

NORDOFF ROBBINS DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

The programme has two parallel tracks

MPhil/ PhD IN MUSIC THERAPY

MPhil/PhD IN MUSIC, HEALTH, SOCIETY

This postgraduate research degrees programme is validated by Goldsmiths, University of London and linked both to the Nordoff Robbins Research Department and to the Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies Department (STaCS) at Goldsmiths. It is a practice-orientated programme designed for experienced practitioners in either music therapy, or community music/music and health who seek further professional development through research.

CONTENTS

1. Programme history & research orientation
2. Staff, students, & research areas
3. Research training, learning culture, and learning resources
4. Student process and student support
5. Programme management, student representation, quality assurance
6. Application criteria, process, selection
7. References and further reading

1. PROGRAMME HISTORY & RESEARCH ORIENTATION

Nordoff Robbins is the largest independent music therapy organisation in the UK - providing music therapy services, training and research. As it is not located within a university its Masters and Doctoral degrees are validated by an external academic partner - Goldsmiths, University of London.

The programme was launched in 2006 in a validation partnership with City University, London, and was the UK's first specialist doctoral programme in music therapy. In 2009 alongside the **MPhil/PhD in Music Therapy** Nordoff Robbins launched a second parallel study track - the **MPhil/PhD in Music, Health, Society**. This was a response to the number of interested and qualified applicants who were not music therapists but music practitioners (community musicians, music teachers, music and health practitioners) whose research interests overlapped both with music therapy and with the research ethos of the Nordoff Robbins doctoral programme. This dual track also aligned the programme with the overall philosophy of the Nordoff Robbins' Masters training programme, whose title was changed to *Master of Music Therapy (Music, Health, Society)* in 2010.

The doctoral programme was revised and revalidated in 2015 as part of the transfer of external validation to Goldsmiths, University of London. The programme has been directed both by Prof Mercedes Pavlicevic and by Prof Gary Ansdell since 2006, working with colleagues from the Nordoff Robbins Research Dept and international associate colleagues.

The ethos of the programme is inspired by the distinctive practice-based approach to research that has developed within the Nordoff Robbins tradition (Ansdell & Pavlicevic, 2010). This involves a close connection between practice, theory and research, and a philosophical base of 'gentle empiricism' that is in sympathy with qualitative and ethnographic forms of inquiry (whilst not discounting other approaches). A second inspiration is from the growing psycho-sociocultural perspective to musical practices and studies, reflected in the programme subtitle 'music, health, society'. This relates in part to the Community Music Therapy tradition, which is closely linked to more recent developments in Nordoff Robbins practice.

The programme promotes a sensitivity to the dimensions of power, diversity and oppression in relation to aspects of culture, race, gender, sexuality and disability - viewing these as structured within the ontological, epistemological and methodological stances, choices and actions of the research enterprise. It is part of the programme's ethos to encourage ongoing critical reflection on these dimensions as part of research ethics, practice, and the communication of new knowledge.

Although these overall 'styles' of research are guiding influences on the ethos of the programme, students who join it have been trained in a variety of different approaches and traditions. Students are encouraged to develop their own research stances, and to find the best match between research questions arising from practice and an appropriate methodology, design and research method(s).

The programme encourages student research interests that align with contemporary areas of music therapy / music and health; with supervisors' areas of interest and expertise; and with the overall principles and values of the Nordoff Robbins research tradition.

The doctoral programme works in close association with the Nordoff Robbins Research Department, drawing from its staff and resources:

<https://www.nordoff-robbins.org.uk/research>

The programme also has a wide range of international colleagues who function as advisers and supporters of the programme. These span a broad range of practices and disciplines: music therapy, music & health, community music, psychology of music, sociology of music and many more areas.

2. STAFF, STUDENTS & RESEARCH AREAS

STAFF

Programme Convenor: [Prof Gary Ansdell](#)

Primary Supervisors: [Prof Gary Ansdell](#), [Dr Simon Procter](#), [Dr Neta Spiro](#), [Prof Tia DeNora](#)

STUDENTS

Student places: the doctoral programme consists of a small group of students (currently 6) with entry to the programme possible at several points during the academic year when places become available. Most students take a part-time study route in order to allow ongoing professional work alongside study.

International students: the group is currently a mix of UK, EU and international students. The programme has developed ways of working to enable international students to participate fully but flexibly in the programme whilst still living and practising in their home country. On acceptance to the programme international students are required to agree to attend a minimum number of doctoral seminars in person, using Skype or equivalent to participate in the other seminars, and for supervision sessions.

