



Royal Conservatoire *of* Scotland

Postgraduate Programmes
DPerf

Guide for Applicants
Academic Year 2026/27

THE ROYAL CONSERVATOIRE OF SCOTLAND

In 1994, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (then, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama) became the first UK Conservatoire to be awarded degree-awarding powers for taught courses by the Privy Council. Since then, the Conservatoire has developed a range of vocationally-orientated degree courses in music and drama performance, production and film, including taught Masters courses in vocal and instrumental performance, opera, composition, conducting, acting, directing and producing. In 1998, the Royal Conservatoire won springboard funding from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council to establish a National Centre for Research in the Performing Arts which has evolved into [The Exchange](#). From October 2000, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland has offered research programmes leading to the awards of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil) of the University of St Andrews. The Conservatoire's first doctorate was awarded in 2005. In 2015, the Conservatoire launched a Doctor of Performing Arts (DPerf) programme which enables professional artistic development at the highest level and a significant and original contribution to a particular artistic field. A separate Guide for Applicants is available for the PhD programme of study.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

Doctoral programmes offered by the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland lead to awards of the University of St Andrews. Doctoral students will matriculate at both the Conservatoire and the University and will have access to the facilities of both institutions. **Programmes of study will be undertaken at, and administered by, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.** All fees will be payable to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

RESOURCES

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is housed in a modern, specially designed building and has some of the best performance and rehearsal facilities of any conservatoire in Europe. The auditoria include the New Athenaeum Theatre as the principal auditorium for plays and opera, the Chandler Studio Theatre and the Stevenson Hall. In addition the Alexander Gibson Opera School, which opened in 1998, houses rehearsal and coaching rooms and a stunning performance space. The Royal Conservatoire library contains one of the most comprehensive performing arts collections in the UK. The collections feature extensive print and online material covering all Conservatoire subject disciplines and wider multi-disciplinary research materials. The RCS Archives is also a unique research resource, rich in both the depth and diversity of holdings. ICT facilities and a study lab for research students are available.

Conservatoire doctoral students also have access to the extensive library resources held by the University of St Andrews (<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/>) and to specialist academic training through the university's Centre for Educational Enhancement and Development (CEED) (<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/ceed/>).

All doctoral students undertake training within the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland through participating in a number of study days held throughout the academic year and engaging in The Exchange Talks series (held weekly in term time). The resources of the

Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities (SGSAH), of which the Conservatoire is a member, can also be accessed (<http://www.sgsah.ac.uk/>)

A DISTINCTIVE RESEARCH ETHOS

The vision of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is:

To be Scotland's globally-recognised and inspirational leader in learning for the performing arts, attracting and nurturing the next Scottish and international creative talent.

As performance to the highest standards is central to all of the Conservatoire's work, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's research activities will always be located within that context. The key elements of **performance and/or creation** give the Royal Conservatoire's research profile a clear and individual identity, both in general as regards research within the Conservatoire and in particular as regards the acceptance of research students and the awarding of research degrees.

The purpose of the DPerf programme is to enable professional artistic development at the highest level and provide a structure within which the candidate can make a significant and original contribution to her or his chosen artistic field. It is a doctoral programme comparable in scope, level and ambition to the PhD, but squarely focused on making a significant and original contribution to the artistic field within which the work resides.

As performance to the highest standards is central to all of the Conservatoire's work, the Doctor of Performing Arts, while a highly specialized programme of advanced study, is nonetheless integral to the Conservatoire's mission.

SPECIALIST AREAS OF STUDY

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland offers opportunities for suitably qualified students to work towards the achievement of a Doctor of Performing Arts in appropriate areas of enquiry. Applications will only be successful if it is clear that the proposed work can best be undertaken within a conservatoire context, in which performance and/or creation is held central, and that the Conservatoire has the appropriate artistic expertise to offer appropriate artistic mentorship and guidance.

STRUCTURE

Doctor of Performing Arts students will pursue a special programme of artistic practice and supplementary study. This will comprise

- A) a series of Professional Projects (360 credits, level 12)
- B) individually tailored Supplementary Studies (120 credits, any level)
- C) a Written Component (60 credits, level 12)

All elements must be passed for the successful award of the degree.

A) Professional Projects

These are the core of the programme of study. Within the broad outline of approximately 3600 hours of work, the student, in consultation with the supervisor, will propose any appropriate set of projects for the approval of the Research Degrees Committee.

