

ROYAL NORTHERN COLLEGE OF MUSIC: REGULATIONS 2023-2024

(Version 7: 8 November 2023)

Please note that items in blue print are copied from the Manchester Metropolitan University Regulations. Items in black print are RNCM-specific variants negotiated with Manchester Metropolitan University.

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This document should be read in conjunction with Manchester Metropolitan University's Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees, available from the [Doctoral Services website](#).

Key contacts

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<p>Manchester Metropolitan University: Doctoral Services, Research & Innovation Email: GSresearchdegrees@mmu.ac.uk</p> <p>If doctoral students or their supervisors have any questions regarding the administration of the student's research degree, they can ring Manchester Metropolitan University's Doctoral Student enquiries line for any non-academic matter on 0161 247 5329 between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday.</p>	

At RNCM the first point of contact should be **Charlotte Wheatcroft**, Programmes and Assessment Coordinator (PGR).

General information about RNCM's postgraduate research degrees

RNCM does not yet have research degree awarding powers. Manchester Metropolitan University validates the RNCM's research degrees programme.¹ RNCM is therefore a Collaborative Partner of Manchester Metropolitan University **so far as the RNCM research degrees programme is concerned**. Manchester Met's Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees—Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) therefore apply to the RNCM's research degrees programme. This document clarifies the Regulations, where necessary, for doctoral students—referred to at RNCM as *postgraduate research students* or PGRs—and their supervisory teams.

The RNCM's postgraduate research degrees occupy the final step in a progressive series of programmes that together make up the RNCM Graduate School. They offer an opportunity to conduct high-level research within the dynamic, creative, and supportive environment of an internationally recognised conservatoire. Excellence in the fields of performance and composition continues to be underpinned and enhanced by research of the highest quality in music education, music psychology and musicology as well as performance and composition, which, in recent years, has resulted in academic monographs, international critical editions, edited volumes, peer-reviewed journal articles, CDs, and a variety of Practice-as-Research (<https://www.rncm.ac.uk/research/>).

Introduction

These regulations outline the rules governing the formal stages of postgraduate research at the University: registration, progression and assessment.

These regulations are supported by a suite of policy and guidance documents that provide additional details for staff and students to support the practical implementation of the regulations.

Where the regulations state that approval must be sought by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), this approval may be delegated to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee (Faculty RDC), Head of Faculty RDC or Doctoral Services, as outlined in the Schedule of Delegated Authority.

All of the other key documents are available on the [Doctoral Services website](#).

General principles

1.1 The rules and procedures relating to postgraduate research degrees, including written and oral examinations, are set out in this document. These regulations provide mechanisms to ensure that students are assessed fairly and objectively, while maintaining the University's high academic standards. Ignorance of these rules and assessment requirements will not constitute a defence in any disciplinary procedures. Queries about the regulations should be directed to the appropriate Faculty Research Degrees Team in the first instance.

1.2 Assessment at Manchester Metropolitan University is an integral part of the research degree. It is the principal instrument with which we recognise and reward student achievement and maintain academic standards.

1.3 The University regulations on assessment support this principle and they aim to make the processes inclusive, fair, consistent and clear to both staff and students. The regulations also reflect the expectation and relevant indicators of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education ([here](#)).

1.4 These regulations and their underlying principles apply to postgraduate research degrees provision approved by the University and delivered by the University or by its collaborative partners leading to awards

¹ See Appendix 3 Programme Specific Schedule (excerpted from Framework Collaborative Agreement between Manchester Metropolitan University and RNCM 2019-2025) [here](#).

or academic credit of the University. They apply to all work that formally contributes to the award of the University, at whatever point in a programme the work is undertaken.

1.5 Any exemption or variation from these regulations shall be exceptional and must be approved in advance by the RDC as set out in the Terms of Reference.

1.6 These regulations shall be applied consistently to ensure equity of treatment of students regardless of their discipline or their mode of study.

1.7 The latest version of the regulations is applied to all current students for any given academic year, irrespective of their year of enrolment.

1.8 These regulations have undergone an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), in accordance with our public sector equality duties.

Admission

Admission to the Degree

2.1 Candidates apply to study at the University via the online university admission system.

2.2 Applicants must meet the entry requirements set by the University, which are available on the [Applying for Postgraduate Research Courses](#) webpages. An offer will only be made upon confirmation from the admitting Faculty that there is appropriate supervision and resources available to support the proposed research.

Prospective PGRs currently apply to study at RNCM by submitting an application form to pgr@rncm.ac.uk.

Applicants must meet the minimum entrance requirements ([here](#)), available on the Research Degrees Programmes website ([here](#)).

Applicants are normally required to hold a good (Distinction or Merit) master's qualifications in a relevant subject, having undertaken research training and produced a dissertation and/or portfolio of compositions or performances. They will also be considered for a place on the RNCM-Manchester Metropolitan University research degree programme if they expect their master's qualification to be awarded within the first three months after they have enrolled. All enrolments are expected to take place in September.

Eligible applicants may wish to apply for funding from the AHRC via the North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NWCDTP). More information as to the application process and deadlines can be found ([here](#)).

Applicants must have sufficient command of the English language to complete their study and to prepare and defend a thesis in English.

The minimum requirement for applicants to the **music education, music psychology and musicology** pathways is an **average IELTS score of 7.0 including a minimum of 7.0 for writing and no less than 6.0 in any of the other three components** (listening, reading and speaking), or equivalent scores on a test approved by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) taken no more than 12 months before the application was made.

