students’ current feelings of stress. Although single item measures for psychological phenomena have been argued to raise

issues in terms of reliability and validity, in their study of undergraduate students' perceptions Bergkvist and Rossiter (2007) found no difference in predictive capability between multiple item measures and single item measures. Freed (2013) argues that a single item measure can be sufficient in a case when the measured construct is narrow. Thus, we considered a single item to be sufficient with the concept of feeling stress, especially because it was clearly explained in the questionnaire as being connected with the situations in which students feel anxious, restless, nervous, or distressed or when students have difficulties sleeping because their problems are continuously playing on their mind. Item responses ranged from 1 = *Not at all* through 4 = *All the time*. The study workload scale included two positively and three negatively worded items assessing students' experiences of workload when considering their studies of their main subject as a whole (an example of a negatively worded item was 'I must work very hard with my main subject studies'). For the analysis, positively worded items were re-coded and re-worded so that higher scores indicated greater experienced workload. Correlations between stress and workload items ranged from weak negative (workload items 2 and 4: Kendall's tau  $b = -.001$ ,  $z = -1.87$ ,  $p = .85$ ) to strong positive (workload items 1 and 5: Kendall's tau  $b = .458$ ,  $z = 6.54$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Figure 1 indicates the response patterns by countries to five workload items, total workload, stress, and total workload and stress combined.



**Figure 1.** Music students' responses to experienced main subject workload and stress items by countries

In order to build models to predict music students' responses to experienced main subject workload and stress, we included multiple covariates for evaluating their potential effect on these experiences. In addition to a participant's country, we included gender, university level, and music genre. In this study, the term 'music genre' is used to refer to the main focus on the programme of study. Possible options in the current study included classical music, music education and all other study programmes combined to a one group (for detailed analysis with study programmes, see Jääskeläinen, López-Íñiguez, and Lehtikainen 2020). To analyse music students' livelihoods as predictors in the model, we added their responses to working whilst studying, funding and loans. We performed Bayesian mixed effects ordinal probit regressions for the model evaluations to identify variation across each workload item and the stress item and across individual responses (see a compact tutorial for ordinal regression models with RStudio in Bürkner and Vuorre 2019). In the final analysis process and in reporting results with measures and visualisation, we followed an open access data analysis procedure by Guckian et al. (2020)

consisting of a profound description of Bayesian approach and a detailed coding script for Bayesian modelling with RStudio.

### *Qualitative phase*

*Data collection.* The qualitative data consisted of 155 participants' (108 in Finland and 47 in the United Kingdom) answers to open-ended questions in the WSC questionnaire and interviews with 29 participants (20 in Finland and nine in the United Kingdom). The semi-structured interviews were conducted one-to-one by the first author either during in-person meetings or remotely in audio-meetings via Skype or WhatsApp, each lasting between 30 and 90 min. The topics consisted of questions which encouraged students to reflect on their experiences of workload, stress and how they coped as music students in higher education. The procedure involved in the interviews is discussed in more detail in Jääskeläinen, López-Íñiguez, and Lehtikainen (2020).

*Data analysis.* We used the Atlas.ti software to code and analyse the qualitative data. The analysis was performed by the first author in collaboration with the second author, who ensured the validity and reliability of the process by coding 5% of the data. The inter-rater agreement of the coding was calculated using Holsti and Krippendorff's Alpha, and were favourably calculated as .924 and .918 respectively, both considered as very highly satisfying levels of reliability. We built a thematic coding framework based on 13 themes, four thematic groups, and three synthesised categories derived from our systematic review mentioned above (deductive analysis). Following the analytical process of transcendental phenomenology (see full procedure presented in Jääskeläinen 2020b), we added further depth to the framework by adding the 14 themes extracted from data based on the interviews (inductive analysis), in order to clarify and incorporate music students' lived experiences in relation to workload while studying in higher education. The analysis continued through the process of horizontalisation (see Moustakas 1994) in which we listed, grouped, and coded all relevant expressions in relation to workload for each interview and questionnaire participant's data. For the purpose of this study, we continued the analysis with the extracts linked to the category of environmental factors.

The Finnish participants' quotes were translated from Finnish into English by the first author, who speaks both languages, and corrected by the third author, who is a native English speaker.

### *Mixed methods*

The final step in the data analysis procedure involved integrating quantitative and qualitative findings. We utilised the experiences relayed by the student interviewees and answers to open-ended questions to gain a deeper understanding of the topic—or the phenomenon when investigating human experiences—to create visions and suggestions which may be used in future plans for adding in or omitting predictors of the Bayesian models. When considering such a mixed methods approach, one advantage of Bayesian statistical modelling is that it can build links between quantitative and qualitative data and connect quantitative and qualitative phases (Low-Choy, Riley, and Alston-Knox 2017). Thus, the mixed methods approach utilised in this study may offer valuable research-based knowledge—and a model of how to utilise students' feedback in the most beneficial way—to feed into developmental work in universities and educational policies.

## **Results**

### *Quantitative results*

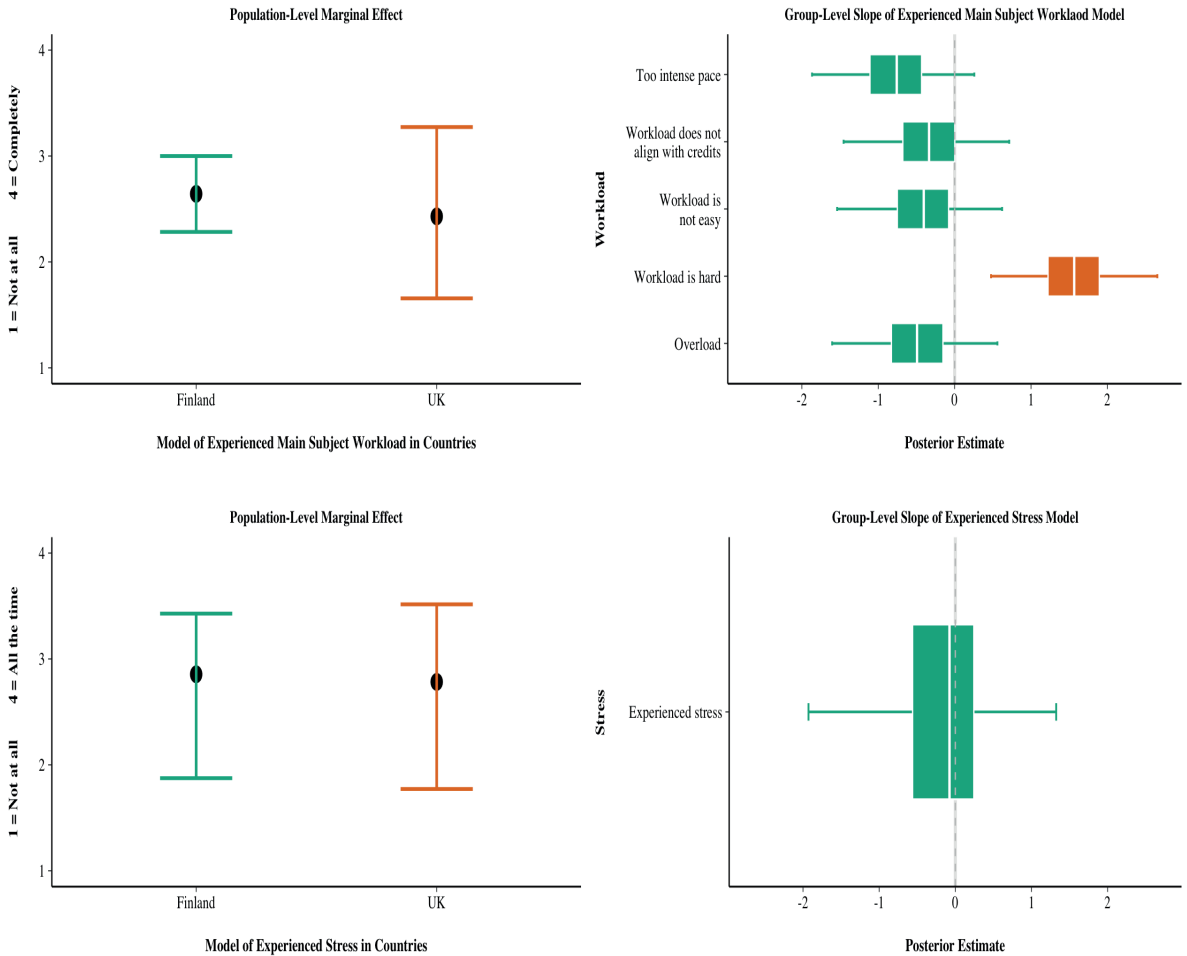
To answer the first research question about possible relationships between music students' experienced workload in their main subject of study and their demographics, livelihoods and experienced stress in higher education, we built four Bayesian ordinal probit regression models. Two of the models in Figure 2 are simplified mixed effects regression models indicating the direct influence of music students' countries on their experienced main subject workload and stress. The third model in Figure 3 is a larger mixed effects model showing the influence of countries on main subject workload evaluated in relation to music students' experienced stress, gender, university level, music genre studied and livelihoods. The fourth model in Figure 4 is similar to the third model but instead of workload it indicates the influence of countries on stress, evaluated

in relation to music students' experienced workload, gender, university level, music genre studied and livelihoods. Instead of testing the null hypothesis or calculating the statistical significance by using the regression estimates, the analysis reported here is based on (1) the estimation of the effects of countries—together with specific environmental and individual factors—predicting music students' experienced main subject workload and stress, and (2) depicting the uncertainty of these estimates by investigating posterior distributions with posterior medians and 95% highest posterior density intervals (Guckian et al. 2020). Detailed explanations of the figures are provided in the figure captions.

*Countries and music students' experiences of main subject workload and stress.* For the first two models in Figure 2, we examined the effect of country on music students' experienced workload and stress separately using a mixed effects probit regression. We allowed the intercept of the models to vary across each group-level intercept with each participant and separately with the workload items and the stress item. With a group-level slope in the models, we allowed the effect of countries to vary across the workload items and the stress item separately. There was a negligible effect of countries on music students' experienced workload (Posterior Median =  $-.29$ , 95% HPDI =  $-1.30$ ,  $.80$ ) and stress (Posterior Median =  $-.20$ , 95% HPDI =  $-1.63$ ,  $1.42$ ). The scale point of music students in the United Kingdom compared to Finland was lower in terms of both the experienced workload and the stress (see the left-hand panel of Figure 2). There was a small amount of variability between participants in each set of ratings in workload (Posterior Median =  $.68$ , 95% HPDI =  $.55$ ,  $.82$ ) and great variability in stress (Posterior Median =  $2.76$ , 95% HPDI =  $.96$ ,  $5.77$ ). In addition, there were aggregate ratings by participants across each workload item (Posterior Median =  $.42$ , 95% HPDI =  $.13$ ,  $1.05$ ) and noticeable variability in stress item (Posterior Median =  $1.41$ , 95% HPDI =  $<.001$ ,  $5.49$ ). The group-level slope for countries was noteworthy both within each workload item (Posterior Median =  $1.23$ , 95% HPDI =  $.51$ ,  $2.60$ ) and stress item (Posterior Median =  $1.12$ , 95% HPDI =  $<.001$ ,  $5.49$ ), suggesting non-negligible variation in the effect of countries across each workload item and stress item (see the right-hand panel of Figure 2).



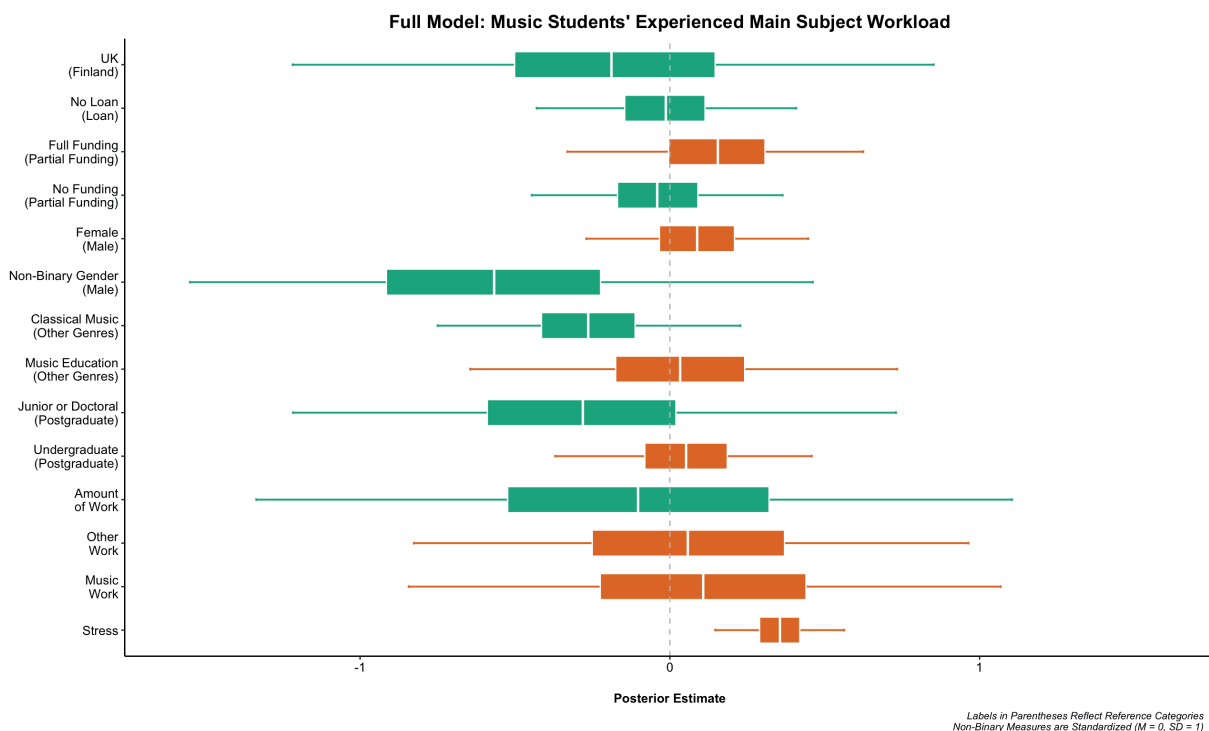
## Experienced Main Subject Workload and Stress: Population and Group-Level Effects



**Figure 2.** Population and group-level effects of main subject workload and stress experienced by the music students in Finland and the United Kingdom. On the right-hand panel, left-hand side boxes indicate that the effect on four workload items and one stress item is greater in Finland than in the United Kingdom, and right-hand side box indicates that the effect on one workload item is greater in the United Kingdom than in Finland.

*Full model: music students' experienced main subject workload.* For the third model in Figure 3, we followed the above-mentioned procedure by testing the full model of countries affecting the music students' experienced main subject workload. We allowed the slopes of each predictor to vary across each workload item. Modelling all predictors at the same time slightly increased the effect

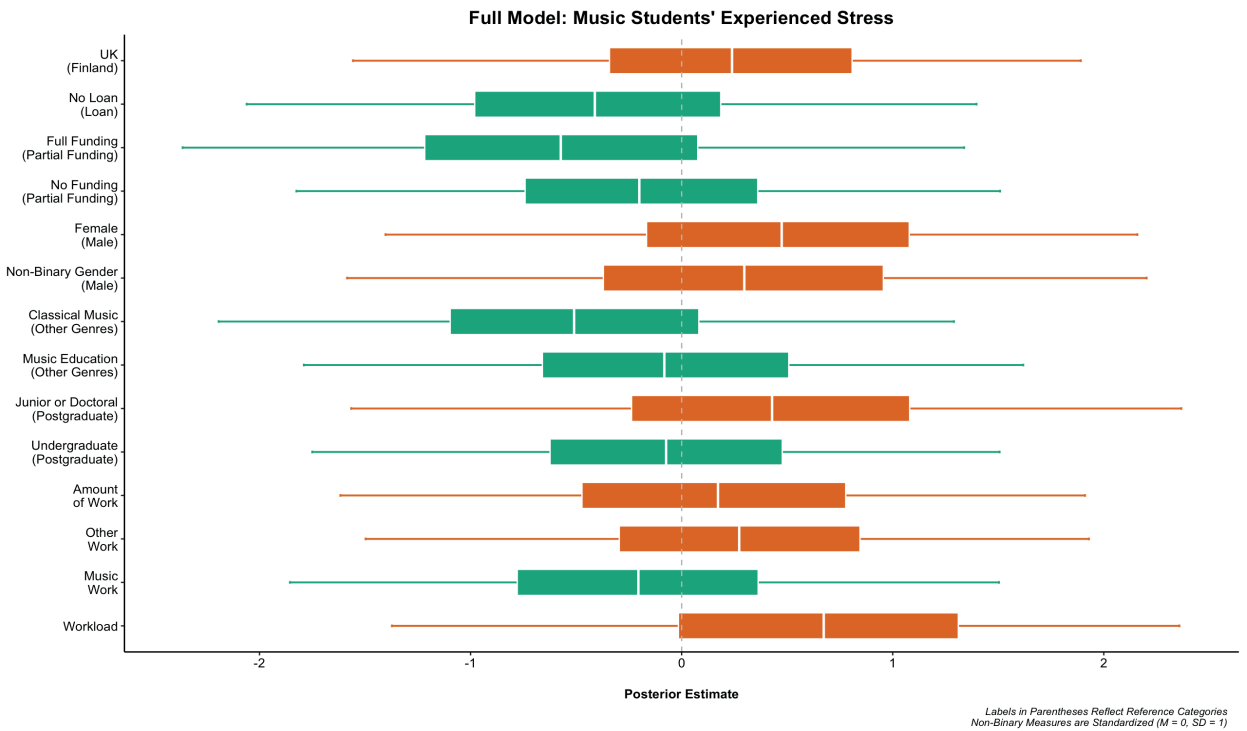
observed previously in relation to a participant's country of study, however, the effect still remained negative. Experienced stress was the strongest predictor of experienced main subject workload in the full model. There was also an effect of funding, such that music students with partial funding or no funding at all were less likely to experience workload than students with full funding. Work related to music had a greater effect than work not related to music, but the total amount of work undertaken alongside a student's studies had a negligible effect on experienced workload. Female music students were likely to experience more workload than male or non-binary gender students. The level of the university studies in general had a relatively small impact on the results, however, undergraduate music students were likely to experience more workload than postgraduate students or junior and doctoral students. Music genre studied had little influence on the level of experienced workload, although studying music education had a greater effect compared to other genres whereas the classical music genre had negligible effect. Having or not having a student loan did not lead to any noteworthy effects. In line with the simplified workload model presented in Figure 2, in this full model there was variation across each participants' ratings, Posterior Median = .68, 95% HPDI = .53, .83, and across each workload item in the group-level estimates, Posterior Median = .39, 95% HPDI = <.001, 1.07. The group-level slope for countries varied substantially across workload items, Posterior Median = 1.18, 95% HPDI = .48, 2.45.



