

# ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC

## ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN

### 2020-21 to 2024-25

‘Fifty scholarships have been established, of which twenty-five confer a free education in music, and twenty-five provide, not only a free education, but also maintenance for the scholars. Of these scholarships, half are held by boys and half by girls. I observe with pleasure that the various districts from which the scholars are drawn indicate the wide-spread distribution of a taste for music, and an adequate cultivation of music throughout the United Kingdom. London, with its vast population, sends only twelve out of the fifty. The remaining thirty-eight come as follows: twenty-eight from fourteen different counties in England, two from Scotland, six from Ireland, one from Wales, and one from Jersey. The occupations of the scholars are as various as the places from which they come. I find that a mill girl, the daughter of a brickmaker, and the son of a blacksmith, take high places in singing, and the son of a farm labourer in violin playing. The capacity of these candidates has been tested by an examination of unusual severity.’

Extract from speech of HRH The Prince of Wales, at the opening of the Royal College of Music as reported in *The Times*, 8 May 1883.

## INTRODUCTION

The Royal College of Music (RCM) is one of the world’s leading conservatoires. Its mission is to provide specialised musical education and professional training at the highest international level for performers and composers within an environment that stimulates innovation and research. Since its foundation the RCM has been committed to enabling talented students from all backgrounds to develop the musical skills, knowledge, understanding and resourcefulness which will equip them to contribute significantly to musical life in this country and internationally.

The RCM is a small, specialist institution offering a single undergraduate course, the Bachelor of Music (Hons). Small numbers mean that it can be difficult to analyse access and progression trends as datasets are barely statistically significant. The BMus is only offered as a full-time programme, although, as part of its student-centred retention strategy, the College sometimes permits students who would not otherwise be able to progress, to transfer to a year of part-time study. This is usually for health reasons or to enable them to complete deferred units or to retake failed units.

The access trajectory for music conservatoire students begins at a very young age, typically starting between the ages of four and nine. Credible applicants for the BMus will have had access to, and been engaged with, music making throughout their school lives and will usually have reached a high level of attainment by the time they are in their mid-teens. One or more distinctions at [ABRSM Grade 8](#) level is usual. The RCM supports children of primary and secondary school age through its ambitious outreach programme, [RCM Sparks](#), and its [Junior Department](#) activities, which are described in detail in this Plan.

Entrance to the RCM’s performance and composition programmes is by audition and/or interview. Entrance assessment panels are made up of experienced professional musicians, whose task is to recognise ability and to offer places to applicants who are likely to develop and succeed on the programmes, leading to successful professional careers. The overriding factor which determines the offer of a place is performance at audition or interview. A-level requirements for entrance are minimal (currently two E grades), reflecting the performance focus of our programmes and thereby further reducing unnecessary barriers to entry. The success of this process is reflected in students’ progress, where more than 98% of entrants successfully complete the four-year BMus programme.

# 1. ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

Before examining the RCM's own performance, it is important to consider the national context of music education, which has been described in a recent report by the Musicians' Union as being in a "perilous state" and a "postcode lottery of musical opportunity"<sup>1</sup>. Numbers of GCSE and A-level entries are falling and, whilst music remains part of the curriculum in most secondary schools, core subjects such as Maths and English are increasingly being prioritised, a problem that has been exacerbated in England by the introduction of the EBacc, which omits music. What school music provision is available is increasingly being delivered by non-specialists. This is corroborated by a report commissioned by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education<sup>2</sup>, which found that music is no longer being taught across Key Stage 3 in 50% of state-funded secondary schools and that some students have little or no access to music education during their entire time in secondary school. In many cases this means that music is increasingly the preserve of those who can afford private extra-curricular tuition, a clear barrier to those from deprived backgrounds.

Research by the Musicians' Union<sup>3</sup> shows that access to music lessons is heavily influenced by household income: children from families with a household income below £28,000 per annum are half as likely to learn an instrument as those from households earning £48,000 or more. The same report highlighted the fact that children from low-income backgrounds are more likely to be self-taught or reliant on subsidised lessons and this means that they are less likely to have access to the sustained, high-quality individual tuition required to reach a suitable standard for conservatoire entry. Such students were also less likely to receive parental support, both financial and motivational, critical factors when considering the thousands of hours of practice needed to achieve the requisite skill level.

To understand better the impact of this context on the pool of potential conservatoire applicants, the RCM recently collaborated with the Royal Academy of Music to commission a report from Birmingham City University, *Geographical and social demographic trends of A-level music students* (2019)<sup>4</sup>. The research interrogated publicly available datasets and the National Pupil Database to analyse the number of entries for A-level music, a good proxy (and measurable integer) for the high level of musical skill required for entry to a conservatoire. An interim report was produced in August 2018, following which additional years of data analysis were commissioned, to facilitate better identification of national trends. Key findings indicate that:

- Areas with lower levels of A-level music entry tend to correlate with lower POLAR ratings and greater levels of deprivation.
- The proportional distribution of A-level entries by POLAR rating has remained relatively stable across a five-year period, indicating that the decline in entries is across all POLAR quintiles.
- Independent schools account for a disproportionately high number of A-level music entries when compared against national entry statistics.
- Higher levels of A-level music entry are mainly clustered around London and the South-East and Manchester, regions which are home to leading conservatoires and one or more of the UK's music specialist schools.

With a 10 to 15-year lead time required to develop the skills needed for conservatoire entry and the socio-economic diversity of school leavers with access to music education decreasing rather than increasing, the RCM faces a significant challenge in increasing the diversity of its student body, and long-term change is needed on a national scale to reverse this trend. However, on the basis of this evidence, the RCM recognises that as one of the UK's leading music institutions it has a duty to contribute to such change, and a commitment to raising attainment in young musicians has been included in the strategic measures in this plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Musicians' Union, 2019. *The State of Play: a review of music education in England*. Available at <https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/StateOfPlay>

<sup>2</sup> All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education, Incorporated Society of Musicians and University of Sussex, 2019. *Music Education: State of the Nation*. Available at <https://www.ism.org/news/new-music-education-report-state-of-the-nation-released>

<sup>3</sup> Musicians' Union., 2018. *Understanding how income affects likelihood to learn an instrument*. Available at <https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Files/Reports/Industry/Education-Statistics-Report.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Whittaker, A. et al, 2019. *Geographical and social demographic trends of A-level music students*. Available at <http://researchonline.rcm.ac.uk/502/>

The following analysis considers each of the key under-represented groups at the RCM through each stage of the student lifecycle. Figures from the OfS Access and Participation dataset have been used where available. Due to small numbers, these are unavailable in many categories, particularly in relation to Success and Progression, therefore alternative data sources have been used as indicated. In order to obtain sufficiently large data samples for analysis, in many cases it has been necessary to combine data for the academic years 2013/14 to 2017/18, meaning it is often not possible to illustrate trends over time. Percentages have been used wherever possible to avoid identifying individuals; however, this can have the effect of making differences appear more significant than they really are, with a difference of just a single student causing a swing of 20% or more in some instances. Where this is the case it has been highlighted. Similarly it has been indicated where it is not possible to comment on detail regarding progress without identifying individuals.

## 1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

### Access

The RCM recognises that its greatest challenge lies in addressing the gap in the number of students recruited from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds with low levels of participation in higher education. As illustrated in figure 1.1a, whilst some progress has been made in reducing this gap, it is still significantly greater than the national average:

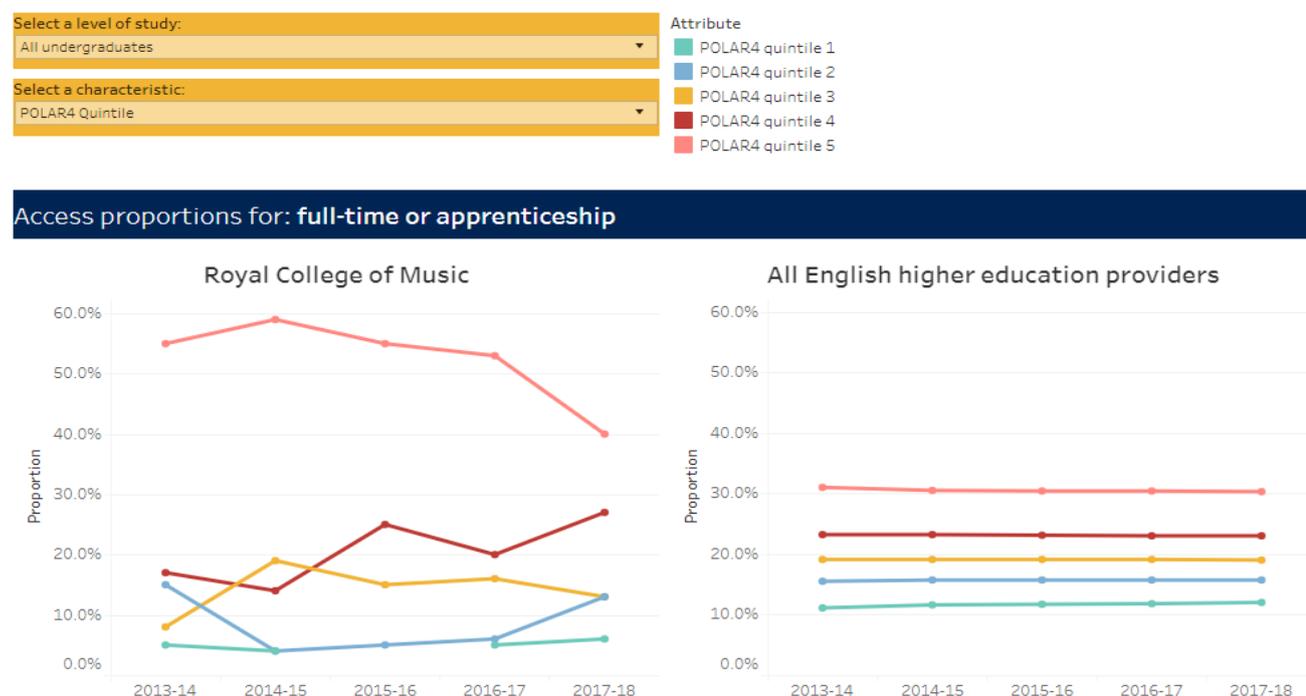


Fig. 1.1a: UK-domiciled new entrants by POLAR4 quintile<sup>5</sup>

In 2013/14 55% of new entrants were from quintile 5 backgrounds (the most advantaged), increasing further still to 59% in 2014/15. In comparison, in 2013/14 just 5% of entrants were from quintile 1 and in some subsequent years numbers were too small to be shown on this chart without identifying individuals. The proportion of students from the most advantaged quintile fell to 40% by 2017/18, with a better spread of students across the five quintiles, however quintile 1 students still only made up 6% of new entrants in that year, compared to 12% nationally.

POLAR4 data can be an unreliable measure for institutions based in highly-populated areas, particularly London, as it is not sufficiently granular to recognise that some of the most deprived students may be living very close to some of the most advantaged, leading to very few London wards being classified within quintile 1. Although the RCM is an institution that recruits nationally, and indeed internationally, a substantial proportion of its UK-domiciled students originate from London and the South East. Therefore, we have also considered data using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), as shown in figure 1.1b; however, this indicates a very similar pattern:

<sup>5</sup> OfS Access and Participation Plan dataset

Select a level of study:  
All undergraduates

Select a characteristic:  
Deprivation quintile

Attribute

- IMD quintile 1
- IMD quintile 2
- IMD quintile 3
- IMD quintile 4
- IMD quintile 5

Access proportions for: full-time or apprenticeship

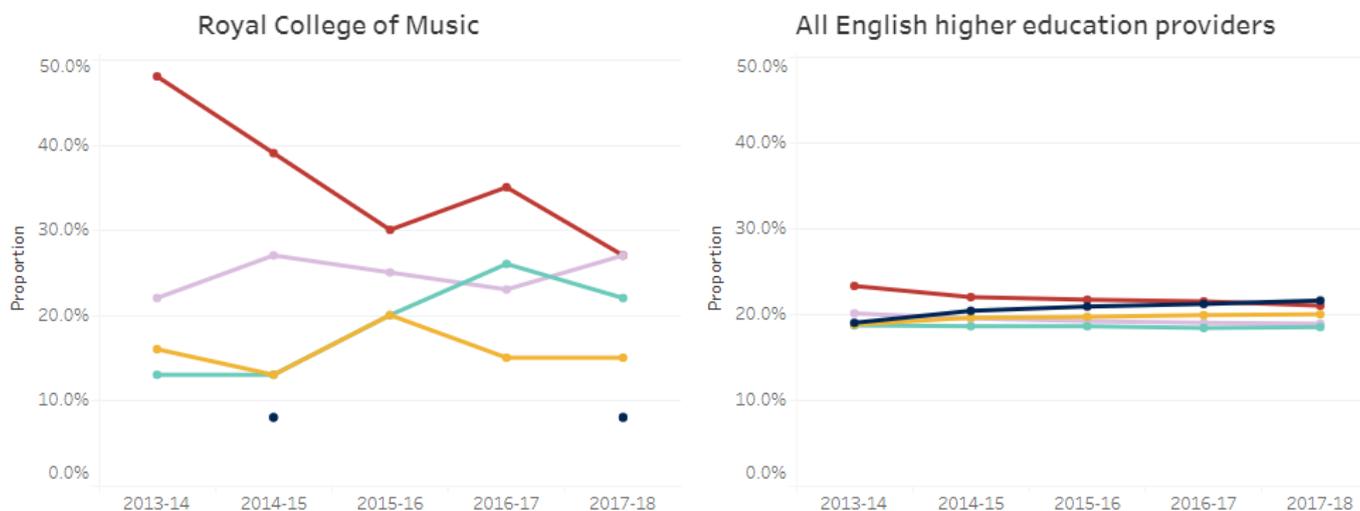


Fig. 1.1b UK-domiciled new entrants by IMD quintile<sup>6</sup>

Again, there has been a significant fall in the proportion of students from quintile 5, from 48% to 27% of new entrants, compared to 21% nationally in 2017/18. These data indicate a broader spread of students across the quintiles, including quintile 2 students making up 15% of new entrants in 2017/18. However, proportions of quintile 1 students remain low according to this measure, making up 8% of new entrants in 2014/15 and 2017/18 and with numbers being too small to display in other years. This is compared to 21.6% nationally in 2017/18.

