

PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA AND ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA HANDBOOK 2026-27

The Royal Academy of Music moves music forward by inspiring successive generations of musicians to connect, collaborate and create.

Charity number 310007

Company registration number RC000438

MARYLEBONE ROAD, LONDON NW1 5HT
RAM.AC.UK



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is a Professional Diploma?	3
PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA (1 year)	4
Introduction	4
Key Staff	4
Programme Aims	5
Intended Learning Outcomes	5
Credit Structure	6
Assessment.....	6
Key Dates	7
Transfer to APD	8
ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA	9
Introduction	9
Key Staff	9
Programme Aims	10
Intended Learning Outcomes	10
Course Content.....	11
Portfolio	12
Viva Voce Examination and final report.....	12
Panel	12
INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION	13
Communication	13
Concerts	13
Student Recordings	13
Academy Recordings	13
Student Support	13
Disability	14
Extension or deferral procedure	14
Student Engagement.....	14
Student Feedback	14
Student Representation	15

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA?

Having completed a postgraduate degree, and perhaps been professionally active, you've already taken major steps towards defining yourself as a musician. The Professional Diploma and Advanced Professional Diploma exist to provide you with a focused and substantial programme of study designed to develop skills that are vital to your professional armoury. Through a combination of one-to-one lessons and engagement with the Academy's wider learning environment you will emerge with both the flexibility and sense of direction necessary to thrive in today's musical environment, and ready to follow a career path on which you can play to your strengths.

The APD can be taken as a two-year programme in its own right, or you can transfer to the second year of the APD following completion of the PD (see page 8).

PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA (1 YEAR)

INTRODUCTION

The Professional Diploma is a one-year programme for students who wish to develop an area of specialism such as chamber music, historical performance, a repertoire niche or compositional specialism (e.g. specific media).

The training consists of Principal Study lessons as the core element and Professional Skills agreed between the student, Head of Department and Tutor at the beginning of the year, selected according to the student's specialism.

KEY STAFF

Please refer to your Department Handbook for the contact details of your Head of Principal Study and other instrumental teaching and support staff.

Associate Professor & Postgraduate Tutor: Roderick Chadwick

Room 278, ext 458, r.chadwick@ram.ac.uk

Roderick has an overview of the Professional Diploma programmes and is Tutor for guitar, organ, choral conducting, professional diploma and advanced professional diploma students.

Head of Postgraduate Programmes: Professor Neil Heyde

Room G81, ext 452, n.heyde@ram.ac.uk

Neil is responsible for all of the postgraduate programmes.

Postgraduate Programmes and Research Administrator: Tom Reid

Room 511, ext 316 TReid@ram.ac.uk

Tom provides administrative support for the postgraduate and research degree programmes, and manages some of the public research events.

PROGRAMME AIMS

- To provide musicians with a bridge to a successful career in performance/composition.
- To encourage the development of particular professional specialisms.
- To provide a programme of study appropriate to the specialised needs of individual students.
- To encourage the development of performers/composers with distinctive and original artistic personalities.
- To create an artistic and educational environment where performers/composers can reach the highest possible standards and consolidate their technical skills.
- To give regular opportunities for performance in a wide range of contexts, both competitive and non-competitive, or to give regular opportunities for students' works to be performed and for them to collaborate with other artists.
- To stimulate habits of self-awareness and self-criticism that will prepare students for the challenges of the music profession.
- To encourage students to develop repertoire interests that will help promote their performance careers or to help students become aware of current compositional trends and how these connect to their own interests.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of the programme students should be able to demonstrate the following:

Knowledge and Understanding - a student will be able to:

- Demonstrate specific knowledge of the repertoire related to their chosen specialism, and an understanding of appropriate performance practices and traditions or demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of a specific range of compositional techniques.
- Demonstrate an understanding of specific principles of style and interpretation as demanded by performance at the highest level or demonstrate knowledge of specific compositional practices.
- Show awareness of the standards and demands of a specific area (or of specific areas) of the musical profession.
- Show awareness of the demands of concert-giving as related to the chosen specialism, including, as appropriate, those relating to performance, music publication, recording, and promotion.

