



Royal Conservatoire  
*of Scotland*

# COMPOSITION

[rcs.ac.uk](http://rcs.ac.uk)

**LIKE  
NOWHERE ELSE:  
STUDY IN THE  
MOST CREATIVE  
HUB IN THE  
COUNTRY**

Composition can be a solitary existence; here we help you to develop the skills to work with other artists across disciplines, allowing you to develop projects with dancers, theatre devisers, filmmakers and performers.

You will find RCS a supportive and nurturing environment where we are invested in ensuring you reach your creative potential.

# Composition

**BMus: Four years, full-time**  
[rcs.ac.uk/composition](https://rcs.ac.uk/composition)

**MMus: Two years, full-time**  
**MA: One year, full-time**  
[rcs.ac.uk/pgcomposition](https://rcs.ac.uk/pgcomposition)

Students from across the world come to study composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, benefiting from our rich array of professional partnerships, the diverse and talented teaching staff and our commitment to providing as many performing opportunities as possible for our students.

There's a real sense of community amongst the department; the Composers Forum meets weekly, and our students are offered support in setting up their own collectives for collaboration and performance.

## Why choose us?

- | RCS is recognised as one of the world's top three destinations to study the performing arts (QS World University Rankings 2021)
- | Study in one of the busiest performing arts venue in Scotland, with numerous opportunities for your work to be performed live
- | Visiting Professors include **Sir James MacMillan CBE** and **Kate Moore**
- | Excellent staff-student ratio
- | Experienced staff with international profiles, all active within the industry
- | 94% of undergraduate respondents from the School of Music are in employment or further study (HESA, 17/18)
- | Annual contemporary new music festival Plug which, over the past 11 years, has premiered 500+ new works
- | Collaborative opportunities with artists from across the performing arts, including dancers, actors and filmmakers
- | Professional partnerships both nationally and internationally have included **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Icebreaker, Psappha, New Music Players, Red Note, Garth Knox, Richard Craig, Scottish Ensemble, Glasgow New Music Expedition, Ensemble Modern, the Conservatoire de Paris, Hebrides Ensemble, Brodsky Quartet, Ilya Gringolts, Darragh Morgan** and **Missy Mazzoli**

## Your studies

The performance of new work is at the core of our curriculum and you will benefit from hearing your work performed in professional venues across RCS. Learning within our diverse conservatoire will allow you to work across the disciplines, exploring composition for film, theatre, opera, dance and musical theatre.

Importantly, your compositions will not be restricted to a certain type of player or performance, and you can develop the breadth of your writing skills.

Your studies will follow a tailored path through the programme; you have the option to include a second study in performance, work in the superb electroacoustic and recording studios, or devise new work in partnership with your peers.

Amongst your busy timetable you can expect to undertake classes in contemporary repertoire, free improvisation and peer-to-peer sharing of new work.

## Performance

Hearing your writing performed is crucial to your musical development and you will have ample opportunity to work with fellow artists to hear your work.

Our annual Plug festival has been created to offer a professional platform for students to showcase their works. The festival has grown from strength to strength with more than 500 new works receiving a professional premiere.

## Professional partnerships

RCS partners with all of the national artistic companies, and the Composition department has strong partnerships with ensembles and institutions around the world including Ensemble Modern and the Conservatoire de Paris.

These partnerships create unique opportunities for our students and offer learning experiences that challenge and inspire new work.



## DID YOU KNOW?

**The Plug festival is a week-long celebration of new music and attracts audiences and reviewers from around the country.**

## Teaching staff

- | **Gordon McPherson** Head of Composition
- | **Dr Colin Broom**
- | **Dr Linda Buckley**
- | **Dr Emily Doolittle**
- | **David Fennessy**
- | **Tom Wilson**
- | **Professor Alistair MacDonald**
- | **Dr Stuart MacRae**
- | **Dr Oliver Searle**
- | **Dr Ailie Robertson**

## Visiting Professors

- | **Sir James MacMillan** CBE
- | **Kate Moore**

Our teaching staff are renowned for their own achievements within the industry and continue to create new, inspirational work.