**Figure 3.** Population-level predictors of experienced main subject workload, derived from a Bayesian mixed effect probit regression. The boxes indicate 50% posterior intervals and the lines indicate 95% posterior intervals. With binary items, left-hand side boxes indicate a smaller effect on workload than in the reference group in brackets and right-hand side boxes indicate greater effect on workload than in the reference group in brackets. With the working and stress items (the four bottom items on the figure), left-hand side boxes indicate a negligible effect on workload and right-hand side boxes indicate a greater effect on workload the nearer the box is to the right-hand side.

*Full model: music students' experienced stress.* For the fourth model in Figure 4, we followed the above-mentioned procedure by testing the full model of countries affecting music students' experienced stress. We allowed the slopes of each predictor to vary across the stress item. Modelling all predictors at the same time increased the previously observed effect of countries from negligible to positive indicating that music students in the United Kingdom are more likely to experience stress than music students in Finland. Experienced workload was the strongest predictor of experienced stress in the full model. There was also a

noticeable effect of gender, such that female music students were more likely to experience stress than male students. With non-binary gender there was positive effect on stress which was contradictory to the negligible effect on workload in the previous full model. Both work not related to music and the total amount of work undertaken alongside studying had a small effect, but work related to music did not have an influence on stress. Junior or doctoral music students were much more likely to report experienced stress than postgraduate students or undergraduate students, which contradicts the full workload model in which being an undergraduate student had more influence on experienced workload. The music genre studied had no effect on experienced stress, nor did funding and loans. Compared with the simplified stress model presented in Figure 2, this model had remarkably greater variation in the group-level estimates across each participants' ratings, Posterior Median = 4.70, 95% HPDI = 2.17, 8.32, and great variation across stress item, Posterior Median = 1.64, 95% HPDI = <.001, 6.28. Also the group-level slope for countries varied substantially across the stress item, Posterior Median = 1.32, 95% HPDI = <.001, 5.18.



**Figure 4.** Population-level predictors of experienced stress, derived from a Bayesian mixed effect probit regression. The boxes denote 50% posterior intervals and the lines denote 95% posterior intervals. With binary items, left-hand side boxes indicate a smaller effect on stress than in the reference group in brackets and right-hand side boxes indicate a greater effect on stress than in the reference group in brackets. With the working and workload items (the four bottom items on the figure), left-hand side boxes indicate a negligible effect on stress and right-hand side boxes indicate the greater effect on stress the nearer the box is to the right-hand side.

### *Qualitative findings*

To answer the second research question regarding environmental factors affecting music students' workload, we aimed to gain an understanding of music students' experienced workload, livelihoods and stress in higher education more broadly and in more depth. Qualitative findings resulted in recurrent ideas which were categorised according to 13 themes from deductive analysis and 14 themes from inductive analysis (see Method section). These 27 themes were separated into four thematic groups: General framework (or structure) of music students' workload (six themes), music students' workload whilst studying (nine themes), music students' workload in relation to teaching and learning

environments (six themes), and psychological and physiological issues in studying music (six themes). To illustrate the findings of the qualitative analysis process and how the themes were categorised into four thematic groups, Table 2 consists of excerpts from the participants’ reflections on the determinants of music students’ experienced workload in relation to environmental factors in higher education.

**Table 2.** Excerpts from the participants’ reflections on the determinants of music students’ experienced workload in relation to environmental factors in higher education

Determinants of experienced workload in relation to environmental factors		
<i>General framework of music students’ workload</i>		
<p><b>Framework of student workload:</b> It is difficult for me to determine which workload is caused particularly by my studies. I feel that the biggest challenge is combining working and studying. However, structural problems related to the field of music is a topic that needs to be addressed and discussed. The pressures inside the world of music make me feel inadequate and insecure regarding my own professional ability and potential, and it really impacts on my workload. In my studies, the emphasis on and idealisation of talented musicians distorts my perception of the music industry.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> Being a self-funded student means my time management is noticeably harder than students that come from money or receive external funding. I feel like money prevents me being able to perform as well as my classmates, as I spend so much of my non-contact hours freelancing to the point where I don’t get much sleep and can’t spend as much time on study as my richer classmates. It feels unfair and prohibitive, like an eternal struggle that often leaves me depressed and overwhelmed.</p>	<p><b>Work:</b> For me, it is the financial need in particular which forces me to work alongside studying. But the workload is also partly caused by me enjoying being able to work in my own field. I think that the same reason applies to many other students. Although they know that work during weekends and holidays causes extra commitments in the calendar, working is very beneficial for my current studies and for my future career.</p>
<p><b>Competition:</b> The most stressful thing is perhaps to always have to play my instrument in front of other music students and other people, for example music teachers. That kind of situation, involving comparison to other performers, is maybe the cause of stress. Or those kinds of auditions where musicians compete against each other, maybe they are the most stressful situations.</p>	<p><b>Social media:</b> In a way, [one cause of stress is] when I see videos [on social media] posted by my friends in rehearsals or gigs and they have edited them to only show the clip where it sounds great. Of course, I would do that too if I published a video. But then it creates the illusion that everybody else can do it and that they don’t need to practice. This is an example of that kind of myth of the artist in society—that I should potentially somehow already be talented and polished in what I am doing, and I do not need to practice.</p>	<p><b>Musician career:</b> Music students are probably to some extent a more homogeneous group [than other students], as I think that many musicians have gotten used to constantly working since childhood, and to expecting a lot of themselves. It is interesting to see how this affects music students’ experiences in a university environment and how well the university takes into account these possible unique characteristics of the cohort of music students in particular.</p>

**Table 2. (continues)**

<b>Determinants of experienced workload in relation to environmental factors</b>		
<i>Music students' workload whilst studying</i>		
<p><b>Approaches to learning:</b> The biggest workload comes from the fact that you are never 'ready'. You could and should always practice a little bit more. As first year students we were told during our early days at university that we must remember during our studies that we could not do everything at maximum capacity. Still, it feels difficult to digest that kind of approach because I would like to complete everything as well as possible based on my skills, not as well as possible based on my resources at any specific moment. I constantly feel guilty and feel like an underachiever because I cannot give my best. At the same time, I am afraid of not making everything that I could have from my studies because of my poor effort.</p>	<p><b>Coping:</b> I have noticed that in general in society, as well as in my department, people tend to idealise those 'multitasking individuals' who keep on stating that it is possible to get the job done (even at the cost of their wellbeing). Yeah, it is great to live life at full speed, with lots of achievements in school and work and long days, in addition to being part of many kinds of events and other activities. I sometimes feel a little bit of remorse about not being able to, for example, go out to meet friends or invite them to my home after we finish studying.</p>	<p><b>Time management:</b> The college workload isn't too big, because, as a musician there's only so much actual physical practice you can do a day, so that's not an issue. And the academic [studies] aren't an issue because they're not that heavily weighted, and there aren't that many of them. But it's fitting in the rehearsals around those things so you have, as a musician as well we have, the academic classes that everybody else has but then we also have lots of, performance and repertoires, like classes, so like things that the other schools don't have. And it's not a lot but then when you start adding in, like practicing on top of that and, like ensemble and if you get gigs, like it all starts to add up very quickly.</p>
<p><b>First year experiences:</b> The first year of studying was difficult and almost traumatic. I felt that other students in my year group were competitive and one of them behaved like a bully. In addition, I experienced difficulty moving to a new and bigger city and starting my university studies. I felt that the level of requirements was totally different to my previous school, right from the beginning of my studies. I imagined that everyone else already had the skills and knowledge required. I doubted my own skills. Why did they even accept me to study in this school? Was it just a mistake? What helped me then? I got an appointment with study counsellor, and I asked the 'bully' for a cup of coffee and explained how the bully's behaviour made me feel, I made friends with students from older year groups, I joined my department's student association, I discussed pressures with my classmates and I noticed that many other students experienced similar things to me. It also helped me to visit my home city and family during weekends.</p>	<p><b>Practising:</b> Then I need to adhere to my reservation for a practice room and time. That means that I must be able to estimate in advance how much I am going to need in terms of practice time in a particular week. Then I also have ensemble rehearsals because I have a couple of concerts and there will be an ensemble in my assessed recital too. So, somehow, I have to organise rehearsal schedules with lots of people. That causes a difficult kind of workload when I have to figure out mine and other musicians' schedules.</p>	<p><b>Flow:</b> I think that it [flow] is connected to those kinds of external aspects and also to my moods. I notice it in myself when I feel that I don't need to concentrate on anything extra, in a way, and then there is kind of a fast-flowing fountain to produce things. There are kind of optimal circumstances for me, so that I can feel comfortable and I know that I now have enough time. And I don't need to stress about it.</p>
<p><b>Meaning of musicianship:</b> Studying music is pretty much that kind of holistic lifestyle, maybe, I would say for me. Since primary school I have studied music regularly and then at some point in adulthood I understood that this is not just studying anymore, this is, music is life [laughing].</p>	<p><b>Enjoyment:</b> I feel success when I have enjoyed doing or completing something. For example, exam concerts and other concerts in which I can play on my own or together with someone and when, in that moment, I feel deep love and joy for playing, for other performers and for the audience.</p>	<p><b>Religion:</b> Occasionally, when lots of deadlines are coming up in the same period of time, I can find myself getting stressed and feel overwhelmed. There are a couple of things I do when this happens. I rely heavily on God and my church. I feel a release of pressure when I pray, and I find that keeping the Sabbath day as a holy day is crucial to my wellbeing, spiritual, mental, emotional and physical.</p>

**Table 2. (continues)**

<b>Determinants of experienced workload in relation to environmental factors</b>		
<i>Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments</i>		
<p><b>Teaching and learning environments:</b></p> <p>Yes indeed, I think there could be a course for students on how to organise time and everyday life, or even a kind of set of materials or that kind of thing. Because I can easily imagine that if you have lived for example some sort of relaxed high school life and managed with everything going well and no worries. And then you come here and suddenly there is awful pressure everywhere. You must be the best, you must succeed, you must prepare for your career and so on. So I believe that it can result in a very very heavy workload. And so on, indeed, I don't assume that any human being is able to manage that kind of thing from birth.</p>	<p><b>One-to-one tuition:</b></p> <p>If I feel pressured by the teacher to do something that I don't feel like I can or want to do, I'll most likely get into some type of a complete anxiety attack. That's why I feel like teachers should be very well educated in pedagogy, especially as private music teachers. The relationship between a music student and their teacher is closer than in most other school situations, and it can get very difficult if the teacher doesn't sense the correct boundaries or crosses lines that they should be trained to detect instantly.</p>	<p><b>Group tuition:</b></p> <p>Having to stay in one place always causes more workload than doing some kind of written assignment or other kind of project work in another place that you can choose by yourself. Compulsory attendance is understandable in smaller groups. But contact teaching is sometimes very hard if the amounts of non-attendance are strict. Unfortunately, many students have to work, for both their prestige and CV, for their artistic career or to earn extra income, although working is not recommended whilst studying.</p>
<p><b>Curriculum:</b></p> <p>Too many essays and too many projects. Some months I have nothing to do, and some months there are too many things. That keeps my schedules uncertain and gives me anxiety because I am not good at organising myself in such an unpredictable environment.</p>	<p><b>Assessment:</b></p> <p>But in a way assessment in general, not only in music departments per se, but everywhere starting as early as kindergarten. Somehow the whole assessment culture should be changed. There should be an understanding of the aims of assessment. Who does the assessment serve? What is the meaning of it? I mean that sometimes when studying I have felt, especially when I was younger, that you did the work for the institution or for your teacher or something like that. You did not understand that the meaning is to work for yourself.</p>	<p><b>Student feedback:</b></p> <p>And the thing is that sometimes people, well very often people choose to not do that [give feedback], to not cause any problems. The thing is the music world is how it is, everyone knows everyone and people don't wanna [make problems]. Because that can affect their career a lot. I really don't know, obviously the solution is anonymity but, anonymity is also not 100%. You still have to have that one person you tell it to. So I don't really know, what would be the solution here, maybe people could be more courageous but...</p>
<b>Determinants of experienced workload in relation to environmental factors</b>		
<i>Psychological and physiological issues in studying music</i>		
<p><b>Stress:</b></p> <p>My reaction to stress has involved a decrease in activity and an inability to plan things when there have been several demanding things to study or exams at the same time. I have experienced that speaking with teachers or student peers helps me. In a serious stressful situation my self-image as a student suffers or, in the worst case, I doubt myself as a musician. However, I have understood that these are normal feelings with stress. Yet, I think there should be a more open and accepting atmosphere in the school to discuss these kinds of difficulties too.</p>	<p><b>Burnout:</b></p> <p>So, I must work to get funding for living and studying. I don't have much leisure time and recovering [from stress when combining studying and working] is not always easy, thus, it negatively impacts on my studying. In addition, I have experienced burnout in my current studies and gone through three years' psychotherapy. Naturally, this has affected how I have coped throughout all of my studies. I think that the main reasons for the need for therapy are primarily in my childhood and youth and also my previous experiences in studying music. Strict values in the music industry have caused workload for me (competition, issues with university studying affecting too much to my own identity and so on).</p>	<p><b>Performance anxiety:</b></p> <p>But even the best players, the great musicians, they always, every one of them had performance stress when they were students. But after all, I think it's quite good in my college, you do so many performances that after two years going on stage becomes quite normal. Unfortunately the stress is something you have to learn how to handle, because if you plan to perform as a job, it is the same for everyone. Even for the best.</p>
<p><b>Musculoskeletal problems:</b></p> <p>Too many essays and too many projects. At least those friends who have had more serious problems and who have not been able to play their instruments, have been supported by the school to get help. I think that our school even provides one free session with a specialised physiotherapist. So there is good guidance. And there are even courses for the first year students in induction week. I think that this issue [musculoskeletal problems] is very well taken care of here.</p>	<p><b>Sport and exercise:</b></p> <p>Sometimes, absolutely, in particular exam concerts and those kinds of events [impact on this]. And entrance exams in which I have participated. They cause sleeplessness at night. And nervousness. Thank God I have sports that I can do. It has been the obvious way for me to relieve those feelings, in every case.</p>	<p><b>Health:</b></p> <p>I think it is easy and, I would say, many many students go there [student counsellor]. So, probably every one of my friends has been there. I think it is that kind of thing where there is no stigma anymore. So it is very normal nowadays. Also, my friends studying in other schools or in other universities have sought help. But of course, here in a music university the issues are very often related to music or playing. Or maybe those kinds of problems are just related to music, or but they may be larger ones [than in other disciplines].</p>



*General framework of music students' workload.* According to participants' experiences, combining studying and working seems to be a big challenge for music students and this makes it difficult to determine which workload derives from work and which from studying. Although working alongside studying is often essential because of financial needs, work related to music is felt to be enjoyable and even invaluable for music students' future careers. However, some participants bring forth an equality issue indicating a big gap between well-off students (e.g. full scholarship or support from family) compared to low-income students who have to work long hours to earn their living. There are multiple factors which need to be considered as further predictors of the impact of the general framework of music students' workload: (1) pressure within the field of music negatively affecting music students' beliefs regarding their abilities as professional musicians, (2) idealisation of talented musicians, (3) competition and comparison in performing music, (4) social media strengthening the myth of innately talented artists in society, and (5) characteristics which may be unique to those students who have been devoted to a career in music since early childhood.

*Music students' workload whilst studying.* When listening to participants' experiences, several factors could be highlighted as further predictors of the impact of music students' workload whilst studying: (1) approaches to learning when the curriculum and timetable in relation to a programme of study are overloaded, (2) the competitive atmosphere of the neoliberal university, its ideal world composed of individuals skilled in multi-tasking and its lack of collegiality, in comparison to advocating realistic possibilities for coping with studies, (3) time management in studying music which includes many additional commitments, such as rehearsals and gigs, compared to other disciplines in higher education, (4) experiences during the first year of study which can be a traumatic transition phase in a music student's life, (5) challenges connected with practising, such as practice room reservations and scheduling rehearsals for ensembles, (6) flow experiences, indicating positively-experienced workload, (7) the meaning of professional musicianship, and this form of study as a unique and holistic experience for music students, (8)

enjoyment arising from playing both alone and with other performers, and (9) religion, especially nowadays when universities are multicultural learning environments including students with diverse religious backgrounds, as a way to find the tools and community to help students to cope with stressful periods.

*Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments.* The following factors arose from participants' experiences reported in the current study as possible predictors affecting music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments: (1) how the course, which helps music students to develop their time management skills, could impact on music students' experienced workload, (2) the unique and sometimes challenging relationship between a music student and their one-to-one instrumental or singing teacher, (3) compulsory courses (academic studies and some group tuition) with strict regulations for permissible amounts of non-attendance, (4) unpredictable and sometimes very intense workload in the curriculum, (5) meaningless versus meaningful ways to utilise assessment, and (6) university culture and the nature of behaviours in the music profession hindering music students from giving honest feedback, as students may be afraid of jeopardising their future careers.

*Psychological and physiological issues in studying music.* Participants' experiences of stress emphasise that this may have serious consequences on their ability to study and may even impact on their self-image as students and musicians. With some of the students stress has led to burnout. As further predictors of psychological and physiological issues in studying music, participants in our study pointed out following considerations: (1) performance anxiety as a particular factor in studying music, (2) university support for music students' musculoskeletal problems, (3) the positive impact of active and regular exercise on decreasing music students' experienced stress, and (4) the fact that most music students need help from a student counsellor or a longer period of intensive therapy at some stage in their university studies.

## Discussion

Music students' experiences of workload and stress in higher education can include many different factors. In this study we defined the aspects as being specific environmental factors and looked into them from the point of view of a student's country in connection with their livelihoods with work, funding and loans. Indeed, we extended the students' livelihoods to also include socio-demographics, such as gender, university level of their programme of studies and music genre studied.