Subject-Specific Skills and Other Attributes (Performers) - a student will be able to:

- Design and deliver a recital programme (or its equivalent) to a high professional standard.
- Demonstrate a distinctive interpretative personality which is convincing in live performance.
- Demonstrate confidence in adapting presentational skills to the demands of different performance and presentation contexts.
- Participate actively in organising and delivering concerts to a high professional standard.
- Show efficiency in organising and prioritising a busy performance and practice schedule.
- Participate actively in a range of specific professional development activities.

Subject-Specific Skills and Other Attributes (Composers) – a student will be able to:

- Deliver a specific portfolio of compositions to a high professional standard.
- Demonstrate a distinctive compositional personality in a specific musical context, or contexts.
- Demonstrate confidence in adapting compositional processes to the demands of different performance contexts.
- Participate actively in organising and delivering performances to a high professional standard.
- Show skills in producing scores, performance parts, and, where appropriate, recordings of their compositions to a high professional level.
- Show confidence in articulating compositional choices, both in verbal and non-verbal ways.
- Participate actively in a range of specific professional development activities.

Key and Transferable Skills - a student will be able to:

- Communicate intentions effectively whether working one-to-one or in a team.
- Respond to criticism in a positive fashion, while maintaining confidence in their own creative work.
- Take responsibility for managing their own learning and professional development.
- Evaluate and assess their own abilities, and know when to seek advice or feedback.
- Be aware of key career opportunities and the need for forward planning.

CREDIT STRUCTURE

The Professional Diploma comprises 120 credits, as follows:

- Final Assessment 60 credits
- Professional Skills 60 credits

ASSESSMENT

The **Final Assessment** is subject to the same criteria as other Level 7 (Masters level) 'Part Two' assessments and may take the same format (see department handbooks for details including timing requirements), or an alternative that has been proposed by the student and approved by their Head of Department. A feedback mark is awarded, and written feedback provided. It is normally expected that recitals will comply with the relevant departmental timing requirements, but if a sufficiently compelling and appropriate case is made, it may be between 40 and 65 minutes in length (the minimum and maximum for postgraduate recitals, regardless of discipline). The Head of Department's approval applies only to programming content/strategy, and it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the recital itself falls within these limits. Standard mark penalties will be applied to recitals that fall outside these limits.

A self-edited recording submission is one possible alternative: guide length, 30 minutes. The submission must be accompanied by text of c. 250 words explaining the primary aim of the recording and the strategies adopted. The recording should be submitted on Moodle, along with five minutes of video from one of the unattended sessions (see below) as evidence that this is your work and that it has been undertaken during the year. Scores must also be submitted. Students choosing this format of assessment will normally be expected to take the Self-recording and Self-editing elective, which provides training, two hours of supervised recording time in one of the

Academy's venues, and tutorial assistance with editing of the material from that session. Students will be permitted to book a further 6 hours of unattended recording time to complete the submission. The recorded sound quality and editing are not the primary focus of the assessment, but the panel will take these elements into account and students are expected to have a developed understanding of appropriate professional expectations in relation to the submission.

Professional Skills comprises all activities undertaken within the Academy other than Principal Study lessons, whether organised by the student's department or as part of the Academy's wider provision. There are no prescribed requirements, unlike for Masters students.

- At the end of the year all relevant activities are to be listed on the Professional Skills Self-Declaration Form - see below for the submission deadline. A feedback mark will then be awarded by the Head of Department and Tutor.
- As well as departmental events and projects, all PG Artist Development sessions and electives are open to Professional Diploma students. See sections 7 and 9 of the Postgraduate Handbook for details.
- It is not essential for assessments to be undertaken (e.g. as part of electives attended or for performances given), although these can contribute positively to the Professional Skills profile.
- External work, especially that which is related to the specialism, can also form part of Professional Skills.

KEY DATES

Weeks of 14 and 21 September	Individual meetings with Tutor.
24 February- 3 March 2027	Drafting period for Final Assessment proposal*
Friday 5 March	Deadline for Final Assessment proposal form to be submitted to Tom Reid TReid@ram.ac.uk
Friday 12 March	HoDs will approve/request amendments to proposals by this date
Thursday 29 April, 15:00	Deadline for submission of the Professional Skills Student Self-Declaration Forms (on Moodle) Students wishing to transfer to APD year 2 should inform their Head of Department, Tutor and the Registry by email by this date.
Friday 30 April, 15:00	Deadline for submission of the APD Portfolio (on Moodle)
May /June – Dates tbc	Performance Examinations (if adopting recital format)

*Do take advantage of the Professional Diploma tutor's advice when completing these forms.

