



CONSERVATORIUM VAN AMSTERDAM

Master research guide

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**Conservatorium
van Amsterdam**
Amsterdams Hogeschool voor de Kunsten

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Introduction

This Research Guide is aimed to inform you about the research you will conduct during your Master studies at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam. It explains the entire process, from the creation of the research proposal to the presentation during the Research Symposium in your second study year.

At the start of your studies you have been assigned one of our research coordinators, experienced researchers and musicians themselves. You will start by creating a research proposal. When it is ready, your coordinator will find you a fitting advisor from CvA's dedicated research advisors team. Then your research can start!

This guide provides answers to many questions that may arise during the process - but certainly not all... Never hesitate getting in touch with your research coordinator and advisor. They are there to help you.

Some of you will already have experience in research; perhaps you have written a Bachelor paper, or a thesis in an earlier Master studies. For others, doing research will be a new experience. Our aim is that this experience will be a fruitful one and an integral part of your Master studies. Embark on your research on the basis of your strength as a musician, and choose a topic you are passionate about. We are sure it will feed and support you in whichever direction it takes you!

On behalf of the CvA research team,

Amit Gur & Arnold Marinissen, June 2024

Master research team

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Timeline

Master 1

September-November

Group sessions with research coordinator towards creating research proposal

15 November

Due date research proposal

November-December

Getting a research advisor, formal start of the research

1 May

Due date first year's submission: first research output and progress report

May-June

End-of-the-year presentation to coordinator, advisor and fellow students

Master 2

15 October

Due date second submission: further research output and second progress report, defining portfolio content and presentation format for the CvA Research Symposium

October-January

Working towards completion of research portfolio

15 January

Due date final submission: handing in the research portfolio

January-March

Preparing for research presentation

March

Research presentation during CvA Research Symposium

Submission requirements

Each of the following is obligatory to complete the research.

MA1 November 15th — Research proposal

See details on pages 6-7.

MA1 May 1st — First year's submission

You will hand in a substantial amount of your research project (around 30% of the estimated output) and provide a progress report in which you reflect on the process so far, and describe the next steps.

1. If the main output of your research is a creative work (like a performance, arrangement or composition), present around 30% of it (see page 8-9).
2. If the main output is a project you are carrying out (of societal nature, self-help guide, and so on), provide context for the project, a detailed planning, and list its intended goals (see page 12-13).
3. If the main output of your research is a written work (thesis), provide a chapter-by-chapter outline and around 30% of the writing (see page 10-11).

MA1 May-June — End-of-the-year presentation

Soon after the first year's submission, your research coordinator will contact you to schedule a 10 minute presentation. In this presentation you will (1) briefly introduce your research, (2) share your main output/achievements so far, and (3) describe the next steps.

MA2 October 15th — Second submission

Based on the planning outlined in the first progress report, the second submission should demonstrate a considerable advancement in your research project (reaching around 60% of the estimated output).

It is crucial that your research project takes a concrete shape and the necessary steps to complete it by January 15th are well defined.

1. In the case of artistic research, demonstrate significant progress in the development of the project and provide a concrete plan for its realisation (scheduling rehearsals, recordings, etc.)
2. In the case of project-based research, provide an up-to-date project planning, describe the current state of the project, and show notable progress in the written part.
3. In the case of thesis research, provide the current state of your thesis and demonstrate considerable progress.

MA2 January 15th — Final submission

For the final submission you will hand in a portfolio that showcases your research project. The content of the portfolio will be discussed with the coordinator and advisor.

Depending on the nature of your research its content can vary and may include:

- thesis/paper;
- artistic output, such as sheet music, audio and/or video recordings (live performance can be presented in the Research Symposium in March);
- further documentation: images, interviews, etcetera;
- the source material used for the research project should be clearly specified (see page 14-15).

The portfolio may include one or more videos in which the student presents the main aspects of the research aurally (for example, the research goals, method, main findings, and conclusions). Note that aural submissions should follow the criteria listed above.

Research proposal

Following the start of your Master studies, you will prepare a research proposal, to be submitted by November 15th. In this document you will present your chosen topic, define the research question(s) and goals, and outline the method and planning of your work. The proposal helps to establish clear objectives and to set your research project on the right track. Once approved by your research coordinator, it will be key in finding a suitable advisor.