The minimum requirement for applicants to the **composition and performance** pathways is an **average IELTS score of 7.0 with no less than 6.0 in any of the four components**, or equivalent scores on a test approved by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) taken no more than 12 months before the application was made.

For further information please see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prove-your-english-language-abilities-with-a-secure-english-language-test-selt> (updated 1 September 2023). If offers to applicants are made conditional on the results of language tests, these *must* be passed *prior to enrolment*.

The RNCM Programmes and Assessment Coordinator (PGR) checks scans of qualifications and certificates before applicants pay their fees and enrol at RNCM. The current fees are published on the RNCM website.

RNCM is committed to offering the highest quality supervision and expects its PGRs' research to be congruent with established or developing research within the College. To this end, prospective applicants are advised to identify a prospective primary supervisor (PPS; the research interests of staff are published on the RNCM website and in the Guidelines for Applicants [here](#)) and work with them on the research proposal that will accompany their formal application. Applicants for PhD in Composition and Performance should approach the appropriate Head of School for advice. The Programme Leader for Research Degrees, Professor Jane Ginsborg (pgr@rncm.ac.uk), can provide further guidance if necessary.

Applicants are required to nominate their chosen pathway (Composition, Music Education, Music Psychology, Performance, or Musicology) and submit an appropriate research proposal of 1500 words including tables, figure and table captions, and bibliography or references. This is congruent with the current word limits for AHRC funding proposals through the North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership ([here](#)). The content and structure of research proposals for each pathway are specified in the Guidelines for Applicants ([here](#)). Applicants for PhD in composition must also submit scores of three examples of their recent compositions, with high-quality audio-recordings where available, and applicants for PhD in performance must submit high-quality audio-visual recordings of their performances. In both cases links to online recordings are acceptable.

Applicants must nominate two referees. One can be the prospective primary supervisor (PPS) or secondary supervisor but at least one must be independent of the application.

Applications, including proposals (and portfolios, for Composition and Performance), are approved for review by the appropriate pathway leader or their nominee. Applications are reviewed by at least two suitably qualified members of staff including the PPS and a reviewer independent of the application. Reviews include one of three recommendations: i) call for interview, ii) ask for application to be revised (on one occasion only) and iii) do not call for interview.

Applicants are called to interview on the basis of the reviews; feedback and further advice on revised and unsuccessful applications are provided by the pathway leader. Only one revised application will be considered.

Interviews (and auditions, for Performance), normally lasting about 45 minutes, are conducted by a panel comprising at least two suitably qualified members of staff, ideally including those who reviewed the application, and not excluding the potential primary supervisor. The Head of School of Composition or his nominee will interview all applicants for PhD in composition. Without exception, the offer of a place on the programme will be made only after the applicant has been interviewed.

The offer of a place on the programme will be made only after the applicant has been interviewed. All offers are subject to the availability of a Principal Supervisor at Manchester Metropolitan University.

3 Transferring PhD between institutions

Transferring into Manchester Metropolitan University from another institution

3.1 Applicants may transfer into Manchester Metropolitan University from another institution to complete their studies.

3.2 Each case will be considered on its merits and a maximum reduction of 12 months of study will be available for full-time students (24 months for part-time students).

3.3 In order for a student to be eligible for an award of the Manchester Metropolitan University, they must complete a minimum of 50% of their registration period at Manchester Met.

3.4 Applicants will be required to provide documentary evidence from their previous institution of agreement to the transfer, in line with the regulations for the previous institution (if available). This documentation should take the form of a report from the original institution to confirm the dates of registration, confirm support for the transfer, academic progress and assessment information, supervisory team comments on the work completed, and a statement from the student to confirm the reasons for moving institution.

Transferring from Manchester Metropolitan University to another institution

3.5 Applicants may request to transfer from Manchester Metropolitan University to another institution to complete their studies, provided they have not been examined on their submitted thesis by the University.

3.6 Where a transfer to another institution is requested, subject to the provisions in regulation 3.5 above, the University will provide documentation to confirm the dates of the student's registration, academic progress and assessment information and comments on the work completed to the new institution.

3.7 In all cases, the transfers are subject to the required documentations being provided, agreement of the student, supervisory team and the two institutions involved, and the approval of RDC.

4 Enrolment

4.1 Students must enrol with the University prior to starting their research degree. If a student does not enrol within four weeks of the start date in their offer letter, they will be required to withdraw from the University or defer their enrolment to the next enrolment intake.

Successful applicants must enrol at RNCM prior to starting their research degree. When they have done so, the RNCM Programmes and Assessment Coordinator (PGR) arranges for them to be enrolled at Manchester Metropolitan University.

4.2 Students are required to renew their enrolment annually. If a student does not re-enrol, their registration shall lapse, they shall no longer be insured at the University, and they will be deemed to have withdrawn from their studies. A student whose registration has lapsed may be considered for re-admission to the same programme provided that the lapse in registration was not a consequence of academic failure and is within one calendar month from the re-enrolment start date.

4.3 Enrolment on time is the expected standard. If exceptional circumstances prevent timely enrolment or re-enrolment, backdating of that enrolment may be possible at the discretion of the RDC.

PGRs must re-enrol at RNCM each August, or by mid-January for those who enrolled – exceptionally – for the first time in January,² until the degree has been conferred.

5 Concurrent registration

5.1 Students who are registered on a postgraduate research programme at Manchester Metropolitan may not be registered for another award at this university or other academic or professional institution without the University's specific prior permission.

² Induction and enrolment normally take place mid-September.