The rationale that you provide on the form will be given to the assessment panel, so it is important that you explain clearly how your programme and format choices reflect your specialism.

TRANSFER TO APD

Students who wish to continue their studies by transferring to year 2 of the Advanced Professional Diploma should signal their intention to their Head of Department, their Programme Tutor and the Registry by **Thursday 29 April**. You will be required to submit a written document answering the following questions – guide length 1500 words – and attend an interview in the second half of June:

- Outline the skills that you wish to develop over the course of a second year, in line with the specialism areas described on page 11. Include a brief account of how these align with your career aims.
- Give examples of the repertoire, activities and/or projects that you envisage playing a part in your studies. Include any external commitments currently scheduled or being planned, and provide a detailed account of how you see the year unfolding.
- What aspects of your musical studies so far are most relevant to these plans?
- Are there any Academy staff you would be keen to receive advice from during this period?

A distinction mark for the Final Assessment will also normally be expected.

ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA

(2 YEARS)

INTRODUCTION

The Advanced Professional Diploma is a two-year programme designed as a final-stage bridge for students into the profession, in the form of a focused area of study chosen from a range of options. It is particularly suited to performers and composers whose professional focus and/or aptitude is not suited to a research degree but who want or need a level 8 programme (Dublin third cycle) to establish a footing in the profession. The course offers intensive support for development as practitioners in the form of principal study tuition, as well as an environment in which to engage with the variety of activities open to postgraduate students including masterclasses, electives, side-by-side workshops and performances, and developing recording skills. The aim is for students to emerge as rounded and resourceful artists with the skills needed to forge consequential career paths.

KEY STAFF

Please refer to your Department Handbook for the contact details of your Head of Principal Study and other instrumental teaching and support staff.

Associate Professor and Postgraduate Tutor: Roderick Chadwick

Room 278, ext 458, r.chadwick@ram.ac.uk

Roderick has an overview of the Professional Diploma programmes and is Tutor for guitar, organ, choral conducting, professional diploma and advanced professional diploma students.

Senior Postgraduate Tutor: Dr Sarah Callis

Room 178, ext 347, s.callis@ram.ac.uk

Sarah has an overview of research degree programmes and Advanced Diplomas. She is Tutor for harp, jazz, conducting, advanced artist diploma, advanced opera diploma and research degree students.

Head of Postgraduate Programmes: Professor Neil Heyde

Room G81, ext 452, n.heyde@ram.ac.uk

Neil is responsible for all of the postgraduate programmes.

Postgraduate Programmes and Research Administrator: Tom Reid

Room 511, ext 316 TReid@ram.ac.uk

Tom provides administrative support for the postgraduate and research degree programmes, and manages some of the public research events.

PROGRAMME AIMS

- To provide high-level professionally-focused training in performance or composition skills.
- To enhance students' employability by developing professional standards in attitude, work patterns, preparation and performance.
- To enable students to develop as interpreters capable of synthesising complex musical concepts and technical strategies.
- To broaden students' experience of professional musical practices, and to enable them to shape and reflect on their own developing practice.
- To develop students' knowledge and understanding of their chosen field through professional contacts and through artist development advice and guidance.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of the programme students should be able to demonstrate:

- The ability to communicate artistic insight at a level that meets professional expectations.
- An authoritative synthesis in performance or composition portfolio of a complex body of knowledge.
- An understanding of specific principles of style and interpretation or knowledge of specific compositional practices at a professional level.
- Awareness of, and ability to implement and meet the standards and demands of a specific area (or areas) of the music profession.
- The initiative and self-awareness required to select appropriate performances/compositions for ongoing assessment.
- The skills required to assemble an audio or video portfolio of artistic work.

Performers:

- A distinctive interpretative personality which is convincing in live and/or recorded performance.
- Well-developed collaborative and leadership skills in appropriate contexts.

Composers:

- Authority in adapting compositional processes to the demands of different contexts.
- Skills in producing scores, performance parts and, where appropriate, recordings of compositions to a high professional level.

