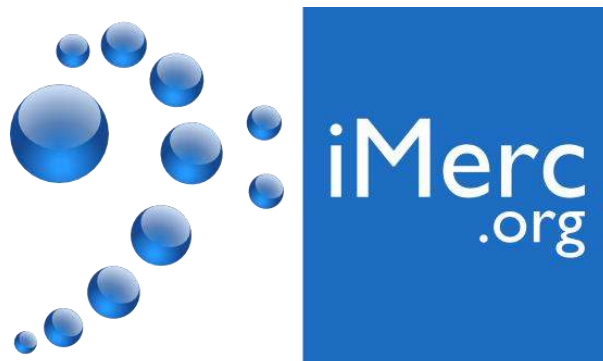




UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 30, October 2026

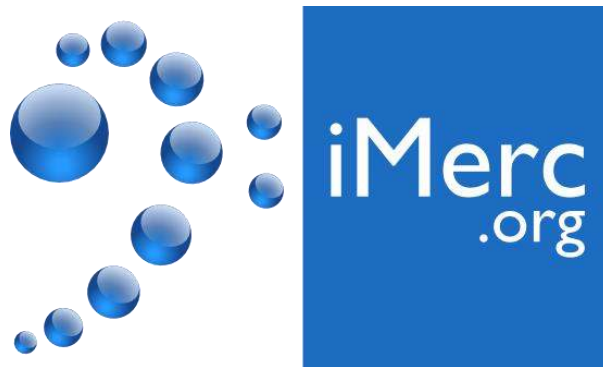
About us

Over the past 20+ years, we have been developing the International Music Education Research Centre (iMerc) at the UCL Institute of Education to celebrate and disseminate our extensive research in the field of music education, broadly conceived, and to hear about new research from colleagues elsewhere in the world. In the beginning, we often held our research seminars over several days, such as in different European cities to allow our doctoral students to have more intensive support as a community, to listen to local researchers, and to share their ongoing research journeys. These 'Travelling Research Seminars' visited Ireland (Limerick), Spain (Barcelona), Italy (Bologna) and Sweden (Malmö) and helped us to establish our international profile and sense of community. With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, we have been meeting more regularly, both online and in person, to continue to share new research and insights related to diverse topics in music education. We are a group of researchers at doctoral and post-doctoral levels, as well as senior researchers, with a shared curiosity and interest in advancing basic and applied research. In line with our mission, the monthly seminars continue to foster a sense of shared endeavour amongst colleagues who are based in the UK, across mainland Europe (such as Portugal, Germany, Greece, Skandinavia), Asia (China, including Hong Kong), Latin America, North America (including the USA) and Australia. Opportunity is taken each month

to be informed of research news and various current research projects, including opportunities to listen to the latest research from our invited speakers. If you would like to know more or to join us, please contact us.

Our upcoming UCL iMerc Research Seminar will take place on **Wednesday, 21 October 2026**, 11am BST via Zoom and, if you would like to come into London, in room 938 (9th floor), UCL Institute of Education. We are pleased to invite you to join us online [HERE](#). Everyone is welcome!

In This Issue



1 - Credit: iMerc

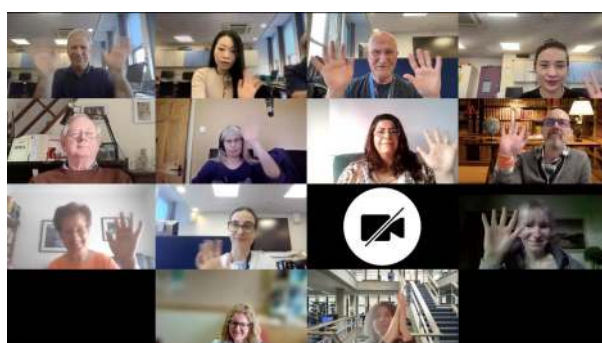
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1. *Previous UCL iMerc Research Seminar, 16 September 2026*
 2. *Newly published: Personal and Professional Identity of Secondary Music Teachers*
 3. *New Resource: Sage Research Methods AI Assistant*
 4. *Support Inclusive Music Education: The Amber Trust Autumn Raffle*
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10. Contact us