6 Award and Registration Information

Criteria for Awarding research degrees

6.1 Manchester Metropolitan University assures its academic standards for research degrees through engagement with external reference points established by the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications and through the UK Quality Code for Higher Education ([here](#)), which clearly outlines what higher education providers are required to do, what they can expect of each other, and what the general public can expect of them.

6.2 The standards of the University's awards are regulated through the [Regulations for the Academic Awards of the Manchester Metropolitan University](#) and the [Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees Doctor of Philosophy](#).

Awards of the University

6.3 The awards that the University offers for postgraduate research study are detailed in the [Regulations for the Academic Awards of the Manchester Metropolitan University](#).

6.4 Information relating to aegrotat and posthumous awards are outlined in the document.

The following pathways are offered at RNCM in i) composition, ii) music education, iii) music psychology, iv) musicology, and v) performance:

- PhD
- PhD by published work.

Applicants typically apply for one of the five pathways but, in practice, it is possible to undertake PhD research in two pathways (e.g. music education and psychology; musicology and performance).

7 PhD Period of Student Registration

Minimum period of registration	Standard period of registration	Maximum period of registration
24 months (full-time) 48 months (part-time)	36 months (full-time) 72 months (part-time)	48 months (full-time) 84 months (part-time)

7.1 The standard length of supervised study for a PhD is 36 months (full-time) / 72 months (part-time).

7.2 Students can apply to the RDC for permission to submit before this in line with the minimum period of registration.

7.3 Students will be eligible to enter a writing up period immediately after the end of the standard registration period, for a maximum of 12 months. The 12-month period is applicable to both full-time and part-time students. See Section "Supervision, Review and Progression/Writing up" for full details.

7.4 For all research degrees, the registration period commences on the date indicated in the student's offer letter. The registration period continues until the degree is awarded, the student reaches their maximum registration period (unless an extension is granted as outlined in regulation 11.6 below), or the student withdraws from the programme. See also the requirement for students to re-enrol on an annual basis to maintain their registration.

7.5 Appropriate fees are payable annually for the duration of the degree and for any resubmission period (if applicable).

8 Supervision, Review and Progression/Writing-Up

Supervision

8.1 All research degree students shall be supervised by a supervisory team including a Principal Supervisor, supervisors and, where appropriate, specialist advisor(s).

8.2 The aim of supervision at Manchester Met is to:

- Support and develop the student to enable them to complete their studies within the agreed timeframe.
- Enable the student to develop and effectively provide and receive a critical overview of their work.
- Provide effective support and prepare the student for their oral examination.
- Provide a framework in which new supervisors can gain experience alongside those with more experience.

8.3 Supervision team criteria, roles and responsibilities of the supervisory team and student, schedule of agreed contact, and the process that a student needs to follow if they are not satisfied with their supervision arrangements, are all detailed in the [Guidance on Postgraduate Research Supervision](#).

8.4 Supervisory teams are subject to approval by the RDC.

PGRs' supervisory teams consist of a primary supervisor and one or more secondary supervisors who are typically full- and/or part-time members of staff at RNCM. In addition, each PGR is allocated a Principal Supervisor at Manchester Metropolitan University who is responsible for liaising with the Faculty Research Degrees Team at Manchester Metropolitan University and who may take an active part in supervision as agreed on an individual basis. For the purposes of [SkillsForge](#), the portal through which research degrees are managed at Manchester Metropolitan University, primary supervisors at RNCM are nominated joint principal supervisors so that they can make applications for changes to supervisory arrangements, for example, and nominate examiners.

Team composition and appointment criteria

All PGRs (other than those registered for PhD by Published Works ([here](#)), who have an Internal Advisor) should be supervised by a supervisory team including a primary supervisor, one or more secondary supervisor(s) and, where appropriate, one or more specialist advisor(s). The team should not include anyone who has a close personal relationship with the student.

At least one member of the supervisory team should be experienced in and actively engaged in research, with a PhD. At least one member of the team should have supervised one or more PhDs to completion, although if this is not possible a member of staff at RNCM who has supervised to completion can be appointed as a mentor to the team. Members of the team who do not hold a PhD should have appropriate equivalent experience or professional qualifications or status.

In addition, the approval of the RNCM Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee should be sought for proposed supervisors to supervise to a higher level than their own qualifications. Supervisors without completions (i.e. conferral of the award of PhD to a PGR they have supervised), or new to the College, are strongly recommended to follow the UKGCE Research Supervision Recognition Programme ([here](#)), the cost to be borne by RNCM) and become UKGCE Recognised Research Supervisors; they should also receive mentoring from a more experienced member of the supervisory team. Supervisors and advisors may be external to the College.

It is mandatory for supervisors to engage in research supervision and ethics training on a regular basis. All new supervisors must attend the Manchester Metropolitan University Doctoral Services development workshop in their first year, and thereafter every three years. All new supervisors must also undertake an induction / refresher session at RNCM, provided annually by the Programme Leader for Research Degrees on

a small-group or one-to-one basis. Also, a PGR supervisors' handbook is circulated to all supervisors, chairs and members of annual progression review panels (see **Formal Progression Reviews**, below) at the beginning of each academic year. More experienced supervisors must attend the RNCM induction / refresher session at least once every three years, and ethics training every year. These sessions take place in Semester 1, and a second research supervision training workshop is also held annually in Semester 2, with a range of presentations and discussions.

PGRs, other than those registered for PhD by Published Works ([here](#)), may not act as primary supervisors for other PGRs, but may act as a secondary supervisor or advisor.