Mixed method synthesis as an integration of the models based on quantitative results, and suggestions for further development of the model based on qualitative findings provided evidence for the third research question to further the development of Bayesian models and pave the way for developmental work in music higher education institutions. The results of this study indicate that, when connected to these characteristics of livelihoods, a student's country of study has an effect on a student's experienced stress, but not on the experienced main subject workload. However, the experienced main subject workload was the strongest predictor of music students' experienced stress in this study. The findings in relation to music students' lived experiences emphasise that a multifaceted approach is needed to understand the many nuances impacting both their workload and stress whilst studying music at university level.

When looking at the results of general framework (or structure of studies) impacting music students' workload in higher education, livelihoods—understood in their everyday meaning as working and earning resources for living—influences workload and stress. Results in this study indicate that a larger amount of total working hours increases experienced stress but does not affect experiences of main subject workload. Work related to music influences music students' workload, but it does not cause stress to students. Work not related to music has an increased effect on both workload and stress. Full funding seems to have a greater effect on main subject workload—maybe allowing music students to put all their efforts into studying—than partial funding or no funding at all. Funding has no influence on stress. Similarly,

having or not having a loan has no effect on workload or stress. It might be that once students have resolved the resources for studying at the beginning of their university studies, they can put this concern to one side until it is time to start to pay back the debts. Research by Beban and Trueman (2018) indicates similar challenges when students navigate between the requirements from a neoliberal university and work. Music students' lived experiences indicate that gap between well-off students compared to low-income students, pressure within the field of music, idealisation of talented musicians, competition, impact of social media and unique characteristics of music students' cohort can be considered as further predictors of the impact of the general framework of music students' workload.

The results show that there is variation in music students' experiences of main subject workload between the United Kingdom and Finland. When looking at the effects, music students in the United Kingdom report that they must work hard with their main subject studies (or 'principal studies' in some institutions). In comparison, music students in Finland find that their main subject studies overload them and this part of their programme does not work well with the overall workload. In addition, their experiences indicate that the amount of credits is not right compared to overall course workload and the pace of study is too intense within the study programme. It is one of the most important developmental aspects of any curriculum that workload is equivalent to the required amount and quality of work, in order to support students' learning in a meaningful way (Bernhard 2010). When listening to participants' experiences, approaches to learning, competitive atmosphere, time management, experiences during the first year of study, practising, flow experiences, the meaning of professional musicianship, enjoyment and religion could be highlighted as further predictors of the impact of music students' workload whilst studying.

Regarding teaching and learning environments, results suggest that university level of study and the music genre studied only have a small effect on music students' experienced main subject workload. Undergraduate students report experiencing a greater workload but less stress than postgraduate students and junior or doctoral students in both countries. Junior and doctoral

levels seem to be associated with stressful studying which may be connected with the fact that junior students study music alongside high school and doctoral students alongside working and family commitments. Students studying music education—when combining multiple requirements including playing instruments, practising and studying the teaching profession—are more likely to experience a high level of workload than students studying classical music or other genres but, surprisingly, none of these groupings had an effect on experienced stress. Previous research on student workload suggests—and actually already suggested this 50 years ago—that for developing the best possible teaching and learning environments, student workload problems should be discussed from many angles, such as including perspectives relating to the curriculum, assessment, student capacity and support services for students (Clift and Thomas 1973; Giles 2009). Time management course, relationship with teachers, compulsory courses, curriculum, assessment and student feedback arose from participants' experiences as possible predictors affecting music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments.

For music students in higher education, particular psychological and physiological issues are connected to their studies. Results in this study suggest that music students' experienced stress is a stronger predictor of the workload involved in studying their main subject than their livelihood. Female students are more likely to experience significant workload in relation to their main subject and stress, than male or non-binary gender students. This resonates with similar findings by Zetterberg et al. (1998) who reported the issue regarding greater stress levels in female music students 20 years ago, which may indicate that this issue has not been sufficiently taken care at institutional levels. Further consideration is needed to understand possible relations between minority groups and experienced workload and stress, as results indicate that non-binary gender is associated with a negligible effect on main subject workload but a noticeable effect on stress. It is crucial that universities organise adequate and appropriate support systems for music students to develop their coping strategies, in light of the particular issues associated with studying music (Papageorgi et al. 2010a, 2010b). As further predictors of psychological and physiological issues in studying music, participants pointed out performance

anxiety, musculoskeletal problems, active and regular exercise and help from a student counsellor or therapy.

### *Limitations*

We consider that certain limitations in our study should be addressed. Results of the study should be generalised to other music students' cohorts with caution because study limitations include the use of single item measure of feeling stress, as well as the use of self-reported experiences by music students. Extending the statistical representativeness of sample sizes in both countries would increase the generalisability of the observed effects. Because our empirical data was collected in two countries, results and findings cannot be generalised outside of those countries. Thus, further research is needed involving additional countries in order to provide results for wider utilisation in higher education music institutions. The second limitation is that it is not possible to make causal conclusions with our correlational research design. Future research could be designed as a Bayesian evaluation of music students' behaviour changes to provide evidence on the impacts of interventions in relation to experienced workload (in line with Heino, Vuorre, and Hankonen 2018). In addition, more research is needed to examine multicultural factors impacting on music students' experiences of workload and stress in higher education, for example research focussing on exchange and international students who have studied in more than one university, and equality issues, for example experiences of minority groups.

### *Implications*

Our study has multiple implications. We employed a model for the current research process which utilises students' experiences in a beneficial way; the experiences serve as research data aimed at producing robust evidence for developmental work which could be undertaken at universities to better support students. In the context of music universities where the study programmes are quite small, a Bayesian approach is a good option because it can produce valid results for small samples and combine both quantitative and qualitative

feedback from students (Low-Choy, Riley, and Alston-Knox 2017). Our study, for which the country of study and music students' livelihoods were combined as results predictors, suggests that a neoliberal university culture with high tuition fees which impacts students' livelihoods alongside studying is likely to increase music students' experienced stress, but not directly impact on the workload associated with their main subject of study. However, experienced stress has a great effect on students' experiences of the workload involved with their main subject. To counter and eliminate the negative impact of neoliberalism on students' well-being whilst studying, there is an urgent need for interventions which utilise research on music students' health (Ginsborg et al. 2009; Williamon and Thompson 2006) in connection with possible alternative courses of action, such as changing competition within an institution to co-operation (Fernández-Herrería and Martínez-Rodríguez 2016; Fitzpatrick 2019) and revising the purposes and contents of study programmes with reference to diverse sources of knowledge (Cannella and Koro-Ljungberg 2017). In this study, we listened to music students' experiences and showed how their valuable voices can contribute to a wide spectrum of knowledge, and become a form of research-based evidence which could potentially be utilised in furthering both the development of university cultures and educational policies.

### *Conclusions*

The results and findings presented in this study increase the understanding of the predictors of music students' experienced workload, and how they are connected to livelihoods and stress in higher education. We provided an example of a Bayesian ordinal probit regression modelling process and showed how the students' experiences can be analysed in a way which may offer useful evidence for future developmental work in universities and in relation to educational policies. Music students do experience significant workload and stress in higher education, and with regards to their livelihoods, especially when working whilst studying, which does have an impact on their workload and stress. Combining working and studying may increase stress and affect music students' relationship with studying and being a musician, while at the

same time it may be beneficial and invaluable for their future careers (e.g. López-Íñiguez and Bennett 2020, in press). In curriculum development in music universities there is also a need to pay attention to particular university levels of study, regarding workload (especially with undergraduate-level students), to stress (especially regarding junior- and doctoral-level study), and to particular areas of study, especially music education, in order to be able to make informed adjustments to the course requirements, modules and schedules. Further research is needed to find out the reasons for stress amongst female and non-binary gender students to be able to better support them as music students and musicians in higher education. Because our results indicate that country of study has an effect on the variation between different aspects of music students' experienced main subject workload and on experienced stress, it is important to produce more research-based evidence on students' experiences in connection with specific learning cultures and country-specific educational policies, for example concentrating on university music students' workload in Finland and stress in the United Kingdom. Results and findings of this study can also be used to critically examine how a neoliberal university culture may impact not only on music students' learning, well-being and future careers as musicians but also on the work atmosphere, sense of collegiality and collaboration in academia and the field of music more generally.

## Notes

1. The United Kingdom is a sovereign country, or state, which is comprised of four separate countries. For the purposes of the current discussion, the term 'country' will be used to refer to both Finland and the United Kingdom.
2. 'Junior' students are those who are in secondary school education (pre-higher education), but are attending a course of study at a higher education institution alongside their school studies (usually at weekends). These students are 18 years of age or younger, and study in the same higher education music environment as those pursuing degree study. They are taught by the same tutors as those who teach on degree courses, and are exposed to many of the same environmental factors as those studying for higher education qualifications. The experience of these 'junior' students is therefore considered relevant and important for the current study.



## Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all the university music students who kindly participated in this study. We would like to give special thanks to Heidi Westerlund and Kai Lehtikainen for their expertise as supervisors of the first author. We also wish to thank Samantha Low-Choy for her supervision with the Bayesian approach, Kimmo Vehkalahti for his Structural Equation Modeling course with RStudio, Jere Kuusela for his technical support in the analysis with RStudio, and Matti Vuorre for his feedback on statistical methods.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This work was funded by the Sibelius Academy Music Education Doctoral Programme and supported by the Center for Educational Research and Academic Development in the Arts (CERADA), University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland.

## Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the University of the Arts Helsinki Finland Research Ethics Committee and Conservatoires United Kingdom Research Ethics Committee. All participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

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## Supplemental material

Supplemental Appendix (online).

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Supplemental material for article “Music students’ experienced workload, livelihoods and stress in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom” (Jääskeläinen, T., López-Íñiguez, G., & Phillips, M.)

Appendix is available in this dissertation as “Appendix 7: Questionnaire”









## Appendix 4: Article IV

Jääskeläinen, T., & López-Íñiguez, G. (2022). Tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education. *Frontiers in Education*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.895090>



# **TOOLS FOR TEACHERS TO SUPPORT MUSIC STUDENTS IN MANAGING AND COPING WITH THEIR WORKLOAD IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **Abstract**

One-to-one tuition is an essential part of studying music and is appreciated by the music students. Problems can occur when there are diverse perceptions between teacher practice and student expectations. This study provides research-based evidence on 155 music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping in their interaction with teachers in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom. The theoretical framework was informed by several theories in educational psychology research, such as the influence of teaching and learning environment on students' perceived workload, and constructivist approach in teaching and learning music. The data included 155 music students' open-ended answers in the questionnaire and interviews with 29 music students. The qualitative analysis was conducted through the methodological framework of transcendental phenomenology. The findings illustrate music students' interaction with teachers concerning (1) the structure of students' workload, (2) a music student's individual workload, (3) workload relating to teaching and learning environments, and (4) psychological and physiological issues. A total of 43 constructive tools for teachers were created based on these music students' experiences. These tools are based on the constructivist principles focusing on the music students' knowledge and capabilities and they can be utilized to better support students in managing and coping with their workload and stress in higher music education institutions.

## **Keywords**

workload, stress, music student, experience, interaction with teachers, higher education, recommendations

## **Introduction**

Teaching has a remarkable role in higher music education, where individual

one-to-one tuition is a major part of the studies and where the master-apprenticeship tradition of instrumental/vocal teaching and learning is still strong (e.g., Gaunt, 2010; Creech, 2012; Burwell, 2013; Carey and Grant, 2015; Pozo et al., 2022). Gaunt (2011) suggests that more research is needed to explore interactions between music students and teachers in higher music education from a psychological perspective, because this specific model of instruction may crucially affect music students' learning and personal and professional development. Research concentrating on music students' experiences of studying in relation to workload in higher education is one potential way to approach this topic. Therefore, to map previous research on students' workload and to suggest recommendations for good practices aimed specifically at supporting music students, a systematic review was conducted by Jääskeläinen et al. (2022b). As a result, a framework of music students' experienced workload was constructed based on three contexts where developmental actions could be conducted in higher education: (1) music students' studying and coping strategies, (2) teachers' interactions with music students, and (3) environmental aspects, such as teaching and learning environments and university culture. This study concentrates on seeking more understanding of the second developmental action—namely, teachers' interactions with music students—by investigating potential tools that teachers can use to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education.

In relation to students' experiences of workload, the systematic review pointed to three main areas where teaching could be developed: (1) the importance of teachers' professional development work in the university (Giles, 2009), (2) assessment that supports learning processes (Hernesniemi et al., 2017), and (3) constructive cooperative teaching (Kember and Leung, 2006). Although measuring the causality in the relationships between the students' perceptions of a teacher's teaching and the students' perceived workload is challenging, developing methods to reduce students' perceived overload is valuable because an excessive workload can have a negative effect on students' well-being and study success (Hernesniemi et al., 2017). However, when teachers promote a cooperative atmosphere in their teaching,



both the demands and quality of learning can grow without increasing students' perceived workload (Kember and Leung, 2006). Previous research indicates that teachers can support music students in coping with their workload in higher education with these actions: (1) developing students' meta-cognitive abilities and psychological skills (Biasutti and Concina, 2014), (2) providing tools to cope with performance anxiety (Miller and Chesky, 2004), (3) tailoring one-to-one tuition methods to the needs and learning style of each student (Carey and Grant, 2015), and (4) providing support for practicing with diverse and effective approaches and techniques (Gaunt, 2010).

One-to-one tuition as individual tuition is a key teaching and learning method in the instrumental and vocal training of musicians, and is appreciated by the music students—however, it can also hamper learners' autonomy when the lessons are content- and teacher-centered (e.g., Gaunt, 2010; López-Íñiguez et al., 2014; Pozo et al., 2022). Problems can also occur when there are diverse perceptions between teacher practice and student expectations (Carey and Grant, 2015). One typical issue for music students is music performance anxiety, for which universities should offer courses so that music students learn skills to cope with such difficulties (Biasutti and Concina, 2014). In addition, more research is needed to gain research-based knowledge about methods to develop music students' self-confidence (Miller and Chesky, 2004). To confront such challenges, music teachers could learn and benefit from research findings in relation to flow in one-to-one tuition, so that they would be able to support music students' positive perceived competences and identify the optimal challenges that would be crucial to flow experiences (Valenzuela et al., 2018).

The suggestions for improvement in higher music education above could be better implemented in the classroom when enhancing learner-centered teaching (Reid, 2001; Valenzuela et al., 2018), which is based on constructivist pedagogy (López-Íñiguez et al., 2014). The topic of learner-centered teaching has been widely discussed in music education and music psychology research at all levels of instrumental/vocal tuition in Western countries (Pozo et al., 2022). Indeed, when learners are actively involved in a process of meaning and knowledge construction—as opposed to passively receiving information—they may become empowered to act in their own learning and, furthermore, to

develop supportive learner mindsets to positively broaden their career horizons (e.g., López-Íñiguez and Bennett, 2021; Pozo et al., 2022).

Research on instrumental music instruction at elementary levels has shown that the beliefs and practices of constructivist teachers can have an impact in a positive way on students' learning strategies and lived experiences, teaching and learning beliefs, studying autonomy, and sense of engagement in the classroom (López-Íñiguez and Pozo, 2014a,b, 2016). The conceptions held by teachers and students about teaching and learning can be considered as some of the most relevant factors in pursuing the change in educational practices, and constructivist research in teaching and learning music may offer a practical framework for pursuing this kind of conceptual change (i.e., Pozo et al., 2022; see also López-Íñiguez and Pozo (2014a,b, 2016)).

Studies on the conceptions and practices of teaching and learning music show that instruction still largely focuses on transmitting the musical and technical knowledge needed to produce the correct sound (e.g., Bautista et al., 2010; Marín et al., 2013; López-Íñiguez and Pozo, 2014b). Some of these studies have found that there is a relationship between teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning and the way that their students process musical scores, such that simpler conceptions correspond to simpler processing levels, while constructive conceptions would promote more complex ways of understanding scores. In that respect, López-Íñiguez and Pozo (2014a,b) have shown that studies of how teachers and students represent the learning and teaching of instrumental music during childhood tend to identify two extreme instructional positions: one focusing on the transmission of established knowledge, usually called traditional or direct, and the other, usually known as constructive, focusing on the students' knowledge and capabilities. The latter approach fosters cooperation through more dialogical learning spaces and promotes student metacognition, agency, and self-regulation. Teaching according to constructivist principles requires activating, stimulating, and developing the student's mental processes through reflection and scaffolding. The aim is for students to learn to autonomously regulate and manage their own cognitive and motor processes, and to build unique and inspiring representations of the music they play, through the guidance and supervision of teachers who focus on the

students' reflective, metacognitive, emotional, and affective processes at all levels of instruction (in line with López-Íñiguez (2017); Pozo et al. (2022)).

According to Gaunt (2008); also, Gaunt et al. (2021), it seems that even though teachers are aware of the theoretical assumptions underlying constructivist models, very often they are unable to put them into practice successfully in the music classroom. Therefore, in the present study, we search for tools which are based on above-mentioned constructivist principles (hereafter *constructive tools*) that can address music students' lived experiences of workload. The practical examples of students' experiences may help teachers better understand learner-centeredness from the students' point of view. Thus, the present study is informed by the previous research on music students' experienced workload (Jääskeläinen et al., 2022b) and several theories in educational psychology research, such as the influence of teaching and learning environment on students' perceived workload (e.g., Kember, 2004; Kember and Leung, 2006), and constructivist approach in teaching and learning music (e.g., López-Íñiguez and Pozo, 2016; Pozo et al., 2022). The aim of this study is to recommend tools for teachers—based on music students' experiences—that can constructively support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education. This study concentrates on the following research question:

What constructive tools for teachers can support music students in managing and coping with their experienced workload in higher education?

## **Materials and methods**

### *Study design*

For the purpose to investigate music students' experiences in the present study, Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology offered an effective methodological qualitative approach to obtaining a meaningful understanding of the essence of human experience. Phenomenological approach is particularly useful when the aim is to utilize human experiences of everyday life as a source for developing interventions and more effective policies to support individuals or groups who have similar experiences (Jääskeläinen, in press, 2022).

