

Tools for Teachers to Support Music Students in Managing and Coping With Their Workload in Higher Education

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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.

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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 (Lópezĺñiguez 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-ĺñiguez 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 selfregulation. 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 openended 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.

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

.

TABLE 1 | Demographic characteristics of all participants in the sample (N = 155).

Background	%	Main subject studies	%	
Country		Genre group		
Finland	69.7	Classical music (UG or PG)	43.2	
United Kingdom	30.3	Music education (UG or PG)	24.5	
Gender		Other genres	32.3	
Female	68.0	Study programme		
Male	30.1	Classical string	13.5	
Non-binary gender	2.0	Classical wind	9.7	
University level		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	
Interview participants ($n = 29$)	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	

steps of (1) horizonalisation; (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.

13 literature- based codes *		14 interview- derived		Four categories of		Three overarching themes of proposed	
		codes		different workload meanings drawn from columns 1 and 2		recommendations for good practice related to music students' workload in higher education	
Structure of student workload Work	+	Competition Funding Musician career Social media	\rightarrow	Structure of workload	\rightarrow	Music students' ability to cope with their workload (including excerpts related to 'the student' in four of the categories to the left)*** 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)**** Developing learner-centered environments in higher music education (including excerpts related to 'the environment' 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	\rightarrow	A student's individual workload			
One-to-one tuition Teaching and learning environments	+	Assessment Curriculum Group tuition Student feedback	\rightarrow	Workload relating to teaching and learning environments			
Burnout Health Musculoskeletal problems Performance anxiety Stress	+	Physical exercise	\rightarrow	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).

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:

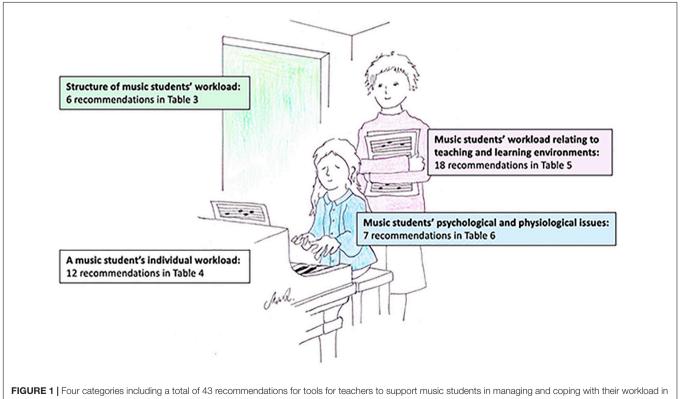
"I therefore feel well taken care of in the here-and-now, but not in terms of future planning."

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 musicrelated 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



higher education.

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 *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.

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:

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' approaches to learning 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 *coping* 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 *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 *practicing* 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 *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.

"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.

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

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 *teaching and learning environments*, but some students have or have had unfortunate, unfavorable, 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 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

(e) 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 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 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 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 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 utilize 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.

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."

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.

TABLE 6 | Music students' psychological and physiological issues 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 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 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' *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 practicing and playing techniques could help students to avoid *musculoskeletal problems* 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 *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 practicing. 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."

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-Íñiguez, 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 peerstudents 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 oneto-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-Íniguez, 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-toone 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 learnercentered 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. Pecen 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 metacognition 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.

CONCLUSION

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.

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

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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.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

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