There is a correlation between the lack of access to music provision in schools in low-participation areas identified in national research and the gap in the progression of the most disadvantaged students to degree-level study at the RCM. The decreasing numbers of POLAR4/IMD quintile 1 students accessing advanced music tuition and taking Music A-Level mean that the RCM faces a major challenge to prevent this access gap from growing, and an even greater one to reduce it.

Success

Non-continuation

Continuation rates for all POLAR4 quintiles are high, with no gaps between the lowest and highest quintiles. This indicates that once students are admitted to the RCM, they make good progress regardless of socio-economic background, as shown in figure 1.1c:

<sup>6</sup> OfS Access and Participation Plan dataset

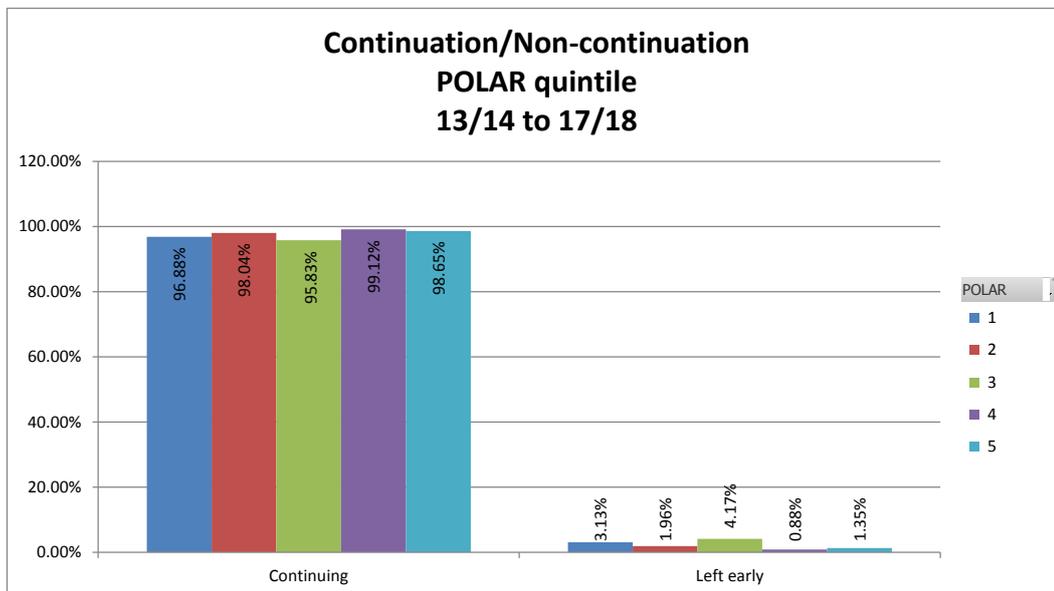


Fig. 1.1c Continuation/Non-continuation by POLAR4 quintile 2013/14 to 2017/18<sup>7</sup>

### Attainment

As shown in figure 1.1d, the percentage of students obtaining upper second degrees or above is high above all quintiles, with students from quintile 1 performing best out of all the quintiles. There appears to be some degree of fluctuation, in quintiles 2 and 4, but this is due to very small numbers causing a disproportionate variation in the percentages. We cannot comment further on this without identifying individuals.

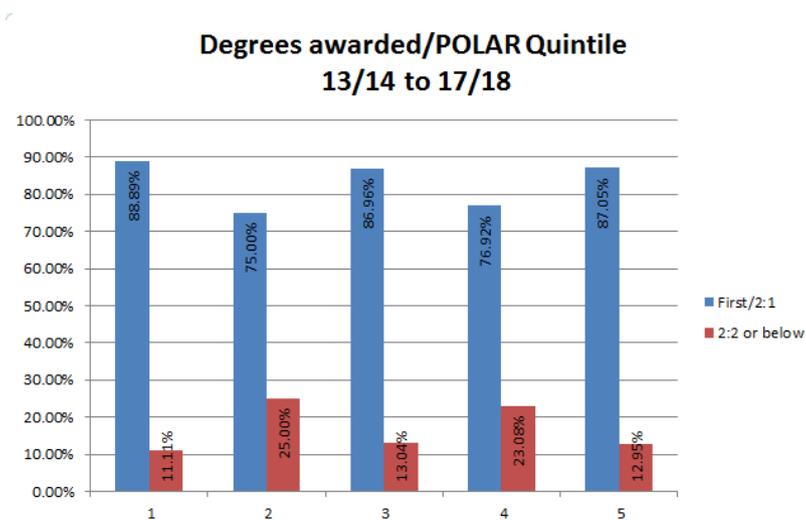


Fig. 1.1d Degree classification by POLAR4 quintile<sup>8</sup>

### Progression to employment or further study

Employment rates for RCM graduates far exceed national norms; DLHE survey statistics for the last four years show between 96% and 100% of respondents progressed into employment or postgraduate study, as shown in figure 1.1e. This indicates that there are no gaps in progression between students from the highest and lowest POLAR4 quintiles:

<sup>7</sup> HESA output 2013/14 to 2017/18

<sup>8</sup> HESA output 2013/14 to 2017/18

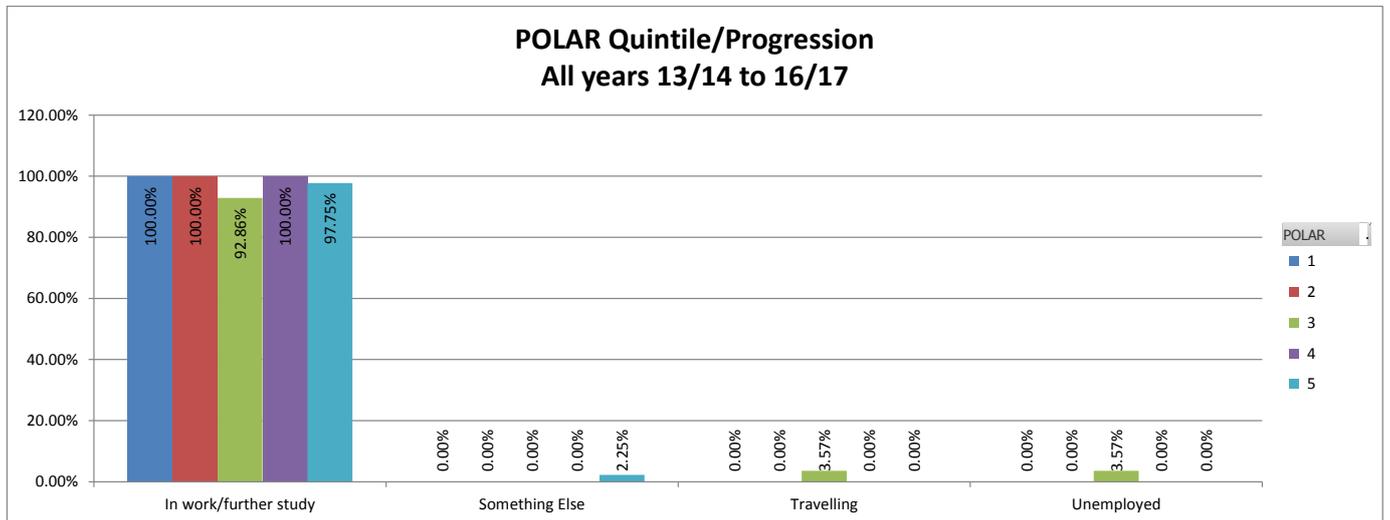


Fig. 1.1e: Progression to employment of further study by POLAR quintile<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

### Access

In recent years the RCM has set Access Agreement targets to improve the proportion of students admitted from BAME backgrounds. Progress has been made and the most recent years' data indicates that the overall proportion of white/non-white students was close to being representative of the UK population: according to ONS data from the 2011 census, 14% of the UK population identify as non-white<sup>10</sup>. However, when calculated using a three-year rolling average as shown in figure 1.2a, the proportion of students identifying as non-white was 10%. This indicates that there is more work to do before equality of opportunity is achieved. Notably, black and mixed-black students are under-represented within the BAME population at the RCM.

Ethnicity Group	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	3-year rolling average
Asian/Mixed Asian/Other Asian	3.17%	9.21%	3.85%	7.25%	12.31%	6.66%
Black/Black Mixed	0.00%	2.63%	0.00%	4.35%	0.00%	1.55%
Other Mixed	1.59%	0.00%	0.00%	2.90%	3.08%	1.16%
Other	1.59%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.54%	0.35%
Unknown	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.45%	0.00%	0.32%
White	93.65%	88.16%	96.15%	84.06%	83.08%	89.96%

Fig 1.2a New entrants by ethnicity<sup>11</sup>

A lack of ethnic diversity within the UK classical music profession has already been widely acknowledged.<sup>12</sup> In a study by King's College London<sup>13</sup>, only 1.7% of orchestral musicians were found to be from a black or minority ethnic background. As a training provider for the professional musicians of the future, the RCM has a responsibility to help redress this

<sup>9</sup> DLHE surveys 2013/14 to 2016/17

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11>

<sup>11</sup> HESA output 2013/14 to 2017/18

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/classical-music/chi-chi-nwanoku-young-classical-musicians-colour-have-no-role/>

<sup>13</sup> Scharff, C., 2015. *Equality and Diversity in the Classical Music Professions*. Available at <https://blogs.kcl.ac.uk/young-female-and-entrepreneurial/files/2014/02/Equality-and-Diversity-in-the-Classical-Music-Profession.pdf>

imbalance. There may be cultural reasons why some ethnicities are likely to be under-represented: for example, some cultures such as the South Asian community have their own rich musical traditions and may perhaps be less likely to pursue advanced study in the Western Classical music tradition.

It should be noted that data on ethnicity is not provided to HEIs by UCAS at the point of application, making it difficult to include this in contextual admissions initiatives. However, since the 2018/19 academic year the RCM has offered ring-fenced scholarships to BAME students to encourage applications. We have not targeted individual ethnic groups, as we do not wish to discourage applications from those of other minority heritage who appear under-represented. This includes certain sub-groups within the Asian category, who it is not possible to disaggregate due to small numbers.

## Success

### Non-Continuation

Levels of non-continuation at the RCM are extremely low and do not indicate any statistically significant gaps between ethnicities, as shown below. It is not possible to comment in more detail about progress here due to small numbers, but where students did leave early, the reasons were not related to factors that could be attributed to ethnic background.

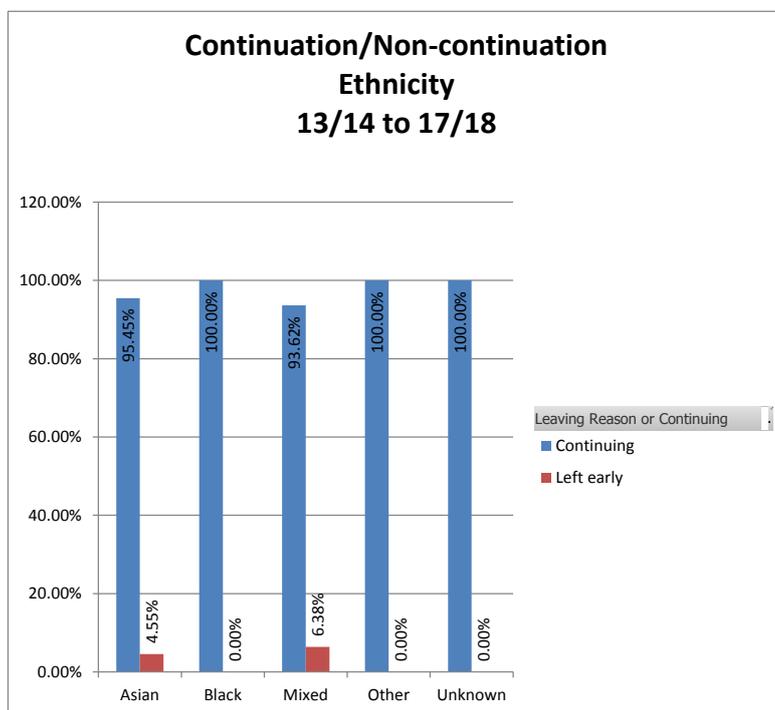


Fig. 1.2b Continuation/Non-continuation by ethnic background<sup>14</sup>

### Attainment

As shown in figure 1.2c, the RCM does not have any gap in degree outcomes between white students and students of other minority groups. The apparent discrepancy for the “Other mixed background” category is due to very small numbers and represents a difference of fewer than five students, making it not statistically significant. For the same reason it is not possible to comment further on progress here without identifying individuals. Numbers are too small to report on attainment for black students.