Writing a research proposal requires preliminary knowledge about the chosen topic, so you can contextualise your work and explain its relevance and necessity. Therefore, as a first step, it is important to acquaint yourself with the field and already gather sources which you will use in your research (relevant literature, musical repertoire, etc.).

When preparing the proposal, aim for a short document (2-3 pages) presenting the planned research in an engaging way. You will find a proposal template on the following page.

Research proposal

1. *Contact information*

full name, main subject, department, e-mail address

2. *Title and subtitle*

Choose a compact title conveying the essence of your research.

You may add a subtitle, which is usually longer and explanatory.

3. *Introduction*

The introduction offers essential information about the topic and its context. It describes the relevance of your research for you and the field. Referring to some sources helps you to clearly position your research. It is advisable to write the introduction after completing the other sections of the proposal (max. 300 words).

4. *The proposed research and its goals*

This section states briefly and clearly the research you plan to undertake and what its goals are, relating to the issues raised in the introduction. Formulate a main research question and possible subquestions, addressing what you seek to learn/understand/do (max. 100 words).

5. *Method and sources*

In the method you describe how the proposed research will be carried out: which actions and strategies you will follow to find answers to your research question(s). Reflect on the type of sources you aim to use (max. 200 words).

6. *Planning*

Outline the project's timeline: what will you do when? You can present this as a concise list.

7. *Portfolio and presentation*

Describe the intended content of the portfolio, and the preferred presentation format.

8. *Advisor*

Specify the expertise/specialisation you wish your advisor to have and what help you might need.

9. *List of sources*

List any sources you have already found. Choose a referencing style and use it consistently.

Three research paths

The Conservatorium van Amsterdam offers three paths to conduct your Master research:

- 1) Artistic research, in which the main output is an artistic work (p. 8-9)
- 2) Thesis research, in which the main output is a written work (p. 10-11)
- 3) Project-based research, in which the main output is a project the student carries out (p. 12-13)

Below you can read what each of the three research paths entails. This will allow you to choose the one that suits you most. Note that these paths are not mutually exclusive and aspects can be combined.

1) *Artistic research*

While the notion of artistic research is relatively new, it has become a common way to conduct research in the arts. What sets it apart from other types of research is that the creative process is integral to the research and the resulting artistic work forms the central part of the research output. In a musical context, artistic research can revolve around, for example, a composition, an arrangement, a performance, or a sound installation. At the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, we encourage students to engage in artistic research. This research path allows you to explore a topic closely related to your musical practice, motivating you and enriching your studies.

Although a creative activity is essential for artistic research, not every creative process counts as artistic research. The key difference is that while a creative process might be partly or mainly intuitive, artistic research requires critical awareness of the creative process. You should keep in mind the questions you wish to answer and use the creative process as a testing field. The research will thus lead to a meaningful discussion of the creative process, with findings and insights that go beyond the resulting artistic work.

Method

An effective method for artistic research allows you to answer questions and generate insights through the creative process. Hence, it is essential that the research questions and goals are formulated at an early stage, before starting to work on the artistic output.

During the process, it is important to use sources to enrich and deepen the work. In the context of artistic research, these may include professional and academic texts, but also other artistic works, arrangements, recordings, interviews, lectures, and any other source of knowledge and inspiration that contributes to your research.

Portfolio

The main output of artistic research is the artistic work. Ideally, it will be performed during the presentation in the Research Symposium. If not possible, the artistic output can be included as an audio or video recording. The portfolio can contain supporting materials relevant to the creation of the artistic work, for example, the score of the piece or arrangement and documentation of the creation process.

Apart from the artistic work, the portfolio should include a thoughtful discussion of the research questions and the insights gained through the work. The discussion should offer general findings with a relevance beyond the particular work. For examples, these can be insights into arranging, album recording, the creation of a performance, how to use certain composition techniques, and so on. Although the written part of artistic research can be relatively compact, it must follow the structure outlined on page 15.

Presentation

The presentation format recommended for artistic research is a lecture recital (see page 16). This allows you to present your creative work to a live audience as well as to share your gained insights and findings.

Examples of possible research projects

- Arranging an existing piece for a different instrumentation. The main output will be the arrangement and its performance. The research generates insights into the arranging process.