In practice, this component of the portfolio will normally include 3-4 Artistic Projects and one Development Project. Recognising the core aim of developing advanced artistic practice, the Professional Projects may be assessed 'live' (for example, through a performance) or through appropriate media (such as video or audio recording).

Artistic Projects

The artistic projects will form a coherent artistic whole. In some programmes of study, this coherence may be self-evident (a focus on particular techniques, a body of repertoire, or a well-defined professional context), but in others it will require more careful articulation. In all cases, however, the artistic projects will clearly establish a well-integrated body of artistic work: they must be focussed enough to permit the candidate to make a significant and original contribution to her or his professional field.

Supervisors will be able to offer guidance on the level of work required in each project: all projects will demonstrate some work at a professional, post-Masters level in the chosen artistic field.

Development Project

The purpose of the Development Project is to broaden the professional development of the candidate by facilitating significant work beyond the framework of the core Artistic Projects. The Development Project is therefore designed to challenge the candidate to apply their artistic insights in new and unfamiliar contexts, expand their professional skills, and provide opportunities to maximise the impact of their artistic work. The scale of the Development Project will normally be similar to one of the Artistic Projects: the Development Project therefore represents a substantial and extended piece of work.

The nature of the Development Project will depend significantly on the proposed Artistic Projects: where these are located primarily within formal contexts such as the studio, concert hall or performance space, candidates will be encouraged to expand their professional versatility by pursuing the Development Project in a community or business setting.

The detailed proposal for a candidate's programme of study will explain how his or her Development Project complements the proposed Artistic Projects. Together, the Professional Projects are the heart of the programme of study.

B) Supplementary studies

Supplementary Studies are taught courses, to a total of 120 credits, the purpose of which is to broaden and deepen the candidate's artistic practice. In the detailed proposal for the programme of study, the candidate will propose a programme of taught study that will support the development of her or his artistic practice.

These taught courses may be drawn from the Conservatoire or the University course catalogues (dependent on availability and pre-requisites), and may also be pursued at other higher education institutions, such as the Open University. Procedures for credit transfer will be used to ensure the widest possible flexibility, and the specification for doctorates provided within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework allows that these courses be at any level between SCQF 7 and 12 (that is, any level from first year undergraduate, to doctoral level).

These taught courses may be theoretical, practical or research-related, and may be 'close' to the candidate's proposed artistic field or, where a clear case can be made, more 'distant' from that field.

For example, a student pursuing a project focussed on 19th Century German Lieder might propose Supplementary Studies relating to German language and poetry, but could also propose a programme of work focussed on related philosophical currents, or social history, where a case can be made that these will directly enrich his or her artistic practice. Likewise, a contemporary performance maker might propose a programme of supplementary study that centres on cultural theory, but could equally pursue studies in economics or natural history, where a case can be made that these studies will meaningfully inform his or her artistic practice.

C) Written component

The aim of the written component is to provide a reflective synthesis of the Professional Projects and Supplementary Studies, drawing them together into a coherent whole and contextualising the contribution made by the candidate to their chosen artistic field.

In particular, the written component should set out the artistic and intellectual context for the Professional Projects, reflect self-critically on the process of professional artistic development (including the role of the Supplementary Studies undertaken), and articulate the artistic insights achieved through the programme of study.

The written component will be 12,500 – 15,000 words (excluding bibliography and appendices), unless the Research Degree Committee has specifically granted permission for the word limit to be increased.

CONTENT

The precise programme of study will be tailored to each individual candidate. An outline will be proposed by the candidate as part of the admissions process; the detailed programme of study will be established with the advice of the supervisory team and approved by the Research Degrees Committee.

The most important considerations in developing the programme of study are to demonstrate its coherence, its potential for making a significant contribution to the artistic field in which it resides, and its practicality, recognising that the requirements for the degree should be met within the approved period of study.

As noted above, an outline proposal for the programme of study will be developed by the student at the application stage. This will be elaborated in detail with the advice of supervisory team in the early stages of study and submitted for the approval of Research Degrees Committee no later than six months after matriculation. Successful progression at the end of the first year is dependent on the approval, by the Research Degrees Committee, of the detailed programme of study.