<sup>14</sup> HESA output 2013/14 to 2017/18

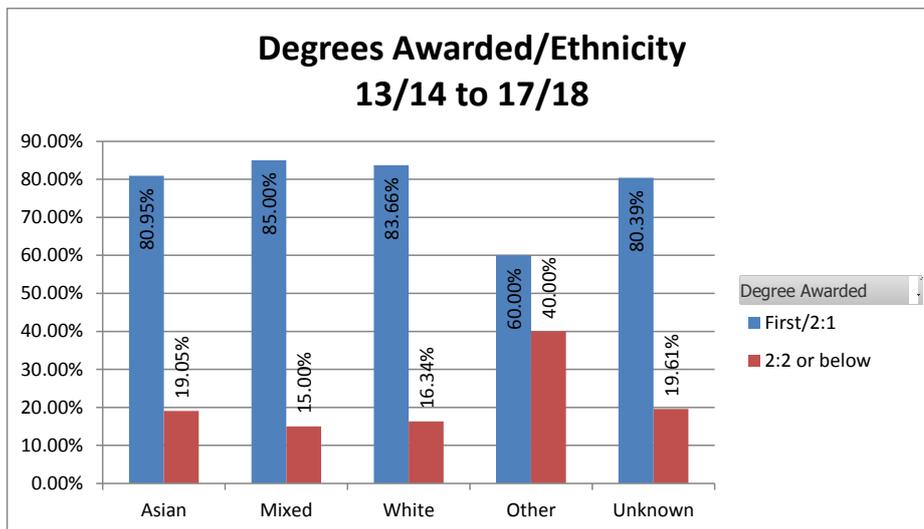


Fig 1.2c Degree outcomes by ethnicity

### Progression to employment or further study

As with low POLAR4 quintile entrants, there is no greater likelihood of students from ethnic minorities being unemployed nine months after graduation compared to students from white backgrounds, as shown in figure 1.2d:

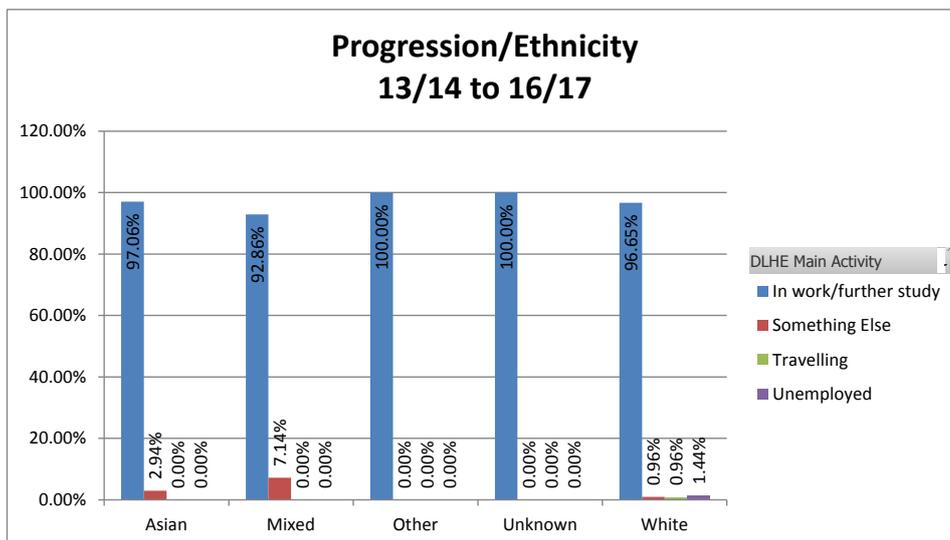


Fig. 1.2d Progression to work or further training by ethnicity<sup>15</sup>

## 1.3 Mature students

### Access

The RCM's undergraduate programme does not recruit high numbers of mature students (individuals aged 21 or over at the beginning of their course) compared to the national average, as shown in figure 1.3a. In 2017/18 mature students made up 9% of new entrants, compared to 27.8% nationally, and this figure has remained largely constant over the past five years.

It is very rare for a late starter on a musical instrument to achieve the required level of practical skill for entry. Sustained and regular tuition and practice is required from a relatively early age and without any break, meaning the vast majority of music conservatoire students progress directly from school to conservatoire. One exception is singers, who, for physiological and anatomical reasons, mature later than instrumental performers. For this same reason a number of mature singers choose to join the RCM as postgraduates rather than as undergraduates, with the RCM's [Graduate Diploma in Vocal Performance](#)

<sup>15</sup> DLHE survey data 2013/14 – 2016/17

offering a pathway to help facilitate this. For these subject-specific reasons, the RCM considers that access gaps amongst other under-represented groups are a greater priority.

Select a level of study: All undergraduates

Select a characteristic: Age

Attribute: Mature (21 and over), Young (under 21)

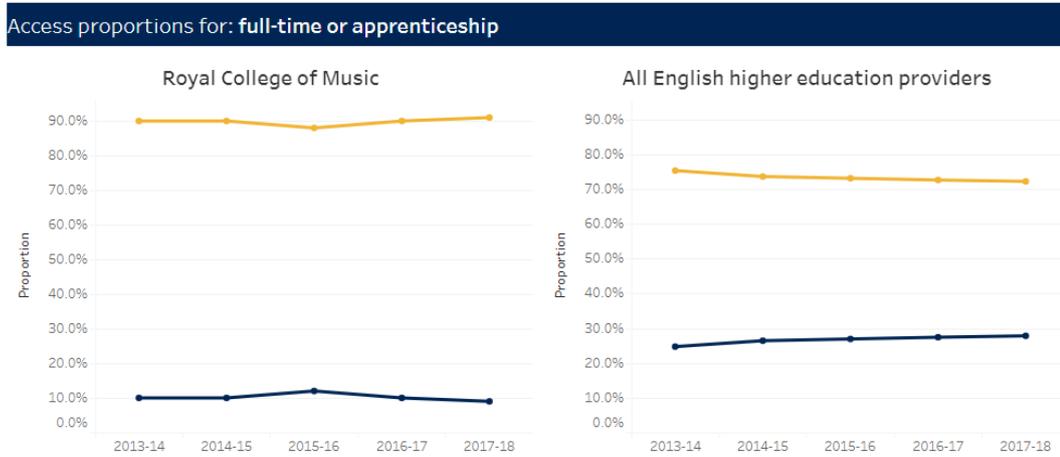


Fig. 1.3a: UK-domiciled new entrants by age group<sup>16</sup>

## Success

### Attainment and Non-continuation

As figure 1.3b indicates, there is no significant difference in the proportion of young and mature students successfully completing the BMus degree. The chart may appear to indicate that there is a gap in continuation between young and mature entrants. However, the number of mature leavers during the five-year period is so low that the proportions appears distorted: the percentage of mature students shown represents fewer than 5 students. Therefore, the RCM does not consider this apparent gap to be statistically significant.

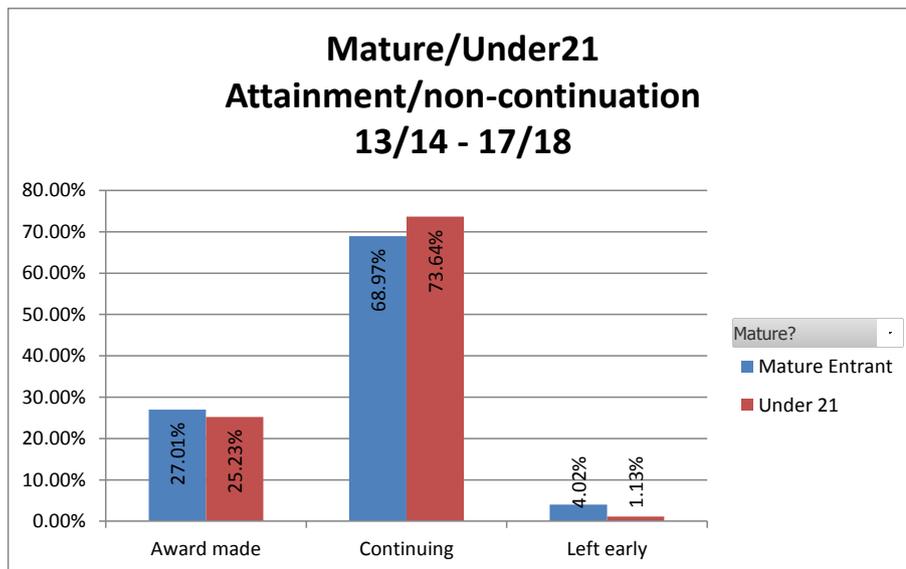


Table 1.3b Attainment and (Non)-Continuation of students by age group<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> OfS Access and Participation Plan dataset

<sup>17</sup> HESA output 2013/14 to 2017/18

## Progression to employment or further study

As previously noted, the RCM's rates of progression to employment and further study exceed the national average. Figure 1.3c indicates that there is no gap in progression between young and mature students.

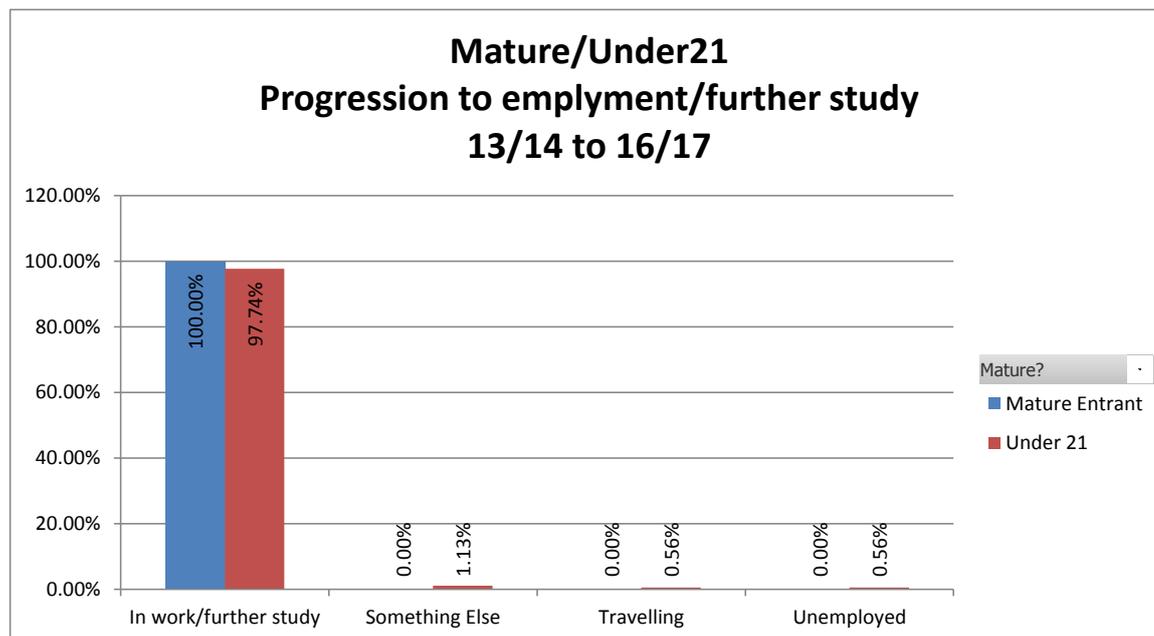


Table 1.3c: Progression to skilled employment or further study by age group<sup>18</sup>

## 1.4 Disabled students

### Access

In the recent past disabled students were under-represented at the RCM, and Access Agreement targets were set to increase the number of applicants declaring a disability. Efforts have also been made to ensure that all students who receive a DSA report it through the College to ensure our HESA statistics accurately reflect all those in receipt of an allowance. Processes are now in place to encourage declaration to enable the RCM to provide appropriate support. One example is by ensuring that reasonable adjustments are offered during the audition process, such as allowing extra time for sight-reading tests.

Good progress has been made in this area and, allowing for peaks and troughs due to small numbers, the proportion of new entrants declaring a disability is now broadly aligned with the national picture, as illustrated by Fig. 1.4a. The average proportion of disabled new entrants nationally for the last five years is 13%, compared to 12% at the RCM, and the RCM's average figure would be higher were it not for what appears to be an anomalous dip to 6% in 2014/15, which in reality represents a difference of just two students compared with 2017/18.