*Questionnaire and interviews.* The assessment instrument Workload, Stress, and Coping (WSC) questionnaire was created by combining and adapting sections from two renowned, validated questionnaires from the learning sciences (see Supplementary Appendix 1 for data collection instrument). The first instrument was the standardized study workload and stress section of the Learn questionnaire used in the Finnish higher education context (i.e., Parpala and Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). The second instrument was the Proactive Coping Inventory for Adolescents (PCI-A) developed in Canadian higher education (i.e., Greenglass et al., 2008). The WSC questionnaire also included demographic items and open-ended questions about workload, stress, coping, and students' interaction experiences with teachers. In the questionnaire, participants could express their willingness to be contacted for further research, for example participate in the interviews. All instructions and items in the questionnaires were available in English. They were translated into Finnish for the data collection in Finland by following guidelines recommended by van Widenfelt et al. (2005). We pilot-tested the translated documents with Finnish and English-speaking music students and higher music education teachers to validate the items. The final documents were refined by their feedback.

*Data collection and sample.* We randomly selected seven university-level music institutions in Finland and the United Kingdom (to protect participants' anonymity, the details of the institutions and how they were divided by countries are not available). Scholars and teachers in these countries had expressed an interest in acquiring more information on their students' workload experiences in higher music education. After receiving ethical approvals from the University of the Arts Helsinki's Research Ethics Committee in Finland and Conservatoires United Kingdom Research Ethics Committee, we obtained research permissions from participating institutions. The data was gathered online through an institutional SurveyPal-questionnaire. We sent the invitation to participate in the research via student email lists, thus potentially reaching over 7,000 music students. The invitation email included a brief outline of the study, the questionnaire, and a sheet informing that participation was voluntary and confidentiality of participation was assured. We sent the reminder of the

invitations via email to encourage students to participate. The participants were not compensated for their time.

A total of 155 music students (108 in Finland and 47 in the United Kingdom) completed the questionnaire in five different institutions (including a total of 5,900 music students), and 29 music students volunteered to participate in the interviews. The first author conducted the semi-structured in-depth interviews either in contact meetings or remotely; the time span varied from 30 to 90 min. The interviews aimed to obtain deeper understandings of the participants' open-ended answers in the questionnaire. The interview questions were informed by previous research (e.g., Deasy et al., 2014). The topics consisted of questions that encouraged students to reflect on their workload, stress, and coping as professional students in higher music education (see Supplementary Appendix 1). Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of all participants in the sample ( $N = 155$ )

<b>Background</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Main subject studies</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Country</i>		<i>Genre group</i>	
Finland	69.7	Classical music (UG or PG)	43.2
United Kingdom	30.3	Music education (UG or PG)	24.5
<i>Gender</i>		Other genres	32.3
Female	68.0	<i>Study programme</i>	
Male	30.1	Classical string	13.5
Non-binary gender	2.0	Classical wind	9.7
<i>University level</i>		Classical piano	6.5
Undergraduate (UG)	52.9	Classical early music	3.2
Postgraduate (PG)	42.6	Classical other instruments	3.2
Other (junior or doctoral)	4.5	Classical voice and opera	7.1
		Music education	24.5
<i>Interview participants (n = 29)</i>	18.7	Composition	7.7
Finland (n = 20)		Church music	12.3
United Kingdom (n = 9)		Folk and global music	4.5
Female (n = 21)		Other programmes	3.9
Male (n = 8)		Doctoral programmes	3.9

### *Data management and analysis*

We used Atlas.ti (version 9.0.7) to code and analyze the qualitative data concerning the answers to the open-ended questions in the WSC questionnaire and transcribed interviews. The first author performed the analysis in collaboration with the second author, who ensured the validity and reliability of the process by coding 5% of the qualitative data (transcribed interviews and open-ended answers of the questionnaire). The inter-rater agreement of the coding was calculated using Holsti and Krippendorff's Alphas, and were favorably calculated as 0.924 and 0.918, respectively, with both considered very highly satisfying levels of reliability. The qualitative data was analyzed thematically according to our adaptation of Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology approach through the steps of (1) horizontalisation; (2) reduction and elimination; (3) clustering and thematizing; (4) validation; (5) constructing individual textural and structural descriptions; (6) constructing composite textural and structural descriptions; and (7) intuitive integration (the analysis procedure is presented in more detail in Jääskeläinen, 2022).

In the systematic review (Jääskeläinen et al., 2022b), 13 codes were identified in the 29 qualitative, quantitative, and multi-strategy studies in relation to music students' experienced workload in higher education (see the first column in Table 2). Fourteen new codes in relation to music students' workload were found through the inductive coding process based on data collected in the interviews with 29 music students (see the second column in Table 2). This framework of music students' experienced workload was used to group the qualitative data (transcribed interviews and open-ended answers of the questionnaire) into clusters based on three contexts where good practices could be developed in higher music education: (1) the student (results reported in Jääskeläinen et al. (2022a)), (2) the teacher, and (3) the environment (results reported in Jääskeläinen et al. (2020)). This study used the qualitative data grouped to the cluster of the teacher. Thus, in the analysis procedure, excerpts grouped to the cluster of the teacher were separated from the larger data. As a result of synthesizing the data, four categories were developed as meaning units (see the third column in Table 2): (1) structure of workload,

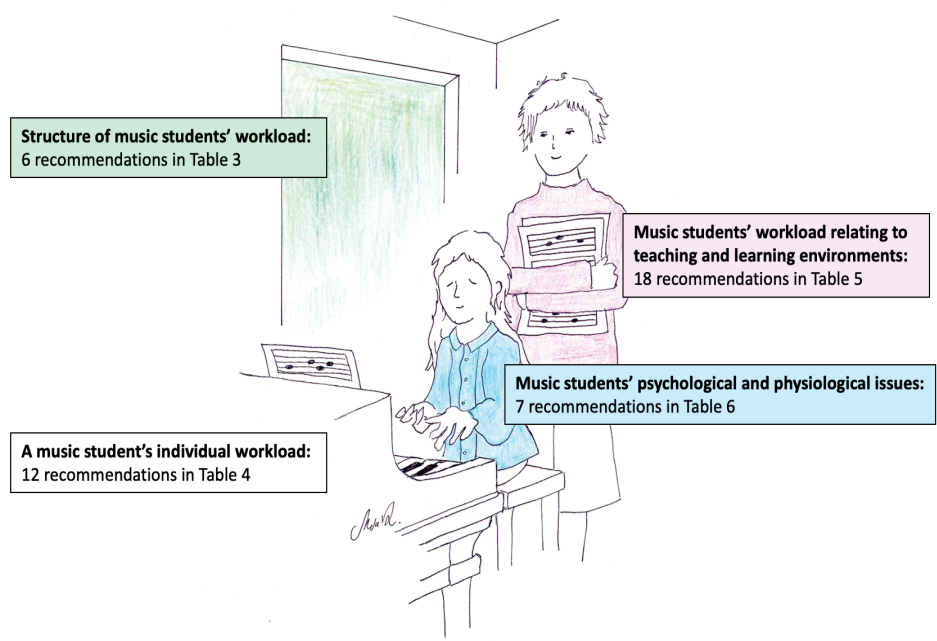
(2) a student's individual workload, (3) workload relating to teaching and learning environments, and (4) psychological and physiological issues. After the qualitative analysis with the descriptions of music students' experiences of their workload in the interaction with teachers, the synthesis process resulted as tools for teachers, which are presented in the Findings section.

**Table 2.** Thematic coding framework

13 literature-based codes*		14 interview-derived codes		Four categories of different workload meanings drawn from columns 1 and 2		Three overarching themes of proposed recommendations for good practice related to music students' workload in higher education
Structure of student workload Work	+	Competition Funding Musician career Social media	→	Structure of workload	→	Music students' ability to cope with their workload (including excerpts related to 'he student' in four of the categories to the left)***
Approaches to learning Experiences in the first year of study Flow Time management	+	Coping Enjoyment Meaning of musicianship** Practicing Religion	→	A student's individual workload		Tools for teachers to support music students to manage and cope with workload (including excerpts related to 'the teacher' in four of the categories to the left)****
One-to-one tuition Teaching and learning environments	+	Assessment Curriculum Group tuition Student feedback	→	Workload relating to teaching and learning environments		Developing learner-centered environments in higher music education (including excerpts related to 'the environment' in four of the categories to the left)*****
Burnout Health Musculoskeletal problems Performance anxiety Stress	+	Physical exercise	→	Psychological and physiological issues		
Results reported in * Jääskeläinen et al. (2022b), ** Jääskeläinen (in press) and Jääskeläinen (2022), *** Jääskeläinen et al. (2022a), **** Present study, and ***** Jääskeläinen et al. (2020).						

Findings

Based on the qualitative analysis of the music students’ diverse experiences, four categories emerged in the synthesis process as recommendations for tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education (Figure 1). We present examples of the music students’ experiences in each category. The following Tables 3–6 introduce numbered lists of the identified recommendations related to each category as tools for teachers (identified codes are written in *italics*).



**Figure 1.** Four categories including a total of 43 recommendations for tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education

*Structure of music students' workload*

Music students mention that usually no single teacher has a clear idea of how many courses comprise the total workload for their students, or how much time the assignments take in total, or how much stress working beside studying



causes to students. In addition, teachers of academic courses do not always understand how much effort is required from students when practicing for one-to-one tuition in their main subject. Students do not discuss these topics easily with their teachers, although students think that open discussion could help them:

*I have several compulsory instruments in my main subject studies. My study schedule was the tightest during my bachelor studies, when I had weekly one-to-one lessons in four different instruments. Then I had, of course, the compulsory group courses and choirs. I was extremely tired. The heaviest workload was the feeling of not having time to study and practice enough before the lessons. In those times I could not discuss these issues with my teachers, so despite my frustration, I do not know whether they were satisfied or not with my efforts.*

Competition between peer-students and social media pressure are also topics that students cannot openly discuss with their teachers. In addition, students mentioned that they do not get enough guidance about the diverse paths their musician career may take, and the guidance often follows the one-to-one teacher's own career:

*I therefore feel well taken care of in the here-and-now, but not in terms of future planning.*

**Table 3.** Structure of music students’ workload and tools for teachers

Recommendations for tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education
1) Teachers could acquire more knowledge about the whole <i>structure of workload</i> in studying music in higher education. Studying in higher education brings along overload, overlapping schedules, and performance anxiety for music students, particularly at the bachelor level. Research-based evidence on music students’ experiences could help teachers better understand students’ multifaceted circumstances with workload in their studies.
2) Teachers could have open discussions with music students about students’ experienced workload. Students feel that these discussions could help them to cope with their workload.
3) Teachers could be aware of students’ circumstances in relation to <i>funding</i> and <i>working</i> , in order to be able to understand students’ different situations and possible difficulties in devoting time and energy to studying.
4) Teachers could be clear and reasonable with their expectations for students, and balance these expectations with the students’ circumstances regarding their workload. Very often students feel pressure from teachers’ expectations for success.
5) Teachers could try to decrease the <i>competition</i> between music students. The field of music has a long tradition of competitive practices in studying music and performing, and nowadays <i>social media</i> increases the competitive atmosphere among students even more.
6) Teachers could give more individual support to music students with their <i>musician career</i> planning. Students wish that they could also learn about different career paths than the teachers’ own careers.

*A music student’s individual workload*

Music students are in a vulnerable position, and that is why it is important that teachers create a secure and safe atmosphere for them. Indeed, one-to-one teachers may be very close to students, and the only ones who can understand and support students with their specific music-related issues:

*I think for me as a learner that [interactions in which a teacher is like a friend] work because having that support from a teacher makes me feel like they’re in a mental role where they can be more than just a teacher.*

Students seem to prefer one-to-one tuition in music learning, because they have noticed that in group courses it is not easy for teachers to give an optimal workload for each student when there is variation in the level of students’ previous knowledge and skills:

*They [good teachers] have this kind of sincere will to help a student to improve, in a way [laughing], take the next steps right in the place where the student is at the moment.*

In studying music, there are special cases where students would need specific support from their teachers for coping. For example, completing a successful performance, concert exam, or a large study module often causes lots of feelings, which are mostly positive. However, sometimes it causes a feeling of emptiness that makes it difficult to continue studying for some students. In addition, students say that there is no relation between how difficult it has been to achieve the goal and how successful the results are. This unpredictable fact must be understood to be able to find the motivation to start the practicing process again and again without knowing in advance whether it will be worth it or not. Emotional conflicts with teachers are also difficult issues for students to cope with, and these situations take lots of energy to recover:

*After those [moments causing conflicts] it takes lots of energy to find a way to continue. For example one and a half weeks ago, I had a situation with my teacher that took three days afterwards to recover, somehow to get rid of angry feelings.*

However, it is not easy for students to solve this kind of issue directly with the teacher:

*I guess we [students] talk, with each other, about these [problematic] things [in studying], but we don't often raise the issues with the actual people who are in charge, because we don't think it's important enough, or we don't think that we should say that.*

When speaking about time management in courses, students say that workload may differ drastically depending on the teacher, especially in relation to homework. This is a serious problem if the required workload is unpredictable, and students need to adjust their practice time to be able to manage the assignments and exams. Students can sometimes spend a whole day practicing,

especially when they are studying many instruments, which can lead to psychological and musculoskeletal problems:

*It is considered normal that music students are overloaded, but I believe that it can be bad for mental and physical health.*

Students wish that teachers would help them find paths that emphasize their strengths. They enjoy receiving good feedback from teachers, particularly if the meaning of musicianship is more important to the teachers than the students' achievements and credits. For some students, religion is an important source for coping with workload and stress, however, it is not a topic which they share in their interactions with teachers.

**Table 4.** A music student's individual workload and tools for teachers

Recommendations for tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education
1) Teachers could best support students' <i>approaches to learning</i> by treating them as autonomous individuals. Students also need teachers' clear advice, for example with technical aspects in practicing that are tailored to their needs. Instead of the traditional master-apprenticeship model, where teachers have an authoritative role, students would like to receive such advice through personalized discussions in a learner-centered way.
2) By creating a secure and safe atmosphere, one-to-one teachers in particular could maintain a very close relationship with students. In addition to focusing on musician's skills, students would like to get teachers' mental support with specific music-related issues.
3) Teachers could show an interest in and understanding of students' situations with their workload. This might even help students to increase their workload and efforts in studying.
4) One-to-one teachers and teachers in academic studies and other studies could collaborate in developing their teaching and courses in order to better understand the total workload that practicing and studying entail for students. This may help students to enjoy both practicing and studying academic courses.
5) Teachers in group tuition could try to find ways to better support students according to their prior knowledge and skills, for example by dividing the big group into smaller groups. Students could then choose the group which best supports their learning.
6) Teachers could support students' enjoyable experiences in studying by helping them find suitable <i>coping</i> methods for specific workload connected to practicing and performing, such as emotional aspects that follow after performing.
7) Teachers could acquire skills to solve possible emotional conflicts with students, as such unsolved conflicts may negatively affect students' coping with their workload while taking up their time and decreasing their energy for studying and practicing.
8) Teachers could be trained to support students with their <i>time management</i> skills, thus helping students proactively discuss their workload and plan their courses and schedules for studying.
9) Teachers could give specific understanding and support for students with their <i>experiences in the first year of study</i> to help them find their individual study paths and to learn needed coping methods for the workload in studying at the higher education level.
10) To adjust course requirements to support students' healthy <i>practicing</i> methods, teachers could be more aware of the mental and physical load that practicing in addition to studying at the higher education level causes to students.
11) Teachers could aim to increase positive interaction with students, because these moments can create circumstances for students to feel <i>flow</i> and <i>enjoyment</i> in studying and affect students' <i>meaning of musicianship</i> .
12) For teachers, it is good to know that students may also have personal coping methods, such as <i>religion</i> (or spiritual orientations) that they do not necessarily discuss in their interactions with their teachers, despite such being an important part of their identities.

### *Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments*

Music students mention that there can be significant differences between teachers with respect to their skills as pedagogues. Students feel that the most beneficial learning experiences come from teaching and learning environments where they can experience “eureka!” moments in the interactions with their teachers:

*Cooperation with my one-to-one teacher is dialogical and fruitful because the teacher has the tools to support my development, and at the same time we share equally our experiences as musicians.*

In one-to-one tuition, the relationship between students and their teachers is closer than in many other educational situations. Students experience balanced workload when they have a good relationship with one-to-one teachers who support their motivation to learn, but also their capacity to love music and be enthusiastic about it. Students describe good one-to-one teachers as advanced musicians that help students to develop their skills, creativity, identity, and self-confidence as musicians. These teachers acknowledge students' learning and improvement, and keep an open, caring, and nurturing relationship by having “student's best interests in their heart.” They use constructive teaching methods. They give honest but friendly feedback that encourages students to be persistent and try to exceed their limits. They support students by challenging them but at the same time placing the main responsibility for learning on the students themselves. They give practical suggestions for repertoires and technical advice on how to solve problematic matters by approaching them in small steps. They also provide tips for time management, practicing, and future careers.

