

RCM STRATEGIC PLAN

2017–27



SECURING THE FUTURE OF MUSIC THROUGH WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION: HERITAGE AND INNOVATION

THIS STRATEGIC PLAN

This document sets out the College's main priorities for development and focus in the final two years of the current Strategic Plan and is intended for members of the College's community, for our stakeholders and the general public.

Reflecting on the previous three-year phase of the Strategic Plan, the RCM's students, staff and audiences have continued to benefit from the significant investment the RCM has made into its Estate via the More Music Campaign, which in turn has allowed the College to expand its student numbers and widen the range of teaching, learning and research programmes. For the fourth consecutive year, the RCM has been named Global No 1 in the QS World University rankings for the Performing Arts, and careful stewardship of the College's finances has allowed the RCM to maintain a strong balance sheet against a challenging fiscal climate. In 2024, the RCM appointed its new Director James Williams succeeding Professor Colin Lawson and in March 2025, Andrew Moore took up the role of Artistic Director.

The past three years have also brought substantial challenges to Higher Education (HE) and the country's wider music education ecosystem. A volatile geo-political climate has driven rising inflation and a change of UK government in July 2024 has brought a new set of priorities, the impact of which are still unclear in relation to HE, the performing arts and the place for music in UK schools' curriculum.

This updated Plan starts with a refreshed ten-year Vision for the RCM to 2027, it goes on to our priority initiatives for the final years period 2025–27 and finishes with the guiding objectives and principles in the main continuing areas of the College's activity.

MISSION

The Royal College of Music provides specialised musical education and professional training at the highest international level for performers and composers, within an environment that stimulates innovation and research. This enables 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.

A contemporary ethos: innovation that builds on tradition

The Royal College of Music has a relationship with people throughout their lives and is committed to life-long musical relationships with all who have a link with us, notably alumni. We believe in the power of people to enrich the student experience with passion and commitment. The finest music from the best musicians in the world harnesses innovation and the potential it unleashes. Everyone is welcome at the RCM, whatever their background; indeed, accessibility and diversity define the College and all its activities. Global leadership is based at our newly reimagined South Kensington campus and extends online throughout the world. A new era of connectivity binds the community together.

Innovative, ambitious, distinctive and accessible since its foundation

The Royal College of Music provides world-class music education that nurtures future generations of performers, composers, creative leaders and thinkers, allowing them to enjoy significant global careers in all areas of the music industry and beyond. Our iconic campus is in the heart of London's cultural area of South Kensington and our distinguished staff, alumni and unmatched performance opportunities demonstrate excellence of the highest order. Innovation is central to the RCM and has been since we were first founded. An illustrious heritage, coupled with state-of-the-art digital technology, provides an unparalleled, dynamic learning environment. Our values anchor our mission, and access and inclusivity are at the heart of this strategy as we extend our reach and engage with a global audience in new and expanded ways.

RCM IN 2027 – A TEN-YEAR VISION FOR THE RCM

The Royal College of Music provides music education and professional training at the highest international level, through commitment to the transformative power of music and its own founding principles of excellence, advocacy and access. The RCM will remain agile and adapt to the changing landscape facing High Education, the wider industry and the music education ecosystem and will continue driving innovation to lead classical music's evolution.

As a natural first choice for the most talented students from around the world, the RCM is consistently recognised as an international leader in developing versatile and innovative creators, communicators and curators within the world of music and beyond. It embraces the ideals of an inclusive, open and just society, supporting students from diverse social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. It fulfils its obligation as a relevant, persuasive and world-leading advocate for the future of music, as an agent for positive and meaningful cultural change. The RCM's activities are supported by a brand identity that is recognised globally as a beacon of excellence. By 2027:

- The College offers transformative programmes of study that develop artists with advanced musical skills, knowledge, and understanding for the world today. Our vibrant, professionally informed learning environment draws upon performance, research, community initiatives, and global collaboration to equip graduates with the versatility, confidence, and vision to pursue flourishing careers in the future music profession. Our programmes recognise individual student needs and provide tailored support, enabling each student to fulfil their potential.
- The College's research community and resources, including the RCM Collections, interact with and enrich our curriculum and artistic performance programme, promoting a College-wide culture of innovation in musical practice and thought. Staff and doctoral students are supported to develop their research in an environment that promotes ambitious and innovative projects, including practice research, collaborative research, and knowledge exchange with external partners. The College's research and knowledge exchange impact is visible nationally and internationally, through a diverse range of high-quality research outputs, public engagement activities, and imaginative approaches to disseminating new insights.
- The RCM's artistic programmes both reflects and leads professional composition and performance activity. Opportunities are provided for students to develop the necessary skills for successful careers and to practise them externally through partnerships with major professional organisations. Leadership and innovation are encouraged and supported to extend reach, diversity and representation, and to challenge and fresh our artforms.
- World-class faculty, staff and visiting artists play a critical role within a working environment that provides an invaluable connection to the profession.
- The student experience and public engagement are further cultivated within a wide-ranging estates plan, inflected by a continued commitment to a responsible and ambitious environmental policy.
- The RCM collaborates with its community of supporters and alumni to cultivate lifelong relationships with the College. The development of imaginative and tailored opportunities for philanthropy ensures the College's sustainability and growth in this area.