The RNCM Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee will determine the number of concurrent supervisions permitted for a member of staff acting as a primary or secondary supervisor, to a maximum of six full-time PGRs for primary supervisors. The Committee should ensure that an individual member of staff is able to manage a particular workload and that this does not reach a level where it might disadvantage an individual PGR.

Appointment process

The supervisory team, including the Principal Supervisor at Manchester Metropolitan University, is identified through the admissions process, must be approved by the appropriate Faculty Research Degrees Committee at Manchester Metropolitan University and be in place by the end of week 12 of the PGR's research degree programme.

PGR and supervisor responsibilities

These are set out in the [Guidance on Postgraduate Research Supervision](#). In aiming to fulfil their roles, supervisory teams should be aware of the QAA doctoral degree characteristics statement ([here](#)) and the National and Dublin descriptors set out in the Appendix to this handbook.

Note that Manchester Metropolitan University expects formal meetings to be held by the PGR and primary supervisor at least 10 times a year, regardless of whether the PGR is full- or part-time, and recorded on [SkillsForge](#). The precise number, length and format of contacts will vary since they depend on many factors, including the stage of the research, type of meeting and type of research project. Full-time PGRs can expect 30 hours of supervision (on average), over the course of each academic year, and part-time PGRs can expect 15 hours of supervision, but this does not necessarily involve face-to-face meetings; contact may be virtual, and supervisors inevitably spend some of their hours reading and providing feedback on work that has been submitted to them.

Expectations, feedback and academic progress

The whole supervisory team should meet as soon as possible after the PGR has enrolled to establish all parties' expectations, including when and how work will be received by the team for review, and when and how feedback will be given to the PGR. If such feedback is given outside a formal meeting, it should be recorded on [SkillsForge](#) within the record of the following meeting.

If supervisors have concerns over the PGR's progress, they should consult and follow the Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research Progress ([here](#)). In keeping with all Graduate School Programmes at RNCM, supervision for PGRs is normally delivered within the context of a 34-week academic year. That part of the year lying outside this 34-week period should be regarded primarily as devoted to private study and preparation for submission.

Formal Progression Reviews

8.5 Formal progression reviews require the student to submit evidence of their academic progress and attend a review meeting, which consists of the student and a panel of reviewers who are independent of the supervisory team.

8.6 The role of the panel is to assess the progress of the student and produce and submit a written recommendation report to the Faculty Assessment Board for review. The panel will report on whether the student's progress is satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

8.7 If the student's progress is satisfactory, then s/he will continue with the programme. If the panel determines that the student's progress is unsatisfactory, the student's case will be referred to the relevant Faculty, who will determine the appropriate action to be taken. The following actions are available to the Faculty, for subsequent approval by the Faculty Assessment Board.

- **Resubmit.** The student is not currently making sufficient progress to indicate they are on track to meet the required [doctoral standards](#) to continue with their studies. The student is required to make revisions and amendments to their work and resubmit them for further review. Upon resubmission the outcomes available to the student will be continue, transfer or withdraw.
- **Transfer.** The student has not made sufficient progress to indicate they are on track to meet the required [doctoral standards](#) and it is recommended that they transfer from the doctoral degree to a lower award.
- **Withdraw.** The student has not made sufficient progress to indicate they are on track to meet the required [doctoral standards](#) for PhD or a lower award, and it is recommended that the student is withdrawn from the University.

8.8 The format and timescales for the completion of formal progress reviews are detailed in the PGR Progressions Reviews document ([here](#)).

Initial project reviews are undertaken informally in the course of supervision during the PGR's first three months following enrolment and reported on an RD9 form on SkillsForge, signed by the PGR and their primary supervisor. The PGR should provide a data plan and a training plan. As part of the initial project review, the PGR should also obtain ethical clearance by completing an RNCM Ethical Clearance form ([here](#)) signed by the PGR's primary supervisor, the Chair of the RNCM Research Ethics Committee and the Programme Leader. Initial project reviews and any concerns that may arise from them should also be reported by primary supervisors to the Programme Leader, since she must report the progress of first-year PGRs at the February meeting of the Research Degrees Committee. Ethical approval (not clearance) must be sought, if appropriate, using the appropriate form ([here](#)), and obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of either RNCM or Conservatoires UK (if participants are to be recruited from other CUK institutions) before the PGR starts collecting data.

Turnitin is accessed via MyMMU. Navigate to the Doctoral Services Hub area of Moodle and it will be found at the "Managing your research degree" tab.

Full-time PGRs undertake their First Formal Annual Progression Review 9-12 months after enrolment, the Second Formal Annual Progression Review 20-24 months after enrolment and their Final Formal Review 30-33 months after enrolment, in preparation for the submission of their thesis or portfolio and critical commentary for examination.

Part-time PGRs undertake Annual Check-ins 9-12 and 33-36 months after enrolment. Their First and Second Progression Reviews take place after 18-24 and 40-48 months, respectively, and their Final Formal Review 60-66 months after enrolment. (There is no Annual Check-in between the Second Progression Review and the Final Formal Review.)

Each PGR has a Review Panel consisting of two members of staff at RNCM who are independent of the PGR's supervisory team. They should agree between themselves which of them will fulfil the role of chair for the progression review and submit the report and recommendation on SkillsForge. This panel should remain consistent, from the First to the Final Formal Review. One member of the supervisory team should attend each Review Panel Meeting.

The RNCM PGR conference takes place in May every year, and all PGRs are expected to present their work-in-progress to their peers and members of staff unless they have already submitted their thesis/portfolio.

