

NORDOFF & ROBBINS

Doctoral Programme

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Prospectus

Validated by:

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



The programme has two parallel tracks

- MPhil/PhD in Music Therapy
- MPhil/PhD in Music, Health, Society

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

About the programme

The UK's first specialist doctoral programme in music therapy was launched in 2006 in a validation partnership with City University, London. In 2015, it was revised and revalidated as part of the transfer of external validation to Goldsmiths, University of London.

The programme's ethos was inspired by the Nordoff Robbins practice-based approach to research (Ansdell & Pavlicevic, 2010). This involves a close connection between practice, theory and research, and uses a 'gentle empiricism' in sympathy with qualitative and ethnographic forms of inquiry, while not discounting other approaches.

Another inspiration was the growing psycho-sociocultural perspective to musical practices and studies, reflected in the programme subtitle, Music, Health, Society. This relates to the Community Music Therapy tradition, which is closely linked to more recent developments in the Nordoff Robbins practice.

The programme explores power, diversity and oppression in relation to aspects of culture, race, gender, sexuality and disability, viewing these as structured within the different stances, choices and actions of our students' research. It aims 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, our students have been trained in a variety of different approaches and traditions. They are encouraged to develop their own research stances, and to find the best match between research questions arising from practice and their own research methods.

The programme encourages them to examine ideas that align with contemporary areas of music therapy and music and health, supervisors' areas of interest and expertise, and the overall principles and values of the Nordoff Robbins research tradition.

Nordoff and Robbins is the name of the UK charity providing this course. The Nordoff Robbins approach refers to the music-centred approach and research that we share with our sister organisations around the world.



Staff, students, schedules and fees

Staff

Programme Convenor:
Prof Gary Ansdell

Primary Supervisors and Advisors:
Prof Gary Ansdell, Dr Simon Procter,
Prof Tia DeNora, Dr Neta Spiro

Students

Requirements: Our students are normally experienced professionals in either music therapy, community music or music and health, with at least five years' practical experience following training.

Student places: The programme consists of a small group of students – currently six (as of March 2023). Entry to the programme is possible at several points during the academic year, when places become available. Most students take a part-time study route so they can continue working professionally.

International students: The group is currently a mix of UK, EU and international students. International students are able to participate fully but flexibly in the programme while still living and practising in their home countries. Upon acceptance, they are required to agree to attend a minimum number of doctoral seminars in person, using Zoom or equivalent for other seminars and supervision sessions.

Schedule

Students enrol as an MPhil candidate, transferring to PhD status usually after two years, following an assessment of their progress and potential as a doctoral researcher. For part-time candidates, the programme normally takes six years to complete. The maximum is eight.

Fees

These are £1,700 per year. Nordoff and Robbins has no specific funding available for doctoral students, and as a non-university organisation is not normally eligible for UK or international government-level postgraduate grants. Funding must therefore be organised personally by students. Some 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.



Research and resources

Doctoral seminars

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

These convivial sessions are an opportunity to focus on wide-ranging research and theory topics, and for students to present their work-in-progress and receive feedback from their peers and tutors. The seminars also include focused research training on a variety of relevant topics. Some seminars feature external researchers, chosen for their expertise in relevant areas. Occasionally the seminars also include student progress events, such as the transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD status, and the final PhD exam.

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

Intensive research induction

We understand that students may not have had extensive research methods training or may be out of practice. As each student's project develops, they will receive individually tailored guidance on academic practice and research methodology from their supervisors. They will also have access to general research courses at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Individual research supervision

A key part of research development happens through individually tailored research supervision. This is given by a primary and a secondary supervisor, who are chosen with your input on the basis of their expertise in relation to your research needs. You then meet regularly, either in person or online, throughout the programme, normally four to six times a year. Your supervisors will advise on all aspects of your research journey, including:

- Formulating a plan of study. This will include focusing your research topic and planning research, writing research questions, and choosing an appropriate methodology and method, first for the MPhil stage, then for the PhD.
- Clarifying the nature of research at MPhil/PhD level and the standard expected, including advice on presentation and writing style.