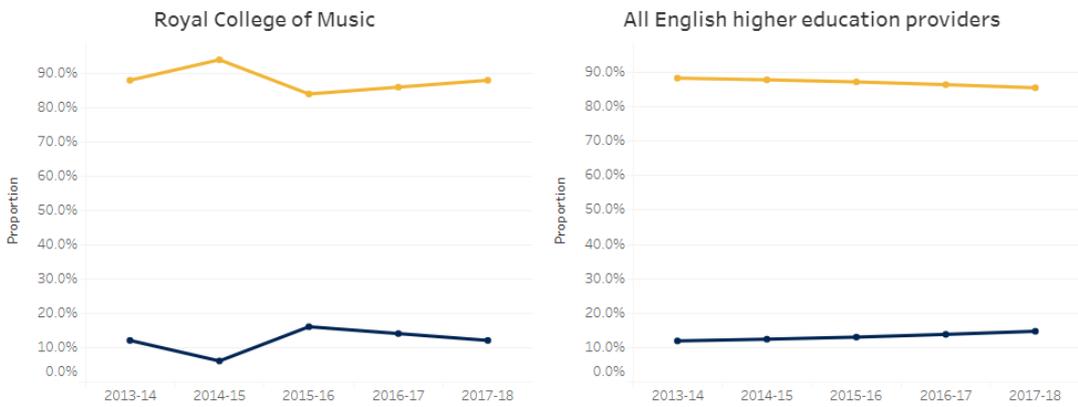
<sup>18</sup> DLHE survey 2013/14 to 2016/17

Select a level of study: All undergraduates

Select a characteristic: Disability

Attribute: Disabled, Not known to be disabled

Access proportions for: full-time or apprenticeship



Access proportions for: part-time

Fig. 1.4a: UK-domiciled new entrants declaring a disability<sup>19</sup>

Once disaggregated by disability type, it is hard to draw any significant conclusions. As shown in figure 1.4b, the percentages of students in each disability category in most cases represent fewer than 5 students. For example, the 10% of new entrants declaring a learning disability in 2017/18 represents just 7 students. These numbers have fluctuated slightly over the past five years, but it is not possible to conclude that there are any discernible differences between groups of disabled entrants.

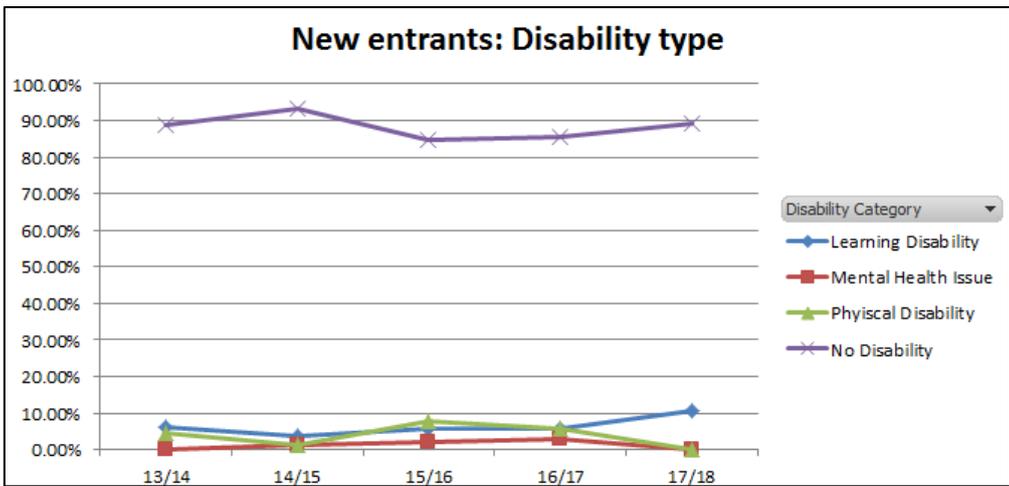


Fig. 1.4b: RCM new entrants declaring a disability by disability type<sup>20</sup>

Success

Non-continuation

The RCM has a good record of support for disabled students. This was cited in the RCM’s most recent QAA report in 2012 as a feature of good practice: ‘the exemplary support for disabled students including the support offered through the application stage, comprehensive handbooks for students and staff, and the individually tailored learning agreements’. HESA data on disabled students focuses on students in receipt of a DSA. Other students identify as having a disability but are not in receipt of a DSA. RCM Student Services offers support to students who declare a disability at any point during

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

<sup>20</sup> Output provided by HESA from Annual Student Return 2013/14 – 2017/18

their studies, via a Learning Agreement system, detailing on-course reasonable adjustments. Students presenting with suspected Specific Learning Difficulties are assessed, funded by the RCM, and assistance is provided for applications for a DSA.

Figure 1.4c may appear to indicate that there is a gap in continuation for students with a physical disability. However, the numbers are so low that the proportions appear distorted, with the percentage of students with a physical disability representing fewer than 5 students. Further investigation into the reasons given for leaving indicate that this was unrelated to disability or academic progress. Therefore, the RCM does not consider this apparent gap to be statistically significant.

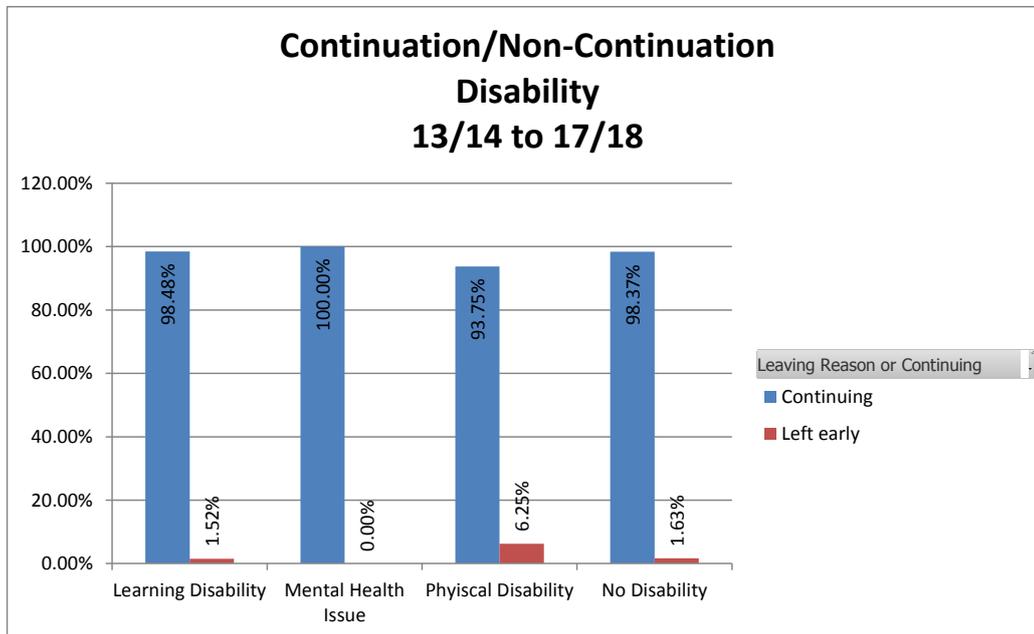


Fig. 1.4c: Continuation/Non-continuation by disability type<sup>21</sup>

## Attainment

As shown in figure 1.4d, there are no statistically significant gaps in degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students. Whilst there is an apparent gap in outcomes for students with a mental health issue, the percentage is distorted by the very low numbers of students involved, which has a disproportionate impact on the percentages. It is not possible to comment in detail on progress in this area due to low numbers, but the underlying data does not indicate any pattern that leads us to believe the RCM needs to set a specific target in this area.

<sup>21</sup> Output provided by HESA from Annual Student Return 2013/14 – 2017/18

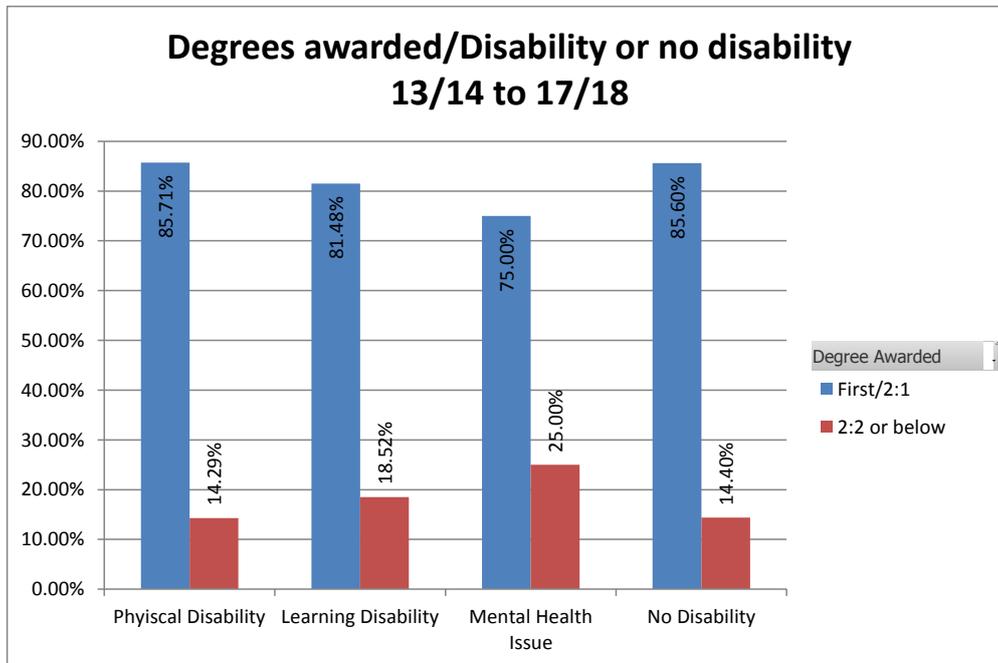


Fig. 1.4d: Comparison of degree outcomes for disabled and non-disabled students<sup>22</sup>

### Progression to employment or further study

Figure 1.4e demonstrates that there is no gap in the number of disabled and non-disabled students remaining unemployed 9 months after graduation, supporting the trend shown in other under-represented categories that, once enrolled at the RCM, there is no discernible gap in opportunity.

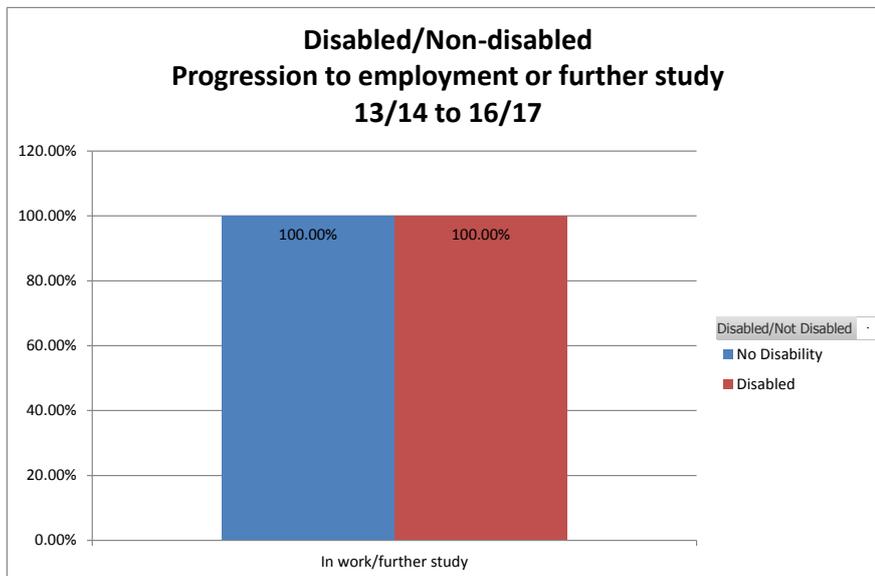


Fig. 1.4e Progression to employment or further study for disabled and non-disabled students<sup>23</sup>

## 1.5 Care leavers

### Access, Success and Progression

Since the field identifying care leavers was first introduced through UCAS, no applications in this category have been received. As the RCM does not currently have any students who are care leavers, it is not possible for us to comment on their trajectory with respect to success and progression.

<sup>22</sup> HESA output 2013/14 to 2017/18

<sup>23</sup> DLHE survey 2013/14 to 2016/17

Applicants to the RCM are relatively unlikely to be care leavers, as a disrupted family life is not conducive to the high degree of consistency of instrumental tuition and the committed and sustained practice and performance regime that is essential to develop the high executant standard required to gain entry to a conservatoire. Nonetheless, audition fee waivers are available to ensure that care-leavers, who are likely to be self-funding, have equality of opportunity in being able to attend an audition.

## 1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

Due to small numbers, it is very difficult to identify any specific trends of disadvantage between under-represented groups, and it is not possible to present the data here without identifying individuals. Our analysis indicates that there is no statistically significant correlation in Access, Success or Progression between POLAR4 quintile 1 students and either ethnicity or disability. Similarly, we also have not identified any noticeable intersection between these three groups and other protected characteristics such as sexual orientation or gender within our student body. However, internal anecdotal evidence suggests that students from under-represented groups are more likely to encounter financial or personal difficulties, sometimes related to a less stable home life, and may require additional pastoral support.