Transfer of registration to a lower award

8.9 A registered student may request a transfer to a lower award at any time.

8.10 A Principal Supervisor may recommend that a student is transferred to a lower award at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, which will then be managed through the formal progress review process or through the [Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research Progress](#) (if the formal progress review is not imminent).

8.11 All transfer requests are subject to approval by the RDC.

Supporting Student Progress

8.12 The [Procedure to Support Postgraduate Research](#) may be used to support a student's progress in the following scenarios:

- Where students are not making sufficient progress with their research, or they are failing to maintain contact with their supervisory team, the procedure can be instigated by supervisors at any point during the academic year.
- In the event that the formal progression review(s) outcomes deem that insufficient progress has been made to continue, the independent review panel, in consultation with the supervisory team, may recommend that the procedure be instigated.

8.13 The procedure aims to seek a resolution, agreeable to both parties, within an appropriate timescale. However, if insufficient progress continues, or engagement does not improve, it may lead to the withdrawal of the student's registration by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee. The student has a right of appeal regarding any progression recommendation via the [University Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

Intention to submit

8.14 Students should register their intention to submit a minimum of 3 months prior to their planned submission date, using the relevant University form.

The RNCM Notice of Intention to Submit form can be found on RNCM Moodle ([here](#)). The difference between it and the Manchester Metropolitan University form is that it must be signed by the Programme Leader. The correct form must be completed and submitted to pgr@ncm.ac.uk.

Writing-up Period

8.15 All students registered on a PhD degree are eligible to enter a writing-up period after the end of their period of supervised study, to allow additional time to prepare and write up their thesis in advance of submission.

8.16 A fee will be payable for any writing-up period that is approved by the University. Details of the writing-up fee and other University fees can be found in the Regulations for the Payment of University Fees and other related Financial Information for Postgraduate Research Students.

At RNCM, there is one flat-rate writing-up fee (<https://www.ncm.ac.uk/study-here/make-an-application/fees/tuition-fees/>), which applies to home and international students. If a PGR is granted an extension following the writing-up period, the same extension fee is charged for up to 12 months. PGRs who receive a "revise and resubmit" outcome following their oral examination will be charged the same flat-rate fee, regardless of whether they are home or international students, and will receive a maximum of five hours of supervision while they are making their revisions. The RNCM Application for a Writing-Up Period form can be found on RNCM Moodle ([here](#)). During the writing-up period PGRs will similarly receive a maximum of five hours of supervision.

8.17 If students are funded, or hold a visa, they are advised to check if there are any restrictions in advance of applying.

9 Research ethics and academic misconduct

9.1 The University expects research students to maintain the highest level of professional integrity in research practice and publication. Students are accountable to their professional bodies, Manchester

Metropolitan University and to the organisations that fund their research. The Manchester Metropolitan University Academic Ethical Framework provides further details.

9.2 Prior to the commencement of any research, students must gain [ethical approval](#) for that work.

PGRs at RNCM, whether their research is practice-based (i.e. in composition or performance) or non-practice-based (music education, music psychology, musicology) must apply for ethical clearance (not approval) on the form available [here](#), to be signed off by the PGR's primary supervisor, the Chair of the RNCM Research Ethics Committee, and the Programme Leader for Research Degrees before completing their initial project review.

Before any participants are recruited to studies involving human participation, ethical approval (not clearance) must be sought using the appropriate form available [here](#) and obtained from the RNCM Research Ethics Committee (or the Conservatoires UK Research Ethics Committee if appropriate). The requirement to obtain ethical approval applies to

- all researchers who are members of staff, PGRs or students at RNCM
- all external researchers (i.e. independent researchers and those employed by other institutions) wishing to recruit staff, PGRs or students at RNCM as participants in their research, regardless of whether they have obtained ethical approval from another institution.³

It is therefore vital that *all* PGRs and their supervisory teams are aware of and adhere to RNCM procedures for obtaining ethical clearance for research that does *not* involve the participation of other people (typically musicological and archival research), and ethical approval for empirical research that *does* involve other people as participants, including composition and performance. Further information on research ethics can be found [here](#). Training in research ethics is mandatory for PGRs as well as supervisors and is delivered by the Programme Leader for Research and the Chair of the RNCM Research Ethics Committee in two workshops each year.

9.3 The Manchester Metropolitan University website on Research Governance provides guidelines for good research practice and links to legal requirements and Manchester Metropolitan University policies and procedures. The [Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#) and the [Procedure for Handling Academic Misconduct](#) provide guidance on appropriate behaviour and definitions of misconduct in research.

9.4 The University will implement the [Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#) if an allegation of scientific or ethical misconduct is identified. Once this procedure is complete, any necessary recommendations and decisions on penalties will be made through an Assessment Disciplinary Committee as outlined in the [Procedure for Handling Academic Misconduct](#).

PGRs at RNCM should **in addition** be familiar with the RNCM Good Research Conduct policy ([here](#)), which sets out the RNCM Research Misconduct Procedure.

10 Training and Development

10.1 A programme of skills training and development is a fundamental component of the research degree, as outlined in [The Quality Code, Advice and Guidance Theme: Research Degrees; Guiding principle 4](#), which states that 'Research students are afforded opportunities for professional development'.

10.2 All full-time and part-time doctoral students must attend the appropriate Faculty induction programme and complete the online induction at the start of their registration period.

10.3 Doctoral students are required to engage in training and development to support their development as researchers. Manchester Met is committed to principles contained within the [Concordat to support the](#)

³If approval has been granted by the Conservatoires UK Research Ethics Committee there is no need for a separate application to the RNCM Research Ethics Committee.