- Composing a piece that is exploratory in nature. The main output will be the composition. The research generates insights into the composition process, composition techniques, how inspiration was taken from various sources, and so on.

- An innovative musical performance. The main output will be the performance. The research generates insights into the process of creating the performance.

2) Thesis research

This research path aligns with an academic approach to research. In a musical context, it can involve a thoughtful discourse around a music-related subject, for example an investigation of a particular compositional practice, an exploration of the performance practice of a particular piece, or a study of methods for a specific instrument.

A thesis research gives you the opportunity to thoroughly explore a topic of personal significance, enriching your studies and contributing to your musical and academic growth.

Method

A thesis research can be set up in a variety of ways, each requiring a different strategy. However, there are some key points of advice for an effective method.

Formulate research questions: It is essential to formulate a clear main research question, and possible sub-questions. These will help you focus your research and work towards your research goals.

Engage with sources: It is important to collect relevant sources and study them to deepen your understanding of the topic. You will provide source references in your thesis.

Work strategy for the thesis: A crucial distinction should be made between contextual sections, primarily offering summaries of existing knowledge as well as sections in which you present your own insights and findings, which constitute the heart of your research.

Portfolio

The main part of the research output is the thesis. In addition, you may provide supporting materials such as musical scores, recordings, interviews, and other materials that are relevant for your work.

Presentation

The common presentation format for a thesis research is a research lecture (see page 16). If you have researched the performance practice of a specific work, it is highly recommended that you perform it during your presentation. Then, choose the longer lecture recital format.

Examples of possible research projects

- A thoughtful exploration of a music-related topic of musicological, philosophical, technological or sociological nature.
- A research into a specific work or compositional practice. The research may draw upon established music theory methods, but will also address aspects such as interpretation and performance practice, and influences from external musical sources.
- A guide to performing a specific musical work. The objective of such a research project is to give musicians the necessary knowledge and skills to perform a certain composition, focusing on technical, interpretational and contextual aspects.
- A method book for a particular instrument, targeting specific playing levels, age groups, techniques, and/or interpretational aspects. Such a research project usually focuses on playing methodologies, pedagogical approaches, and the creation of exercises.

3) Project-based research

The central aim of this research path is to carry out a project, oftentimes with a societal focus. For instance, the project could revolve around creating musical activities for specific communities, or exploring therapeutic aspects of music. The outcome of the research will be the completed project, along with a paper that contextualises the project, outlines its goals, method and planning, and offers a reflection on the results. Follow the research structure outlined on page 15)

This approach to research is the standard for the Master studies Musical Leadership. However, a project-based research may be an exciting and fulfilling opportunity for any student who wishes to take a hands-on approach to research and is keen to explore ways to make a positive impact on society.

Method

For guidance regarding the paper, refer to the method section for thesis research on page 10. Below are some key points of advice for the project part of the research.

Define project goals: start by outlining the project goals and research question(s).

Engage with sources: obtain relevant materials to gain a deep understanding of the topic and the issues at hand. These materials will provide context when writing the paper.

Plan and pilot the project: since projects usually involve collaboration with multiple parties, providing potential challenges, it is important to plan ahead. Ideally a pilot run is conducted. Completing the project well before the submission due date allows sufficient time for finishing the paper.

Document the process: keep records throughout the project. These materials can enhance your research and help you communicate the outcome of the project.

Evaluate results: after completing the project, reflect on the outcomes and examine them in the light of your research questions.

Portfolio

The portfolio will consist of the paper and supporting material, such as documentation of the project in images, audio and/or video, and any other material relevant to the research.

The paper should include a contextualisation of the topic, research questions, planning and execution of the project, evaluation of the results, and a reference section.

Presentation

The suggested format for project-based research is a research lecture (see page 16).

However, a performance may be incorporated, resulting in a lecture recital format. This could especially fit projects that involve active music making.

Examples of project-based research

- A research into the role of vocal improvisation in community art projects, realised with a group of amateur singers.

- A research into the mechanisms of democracy in community art projects, involving the application and testing of such mechanisms in collective music making.

- A research into the impact of music making in healthcare environments, involving the active musical participation of patients in a hospital.

- A research into curating and producing a music festival.

Writing, referencing and formatting

If you have embarked on an artistic or project-based research, you will write a compact paper supporting your main output. If you are involved in a thesis research, your writing will be more extensive. The permitted languages are English or Dutch.