Students are normally experienced professionals in either music therapy, or community music / music & health, with at least 5 years of practical experience following training. Students work on a variety of research areas that are motivated by their own practice and which match the areas of interest and expertise of the tutorial staff.

Current areas of student research (2017) are:

- The 'performance' of spirituality in music therapy within health & educational settings
- Music therapy and distributed expertise in a child development service
- Music therapy within an open prison in Norway
- Music therapy in family settings with neurodiverse children
- Audience & performer responses to performance situations involving adults with special needs (USA)
- Music therapy situations involving carers

Schedule: students enrol as an MPhil candidate, transferring to PhD status usually after 2 years after an assessment of their progress and potential as a doctoral researcher. As a part-time candidate completion of the programme is normally after 6 years (max 8).

Fees: £1700 per year.

Nordoff Robbins has no specific funding for doctoral students and as a non-university organisation is not normally eligible for UK or international government-level postgraduate grants. Funding for the programme must therefore be organised personally by students. Sometimes students obtain assistance from charitable trusts, or are sponsored by their workplace. Limited financial assistance is offered annually to students on the programme for relevant conference attendance or to assist with research-based travel costs.

3. RESEARCH TRAINING, LEARNING CULTURE & LEARNING RESOURCES

The Nordoff Robbins doctoral programme is located at the Nordoff Robbins London Centre, on the edge of Hampstead Heath. The main components of the research training are:

Doctoral Seminars

Students, tutors, and guests meet a minimum of four times a year (normally in March, May, October, December) for intensive two-day doctoral seminars. These are stimulating intellectual and social events, designed to give students a well-rounded experience of working at doctoral level on their projects.

These intensive two-day seminars provide a stimulating and convivial opportunity for students, tutors and visitors to focus on wide-ranging research and theory topics, and for students to present their work-in-progress and to learn from feedback and critique from peers and tutors. The seminars also include focused research training input given by tutors on a variety of topics relevant to current student needs. Some seminars feature invited external researchers, chosen on the basis of their research expertise and students' project areas. Occasional student progress events (for 'transfer of registration' from MPhil to PhD status, and then the final PhD examination) are also held within these two-day seminars.

International students attend an agreed minimum of these events in person, participating in the others via Skype.

Intensive Research Induction

We understand that students embarking on a doctoral programme may either not have had extensive research methods training during their Masters or other practice-based training, or else have been working as a practitioner for a long stretch and are feeling 'rusty' or distant from academic work. The programme has devised an intensive induction module that is mandatory for new students. The module covers the basics of academic practice, the research working processes and expectations, and to the programme's research ethos in relation to issues of power, diversity and ethical sensitivity. The induction creates a platform for more individually-tailored learning guided by supervisors as a student's project develops. The intensive research induction is delivered in a blended learning format, through direct participation and guided reading.

Individual Research Supervision

A key part of research development on the programme happens through individually-tailored research supervision. This is given by a primary and a secondary supervisor, who are chosen (with students' consultation) on the basis of their expertise in relation to your research needs. You meet regularly with your supervisors (either in person or via Skype normally between 4-6 times a year) throughout the programme. Your supervisors advise on all aspects of your research journey:

formulating a plan of study, which will include: focusing your research topic and planning research, including formulating research questions, and choosing an appropriate methodology and method(s) - first for the MPhil stage ('pilot project'), then for later PhD phases of research

- clarifying the nature of research at MPhil/PhD level, and the standard expected (including advice on presentation and writing style)
- ensuring appropriate research ethics formulation and processes for project(s)

- ensuring sensitivity towards the core ethos of the programme in terms of issues of power, diversity and oppression in the student's research design, process, and communication of new knowledge.
- accessing and understanding appropriate literature and sources
- developing research skills, attitudes and outputs
- using programme research resources and opportunities best (such as presenting at seminar events and external platforms)
- identifying appropriate data-gathering processes and media
- preparing for major assessment milestones and events
- where necessary connecting you to other sources of advice and expertise.

It is expected that the main supervisor will have knowledge of the student's subject area but if your work goes significantly outside the area in which the main supervisor is competent, students may seek out other subject specialists in consultation with their supervisors.

Learning Culture

The learning culture of the programme encourages both personal responsibility /independent academic motivation, but also a strong ongoing group learning culture that offers supportive critique, encouragement, and peer learning.

Learning resources at Nordoff Robbins

Students access appropriate resources for studying at doctoral level both from the Nordoff Robbins organisation and from the validating university, Goldsmith University of London:

Nordoff Robbins London Centre specialist music therapy library for music therapy/music and health practice and research

Advice and resources from the on-site inter-professional creative coexistence of music therapy practice, education and research at the Nordoff Robbins London Centre.

