PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

ADVANCED ARTIST DIPLOMA (LEVEL 8)

Awarding Institution: Royal Northern College of Music
Programme Leader: Dr Tom Parkinson, Head of Doctoral Programmes

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1.INTRODUCTORY PROGRAMME INFORMATION

Award **On successful completion of the course, students will receive:**	**Duration (months)**	**Mode of study**
Advanced Artist Diploma (Level 8)	12 months	FT
Potential Awards:	24 months	PT
Advanced Artist Diploma in Performance		
Advanced Artist Diploma in Composition		
Advanced Artist Diploma in Production		

Period of Registration: Minimum: 12 Months Maximum: 24 Months

Academic Year: September to September

OTHER POTENTIAL AWARDS: Programme levels and qualifications (*Exit Awards*)

There are no other potential awards.

Date of Writing:	December 2025
Period of Approval:	**From:** September 2026 **To:** December 2031

PROGRAMME AIMS

The programme aims to:

1. Develop autonomous, research-informed artistic practitioners capable of operating at the highest level of international artistic practice, demonstrating rigour, integrity, and reflexivity commensurate with doctoral-level achievement
2. Enable advanced performers and composers to acquire and extend a specialised body of advanced musical knowledge, skills and techniques, supporting the development of sustained, research-informed international careers and the capacity to extend and redefine contemporary artistic practice within their chosen discipline.
3. Equip advanced performers and composers with a detailed understanding and critical awareness of the relationship between current knowledge and practice within their chosen discipline.
4. Offer advanced performers and composers opportunities to identify, plan, curate, and realise performance and dissemination opportunities that function as sites of research-led, knowledge generating artistic practice commensurate with doctoral-level achievement
5. Provide individual career development guidance to ensure that students are fully prepared for the challenges of establishing and sustaining a freelance international career.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAMME

Knowledge and Understanding (Intellectual Skills) - on successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a critical and comprehensive understanding of the chosen artistic discipline (performance or composition), informed by current research, advanced artistic practice and evolving artistic contexts, evidencing musical insight, critical maturity, creative originality and technical authority commensurate with doctoral (level 8) work and professional artistic standards
2. Demonstrate a critically informed and research-led command of a specialised domain relevant to the Principal Study discipline, including the ability to contextualise, interrogate and extend existing artistic practices and interpretative traditions at the forefront of the field.
3. Demonstrate an advanced, reflexive and research-informed approach to identifying, analysing and resolving complex creative or interpretive issues, communicating artistic and technical solutions to an internationally recognised professional standard, and contributing to the understanding and advancement of artistic practice.
4. Demonstrate exceptional levels of autonomy, originality and leadership in problem-solving and decision-making, including the capacity to operate at the highest professional and ethical standards within musical organisations and institutions, and to influence practice, policy or understanding within the discipline.

Practical Skills - on successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

1. Synthesise theory and practice for identification, analysis and solution of musical and technical problems.
2. Demonstrate highly developed and discriminating command of diverse artistic techniques related to the Principal Study discipline.
3. Conceptualise, plan, realise and evaluate exceptional individual and/or ensemble performances at an internationally recognised professional artistic standard.

Generic and Graduate Skills - on successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

1. Work collaboratively, demonstrating a high level of personal and interpersonal maturity.

2 Work autonomously and with an extremely high degree of self-motivation, employing exceptional self-critical skills.

3 Communicate with a professional level of confidence and insight.

4 Demonstrate imagination and creativity in overcoming challenges.

2.CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION AND ENTRY

Applicants to the Advanced Artist Diploma should normally possess a minimum of a Master's degree in a relevant discipline (performance or composition) or international equivalent. In exceptional circumstances, applicants without a Master's degree but who can demonstrate commensurate experience as a professional artist at the highest level will be considered.

Applicants whose first language is not English should have achieved an IELTS score of 6.0, with no less than 6.0 in any one component.

Admission to the Advanced Artist Diploma programme is by proposal and competitive audition (detailed information and guidance on the audition process is available on the RNCM website).

In their proposal, applicants must demonstrate a clear research-led artistic agenda, covering their artistic aims, performance or dissemination plan in accordance with the programme expectations, and their project's potential for generating new knowledge and understanding in accordance with Level 8 standards.

Entrants must demonstrate at audition exceptional ability and evidence of, or the potential for, a self-directed international career. All candidates are required to audition in person at the RNCM, and should normally hold a postgraduate taught degree, or demonstrate equivalence through professional experience.

For applicants whose first language is not English, the normal International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or equivalent standard for entry to the Advanced Artist Diploma is 6.0.

3.COURSE OVERVIEW

The Advanced Artist Diploma programme focuses on developing students' research-led artistic skills, effectively preparing them for an international career as a professional composer or performer. Supported by principal study tuition, project supervision and research training, students undertake a self-directed artistic research project. Students are expected to make use of RNCM's resources and to take advantage of performance and recording opportunities within and beyond the College, and to collaborate with fellow students in the development and realisation of their work.

Individual career development support and guidance will be given by members of the RNCM's Performance and Programming Team, many of whom hold or have held in the past prominent positions in external arts organisations.

Work Placement	There is no formal work placement on the programme. Students are encouraged to develop collaborations and partnerships with regional organisations where relevant
Timetables	Principal study and supervision are arranged between tutors and students on an individual basis. Research training takes place on Wednesday mornings and afternoons during term time. Timetables are published on Moodle and ASIMUT

To qualify for the award, students must have received and completed all requested corrections or revisions (if any) to the satisfaction of the examiners.