HOW TO APPLY

Thank you for your interest in the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. If you require further information regarding the application and selection process generally, please do not hesitate to contact the Royal Conservatoire's Admissions office in the first instance. Contact details are:

tel: 0141 270 8265
email: admissions@rcs.ac.uk
website: <http://www.rcs.ac.uk>

We advise all applicants to discuss their ideas informally, before applying, with Dr Bethany Whiteside (Senior Lecturer and Doctoral Degrees Coordinator) via doctoraladmissions@rcs.ac.uk

CLOSING DATE

Applicants intending to commence their studies at the beginning of academic year 2026/27 are advised to submit their applications by **30 January 2026**.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Applications for all RCS programmes must be made online through the **UCAS Conservatoires** website at www.ucas.com/ucas/conservatoires. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland institution code is R58. You will find details of the admissions process on [UCAS](http://www.ucas.com/ucas/conservatoires) and you can call UCAS Conservatoires on 0371 468 0470 (UK) or +44 330 3330 232 (outside the UK) should you need advice or assistance.

You will also require the following course codes to apply:

Course	Course Code
DPerf Doctor of Performing Arts Full Time	470F
DPerf Doctor of Performing Arts Part Time	470P

Application Fee

There is a UCAS Conservatoires application fee of £28.95. In addition to that application fee, each Conservatoire charges an interview/audition fee. For the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, the interview/audition fee is £55 per programme applied for. Fees are not refundable. The fees are paid via the UCAS Conservatoires website and not directly to

the Conservatoire. The Conservatoire does not offer any fee waivers for research programmes.

References

It is your responsibility to nominate a referee as part of your UCAS Conservatoires application form. We may also request a second reference, if this is the case you will be contacted by email for the referee details. We cannot accept references from family, other relatives or close friends. You can read guidance about nominating your referee on the UCAS Conservatoires website.

[UCAS Conservatoire References](#)

Tuition Fees: Session 2025/26

	Full-Time	Part-Time
DPerf Home (Scot and Rest of UK):	£9,965	£4,982
DPerf International (including EU):	£23,191	£11,597

From academic year 2021/22 all EU students commencing study in Scotland pay fees at the international rate. Confirmed fees for 2026/27 will be available from the Conservatoire website in autumn 2025. Please note that the fees above are offered for guidance only and will be subject to annual increase. By agreement with the Conservatoire's Finance Officer, fees may be paid by instalment. Details will accompany any offer of a place.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Admission to doctoral level programmes is normally on the basis of a first degree at 2:1 level or higher (or the overseas equivalent) in the relevant subject, or a relevant postgraduate qualification. However, where a prospective student lacks a suitable first degree, alternative mechanisms for assessing qualifications and preparedness, reflecting professional or other work experience, may be used. Increasingly the UK research councils in several disciplines require that funded students on doctoral programmes have first completed an approved masters programme that prepares the student for doctoral work. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is committed to the principles of the Accreditation of Prior Learning, including experiential learning, and will bring those to bear on the admissions process for its doctoral students. Applicants for whom English is a second language must demonstrate an IELTS score of 7.0.

DURATION AND MODE OF STUDY

Study may be undertaken on either a full- or part-time basis. The normal duration of study is as follows:

DPerf: 3 years full-time or 6 years part-time. A one-year continuation period is normally allowed (two years for part-time students).

With the approval of the Research Degrees Committee, it may be possible for a student to change their mode of study depending upon individual circumstances.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

All applicants submit an application form via UCAS Conservatoires (<https://www.ucas.com/conservatoires>). Once you submit your online application, please then submit your proposal online via Acceptd (<https://app.getacceptd.com/rcs>). Those applicants who meet the admissions criteria and whose proposed research projects accord with the Royal Conservatoire's research priorities and context will be interviewed/ auditioned. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland may require an applicant to provide additional material in support of their application prior to, or following, their interview/audition.

An interview/audition panel will include a specialist member of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland staff and will include other members of staff or external advisers as appropriate. An interview panel will normally be chaired by the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange and will include at least one other member of staff or external adviser as appropriate. At the conclusion of the interview/audition process, the panel will formulate a recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee regarding the application. In exceptional cases, the panel may defer its recommendation until

- additional material has been requested and received from the applicant; and/or
- the applicant has participated in other interviews/auditions.

The Research Degrees Committee will recommend an applicant's admission to the University of St Andrews. (NB – although the offer of a place is made by the University, students will undertake their research programmes at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland).