Make sure to start writing at an early stage. This helps you get a clearer view of your topic and aims. Starting early also means that you give yourself time to develop your writing skills, to make steady progress, giving yourself sufficient time for reflection, and to reserve time for final editing. Avoid having to finish your work in a rush! If English or Dutch is not your native language, make sure to ask a native speaker to read your paper and propose corrections before you submit.

Referring to sources in your writing is essential. There will be a list of sources at the end of your document, listing all the sources that you have used throughout the research. There are two common ways to refer to these sources in your writing:

1) in brackets in the main text (Williams, 2020, p. 56)

(2) in a footnote, without brackets; a superscript number in the main text refers to each footnote.¹

These references will lead the reader to the complete source information provided in the list of sources. Any of the standard citation styles can be applied (APA, Chicago, Harvard, and so on), as long as done consistently. This can be decided with your advisor/coordinator.

Some important points for dealing with sources:

- When using online sources, provide the full weblink and the date of access.
- You can easily extract citations via scholar.google.com, by clicking the 'cite' link below the relevant source.
- Any source you use needs to be referred to, including cd's, dvd's, musical scores, and images taken from publications or online sources.
- Wikipedia is not considered a solid source. It can however be helpful in finding primary sources.

Footnotes can also be used for brief explanations that would otherwise obstruct the flow of the text.

Figures (musical examples, pictures, tables, graphs) can be added to your writing. These should appear in close proximity to the relevant text. Figures need to be numbered and given a caption, enabling you to refer to them in the main text.

¹ Williams, 2020, p. 56.

Appendices are used for information that exceeds the scope of the main text, such as full interview transcripts or results of a survey or a score. Appendices are only useful if they are referred to in the main text.

We recommend the following formatting standards:

- margins 2,5 centimeters
- font size 12 (footnotes may use a smaller font size)
- identical font throughout (chapter and section titles may be formatted differently);
- line-spacing 1,5;
- paper size A4;
- all pages numbered in a flush-right footer.

The paper/thesis is structured as follows:

- Title page (with title, subtitle, your name and main subject, year of graduation, names of your research advisor and research coordinator)
- Non-plagiarism statement, signed (see Appendix);
- Abstract (summarising the content in 150-250 words);
- Table of contents;
- Preface or Foreword (if any);
- Acknowledgements (if any);
- Introduction;
- Chapters;
- Conclusion;
- Appendices (if any);
- Endnotes (if any);
- List of sources.

Note that the front matter, up to and including the table of contents, is numbered with Roman numerals (i, ii, iii), and that the title page is page i but carries no page number. From the introduction onwards, numbering is with Arabic numerals, restarting with 1 on a right page. The Arabic numbering continues up to and including the list of sources.

Research Symposium

Following the submission of your portfolio by January 15th, you will present your work during the Research Symposium in March. The research coordinators will meet you to prepare for your presentation and inform you about the ins and outs of the Symposium.

Presentation formats

You can choose between two presentation formats:

- *Lecture recital* (45 minutes): this format is especially suitable for an artistic research, but often fits thesis or project-based research as well. You will introduce and evaluate your research, present the outcomes and perform artistic output (composition, arrangement, interpretation of an existing work, etc.).

- *Research lecture* (30 minutes): you will introduce and evaluate your research and present the outcomes. Also in a research lecture we encourage you to include musical examples, demonstrating outcomes of your research through music.

Reserve at least five minutes for a Q&A with the committee and the audience.

Preparing your presentation

- Don't summarise your entire paper; be selective, focus on specific striking outcomes. You may share some fresh viewpoints that were not addressed in the paper.

- Provide complementary visual and audio/video material.

- Make sure your presentation is well timed, never too long. It is a good idea to use a stopwatch, in preparation as well as in the presentation.

- For most people, having text in front of you makes you feel more confident. Even when you speak more freely while presenting, the text will give you something to fall back on when needed.

- Especially if you script your presentation, practice it as you would do with a musical performance. Speak lively, use dynamics, tempo changes... Don't speak too fast, breathe, take pauses, and focus on good diction.

- Try out your full presentation for an audience at least once, ask for feedback, and make adjustments as needed.