On-site and online access to Goldsmiths, University of London library.

Support and opportunities from the Goldsmiths Graduate School and Goldsmiths *Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies* department.

Specialist guidance from a team of internationally acknowledged specialists in music therapy / music and health practice and research who are informally linked to the doctoral programme.

Collaborative doctoral seminars and research conferences.

Students on the programme receive an annual allowance of £500 to support either attendance of appropriate academic/professional conferences related to their research, or to assist with data-gathering costs.

Nordoff Robbins has a range of institutional collaborations, sometimes involving shared research seminars in the UK.

Normally every second year a doctoral seminar is twinned with the Nordoff Robbins research department Research Symposium, as part of the Nordoff Robbins plus conference series. For more information visit <http://www.nordoff-robbins.org.uk/conferences>

Additionally, doctoral students can benefit from the extensive research opportunities offered by the Goldsmiths, University of London Graduate School.

4. STUDENT PROGRESS & STUDENT SUPPORT

As students on this programme are normally at different stages of the PhD journey your academic progress and personal support is individually tailored by the Programme Convenor and supervisors.

The Programme Convenor provides an induction to the process and expectations of the programme, its culture and regulations (as set out in detail in the Programme Handbook) and will:

- Appoint a supervisory team in consultation with you and discuss any needs for joint or consultancy supervision.
- Discuss and confirm supervisors and the Supervisee/Supervisors Agreement (which clarifies mutual obligations and expectations for study, feedback and assessment).
- Ensure correct research ethics procedures are followed and that students are aware of the ethos of the programme in relation to issues of power and diversity.
- Ensure access to appropriate programme resources and support

The Programme Convenor also coordinates the monitoring of academic progress and appropriate mutual feedback through:

- An Annual Review that gives you feedback on the previous year's work and reviews the research project and its time management. Progress towards transfer (from MPhil to PhD) or final submission is also reviewed.
- You will also have the opportunity through this process to appraise the supervision, support and research resources.
- A summary of student reviews is given at the Goldsmiths Postgraduate Research Committee annually.

Progress through the programme happens formally through transfer between MPhil status and PhD status (normally after 2 years part-time work on the programme and a pilot project). Transfer to PhD status involves a formal assessment through a written document and viva. This process includes input from two external moderators.

Nordoff Robbins Education has a well-established pastoral and support structure for all its training programmes. Students of the MPhil/PhD programme are able to access these support structures and where necessary can request independent support from Goldsmiths Department of Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies.

5. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT, STUDENT REPRESENTATION & QUALITY ASSURANCE

The MPhil/PhD programme is a Nordoff Robbins education programme is validated through the academic partnership with Goldsmiths, University of London. The University is responsible for ensuring that the academic standards of the programme are in line with equivalent programmes delivered at Goldsmiths, and across other UK Higher Education Institutions. Goldsmiths is involved in setting and approving the regulatory frameworks, governance structures and quality assurance processes for this programme. They work closely with Nordoff Robbins in monitoring and reviewing these procedures.

The management and quality management systems include the following:

- The MPhil/PhD programme team meets regularly to discuss and monitor both the delivery of the programme and the progress of individual students.
- The *Nordoff Robbins/Goldsmiths Programmes Committee* meets once each term to provide a formal forum of communication and discussion between the student body and the training programmes about academic matters relating to the programmes, and to bring to the attention of Goldsmiths any formal issues from the student body. A student representative of the doctoral programme takes part in this committee.
- The *Nordoff Robbins Research Ethics Committee* receives applications from Nordoff Robbins MPhil/PhD students, and from any other projects associated with Nordoff Robbins. NRREC reports directly to the NR Board of Trustees. NRREC is responsible for the Research Ethics status of all applications received, with forms and guidelines modelled on those of statutory panels. Where necessary, NRREC refers applications to Statutory ethics panels (Medical or Social Care), and monitors their status through requesting regular reports.
- On matters relating to the research degree programme, NRREC corresponds with the virtual Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies (STaCS) at Goldsmiths.
- The NR MPhil/PhD programme is represented on, and report to, the *Goldsmiths Postgraduate Research Committee* for Goldsmiths' Department of Social Therapeutic and Community Studies (STaCS) which consists of members of academic staff from Goldsmiths and Nordoff Robbins with experience of research practice and supervision. The aim of this Committee is to monitor the progress of research students within its Department and to ensure that the students' studies are progressing well.