RCM 2025–27

Alongside the continued delivery of RCM's full range of programmes, over this two-year period the RCM will focus on the following key objectives:

- Strengthen the RCM's financial resilience through increased earned income and an expansion of the RCM's philanthropic income generation.
- Following a comprehensive curriculum review in 2025-26, the College will implement a refreshed BMus programme from September 2026, reflecting an enhanced programme structure and assessment framework. The new programme design will focus on developing RCM graduates who are highly skilled, resilient, and versatile artists, equipped for the music profession of the future.
- Building on our existing Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) strategy, we will further our strategic preparations for Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029. Research active staff will receive guidance and support with a view to producing internationally excellent outputs and maximising their research impact. We will work collaboratively across the College to develop the evidence-base for our REF case studies and to strengthen our institutional research culture at all levels.
- The College will engage with internal and external stakeholders to refresh the RCM's Artistic Strategy, enabling the performance programme to intersect more closely with the refreshed curriculum, the RCM's research and knowledge exchange programmes and an expanded range of partnerships with professional performing arts and education organisations.
- Continue our pursuit to diversify our international strategy, including student recruitment, stakeholder and partner engagement, taking and creating opportunities where these emerge in a fast-changing world.
- Define priorities for estates and facilities enhancement that directly support the student experience and public engagement, and undertake a feasibility study which in turn will support the evolution of the next capital campaign.
- Develop enhanced engagement with professors, identifying ways to better support their work and engagement with the RCM, the profession, and support for student learning.
- Develop further the RCM's advocacy role, convening the sector to make the case to Government for the value of a conservatoire education and for provision of music as part of the UK's core school curriculum.
- Minimise the environmental, social, and economic impacts of our operations. Apply a mature and multidimensional approach to sustainability that encourages members of the RCM to respond to environmental and societal challenges in our day-to-day operations, in the profession, and across the globe.
- Embrace the creative potential of new technologies including AI, to enhance the staff and student experience.
- Develop the framework for the RCM's next strategy from 2027, embracing opportunities relating to the RCM's 150th Anniversary in 2032/33 and RCMJD 100th anniversary in 2027.

GUIDING OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES FOR ONGOING INITIATIVES IN THE MAIN AREAS OF THE COLLEGE'S ACTIVITY, WITH RENEWED EMPHASIS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACROSS ALL AREAS

Our guiding objectives and principles are:

Research & Knowledge Exchange (KE)

- Ensure an environment that supports the development of all RCM staff and students to engage in enquiry leading to the creation of new knowledge.
- Substantially raise the RCM's national and international research profile.
- Aspire to be a world leader in practice research.
- Identify and maximise opportunities for industry partnerships and commercialisation through the development of Knowledge Exchange.
- Further refine RCM research degrees programmes, to attract candidates in appropriate fields who can become the next generation of research leaders.

Learning and teaching

- Offer holistic programmes of study that respond to the needs of our global society, enabling each student to fulfil their aspirations as artists, educators and researchers of the future.
- Nurture artistic innovation through a curriculum that embraces critical enquiry, current professional practice and inclusive approaches to learning and teaching.
- Draw upon a range of cutting-edge technologies to support and enhance face-to-face teaching and learning, including links with international artists, scholars, and partner institutions such as the Global Conservatoire.
- Equip students with the skills, support, confidence and resourcefulness to shape healthy and sustainable careers as professional musicians and educators.
- Extend our RCM student community by offering specialist, high-quality distance learning programmes, modules and short courses in appropriate subject areas.
- Recruit outstanding teachers and support their continuing development by promoting a shared understanding of learning and teaching excellence, especially in the areas of performance, composition and research-led teaching.