PROPOSAL

The proposal is a key part of the application. A template of the proposal form can be downloaded from the Conservatoire website - <https://www.rcs.ac.uk/apply/how-to-apply/research/> and this will allow you to view the online questions in advance and plan your responses. Your response to the questions should be submitted online via Acceptd (<https://app.getacceptd.com/rcs>) once an application has been submitted via UCAS Conservatoires. In general, the most successful applications are strong in three key areas: the proposal itself is strong, showing the context and need for the study with an awareness of previous work in the area; the application shows that the candidate is well-prepared, in terms of their previous experiences and/or training, to undertake the proposed study; and the proposal makes a reasoned case for the proposed course of study being undertaken here at the Royal Conservatoire – usually because a particular specialist supervisor or other resource is available here. As noted above, we advise all applicants to discuss their study ideas informally before applying.

SUPERVISORY ARRANGEMENTS

Supervisors for doctoral students are appointed, with the approval of the University of St Andrews, by the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Research Degrees Committee. At least one supervisor must be a member of staff of the Royal Conservatoire. A second or joint external supervisor will also normally be appointed.

REGISTRATION AND PROGRESS

Successful applicants will initially be admitted as general research students. The Research Degrees Committee will review their progress after the first year of study (two years in the case of part-time students). On the basis of that review, the Research Degrees Committee will recommend to the University of St Andrews registration for either the degree of DPerf or MFA. After the initial review, the progress of students will be reviewed annually.

Following Your Interview/Audition

All decisions will be posted on UCAS Conservatoires following your audition via UCAS Conservatoires track, www.ucas.com/ucas/conservatoires/login (you will need your username and password). You will also receive notification from UCAS Conservatoires when decisions on **all** your choices are available.

Please see below for an explanation of UCAS Conservatoires codes –

Guaranteed Unconditional (GU)

The Conservatoire is satisfied from the information you have given, that you have already met the conditions for entry. Unless your application and/or qualification are subsequently shown to be fraudulent, a guaranteed unconditional offer is binding.

Guaranteed Conditional (GC)

The Conservatoire has made the offer subject to you meeting certain conditions such as examination results. Conditions can be viewed via UCAS Conservatoires track. Unless your application and/or qualifications are subsequently shown to be fraudulent, the offer is binding if you accept the offer and meet the conditions. You must meet the conditions of the offer by 31 August 2026, unless an earlier date is specified. If your conditions include obtaining IELTS (English Language test), you must meet this condition by 31 May 2026.

Reserve Unconditional (VU)

The Conservatoire is satisfied from the information you have given, that you have already met the conditions for entry and have offered a place on our reserve pool. See below for further information on reserve offers.

Reserve Conditional (VC)

The Conservatoire has offered a place on its reserve pool subject to you meeting certain conditions such as examination results. Conditions can be viewed via UCAS Conservatoires track. See below for further information on reserve offers.

Unsuccessful (R)

The Conservatoire does not wish to offer you any type of a place.

Reserve Offers Explained

A reserve (VC or VU) offer does not mean a place has been ‘reserved’ for you. Until such time as you receive (and accept) a guaranteed offer (GU or GC) from the Royal Conservatoire, you have not been accepted to study at the Conservatoire.

If you have received a reserve offer, it means that the Royal Conservatoire is not able to offer you a guaranteed place at the time it makes the offer. A reserve offer merely indicates that the Royal Conservatoire would like the opportunity to review its offer to you in the light of acceptances/declines to its guaranteed offers. You will become part of a ‘pool’ of reserve candidates and the Royal Conservatoire may choose to make you a guaranteed offer if a suitable place becomes available. If the Royal Conservatoire chooses not to make you a guaranteed offer, you will not be eligible to start at the Conservatoire.

If you have been given a reserve offer, in order to be considered for a guaranteed place (should one become available) you will need to accept the offer (and meet any conditions if applicable).

If you are holding a reserve offer, the Conservatoire can elect to make you a guaranteed offer at any time during the application cycle. Reserve offers remain active until the end of August. The decision to wait and see whether a guaranteed place becomes available, or to accept an offer at another conservatoire is entirely at your discretion.

Replying to offers

If you have one or more offers and UCAS Conservatoires has received decisions from all your conservatoires, they will send you a letter asking you to reply to your offers by a given date. You must reply online via UCAS Conservatoires Track (www.ucas.com/ucas/conservatoires/login). Your reply date is also shown on Track. If you do not reply by the date given, your offers will be declined automatically. The reply date is your individual reply date so it may be different to other applicants’. This is because it is based on when you received the last decision from all the conservatoires you applied to.

