

ROYAL
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Combining Artistic Research with Professional Practice

Developing artistic research projects within 2nd Cycle studies in music

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Programme Structure

← Master of Arts in Music (MA) →

PRINCIPAL STUDY	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	RESEARCH PROJECT
Managed within Departments (e.g. strings, brass, vocal)	Managed outside of Departments Elective classes, self-directed work	Managed outside of Departments Research training and project work

← Master of Music (MMus) →

Requirements of MMus Research Project

- Minimum of 5,000 words writing for each project
- For stand-alone writing, up to 15,000 words allowed
- Artistic outcomes:
 - Concert or event (normally c.50-90 minutes)
 - Portfolio of performance/composition materials, editions, mixed media

Teaching delivery of MMus Research Project

- Weekly research skills seminars
- Weekly small-group workshops and coaching
- Small-group tutorials
- Individual supervision
- Formal student presentations with written feedback and guidance

Methodology

- Written questionnaires:
 - What are the key goals?
 - What are the strengths?
 - What are the challenges?
 - What is the relationship with the field of artistic research?
- Semi-structured interviews
- Open Coding analysis

[See, e.g. Wise, James, & Rink, 'Performers in the practice room', in *Musicians in the Making*, edited by John Rink, Helena Gaunt, and Aaron Williamson (Oxford University Press, 2017), 143-63]

Code list

Theme 1

Descriptions of internal pedagogic culture

- Workshop culture
- Developing an individual voice
- Mixed backgrounds of students
- Relationship between practice and reflection
- Staff expertise
- Multiple staff viewpoints
- Relationship between educational culture and assessment outcomes
- Longitudinal relevance
- Importance of craft

Theme 2

Perceived relationship with internal context

- Defining institutional culture
- Separate from institutional mainstream

Theme 3

Perceived relationship with external reference points

- Music profession
- Artistic research
- Academia
- Social relevance

Theme 1

Workshop culture

- “learning environment rather than a course”
- “a community of voices, mind and listening”
- “an open and stimulating culture” where “ideas are exchanged between staff and students”
- we “get students to talk to each other in certain ways”
- create a space where everyone is “really invested in what’s going on”
- potential “to see other people grappling with things from the early stages”
- see it “in terms of a salon, where insights, beauty, ideas and discoveries can be shared”

Theme 1

Developing an individual voice

- “allowing students room for what they need, which is incredibly individual to every student”
- “the voices thing is very important ... encouraging everyone to find their voice, what it is you’ve got to say, and who you are, and why you’re saying it”
- “as far away from a pedagogical culture as possible”

Theme 1

Mixed backgrounds of students

Theme 3

Social relevance

- requiring what was described as “educational management”
- “liberates the students in ways which open creative technical and artistic doors”
- helps to keep the research culture “creatively current, reflecting recent artistic, social and political priorities”

Theme 1 Relationship between practice and reflection

- “conceptual questions are rooted back into the practical work”
- “a questioning attitude to their creative work and the tools to implement those questions in their practical work”
- “a reflective kind of musician”
- “we are trying to get them to think carefully about what they do as artists ... so if we teach them research skills or we teach them bibliography skills or literature review skills, it's not to turn them into an army of researchers, it's to get them to think carefully about their artistic work”

Theme 1

Staff expertise

Theme 1

Multiple staff viewpoints

- “a strong dialogue going on”
- “it’s vital that the students see that we are prepared to disagree with each other – this, in my experience, offers a safe space for a variety of approaches and disparate points of view in the group as a whole”

Theme 1 Relationship between educational culture and assessment outcomes

Theme 1 Longitudinal relevance

- “develop an artistic project ... that is directly connected to their professional goals”
- “I think it’s a course without an obvious end point, because people with really big projects will need to take them on over multiple years afterwards”
- “balancing students’ creative ambitions with the practical realities of delivering a project in a year”
- “can sometimes be difficult to handle”
- “we are requiring them to put boundaries down for themselves which is actually quite difficult to do”

Theme 3

Music profession

Theme 1

Importance of craft

- “a questioning attitude to industry norms”
- “a critical attitude to the trends in the profession”
- “so that they don’t follow the obvious paths just because they are there”
- “cutting across music industry norms – not ignoring them, but situating them well in relation to an educational context”
- “doesn’t mean it should be an excuse for substandard instrumental level”
- profession itself is “just not as good as it should be” ... “all the students will know here, if they try that we will be suspicious”

Theme 2

Defining institutional culture

Theme 2

Separate from institutional mainstream

- a “counterpoint”
- “must be the questions [the students] are asking everywhere else”
- “to one side of the mainstream environment of the institution, but still within it”

Theme 3

Artistic Research

- “artistic research that sees research outcome in the [artistic] product”
- “we subscribe to some elements of what’s happening in mainstream artistic research, but we also keep a healthy skeptical attitude to it”
- Artistic Research that was aimed primarily at its own community was “unhelpful”
- “ungrounded experimentation,” ... was “quite unhealthy in a place like this”
- “Embeddedness in individual experience at the heart of epistemological questions around artistic research” was a strong feature of MMus projects.

Conclusions

- “this is a way of preparing students for a *life* in projects”
- “development of confident and informed artistic agency”
- “the kind of attitude we adopt here is reflected in other things that go on in the building”
- “in the fields in between trying to find points of connection ... trying to shuttle between those two places and letting our students sometimes play with the lambs in the fields between the two.... Maybe the great space is the fields in between.... That could be the happy place.”

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