

ADMISSIONS POLICY

December 2017

Objectives

- 1 The Royal College of Music is one of the world's leading conservatoires. The RCM's admissions processes are intended to identify students with the skills and potential to achieve the highest standards of musical and academic excellence, regardless of their background.

Scope of this policy

- 2 This policy applies to all programmes of study delivered by the Royal College of Music. It draws on the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to Higher Education).
- 3 This document should be read in conjunction with other supporting RCM policies, which are available on the RCM website, including:
 - Equal Opportunities Policy
 - Disability Statement
 - Access Agreement
 - General Regulations for Students.
 - RCM Child Safeguarding Policy

Equal opportunities

- 4 The Royal College of Music is committed to a policy of equal opportunities. As a leading British conservatoire, it aims to provide musical education and professional training at the highest international level to meet the aspirations of as many as possible of those whom it deems to have the ability and motivation to benefit. As an institution described at its foundation as one whose doors were to be 'thrown open to the whole world', the Royal College of Music acknowledges and welcomes influences from diverse social and artistic traditions.
- 5 The RCM is dedicated to providing a fair and transparent admissions process. Students are recruited on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential. The College will not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, class or other such unjustifiable cause.

Application process

Application method

Applications via UCAS

- 6 Applications for the majority of programmes are submitted online via the UCAS Conservatoires application service. Applications for the BSc in Physics and Music Performance are submitted via the main UCAS Undergraduate service to Imperial College London.

Direct applications

- 7 Applications to the Doctoral Programme are submitted directly to the RCM, via an online form.

Auditions and interviews

Performance and composition programmes

- 8 The RCM does not screen application forms for performance and composition programmes, and all applicants who apply by the "on time" equal consideration deadline are guaranteed an assessment. Late applications are considered where places remain.
- 9 Performers are invited to attend a live audition in London or at one of the RCM's overseas audition venues. Auditions via recording are available for applicants resident outside Europe who are unable to attend one of the RCM's audition venues in person.
- 10 Composition applications are initially assessed based on the candidate's composition portfolio. Shortlisted applicants are invited to an interview in London. Shortlisted applicants for Composition for Screen courses are also required to complete a short practical task prior to the interview. Applicants resident outside Europe who are unable to attend an interview in London may be interviewed via video-conferencing.

Other taught programmes

- 11 Applicants for the MSc in Performance Science and Master of Education are shortlisted for interview based on their application form. Applicants from outside Europe who are unable to attend an interview in London may be interviewed via video-conferencing.

Research degrees

- 12 Doctoral applicants receive an initial assessment based on their research proposal. Only shortlisted applicants are invited to interview (a practical audition is also required for DMus applicants). Applicants resident outside Europe who are unable to attend an interview in London may be interviewed via video-conferencing.

Audition/Interview panels

- 13 Most performance auditions consist of a single panel, but for some larger Faculties where it is not possible for the Head of Faculty to be present on all panels, applicants may be referred to a second panel. This will always be on the same day.
- 14 Audition/interview panels for most programmes normally consist of two panellists.

Audition fees

- 15 All applicants must pay the relevant audition/assessment fee before their application can be assessed. Audition fees are published on the RCM website and revised annually.

Audition fee waivers

- 16 Audition fee waivers are offered for applicants for whom financial hardship may be a barrier to auditioning. The purpose of these audition fee waivers is to encourage applications from prospective students from groups currently underrepresented in UK higher education. Requests for waivers are assessed by a designated member of the Student Services team and administered by the Admissions Officer. Details of how to request a waiver are available on the [RCM website](#). Applications through UCAS are also subject to the UCAS application fee, which cannot be waived.

Refunds

- 17 Applicants who change their mind have the right to withdraw their application and obtain a refund of the audition/assessment fee within 14 days of submitting their application. Those who applied through UCAS should contact UCAS directly to request this. If applying directly to the RCM, applicants should e-mail admissions@rcm.ac.uk to request their withdrawal. Unless notification of withdrawal is received within 14 days, refunds will not normally be granted unless there are exceptional extenuating circumstances.