6. APPLICATION CRITERIA, PROCESS, SELECTION

Unlike larger doctoral programmes located within university departments, the Nordoff Robbins MPhil / PhD programme recruits new students only when places become available. Because currently all of our students are part-time (taking up to 7 years to complete their studies) the programme does not recruit on an annual basis. Instead, when places are likely to be available there is a formal call for applications, advertised on the Nordoff Robbins website and other bulletins.

Entry Criteria & Language requirements

Applicants will normally have been professionally trained in a discipline relevant to the doctoral programme (music therapy, community music, music and health) and hold a Masters degree in that area. Such a degree might sometimes be in a relevant associated area such as music psychology or music education. In exceptional circumstances applicants with a lower level qualification but with appropriate practical or research experience may be eligible, provided they can demonstrate ability to study at MPhil/PhD level.

The programme is conducted in English and the final thesis must be written in English. The English language requirements are:

- IELTS (band score): 7.5
- TOEFL (paper-based): 600
- TOEFL (internet-based): 100
- The language test result must be less than two years old.

Application Process

The Programme Convenor always welcomes informal discussions with prospective applicants. These focus on the entry criteria, the candidate's experience and eligibility, potential research projects and general information about the programme.

Candidates who fulfil the entry criteria and whose intended projects fit the programme's resources and scope of expertise are invited to apply, following the programme's current application schedule and procedure as listed on the NR website.

You can download the Application Form from the [PhD Programme webpage](#) - which you should send completed, along with a current **CV** and **Research Proposal** to the Programme Convenor Prof Gary Ansdell:

gary.ansdell@nordoff-robbins.org.uk

A note on the Research Proposal: this is designed to show the selection panel whether you have the academic competences to enter onto and complete a PhD programme, and whether your research ideas align with the Nordoff Robbins programme and its available resources. You are not committed to following this exact proposal of research if you get selected, as during the first year of the programme the direction and details of your research project will normally develop further or change.

Selection Process

The programme team along with one independent academic will assess applications 'blind' that meet the criteria outlined above. The criteria for the assessment are:

1. What evidence your application/proposal demonstrates of your ability to work at doctoral level (also taking into account experience as a music therapist/ music practitioner and other research and professional activities)
2. Whether your project aligns with the particular ethos/philosophy of the Nordoff Robbins doctoral programme, and with the expertise and resources it has to offer students.
3. The quality of the application in relation to formulating a research approach to a practical/theoretical area of relevance to the discipline/profession.
4. Whether the proposed research is viable, practical, ethical etc
5. Whether the application is ready to proceed immediately or needs further development/re-application.

Promising applicants are invited to interview following a successful assessment of their application. The interview gives a mutual opportunity for both applicant and the programme team to explore whether the Nordoff Robbins doctoral programme is the best fit for the applicant's circumstances and research aims.

Recommendations for acceptance onto the programme are made to the Goldsmiths STaCS Postgraduate Research Committee.

Successful applicants initially register on MPhil status. This usually two-year period is used to focus the research area, develop an appropriate research methodology and gives time for the student to demonstrate competence to work at PhD level on a subsequent further phase of research.

7. REFERENCES

Ansdell, G. and Pavlicevic, M. (2010) Practising 'gentle empiricism': The Nordoff-Robbins research heritage. *Music Therapy Perspectives*, Vol.28, Issue 2.

Ansdell, Gary and Mercedes Pavlicevic (2001). *Beginning Research in the Arts Therapies – A Practical Guide*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

For publications by the programme tutors see links above to their CVs.

Completed theses & articles by NR PhD students

Wood, S. (2014). *The performance of Community Music Therapy evaluation*. Doctoral Thesis (unpublished). London: City University.

Wood, S. (2016). *A Matrix for Community Music Therapy Practice*; Barcelona Publishers: Gilsum, NH.

Tsirir, G. (2017). Music therapy and spirituality: an international survey of music therapists' perceptions *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 26(4), 293-319.



Life-changing music

CONTACT

Prof Gary Ansdell,

Programme Convenor:

gary.ansdell@nordoff-robbins.org.uk

Informal expressions of interest are always welcome.

Education Administrator: +44 (0)20 7267 4496

or

education@nordoff-robbins.org.uk

General enquiries: +44 (0)20 7267 4496

Email: education@nordoff-robbins.org.uk

www.nordoff-robbins.org.uk

 @NordoffRobbins1

 @NordoffRobbins

Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy - a registered charity and company limited by guarantee (trading as Nordoff Robbins).
Registered in England No. 1514616. Registered Charity No. 280960. Registered Office: 2 Lissenden Gardens, London NW51PQ