## 1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

The RCM recognises that students from a number of other groups are currently under-represented in higher education at national level, including:

- Carers
- People estranged from their families
- People from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Refugees
- Children from military families

The RCM does not currently have any data available that indicates whether these groups are represented in the student population, as this information is not currently provided through UCAS. Given the already small size of the RCM's student body, numbers within these categories are likely to be far too small to report on. As with care leavers, people in these categories are less likely to have had access to sustained high-quality tuition or the stable conditions necessary for practice. Refugees are also currently more likely to originate from countries in the Middle East, South Asia and East Africa<sup>24</sup> that often do not have such a strong tradition of Western Classical Music.

## 2. STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

As stated in the RCM's Strategic Plan 2017-2027<sup>25</sup>, the RCM is strongly committed to its founding principles of excellence, advocacy and access. The College aims to pursue further access and engagement locally, nationally and internationally. By 2027 the RCM aims better to reflect the diversity of contemporary society in the UK and beyond and have integrated pre-tertiary provision and community engagement into the RCM's programmes and ethos from age four up. The RCM's overarching strategic aim for the period of this Access and Participation Plan is to reduce the under-representation of applicants and students from the lowest socio-economic groups and BAME backgrounds in conservatoire education and consequently in the wider music profession.

### 2.1 Target groups

The RCM's assessment of both its performance and the evidence regarding the wider national context demonstrates that the greatest challenges lie in improving equality of access to higher music education. The two target groups we have identified as a priority are:

- Students from areas with low participation in higher education (POLAR4 quintile 1)
- Students from BAME backgrounds, particularly students who identify as black or mixed-black

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<sup>24</sup> The Migration Observatory, *Top Ten Nationalities: UK Asylum applicants 2017*, available at <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migration-to-the-uk-asylum/>

<sup>25</sup> RCM Strategic Plan 2017-27, available at <https://www.rcm.ac.uk/about/governance/strategy/>

As the timeline for development of the skills needed to enter a conservatoire is a long one, the RCM will be targeting both sixth-form students preparing to apply to higher education and also young people at earlier stages of their musical development, responding to the national inequality of access to quality music education in schools and the community at large and the need to improve ethnic diversity within the music profession.

Whilst our assessment indicates that students from black and mixed black backgrounds are particularly under-represented, there are still improvements to be made in access for students from all BAME groups, and we do not wish to deter applicants from other BAME backgrounds, hence our decision to develop not to restrict our strategic measures to black students.

The RCM recognises that some other groups such as mature students and care leavers are currently under-represented, as previously explained this is unlikely to change due to subject-specific and other factors that are difficult for the RCM to influence. As a small specialist institution with relatively limited resources, it is necessary to prioritise our efforts where we believe a proportional investment can be most effective.

Analysis of the OfS' Access and Participation dataset indicates a gap in access for students from IMD quintile 1. However, as this information is not currently provided to the RCM as part of applicants' UCAS Conservatoires applications, the College is not in the position to set targets in this area at this time. However, the RCM will be introducing measures to calculate this data on an individualised basis and make it available to audition panels, which it is expected to have in place for the 2021 recruitment cycle (aligning with the introduction of UCAS' new application system and the expected implementation date of the RCM's new student records system).

The RCM's current performance in relation to attainment and progression is strong, and we have not identified any current statistically significant differences in outcomes for students from under-represented groups. However, our commitments within this plan recognise that, in diversifying the student body, it will be necessary to increase support for these students, to ensure that equality of opportunity and attainment is maintained. Therefore, whilst we have not set specific targets in relation to Success and Progression, the provision of appropriate support to students from the groups above forms a key element of our strategic measures outlined in section 3.

## 2.2 Aims and objectives

The following key objectives have been set to be achieved by 2024-25:

**a) To reduce the gap in participation between the most and least represented socio-economic groups (POLAR4 quintiles 5 and 1)**

The Office for Students has set a key performance measure to eradicate the national participation gap for this category by 2038–39, with a five-year aim of reducing the ratio of quintile 5 to quintile 1 students from 5:1 to 3:1. The current participation gap at the RCM is just under 11.6:1, higher than the national average. To eradicate this gap by 2038-39, the RCM would need to reduce the current gap by a quarter in the next five-year period. However, in recognition that stretching targets are needed in this area, the RCM has set a more ambitious target to reduce the gap by a third to 8:1 by 2024-25. To achieve this, the RCM intends to almost double the percentage of new entrants from POLAR 1 backgrounds compared to the baseline data for 2017-18.

**b) To increase participation of students from BAME backgrounds, in particular the number of students who identify as coming from black and mixed black backgrounds.**

The RCM has set a target to increase the percentage of students who identify as coming from non-white backgrounds from 10% to 14% by 2024–25, aligning this target with the profile of the UK population according to the most recent census data. This equates to a 22% increase in UK-domiciled new entrants from BAME backgrounds. Furthermore, the RCM will aim to increase the consistency of recruitment of students from black and mixed black backgrounds, who are currently unrepresented in some intakes.

**c) To contribute to reducing the current national inequality of access to high-quality music tuition by offering a pathway of learning, allowing those from under-represented groups to access and develop the skills required to progress to higher music education.**

Music education is currently in general decline, especially in the most disadvantaged areas, meaning that young people from under-represented groups are increasingly less likely to have the opportunity to develop the skills

needed to enter a conservatoire. The RCM, is a small institution and cannot single-handedly reverse this trend. However, we aim to contribute to resolving this problem by ensuring that, through our own pre-tertiary programmes and outreach work with collaborative partners, disadvantaged children who might not otherwise have access to music education have the opportunity to develop the skills that can set them on the pathway to conservatoire study.

The RCM has set a long-term target of 50% of children in the final year of the Sparks Juniors programme (age 4–8) progressing to a fully auditioned place at RCMJD (age 8+) by 2024–25, which in turn provides a pathway to higher music education. This target takes into account the likelihood that a proportion of Sparks Juniors may wish to continue their musical education elsewhere (at another conservatoire’s junior department or through the Tri-borough Music Hub) or decide that they wish to pursue other interests. Sparks Juniors will be launched in its revised format in 2019/20 and the first cohort of participants will audition for entry to RCMJD in 2024–25. Ten children who demonstrate musical potential will be identified out of cohorts from three local schools participating in our pre-primary Sparkles programme, all of whom will be from disadvantaged backgrounds.

To ensure that participants are on track to achieve this target, the RCM is setting benchmarks for attainment for each stage of the four-year programme. It is expected that by 2024–25, 90% of participants will be achieving the expected benchmark standard for the relevant year of the programme, based on annual in-house assessment. Examples of outcomes being worked towards during the first year of the programme include: listening and being ready, memory, discerning differences and spotting patterns, imagination and expressive movement and natural musical ability. Participants will move onto an instrument in the second year of the programme and formalised assessments will begin in this year including at the mid-year point. Each year the outcomes will be set via appropriate graded exams, music medals or skill-based goals. Creativity will also be assessed.

It should be noted that the RCM is currently undergoing an evaluation of its RCM Sparks outreach and participation programme by an external consultant, which is due to report by the end of the summer term 2019. A response will be developed over summer 2019, which will be considered by RCM committees during Autumn 2019, including Council and Senate. Based on the results of this evaluation and it is possible that at this point the target may be reconsidered.

## 3. STRATEGIC MEASURES

### 3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

#### Overview

The RCM is a highly selective institution, but considers itself to be elite, not elitist, and is deeply committed to increasing inclusivity. Widening access is a key pillar of the RCM’s Strategic Plan 2017-2027 and the RCM is actively lobbying government on access to school music provision through its membership of Conservatoires UK and the ABRSM. The Council (the RCM’s governing body) and Senate oversee the development and monitoring of the RCM’s Access and Participation Plan and members take a close interest in increasing access, which is also a subject of considerable interest to the RCM’s President, HRH The Prince of Wales.

As stated in its Equality and Diversity Strategy<sup>26</sup> the RCM recognises an obligation to be a relevant, persuasive advocate for music in the UK and beyond. The RCM’s Chairman, Lord Black of Brentwood, is a prominent public advocate of youth music education and has spoken passionately on the subject in the House of Lords<sup>27</sup>. Among other Council members, Lady Robey was a founder of London Music Masters, an organisation providing access to music education for thousands of under-privileged children, and Veronica Wadley is chair of the DfE’s Expert Panel for the Model Music Curriculum.

As a member of institution of Conservatoires UK, we are working collaboratively with other similar institutions to promote greater equality in music education. In its Strategic Plan 2018-23, Conservatoires UK (CUK) commits to taking a leadership role in Access and Participation and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Complementing the specific measures outlined in their institutional Access and Participation Plans, CUK members have agreed to work collectively to share best practice and enhance their impact in the following areas:

- Improving understanding of access, success and progression in a conservatoire context

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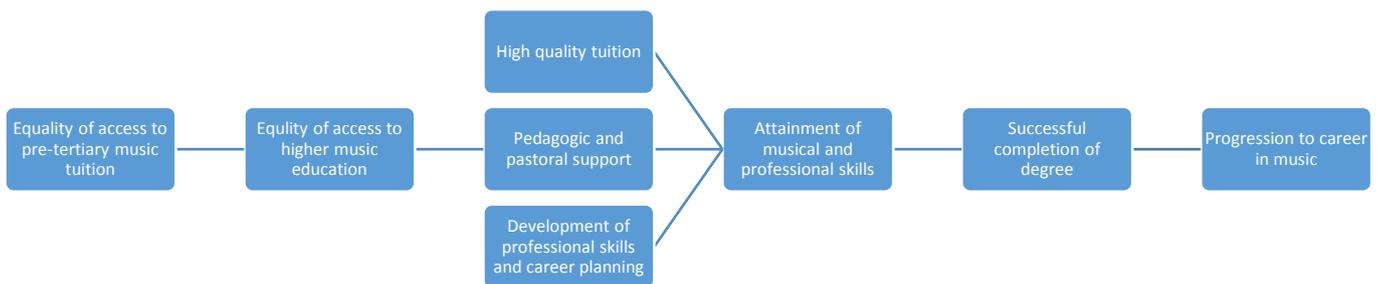
<sup>26</sup><https://www.rcm.ac.uk/about/governance/strategy/accessdisabilitiesandequalopportunities/Equality%20and%20Diversity%20Strategy%202017-2027.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2018-10-18/debates/15CD7958-6124-4E51-861D-CE7A38F4D4AB/SchoolsMusicEducation>

- Sharing expertise and best practice to address the challenges and remove any barriers for underrepresented student groups
- Promoting conservatoire education as a positive study choice for underrepresented groups locally, regionally and nationally
- Engaging in dialogue with the wider higher education sector to evidence the impact of the decline in access to performing arts education within schools and the disproportionate impact this can have on disadvantaged young people

Widening participation issues are considered in all areas of the RCM's work; not just in dedicated departments such as Student Services and Learning & Participation, and by the Welfare & Diversity Committee (which includes significant student representation) and the Student Staff Committee, but also throughout the institution, including Admissions, Learning and Teaching, the Creative Careers Centre, the RCM Museum and the Estates team.

The musical development journey starts early, as illustrated in the model below, and it is critical to identify and nurture talent from a young age.



Only a small number of exceptionally talented individuals will ultimately become music professionals, but in order to identify and then support them, as many children as possible must be given the opportunity to discover their potential through equality of access to music tuition. This should enable equality of opportunity to enter higher music education at the RCM for those with the level of skill to do so and the potential to develop further. Once at the RCM, a combination of high-quality tuition, appropriate support and professional skills development equips students with the complex of skills necessary not only to succeed in their studies, but to progress to a career in music. If equality of opportunity can be achieved at each stage, in due course the classical music profession should be enriched by increasing diversity.

## Pre-tertiary programmes

### RCM Sparks

The RCM's learning and participation programme, RCM Sparks, provides inspiring opportunities for families, schools and young people to engage with music education. RCM Sparks runs a series of public events and activities for schools at the Royal College of Music, as well as a special programme in our local area, partnering with other institutions to provide the benefits of music education where they are most needed in the community. All of its work is based around clear learning pathways, which cater for children's changing needs as they develop, fostering musicianship and learning skills year-on-year throughout their educational journey. The programme is designed by experienced RCM staff and led by outstanding workshop leaders who are experts in their fields. These leaders are supported by teams of RCM students who are trained and supported in community- and primary school-based learning and participation work, in turn developing a new generation of music educators with relevant and meaningful practical experience.

Our target groups are:

- Children, young people and families from low income-households/low socio-economic groups
- Children and young people from underrepresented groups (including BAME backgrounds)
- Children and young people with disabilities

Most of the programme is provided free of charge, funded through active fundraising and supported by a core grant. Free and subsidised places are available to the following groups:

- Children who are eligible (whether claimed or not) for free school meals (after age 7) and their families
- 'Looked-after' children i.e. children looked after by the local authority or in foster care, and their families
- Families who live in social housing
- Families who are eligible for housing benefit
- Families who are eligible for family tax credit

- Families/individuals who are eligible for disability benefit
- Service families

### Learning pathways through RCM Sparks

The information below sets out the learning pathway a child from a target group could take through RCM Sparks.

*Mini Sparks age (0-3):* Following the launch of Tri-Music Together, the Royal College of Music now runs two Mini Sparks programmes in local communities. These weekly sessions teach families the value of learning how to listen in the truest sense, to tune-in and play with their children through music. This can raise self-esteem and confidence and can heighten a child's ability to focus, listen and contribute with others over time. It also teaches and promotes healthy attachment and communication methods between parents and children through play.