Scholarships

- 18 The RCM endeavours to ensure that no student who is offered a place is prevented from taking it up due to financial hardship. RCM scholarships are available to support students on our performance and composition courses. Awards range in value from a modest contribution towards tuition fees, up to full tuition fees for applicants who demonstrate the greatest potential. Scholarships are awarded based on performance at audition; there is no separate application process. A small number of grants are also available to help with unexpected study costs throughout the year.
- 19 Bursaries are available to assist with the cost of Doctoral studies. Details of how to apply will be sent to successful applicants.
- 20 We regret that the RCM is currently unable to offer scholarships to students on the Master of Science and Master of Education programmes.

Selection policies and procedures

Academic requirements

- 21 The primary basis for admission to the RCM is the assessment of practical ability through the audition process. However, applicants must also demonstrate that they have the academic skills necessary to succeed on their chosen programme.
- 22 The RCM's minimum academic entrance requirements for each programme are reviewed on a regular basis and are stated on the RCM website. The RCM welcomes applications from candidates from a broad range of academic backgrounds, and applicants whose qualifications are not listed are invited to contact the Admissions Team to discuss their suitability for their preferred course. Practical ability is assessed through the audition process, and music grade examinations are not accepted in place of academic qualifications.
- 23 The RCM uses the UK NARIC (National Agency for the Recognition and Comparison of International Qualifications) database and guidelines published by UCAS when assessing the equivalency of UK and international qualifications.

English language requirements

- 24 English is the medium of tuition at the RCM, and an acceptable level of proficiency is essential for all programmes. Applicants who are not UK nationals are required to provide evidence of their English language ability. Please refer to the [RCM's English language requirements](#).

Recognition of prior learning

- 25 Applications may be considered for direct entry into year 2 or year 3 of the Bachelor of Music programme, if students have already completed equivalent study at another institution. Applicants should indicate their preferred year of entry in their UCAS Conservatoires application. Offers will be made subject to:
- performance at audition being of a suitable standard for higher year entry (if not, entry to a lower year may be recommended).
 - submission of a full academic transcript of study from the previous higher education institution, which the Head of Undergraduate Programmes must approve as being broadly commensurate with the content and standard of the first year(s) of the RCM BMus degree.

Visa requirements for international students

- 26 In addition to the RCM's entry requirements, international students requiring a Tier 4 (General) Student visa to study in the UK must meet the requirements set by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), including the Tier 4 English language requirements. As part of its duties as a Tier 4 sponsoring institution, the RCM is only authorised to issue a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to students who it reasonably believes will meet the requirements of the Tier 4 visa category, as stated in the [UKVI Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#) and the [General Grounds for Refusal](#). The RCM reserves the right not to issue a CAS where it believes that a Tier 4 visa application is likely to be refused.

Decision making

Taught programmes

- 27 Recommendations for admission are made by audition/interview panels and relevant Heads of Faculty. Final decisions on admission are made by the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) Admissions Committee, which meets twice annually in December and February. Decisions made outside the main committee cycle may be approved by Chair's action.
- 28 Outstanding applicants for performance and composition programmes may be offered a place "over the table" on the day of audition, provided either the Director or the relevant Head of Faculty is a member of the audition panel. This offer must subsequently be confirmed by the SEC Admissions Committee.
- 29 Where an applicant is unsuccessful, but is deemed suitable for admission to another programme, an offer for the alternative programme may be made.

Research degrees

- 30 Recommendations are made by the interview panels, and final decisions are made by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC).

Scholarships

- 31 Decisions on the award of scholarships are taken by the SEC Scholarships Committee, following recommendations from the relevant Heads of Faculty or the Research Degrees Committee (for Doctoral bursaries).

Communication of decisions

- 32 Applicants who apply through the UCAS system are notified of the outcome of their application via the Track service. Conditions of entry and the deadline(s) by which these must be met are also communicated via Track. In addition, successful applicants receive an offer e-mail directly from the RCM with further information about studying at the RCM.
- 33 Applicants for courses with direct application to the RCM are notified of results and conditions directly via e-mail.
- 34 Applicants who audition during the main London audition period in November – December will receive decisions on places before Christmas. Those who are awarded scholarships will be informed before the end of January.