Using a slideshow

It is highly recommended to use a slideshow.

Here are a few rules of thumb to consider when making the slideshow.

- If you plan to use video or audio, download the files and embed them in the slideshow.

Don't rely on an internet connection, and don't switch between applications while presenting.

- Avoid long texts; use just a few bullet points or oneliners per slide.

- The use of images, video, audio and/or graphs will make your talk more engaging.

- Talk to the audience, not to the screen behind you. Keep your computer or tablet in front of you, so you can still see the slideshow.

- Although it might seem out-of-date, a handout can be helpful. You can use it next to the slideshow, for example if you present sheet music or lyrics.

On the day of the presentation

- Organise any technical and logistic aspects well in advance, such as the proper connectors for your computer or tablet, and the requirements on stage.

- Arrive early so that you can set the stage, prepare your presentation, test your slideshow, check the connection with the screen, set the audio levels, etc.

- Finally, make sure to switch off any automatic updates, sleeping mode and incoming message notification on your computer or tablet!

Assessment criteria

Your presentation in the Research Symposium will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Quality of the idea (15%)

- Originality
- Contribution to the field
- Contribution to the student's practice

Quality of the research process (25%)

- Consistency of the research process: setting goals, planning, realising
- Quality and punctuality of the intermediate submissions
- Communication with coordinator and advisor

Quality of the portfolio (30%)

- Quality of the research outcomes, in light of the initial research goals
- Quality of the written work, including references and formatting

Quality of the presentation (30%)

- Quality of preparation, time management and execution
- Effective communication of the research outcomes
- Evidence of gained expertise as manifested in the presentation, including the Question and Answer

Plagiarism and fraud

During the research process you will use source material to deepen your knowledge around your topic. And while writing your work, you will make quotations and use paraphrased text to underpin your argumentation. You may also use pictures, designs, graphs, sheet music, recordings and videos from external sources.

You will therefore deal with other people's intellectual property. Specifying sources in your written work, thus acknowledging intellectual property, is essential. It is a matter of academic integrity. Not referring to these sources is plagiarism. When you submit your portfolio, plagiarism and AI detectors will be used. Regardless whether plagiarism is intentional or accidental, it will cause problems.

Your paper/thesis needs to be an original piece of writing. You cannot reuse text from an earlier paper of yours, from a fellow student, the internet or AI-generated material without referencing. Doing so will be considered fraud. You can however use an earlier paper as source material by quoting or paraphrasing.

Ways in which Artificial Intelligence (AI) may or may not be used for your paper/thesis should be discussed with your research coordinator and advisor. Proof reading is an example of an effective and licit use of AI. It is not allowed to generate sections of your text with AI.

Your research coordinator and advisor are well-informed about all these issues. They will be pleased to talk with you about working with sources, ways of referencing, and avoiding problems of plagiarism and fraud.

If you make sure to do it properly, working with sources throughout your research is a rewarding activity, and a way to enhance, support and share the full breadth and depth of your musicianship!

Appendices

Non-plagiarism statement

I declare

1. that I understand that plagiarism refers to representing somebody else's words or ideas as one's own;
2. that apart from properly referenced quotations, the enclosed text and transcriptions are fully my own work and contain no plagiarism;
3. that I have used no other sources or resources than those clearly referenced in my text;
4. that I have not submitted my text previously for any other degree or course.

Name:

Place:

Date:

Signature:

Format title page

Title
Subtitle

Optional illustration

Student name
Main subject, MA
Conservatorium van Amsterdam Year
Advisor: name
Research coordinator: name

First progress report

Student:

Advisor:

Number of meetings you've had:

Coordinator:

Describe the progress you have made on your research project.

Did the planning and/or focus of your research project change? If so, explain briefly.

If relevant, what is the updated work plan for your research project between now and the final submission?

What would you like to present in the end-of-the-year research presentation?

The presentation should focus on your main research output. It can be a talk and/or a performance.

Second progress report

Student:

Advisor:

Coordinator:

Describe the progress you have made on your research project since the previous progress report.

Did the planning and/or focus of your research project change? If so, explain briefly.

If relevant, what is the updated work plan for your research project between now and the final submission?

Indicate your preferred presentation format for the Research Symposium?

This could be a lecture recital (45 minutes) or the shorter research lecture (30 minutes).