*Sparks Juniors (age 3-8)* (further details below): Sparks Juniors is an innovative collaboration between RCM Sparks and the RCM Junior Department, launched in September 2009. Each year, the initiative offers eight pupils a free three-year programme of high-level tuition led by RCMJD staff and Royal College of Music student mentors.

*Get, Set, Play (6-8)* is a year-long free programme offered to families and young people from the least affluent neighbourhoods of the Tri-borough area. It offers an accessible way for parents, grandparents and carers to learn music alongside their children and provides a pathway for a continuing musical journey. The programme features the composer Sally Greaves' 'Groove n' Play' series, exploring first-access instruments such as ukulele, recorder and violin.

After the age of 8 and at the end of the Get, Set, Play programme, engaged families are offered subsidised music lessons and choir membership with the Tri-borough Music Hub as well as information to signpost other events for families to continue their engagement. Particularly talented children are encouraged to audition for the RCM Junior Department, a dedicated high-quality Saturday school for performing musicians aged 8–18.

An enhanced bursary programme is available to support students from lower socio-economic backgrounds on the Sparks Juniors programme, helping them to progress to the RCM Junior Department and potentially on to undergraduate study as BMus College students.

### RCM Sparks Juniors

RCM Sparks Juniors is a long-standing and successful collaboration between the RCM Junior Department (RCMJD) and RCM Sparks. It is an instrumental teaching programme designed to provide a progression route to RCMJD for children whose potential might otherwise be overlooked. Now in its tenth year, it currently recruits eight children each year from Key Stage 2, for a three-year programme, 80% are currently from under-represented backgrounds. They attend the RCMJD on a Saturday, where their timetable includes first access instrumental and musicianship lessons, ensemble and participation in the RCMJD Junior Choir. Children are recruited in consultation with their school, following a series of whole-class workshops led by the RCM at which exceptional musical promise is identified. Whole families are encouraged to become involved and many parents and siblings attend Family Days with their children.

Whilst the Sparks Juniors scheme has been very successful in nurturing musical potential and fostering musical engagement within the TBMH, only six Sparks Juniors students have ultimately gained places on the RCMJD programme over the past ten years. Despite the significant progress made by all students on the programme, tracked through levels of hub musical engagement and ABRSM examination results, the students were still at a significant disadvantage, as they were accessing high-quality musical tuition only at a relatively late stage compared with peers who had received prior private musical tuition. Therefore, following an internal review of the programme in 2018–19 it was decided that the Sparks Juniors programme will now focus on recruiting children from a younger age: Early Years, RCM Mini Sparks & RCM Sparkles (Dalcroze classes for 3–5 year olds) as part of the Sparks community and schools programme. These early year groups will act as a pool of potential new Sparks Juniors for 2019/20, allowing for manageable momentum into the new Sparks Juniors model and eventually into RCMJD.

### RCM Sparkles and revised Sparks Juniors model

The new Sparkles programme aims to build on the success of the current Sparks Juniors to create a unified offering for students aged 4–8. In the summer term of 2018, RCM Sparks ran 6-week pilot Dalcroze Eurhythmics music and movement classes for 3–5 year olds in three targeted TBMH Primary Schools, each with a high proportion of Free School Meals. The success of the pilots led to the instigation of a full 30-week programme of Dalcroze classes (i.e., RCM Sparkles) which was embedded in each school from September 2018.

Sparkles delivers weekly sessions to 240 3–5 year-old children, thus creating a pool of especially musically developed children, nurturing access and supporting progression into the Sparks community programme, the TriBorough Music Hub, and a revised Sparks Juniors programme at the RCMJD for students aged 5 (September 2019). By enabling students to access high-quality musical education at a very early age, RCM Sparkles maximizes their chances of progressing through the Sparks Juniors programme, the RCMJD, and beyond.

### RCM Junior Department

The RCMJD provides specialist training for talented children aged 8–18. It comprises around 300 students who meet on term-time Saturdays. Young people travel to the RCMJD from all over Britain for an intensive day of music-making. The challenging curriculum, including individual instrumental or vocal lessons, ensembles, choirs and general musicianship, is designed to nurture talented musicians and prepare them for entry to conservatoire or other HEIs. Admission is by competitive audition. The RCMJD is uniquely placed to offer young musicians the opportunity to develop their musical skills in preparation for conservatoire or university. 82% of RCMJD students went on to study music at conservatoire or university in 2018. This is a key reason why the RCM has elected to focus on developing pathways for children to attain the level of skill required for entry to RCMJD, as there is then a high probability of them progressing to higher music education.

In order to encourage students from under-represented groups to apply to the RCMJD, it has formed successful working partnerships with the TBMH (through Sparks), London Music Masters and the [Nucleo project](#), to identify and support talented young musicians who might benefit from the courses. It is envisaged that our new RCM Sparkles and revised RCM Sparks Juniors programme (see above) will enable the RCMJD to recruit suitably-qualified students at a much younger age. There is still much to be done to support young musicians in a challenging musical landscape. The RCMJD will be collecting ethnicity and POLAR4 data from the start of the next recruitment cycle in September in order to inform its admissions processes and to help track the progress of all students.

The RCMJD is committed to ensuring that successful applicants are not prevented from attending the RCMJD through financial hardship. In the 2018–19 academic year over £200,000 of bursary support was provided to families where there is the most need, furthering the RCM's mission to offer an inspirational learning experience for all, regardless of financial means. These bursaries continue to be funded by the RCMJD bursary fund and a range of Trusts.

### Outreach work with collaborative Partners

The RCM has a wealth of collaborative partners, informing its entire approach to outreach and widening participation. This includes:

- being a strategic partner of the Tri-Borough Music Hub has led to new partnerships with schools at both primary and secondary level as well new partnerships with other arts organisations. This is a major Arts Council funded initiative and is a very significant development in the College's approach to access, which builds on its work over a large number of years. The partnership closely positions the RCM at the heart of music delivery in the local area. The RCM sits on a strategic governance committee that develops a varied, robust and accessible programme of delivery for all children across Tri-Borough. Our key areas of support are strategically to lead on access in music, in particular ensuring the SEND and widening participation agenda for children from underrepresented groups is at the forefront of the TBMH priorities, as well as spearheading projects that bring about tangible change.
- Partnership with IntoUniversity (IU) – nine activities per year across three local IU centres which provide a meaningful widening participation partnership.
- Partnership with Royal Albert Hall – collaborative community programme engaging hard-to-reach families

## Tertiary education

### Admissions

The RCM is committed to operating a fair and transparent admissions process, with a stated aim of identifying students with the skills and potential to achieve the highest standards of musical and academic excellence, regardless of background.<sup>28</sup> 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.

A live audition or composition portfolio assessment is offered to all UK and Europe-domiciled BMus applicants who apply by the deadline; only applications for certain overseas audition venues are pre-screened. This ensures that those applicants who may not have had access to A-level Music or grade exams are not disadvantaged and will have the opportunity to

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<sup>28</sup> RCM Admissions Policy, 2018. Available at

<https://www.rcm.ac.uk/about/governance/strategy/accessdisabilitiesandequalopportunities/>

demonstrate their talent and potential. Panel decisions are moderated by the Senate Executive Committee, to ensure all applicants are considered fairly, with particular close consideration paid to applicants flagged as being from under-represented groups.

### **Audition fee-waiver scheme**

The RCM operates an audition fee-waiver scheme for applicants who come from families with low household income, for whom the fee may be a barrier to application. This contributes to supporting underrepresented low household income and/or low socioeconomic status groups, along with care leavers.

### **Disability support**

The Student Services team provides support to students identifying with a disability through a process of assessment, which is funded by the RCM, and assistance is provided for applications for a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). Close links between Student Services and Heads of Faculty, Personal Advisers and other academic staff ensure that, throughout each year, students who may be struggling with aspects of their studies are referred to, or encouraged to seek support from Student Services for diagnostic assessments for Specific Learning Difficulties, support for mental health issues or other disabling conditions.

All students with a disability, regardless of whether or not they are in receipt of DSA, are offered a Learning Agreement which sets out reasonable adjustments to study programmes and assessment that may be required. Given that musical performance is a physical discipline requiring fine motor skills and highly developed aural skills, individuals with some physical disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties such as dyspraxia face additional challenges. Increasingly such students may be offered additional support, including one to one sessions for improving fingering and sequencing, and additional classes and individual coaching in aural training from the Area Leader for Aural, and Personal Advisers.

### **Teaching support and pastoral care**

The RCM's core performance and composition tuition is primarily delivered on a one to one basis and students typically develop a close working relationship with their assigned professor, who will often be the first person to identify any problems. Students on the BMus course are also assigned a personal academic tutor for the first two years of their course, to whom they can turn with any concerns about their academic progress, particularly if this is being impacted by external factors. Furthermore, the RCM's Student Services provides a wide range of support, ranging from drop-in sessions to an in-house counselling service. The RCM has increased investment in its counselling service in recent years in response to student feedback, and recently recruited a second counsellor, ensuring gender balance. The RCM also has an agreement with its HE neighbour, Imperial College, that enables RCM students to access additional therapies such as CBT. In addition to pastoral care, the Student Services team administers the RCM's Hardship Fund, to which students can apply if they find themselves in unexpected financial difficulty during their studies.

### **Mental health and wellbeing**

National research indicates that students from under-represented groups can have an increased chance of suffering from debilitating mental health conditions. The RCM has specialist expertise in the area of musicians' health and wellbeing through the work of our [Centre for Performance Science](#), a partnership with Imperial College London, and has taken steps to integrate awareness of wellbeing issues into the curriculum, with a particular specialism in Alexander Technique and performance anxiety management. Additional regular services are also offered, such as meditation and yoga classes. The RCM is now subscribed to [Big White Wall](#), providing out of hours mental health support to students. Mental health issues have been a particular area of focus for the RCM's Students' Union, and in recent years the RCM has supported RCMSU in running a very successful Wellbeing Week, increasing awareness amongst the student body.

### **Employability**

A conservatoire education is intended to prepare musicians for the professional world. Today's musicians are unlikely to have a career working solely as a performer: the majority make portfolio careers encompassing teaching, community outreach, arts administration and management, and more. The work of the RCM's sector-leading Creative Careers Centre exists to equip students with the necessary skills for their future career, as described in its mission statement:

The core aim of the RCM Creative Careers Centre is to support musicians in bridging the gap between student and professional life, while constantly adapting to the parameters of an increasingly competitive and complex music industry. The department believes in a tailored approach to accommodate individual needs, interests and skills – most crucially, at a time that is right for its users. It strives to develop professional and pioneering partnerships with leading industry specialists, reputable arts organisations and local communities. These, in turn, deliver unique

career-building opportunities and a direct route into the music industry. The Creative Careers Centre's primary goal is to offer a broad range of professional contacts and services, which will enable musicians to discover their own identity, gain hands-on experience and new skills, develop an entrepreneurial mind-set, and ultimately build a successful and fulfilling professional portfolio.

## Work in the wider community

The RCM offers a wider programme of activities to the local community through its series of public events delivered by RCM Sparks. These events are tailored to specific age groups, allowing to offer the most constructive, enjoyable and engaging learning experience for participants. Events are available for children aged from 4–18. The programme provides a consistent and nurturing learning journey for those who return year after year, offering an excellent opportunity for access to high quality music experience.

Family Create (ages 4–5)

Ignite (age 6–8) and Explorers (age 8–12)

Springboard (ages 13–18)

In its commitment to life-long learning the RCM is also a partner with Turtle Key Arts and English Touring Opera in the delivery of Turtle Song. The project brings music, movement, and singing to people with memory problems and their carers, whilst also providing valuable experience to RCM.

The RCM's Creative Careers Centre is developing its partnership with Chelsea and Westminster Hospital by providing musicians for their waiting areas, as well as on wards and Intensive Care Units.

### RCM Museum

The RCM Museum is not only an invaluable resource for students, but also plays a key role in the RCM's aim to bring music to a wider audience. The Museum seeks to combat physical, intellectual, social and economic barriers to welcome a diverse range of visitors through a number of measures, including:

- A free admissions policy
- Making interpretation content easy to understand and providing opportunities to learn through touch and other senses.
- Representing inclusive communities (such as minority groups) within the collections and displays where possible, promoting tolerance, inter-community respect and challenging stereotypes
- Hosting a monthly relaxed concert in the gallery, collaborating with external service providers to work with people with learning disabilities.
- Further activities targeted at harder to reach groups will be planned following the Museum's re-opening in 2020, such as regular BSL and audio description tours led by trained guides.

### Accessibility

The RCM will complete a major £40 million project, More Music, to redevelop its estate in early 2020. A key element of the project involves making the historic building more welcoming and accessible to applicants, students and the wider community. The entrance lobby is being re-designed to make the RCM feel more inviting and open. Significant alterations are being made to improve disabled access, including simplified circulation routes, a new lift and an external sesame lift already in action.

As part of the project the RCM is rebuilding the RCM Museum, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The transformation will focus significantly on outreach and will position the Museum at the heart of the College, and includes a fully accessible gallery with step free access to both levels, an induction loop for the hard of hearing and large print guides and handling materials for the visually impaired. There will be a rich programme of workshops, concerts and lectures organised in partnership with other cultural venues, colleges, libraries, museums and schools in London.