COURSE CONTENT

Students enrolled on the Advanced Professional Diploma receive training that is tailored towards their professional needs in a similar manner to the one-year Level 7 Professional Diploma but with a more developed focus. Students are expected to identify an area of specialism (see indicative list below) which may evolve in discussion with the Programme Supervisor and Head(s) of Department. The goal is to foster excellence in specific professional roles.

Those undertaking a two-year APD will follow the same syllabus and assessment requirements as one-year Professional Diploma students in their first year (see above), progressing towards the pursuit of similar activities with a greater level of autonomy and intensity in Year 2.

1. Orchestral activity (workshops and rehearsals as well as concerts).
2. Developing critical and verbal skills for teaching and/or entrepreneurship and/or public communication, choosing from a range of PG electives as appropriate; minimum class attendance will be required.
3. Chamber music – either as member of an existing ensemble(s), or with the aim of establishing new collaborations.
4. Leadership: ensemble direction, principal roles in orchestra, other aspects of mentoring.
5. Recording focus – enrolment on Self-recording and Self-editing elective mandatory.
6. Performer embedded in Composition and Contemporary Music Department.
7. A specific project (or projects) resulting in live performance(s) and/or a recording.
8. Ensemble Piano partnership development.
9. Historical Performance specialisms (repertoire and/or instruments).
10. Extended instrument family specialisms (bass clarinet, etc).
11. Any compositional specialism.
12. Combinations of Principal Study disciplines, such as a performer-composer specialism.

PROGRESSION

In order to progress to the second year of the programme you must pass both of the final assessment components for the Professional Diploma: the Professional Skills Profile and Progression Examination (the equivalent of the ProfDip Final Assessment).

FINAL ASSESSMENT

The Advanced Professional Diploma is set at level 8 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in order to recognize the stage at which students usually enter the programme and to provide an appropriate framework for assessment (Masters courses are at level 7). In keeping

with other programmes at FHEQ level 8 the course is pass/fail only. The course will be formally assessed through the following:

PORTFOLIO

You will submit a Portfolio of 45-60 minutes of performances drawn from work undertaken as part of the programme, presented as audio and/or video recordings. The material should be selected with the aim of demonstrating your artistry and technical command.

The Portfolio will also include the following contextual documents:

- A link to your professional website OR copies of your CV and biography.
- A list of activities over both years of the programme.
- Reports from staff (or nominated musicians of professional standing) in response to two or three performances, workshops or other appropriate events over the year, plus professorial report. Students are responsible for nominating which events should receive reports, in discussion with the Head of Department (or nominated member of departmental staff) and Programme Supervisor.
- Written responses to the following questions about the management of your work and the strategy for assembling the Portfolio. (Guide length 2,000 words.)
 1. Outline the ways in which your activities and the material in the Portfolio reflects developments in your work over the year.
 2. What was the strategy for selecting material for the Portfolio?
 3. How are you responding to your reports?
 4. What kinds of relationships have you developed between your Principal Study lessons and your wider activities?
 5. Outline any particular professional skills you feel you have developed or refined during the programme.

VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION AND FINAL REPORT

To contextualise your Portfolio materials the assessment panel (see below) will hold a *viva voce* examination of up to 30 minutes to discuss your submission and your wider work. A short panel report will be completed by the Chair that summarises the *viva voce* discussion and which is the final acknowledgement that all of the ILOs have been met.

PANEL

The Standing Committee of Academic Board, in consultation with your Head of Department, will appoint a panel of three examiners of appropriate experience, expertise and standing to assess the Portfolio at level 8. The panel will include a Chair (internal), and at least one external examiner.

INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

COMMUNICATION

The Academy will communicate with you via your @ram email address only, so you will need to check this account every day. This will ensure that you receive all the information you need to undertake the programme. It is easy to ensure that you can access your Academy emails on your own phone/laptop/tablet – visit the IT helpdesk to set this up.

CONCERTS

Students are able to arrange their own concerts within the Academy, as well as become involved in external bookings. Details of these are available from the concerts department.