Students say that the quality varies a lot between different group courses. Very often lectures are felt to be boring because of the slow tempo, and time is wasted that could be used for practicing. A light workload is experienced if there are no home assignments in the course. Some students mention that some of these courses are the reason why they are not able to graduate on time. Compulsory attendance without flexibility, particularly if the student is working in addition to studying, is experienced as an increase in workload:

*Yes, I understand that students need to use lots of their time for this course, but there was also a requirement for compulsory attendance, like you must attend these lessons even if you had your own funeral [joking]. That caused a little bit of anxiety for an adult student studying a profession and so on. If I were a teacher, I would trust the students more, so that the teacher understands that these [lessons] are important but there are sometimes other things to do too.*

If the teachers do not prepare the content, assignments, and desired outcomes well, it increases workload for students:

*I cannot remember anything from it [group tuition lectures], I could not get anything because the lectures did not have any structure. So, they were not planned at all. I was feeling very frustrated and terribly... if I even think about it, I start to freeze up.*

In group courses, it is important that students feel that the teaching and learning environment is safe, so that they have the courage to be active among their peer-students:

*In that situation [in a group course] I try to be so that nobody recognizes me and asks questions. Because I have not felt that the environment is safe enough, so that I could say: sorry, but I cannot understand what this teaching is about.*

There is a particular problem in curriculums where the courses are packed from September to April in an overly intensive way. Rehearsals, concerts, lessons, lectures, projects, masterclasses, exams, and deadlines for assignments are usually packed close together. Many things happen at the same time at the end of semesters, whereas earlier in the year students are mostly left with nothing to do:

*The timings of our assessments overload me. In the sense that throughout the second term the bulk of our work is done involving the first-year repertoire exam, technical exam, ensemble exam, aural, harmony, alongside our essays. Our assessments are heavily weighted on the second term, meaning it is more stressful to get it all completed and to be ready for all these exams.*

The structure of the curriculum does not work when some courses that students do not consider important for them, for example language courses, take up the best practicing time in the middle of the week throughout the year. Students say that intensive courses and periodic tuition can help them plan their studying and practicing better than courses that continue throughout the year:

*I have been thinking that it could help [in managing workload] if courses could be completed in a different way. Because now all these courses continue throughout the year. So, if they continued for a shorter time, for example half a year. Or there would be more possibilities for intensive courses. Then you would not need to lock in your plans for such a long time into future. Then, if you get a good offer for a job or something else that is beneficial for your career, you could take that.*

In addition to receiving feedback, it is important for students to acquire the skill to provide constructive feedback. This can help them to understand and process the feedback that they receive from teachers:

*What is feedback about, which things affect feedback, which things are possibly mirrored in other people's feedback? When you hear feedback that is not very constructive, then you are able to recognize that it is not necessarily my problem. Actually, when listening to that feedback, there is nothing about my performance, instead, there is for example a favorite topic from the person who gives that feedback. This makes the situation easier to handle. However, not everyone has these tools to process feedback.*



Students appreciate assessment situations in which they can discuss things with their teachers. Particularly in exam concerts, student would like to be heard more:

*I feel that it would be a better way [to give feedback to students] if those who assess asked the students about their thoughts on how it went. And I think that in exam concerts and teaching evaluation situations there is a question for the students about how they feel, but it is more like a formal question. And then in exam concerts, when there are also other students listening to that feedback and three persons in the committee, a student cannot say that it feels terrible, and this is a very difficult process. So, everybody says that it feels good, and I have a nice feeling. I don't know what other people really think, but I feel that it is not that kind of a situation where I could talk about my real thoughts.*

Students think that they could better utilize the feedback if they had the possibility to record it to be used later as well:

*I have received very contradictory feedback every now and then. You cannot process that kind of feedback right after the exam concert. It would be great if that feedback could be received in a recorded version if you just understand to ask permission in that situation. It would be great to be able to get back to that feedback afterwards. Then you could also remember those positive things easier, because in the situation right after the exam concert you easily pick out and remember only the negative things.*

Some students feel that the older the teacher, the more “traditional” teaching methods they often use, and this makes it difficult to give feedback to the teachers. Students welcome the higher education culture that tries to change teaching to be more constructive, thus making it easier to give feedback to teachers:

*Somehow these older teachers have a quite old-fashioned conception of teaching. In a way, then they think that they have the greatest authority, and they can say whatever they want. Maybe some kind of conception of teaching is changing. And it changes slowly, and the change takes decades, and it requires teacher education and so on. So maybe it is more like a cultural change.*

**Table 5.** Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments and tools for teachers.

Recommendations for tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education
1) It is important for teachers to understand that students have mostly positive learning experiences in their <i>teaching and learning environments</i> , but some students have or have had unfortunate, unfavourable, or even abusive experiences at the hands of their music teachers, and these experiences may affect students' current workload.
2) Teachers' pedagogical skills, which increase and maintain good relationships with students, are experienced by students as an important part of good teaching and learning environments for enhancing their learning.
3) Teachers could try to find ways to plan and arrange compulsory academic studies and other studies so that schedules are informed in advance and the workload is appropriately in balance with students' practicing and one-to-one lessons.
4) In constructive <i>one-to-one tuition</i> teachers are able to: (a) support students' motivation to learn the specific subject, but also students' ability to love music and be enthusiastic about it, (b) give guidance as advanced musicians to help students to develop their skills, creativity, identity, and self-confidence as musicians, (c) acknowledge students' learning and improvement, and maintain an open, caring, and nurturing relationship by having "student's best in their heart", (d) have constructive teaching methods, (e) give honest but friendly feedback that encourages students to be persistent and try to exceed their limits, (f) support students with their challenges, but at the same time place the main responsibility for learning on students themselves, (g) give practical suggestions for repertoires and technical advice on how to solve problematic matters by approaching them in little parts, and (h) provide tips for time management, practicing, and future careers.
5) One-to-one teachers could find ways to be demanding "in a good way" that motivates students to practice harder and to be productive, as too much pressure and demands may cause anxiety and stress for students and hinder feeling enjoyment in studying.
6) One-to-one teachers could be aware of those situations in which students feel that negative interaction takes place between them and their teachers. This happens when one-to-one tuition teachers: (a) use hierarchical power and do not have pedagogical skills to support learner-centeredness, (b) do not develop and update their methods, (c) are dismissive, cruel, and too critical, (d) do not accept any criticism from the students, and are difficult to communicate with, (e) are not able to give mental support, and (f) are not clear about the desired learning outcomes.
7) It is important that teachers understand how meaningful the relationships with the one-to-one teachers are for students, thus it is very frustrating for the students if the chemistry in that relationship is not working well.
8) In <i>group tuition</i> , students find the content useful if teachers plan the courses to be connected to learning practical skills as a musician and their future careers. For example, students think that well-being courses are meaningful because they are useful to students themselves.
9) Teachers could plan group tuition courses to be: (a) interesting, (b) flexible in regards to compulsory attendance, and (c) well-prepared with regard to desired outcomes, content, and assignments.
10) Teachers could find ways to create a safe learning environment, so that students have the courage to be active among their peer-students.
11) Teachers could be careful to plan their courses so that the credits and workload are in balance.
12) Teachers could be aware that there is variation in students' opinions about group tuition and academic studies. Some students enjoy these courses, but some students do not consider them to be useful at all because of the content or the teacher's pedagogical skills.
13) Teachers could be active in <i>curriculum</i> development work in order to understand the total workload that all of the compulsory and elective courses and practicing entail for students. By pursuing such developmental work, teachers would also have the possibility to affect the curriculum and students' workload. Very often there are too many courses and deadlines packed into the same time at the end of the semesters; thus, developing more intensive courses that take place throughout the semesters could ease students' workload.
14) In <i>assessment</i> situations, teachers could provide higher quality feedback for students. Students are glad to receive feedback from teachers, and they want assessments to be clear, easy to understand, focused, and constructive.
15) It is important for teachers to understand that harsh and overly critical feedback affects students' mental health. Good feedback encourages and motivates students to practice even harder, and constructive critical feedback pushes students to increase practicing time. When students are overloaded, they are not able to handle feedback of any sort.
16) Teachers could engage students in discussion to a greater degree, and also ask their opinions in the assessment situations. Students also find it useful to learn how to give constructive feedback. In exam concerts, students could better utilise feedback if they could record the process for later review.
17) Teachers could be involved in developing <i>student feedback</i> systems, because students often think that the questions in the feedback forms are too general. In addition, it is important that students' anonymity is fully protected in feedback systems, so that they can give honest feedback.
18) Teachers could encourage students to give more feedback, because it can change traditional conceptions of teaching toward a more constructive teaching culture.

### *Music students' psychological and physiological issues*

Well-being courses and appointments with study psychologists have helped music students to cope with stress:

*I used to have constant anxiety that affected my life a lot, but now, after some well-being courses and seeing a study psychologist, I have decreased my anxiety levels.*

In particular, the final recital of the degree program can cause performance anxiety, and the attitudes of peer-students and teachers can increase that:

*One prolonged stressful situation was the run-up to the final recital for my degree. The concept of the recital itself was not stressful, as I'm an experienced performer, but the social view of the individuals at the college was. You are continually reminded of them by your colleagues, and you often compare preparation with them.*

Students say that when there are courses related to body awareness and practicing and playing techniques available, these courses help them to avoid and cope with musculoskeletal problems:

*I did have pain, but it was when I was in my second and first year. I don't have as much anymore because I have a stronger understanding of technique and how the body works, really, yeah, I don't have much pain anymore. Well, last time there was someone who gave lessons and lectures on anxiety. Basically, a visiting professor that gives lectures on anxiety and body awareness and topics around that. We also have Alexander technique lecturers giving lessons and classes. Yeah, so, I think it's quite sufficient for me.*

Very often teachers keep music and sports separate in their teaching although in ergonomics courses physical exercise is a recurrent topic:

*I remember that in one of the courses we had a topic about ergonomics for one day. But very seldom do one-to-one teachers give advice about sport and exercise. That situation is very common. Everybody says that we should exercise, but not many of us have practical ways to do it. Or how many teachers have such an active hobby in sports and exercising that they would have enough experience to guide students to do this and that. So, very often music and sports are kept separate. It is a long tradition.*

Some of the students have had physical injuries caused by playing and that have affected their health. They experienced that teachers are able to be supportive in this kind of situation, when students have to take a break from practicing. Particularly long rehearsal and performing periods, such as orchestral periods, may cause physical overload and thus affect students' health. Competitions, concerts, writing assignments, and some lessons can also cause stress, and students must find ways to cope with stress and time management to be able to balance studying and other aspects of life in a healthy way. Some students feel that it is easy to approach teachers to ask advice with health-related issues:

*I have sought help through the counselling team available at college and talked to a variety of teachers to ask for more help [with health issues].*

However, some students try to find tools by themselves:

*I have learnt quite a lot by examining things by myself. I think that almost all learning happens by examining things by myself and finding things. But, of course, I get some kind of tips from one-to-one teachers and master classes and, for example, from the basics in Alexander technique. I find those kinds of tips in different places and then I try them.*

**Table 6.** Music students' psychological and physiological issues and tools for teachers

<b>Recommendations for tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education</b>
1) It is important to teach students in higher education how to deal with <i>stress</i> , because too much stress is often connected to overload and affects most of the students' physical and mental health, and can even lead to <i>burnout</i> .
2) Teachers could be aware of causes of stress in students, such as relationships with peer-students, teachers' teaching approaches, friend and familial issues, financial issues, cumulative assignments with deadlines, unclear expectations, exam concerts, performing, and finding time and space for practicing. Stress causes many symptoms, such as sleeping problems, physical issues, unhealthy eating habits, panic attacks, anxiety, and feeling paralyzed. Teachers could adjust their teaching so that it does not cause too much stress for students.
3) Teachers could actively search for information about well-being courses and psychological support for students, so that they can guide students to seek help with overload, stress, and burnout. Students do not easily speak about their feeling of stress with teachers.
4) Teachers could be aware of different aspects of students' <i>performance anxiety</i> , which is connected to both psychological anxiety and depression and to physical bodily reactions. Support from teachers in defining reasonable expectations could help students to cope with performance anxiety. Providing time to get used to performing also helps to decrease performance anxiety.
5) Teaching body awareness and practicing and playing techniques could help students to avoid <i>musculoskeletal problems</i> in practicing and performing. Support from teachers is important when students' musculoskeletal problems force them to interrupt their practicing schedule and plan everything in a new way.
6) Teachers could discuss with students about ergonomics and practical ways to do <i>physical exercises</i> for increasing well-being as musicians.
7) Teachers could get training to support students with their <i>health</i> issues. Students appreciate teachers' understanding when mental or physical health issues or other challenges in their life affect their studying and practicing.

## Discussion

In this section, we discuss each category of tools presented in the Findings section in relation to previous research and participants' lived experiences. We also connect each category with the constructivist principles in teaching practice in higher music education (López-Iñiguez, 2017).

### *Structure of music students' workload and interaction with teachers*

We found tools that could help teachers to constructively develop their interaction with students concerning the structure of music students' workload

in higher education. The constructive tools presented in this category focuses on the students' knowledge and capabilities and cooperation through more dialogical learning spaces (López-Íñiguez, 2017).

It is crucial that teachers have research-based evidence about the whole *structure of workload* in studying music in higher education, because music students feel that teachers seldom understand students' total workload. Students do not discuss their experiences of workload and stress easily with their teachers, although students think that open discussion could help them to “know whether they [teachers] were satisfied or not with my efforts.” It is important for teachers to be aware of the students' circumstances in relation to *funding* and *working*, so that teachers can balance their expectations according to the students' workload. *Competition* between peer-students is also something that teachers could try to decrease, because competitions, auditions, and *social media* increase the competitive atmosphere, particularly in the field of music. For example, Gaunt et al. (2021) suggests that teachers should arrange democratic learning situations, which may increase music students' well-being, confidence, and enjoyment with peers more than the master–apprentice approach.

In general, music students are very happy with the level of one-to-one tuition, and they feel that they are “well taken care of in the here-and-now, but not in terms of future planning,” thus teachers could provide more individual support for music students' with their *musician career* planning. The results of a study by López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2021) also indicate that music students know that they should develop their professional skills, but they cannot find support for this in their studies in higher education.

#### *A music student's individual workload and interaction with teachers*

We found tools that could help teachers to constructively develop their interaction with students concerning a music student's individual workload. The constructive tools presented in this category may activate, stimulate, and develop the student's mental processes through reflection and scaffolding, and help students to learn to autonomously regulate and manage their own cognitive and motor processes (López-Íñiguez, 2017).

Teachers could best support students' *approaches to learning* in a learner-centered way by helping a student to "take the next steps right in the place where the student is at the moment"; for example, teachers could help students to choose a group that best supports their learning. It is important to create a secure and safe atmosphere for teaching. When teachers understand and discuss with students about their situation with their workload, this might even help students to be able to increase their workload and their efforts to study and practice. Kember and Leung (2006) also found in their research that when teachers can enhance constructive cooperative learning with their teaching, it is possible to make more demanding expectations of students' learning without making them feel overloaded.

Teachers' support is important in helping students to find suitable *coping* methods for specific workload connected to practicing and performing, such as processing emotional aspects after performing, solving possible conflicts between a student and a teacher, and learning *time management* skills. This support can lead to a long and trustful relationship between a student and a teacher, for example teachers are "in a mental role where they can be more than just a teacher." Particularly during their *experiences in the first year of study*, students need support from teachers to find their individual study paths and to learn needed coping methods with workload in studying higher education level. For example, teachers could utilize reflective, creative, and transgressive approaches to encourage first year music students to explore diverse and alternative ways to learn, practice, and prepare their careers (López-Íñiguez and Burnard, 2022). It is important that teachers, both in academic courses and in one-to-one tuition, adjust course requirements collaboratively to support students' healthy *practicing* methods. Teachers can especially help students to learn techniques and structures for practicing that are based on the learner's varying needs and circumstances (Gaunt, 2010).

With positive interaction, teachers can create circumstances for students to feel *flow* and *enjoyment* in studying and affect a student's constructed *meaning of musicianship*. Indeed, students' perceived competence and intrinsic motivation may increase flow in practicing and playing an instrument (Valenzuela et al., 2018). According to Bakker (2005), music teachers'



experiences of flow coincide with those of their students, and therefore teachers can be sources for the happiness and motivation of their students. Students experience learning in very different ways, and teaching methods should thus be adapted and modified in a learner-centered way (Reid, 2001). We found in the present study that students also have different ways of coping, and that they have personal coping methods, such as *religion*, that they do not necessarily discuss in their interactions with teachers.

*Music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments and interaction with teachers*

We found tools that could help teachers to constructively develop their interaction with students concerning music students' workload relating to teaching and learning environments. The constructive tools presented in this category may support students' ability to build unique and inspiring representations of the music they play, through the guidance and supervision of teachers who focus on the students' reflective, metacognitive, emotional, and affective processes (López-Íñiguez, 2017).

Students have mostly positive learning experiences in their *teaching and learning environments*, for example “cooperation with my one-to-one teacher is dialogical and fruitful because the teacher has tools to support my development, and at the same time we share equally our experiences as musicians.” However, some students have had negative experiences in their interactions with teachers, which may affect their current workload. Pecén et al. (2017) argue that one of the most salient challenges for music students in their learning is related to abusive or bad teachers, and having good teachers is considered to be good fortune. Therefore, it is important that teachers have and use pedagogical skills that increase and maintain good relationships with students.

It is also crucial, both in academic courses and one-to-one tuition, that teachers plan courses with appropriate workload and communicate schedules in advance to best support students' concentration on practicing and one-to-one-lessons. According to Giles (2009), a teacher's continuing professional development is essential to enabling teachers to update their pedagogical skills and create more responsive teaching and learning environments, as well as learning communities within programs.

In *one-to-one tuition* teachers should support both students' practical skills, such as technical tools in music practicing, and psychological aspects, such as motivation and self-confidence as musicians. Hence, teachers should focus on developing their relationship with a student by considering each learner's needs, dependency, self-sufficiency, and institutional teaching-learning environment (Carey and Grant, 2015). One-to-one tuition is a large part of music students' learning, and one-to-one teachers are very important to their students. Thus, it is very frustrating for the students if the chemistry and relationship are not working well. According to Gaunt (2011), the power dynamics in one-to-one teaching situations may make it difficult for students to speak about difficulties in their interactions with the teacher and start the process of finding a more suitable teacher.

In *group tuition*, students find the content useful if teachers plan the courses to be connected to learning practical skills as a musician and their future careers. Students also want their group courses, particularly in academic studies, to be interesting, flexible regarding compulsory attendance, and well-prepared about intended outcomes, content, and assignments. Teachers should be active in *curriculum* development work to understand the total workload of students. When teachers take part in such developmental work, they have the possibility to affect the curriculum and overlapping course workloads in a very important way, for example "assessments are heavily weighted on the second term, meaning it is more stressful to get it all completed and to be ready for all of these exams."

Students would like to receive more feedback from their teachers, and the feedback should be clear, easy to understand, focused, and constructive. They also want the *assessment* situations to include more discussion with the teachers. Accordingly, Hernesniemi et al. (2017) suggest that teachers should build encouraging relationships with their students and set assessments that support students' learning processes, because these aspects help students to perceive their workload as being suitable. *Student feedback* systems could be developed in collaboration with teachers so that the questions in the feedback forms serve the development of teaching. Teachers could encourage students to give more feedback, because it can help develop traditional conceptions of teaching toward a more constructive teaching culture.

### *Music students' psychological and physiological issues and interaction with teachers*

We found tools that could help teachers to constructively develop their interaction with students concerning music students' psychological and physiological issues. The constructive tools presented in this category may promote student meta-cognition and self-regulation (López-Íñiguez, 2017).