Previous UCL iMerc Research Seminar, 16 September 2026



2 - Credits: Professor Graham Welch, Dr Caroline Caregnato, Dan Wang, Dr Eunice Tang, Dr Anthony Anderson iMerc



3 - Credits: iMerc



4 - Credits: Dr Marc R. Thompson

Dr Marc R. Thompson: Creativity, Interaction, and Embodiment in Musical Improvisation: Insights from Music Education Students

Dr Marc R. Thompson (marc.thompson@jyu.fi) reported findings from an ongoing study investigating how Finnish university students in music education and musicology perceived creativity, interaction and musical skill in improvised performances. Drawing on survey responses from 30 participants evaluating motion-captured xylophone improvisations, the research explored relationships between perceived performance qualities, embodied interaction and students' own improvisational experiences. Findings highlighted contrasting experiences of improvisation as *Creative Play* and a *Discomfort Zone*, alongside differences associated with musical background and gender. The study raised important questions about the role of embodied interaction, musical experience and inclusive approaches to improvisation in music teacher education.



5 - Credits: Dr Anthony Anderson

Dr Anthony Anderson: Classroom music teachers on the curriculum tightrope

Dr Anthony Anderson (Anthony.Anderson@bcu.ac.uk) explored the challenges faced by classroom music teachers in balancing their personal curriculum visions with school and national policy requirements. Drawing on academic literature (historical and latest) and curriculum research, it examined the concept of curriculum literacy and its implications for music teachers in theory and practice. Anthony's presentation also considered how teachers negotiated competing expectations while developing curricula responsive to the needs and

experiences of their pupils, raising important questions about professional agency and curriculum decision-making in music education.

Newly published: Personal and Professional Identity of Secondary Music Teachers



6 - Credits: Dr Christopher Dalladay, British Journal of Music Education

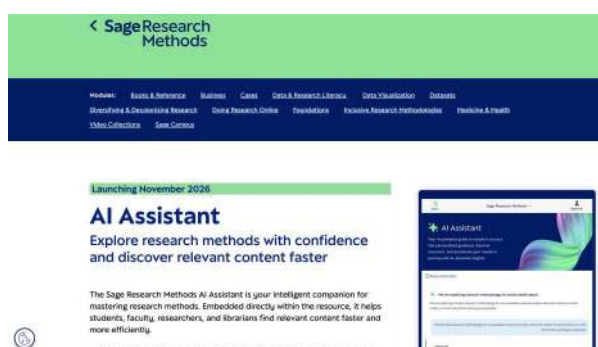
Newly Published: Personal and Professional Identity of Secondary Music Teachers

A new study by Dr Christopher Dalladay (cdalladay@aol.com), published in the *British Journal of Music Education*, examines the personal and professional identities of secondary classroom music teachers in England. Exploring the relationship between teachers' identities as musicians and educators, the research considers how these shape pedagogical perspectives, particularly the extent to which pupils are recognised as musicians themselves. The study contributes to ongoing discussions about music teacher identity, professional development and the relationship between musicianship and classroom practice.

Dalladay C. The personal and professional identity of secondary classroom music teachers in England. *British Journal of Music Education*. 2026;43(2):229-244.
doi:10.1017/S0265051726100680

Read more: [Journal article](#) | [Music Mark Research Short](#)

New Resource: Sage Research Methods AI Assistant



7 - Credits: Sage

New Resource: Sage Research Methods AI Assistant

Sage is launching a new AI Assistant in November 2026, integrated into its *Sage Research Methods* platform. Designed to support students, educators and researchers, the tool offers contextual guidance on research methodologies, explanations of unfamiliar concepts and AI-assisted discovery of relevant methodological resources.