STUDENT RECORDINGS

For information about making recordings please see the Recordings Department information page at <https://royalacademyofmusic.sharepoint.com/sites/TheRecordingDepartment>

ACADEMY RECORDINGS

You can access recordings or large-scale public performances from the Library for educational purposes. The Academy cannot provide you with your own copies of these performances for copyright and resource reasons. Exceptions may be made in the case of performances with rarity value such as concertos, but requests must be submitted to the Concerts Department at least **one calendar month** in advance of the performance. This will allow the Concerts Department time to consider any copyright clearance issues/licences/costs involved and for the Recording Studio staff to allocate time in their schedule and recording equipment.

If the Academy is not planning to record a performance that you are involved in (e.g. Tuesday lunchtime concerts), requests may be made by students to record it but in audio format. In order to request this you will need to ensure that all relevant consent forms and copyright clearance are completed at least one calendar month in advance of the performance. You are allowed to record yourselves on Academy premises (in practice rooms and concert venues) either using your own or loaned equipment (in this case you would retain the copyright on the recordings and accept all responsibility for any necessary copyright clearance required). You are advised to check the Academy's guidelines '**Recording Academy concerts and students' private performances; IPR considerations**' on the Copyright and Intellectual Property page on the RAM SharePoint for more information. <https://royalacademyofmusic.sharepoint.com/sites/copyrightandipr>

STUDENT SUPPORT

Students receive an enrolment programme which includes: an induction for library and IT facilities; guidance on health and safety (including audiometric testing); registration; international student meetings; introduction to senior staff with programme responsibilities, and a tutorial meeting. Students are supported in all aspects of their subsequent life and work at the Academy throughout the duration of the programme.

Further information, including our Belonging Policy is available at

[Belonging - Home](#)

[Belonging | Royal Academy of Music](#)

DISABILITY

The Academy offers a wide range of support for students who have disabilities and specific learning difficulties, including exam arrangements and specialist tuition, so that all students can participate fully in the life of the Academy.

The term 'disability' covers a wide range of conditions and impairments. These include specific learning difficulties, sensory impairments, mobility impairments, certain ongoing medical conditions, and long-term mental health conditions. Further details about disability and the support available to students are available on our website at [Access and Disability | Royal Academy of Music](#) or by request from the Disability Advisor (see below).

If you would like to discuss any issues relating to disability, please contact the Disability Advisor (email disability@ram.ac.uk) and, once enrolled, your Programme Tutor. Please contact us as early as possible in order that appropriate support can be agreed and coordinated. Information disclosed to the Academy by students is treated in confidence.

EXTENSION OR DEFERRAL PROCEDURE

Requests for an extension or deferral are considered according to the [Extension and Deferral Process Regulations](#). You may make an application for one of the following reasons:

- extenuating circumstances which may have affected your performance in an assessment
- to request an extension to the deadline for submission of assessment work
- to defer an assessment
- to appeal against penalty marks where the reasons were beyond your control.

Your application will be reviewed by the Registrar and Director of Student Operations (Chair), the Head of Undergraduate Programmes, the Head of Postgraduate Programmes and the Senior Tutor in Undergraduate Pastoral Support & Head of Year, B2.

Please see the guidelines on the [Student Information Hub](#) for further information on making applications.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The Academy is committed to improving the motivation of students to engage in learning and to learn independently; and the participation of students in quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, resulting in the improvement of their educational experience.

It is widely accepted that the views of students, individually and collectively, should inform quality systems with the purpose of improving the student educational experience both for current and future cohorts. Student involvement in quality can have a positive influence on the delivery and development of any aspect of the student educational experience, whether implemented by the Academy, your programme, your department, or an individual member of staff.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

The Academy's Senior Managers, Programme Teams, Heads of Department and those delivering the programme will always welcome informal feedback from you on any aspect of the programme and your studies. Student Union members and student representatives are part of

Academy committees and students are encouraged to use their representatives and let them know of any matters of concern that you wish to be raised at these committees. At the start of the Summer term each year, you will also be given the opportunity to complete an online survey covering the Academy as a whole, your Programme and Department. You are asked to be open, honest and constructive in your evaluation and comments. This is a vital component in the Academy's mechanism for developing the quality of our students' experiences and planning for the effective future delivery of the programmes of study.

STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Student representatives are the voice of the student body and sit on all of the Academy's academic committees. Find out who your year/department representative is through the SU Team if you want to pass on some comments or feedback, or ask to become a student representative if you want to act on behalf of other students.