- Ensuring you follow appropriate research ethics and processes.
- Ensuring you remain sensitive towards the core ethos of the programme in terms of issues of power, diversity and oppression in your research design, process and the communication of new knowledge.
- Accessing and understanding appropriate literature and sources.
- Developing research skills, attitudes and outputs.
- Using programme research resources and opportunities, such as presenting at seminar events and external platforms.
- Identifying appropriate data-gathering processes and media.
- Preparing for major assessment milestones and events.
- Connecting you to other sources of advice and expertise where necessary.

Your main supervisor should have knowledge of your subject area, but if your work goes significantly outside their field of expertise, you may seek out other specialists in consultation with your supervisors.

Learning culture

The programme encourages personal responsibility and independent academic motivation as well as fostering a strong group-learning culture that offers supportive critique and encouragement.

Learning resources

Students can access resources from Nordoff and Robbins and Goldsmiths, University of London, including:

- Nordoff and Robbins' specialist music therapy library for music therapy and music and health practice and research in London.
- Advice and resources from Nordoff and Robbins' on-site music therapy practice, education and research.
- On-site and online access to the Goldsmiths, University of London, library.
- Support and opportunities from the Goldsmiths Graduate School and the Department of Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies (STaCS).
- Specialist guidance from a team of internationally acknowledged specialists in music therapy and music and health practice and research, who are informally linked to the doctoral programme.

Collaborative doctoral seminars and research conferences

Students receive an annual allowance of £500 to help them attend appropriate academic and professional conferences related to their research, or to assist with data-gathering costs.

Nordoff and Robbins has a range of institutional collaborations, sometimes involving shared research seminars in the UK. Additionally, doctoral students can benefit from the extensive research opportunities offered by the Goldsmiths, University of London, Graduate School.

Student progress and support

Your academic progress and personal support are individually tailored by the Programme Convenor and your supervisors.

The Programme Convenor introduces the programme, explaining how it works and what is expected of you. This will be explained in greater detail in the programme handbook. They will also:

- Appoint a supervisory team in consultation with you and discuss any needs for joint or consultancy supervision.
- Discuss and confirm your 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 the following:

- An annual review that gives you feedback on the previous year's work and looks at your research project and its time management. Progress towards transfer (from MPhil to PhD) or final submission is also explored.
- Your appraisal of the supervision, support and research resources.
- A summary of student reviews given at the Goldsmiths Postgraduate Research Committee every term.

Progress through the programme involves a transfer between MPhil status and PhD status. Normally this takes place after two years of 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 and Robbins has a well-established pastoral and support structure for all its training programmes. Students of the MPhil/PhD programme can access these support structures and, where necessary, can request independent support from Goldsmiths' Department of Social, Therapeutic and Community Studies (STaCS).



Management, representation and quality

Nordoff and Robbins' MPhil/PhD programme is validated through an 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. It works closely with Nordoff and Robbins in monitoring and reviewing these procedures.

The management and quality-assurance 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 and Robbins/Goldsmiths Programmes Committee meets once each term to provide a forum for students to discuss academic matters and to make any formal issues known. A student representative of the doctoral programme takes part in this committee.
- The Nordoff and Robbins Research Ethics Committee (NRREC) receives applications from Nordoff and Robbins MPhil/PhD students, and from any other projects associated with Nordoff and Robbins. NRREC reports directly to the Nordoff and Robbins 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, either medical or social care, and monitors their status through regular reports.
- On matters relating to research, 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 reports to, the Goldsmiths Postgraduate Research Committee for STaCS, which consists of members of academic staff from Goldsmiths and Nordoff and Robbins who have experience of research practice and supervision. The aim is to monitor the progress of research students within its department and to ensure that the students' studies are progressing well.



Entry criteria and eligibility

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 Master's degree in that area. Sometimes this might 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 an 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): 60
- 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. Please contact Prof Gary Ansdell at gary.ansdell@nordoff-robbins.org.uk

Selection process

The programme team, along with one independent academic, will assess applications that meet the criteria outlined above anonymously. 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 your experience as a music therapist/practitioner and other research and professional activities.
2. Whether your project aligns with the particular ethos/philosophy of the Nordoff and 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 and ethical.
5. Whether the application is ready to proceed immediately or needs further development/reapplication.

Promising applicants are invited to interview. This gives an opportunity for both applicant and the programme team to explore whether it's a good 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 is usually a two-year period. It's used to bring focus to the research area, develop an appropriate research methodology and give time for the student to demonstrate competence to work at PhD level on a subsequent further phase of research.

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.