[career development of researchers](#), including the minimum requirements for professional development time.

10.4 Training and Development opportunities provide personal and professional skills and the skills necessary to attain competence in research methods, wider research integrity and knowledge related to the subject of the thesis.

10.5 Development opportunities and events are available on The Graduate School webpages. Detailed training and development information is provided to all students at induction events and throughout their studies.

Informal PGR workshops are delivered most Wednesday mornings during term-time, in person, by the Programme Leader and other members of staff as appropriate. An indicative list of topics includes Doing a PhD at RNCM; Managing Your Supervisory Team; Analysing Your Training Needs; Accessing Appropriate Resources from the RNCM Library; Writing Literature Reviews; Research Ethics and Integrity; Applying for Ethical Clearance and Approval; Making Use of Opportunities to Develop Expertise in Teaching; Artistic Research; Practice-based Research and Autoethnography; Belonging, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; and Archival Research. The schedule is published on RNCM Moodle.

Formal PGR seminars are delivered most Wednesday afternoons during term-time, in person, typically by the speaker delivering the Sir John Manduell Research Forum (see below), and relate to the speaker's research interests. The schedule is published on Moodle and reminders are sent in advance, together with readings and other materials for preparation, as appropriate.

The School of Composition and each of the Schools of Performance hold regular seminars and workshops. These are advertised by the relevant School. All PGRs are welcome to attend and contribute as appropriate.

Sir John Manduell Research Forum seminars are typically given by external speakers and are open to all staff, students, PGRs and visitors to RNCM. The schedule is published on Moodle and they are also advertised on the RNCM website. PGRs are expected to attend, contribute as appropriate (e.g. by asking questions) and invited to join the speaker in the bar after the seminar.

Employment of Research Students

10.6 During the student's period of registration, there is a maximum number of hours per week that a full-time research student can be employed and be paid for. Details of the maximum number of hours per week are detailed in the Research Degrees Handbook.

10.7 Students who require a visa and/or students who are funded should also check their eligibility to work with the relevant authority.

At RNCM, and subject to visa requirements and those of external funding bodies, full-time PGRs should be employed outside their studies for a maximum of 16 hours per week. There is no limit on the number of hours that part-time PGRs can be employed.

11 Change in Circumstances

Request to Interrupt

11.1 Where a student is prevented from making progress with their research, they may apply, in accordance with the Guidance on Concessions ([here](#)) to interrupt during their period of supervised study. Retrospective applications for interruption will not normally be considered.

11.2 An interruption of studies for a period of up to 6 months at any one time, and for a maximum of 12 months' continually, may be granted.

11.3 The total length of time taken as an interruption will not normally exceed 24 months over the duration of the student's registered period of study.

If, having read the Guidance on Concessions ([here](#)), PGRs at RNCM wish to apply for an interruption, they must make their case, in writing, supported by documentary evidence, and submit it to the RNCM Programmes and Assessment Coordinator (PGR) (pgr@rncm.ac.uk). They should then request interviews, face-to-face or via a video conference, with each of the following members of staff in turn, so that the RNCM Interruption of Studies form can be completed:

- Programme Leader for Research Degrees [Course Leader],
- Head of Student Services.

When the RNCM PhD Interruption of Study form ([here](#)) has been completed and signed by both members of staff it can be used as evidence to support an application for interruption of studies to Manchester Metropolitan University via [SkillsForge](#). The Programme Leader will report interruptions of study to the RNCM Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee when they have been approved.

11.4 The student Pregnancy and Maternity Guidelines ([here](#)) outline the maternity procedures for all students where this applies to an interruption of study.

Where an RNCM PGR has a studentship and is either funded internally or by an external funding body or sponsor, the PGR must first obtain approval from the funding body to interrupt their studies.

Extensions to a deadline, the writing-up period, or registration

11.5 An application for an extension to registration or the writing-up period will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and should be submitted with satisfactory documentary evidence to support the request.

11.6 If the Faculty RDC considers that the extension request is valid, and the application is supported by satisfactory documentary evidence, the Committee may agree to an extension of the deadline date by a period of time up to a maximum of 12 calendar months. That maximum applies to both full- and part-time students.

11.7 An application for an extension to a formal progression review, thesis revisions, or resubmission deadline should be submitted in accordance with the Guidance on Concessions.

If, having read the Guidance on Concessions ([here](#)), PGRs at RNCM wish to apply for an extension, they must make their case, in writing, supported by documentary evidence, and submit it to the RNCM Programmes and Assessment Coordinator (PGR) (pgr@rncm.ac.uk). They should then request interviews, face-to-face or via video conference, with the Programme Leader for Research Degrees, so that the RNCM PhD Extension of Study form ([here](#)) can be completed and used as evidence to support an application for extension of studies to Manchester Metropolitan University (see below). The Programme Leader will report extensions of study to the RNCM Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee when they have been approved.

Applications for extensions to progression reviews are not made via SkillsForge but must be made to Manchester Metropolitan University directly using the Manchester Metropolitan University Research Degrees Exceptional Factors Form ([here](#)). Where a PGR has a studentship and is either funded internally or by an external funding body or sponsor, the student must first obtain approval from the funding body to extend their studies.

Change in Mode of Studies

11.8 A student may apply to the Faculty RDC to change their mode of study from full-time to part-time, or part-time to full-time at any point. Details of the application process are outlined in the Research Degrees Handbook ([here](#)).