BENCHMARKING

Programmes are based on national standards for degrees in music through external scrutiny of the programme during development by both academics and professional musicians and by reference to nationally agreed standards: OfS Conditions of Registration and Sector Recognised Standards.

4.TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

As a Level 8 (doctoral level) postgraduate research (PGR) programme, the Advanced Artist Diploma entails self-directed study. The programme is centred around a self-directed artistic research project, conceived and proposed by the student and refined under guidance from supervisors, with clear artistic aims and plans for performance or dissemination. Alongside their project work, students receive principal study tuition in their chosen School and project supervision by an experienced research supervisor, undertake training in artistic research, and participate in the RNCM postgraduate research community through attendance at weekly seminars and research fora.

Principal study tuition is delivered on a one-to-one basis, according to a schedule agreed upon between the student and their tutor. Project supervision takes place at regular intervals (typically monthly) with an assigned research supervisor, who is responsible for monitoring the student's progress, advising on project management and research design, and providing critical feedback on work-in-progress.

Research training is delivered at cohort level to Diploma students, alongside PhD students, on Wednesdays (all day). This includes participatory workshops covering practical research skills and professional development, and research seminars delivered by visiting and RNCM-based speakers focusing on their own research and practice.

In addition to these mandatory activities, Diploma students are encouraged to participate in the training and other learning opportunities offered within their School, and in the College's wider research and artistic activities including regular research fora, performances, symposia and conferences, and to audit postgraduate courses in artistic research and other areas relevant to their project and development aims.

5.OVERALL WORKLOAD

As a research qualification, the Advanced Artist Diploma is not credit bearing, and as such does not have prescribed notional hours. It is expected that FT students will spend a minimum of 35 hours per week on their study (17.5 hours for PT), for 46 weeks of the postgraduate year, totalling 1610 hours over the course of the programme.

6.ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

As a research programme, the Advanced Artist Diploma is assessed via a portfolio submission comprising the artistic output (performance, composition or production), a critical commentary and reflective account, and a viva voce examination undertaken at the end of the programme of study. The portfolio and viva voce will be assessed against Level 8 expectations of rigour, criticality, and original contribution/advancement of the field.

Prior to the final submission and examination, student progress is monitored continuously through regular supervision, and though three formal progress reviews distributed across the year, for which the student must submit samples of work.

There is a formal expectation that students undertake at least two performances (or other dissemination activities) during the course of their study, for which they will receive formative feedback from the supervisory team, peers, and the wider RNCM community.

Feedback
Regular informal feedback will be provided throughout the programme by the student's supervisory team. During and after each formal review, the student will receive oral and written feedback on their work from the review panel.

7.STUDENT SUPPORT, DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

You will receive an induction programme in the Welcome Week activities, a week before the start of the academic year.

STUDENT VOICE
Students are represented at every level of the College's deliberative structure, except for those committees (for example the Board of Examiners, Extenuating Circumstances Committee) in which confidential student data is discussed and/or evaluated.

Postgraduate Research Degrees Committee (RDC)
Representatives report to the RDC on matters affecting their cohort, with particular emphasis on providing feedback to staff on the programme.

Student Experience Forum (SEF)
The Student Experience Forum meets once a term, with student representatives being allocated according to Schools rather than programmes. The committee operates as a discussion forum between students and staff representing key College services and functions on any matters not relating to academic programmes

Students' Union
The RNCM Students' Union (RNCM SU) exists to promote student interests through representation on most College committees and by providing an extensive welfare and advice service. The RNCM SU integrates the social and academic areas of student life through the organisation of various events throughout the academic year and works in collaboration with senior academic members of staff to ensure that the student voice informs strategic decision making at the College. The Union is affiliated to the National Union of Students, subject to annual confirmation by the membership.

Personal Support
Students experiencing personal difficulties that are affecting their ability to fulfil the requirements of their degree programme should contact the Student Wellbeing Advisors, Wellbeing@rncm.ac.uk, who will direct them to the appropriate service.

Disability

It is your responsibility to consider whether to disclose a disability or not; the College will only consider whether reasonable adjustments are required from the point of disclosure by you and adjustments cannot be made retrospectively, e.g., following assessments or at the end of the academic year.

8.COURSE COSTS AND SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Details of fees, and potential funding sources, including bursaries and scholarships, may be found on our website: **FEES**

9.THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

RNCM Library:

The RNCM Library has a wide range of materials to support learning, research, and performance, and

is a key resource for all areas of the degree programme. Our knowledgeable library staff have vast musical expertise and will help students to make the best use of the resources available. You have access to over 90,000 catalogued items of books and printed music, 96 current journal titles, a significant collection of CDs and DVDs and the College's own archive of recordings. You also have online access to e-books, databases, selected journals, and audio-visual streaming services, as well as the use of PCs with music software, listening stations and a viewing area. You are encouraged to make use of the library's archives and special collections: the RNCM Archives are of international importance, and the RNCM Collection of Historic Musical Instruments consists of over 300 instruments, bows and miscellaneous items dating from the 16th to the 20th century.

10. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY

In keeping with the RNCM's commitment to, and policy on, equal opportunities, our programmes:

- are offered to all students with no discrimination in terms of race, age, gender, sexual orientation or family circumstances (where possible every effort is made to accommodate students with special needs as a result of disability or socio-economic disadvantage);
- will, where appropriate, cover issues of equality of opportunity within the curriculum;
- aims to ensure that every effort is made to provide learning spaces accessible to students with disabilities and to support them throughout their programme.

Further details of the RNCM Belonging, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy and Ethics Framework may be found, under 'Institutional' policies, on the 'RNCM Policies' website**.**

11. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION:

Available on the College website: **:**

RNCM Policies

Academic Regulations

College Policies