Department of Performing Arts

Guidance notes for Music research degrees

In order for us to assess your intentions for doctoral study, you need to send us a research proposal that describes what you wish to research, why you wish to do so, and how you plan to go about it. Candidates for PhD normally produce either a written dissertation (of c. 80,000 words), or a portfolio of works (e.g. compositions or performances) accompanied by a shorter written commentary.

These guidance notes focus on what you should include in your proposal. It is important that your proposal is as specific and developed as possible.

1. The research proposal would normally be 2-3 pages long.
2. Your proposal should state clearly your research question(s) – what is it you wish to investigate and why.
3. You should explain the research context for your proposed project, how your work proposes to build on existing work in your subject area and to introduce new knowledge and insights. If you are a practice-based candidate, you should outline the theoretical grounding of your work to provide a critical context for your portfolio of performances/compositions, whether through analytical, historical, aesthetic or other form of scholarly enquiry.
4. Explain how your background and previous work will enable you to undertake this research. What are the skills you bring with you and what are the areas you wish to develop? Check online for the research interests of the current academic staff in the music department.
5. You should discuss how you propose to carry out your project and the methods or methodologies that underlie your research (which might involve library or archival work, participant observation, creative practice, music analysis, software development, for example).
6. Include a bibliography in your proposal. This does not need to be an exhaustive list of sources but should demonstrate your engagement with relevant existing research.
7. You should also consider the time frame. Your research needs to be completed in 3 years (for full-time PhD). Try to provide an outline of stages towards realising your research.

For further information, contact Dr. Ben-Tal (ben-tal@kingston.ac.uk) postgraduate research student coordinator for music.