

ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC

SUMMARY OF ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2025-26 to 2028-29

What is an access and participation plan?

An access and participation sets out provisions that will be meaningful and effective in promoting equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups, as determined by the Office for Students.

You can see the full access and participation plan for the Royal College of Music (RCM) at <https://www.rcm.ac.uk/about/strategies-values/people-equality-diversity/>

Key points

The RCM is committed to ensuring talented students from all backgrounds can access the highest level of music education, in a community where diversity is recognised, valued and celebrated. The RCM's Access and Participation Plan focuses on:

- improving access for students from groups that are currently under-represented at the RCM and in the wider conservatoire sector, according to our data analysis.
- ensuring students can reach their full potential by reducing barriers to success caused by financial concerns and poor mental health.

See pages 5 -6 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Fees we charge

For UK Undergraduate students the maximum fees charged for 2025/26 entrants are:

- £9,565 for full time students
- £5,650 for part time students

This fee reflects the increase [announced by the UK Government](#) in November 2024. Tuition fees may increase in future years according to the maximum levels set by the Government. You can see a full list of the RCM's tuition fees at <https://www.rcm.ac.uk/apply/feesandfunding/>

See page 68 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Financial help available

Audition fee waivers are available for BMus applicants in receipt of free schools meals, from low income households, or who are care experienced or refugees. See <https://www.rcm.ac.uk/apply/auditions/feewaiver/>

More than 50% of RCM students receive some level of financial support thanks to our Scholarship Programme. Every student who applies for our undergraduate course is considered; there is no separate application

process. Eligibility is based on performance at audition or the strength of the portfolio and interview for composers.

In addition, the RCM offers some awards specifically for students from under-represented groups:

- Means-tested RCM Undergraduate Bursaries for students from low-income backgrounds
- Top-up bursaries for care leavers to assist with the cost of summer vacation accommodation if living independently
- At least three scholarships per year to students from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds, worth up to full tuition fees for each year of the course.

A hardship fund is also available for students who encounter financial difficulties during their studies.

Further details are available at <https://www.rcm.ac.uk/apply/feesandfunding/scholarships/>

See pages 16 - 17 and 25 - 26 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Information for students

Prospective students receive information about fees and financial support via our website, e-mail communications and in-person sessions at our Open Day.

Current students receive information at in-person events during Induction Week and via our student portal Learn.RCM. Individual meetings are available with our Student Services team. The RCM's Creative Careers Centre offers fundraising and financial management support for musicians.

Further details are available at <https://www.rcm.ac.uk/apply/feesandfunding/>

See page 30 of the access and participation plan for more information.

What we are aiming to achieve

We have set four objectives for this plan:

1. To reduce the gap in equality of access to conservatoire education for students from low-income backgrounds by addressing the cost pressures of studying in London and inequality of access to the prior skills and knowledge necessary to apply to a music conservatoire.
2. To continue to reduce the gap in participation in conservatoire education for students from black, Asian, and ethnic minority backgrounds.
3. To mitigate the increased risk of non-continuation and poorer student academic and well-being outcomes due to cost of living pressures, by supporting students with the costs of studying in London
4. To mitigate the risk of non-completion for students declaring a mental health condition (with or without a formal diagnosis) by addressing the increased demand for pastoral and specialist support.

To monitor our progress we have set these targets:

- to achieve a 25% increase in the number of new UK-domiciled undergraduate entrants eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) by 2028-29
- to achieve a 5% increase in the number of new entrants to the RCM Junior Department either in receipt of Free School Meals or with a household income lower than £35,000 per annum by 2028-29
- to increase the percentage of students from black, Asian, and ethnic minority backgrounds from a baseline of 19.9% (three-year rolling average) in 2023/24 to 22% by 2028/29.
- to ensure there is no statistically significant difference in continuation rates between students from lower-income households (defined as £35,000 or lower) and other students, by supporting students with the cost pressures caused by the current increase in the cost of living.

See pages 5 – 6 of the access and participation plan for more information.

What we are doing to address key risks to equality of opportunity

Knowledge and skills: A range of activities will support young musicians at all stages of their development from pre-school to 6th form. To widen our reach our Junior Department and outreach programme, RCM Sparks, are partnering with a range of schools and specialist organisations working in target communities.

Perceptions of conservatoire education: We are working to develop a diverse and inclusive curriculum and culture, addressing groups that have been historically underrepresented in classical music, including: black, Asian and ethnically diverse musicians; women (especially female composers and conductors); LGBTQ+ musicians; and disabled and neurodiverse musicians. We aim to provide more opportunities for learners to encounter role models they identify with and increase confidence in pursuing music professionally.

Cost pressures: Increased financial support should reduce barriers to accepting a conservatoire place, and reduce financial pressures during the course, allowing students more time to focus on their studies.

Mental health: We are responding to an increased need for mental health support through a range of measures focusing on preventative work and early intervention, designed to meet the specific needs of conservatoire students.

These measures form just a part of our work taking place across the RCM and in the wider community. See pages 7 - 27 of the access and participation plan for more information.

How students can get involved

The RCM worked with the RCM Students' Union to gather input when writing the Plan. Students are represented on the RCM's committees, including the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. As part of the BMus course students help to deliver our RCM Sparks school and community outreach programmes, whilst developing valuable teaching and workshop leadership skills. To get involved in our work to promote greater diversity in all aspects of RCM life, contact:

- RCM Sparks sparks@rcm.ac.uk
- Students' Union President: su.president@rcm.ac.uk

See pages 27 - 28 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

We collect data and feedback to monitor the effectiveness of our activities and assess our progress against our annual benchmarks. This includes working with external consultants to help us design and implement evaluation processes for our outreach work.

The RCM's Access and Participation Plan Working Group meets on a termly basis to ensure delivery of the plan and to review its effectiveness. Progress is monitored by several committees, each with Student representation, including the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and Council, the RCM's governing body. Where appropriate, we will adjust our interventions in the best interests of our students.

See pages 28 - 30 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Contact details for further information

You can contact RCM's Access and Participation Plan lead for further information:

- Nicola Peacock, Deputy Academic Registrar, nicola.peacock@rcm.ac.uk