- 35 Results of auditions held outside this period are normally communicated within two weeks of the date of audition/interview.
- 36 Unless the applicant expressly gives consent to a third party (e.g. a parent) to communicate on their behalf, the RCM will not enter into any communication about the application with anyone other than the applicant.

Fair admissions

- 37 The RCM takes the following steps in supporting fair admissions:
- All applicants for performance and composition courses who apply by the equal consideration “on time” date for their programme are guaranteed an assessment. This ensures that no applicant with the talent to succeed is overlooked for consideration, even if they have a non-traditional academic or musical training background.
 - In addition to the current level of academic and practical ability, the panel will also take into account evidence of talent, potential for future development and potential to benefit from the chosen course.
 - The RCM undertakes to ensure transparency throughout the application process.
 - The RCM ensures that all information and guidance on the website is clear, accurate, accessible and regularly maintained. This includes, but is not limited to, entry requirements, audition requirements and course details. The website and prospectus are revised prior to the opening of the new admissions cycle in July each year.
 - Audition/interview panellists receive appropriate training and assess candidates individually against an agreed set of criteria.
 - Recommendation for admission is based on the performance at the audition, and not any prior knowledge of the candidate (including existing RCM students).
 - Consideration is given to achieving a gender balance among panellists, where staffing permits.

Contextualised admissions

- 38 The RCM is committed to increasing access to conservatoire education from under-represented groups. For courses where the applicant applied through UCAS, the following contextual data is made available to the SEC Admissions Committee where the applicant has provided it in their application:
- Disability flag
 - POLAR 3 classification (indicating likelihood of young people to participate in higher education based on postcode – UK applicants only)
- 39 Where the decision on whether or not to offer a place to a student is borderline, the Committee will give favourable consideration to applicants with one or more of these indicators.

Applicants with disabilities

- 40 The RCM welcomes applications from those with disabilities. It is the RCM’s policy to consider all applications solely on the grounds of practical skill and academic ability.
- 41 The RCM will make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, to enable all applicants to compete on an equal basis. Applicants are invited to disclose a disability at any stage in the application process, although they are encouraged to do so at as early a stage as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place. Prior to audition the Student Services Manager writes to all applicants who declare a disability to discuss their needs.
- 42 Successful applicants who disclose a disability or support need will be offered the opportunity to adopt a Learning Agreement tailored to that individual. An initial meeting is held with the student, the Student Services Manager and their Personal Advisor as appropriate, to discuss and agree support needs in the context of the

programme and related activities. With the student's consent, information about any reasonable adjustments that need to be made can be given to those people who need to know, ensuring that all parties involved in providing support are aware of their responsibilities. Further information on disability support at the RCM can be found on our [website](#).

Applicants under the age of 18

- 43 The RCM's senior college provides degree-level education and, as such, students are normally over the age of 18 at the point of commencing their studies. Applicants may exceptionally be admitted below the age of 18, provided they are able to meet the standard entry requirements. In most cases this will be for a short period prior to turning 18 during their first year of study.
- 44 All students, irrespective of age, are treated equally and receive the same level of provision. The Admissions Committee will take into consideration the applicant's readiness for and ability to cope with degree-level study before offering a place.
- 45 Notwithstanding, all persons under the age of 18 are considered to be children in UK law, and the RCM has a duty of care to them. Please refer to the [RCM's Safeguarding children policy](#).
- 46 In support of this, the RCM requires the written permission of a student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) prior to enrolment.
- 47 As a Higher Education Institution, the RCM does not hold a Tier 4 (Child) Student sponsor licence, and therefore is unable to accept students under the age of 16 who require a visa to study in the UK.
- 48 Applicants who will turn 18 during their first year of study are eligible to apply for accommodation at Prince Consort Village. Parents of younger applicants should make suitable alternative arrangements.