Artistic programme

- Present an artistic programme with learning, excellence and diversity at its heart, acknowledging and promoting our roles as both curators and creators.
- Recognise evolution and divergence in professional practice, including different modes of performance, different spaces and the opportunities afforded by new media.
- Provide regular opportunities for all students to perform in a suitable environment for their current stage of learning, and ensuring transparency in the choices made.
- Work with international artists at the highest levels.
- Create opportunities for student innovation and experimentation.
- Use composition and performance as a learning environment and training for the standards and demands of the musical profession.

- Ensure all students experience teaching, composition and performance in all suitable genres – solo, chamber and large ensemble, and performance of compositions.
- Create the environment for students to develop their skills in confident, expressive, innovative and independent performance, and to engage with audiences both live and online.
- Provide the tools and experience for students to gain confidence and fluency in curation, programming and presentational skills with audiences.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (including Junior Department and Sparks)

- Broaden the diversity of the RCM community, including professors, visiting artists, other staff and the student population, to ensure we are doing everything we can to remove barriers for access to music.
- Nurture a culture of respect and belonging that is owned and valued by the RCM's community of students and staff.
- Take the lead in bringing a wide range of repertoire to learners and audiences, by sharing, discussing, rehearsing and performing a greater range of repertoire by under-represented composers as a central part of our core curriculum and artistic programme.
- Advocate for the importance of music education at all ages through leadership and example.
- Increase our relevance to the local community through a programme of public engagement featuring meaningful projects and partnerships.
- Develop further the profile of the RCM Junior Department as the UK's leading transition programme into conservatoire training for students from all backgrounds.
- Learning and participation projects are more collaborative and have expanded reach across the UK. Working with staff and students from across the College and our external partners, identify and develop outstanding young musical talent, promoting inclusive progression opportunities internally and externally.
- Integrate Junior Department and our learning and participation programme, within a strong and unified profile that is seamless with and supported by the College's HE work. Develop a range of ways to bring the musically gifted and/or enthusiastic of all ages into involvement with the inspirational learning experience on offer.

Supporting our professors and administrative staff

- Bring professors closer to the priorities of the College. Make new professorial appointments that enhance the RCM's reputation for quality teaching, in a way that reflects all the markets in which the College needs to be competitive.
- Maintain a supportive professional environment that enables staff to realise their full potential and share tacit knowledge. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all professors and administrative staff.
- Provide an innovative and comprehensive programme of professional development and training.

Environment and social responsibility

- Minimise the environmental, social and economic impacts of our operations. Apply a mature and multi-dimensional approach to sustainability that encourages members of the RCM to respond to environmental and societal challenges in our day-to-day operations, in the profession and across the globe.
- Continuously improve our environmental performance through implementation of appropriate environmental initiatives and monitoring of data.
- Achieve net zero carbon by 2040 across scopes 1,2 and 3, with an interim reduction target of 73% against a 2005 baseline by 2027. Develop short-term initiatives which engage students and staff with the environmental issues that directly affect their future.

- Seek innovative ways to meet our sustainability objectives in all our activities, and ensure that our values are embedded within our community, our research and our teaching:
 - embed sustainability into teaching and research
 - support talent, preserve culture and expand access to classical music
 - deliver sustainable operations, events and performances
 - deliver sustainability with partners and suppliers
 - foster a healthy, inclusive and supportive environment
- Aim to be a centre of excellence in environmental management within higher education, and to promote environmental best practice.

Sustainability & fundraising

- Optimise long-term supporter development with donor-led, tailored relationship management based on defined needs.
- Fund new specific projects based on integrated fundraising appeals, following new regulatory guidelines and aligned with strategic priorities.
- Increase the predictability of income with a focus on regular giving asks, and high-volume appeals and activity.
- Support international presence with increased investment in Development communications and engagement overseas.
- Expand and enhance commercial potential via new facilities and strategic partnerships with the cultural sector as well as the corporate sector where appropriate.
- Continue to develop a scholarships programme that enables RCM to remain globally competitive.

APPENDIX: CONTEXT FOR THE MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission Statement supplements the Objects of the Royal College of Music as set out in the 1883 Charter:

- a) the advancement of the Art of Music by means of a central teaching and examining body charged with the duty of providing musical instruction of the highest class, and of rewarding with academical degrees and certificates of proficiency and otherwise persons, whether educated or not at the College, who on examination may prove themselves worthy of such distinctions and evidences of attainment; and
- b) the promotion and supervision of such musical instruction in schools and elsewhere, as may be thought most conducive to the cultivation and dissemination of the Art of Music in the United Kingdom; and
- c) generally the encouragement and promotion of the cultivation of music as an art throughout the world.

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

'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.'