The assistant aims to facilitate engagement with research methods literature and support independent learning and methodological decision-making. It will be available to users at institutions with access to Sage Research Methods.

Find out more: [Sage Research Methods AI Assistant](#)

Support Inclusive Music Education: The Amber Trust Autumn Raffle



8 - Credits: The Amber Trust

Support Inclusive Music Education: The Amber Trust Autumn Raffle

The Amber Trust, a national charity supporting the musical development and education of blind and partially sighted children across the UK, is holding its Autumn Raffle to raise funds for its work. Proceeds will help provide opportunities for children, including those with additional disabilities, to develop their musical skills and fulfil their potential.

Prizes include a two-night stay in Barcelona, concert tickets at the Royal Albert Hall and a Fortnum & Mason hamper. Tickets cost £2 each, with entries closing on **9 November 2026 at 10am**.

Find out more and enter: [The Amber Trust Autumn Raffle](#)

Sustainable Guitar Maintenance Workshop at UCL



9 - Credits: Professor Evangelos Himonides



10 - Credits: Professor Evangelos Himonides

Led by Professor Evangelos Himonides (e.himonides@ucl.ac.uk), UCL Institute of Education and the The crafting sustainabilities collective (<https://craftingsustainabilities.org>) located at the UCL Knowledge Lab, recently hosted a sustainable guitar maintenance workshop and knowledge exchange event for Music Mark-affiliated practitioners from Music Hubs across England.

The workshop provided opportunities to develop practical instrument maintenance skills, exchange professional knowledge and explore sustainability in music education. Participant feedback also offered valuable insights into practitioners' needs and priorities, informing the development of future workshops and professional learning opportunities.

Upcoming Event: AI and Creative Music Making in Secondary Classrooms

Upcoming Event: AI and Creative Music Making in Secondary Classrooms

On Thursday 12 November 10-15:30, Dr Kate Laurence and Dr Ross Purves will host *AI and Creative Music Making in Secondary Classrooms: Sharing Practice, Shaping the Future*, a research and professional learning event for Secondary music teachers at the UCL Institute of Education (20 Bedford Way, London).

The event will bring together teachers from London and beyond to explore the opportunities and challenges of AI in music education. The programme combines practical music technology sessions with discussions of classroom case studies and ethical dilemmas, providing opportunities to share practice and consider the future of AI-supported creative music making in Secondary education.

If you are interested, please contact: Dr Kate Laurence (k.laurence@ucl.ac.uk)

More information about this project is available here: <https://imerc.org/research/ai-and-creative-music-making-in-secondary-classrooms-sharing-practice-shaping-the-future>

UCL iMerc Research Seminar, 21 October 2026

Guest Speaker: Dr Jan Stupacher

Topic: Multiple pathways to social bonding through music



11 - Credits: Dr Jan Stupacher

Jan's abstract:

Music is widely recognized for its ability to foster social bonding. Yet, while research has largely focused on interpersonal movement coordination, other ways in which music can

connect people have received comparatively less attention. We argue that music-related social bonding extends beyond coordinated movement and emerges through multiple forms of imagined and shared social experience. We propose a conceptual framework comprising three interrelated pathways: interpersonal coordination, shared social experience without explicit behavioral coordination, and imagined social experience during solitary listening. Across these pathways, music recruits interacting mechanisms of temporal prediction, self-other integration, reward processing, and social-cognitive alignment that together promote social closeness, affiliation, and prosocial orientation. We further highlight how musical features and individual differences shape these processes. By integrating evidence from music psychology, cognitive neuroscience, and social psychology, this framework broadens current perspectives on how music promotes social bonding and identifies conceptual and methodological directions for future research.