Mature students

- 49 Applications are welcomed from mature students (usually defined as applicants over the age of 21 for undergraduate degrees and over 25 for postgraduate degrees). The RCM has no maximum age for admission.

Applicants with previous criminal convictions

- 50 The RCM will not make any moral judgement of an applicant's past actions and, in principle, supports the rehabilitation of offenders, but may consider, based on the evidence, whether an applicant poses an unacceptable risk to the RCM's community. If the risk is assessed as too high then a place will not be offered or will be rescinded. The RCM will initially assess applicants who declare a relevant criminal conviction (as defined by UCAS) on the same basis as all other applicants. This declaration is not made available to the audition panel, to avoid any risk of unconscious bias. If the applicant is deemed to meet the required standard for entry, depending on the nature of the offence they may be contacted by the Academic Registrar and requested to provide further details. This information will be treated in strict confidence as sensitive personal data, and only seen by staff directly involved in the decision on admission (normally the Deputy Director, Academic Registrar and International & Admissions Manager).

Changes to advertised programmes

- 51 In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for the RCM to amend or withdraw a programme. In the event that this occurs, the RCM will inform all applicants affected in a timely manner, and suggest alternatives if possible.

Fraudulent applications

- 52 If the RCM or UCAS Conservatoires have any reason to believe that an applicant and/or their referee(s) have given false or misleading information, we may take any necessary steps to check with the applicant and other parties, including examination and awarding bodies, whether the information provided is accurate. The RCM reserves the right to cancel an application, and any offer of a place made, without refunding the application fee, if having carried out any necessary checks, we determine, or have reasonable belief, that an application contains false information.

Use of personal data

- 53 For information on how the RCM processes candidates' personal data, please see the RCM's Privacy Statement, which is available at <http://www.rcm.ac.uk/websitepolicies/privacy/>.

Deferrals

- 54 In most instances the RCM does not normally permit applicants to defer an offer of a place to the following year.
- 55 Deferrals may exceptionally be permitted where there are extenuating circumstances, subject to the approval of the relevant Head of Faculty/Programme, and for a maximum of one academic year. Applicants for performance and composition courses are required to undertake a confirmatory audition, to ensure that their level of practical skill has been maintained during the deferral period. In the event that their standard has fallen below the benchmark for entry, the applicant will be considered not to have met the entry requirements for the course.
- 56 Any offer of a scholarship may not be deferred, but applicants may be re-considered for an award based on performance in the confirmatory audition.

Feedback policy

- 57 Requests for feedback should be submitted in writing to admissions@rcm.ac.uk within two months of notification of the outcome of the audition. Requests received later than this will not be processed.
- 58 Doctoral applicants may request feedback on their research proposal from the Head of Postgraduate Programmes at researchdegrees@rcm.ac.uk.
- 59 Feedback requests will only be accepted from the applicant themselves. Requests from third parties will not be acknowledged.
- 60 Requests will normally be processed within 20 working days of receipt. Applicants auditioning during the main audition period in November/December should note that the RCM is closed between Christmas and New Year.
- 61 The purpose of the audition is only to assess an applicant's suitability for the specified course; it is not intended as a consultation. Our courses are highly competitive and applicants should be aware that feedback may simply state that other applicants were stronger or that the course was not suitable for them.
- 62 The RCM will not enter into a dialogue with applicants regarding feedback.

Subject access requests

- 63 Under data protection legislation, all applicants have the right to see information held by the RCM relating to their application. Subject Access Requests should be submitted to the RCM's Data Protection Officer by completing our [online form](#).

Complaints procedure

- 64 Admissions decisions are final and there is no right of appeal against the academic or artistic judgement of such decisions. However, applicants may submit a complaint or appeal if they believe there has been a procedural irregularity in processing their application. Further details are available in the [RCM's Applicant Complaints Procedure](#).

Terms and conditions

- 65 In accepting the offer of a place at the RCM, applicants agree to the [RCM's Terms and Conditions](#). Applicants have the right to cancel this agreement at any time within 14 days of acceptance of their offer. However, they waive the right to cancel if the RCM provides any of the stated services within the 14 day period.

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