

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland three-year GCRF strategy (AY 2018-19 onwards)

Name of institution	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
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Has this GCRF strategy been approved for submission to SFC by the head of institution?	
Yes/ No (delete as appropriate)	
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Section A: Official Development Assistance (ODA) and GCRF strategy

The strategy

- a. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland warmly welcomes the opportunity to extend the global reach and impact of its research through new, development-related and GCRF activity. Research at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland operates through the agency of *The Exchange*, an autonomous unit within the Conservatoire, distinct from its two Schools, employing ten members of staff and led by the Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange, Professor Stephen Broad. *The Exchange* encompasses several spheres of activity:
 - i. Institutional policy and strategy for research and knowledge exchange
 - ii. External research and knowledge exchange collaborations and projects
 - iii. Promotion of and support for staff research (including staff development and funding)
 - iv. Research degree provision (validated by the University of St Andrews)
 - v. Research office functions

The Exchange therefore integrates a range of academic and administrative functions that in larger institutions might be distributed across faculties and be divided between academic and administrative staff. Its role is to lead and facilitate the Conservatoire's vigorous research culture and manage its distinctive research profile.

As a small specialist institution, the Royal Conservatoire's research is squarely focussed on the performing arts: their practices, histories, place and role in society and, in collaboration with partners, their relationship to concerns such as health and wellbeing. Practice-based research – research in-and-through the performing arts – is central to our distinctive research culture.

Our success in developing that research culture is indicated by our top 10 ranking in each of the first three years of the QS World Rankings for Performing Arts. Perceptions of research excellence, assessed by an independent survey of academics, are weighted at 90% in this global ranking, in which the Royal Conservatoire is currently (2018) ranked fifth, making it the highest ranked Scottish institution in any discipline included in the QS subject rankings. This indicator is supplemented by the current Complete University Guide Art, Drama, and Music League Table for the UK, in which the Conservatoire is ranked second.

Except through a specific PGR research project, the Royal Conservatoire does not currently engage in development-related research, and the GCRF therefore represents a remarkable opportunity to develop new strands of research that further our ambitions to achieve strong impacts with our research, extend our global reach, and further manifest, in a wider arena, the principles of our curriculum (which is specifically designed to create graduates who are ready to make a contribution in the world as 'artists, educators, advocates and active citizens').

- b. Our strategic approach to the formula element of GCRF will incorporate 3 strands.
 - We will sustain our existing support for the small-scale development-related PGR research that is continuing at the Conservatoire, concerning music education in India.

- We will, in the first of the three years, initiate a responsive funding call for staff research projects, adopting the existing framework of our existing – and successful – Athenaeum Awards to create the Global Challenges Athenaeum Awards. In the second and third years of the strategy, we will explore and then implement possibilities for ‘Follow-on Funding’ for the projects supported through the Global Challenges Athenaeum Awards.
 - We will ringfence a small proportion of the funding to explore partnership funding with one or more of the larger multi-technic universities.
- c. As noted above, these activities will, in effect, be the Conservatoire’s first steps in strategic development-related research activity.
- d. Such early steps will, however, speak directly to the UK strategy for the GCRF by addressing two of the stated aims of that strategy (specifically to “promote challenge-led disciplinary and interdisciplinary research”; and to “strengthen capacity”) in the particular context of the creative and performing arts.
- e. Our strategy for initiating development-related and GCRF research directly supports the overarching ambition of our current Research Strategy: “Enhancing vitality and achieving sustainability”, but it also speaks to two of our five Strategic Objectives for research, namely: “fostering a greater number of productive research collaborations with other universities and conservatoires, in Scotland, the UK, Europe, and globally”; and “further embedding research as a coherent strand of activity for a wider section of academic staff from both Schools”.
- f. In implementing this strategy, it is important to note that it deals with the earliest stages of establishing development-related research at the Conservatoire. The decision to take a ‘responsive’ and competitive approach reflects the success we have had in developing and supporting staff research and KE activity by such means, but it is, necessarily, dependent on staff capacity and individual ambition.

Nonetheless, Royal Conservatoire staff are very well connected globally, and they are united by the basic artistic impetus to make a difference in the world, an impetus that translates, in research terms, into a desire to pursue impactful research, often characterised by work in which the impacts of the research are inseparable from its processes and outputs.

By taking the proposed approach, we also benefit from well-established structures and processes for managing responsive project funding, including mechanisms for ensuring that individual projects contribute to the further development of our research environment and to public understanding.

We cannot at this stage identify the specific projects that will receive funding through this competitive process, but we anticipate that the outcomes of our first funding call will be known by December 2018.

Our work exploring possible partnerships with colleagues at other, multi-technic HEIs will complement our ‘responsive’ approach. We will use this exploratory partnership work to identify possible strategic projects that will be developed in later years.

Management of GCRF

By taking a broadly ‘responsive’ approach, we will make use of a well-established process for promoting and managing the projects supported by the scheme. In promoting the scheme, the criteria for GC Athenaeum Awards will extend the criteria for the existing scheme to explicitly set

out the requirements for ODA compliance; in addition, staff will receive mentoring to make their applications (again, extending existing processes).

The Athenaeum Awards are overseen, and applications received and considered, by the Conservatoire's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). The responsibilities that this Committee currently discharges with respect to the Athenaeum Awards will be extended to the Global Challenges Athenaeum Awards.

In all aspects of their operation, the Global Challenges Athenaeum Awards will therefore co-opt well-developed decision-making processes and post-award monitoring that will be adapted for the specific requirements of the GCRF, including ODA-compliance, and assessing the success of activity, outputs, outcomes and economic and social impacts. In summary, the proposed process for identifying suitable projects and monitoring their progress will specifically ensure that all funded projects are ODA-compliant and will achieve the greatest possible impact.

Day-to-day management and monitoring of the GC Athenaeum Awards will rest with The Exchange, which undertakes these responsibilities for the existing Athenaeum Awards.

Our approach will provide a clear basis for measuring progress in initiating development-related research at the Conservatoire. Indicators will include numbers of applications received and their quality, together with outcomes and outputs assessed against applications. The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee will evaluate the outcomes of GC Athenaeum Awards based on these, and other, indicators, and from this data, we expect to be able to assess the overall impact of the Conservatoire's GCRF activity in summa. A preliminary judgement of this overall impact will be the basis of our examination of mechanisms for 'follow-on funding' (see below).

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee will also receive reports on developing partnerships with other HEIs in pursuit of development-related research.

Future formula GCRF priorities

In 2019-20 we will continue to develop our partnerships and the GC Athenaeum Awards, and begin to explore mechanisms for 'follow-on funding' for successful funded projects. 'Follow-on' support could include dedicated mini-sabbaticals; part-funding for studentships associated with development-related projects.

In 2020-21 we will continue to develop our partnerships and the GC Athenaeum Awards, and begin to implement appropriate pilots for 'follow-on' support to successful projects.