## Alignment with other strategies

### Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

The RCM has a new Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy<sup>29</sup>, approved in 2019, which closely aligns with the target groups and commitments in this plan. For the first time this strategy explicitly highlights the importance of an integrated approach to music teaching from early years right through to postgraduate level, which includes our work to raise

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<sup>29</sup> RCM Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2019 -2027, available at <https://www.rcm.ac.uk/about/governance/strategy/Learning%20Teaching%20and%20Assessment%20Strategy%202019-2024.pdf>

attainment with young learners from disadvantaged backgrounds through RCM Sparks. It emphasises the need to provide appropriate support for students with diverse needs and from differing backgrounds, which includes students from low-participation and BAME backgrounds, along with tailored support for students with disabilities. The policy furthermore highlights the need for safe and healthy music making, including appropriate mental health support, to help students to achieve their potential.

### Equality and Diversity Strategy

The RCM’s new Equality and Diversity Strategy<sup>30</sup>, approved in 2019, is closely aligned with many of the key aims and target groups identified in this plan, specifically committing to:

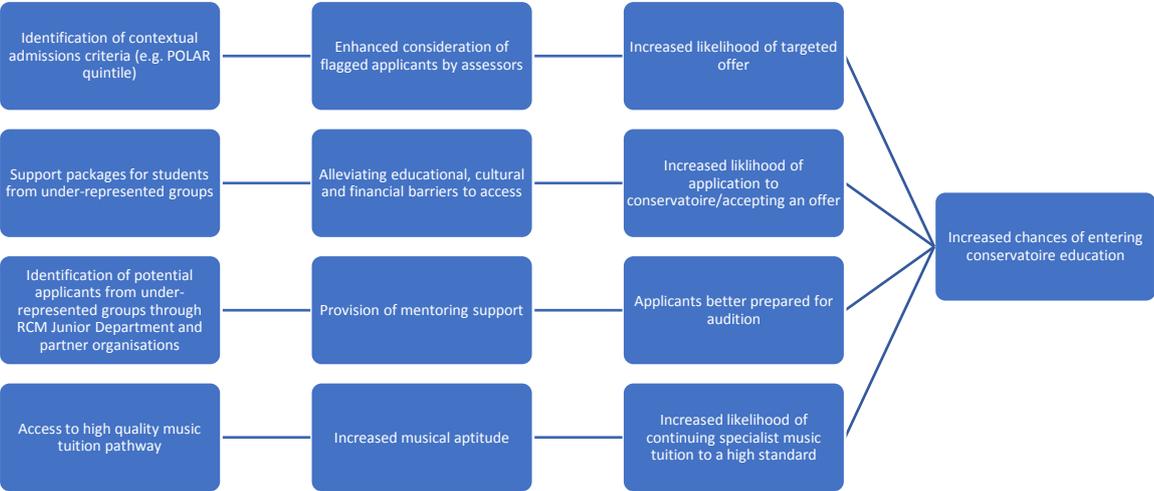
- undertake initiatives to widen participation by UK students who are currently under-represented in the RCM community and in the wider music profession, highlighting students from low-participation and BAME backgrounds and those with disabilities as target groups. Again, the importance of high-quality mental health and wellbeing support is highlighted.
- address the RCM’s wider responsibilities to music education through advocacy to promulgate the importance of music education at all ages through leadership and example.
- establish an integrated Primary College, Junior College and learning and participation programme (RCM Sparks), within a strong and unified profile that is seamless with and supported by the College’s HE work, developing a range of ways to bring the musically gifted and/or enthusiast of all ages into involvement with the inspirational learning experience on offer.

Furthermore, the strategy outlines the RCM’s commitment to promoting equal opportunities and greater diversity among its staff and a positive and supportive environment for all, including those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

### Strategic measures

Each of the strategic measures outlined below has been developed to contribute to continuous improvement in the RCM’s performance in relation to the gaps and target groups identified as priorities, and benchmark targets for each year have been set in our Targets and Investment Plan to monitor performance. However, it should be noted that the lead time for our work raising attainment among young learners is long and will not have a direct impact on access at undergraduate level during the lifetime of this plan.

The RCM has developed the following theory of change for its key strategic aims outlined in section 2.2:



The RCM intends to achieve its aims through the following strategic measures:

<sup>30</sup> RCM Equality and Diversity Strategy 2017-2027, available at <https://www.rcm.ac.uk/about/governance/strategy/accessdisabilitiesandequalopportunities/Equality%20and%20Diversity%20Strategy%202017-2027.pdf>

## a) Bolder use of contextual admissions

Use of contextual data to inform admissions decisions has been widely accepted across the HE sector and has been shown to increase equality of opportunity, as documented in a recent report by the Fair Education Alliance<sup>31</sup>. The OfS Director of Fair Access has stated that contextual admissions, “must be central to [widening participation] strategy”.<sup>32</sup>

Contextual data will inform the following measures:

- Additional guidance and training will be provided to audition panellists, to help them identify where technical shortcomings may be due to a lack of opportunity to access high-quality music tuition, but where an applicant still demonstrates the potential to succeed.
- Flagging of applicants from under-represented groups based on data provided by UCAS.
  - As previously noted, POLAR data can often be insufficiently granular to identify disadvantage within the London area accurately. Therefore, beginning with the 2020 admissions cycle, the RCM plans to subscribe to UCAS’s Multiple Equality Measure (MEM) data, which takes into account several other dimensions of inequality, such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation, eligibility for free school meals (FSM), and the likelihood of applicants coming from an underrepresented ethnic group.
  - UCAS does not provide individualised ethnicity data to HEIs at the point of application and UCAS Conservatoires institutions currently only receive this data for successful applicants at the end of the cycle, making it harder for the RCM to identify these students. In future data will be used where applicants have declared their ethnicity previously, for example applicants who apply for the RCM’s BAME Scholarships or whose data we already hold due to participation in the Junior Department or other outreach initiatives.
- Flagged applicants will receive additional consideration as to whether, notwithstanding the level presented at audition, they may nevertheless have the ability and potential to succeed on the course, given the right support.
- Where a flagged applicant is rejected, this must be justified by the relevant Head of Faculty.

## b) Support packages for students from under-represented groups admitted based on contextual data, including financial, academic and pastoral support

Analysis of the RCM’s conversion rate of offers of a place to enrolments clearly indicates that financial support offered upfront at the point of offer-making can be an effective access tool and significantly increases the likelihood of an applicant accepting a place at the RCM (in contrast to in-year maintenance bursaries, which our experience from previous programmes and HE sector-wide evidence suggest do not have a significant impact on acceptance rates). Within the conservatoire sector (both nationally and internationally) there is a significantly greater culture of scholarship support than in the wider higher education sector. Currently, around 60% of RCM students receive some form of financial support for their studies, ranging from a small contribution towards fees up to full fees for applicants demonstrating the highest level of performance at audition. Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds are already receiving some degree of financial support based on the current criteria. However, as awards are allocated based purely on the standard of performance at audition, those applicants admitted through contextual admissions are unlikely to meet the current criteria, despite potentially having significant financial need.

As is the case with other highly selective institutions facing challenges in fair access, the RCM wishes to ensure that talented musicians aim high and are not deterred from aspiring to study at a highly ranked conservatoire. Whilst we have not completed a more in-depth formal study into the reasons why this funding has proved effective in increasing acceptance rates, we have evidence from numerous individual examples that the level of financial support offered is a significant factor in their decision-making. It should also be noted that conservatoire undergraduate degrees are typically four years in duration, in contrast to three years for a standard university degree in England. The additional cost can discourage students from lower socioeconomic groups, who are often concerned about taking on additional student debt. The fact that the music profession is not typically a high-earning career can lead to parental pressure to choose other pathways, either music at a university or another subject. Based on the experience of the RCM’s existing scholarship programme, providing the assurance of financial support from the outset should encourage students to consider conservatoire study and increase their confidence in accepting a place at the RCM, improving access rates. In designing the evaluation of our financial support, it is intended to study the motivations behind applicants’ decision-making in greater detail, which by the end of the lifetime of the plan should provide a deeper evidence base for the effectiveness of such awards.

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/543e665de4b0fbb2b140b291/t/5b4456f2758d46c38661be76/1531205398488/FEA+Putting+Fairness+in+Context+Report+July+2018.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/be-more-ambitious-on-contextual-admissions-says-the-office-for-students/>

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have had access to the high-quality tuition or the conditions needed for the hours of daily practice needed to succeed as a musician, making them more likely to have technical shortcomings that need addressing, especially at the start of their HE studies, or pastoral challenges requiring additional support. Students from such backgrounds who have been admitted to the RCM previously have often needed significantly more individual support throughout their studies to enable them to succeed. Fortunately, the nature of the RCM's BMus course, which is highly tailored to the individual student and comprises many significant hours of one to one tuition, is conducive to providing this. However, in increasing its proportional intake of students from under-represented backgrounds, the RCM will need to devote additional resources to developing a more structured package of support, to ensure these students have equality of opportunity to succeed in their studies.

In diversifying its student body, the RCM will review its support systems, to ensure students from such backgrounds have the same possibilities as more privileged young people to succeed on the BMus course. The RCM is currently undertaking its regular five-yearly review of the Bachelor of Music programme, which is due to report in early 2020. This review is considering how best to support and monitor students needing additional intervention, along with broader consideration of the curriculum to ensure the programme design provides sufficient scope for students with significantly differing development needs. The RCM will maintain its student continuation rates and degree outcomes at or above the current benchmarks, which will be monitored through annual analysis of the RCM's annual HESA data return.

This will be implemented through the following measures:

- Financial support
  - Offers of bursaries in the form of fee waivers to students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR quintile 1). It is intended to offer a minimum of two bursaries per year, each worth a minimum of half the tuition fee (currently £4,625) each year, for the duration of the course. Awards will be made to students who would not ordinarily meet the criteria to receive an RCM Scholarship but, based on this contextual data, are identified as meriting financial support.
  - Scholarships for students from BAME backgrounds. The RCM will continue to offer three scholarships per year worth full tuition fees (currently £9,250), for the duration of the course. As ethnicity data is not provided to HEIs by UCAS at the point of application, the RCM writes to all UK applicants who apply on time for the BMus course, inviting them to apply for these scholarships if they are from a BAME background. Where there are more BAME students offered places at the RCM than available awards, scholarships are allocated on merit, based on performance at audition.
- Academic and pastoral support
  - The opportunity for contextual offer-holders to attend the RCM's Junior Department for the Spring and Summer terms between acceptance of an offer of a place and enrolment, funded by bursaries, to ease the transition to advanced study.
  - Flagging of relevant students to Heads of Programme and Heads of Faculty for intensified monitoring post-registration.
  - Allocation of a personal academic tutor not just for the first two years but for the duration of the course
  - Provision of additional hours of one to one instrumental tuition if required to address specific technical issues
  - Regular progress reviews
  - Welfare support from Student Services as required

**c) Identification of potential applicants from under-represented groups through RCM Junior Department and partner organisations.**

Applicants who do not benefit from knowledgeable advisors can be poorly prepared for audition, presenting unsuitable or under-rehearsed repertoire and lacking confidence in responding to interview questions. School sixth form advisors and music teachers can be poorly equipped to provide accurate advice on conservatoire admissions. Similar problems can occur with students who are already participating in the RCM's Junior Department, but who lack stability and support in their home life, many of whom may only enter RCMJD in the sixth form and have lacked prior quality tuition. By identifying potential applicants in advance of application, the RCM can provide support and mentoring to facilitate better preparation, increasing the chance of auditioning successfully.

This will be implemented through the following measures:

- Flagging of Junior Department students from target groups and providing additional application support and mentoring.
- Collaboration with external partners to identify potential applicants from under-represented groups and provision of application support, in the form of mentoring, free consultation lessons or mock auditions
- Organisation of INSET training days at RCM for music teachers at schools in target areas, to help them to provide better support to conservatoire applicants.

As the 2020 recruitment cycle will open shortly, it is anticipated that activities targeting external applicants and teachers will first be implemented from the 2021 cycle.

#### d) Providing access to a high-quality music tuition pathway

In order to diversify the pool of potential applicants, the RCM must address the national inequality of access to instrumental tuition and school music education discussed in the first section of this plan. The timeline for development of musical skills of the standard for conservatoire admission is long, and if children do not have access to regular, high-quality music tuition from an early age, it is already highly unlikely that they will ever achieve the required standard.

The RCM's Sparks outreach programme aims to intervene at the earliest stages (recognised as essential based on our analysis of previous versions of the programme, as discussed on page 18), to identify exceptional musicality and provide the opportunity for individual instrumental tuition not otherwise be available in schools, with further opportunities for progression through to Junior Department for the most able. Such long-term development programmes naturally have a "funnel" effect: only a small number of participants are likely to enrol at a conservatoire. Some children may naturally drop out, due to families moving away (a particular problem for those in social housing who may be transferred out of the local area), and many extremely talented musicians may simply decide that they wish to pursue other educational or extra-curricular interests. However, if such long-term provision is not available, there is no chance of such a child ever reaching a conservatoire. Moreover, engagement with music has demonstrable benefits for other areas of educational development:

Research has shown there are benefits of active engagement with music which go beyond the development of musical knowledge and skills and the enjoyment and appreciation of music. Making music can support the development of literacy, numeracy and listening skills.