Recent achievements from the faculty include:

- | **Dr Oliver Searle** won a British Composers Award for his work *Microscopic Dances* in 2018
- | **Dr Linda Buckley** released a new album, *Moog Residency*, in 2018
- | **Dr Stuart MacRae** wrote a new opera *Anthropocene* with librettist Louise Welsh, performed by Scottish Opera in 2019
- | **David Fennessy's** latest orchestral piece *The Ground* was performed by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in 2018

A full staff list and biographies are available on [rcs.ac.uk](https://www.rcs.ac.uk)

## Our graduates

Composition graduates work across the world in a variety of industries including orchestras, film and TV, and gaming. Graduates include:

- | **Amit Anand** Film composer
- | **Jay Capperault** Member of the inaugural RSNO Composers' Hub Scheme
- | **C Duncan** Mercury prize nominee
- | **Marcos Fernandez** Teacher of composition at the Trinity Music Academy
- | **Matthew Grouse** Composer
- | **John Harris** Co-Director of Red Note Ensemble
- | **Jessica Jones** Film and TV composer
- | **Alex Mackay** Composer and touring musician for Mogwai
- | **Henry Macpherson** Composer and researcher at the University of New Huddersfield Center for Research in New Music
- | **Claire McCue** Composer and educator
- | **Claire McKenzie** Co-founder of award-winning company, Noisemaker
- | **Lewis Murphy** Young Composer-in-Residence, Glyndebourne
- | **Robert Reid Allan** composer and Scottish Award for New Music nominee
- | **Matt Rogers** Doctoral Composer-in-Residence at Royal Opera
- | **Jennifer Walshe** Composer, performer and visual artist
- | **Gareth Williams** First Composer-in-Residence for Scottish Opera
- | **Matthew Whiteside** Composer, producer and promoter of new music concerts

Current students also make their mark within the industry. Masters student **Aileen Sweeney** is writing a piece to be performed by the London Philharmonic and PhD student **Lisa Robertson** is writing a new work for the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

## How to apply

Before you apply, please go to [rcs.ac.uk](https://www.rcs.ac.uk) to read full details on the music programme you wish to apply to, and the application and admissions processes.

The standard application deadline is **1 October**. Late applications made after this date may be accepted and those details can be found at [rcs.ac.uk/apply](https://www.rcs.ac.uk/apply)

All applications must be made through the UCAS Conservatoires online admissions service: [ucas.com/conservatoires](https://www.ucas.com/conservatoires)

Our institution code is **R58** and you'll find the specific programme code on [rcs.ac.uk](https://www.rcs.ac.uk)

## Entry requirements

Entrance to RCS is based on talent, potential and ability. We are looking for students who display outstanding potential, dedication and ambition.

### BMus academic entry requirements

- | Scottish Highers - 3 passes (grade C or above)
- | A Levels - 2 passes
- | International Baccalaureate - minimum score of 24 with 3 subjects at Higher Level
- | Recognised equivalences

We offer a flexible approach to students taking Highers over more than one academic year and/or who achieve their qualifications in more than one sitting.

Within the minimum academic entry requirements, the subjects recommended are:

- | Music at Higher, Advanced Higher or Advanced level or equivalent
- | English at Higher, Advanced Higher or Advanced level or equivalent

### Postgraduate academic entry requirements

- | Honours degree (at least 2.2), or its overseas equivalent in a subject area relevant to the demands of the programme

For more specific entry requirements, including language requirements, please visit [rcs.ac.uk](https://www.rcs.ac.uk)

## Your interview

We want you to enjoy the interview process and use the opportunity to discover more about RCS and see if it is the right place for you.

After making an application through UCAS Conservatoires, Composition applicants should submit at least three compositions (preferably recent examples) together with brief analytical notes, and recorded performances and software files wherever possible.

Once you submit your portfolio, this may be followed up with an interview.

Full details on the application process are available at [rcs.ac.uk](https://www.rcs.ac.uk)

## Tuition fees and scholarships

Tuition fees can be found at [rcs.ac.uk/fees](https://www.rcs.ac.uk/fees) as well as information on financial support and scholarships.

## Junior Conservatoire

The Junior Conservatoire of Music programme is for talented and committed young people aged 11-18 who are passionate about music and want to develop their skills and techniques.

Junior Conservatoire students benefit from one-to-one tuition from RCS expert teaching staff, performance classes and the opportunity to play in a variety of ensembles every week.

Find out more at [rcs.ac.uk/junior](https://rcs.ac.uk/junior)

## Short Courses

We offer a range of short courses and summer schools for people who wish to develop their skills and passion for music.

To see what courses are on offer this year, please visit [rcs.ac.uk/shortcourses](https://rcs.ac.uk/shortcourses)

## Contact us

If you have any questions about your application, please contact us at [admissions@rcs.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@rcs.ac.uk) and we'll be happy to help you.

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