PGRs at RNCM who wish to transfer from full-time to part-time or vice versa (at the end of the second or fourth part-time year) should do so using an **RNCM Request for Change in Mode of Study (PGR)** ([here](#)). Note that for visa reasons this option is not open to international PGRs. They must **also** apply to their Faculty at Manchester Metropolitan University using the application process referred to in 11.8, above.

11.9 Students who require a visa and/or students who are funded should also check their eligibility to work with the relevant authority.

Change in Programme of Studies

11.10 A student may apply to the Faculty RDC to change their approved programme of study if there has been a significant change in the direction of their research in advance of the approval of their second progression review. Details of the application process are outlined in the Research Degrees Handbook.

Adjustments for students

11.11 The needs of students with disabilities, including specific learning difficulties, are supported throughout the research degree in compliance with the Equality Act 2010. If a student requires any adjustment to be made this will be implemented with support from colleagues in the Disability Service. Details around student adjustments are outlined in the Research Degrees Handbook.

PGRs at RNCM who identify a disability or other learning need that requires modifications to the approved programme will be referred to the RNCM's Learning Support Tutor and, if necessary, will be offered a Personal Learning Plan. The implications of such a plan will be discussed with the PGR and their supervisor(s). The relevant College guidelines may be found [here](#).

Compulsory Suspension

11.12 For reasons of academic or personal misconduct, the University may apply a suspension from attendance at the University for a specified period. A student's registration status throughout this period will be 'Suspended'. The procedure for this can be accessed from the [Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#).

11.13 The Finance Service Centre under certain circumstances (e.g. non-payment of fees) can suspend a student's studies. This will occur where the University has had a number of failed attempts to contact the student to reach a resolution. It is the student's responsibility to contact the University to negotiate a payment arrangement.

11.14 Where the above applies, there will be implications to the student's funding provision, access to University facilities, and for international students, implications to their visa and immigration status. It is the student's responsibility to contact the University to confirm what these implications will be.

Withdrawal

11.15 A student may make a request to withdraw from their studies at any time.

11.16 Where the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee requires a registered student to be withdrawn from their studies, this will be managed, as outlined in the Postgraduate Student Withdrawal Policy ([here](#)).

PGRs wishing to withdraw from their programme of studies should apply first to RNCM using the RNCM Notice of Withdrawal form ([here](#)).

12 Preparation and Presentation of Thesis

Thesis word limit

12.1 The text of the thesis should not exceed the maximum word limit of 80,000 words (excluding ancillary data such as footnotes, bibliographies, diagrams and references).

12.2 It should be noted that the maximum limit is not intended to be interpreted as a requirement for the length of the thesis and that in certain disciplines the thesis may be shorter. A student can apply to submit a thesis that exceeds the maximum word limit and should seek further advice from their Principal Supervisor.

For RNCM PGRs, the maximum word limit for PhD is 80,000 words (excluding ancillary data). PGRs who wish to submit a thesis exceeding the maximum word limits should seek advice from their supervisory team at RNCM and their Principal Supervisor at Manchester Metropolitan University.

12.3 Students registered to conduct research within a practice-based context may be permitted other variants of assessment methods. This would normally be based on a thesis with a lower word limit of up to 50,000 words, and a practice-based element (for example a live performance, exhibition or calculations and equations). Where this applies, and a student requires alternative examination arrangements, they must inform the Graduate School and Faculty Research Degrees Committee in advance of thesis submission.

At RNCM, PhD submissions in **composition** should consist of a substantial portfolio of compositions normally between 90 and 120 minutes in duration and a critical commentary. The portfolio of scores should normally be accompanied by recordings of each work. The critical commentary should normally be between 10,000 and 20,000 words, although this can be negotiated.

At RNCM, PhD submissions in **performance** should consist of a series of substantial performances of c.180 minutes total duration, which may be in the form of live presentations or studio recordings and a critical commentary. Live presentations must also be submitted as high-quality audio-visual recordings of their performances (links to online recordings are acceptable) recordings (live and / or studio). The critical commentary should normally be between 10,000 and 20,000 words, although this can be negotiated.

PGRs must make scores of all works performed available to both members of the examination panel, so should contact Library staff four weeks in advance of the examination for copies to be obtained and made available. The supervisory team will ensure that submissions in Performance involving live presentation, or that for other reasons require multiple assessment points, will be supported by the early appointment of an external examiner who will be invited to assess the PGR's performances accordingly.

Thesis Submission requirements

12.4 The thesis should be submitted in accordance with the [Guidance on Thesis Submission for Postgraduate Research Degrees](#).

12.5 To successfully submit a thesis, a student must ensure that they are currently enrolled as a student of the University, and that they have no outstanding fees.

12.6 A student will be required to declare upon submission that the work submitted is the student's own work and also that the work submitted has not previously been submitted and/or examined for any other award.

12.7 If a thesis is not submitted before the end of the maximum period of registration, the student will be withdrawn from the University and deemed unable to submit, unless further approval is granted owing to reasons of exceptional circumstances.

Request for early submission

12.8 A student can submit a request for early submission to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee. Specific guidance on the process is provided in the Submission Requirements guidance.

12.9 The minimum length of registration before a student can submit for a PhD is 24 months full-time (48 months part-time).

Copyright guidance

12.10 Students must have a full understanding and awareness of copyright issues and when it is necessary to seek permission to use other people's work to avoid infringing copyright. Further specifics in relation to copyright guidance are provided in the Submission Requirements guidance.

