

Leeds Conservatoire

Professional Studies 1: Working in the Creative Industries (SHR4C007R)

Assignment: Business Plan or Electronic Press Kit (SHR4C007R~002)

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Word count: 2152

Business Plan Proposal

Introduction

This business proposal outlines the idea of creating a music-focused education consultancy and artist development service aimed primarily at international students applying to conservatoires and higher education music institutions in the UK. The business would combine educational consultancy, portfolio and audition preparation, and small-scale performance workshop opportunities.

The proposal is inspired by both my own experiences as an international conservatoire student and my observations from participating in professional music projects. The main aim of the business is to provide more transparent, affordable, and musician-led guidance for students who wish to pursue professional music training. The company would focus on helping students understand conservatoire application systems, portfolio preparation, auditions, and career pathways, while also building connections between young musicians, music directors, performers, and tutors.

Main Business Activity

The core activity of the business would be providing consultancy and preparation services for students applying to music conservatoires and higher education institutions. The company would support students through different stages of the application process, including:

- Conservatoire and university selection advice
- Audition and portfolio preparation
- One-to-one coaching or workshops

- Personal statement and interview preparation
- Guidance on course structures and career pathways
- Mentoring from current students, alumni, or professional musicians

In addition to educational consultancy, the business would also organise small showcase performances and workshops. These events would allow students to experience professional rehearsal environments while also creating opportunities for networking and collaboration between musicians.

Market Identification

The target market for this business would mainly consist of:

- International students applying to conservatoires or music schools
- Families seeking guidance about overseas music education
- Young musicians preparing auditions or portfolios
- Students requiring additional coaching or mentoring
- Musicians looking for networking and workshop opportunities

There is increasing demand for specialised educational guidance, especially within competitive conservatoire environments. Unlike general university applications, music applications often require auditions, portfolios, interviews, repertoire planning, and artistic preparation. Many families may not fully understand the process, especially if they are unfamiliar with overseas music education systems.

In my own experience and through discussions with peers, I have noticed that many students rely heavily on education agencies because information about conservatoire applications can

be difficult to access clearly. However, many agencies focus more on recruitment and profit rather than providing balanced and honest advice.

This creates a gap in the market for a smaller-scale consultancy service that is musician-led and focused more on transparency and personalised support.

Unique Selling Point (USP)

The business would have several unique selling points.

Firstly, the service would be music specialised. Unlike general education agencies that cover many subjects, this consultancy would focus specifically on conservatoire and music-related applications. This allows more detailed understanding of audition requirements, portfolio expectations, artistic pathways, and music training systems.

Secondly, the business would provide trilingual communication services in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. This could help students and families from different backgrounds communicate more comfortably and understand complicated application systems more clearly.

Another important USP is personal experience and industry understanding. As someone currently studying within a conservatoire environment, I understand the application process from the perspective of a recent applicant. I also have connections with other music students, graduates, and freelance musicians who may contribute workshops, mentoring, or coaching.

The business would also aim to maintain more affordable pricing compared to larger agencies. From conversations with friends and personal observations, I know many educational consultancy services can become extremely expensive. Therefore, the company would attempt to provide fairer pricing while still maintaining professional standards.

Finally, the ethos of the business would focus on honest and balanced guidance rather than unrealistic promises. Some agencies guarantee admission results or promote only positive aspects of certain schools. This proposal instead aims to help students find suitable pathways based on their individual goals and abilities.

Competitor Analysis

There are already many educational consultancy agencies operating internationally, especially in countries across Asia and the UK. These companies often provide university application services, visa support, personal statement editing, and interview preparation.

However, many of these companies are broad educational agencies rather than music-specialised organisations. As a result, they may not fully understand conservatoire culture, portfolio preparation, repertoire choices, or professional artistic expectations. Some larger agencies also charge very high fees, especially for one-to-one consultancy or long-term coaching packages. In some cases, information asymmetry between institutions, agencies, students, and families can create unequal power relationships.

Another issue is that some services may over-promote specific institutions because of partnerships or recruitment incentives. This can result in biased advice rather than guidance genuinely suited to the student.

At the same time, there are risks within this market that need careful consideration. In smaller cities or regions, a few agencies may dominate the market. There may also be concerns

regarding unofficial coaching systems or conflicts of interest if tutors are directly involved in admissions processes.

This business proposal attempts to position itself differently by emphasising transparency, realistic expectations, and musician-led mentorship.

Marketing Strategy

The marketing strategy would initially focus on building trust and visibility through personal networks and online promotion.

At the start-up stage, clients could be reached through:

- Social media platforms
- Student recommendation networks
- Word-of-mouth promotion
- Conservatoire communities
- Online workshops and information sessions
- The business could also collaborate with:
 - Student societies
 - Music schools
 - Youth ensembles
 - Conservatoire alumni
 - Independent music tutors

One possible strategy would be hosting free or low-cost workshops discussing conservatoire applications, audition preparation, and portfolio advice. These workshops could act both as educational events and promotional activities.

The company could also create showcase projects similar to the opera projects that inspired this proposal. These performances would not only provide artistic opportunities but also increase public awareness of the organisation. In the long term, the business may attend higher education fairs, conservatoire open days, webinars, or educational booths to strengthen partnerships and improve credibility.

The overall branding and Image of the business would aim to appear professional but approachable. The company ethos would focus on empathy, transparency, and realistic guidance.

Resource Requirements

Several resources would be required to operate this business successfully. Human resources would include:

- Music tutors and coaches
- Administrative staff
- Marketing and promotional support
- Stage management staff for showcase events
- Freelance musicians or workshop leaders
- Physical and operational resources may include:
 - Rehearsal or teaching spaces
 - Small performance venues

- Online meeting platforms
- Promotional materials
- Recording or portfolio preparation equipment

At the beginning, the scale of the business would likely remain relatively small. Some operations could initially be managed through freelance collaborations and personal networks. However, as the business expands, stronger organisational systems and larger teaching networks would become necessary.

