

ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

April 2024

1. Introduction

Social media has transformed communications. It provides many benefits and opportunities including promoting the Royal College of Music's success, developing national and international reach, improving engagement with key audiences, exchanging ideas and attracting outstanding staff and students.

The Marketing & Communications team manage the RCM's institutional accounts and use social media to communicate with prospective and existing students, alumni, supporters, music industry, funders, visitors and music lovers. Some common areas of activity include:

- External relations and public relations: social media can assist the RCM communicate its mission & purpose to prospective and existing students, alumni, music industry, visitors, supporters and music lovers.
- Student recruitment and student life: through behind-the-scenes, student-led, useful and practical content social media can assist the College's recruitment activities.
- RCM community: through celebrating and sharing our successes social media can assist with brand awareness and advocacy.
- Public offer: through auditory and visual content social media can assist with engaging audiences and participation.
- Research: through academic and accessible content social media can assist with raising the profile of our research activity.
- Alumni relations: social media can assist in enhancing engagement with graduates.

However, social media also comes with risk including reputational damage arising from misuse, the sharing of confidential information and the additional responsibilities regarding staff-student interactions.

2. Purpose of guidance

This policy is designed to maximise the benefits and opportunities of social media as a communications channel, while supporting staff in communicating safely and responsibly online whilst protecting the College's reputation.

The policy applies to all staff of the College and equally applies to casual staff, contractors and voluntary workers. It also applies to members of staff working elsewhere on collaborative programmes or on College-related placements, trips or conferences.

3. Definition of social media

Social media is a form of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content such as images and video. It includes social forums, blogs, video and image-sharing websites.

Social media channels covered by this Policy include but are not limited to:

- Social networking websites such as Facebook and WeChat
- Video and photo sharing websites such as Instagram and YouTube
- Micro-blogging sites such as X
- Professional networking sites such as LinkedIn

4. General guidance

The RCM Marketing & Communications team manages the institutional social media accounts for the College. These channels have a strategic purpose to communicate with key target audiences and to positively promote the Royal College of Music brand.

Staff are encouraged to interact with the official social media accounts (such as resharing, commenting and liking posts) through their personal accounts. It is best practice for the RCM's official social media accounts to lead with any public announcements. Sharing and amplification of these announcements through personal accounts to support the work of the College is then welcomed.

The College is currently active on:

- X ([@RCMLondon](#))
- Facebook ([@RoyalCollegeofMusic](#))
- Instagram ([@RCMLondon](#))
- Threads ([@RCMLondon](#))
- YouTube ([@RCMLondon](#))
- LinkedIn ([@RoyalCollegeofMusic](#))

There is no obligation for any staff member to have, engage or connect with the Royal College of Music on social media.

5. Terms of use

5.1 Advertising

All paid advertising on social media should go through the RCM's official social media accounts. The RCM does not permit individuals to pay to boost or promote posts without approval of Marketing & Communications.

5.2 Affiliated accounts

The setting up of affiliated accounts on behalf of the RCM is not permitted without prior approval from Marketing & Communications. Approved affiliated accounts must also follow the terms of use detailed in this policy.

5.3 Confidentiality

When posting on social media please ensure you do not reveal confidential or sensitive information related to the College. This includes business sensitive information, embargoed announcements, internal consultations or personal information. This includes in the form of text, image or video content.

5.4 Crisis management

The RCM's official social media accounts provide an important channel of communication in the event of a crisis. Information shared in such circumstances must be very carefully controlled to ensure it is timely, consistent and factually accurate.

In the event of a crisis all communication from the RCM must be issued via the institutional social media accounts. This will reduce the chance of misinformation and content taken out of context. Individuals should not make any comments or updates via personal or affiliated accounts without prior authorisation. Any questions or enquiries received during a crisis must be referred to the Director of Communications.

5.5 Engaging with students over 18

Social media brings an additional dimension to staff-student interactions and can be far more informal in nature. You should be aware of this when interacting with students via social media, particularly when considering becoming "friends" with students on social media. You should never share information with students or interact with their comments or opinions in any environment that you would not share in a more formal public setting. Before using social media to engage students over 18 years, the RCM advises staff to consider carefully if social media is the most appropriate way to communicate.