13. Examination and Assessment

Examination arrangements

13.1 For the purpose of satisfying the provisions of these regulations, the Faculty Research Degrees Committee may act as the Assessment Board for all research degrees.

13.2 Standard attendance at the oral examination consists of the student, two examiners and an independent chair. Additional examiners may attend dependent on the individual assessment requirements for the degree being examined.

13.3 Members of University staff, and other doctoral students of the University, may attend the examination, if prior consent is provided by the student.

13.4 The oral examination will be conducted within the University, or via video conferencing if deemed appropriate (see the [Oral Examination by Video Conference Policy](#) for full details and eligibility. Alternative format of examination, such as public defence, may be permitted subject to formal agreement between collaborating institutions.

13.5 All students must defend their thesis in English.

13.6 Where a student requires alternative assessment arrangements, they must gain the agreement of their supervisory team before informing the Graduate School and Faculty Research Degrees Committee in advance of thesis submission.

Examination Team

13.7 The appointment of examiners shall proceed in accordance with the Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees [here](#).

13.8 The examination team will normally consist of two examiners; at least one shall be an external examiner. Exceptions to this, such as for members of staff at MMU, are outlined in the Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees [here](#).

13.9 Examination teams are approved by the relevant Faculty Assessment Board.

13.10 For all research degree students who are required to undertake an oral examination, an independent chair shall be appointed to promote consistency and fairness. The independent chair does not examine the student, and is solely responsible for chairing the examination and ensuring the associated administration of the oral examination is completed.

Examination outcomes

13.11 After examining the thesis presented by a candidate and considering the results of the oral examination, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations for subsequent approval by the Faculty Assessment Board.

i) The student **be awarded the degree** with no revisions to the thesis being required.

ii) The student **be awarded the degree subject to minor revisions** being made to the thesis within the timelines noted in the Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees [here](#) (i.e. the revisions should be capable of being completed by the candidate within **two months from receipt of the written outcome**). Minor revisions are normally signed off by one of the two examiners with responsibilities agreed among the examiners during the viva deliberations and specified on the outcome form.

iii) The student be awarded the degree subject to **major revisions** being made to the thesis within the timelines noted in the Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees [here](#)

(i.e. the revisions should be capable of being completed by the candidate within **six months from receipt of the written outcome**. The examination team will provide the detail of the required revisions at the end of the oral examination. Both examiners will check the amendments). Major revisions are normally signed off by both examiners.

iv) The student **be invited to revise and re-submit the thesis** within the timelines noted in the Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees [here](#). The student will be permitted to resubmit on only one occasion. The thesis will be re-examined, normally by the original examiners, and a further oral examination may be required.

v) The student **be awarded a lower qualification with or without corrections** being made to the thesis within the timelines noted in the Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees (see [Regulations for Academic Awards of the Manchester Metropolitan University](#) for appropriate awards/exit awards).

vi) **No award be made to the student** and no resubmission be permitted.

Submission of revisions (outcomes ii, iii & v)

13.12 If the student has submitted the corrected thesis within the deadline, but the examiners are not satisfied with the revisions, the examiners may agree to allow up to one additional month on one occasion for the student to make further, minor revisions.

Re-assessment and resubmission (outcome iv)

13.13 The student shall be required to re-submit for re-examination and approval within a period of time specified in the Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees [here](#).

13.14 The form of the re-examination shall be as specified in the initial examiner outcome report, and shall address those aspects of the first examination in which the student's performance was not satisfactory and may consider any new or amended material included in the thesis presented for re-examination.

13.15 Students who fail to resubmit their amendments by the date specified may be deemed to have failed their degree and may be withdrawn by the University.

13.16 Upon resubmission, the examiners shall make one of the following recommendations for subsequent approval by the Faculty Assessment Board:

i) The student **be awarded the degree** with no corrections to the thesis being required.

ii) The student **be awarded the degree subject to minor revisions** being made to the thesis within the timelines noted in the Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees [here](#). The revisions will be assessed as outlined in the "Submission of revisions" section above.

iii) The student **be awarded a lower qualification with or without corrections** being made to the thesis within the timelines noted in the Guidance on the Examination of Postgraduate Research Degrees (see [Regulations for Academic Awards of the Manchester Metropolitan University](#) for appropriate awards/exit awards).

iv) **No award be made** to the student, and the student is withdrawn from the University.

13.17 The original examiners will normally undertake the re-examination, but in the event of non-availability, new examiners shall be appointed and approved by the Faculty Assessment Board.

13.18 In all cases, having considered the recommendation, the Faculty Assessment Board shall submit its final recommendations for an award to the Academic Board for University approval.

14 Complaints and appeals

14.1 The [Student Complaints Procedure](#) and the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#) apply to all doctoral students of the University.

PGRs at RNCM will be entitled to invoke the complaints procedures of either RNCM or Manchester Metropolitan University, according to the individual circumstances of the complaint. Complaints must be addressed to the institution responsible for the subject of the complaint or where it occurred. The RNCM's formal procedure for Student Complaints is published [here](#). If issues remain unresolved through local procedures, a PGR should refer the matter to Manchester Metropolitan University to commence Review proceedings. It should, however, be recognised that the University will not always have the authority to determine matters at partner institutions.

15 Further Information

Additional guidance and support

15.1 Information to support the regulations is available on the [Doctoral Services website](#).

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 8 on the FHEQ and SCQF level 12 on the FQHEIS: doctoral degree

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments

Dublin descriptors

Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field
- have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity
- have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication
- are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas
- can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise
- can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge-based society.