It is important to teach students in higher education how to deal with *stress*, because it causes many symptoms, such as sleeping problems, that negatively affect their studying; as one student describes, stress caused “constant anxiety that affected my life a lot” and that may also affect the experienced workload (Jääskeläinen et al., 2020). In addition, too much stress also affects the students' physical and mental health and can even lead to *burnout*. Therefore, teachers should be aware of causes of stress in students, and actively search for information about well-being courses and psychological support for students to be able to guide students to seek help with overload, stress, and burnout.

Biasutti and Concina (2014) highlight that it is important to understand the psychological processes involved in studying music and music performance. To support music students' well-being, music teachers should also concentrate on the development of students' meta-cognitive abilities and psychological skills, for example by helping students to cope with psychological challenges in performing. In particular, teachers should be aware of different aspects of students' *performance anxiety*, which is connected to both psychological anxiety and depression, as well as physical bodily reactions. For example, a study by Miller and Chesky (2004) showed that it can be challenging for music teachers to notice music students' performance anxiety. In addition, particularly for undergraduate students and women, cognitive anxiety can be a challenging problem, and therefore cognitive-based strategies are important in prevention and intervention methods. In the present study, music students seemed to prefer support and tips from their one-to-one teachers to prevent and cope with the performance anxiety. Thus, higher music education institutions should carefully consider, in the light of research on performance anxiety, what the support

should consist of, who should deliver it, and what the evidence is that the support is effective.

Teaching body awareness and practicing and playing techniques could help students to avoid *musculoskeletal problems* in practicing and performing. Teachers could discuss with students about ergonomics and practical methods of *physical exercise* for increasing well-being as musicians, because according to a student's experience, it is a pity that "very seldom do one-to-one teachers give advice about sport and exercise." Teachers could also get training to support students with their *health* issues, because students seem to trust teachers' help as students have "talked to a variety of teachers to ask for more help [with health issues]."

### *Limitations*

We address certain limitations in our study. The first notion concerns the generalization of the findings. Because our empirical data was gathered in two countries, the findings cannot be generalized outside of those countries. The second limitation concerns the use of self-reported experiences by music students; it could be valuable for researchers to collect complementary sources of data concerning teachers' experiences of the workload connected to the interactions between music students and teachers, for the sake of triangulating the students' experiences, for example in line with research by Gaunt (2011). Instrumental/vocal teachers and teachers of academic subjects not necessarily welcome the changes which are suggested by the students. However, it is a question of progressively implementing the conceptual change as proposed in the present study. It is crucial that students' self-reported experiences are not considered as biased judgments of what teachers should do to help them. Music students should be treated as experts because they have been students for a long time and performed at professional levels. Many of them also teach while studying, so the environment and the pedagogies underlying the music classroom are familiar to them.

## *Implications*

Our study has several developmental implications. The emphasis on music students' experiences offers a way to strengthen students' voices so that they can be integrated into developmental work in teaching. Our study's main implication is to present tools that teachers can use to take a constructive approach that would provide more spaces for learner-centeredness and agency for the music students. Music students in the present study seemed to perceive a dichotomy between traditional and constructivist teaching in their individual lessons—some of the participants even used the concepts of “traditional” and “constructive” teaching in their open-ended answers and interviews. Previous research in different music education levels has shown similar findings (Pozo et al., 2022). Most of the participants in this study found constructivist teaching supporting their coping with the experienced workload better than traditional teaching, both in the one-to-one lessons and in group tuition. More constructive teaching is not always preferred by everyone, but it seems to help teachers to motivate and activate students, as well as to create a positive learning environment (Pozo et al., 2022). The findings of the present study could be utilized, for example, in teacher training, in order to change teacher-centered and product-oriented methods of teaching music, which should be designed to promote complex processes of conceptual change (e.g., Vosniadou, 2013). López-Íñiguez et al. (2014; see also Pozo et al. (2022)) argue that a conceptual change (in line with Vosniadou (2013)) would make it possible to implement progressive changes in teaching practice, moving from traditional regular, repetitive activities toward more holistic instructional practices. Practical tools for teachers may particularly help those teachers and students who experience difficulty in consciously accessing their cognitive and metacognitive processes when the stability and internalization of their conceptions make them strongly resistant to change (Strauss and Shilony, 1994; Atkinson and Claxton, 2000; Pozo et al., 2006). This empirical research on student workload, stress, and coping, when connected to the principles of a conceptual change (in line with Vosniadou, 2013), may also support the development of instruction toward more democratic practices between master and apprentice in higher music

education (see for example Gaunt and Westerlund (2013)). The institutions should make action plans to inform who are responsible for making all teachers aware of the structure of music students' workload, as well who should be responsible for making the individual teachers aware of each individual student's workload. More collaboration and cooperation between professionals within institution should be enhanced to raise awareness how to provide or signpost students to well-being courses and psychological support. In addition, time should be allocated within the contracts of hourly-paid teachers in order to make them aware of these same principles. The suggested constructive tools informed by this research should be disseminated to music teachers via policy documents and informative paper sheets, but also hosting a permanent website at the institutions. On the basis of the findings, institutions could select the most important tools depending on the current situation related to their students' workload.

## **Conclusions**

The findings presented in this study provide research-based evidence on music students' experiences of workload, stress, and coping in higher education in Finland and the United Kingdom. We posed one research question: What constructive tools for teachers can support music students in managing and coping with their experienced workload in higher education? Excerpts from the research participants' lived experiences show how the music students have their own issues in the interactions with teachers concerning (1) the structure of workload, (2) a music student's individual workload, (3) workload relating to teaching and learning environments, and (4) psychological and physiological issues. A total of 43 constructive tools for teachers were created based on these music students' experiences. It is important to continue research on these areas of workload, stress, and coping in order to better support music students' learning and their interactions with teachers in higher education.

## **Data availability statement**

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because only part of the anonymized datasets are available by request to the corresponding author. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to TJ, [tuula.jaaskelainen@uniarts.fi](mailto:tuula.jaaskelainen@uniarts.fi).

## **Ethics statement**

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by University of the Arts Helsinki Research Ethics Committee in Finland and Conservatoires United Kingdom Research Ethics Committee. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## **Author contributions**

TJ had the idea for the article, conducted the data collection and data analysis, and drafted the manuscript, tables, and figures. GL-Í ensured the validity and reliability of the process and performed 5% of the qualitative data-analysis, actively participated in the interpreting data and drawing conclusions, and critically reviewed the work. Both authors approved the version for publication and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions relating to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work were appropriately investigated and resolved.

## **Funding**

This work was funded by the Sibelius Academy Music Education Doctoral Programme and supported by the Center for Educational Research and Academic Development in the Arts (CERADA), University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## Acknowledgments

We thank all those university music students who participated in this study. We would like to give special thank to Heidi Westerlund and Kai Lehtikainen for their additional expertise as co-supervisors of the first author, and to Michelle Phillips for her contribution to ethical approval and data collection procedures in the United Kingdom. We also thank language editor Christopher TenWolde and visual artist Milja Kuusela.

## Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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Supplemental material for article “Tools for teachers to support music students in managing and coping with their workload in higher education” (Jääskeläinen, T., & López-Íñiguez, G.)

Supplementary Appendix 1 is available in this dissertation as “Appendix 7: Questionnaire” and “Appendix 8: Interview Guide”









## Appendix 5: Ethical Statements



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Research Ethics Committee  
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Helsinki  
September 18, 2018  
Lauri Väkevä

### Statement of the Research Ethics Committee

Tuula Jääskeläinen has requested a statement from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Arts Helsinki regarding the ethicality of her research project.

On the basis of the statement request and the included information of project, the Research Ethics Committee finds that the researcher is engaged to follow ethically sustainable study methods and procedures in his project. According to the Committee, the project can be granted the research permit on the basis of ethical review.

However, the Committee suggests that the researcher clarifies how the data without personally identifiable information may be opened for future research and how it will be stored.

Helsinki, September 18, 2018

**Lauri Väkevä**, PhD  
Vice-Rector  
Professor  
Chair of the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Arts Helsinki  
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## CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This certificate confirms that the application made by **Tuula Jääskeläinen**  
to the CUK Research Ethics Committee was **APPROVED**.

Project title: **Students' experienced workload in higher music education**

Date approved: **26 February 2019**

Signed: 

Date: 26.02.2019

Professor Emma Redding

*(Chair of CUK Research Ethics Committee)*

## Appendix 6: Participant Information Form



MuTri Doctoral School, Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki (Uniarts), Finland

### Students' Experienced Workload in Higher Music Education

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to take part in my research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me/us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like to receive more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to participate.

**Topic of the research project:** Students' Experienced Workload in Higher Music Education

**Ethical approval:** The research project has been reviewed and ethical approval granted by the Research Ethics Committees in Finland (Uniarts REC 18 September 2018) and in the United Kingdom (CUK REC 26 February 2019).

**General description of the study method:** This research project focuses on students' experienced workload in Bachelor and Master level studies in higher music education. The first phase of this project in 2019 will consist of the *Workload and Coping Styles questionnaire* which will be distributed to all Bachelor and Master level students in your higher music education institution via internet. The participants have the option of omitting certain questions in the questionnaire if they do not want to answer them. The second phase in 2019 includes a 45-minute, in-depth interview with five volunteer Bachelor and Master level students in your higher music education institution. The interviews will be audio recorded. The participants will not be recorded in the interviews if they refuse to give consent. The recordings will not be played when I come to report the research. If this study has to be terminated for any reason and participants and/or the contribution they have made are no longer required for the research they will be told, and explained why.

**Purpose of the study:** The primary aim of this study is to examine how students experience workload in their studies and how their experienced workload is related to their proactive coping styles in different music genres. The secondary aim is to indicate how this kind of research-based knowledge can be utilised in the pedagogical development in the higher music education institution, for example in the development of teaching, curricula, study programs, and courses. The processing of personal data is necessary for public interest to conduct scientific research. While people taking part in this study are unlikely to experience any personal benefit as a result, I hope my research will encourage students to reflect on their own experiences of workload, proactive coping styles, and experiences of instruction, by offering the participants a possibility to give their contact details in the questionnaire for receiving feedback on their individual scores as well as on the main overall results of the study at the end of 2021.

#### Research group:

Responsible researcher:

M.Ed., Doctoral Candidate in Music Education Tuula Jääskeläinen (Sibelius Academy, Uniarts)

Supervisors:

Director of Research Centre, Dr. Kai Lehtikainen (CERADA, Uniarts)

Adjunct Professor, Researcher Guadalupe López-Íñiguez (Sibelius Academy, Uniarts)

Professor Heidi Westerlund (Sibelius Academy, Uniarts)

**Research group's experience of the method:** The supervisors in the research group have experience in several previous studies in higher music education and arts education. There are no reported incidents of ethical misconduct.

**Funding:** Center for Educational Research and Academic Development in the Arts (CERADA, Uniarts): ArtsEqual Research Initiative by the Academy of Finland's Strategic Research Council under Grant 293199/2015. Funding period 2015-2021.

**Time commitment:** Participation in this study will take 30-60 minutes.

**Suitability for the study:** Legally competent adults are allowed as participants. The following criteria is required: A student in higher music education institution.

**Compensation:** Compensation will be paid only if required by the participating institution.

**Voluntary participation:** Participation in the study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide if you want to take part in my project or not. If you don't want to take part, or you change your mind about taking part, having agreed to do so, you won't be penalized in any way. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you still have the right to discontinue participation at any time, without obligation to disclose any specific reasons. You can withdraw either by physically leaving and/or by withdrawing consent for me to use whatever contribution you have already made to the research. Again, you won't be penalized in any way.

**The data subject has the following rights:**

- Right to obtain information on the processing of personal data, unless an exception has been provided for by law
- Right of access
- Right to rectification
- Right to erasure (right to be forgotten). Not applied when legal basis of processing is a task in the public interest.
- Right to restriction of processing
- Right to object to the processing
- Right to data portability when legal basis of processing is consent
- Right to withdraw consent to processing of personal data
- Right not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing. Because data is being processed for the purposes of scientific research, the purpose of processing is not to use the data in decision-making related to the participant.

To exercise his or her rights, the data subject should contact the Data Protection Officer, or the research study contact person.

**Possible risks and their prevention:**

- 1) Participants are not likely to experience any lifestyle restrictions and there are no physical or mental security risks in the research situations because data collection is conducted via interviews and questionnaires (internet-based SurveyPal tool secured by Uniarts).
- 2) Participants are not at any risk of being offended, shocked or harmed by the research. If unforeseen risks arise during the course of the project, I will bring these to the attention of the participants and ensure that I have their informed consent to continue their participation. Those needing help and emotional support can contact the counsellors in their home institution. Also, in the UK, Musicians Helpline 0808 802 8008 offers support free of charge, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In Finland, Kriisipuhelin 010 195 202 offers support seven days a week and calls are charged according to the telephone operator.
- 3) Information that is collected about participants for the purposes of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Information the participants provide will only be attributed to them by name with their explicit permission.

**Communication with the research staff during data collection:** The participants can ask the responsible researcher or supervisor at any time if they have any questions about the study or participation.

**Description of the study situation:** The participant's experiences as a student in a higher music education of workload, proactive coping styles and instruction will be asked about with a 30-minute internet-based questionnaire which will be sent during the spring term 2019 to all students in the

institution and with a 45-minute face-to-face interview with five volunteer students in March-April 2019. The language used is either English or Finnish. These data are not used to assess participant, but rather to survey students' experiences in higher music education. Some areas for discussion in the interviews may include:

- Participant's experiences of what it is like to be a student at a higher music education level.
- Workload and stress the participant experiences as a higher music education level student.
- Experiences and methods the participant employs to cope with the studies.
- Participant's experience of participating in this research.

**Collection of data:**

- 1) Data via an internet-based questionnaire: sex, background information related to studies and work, and opinions and experiences.
- 2) Interview data: opinions and experiences.
- 3) Participant's identifying information includes an email address or telephone number for the purpose of participating in the interview or receiving transcription or individual/overall results of the study. The interviews will be undertaken by the responsible researcher. Interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed. A copy of the transcription will be made available to the interviewee with an opportunity to edit or make additions in any way they feel appropriate before approving the transcript. All collected information during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and participants will not be able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications.

**Who will process your personal data:**

Recipients processing data for the University of the Arts Helsinki (Uniarts): Services having a contract with Uniarts for transcribing, data analysis and language revising.

**Transferring data outside EU:** Data will not be transferred outside the EU.

**Anonymity, secure storage, confidentiality:** This study has a research plan which is made by the responsible researcher Tuula Jääskeläinen with the guidance of the supervisors. The data will be used for scientific purposes only and are confidential. All data will be anonymised. All references to the interview data and any direct quotations used from the interviews will be made anonymous in the dissemination. Participant's identifying information will be processed only by the responsible researcher. When the participant offers an email address or telephone number, the responsible researcher replaces the identifying information with codes. No explicit clues of the participant's identity will be left to the stored data. All data will be stored securely on a password-protected computer that is accessible only to the members of the research group. Where data transfer is necessary between the members of the research group, this will be done by appropriate institutional file transfer tools rather than by email or on data sticks. After the results have been sent to the participants, all identifying information (email addresses and telephone numbers) will be deleted from the data. Data without identifying information will be used for additional or subsequent research for unlimited period with participant's permission. If the participant does not provide permission for additional research, participant's data will be destroyed in the end of 2021. The data management plan has been generated by the Tuuli Project and the IDA data and metadata storage is used in this study. Data protection impact assessment has been carried out via the PIA software. Permission of study and ethical approval have been reviewed and granted for this study to be carried out according to the participating institutions' research integrity guidelines. I will use the contribution that the participants make to this study in conference presentations, PhD thesis, printed and online reports, journal articles and books.

**Measures taken in cases of unexpected incidental findings:** This study has not been designed to provide clinical information. In case the data reveal an illness, or any other incidental finding which you are not aware of, a medical expert will be consulted about the finding, and based on his/her estimation you shall be forwarded to further examinations as appropriate.

**Insurance coverage:** Participants are covered by their university-level insurances for accidents and damages during the tests.

**Contact details:**

The University of the Arts Helsinki is the data controller in this research.

In question regarding the research you can contact the responsible researcher: Tuula Jääskeläinen, [tuula.jaaskelainen@uniarts.fi](mailto:tuula.jaaskelainen@uniarts.fi), tel. +358 45 7875 3470. You can also contact the supervisor [guadalupe.lopez.iniguez@uniarts.fi](mailto:guadalupe.lopez.iniguez@uniarts.fi).

You can contact the University of the Arts Helsinki data protection officer if you have questions about data processing and protection: Antti Orava, [tietosuoja@uniarts.fi](mailto:tietosuoja@uniarts.fi), tel. +358 50 358 8681.

If you notice a violation of the data protection legislation, you can contact the Data Protection Ombudsman (<http://www.tietosuoja.fi/en>).

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf. You will be given this information sheet and the signed consent form to keep. Thank you for reading this.

On behalf of the research group

Date and place \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal investigator Tuula Jääskeläinen

**MuTri Doctoral School, Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki (Uniarts), Finland**

**Students' Experienced Workload in Higher Music Education**

**CONSENT FORM**

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in this study.

I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet dated \_\_\_\_\_ for the research project in which I have been asked to participate.

I have understood that the material and research data is gathered for scientific purposes only. The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing. I have received sufficient information about the process of the study.

I understand that my participation in the study is completely voluntary and that I have the right to discontinue my participation at any stage without any reason and consequences. I have the option of omitting certain questions if I do not want to answer them.

I understand that I can ask the responsible researcher or supervisor at any time if I have questions about the study or my participation.

It has been explained to me that a designated researcher will, at my request, provide me with additional details of the general principles of the study and its progress or of the results concerning myself.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured by disguising my identity. I have been explained who are the different parties involved in the research that have access to my data. I understand the practices of storing, protecting, and using the data.

I know that the collected data will not be presented to a third party without my written consent. I know that the research group may ask for a professional consultation on possible unexpected incidental findings without separate consent, provided that the anonymity of the results has been ensured. Any type of commercial exploitation of the results is prohibited.

(Please tick one box:)

☐ I give permission for my data to be recorded in the described manner. Recordings of me will not be played in the course of reporting the research.