*Professor Sue Hallam, Dean of the Faculty of Policy and Society, Institute of Education, University of London.*<sup>33</sup>

This will be implemented through the following measures:

- identification of partner primary schools with a large number of children from underrepresented groups through collaborative discussion with strategic partners from the Tri-Borough Music Hub
- delivery of the RCM Sparkles programme, providing the opportunity to embed high-quality training from an early age
- identification of children from underrepresented groups with particular musical aptitude
- provision of a long-term comprehensive programme of high quality music tuition and on-going mentoring support

#### e) Other groups who experience barriers in higher education, including care leavers

To enable the RCM to identify students in these categories, such as carers and estranged students, and provide appropriate support during their studies on a case by case basis, since November 2018 all successful applicants have been invited to [inform the Student Services team in confidence](#) of their personal circumstances prior to commencing study.

Whilst the RCM has prioritised the underrepresented groups where it believes there is a greater chance of making a difference, the College's extensive outreach programme and the success of its strategic partnership with the [Tri-Borough Music Hub](#) (TMBH), including its local orchestras and ensembles, represent the College's contribution to improving access for Care Leavers. TMBH has a close relationship with alternative provision settings, including the local Virtual School, which gives educational support to all children in the care of The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It works with looked-after children, and with their foster carers, social workers and designated teachers, wherever a child may live or go to school. This ensures all vulnerable learners can access the opportunities offered by the TBMH – including instrumental lessons, ensembles and partnership projects. RCM Sparks works with TBMH to support general access to HEIs for looked-after children and has developing project responsibilities in 2019-20 moving forward. Care leavers are eligible for audition fee waivers, to ensure that cost is not a barrier to application. Recognising that care leavers are likely to face some similar challenges to students from POLAR quintile 1 backgrounds, the RCM would offer bespoke support to successful applicants on a case by case basis, including financial support to the same value (a minimum of £4,625 per year), and ensure that they are offered support from Student Services from the outset, including any counselling or mental health support that may be needed.

## 3.2 Student consultation

The RCM Students' Union comprises an elected executive consisting of the President (a sabbatical officer) and representatives from the student body. From the academic year 2019/20, the SU is creating two additional roles, a

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<sup>33</sup> <http://mec.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/powerofmusic.pdf>

Disabilities Officer and a Diversity Officer, who will have specific responsibility for wellbeing and inclusion matters. As a small institution, the SU President and Executive members know a high proportion of their fellow students personally and provide a representative sample of student opinion. The current (2018/19) SU Executive has elected student support, mental health and wellbeing to be a key focus of their work. Student consultation is an established part of the RCM's governance structure, with students represented on the majority of the RCM's committees, including Council, Senate, Welfare & Diversity and Staff-Student Committees among others. Student feedback plays an important role in the regular review cycle of the academic curriculum. In addition, the RCM collaborates closely with the SU to support its events such as Wellbeing Week, International Week and LGBTQ+ Week.

Students were consulted during the development of this plan, through a specific consultation meeting and ongoing dialogue with the SU Executive. In addition, a group of students from a range of backgrounds had the opportunity to share their views on widening access to music education directly with the OfS Director of Fair Access during a visit to the RCM in March 2019.

Students were provided with the RCM's assessment of its performance and invited to comment on the proposed targets and strategic measures. The students agreed with the target groups that had been identified and were very supportive of the RCM working to improve equality of opportunity in these areas. They approved of the proposed strategic measures, with particularly favourable feedback in relation to the provision of bursaries to students from lower socio-economic groups. However, they highlighted the importance of maintaining standards whilst increasing diversity, to ensure that the educational experience for all students remains at the current high level. This has been reflected in our development of bespoke support packages for students admitted through contextual admissions processes, as outlined above. The students also requested that the RCM ensured that there be the opportunity to monitor progress against the plan at regular intervals through the year. It has therefore been added as a standing item at the termly Staff Student Committee, beginning from the Autumn term 2019, and the RCMSU Executive have been informed of this.

Responsibility for monitoring the RCM's Access and Participation Plan sits with a variety of committees, including Welfare & Diversity Committee, which includes members of the Students' Union and student Residence Assistants at the RCM's residential halls, Prince Consort Village. The SU will continue to be consulted on recommendations following evaluation at each stage of the lifecycle of this Plan. Students also play a highly active role in the delivery of the RCM's outreach work through the Sparks programme. Student feedback has been a significant part of the ongoing RCM Sparks evaluation and will directly feed into how the RCM moves forward with this area of work. The Sparks team also meets with their student teams to hold reflection sessions at the mid-point and/or end of projects, which shape small in-year changes and larger changes when recruiting to these roles for subsequent years.

## 3.3 Evaluation strategy

### 3.3a Strategic Context

There are four main strands to the RCM's strategic measures, requiring different approaches to evaluation. Much of the activity committed to in this plan will begin in the 2020-21 academic year, and the 2019-20 academic year will be used to develop the detail of our interventions and ensure that impact-focused evaluation is built into the programme design, using sector best practice where appropriate in the context of a specialist music institution.

Given the small size of the RCM and the small numbers of participants in each of the strategic measures (in most instances fewer than ten participants each year), evaluation activity will be proportionate. For the same reasons there are limitations to the degree to which the small datasets will be able to demonstrate causality conclusively. Where appropriate, use will be made of existing datasets (e.g. HESA student data) and mechanisms for monitoring (e.g. existing committees), to ensure that our evaluation processes are fully embedded as part of our whole provider approach to access and participation, and not simply an add-on. Within all our programmes it will be necessary also to consider change at an individual level, especially given that a significant proportion of our work will be with very young children who develop at differing rates. The RCM's Access and Participation Plan Working Group used the OfS Evaluation Toolkit to inform the development of its evaluation strategy.

### 3.3b Evaluation Design and Implementation

#### Contextual admissions

The impact of our contextual admissions interventions will be evaluated annually through analysis of internal admissions data and institutional HESA student data at the end of each recruitment cycle, which will be assessed primarily by the Senate Executive Committee, but also other relevant bodies, such as Staff Student Committee and Council.

### **Financial, academic and pastoral support**

The RCM's annual intake is too small to make effective use of the OfS Financial Support Evaluation Statistical Tool to analyse the effectiveness of our financial support. However, it is intended to adapt the survey questions in the tool in order to gather data on whether financial support makes a difference to decision-making by applicants within the target groups. It is planned that students will be surveyed a few months after enrolment and data will be collated for each of the cohorts during the lifetime of this plan, beginning with the first cohort subject to this plan, in Autumn 2020. The impact of pastoral support measures on beneficiaries will be evaluated by assessing their academic progress, both on an individual basis at the end of each academic year, and as part of the RCM's annual monitoring for the BMus course, which is reported to Senate.

### **Mentoring of prospective applicants**

It is intended to develop the RCM's initiatives for mentoring of prospective applicants and delivery of training for staff during the 2019/20 academic year, in readiness for the 2021 recruitment cycle, thus plans for evaluation of this area of activity are currently at an early stage of development. However, it is anticipated that this will involve cross-referencing information about participants with subsequent application and enrolment data to monitor the impact of this work.

### **Skills development through Sparks Juniors**

As previously mentioned, the RCM is currently undergoing an external evaluation of whole of its outreach work delivered through Sparks, and this evaluation will inform the future APP evaluation strategy for this area of work. It is planned to appoint external consultants with the necessary skills to design and implement a suitable programme of impact-focused evaluation in time for the first cohort starting in September 2020 and it is expected that this will be carried out annually throughout the lifetime of this plan.

## **3.3c Learning to shape improvements**

The RCM has formed an Access and Participation Plan Working Group, which will meet on a termly basis to ensure delivery of the plan and to review its effectiveness, at least during the initial implementation phase. In all cases progress against targets will be monitored at institutional level by the RCM's Council, Senate, Audit Committee (which includes both the RCM's internal and external auditors), Staff Student Committee and Welfare & Diversity Committee. With the exception of Audit Committee, each of these committees includes student representation. Furthermore, from Autumn 2019 the Access and Participation Plan will be a standing item on the termly Staff Student Committee, to ensure that students are kept informed of the evaluation of our work and can monitor progress. Where it is considered that a measure is proving ineffective in achieving its aim, a review will be undertaken by relevant team members and a step-by-step plan to remedy the situation developed at the earliest possible stage. It should be noted that the RCM's Senate Executive Committee meets fortnightly in term-time and therefore is able to respond swiftly should an intervention prove ineffective.

## **3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan**

The effectiveness of each of these interventions will be monitored regularly through the mechanisms outlined below. This includes monitoring of the RCM's core targets but also the written commitments contained in this plan. The key individuals responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the plan are the Deputy Director, in conjunction with the Deputy Academic Registrar (whose role has been enhanced to take on this additional responsibility).

### **Contextual admissions**

Primary responsibility for monitoring this area of work will lie with the RCM's Senate Executive Committee. Regular updates will be required through the year and reported on an annual basis to other committees including Staff Student Committee, Senate and Council. In the event that our proposed use of contextual admissions proved ineffective, the RCM's Council and Senate Executive Committee would, in the first instance, require an assessment of whether the policy was being implemented appropriately by audition panels, which would involve measures such as members of senior management sitting in on auditions of contextually flagged applicants to moderate assessments and to enhance training.

## Financial, academic and pastoral support

The impact of bursaries on acceptance rates will be reviewed throughout the year alongside the existing monitoring process for uptake of RCM scholarships. Reports are reviewed at regular intervals through the recruitment cycle by the Senate Executive Committee. Monitoring will include more general monitoring of the student support elements contained in this plan, for example the provision of support for students with mental health issues.

Students identified as requiring a bespoke package of support will be identified to their one to one professors and personal tutors, who will be expected to report any causes for concern about progress as soon as they arise. Heads of Faculty and the Head of Undergraduate Programmes will check the progress of these students at regular intervals through the year, to ensure they are on track.

Whilst the RCM has not identified significant gaps in performance in relation to success and progression and therefore has not specific targets in these areas, it is planned to maintain current performance in these areas through the lifetime of the plan. This will be monitored as part of the monitoring of the effectiveness of the support packages offered to applicants admitted on the basis of contextual admissions, to ensure that the support they receive provides them with equal opportunity to succeed on the BMus course. This will also include ongoing monitoring of the performance of students from other groups that have not been specifically targeted for access purposes in this plan, including mature students and students with a disability.

### Mentoring of prospective applicants

Primary responsibility for monitoring this area of work will lie with the RCM's Senate Executive Committee, whose membership includes all Heads of Faculty and the Head of Junior Programmes, who will play key roles in this area of work. Regular updates will be required through the year and reported on an annual basis to other committees including Staff Student Committee, Senate and Council.

### Skills development through Sparkles/Sparks Juniors

The outcomes of the proposed annual evaluation exercise will be monitored by various committees, including Welfare & Diversity committee, Staff Student Committee, Senate and Council.

## 4. PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

Clear, accessible and timely information will be available for applicants and students on the fees that we charge and the financial support that we will offer. This information will make it clear exactly what level of financial support we are offering students in each year of their studies. The information will be provided on our website and in our prospectus. We will provide timely information to UCAS for the UCAS Conservatoires admissions service and to the SLC to enable them to populate their applicant-facing web services.

Presently fees for students from other EU countries are aligned to the rate set for home students, although it is not clear from Government whether this arrangement will continue for EU students beginning courses in 2021-22.

This Access and Participation Plan will be published on the RCM's website alongside our previous Access Agreements [here](#), where it will be available to all applicants.

## 5. APPENDIX

*The OfS will append the following items from the fees and targets and investment documents when an access and participation plan is published:*

- 1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)*
- 2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)*
- 3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)*

**Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees**

\*course type not listed

**Inflationary statement:**

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we intend to increase fees each year using the RPI-X

**Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£5,000
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

# Targets and investment plan

## 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Royal College of Music

Provider UKPRN: 10007778

### Investment summary

The OFS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OFS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

#### Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OFS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£303,977.00	£311,577.00	£319,366.00	£327,350.00	£335,534.00
Access (pre-16)	£271,660.00	£278,452.00	£285,413.00	£292,548.00	£299,862.00
Access (post-16)	£14,700.00	£15,068.00	£15,444.00	£15,830.00	£16,226.00
Access (adults and the community)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Access (other)	£17,617.00	£18,057.00	£18,509.00	£18,972.00	£19,446.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£114,050.00	£160,440.00	£179,084.00	£197,731.00	£197,881.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£43,584.00	£44,674.00	£45,790.00	£46,935.00	£48,109.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£971,775.00	£981,030.00	£990,285.00	£1,005,710.00	£1,021,135.00
<b>Access investment</b>	23.0%	23.6%	23.2%	22.6%	23.1%
<b>Financial support</b>	1.9%	3.8%	5.6%	7.4%	7.2%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	4.5%	4.6%	4.6%	4.7%	4.7%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	29.4%	31.9%	33.4%	34.6%	35.0%