Dr Jan Stupacher (stupacher@clin.au.dk) is an associate professor at the Center for Music in the Brain at Aarhus University. His research focuses on rhythm perception and production, sensorimotor synchronization, social interaction in musical contexts, flow experiences during musical activities, and the pleasurable urge to move to music – also known as groove. He studied psychology at the University of Tübingen in Germany and received his PhD in psychology from the University of Graz in Austria in 2017.

Speaker: Dan Wang

Topic: Place-based Enactment of Music Zhongkao: Urban-Rural Differences in School Practice



12 - Credits: Dan Wang

Dan's abstract:

In 2020, Yancheng City in Jiangsu Province introduced a computer-based music assessment into the Music Zhongkao, China's high-stakes senior secondary school entrance examination. While intended to strengthen aesthetic education and enhance accountability, little is known about how such reforms are enacted across different local contexts.

This study examines how music teachers in urban and rural schools interpret and implement the Music Zhongkao policy. Guided by policy enactment theory (Ball et al., 2011) and Sewell's (1992) structure-agency framework, the research explores how teachers respond to technological assessment reforms and changing expectations for music education. A qualitative, constructivist approach was adopted, involving paired semi-structured interviews with eight in-service teachers conducted before and after the 2023 Music Zhongkao examination. Data were analysed thematically.

Findings reveal clear urban-rural differences in policy enactment. Rural teachers reported strengthened music provision, collaborative resource-sharing, and clearer accountability mechanisms that supported implementation. Urban teachers expressed greater ambivalence, shaped by entrenched academic priorities, autonomous curriculum practices, and limited professional exchange. Across both contexts, insufficient preparation time, unequal resource distribution, and restricted access to assessment data constrained pedagogical reflection and curriculum development.

The study contributes to international discussions of music education policy by demonstrating how local conditions shape the enactment of technology-supported assessment reforms. Findings suggest that successful implementation depends not only on policy design but also on leadership support, equitable resources, transparent feedback, and opportunities for teacher agency. The research highlights the importance of addressing contextual inequalities when implementing assessment reforms in music education.

Note: These are preliminary findings drawn from her PhD interview data, collected as part of her doctoral research under the supervision of her principal supervisor, Dr. Ross Purves.

Dan Wang (dan.wang.20@ucl.ac.uk) is a PhD candidate in Music Education at the UCL, IOE, where she also worked as a Postgraduate Teaching Assistant for three years. Previously, she taught secondary school music in China for three years.

Her doctoral research examines China's Music Zhongkao reforms, focusing on computer-based music assessment, teachers' perceptions and practices, and policy enactment. Her broader research interests include education policy, teacher agency, music assessment, and educational technology, informed by sociological perspectives, particularly those of Pierre Bourdieu, Basil Bernstein, and Stephen Ball.

Dan has contributed to the international music education research community through conference presentations, publications, academic reviewing, and conference organisation,

including co-hosting the 14th International Conference for Research in Music Education (RiME 2025).

Congratulations!



13 - Credits: Professor Graham F. Welch, Professor Susan Hallam, Dr Jiayi Wang, and Professor Ian Cross



14 - Credits: Professor Graham F. Welch, Dr Jiayi Wang, and Dr Regina Saltari

Warmest congratulations to Dr Jiayi Wang (jiayi-wang@ucl.ac.uk) for passing her PhD viva with minor corrections. Jiayi's thesis title, An exploratory study of the lived experiences of performance-related health and wellbeing among flautists, supervised by Professor Graham F. Welch and Dr Regina Saltari, and examined by Professor Susan Hallam and Professor Ian Cross.

Upcoming Seminar

Please note that our upcoming UCL iMerc research seminar will be on 25 November 2026. If you're interested in sharing your work in future, we'd love to hear from you. Please feel free to get in touch!

Contact Us

Visit us on the website at <https://www.imerc.org/>

Professor Graham Welch: graham.welch@ucl.ac.uk

Professor Evangelos Himonides: e.himonides@ucl.ac.uk

Dr Eunice S Y Tang: eunice.tang@ucl.ac.uk