☐ I do not give permission for my data to be recorded.

(Please tick one box:)

☐ I give permission for information from me to be attributed to me by name.

☐ I do not give permission for information from me to be attributed to me by name.



I understand that a fully anonymized subset of the data may be released to other research groups for unlimited period for the purposes mentioned above, if I give permission to it.

(Please tick one box:)

☐ I agree to releasing anonymized extracts from my data for unlimited period.

☐ I agree to releasing anonymized extracts from my data for unlimited period only if I am informed about the research groups in question. I have been told what that subset will be.

☐ I do not agree to releasing extracts from my data. My data will be destroyed in the end of 2021.

I understand that extracts from possible interviews may be quoted in subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

☐ I agree to anonymized quotation/publication of extracts from my interview.

☐ I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview.

By my signature, I confirm my participation in this study and agree to volunteer as a study subject.

Date and place \_\_\_\_\_

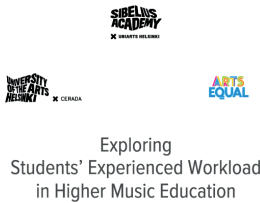
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's contact details \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 7: Questionnaire



QUESTIONNAIRE 2019

Dear student,

Thank you for considering taking part in my PhD research project in Music Education at the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland, under the supervision of Director of Research Centre, Dr. Kai Lehtikainen, Adjunct Professor, Researcher Guadalupe López-Higuera and Professor Heidi Westerlund.

My study focuses on students' experienced workload in Bachelor and Master level studies in higher music education. A student's workload can be affected by diverse aspects, such as course difficulty, pace, time needed for contact and independent study, assessments, teaching, resources, and student characteristics such as ability, motivation, and effort.

I have asked you to respond to my questionnaire because you are a student in a higher music education institution. The primary aim of this study is to examine how students experience workload during their studies and the extent that students' workload is related to their proactive coping styles in different music genres. The secondary aim is to indicate how this kind of research-based knowledge can be utilised to develop teaching, curricula, study programmes, and courses. This study will also encourage students to reflect on their own experiences of workload, proactive coping styles, and experiences of instruction by offering

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Tel. +358 (0)45 7875 3470

I understand that a fully anonymized subset of the data may be released to other research groups for unlimited period for the purposes mentioned above, if I give permission to it. Please tick one box:

☐ I agree to releasing anonymized extracts from my data for an unlimited period.

☐ I do not agree to releasing extracts from my data. My data will be destroyed at the end of 2021.

I understand that extracts from possible open-ended answers may be quoted in subsequent publications if I give permission to it. Please tick one box:

☐ I agree to anonymized quotation/publication of extracts from my open-ended answers.

☐ I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my open-ended answers.

the participants the opportunity to receive feedback on their individual scores as well as on the overall results of the study. This may promote equity in pedagogical practices by supporting health, well-being, and conceptual change in higher music education institutions.

The first phase of this project will consist of this Workload and Coping Styles questionnaire, which will be distributed to Bachelor and Master level students in higher music education institutions in the United Kingdom and Finland during the spring term 2019. The questionnaire includes five short sections and it takes about 30 minutes to fill in the form. The data you provide will be anonymous (separated from your name) and confidential (not disclosed to anyone else). I may publish reports based on my findings, but you will not be identifiable from the data included. The data themselves will be stored securely for an unlimited period. You do not need to agree to the re-use of your data and in that case your data will be destroyed at the end of 2021. Read carefully the information sheet for research participants via this link: [INFORMATION SHEET](#).

Please submit the form no later than 31 May, 2019. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time if you wish. By submitting a completed questionnaire, however, you are giving your informed consent to participate in my study. You do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer and you can stop completing the questionnaire at any point for any reason. Your choice to participate or not to participate in this study will not interfere with your studies.

If you would like to know more about this research, please contact me at [tuula.jaaskelainen@uniarts.fi](mailto:tuula.jaaskelainen@uniarts.fi) or my supervisor [guadalupe.lopez.higuera@uniarts.fi](mailto:guadalupe.lopez.higuera@uniarts.fi).

If completing this questionnaire has raised any issues of concern for you, you can seek help in the United Kingdom from the Musicians Helpline 0808 802 8008.

This research project has been reviewed and granted by the CUK Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for taking part in my research!

Kind Regards

## SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. With which gender identity do you most identify?

- ☐ female
- ☐ male
- ☐ transgender female
- ☐ transgender male
- ☐ gender-variant/non-conforming
- ☐ not listed, please specify
- ☐ prefer not to answer

2. I am currently

- ☐ a student at Bachelor's degree level
- ☐ a student at Master's degree level
- ☐ a doctoral student
- ☐ other, please specify

3. Music subject area in my current studies

- ☐ classical music, please specify study programme/instrument
- ☐ church music
- ☐ composition
- ☐ conducting
- ☐ folk music
- ☐ global music
- ☐ jazz music
- ☐ music education
- ☐ musicology
- ☐ music psychology
- ☐ music technology
- ☐ music theory
- ☐ opera
- ☐ popular music
- ☐ research
- ☐ arts management
- ☐ other, please specify

6. Circumstances (please check all the appropriate boxes)

- ☐ I am a full-time student
- ☐ I am a part-time student
- ☐ I am a domestic/home student
- ☐ I am an international student. From which country?
- ☐ I am an exchange student. From which country?

7. Funding (please check all the appropriate boxes)

- ☐ I am a full-scholarship student
- ☐ I am a part-scholarship student
- ☐ I pay my studies partly myself
- ☐ I pay my studies totally myself
- ☐ I have a loan to cover my studies
- ☐ My family/parents/other third parties pay for my studies in part
- ☐ My family/parents/other third parties pay for my studies in total

4. The starting year of my current degree

- ☐ 2012
- ☐ 2013
- ☐ 2014
- ☐ 2015
- ☐ 2016
- ☐ 2017
- ☐ 2018
- ☐ 2019
- ☐ other, please specify

5. Working

- ☐ I am not working beside my studies
- ☐ I am working and my work is related to music. Numbers of hours per week
- ☐ I am working and my work is not related to music. Numbers of hours per week

SECTION 2: WORKLOAD IN STUDIES AND STRESS

Workload in studies

There are many reasons why students experience light or moderate or heavy workload during their studies. A student's workload can be affected by diverse aspects, such as course difficulty, pace, time needed for contact and independent study, assessments, teaching, resources, and student characteristics, for example ability and motivation, and effort.

Main subject studies

8. Main subject in my degree. Please specify also your main instrument, if any.

Workload in main subject studies

When answering this question, please consider your studies as a whole in your discipline and indicate how true each of these statements is by checking the most appropriate box.

	1	2	3	4
	Not at all	Barely	Somewh	Complete
	true	true	true	true
9. My main subject studies overload me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I must work very hard with my main subject studies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I work easily with the workload of my main subject studies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. The amount of credits is right compared to course workload in main subject studies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I think that the pace of study is too intense in my study programme in main subject studies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You are free to choose not to answer any questions you feel you do not wish to answer. However, it is of utmost importance for the research results that there would be no missing answers in this part of the questionnaire. Please double-check that you have answered all items numbered 9-13, if you wish.

	1	2	3	4
	Not at all	Barely	Somewh	Complete
	true	true	true	true
16. My other studies overload me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. I must work very hard with my other studies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. I work easily with the workload of my other studies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. The amount of credits is right compared to course workload in other studies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. I think that the pace of study is too intense in my study programme in other studies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You are free to choose not to answer any questions you feel you do not wish to answer. However, it is of utmost importance for the research results that there would be no missing answers in this part of the questionnaire. Please double-check that you have answered all items numbered 16-20, if you wish.

21. Please, write here examples of other studies that overload you, if any. Why do they overload you?

14. Please, write here examples of main subject studies that overload you, if any. Why do they overload you?

#### Other than main subject studies

15. In addition to my main subject studies, I have other studies in my degree. Please specify your other studies.

#### Workload in other than main subject studies

When answering this question, please consider your studies as a whole in your discipline and indicate how true each of these statements is by checking the most appropriate box.

#### Overload and other things in life

22. Please, write here examples of other things in your life that overload you and affect your studying, if any. Why do they overload you?

#### Moderate workload in studies

23. Please, write here examples of studies in which you experience moderate workload, if any. Why do you experience workload in those studies to be moderate?

#### Light workload in studies

24. Please, write here examples of studies in which you experience light workload, if any. Why do you experience workload in those studies to be light?

Stress

For the following two questions, the word stress relates to situations in which you feel anxious, restless, nervous, or distressed or when you have difficulties sleeping because your problems are continuously haunting your mind.

	1	2	3	4
	Not at all	Seldom	Often	All the time
25. Do you feel this kind of stress currently?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You are free to choose not to answer any questions you feel you do not wish to answer. However, it is of utmost importance for the research results that there would be no missing answers in this part of the questionnaire. Please double-check that you have answered item numbered 25, if you wish.

26. Please, write here examples of situations in your life that make you feel stress and affect your studying, if any. How do you react to stress?

SECTION 3: COPING STYLES

Coping styles in general in your life (1/3)

The following statements deal with reactions you may have to various situations in general in your life. Indicate how true each of these statements is depending on how you feel about the situation. Do this by checking the most appropriate box.

	1	2	3	4
	No at all true	Barely true	Somewh at true	Complete true
27. I think it is useful to manage your money well in order to avoid being poor in old age.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. When I experience a problem, I take the initiative in resolving it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. I take action only after thinking carefully about a problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. I make lists and try to focus on the most important things first.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. In my mind I go through many different scenarios in order to prepare myself for different outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. After attaining a goal, I look for another, more challenging one.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4
	No at all true	Barely true	Somewh at true	Complete true
33. I like challenges and beating the odds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. I think about every possible outcome to a problem before tackling it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. I imagine myself solving a difficult problem before I actually have to face it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. When I have a problem with my teachers, friends, or family I imagine beforehand how I will deal with them successfully.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37. I am a "take charge" person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
38. When there are serious misunderstandings with teachers, family members or friends, I check my behaviour before how I will deal with them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4
	No at all	Barely	Somewh	Complete
	true	true	true	true
39. Before getting messed up with a problem I'll call someone I trust to talk about it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. When I have problems, I can usually solve them with help from my friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. I confide my feelings in others to build up and maintain close relationships.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. I try to let things work out on their own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
43. I make concrete things to plan for my future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. Rather than acting impulsively, I usually think of various ways to solve a problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You are free to choose not to answer any questions you feel you do not wish to answer. However, it is of utmost importance for the research results that there would be no missing answers in this part of the questionnaire. Please double-check that you have answered all items numbered 27-44, if you wish.

## Coping styles in general in your life (2/3)

The following statements deal with reactions you may have to various situations in general in your life. Indicate how true each of these statements is depending on how you feel about the situation. Do this by checking the most appropriate box.

	1	2	3	4
	Not at all	Barely	Somewh	Complete
	true	true	true	true
46. I study hard to protect myself against failure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
47. I plan my strategies to change a situation before I act.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
48. I imagine myself solving difficult problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
49. When I have a problem I prefer to not think about it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50. I can usually identify people who can help me develop my own solutions to problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
51. When I'm depressed I get out and talk with my friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Coping with problems in your studies

45. Thinking about you having problems with your studies, please write here about these problems and how you cope with your studies in this kind of situation.

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	1	2	3	4
	No at all	Barely	Somewh	Complete
	true	true	true	true
52. I try to talk and explain my problems in order to get feedback from my friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
53. I turn problems into positive experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
54. When solving my own problems my friend's advice can be helpful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
55. Advise I get from others has often helped me deal with my problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
56. My friends help me feel cared for.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
57. When I have a problem I usually let it simmer on the back burner for a while.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4
	No at all	Barely	Somewh	Complete
	true	true	at	true
58. Despite numerous setbacks, I usually succeed in getting what I want.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
59. I ask others what they would do in my situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
60. Talking to others can be really useful because it provides another perspective on the problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
61. I know who can be counted on when the chips are down.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
62. Rather than spending all my pocket money, I prefer to save a little for when I will need it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
63. I think ahead to prevent possible dangerous situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You are free to choose not to answer any questions you feel you do not wish to answer. However, it is of utmost importance for the research results that there would be no missing answers in this part of the questionnaire. Please double-check that you have answered all items numbered 46-63, if you wish.

### Coping styles in general in your life (3/3)

The following statements deal with reactions you may have to various situations in general in your life. Indicate how true each of these statements is depending on how you feel about the situation. Do this by checking the most appropriate box.

	1	2	3	4
	No at all	Barely	Somewh	Complete
	true	true	at	true
65. I always try to find a way to work around obstacles; nothing really stops me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
66. If someone tells me I can't do something, you can be sure I will do it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
67. I tackle a problem by thinking about realistic possible alternatives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
68. I try to pinpoint what I need to succeed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
69. If I find a problem too difficult sometimes I put it aside until I'm ready to deal with it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
70. I often see myself failing so I don't get my hopes up too high.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Coping with success in your studies

64. Thinking about you having success with your studies, please write here about this success and how you cope with your studies in this kind of situation.

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	1	2	3	4
	No at all	Barely	at	Complete
	true	true	true	true
71. If I am sad, I know who I can call to help me feel better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
72. I break down a problem into smaller parts and do one part at a time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
73. When I have my family, I will take care of to protect them from bad events in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
74. I often find ways to break down difficult problems into manageable components.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
75. I make plans of things to do before bad events happen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
76. Before failure strikes I am well-prepared for its possible consequences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4
	No at all	Barely	Somewh	Complete
	true	true	true	true
77. I address a problem from various angles until I find the appropriate action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
78. When I have to study many matters, I make a plan and follow it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
79. I plan strategies for what I hope will be the best possible outcome.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
80. I visualise my dreams and try to achieve them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
81. Before tackling a difficult task, I imagine being successful in doing it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
82. When I have a problem, I usually see myself not being able to resolve it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
83. When I think about my future career, I imagine myself getting the one I want.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You are free to choose not to answer any questions you feel you do not wish to answer. However, it is of utmost importance for the research results that there would be no missing answers in this part of the questionnaire. Please double-check that you have answered all items numbered 65-83, if you wish.

SECTION 5: FURTHER INFORMATION

85. For the next part of my project I will be conducting follow-up interviews. If you would be interested in potentially taking part, please provide your phone number or e-mail address. Please note that your anonymity will be protected in all written elements of publications and dissemination of the research.

86. If you would like to receive feedback on your individual scores and on the overall results of the study, please provide your phone number or e-mail address.

87. Please, write your comments and feedback about this questionnaire below. Thank you for your feedback!

SECTION 4: EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

84. Please, describe here your experiences of teaching and learning with your current teachers.

Thank you very much for spending time completing this questionnaire; your time is appreciated.

References  
Items 9–13, 16–20 and 25 modified from ETLO and Learn Questionnaires (Parpala, 2010; 2015).  
Items 27–44, 46–63 and 65–83 from Proactive Coping Inventory for Adolescents (Greenglass, Schwarzer, & Laghi, 2008).



## **Appendix 8: Interview Guide**

### **Interviews (45 minutes/student)**

The interview questions:

- a) Please tell me what it is like to be a student at the higher music education level.
- b) How would you characterise your experience of being a student in terms of your workload in the studies?
- c) How do you cope with the workload?
- d) If you think about your own experiences of workload, is there anything stressful about being a student?
- e) What is that stressful/workload experience like?
- f) How do you cope with stress? Do you have any strategies?
- g) How has your participation in this research affected your experience in terms of becoming more aware of and better able to cope with the workload in the studies?

# Appendix 9: Exploratory Factor Analysis

## Exploring the factor structure of the Workload, Stress, and Coping questionnaire

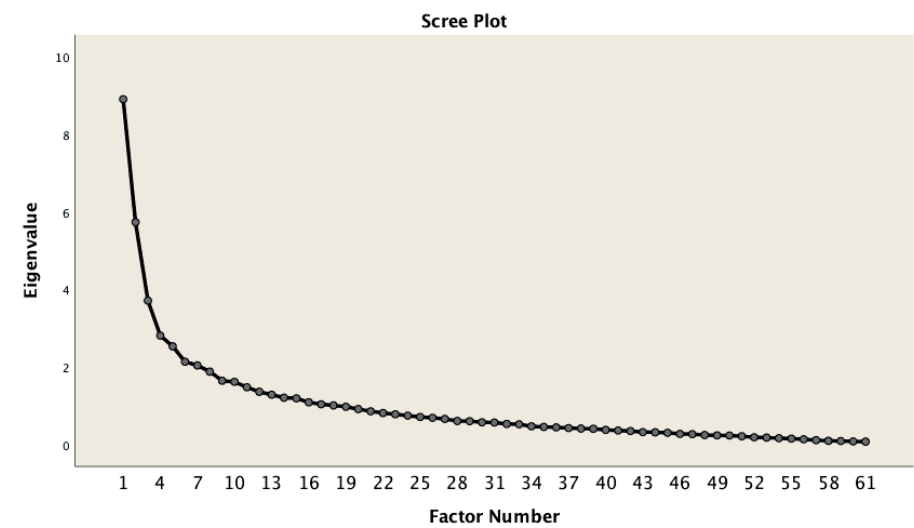
Exploratory Factor Analysis was computed to explore the factor structure of the WSC questionnaire, in order to determine whether its nine-factor structure holds within the sample of music students in higher education. Thus, a Principal Axis Factor (PAF) with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation was conducted to minimise the number of variables that have high loadings on each factor. The factorability of the 61 items was examined. The Kaiser-Meyer Olin measure of sampling adequacy suggested that the sample was factorable ( $KMO = .687$ ) because it was above the commonly recommended value of .60, and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that there were enough correlations ( $p = .000$ ). The communalities were all above .30 (.311 – .780) (Figure 9A).