Social media can be a valuable tool for publicly celebrating students' achievements. However, other forms of communication such as RCM email, Microsoft Teams or Learn might be more appropriate for teaching and learning purposes than sending messages to students via social media platforms. A face-to-face chat or a quick telephone call can also be a more effective way of communicating, particularly if the topic is sensitive, confidential or very urgent.

5.6 Engaging with students under 18

Staff should not use social media to interact and contact young people who are under 18 years old. Do not accept a request from or add a young person under 18 as a friend on any social media platform. All communication with students who are under 18 years old must be an official RCM email account and/or software such as Microsoft Teams.

Sharing content, such as videos or photos, of young people under 18 engaging with College activities can only be used with prior and explicit consent from parents, guardians and/or carers. Please refer to the RCM Photography and Filming Policy for Children and Young People for further details.

5.7 Freedom of speech

The RCM supports freedom of expression and staff are free to express their views.

Staff should not post or share content that incites hatred, promotes or advocates terrorism or radicalisation, or that discriminates on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political or religious belief; or which contravenes the RCM's Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Safety policy or Behaviour at Work policy.

The RCM's social media accounts promote and encourage interaction and conversations with our followers. However, the RCM reserves the right to delete any comments that are off-topic, abusive, contain profanity, are threatening in tone or devolve into personal attacks.

Inappropriate activity on social media, including deliberate attempts to damage the reputation of the institution, may constitute misconduct and result in disciplinary action.

5.8 Online etiquette

Staff should be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything they post online. The RCM advises against posting anything that you would not wish to be in the public domain or would not be willing to say face-to-face.

Where a staff member is concerned by any activity they have seen on social media, or if a staff member receives negative attention online, you can report concerns and access information via the [online incident reporting form](#) on Learn.

Where a staff member has a grievance related to work or a work colleague, these should be discussed offline with their manager and using established routes rather than to airing concerns on social media. The College's Staff Grievance Procedure is available on Muse.

5.9 Press and media

If you are approached for press or media contact regarding content you have posted, which relates to the RCM, this should be referred to the Director of Communications.

5.10 Social media in personal life

It is recognised that many employees will choose to make use of social media in their personal life. Although they are not representing the RCM in this context it must be understood that conduct in use of social media is relevant where the individual is recognised as being an employee.

In the context of personal use of social media the following guidelines should be followed:

- Always get permission from the individuals concerned before posting personal information and/or images in relation to colleagues, students, partners of the University or any other third party affiliated to the University.

- Take care in using social media that you do not contravene the principles of the Equality and Diversity Policy and Respect for the RCM community. Ensure that content could not be considered derogatory, offensive, defamatory, harassing or bullying towards others, discriminatory or reputationally damaging to the RCM.
- Staff are responsible for all content published on their channels and should take steps to ensure it's clear any views expressed are their own, and not of the College.
- Stating that *views are your own* doesn't take away the responsibility to ensure that what you share in the public domain meets the RCM's values of respect as detailed above.

The RCM is not responsible for the content of any staff member's personal social media accounts. Nor is the RCM responsible for social media generated by third-party users that mention the institution.

5.11 Video and audio

When taking photos or video, please always ensure you have the necessary permissions in place from the subject, and those in the background, before posting. Where content consists of individuals or small groups, they should be aware of how you will use their image and have the right to object.

The sharing of any video content from the College's performance programme is best done by re-sharing content from the RCM's official accounts. As permissions are required to make video content available, such as from visiting artists, conductors and copyright, the RCM regrets not all content can be made available publicly.

The sharing of any professional photography from the College is best done by re-sharing content from the RCM's official accounts. Separate permissions are required to make official photography available from individual accounts and the photographer should always be credited.

6. RCM policies and guidelines

The policy should be read in conjunction with the following other College documents:

- [ICT Policy](#)
- [General Regulations for Students](#)
- [Grievance Procedure \(Staff\)](#)
- [Behaviour at Work Policy](#)
- [RCM JD Child Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [RCM Photography and Filming Policy for Children and Young People](#)
- [Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Safety](#)
- [Disciplinary Procedure \(Conduct\)](#)