Start-up and Ongoing Costs

Start-up costs would include:

- Website creation and branding
- Marketing and advertising
- Venue rental for workshops or showcases
- Administrative setup
- Equipment and software
- Insurance or legal registration costs

Ongoing costs may include:

- Staff or tutor payments
- Venue rental
- Promotion and social media advertising
- Event management expenses
- Website maintenance
- Transport and logistics

At the beginning, the company would likely rely heavily on freelance collaboration rather than large permanent staffing structures. This would help reduce financial risk during the start-up phase.

Potential funding sources may include:

- Income from one-to-one coaching
- Workshop participation fees
- Showcase ticket sales
- Government arts funding
- Sponsorship or investment from organisations interested in supporting music education

Pricing Strategy and Financial Considerations

The pricing strategy would aim to balance affordability with sustainability. Based on personal observations and conversations with peers, some consultancy services currently charge approximately £200 per school application for document preparation support. More intensive coaching packages involving regular lessons and audition preparation may cost several thousand pounds.

This business would initially attempt to remain at or below standard market pricing. The intention is not to exploit students but to provide accessible support for those seriously interested in music education.

Possible pricing structures may include:

- One-to-one consultation sessions
- Application preparation packages
- Audition workshops
- Group classes
- Portfolio review sessions
- Showcase participation fees

Break-even points would depend on tutor payments, venue costs, and the number of students enrolled. For example, small workshops with moderate participation fees may help cover venue and staffing expenses while also promoting future services. As the business grows, income from consultancy and workshops could support further expansion, including larger showcase projects or additional tutor recruitment.

Development Potential

The business has potential for future expansion in several directions. Firstly, the consultancy side could expand into broader artist development services, including:

- Career mentoring
- Professional portfolio building
- Performance opportunities
- Networking support
- Collaboration projects

Secondly, the showcase and workshop side could develop into larger performance events involving singers, ensembles, chamber groups, or interdisciplinary collaborations. The

business may also build partnerships with conservatoires, youth music organisations, and cultural institutions.

As a Year 1 student, I understand that many of these goals require time, credibility, and professional development to achieve fully. Building trust and partnerships within the music industry would likely take years. However, this proposal demonstrates a long-term vision that combines artistic collaboration, education, and professional support within the creative music industry.

Conclusion

This business proposal outlines a music-focused educational consultancy and artist development service aimed at helping international students navigate conservatoire applications and professional artistic preparation.

The idea is inspired by both personal educational experience and practical observations from participating in collaborative music projects. The business aims to provide transparent, musician-led, and affordable support while also encouraging artistic networking and collaboration.

Although the proposal would begin on a relatively small scale, there is strong potential for future growth through workshops, showcase projects, partnerships, and expanded mentoring services. And most importantly, the business attempts to combine commercial sustainability with artistic values and educational accessibility within the contemporary music industry.

Evidence of group work and Evaluation

The idea for this business proposal developed mainly from two experiences: my own conservatoire application journey and my involvement in an opera showcase project during Easter.

During the project, I worked as a training music director with Scherzo ensemble, included a group of singers, musicians, stage managers, and other creative staff in London. It was my first experience observing how a professional music project actually operates behind the scenes. Through rehearsals and debrief discussions, I realised how many stakeholders are involved in artistic production, including performers, management teams, sponsors, institutions, and venue providers. What interested me most was how these projects also functioned as networking platforms. Young musicians could meet experienced professionals, receive feedback, and potentially create future collaborations. This made me think about the relationship between artistic activity and business structure within the music industry.

At the same time, I reflected on my own experiences as an international music student. Applying to conservatoires can be confusing and stressful because students often lack clear information about auditions, portfolios, course expectations, and career pathways. Through conversations with peers, I also realised that many students and families depend heavily on educational agencies.

During our group seminar discussion, some classmates generally thought the proposal could provide useful one-to-one support for young musicians. We also discussed some practical challenges. One important point raised was that sponsorship and investment are not always reliable, so the business should not depend completely on external funding. Instead, it may

need to operate mainly through client-based services such as coaching and consultancy. Another point from the discussion was that this proposal would likely require collaboration between multiple people rather than functioning as a single private tutor business. For example, conservatoire graduates or freelance musicians could contribute as workshop tutors or specialised instrument tutors.

Reflecting on the proposal, I understand that some parts are still underdeveloped because I am only in my first year of study. At the moment, I do not yet have enough industry connections or professional experience to fully realise this business idea. However, I can identify areas that would need further development in the future. For example, building partnerships with conservatoires, attending educational fairs or webinars, and joining student committees or music organisations could help improve credibility and professional networks over time.

The branding and ethos decisions were also important in shaping the proposal. I wanted the company image to feel professional but approachable. The idea of credibility is important because students and families need to trust the advice they receive. At the same time, empathy is also essential because I personally understand the stress and uncertainty involved in music applications.

Several commercial and artistic decisions were made within the proposal. Commercially, I decided the pricing should remain relatively accessible compared to larger agencies because I do not want the service to take advantage of students. I also chose workshop and showcase events as part of the business model because they could function both as artistic experiences and promotional opportunities. Artistically, I wanted the proposal to emphasise collaboration and mentorship rather than competition alone. The showcase idea is not only about

performance but also about creating spaces where musicians can exchange experiences and build professional relationships.

Overall, this assignment helped me think more critically about how artistic projects operate within commercial structures. It also made me realise that careers in the creative music industry often require both artistic understanding and entrepreneurial thinking.

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