2026/27 Entry Reply Dates

Last decision by	Your reply date is
8 January 2026	10 February 2026
12 March 2026	7 April 2026
14 May 2026	2 June 2026
7 July 2026	29 July 2026

1 August 2026	8 September 2026
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You cannot hold more than one confirmed place in UCAS Conservatoires. A confirmed place in UCAS Conservatoires is a guaranteed unconditional offer as your first choice (GU1). If you receive more than one confirmed place, UCAS will ask you to accept one offer and withdraw from any others.

Feedback Policy

1. Programmes at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland are very competitive and attract high numbers of applications. In line with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts, the Conservatoire has put in place a process for the provision of feedback where possible.
2. Feedback requests must be made in writing to feedback@rcs.ac.uk. The email must come from the address supplied on the UCAS Conservatoires application and must contain the applicant's full name, course and UCAS Conservatoires personal ID number.
3. Feedback requests will only be accepted from the applicant themselves. Requests from third parties will not be acknowledged.
4. Feedback requests must be received within eight weeks of the audition/interview date. Requests received after eight weeks will not be dealt with.
5. Feedback will usually take the form of a scanned copy of the audition decision sheet (assessment criteria). This will be emailed directly to the applicant. Feedback may take up to six weeks to process from the date of the request.
6. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland will not enter into a dialogue with applicants regarding the provision of feedback. Our courses are highly competitive and applicants need to recognise that feedback may simply state the fact that other applicants were stronger or that the course is not, in our opinion, suitable for them.
7. Applicants should not consider the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland as arbiters of their ability. Feedback given is based on performance in the audition/interview and suitability for a particular course of study. Applicants who are unsuccessful in their application to us, may go on to gain places at other Conservatoires, and similarly, applicants whom we accept may have been unsuccessful elsewhere.
8. There may be occasions where an applicant considers that the Conservatoire has failed to meet its high standards in the consideration of their application. Disagreement with the academic judgement of the audition/interview panel in reaching their decision based on aspects of the applicant's profile does not constitute grounds for a complaint by an applicant. Complaints will only be considered in relation to non-adherence to policy and procedure.

8.1 Complaints can be made in person, by phone, in writing, by email at complaint@rcs.ac.uk or by completing our Complaints Form at <http://www.rcs.ac.uk/complaints>.

8.2 The following information will be required when making a complaint –

- Your full name and address
- As much as you can about the complaint
- What has gone wrong
- How you would like the matter to be resolved

8.3 Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- The event/issue you want to complain about
- Finding out that you have a reason to complain

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

8.4 We will give you our decision in five working days or less. Should the complaint need to be investigated, a full response to the complaint will be given to you within 20 working days. If the investigation is likely to take longer, you will be informed.

8.5 Please refer to the Complaints Handling Procedure Guide for more information
- http://www.rcs.ac.uk/about_us/complaints/.

Applicants with Disabilities

We welcome applications from people with disabilities. Many disabled students have completed courses at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and many are studying here now, including students who are neurodiverse (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism, ADHD) students who have hidden medical conditions such as epilepsy, IBS, asthma, diabetes, ME and mental health issues such as depression or anxiety. Applicants who have a disability or medical condition and would like further information about facilities and support for your studies or who require support for audition or interview are invited to contact Derek Powell, the RCS Disability Adviser at disabilityservice@rcs.ac.uk. The Disability Adviser is also available to meet you when you come for audition/interview to discuss your particular requirements, sources of further information and can assist with completing applications to your funding body (Student Awards Agency for Scotland, Student Finance England, Wales or NI) for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). For more information, please see [Support for Disabled Students](#)

Equality and Diversity Statement

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland embraces a diverse population of students and staff. We believe that excellence can be achieved through recognising and celebrating the value of every individual, and are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in all of our activities.

We are committed to developing and upholding a culture based on respect, inclusiveness, transparency and open-mindedness. We will proactively advance equity and inclusive practice in our activities and through effective and collaborative action, ensure that we all have the right to be seen, heard and celebrated.

Equality and Diversity are of central importance to our working ethos, find out more on our [Equality and Diversity pages](#).

Admissions Policy

Full details of our [admissions policy](#) and procedures can be found on the Conservatoire website.