	Initial	Extraction
aLOAD01_1	.652	.541
aLOAD02_1	.438	.381
aLOAD03P_1	.625	.580
aLOAD04P_1	.462	.467
aLOAD05_1	.588	.615
aSTRESS_1	.651	.601
aPRE01_1	.427	.311
aPRO01_1	.617	.582
aREF01_1	.562	.386
aSTR01_1	.572	.460
aREF02_1	.576	.463
aPRO02_1	.539	.584
aPRO03_1	.602	.605
aREF03_1	.577	.610
aREF04_1	.637	.582
aREF05_1	.654	.696
aPRO04_1	.552	.434
aREF06_1	.605	.528
aINS01_1	.631	.530
aINS02_1	.689	.653
aEMO01_1	.715	.669
aPRO05N_1	.536	.420
aPRE02_1	.718	.669
aREF07_1	.615	.553
aPRE03_1	.578	.426
aPRE04_1	.647	.621
aREF08_1	.623	.629
aAVO01_1	.612	.631
aINS03_1	.596	.535
aEMO02_1	.548	.480
aINS04_1	.693	.652
aPRO06_1	.654	.700
aINS05_1	.725	.641
aINS06_1	.720	.703
aEMO03_1	.722	.665
aAVO02_1	.622	.603
aPRO07_1	.552	.487
aINS07_1	.548	.405
aINS08_1	.743	.648
aEMO04_1	.766	.700
aPRE05_1	.570	.494
aPRE06_1	.631	.524
aPRO08_1	.651	.673
aPRO09_1	.526	.521
aREF09_1	.528	.437
aPRO10_1	.667	.612
aAVO03_1	.511	.495
aPRO11N_1	.712	.670
aEMO05_1	.792	.743
aSTR02_1	.745	.676
aPRE07_1	.522	.525
aSTR03_1	.779	.780
aPRE08_1	.582	.504
aPRE09_1	.668	.645
aREF10_1	.572	.501
aSTR04_1	.695	.753
aPRE10_1	.584	.540
aPRO12_1	.588	.585
aREF11_1	.628	.622
aPRO13N_1	.699	.725
aPRO14_1	.560	.580

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

**Figure 9A.** Variables with communalities

Factors that had an eigenvalue  $\geq 1.0$  were considered, and this resulted in 18 factors. These 18 factors accounted for 57.5% of variance. However, an 18-factor solution was not selected because Cattell's scree plot (Figure 11B) showed elbows at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> factors.



**Figure 9B.** A Cattell's scree plot of the WSC questionnaire data showing elbows at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> factors.

A nine-factor solution was examined because the original WSC questionnaire included nine scales. However, the variables still loaded strongly to five factors. Thus, a five-factor solution was preferred. A total of five variables were eliminated because they failed to meet the minimum criterion of having a primary factor loading of .30 (Table 9A).

**Table 9A.** Variables that failed to meet the minimum criterion of having a primary factor loading of .30

LOAD02	I must work very hard with my main subject studies.
PRE01	I think it is useful to manage your money well in order to avoid being poor in old age.
PRE05	Rather than spending all my pocket money, I prefer to save a little for when I will need it.
PRE07	When I have my family, I will take care of to protect them from bad events in the future.
PRO09	If someone tells me I can't do something, you can be sure I will do it.

For the final stage, a Principal Axis Factor (PAF) analysis of the remaining 56 variables, using Varimax (orthogonal) rotation, was conducted, with five factors explaining 35.8% of the variance. The factor loading matrix for this final solution is presented in Figure 9C.

**Rotated Factor Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
aINS05_1	.747				
aEMO05_1	.726				
aINS02_1	.724				
aEMO03_1	.710				
aINS06_1	.708				
aINS08_1	.699				
aEMO04_1	.682				
aEMO01_1	.670				
aINS04_1	.648				
aEMO02_1	.500				
aINS07_1	.464				
aINS01_1	.453				
aPRO13N_1		.664			
aSTR03_1		.636			
aPRO06_1		.605			
aPRO11N_1		.587			
aPRO14_1		.477			
aPRO01_1		.454			
aPRO08_1		.439			
aINS03_1	.396	.437			
aPRO04_1		.422			
aPRO07_1		.422			
aSTR02_1		.412			
aREF09_1		.399			
aPRO10_1		.385	.334		.322
aREF03_1			.616		
aPRE06_1			.588		
aPRE08_1			.582		
aREF04_1			.557		
aPRE09_1			.515		
aREF07_1			.509		
aREF01_1			.508		
aPRE04_1		.349	.492		
aREF10_1		.302	.485		
aREF05_1			.482		
aREF02_1			.449		
aREF08_1		.327	.428		
aREF06_1			.411		
aPRE03_1			.387		.331
aLOAD01_1				-.681	
aLOAD05_1				-.661	
aLOAD03P_1				-.533	
aREF11_1				.476	
aSTRESS_1		-.392		-.471	
aPRO03_1				.345	
aLOAD04P_1				-.337	
aAVO02_1					-.479
aPRE02_1		.432			.478
aSTR04_1					.458
aAVO01_1					-.444
aPRO02_1					.397
aPRE10_1					.395
aPRO05N_1					.344
aAVO03_1					-.340
aSTR01_1					.340
aPRO12_1				.312	.318

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
 a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

**Figure 9C.** Rotated factor matrix

## FACTOR 1. SOCIAL SUPPORT SEEKING (alpha = .90)

Twelve variables contributed to the first factor. This factor combined items concerning social support seeking, as it comprised seven variables of Instrumental support seeking and five variables of Emotional support seeking. Cronbach's alpha was .90. An increase in alpha could have been achieved by eliminating variables INS01 and INS07. Instrumental support seeking scale had an alpha of .83 and Emotional support seeking scale had an alpha of .82 in the original WSC questionnaire. Table 9B shows the contributing variables in Factor 1.

**Table 9B.** Contributing variables in Factor 1

INS01	Before getting messed up with a problem I'll call someone I trust to talk about it.
INS02	When I have problems, I can usually solve them with help from my friends.
INS04	I try to talk and explain my problems in order to get feedback from my friends.
INS05	When solving my own problems my friend's advice can be helpful.
INS06	Advice I get from others has often helped me deal with my problems.
INS07	I ask others what they would do in my situation.
INS08	Talking to others can be really useful because it provides another perspective on the problem.
EMO01	I confide my feelings in others to build up and maintain close relationships.
EMO02	When I'm depressed I get out and talk with my friends.
EMO03	My friends help me feel cared for.
EMO04	I know who can be counted on when the chips are down.
EMO05	If I am sad, I know who I can call to help me feel better.

## FACTOR 2. GOAL-ORIENTED PROBLEM SOLVING (alpha = .83)

Thirteen variables contributed to the second factor. This factor combined items concerning goal-oriented problem solving, as it comprised nine variables of Proactive coping, one variable of Reflective coping, two variables of Strategic planning, and one variable of Instrumental support seeking. Cronbach's alpha was .83. An increase in alpha could not have been achieved by eliminating variables. Proactive coping scale had alpha .77, Reflective coping scale had an alpha of .76, Strategic planning scale had an alpha of .67, and Instrumental support seeking scale had an alpha of .83 in the original WSC questionnaire. Table 9C shows the contributing variables in Factor 2.

**Table 9C.** Contributing variables in Factor 2

PRO01	When I experience a problem, I take the initiative in resolving it.
PRO04	I am a "take charge" person.
PRO06	I turn problems into positive experiences.
PRO07	Despite numerous setbacks, I usually succeed in getting what I want.
PRO08	I always try to find a way to work around obstacles; nothing really stops me.
PRO10*	I try to pinpoint what I need to succeed.
PRO11N	I often see myself failing so I don't get my hopes up too high. (REVERSED = I do not often see myself failing so I get my hopes up too high.)
PRO13N	When I have a problem, I usually see myself not being able to resolve it. (REVERSED = When I have a problem, I usually see myself being able to resolve it.)
PRO14	When I think about my future career, I imagine myself getting the one I want.
REF09	I tackle a problem by thinking about realistic possible alternatives.
STR02	I break down a problem into smaller parts and do one part at a time.
STR03	I often find ways to break down difficult problems into manageable components.
INS03*	I can usually identify people who can help me develop my own solutions to problems.

\* A variable had a cross-loading above .30, thus it could be eliminated

### FACTOR 3. PREVENTIVE REFLECTING (alpha = .83)

Fourteen variables contributed to the third factor. This factor combined items concerning preventive reflecting, as it comprised nine variables of Reflective coping and five variables of Preventive coping. Cronbach's alpha was .83. An increase in alpha could not have been achieved by eliminating variables. Reflective coping scale had an alpha of .76 and Preventive coping scale had an alpha of .71 in the original WSC questionnaire. Table 9D shows the contributing variables in Factor 3.

**Table 9D.** Contributing variables in Factor 3

REF01	I take action only after thinking carefully about a problem.
REF02	In my mind I go through many different scenarios in order to prepare myself for different outcomes.
REF03	I think about every possible outcome to a problem before tackling it.
REF04	I imagine myself solving a difficult problem before I actually have to face it.
REF05	When I have a problem with my teachers, friends, or family I imagine beforehand how I will deal with them successfully.
REF06	When there are serious misunderstandings with teachers, family members or friends, I check my behaviour before how I will deal with them.
REF07	Rather than acting impulsively, I usually think of various ways to solve a problem.
REF08*	I imagine myself solving difficult problems.
REF10*	I address a problem from various angles until I find the appropriate action.
PRE03*	I study hard to protect myself against failure.
PRE04*	I plan my strategies to change a situation before I act.
PRE06	I think ahead to prevent possible dangerous situations.
PRE08	I make plans of things to do before bad events happen.
PRE09	Before failure strikes I am well-prepared for its possible consequences.

\* A variable had a cross-loading above .30, thus it could be eliminated

### FACTOR 4. PROACTIVE ATTITUDE IN DECREASING WORKLOAD AND STRESS (alpha = .32)

Seven variables contributed to the fourth factor. This factor combined items concerning a proactive attitude in decreasing workload and stress, as it comprised four negatively loaded variables of Study workload (two were reversed), one negatively loaded variable of Stress, one variable of Proactive coping, and one variable of Reflective coping. Cronbach's alpha was .32. An increase in alpha could have been achieved by eliminating variables PRO03 and REF11 (increased alpha = .47 and .53). Study workload scale had an alpha of .63, combined Study workload and Stress scale had an alpha of .66, Proactive coping scale had an alpha of .77, and Reflective coping scale had an alpha of .76 in the original WSC questionnaire. Table 9E shows the contributing variables in Factor 4.

**Table 9E.** Contributing variables in Factor 4

-LOAD01	My main subject studies overload me. (NEGATIVE LOADING = My main subject studies do not overload me.)
-LOAD03P	I work easily with the workload of my main subject studies. (REVERSED + NEGATIVE LOADING = I work easily with the workload of my main subject studies.)
-LOAD04P	The amount of credits is right compared to course workload in main subject studies. (REVERSED + NEGATIVE LOADING = The amount of credits is right compared to course workload in main subject studies.)
-LOAD05	I think that the pace of study is too intense in my study programme in main subject studies. (NEGATIVE LOADING = I do not think that the pace of study is too intense in my study programme in main subject studies.)
-STRESS*	Do you feel this kind of stress currently? (NEGATIVE LOADING = Seldom stress/Not at all stress)
PRO03	I like challenges and beating the odds.
REF11	Before tackling a difficult task, I imagine being successful in doing it.

\* A variable had a cross-loading above .30, thus it could be eliminated

## FACTOR 5. ACTIVE FUTURE-ORIENTED PLANNING (alpha = .43)

Ten variables contributed to the fifth factor. This factor combined items concerning active future-oriented planning, as it comprised three variables of Proactive coping (one was reversed), two variables of Strategic planning, two variables of Preventive coping, and three negatively loaded variables of Avoidance coping. Cronbach's alpha was .43. An increase in alpha could have been achieved by eliminating variable PRO05N and negatively loaded variables AVO01, AVO02 and AVO03 (increased alpha = .46, .49, .50 and .44). Proactive coping scale had an alpha of .77, Strategic planning scale had an alpha of .67, Preventive coping scale had an alpha of .71, and Avoidance coping scale had an alpha of .63 in the original WSC questionnaire. Table 9F shows the contributing variables in Factor 5.

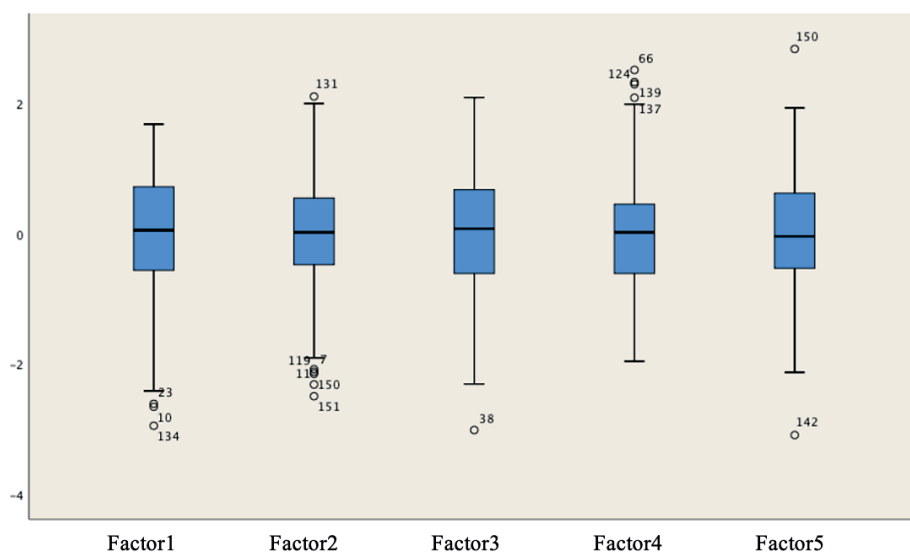
**Table 9F.** Contributing variables in Factor 5

PRO02	After attaining a goal, I look for another, more challenging one.
PRO05N	I try to let things work out on their own. (REVERSED = I do not try to let things work out on their own)
PRO12*	I visualise my dreams and try to achieve them.
STR01	I make lists and try to focus on the most important things first.
STR04	When I have to study many matters, I make a plan and follow it.
PRE02*	I make concrete things to plan for my future.
PRE10	I plan strategies for what I hope will be the best possible outcome.
-AVO01	When I have a problem I prefer to not think about it. (NEGATIVE LOADING = When I have a problem I prefer to think about it.)
-AVO02	When I have a problem I usually let it simmer on the back burner for a while. (NEGATIVE LOADING = When I have a problem I do not usually let it simmer on the back burner for a while.)
-AVO03	If I find a problem too difficult sometimes I put it aside until I'm ready to deal with it. (NEGATIVE LOADING = If I find a problem too difficult sometimes I do not put it aside until I'm ready to deal with it.)

\* A variable had a cross-loading above .30, thus it could be eliminated

The distributions of the factors were examined. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that all of the factors except Factor 5 were normally distributed. The skewness of Factor 1 and Factor 4 and the kurtosis of Factor 5 were found. The strongest skewness was found in the Social support seeking factor (Factor 1: skewness = -.552 and standard error of skewness = .197). Similarly, the skewness was found in the original social support seeking scales (Instrumental support seeking scale and Emotional support seeking scale). Because there were more female students (67%) than male and non-binary gender students in the sample, this has affected on the skewness. The female participants reported more social support seeking than other gender groups.

The sample does not fully support the scales in the original WSC questionnaire. Instrumental support seeking scale and Emotional support seeking scale were combined in Factor 1 almost in their original modes because the Social support seeking factor included all of the variables, except one, of the Instrumental support seeking scale and all of the variables of the Emotional support seeking scale. In Factor 2, most of the variables were from the Proactive coping scale. It also included one variable from the Reflective coping scale, one variable from the Instrumental support seeking scale, and two variables from the Strategic planning scale. Most of the variables from the Reflective coping scale and the Preventive coping scale were combined in Factor 3. Factor 4 included all of the variables, except one, in the Study workload scale and Stress scale, and they were negatively loaded. There was also one variable from the Proactive coping scale and one variable from the Reflective coping scale. In Factor 5, all of the variables from the Avoidance coping scale were included with negative loadings. There were also three variables from the Proactive coping scale and two variables from the Preventive coping scale. Alpha values were high in Factors 1, 2, and 3, but weak in Factors 4 and 5. The profiles of the factors are presented in Figure 9D: Factor1 = Social support seeking, Factor2 = Goal-oriented problem solving, Factor3 = Preventive reflecting, Factor4 = Proactive attitude in decreasing workload and stress, and Factor5 = Active future-oriented planning. A total of 16 outliers were identified in the factor profiles.



**Figure 9D.** Factor profiles



## Appendix 10: Qualitative Data Analysis

Excerpt from the interview transcription:

**Interviewer:** *Would you like to talk more about your experience of workload while you are studying here?*

**Participant:** *Yeah, the workload varies a fair amount. Because sometimes you can have a lot of practical workload and very minimal academic workload. Sometimes those balance out, and sometimes you manage to have a brief period of quiet, so that you can reset, get everything back in order, and start working towards the next big thing. So, no matter how much gets piled on there is always that respite period, so you can just relax, calm down, reorganise, reset, start again. And I think that's probably one of the big benefits of studying here.*

**Interviewer:** *You are now, this is your second year. If you compare the years, was the first one harder, or easier, when you started to study at the university level?*

**Participant:** *To some extent it was hard, because you go from secondary education to college, at a younger age where everything is very much dictated, and you are told exactly what you have to do, when you have to do it by, and you're given a timeframe to do it in. Whereas, when you go to university, it's very much, this is what you will have to do, and when you do it is up to you, and how you do it is up to you. So I think the adjustment to independence in your work, I think that was the biggest struggle. But in terms of year on year I'd say the second year in a way is harder. Because you know what you have to do, you know how you have to do it. But there are other things that are added in that increase your workload. And in some ways decrease it, so it's just resetting, readjusting.*

**Interviewer:** *Which part of the year is the hardest one? Is it now?*

**Participant:** *I'd say whenever it runs up to big assessments, big practical assessments.*

Excerpt from the open-ended answer in the Workload, Stress, and Coping questionnaire:

### **Overload and other things in life**

22. Please, write here examples of other things in your life that overload you and affect your studying, if any. Why do they overload you?

*Working 30 hours a week while studying full-time in a demanding course at a globally highly-ranked institution, it is next to impossible to meet the expectations of progress expected. I am compared to peers who do not have jobs and thus have an extra 30 hours a week to practise, prepare, OR REST.*







STUDIA MUSICA 94

PRINT

ISBN 978-952-329-299-4

ISSN 0788-3757

PDF

ISBN 978-952-329-298-7

ISSN 2489-8155

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