



Royal Conservatoire
of Scotland

**ADMISSIONS
POLICY**

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ADMISSIONS POLICY

1. PREAMBLE

This policy provides information to enquirers, applicants, offer holders, and advisors about recruitment, selection and admissions at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS). It is the policy framework on which all staff who are involved in recruitment, selection, and admissions activity base their approach.

The Conservatoire is committed to providing an environment for learning that emphasises the possibility of achieving potential and enabling safe spaces. As such our admissions processes are designed to strengthen and protect the Conservatoire's community of learning.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland embraces a diverse population of students and staff. We believe that excellence can be achieved through recognising and celebrating the value of every individual, and are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all of our activities.

We are committed to developing and upholding a culture based on respect, inclusiveness, transparency and open-mindedness. We will proactively advance equity and inclusive practice in our activities and through effective and collaborative action, ensure that we all have the right to be seen, heard and celebrated.

How we undertake the recruitment and admissions process is underpinned by this statement.

2. SCOPE

This Policy is concerned with the admission to Conservatoire's taught academic higher education portfolio which includes full-time or part-time programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research (SCQF level 7 to level 12).

This Policy excludes short course provision where applicants register for individual modules, CPD, training provision and work-based learning courses.

Aspects of this policy will be relevant to these courses; they will be referred to in other policies and procedures as appropriate.

3. PEOPLE

The Conservatoire's Team Approach

The management of recruitment and admissions processes reflects our commitment to personalised approaches in which academic leads for programmes direct recruitment and admissions.

To do this the academics work with the Conservatoire's recruitment, admissions, and marketing teams collaboratively to ensure that those offered a place have a realistic chance of success on their chosen programme and have opportunity at application to demonstrate potential.

Head of Admissions

For admissions purposes, the Director of the relevant school/directorate and the Head of Academic Administration & Support are jointly the Head of Admissions. As such they are accountable to the Principal and Deputy Principal for decisions taken.

Recruitment and Admissions Team

The administration of the admissions process is undertaken by the Recruitment and Admissions Teams led by the Senior International Recruitment Lead and managed by the Assistant Registrar (Recruitment and Admissions)

This team is comprised of the following:

ROLE/ AREA	Contact
Senior International Recruitment Lead	Mhairi Macfarlane m.macfarlane3@rcs.ac.uk
Assistant Registrar (Recruitment and Admissions)	Leanne Stirrat l.stirrat1@rcs.ac.uk
Recruitment Team	hello@rcs.ac.uk
Admissions Team	admissions@rcs.ac.uk
UKVI Compliance & International Student Experience Manager	Gillian Mackenzie g.mackenzie@rcs.ac.uk
International Student Experience Administrator (ISEA)	mailto:P.McCluskey@rcs.ac.ukinternational@rcs.ac.uk
Additionally, from the Deputy Principal's Office, Head of Fair Access – supports access for students from widening participation backgrounds	Jesse Paul j.paul@rcs.ac.uk

4. APPLICATION PROCESSES

Application Method

Applicants to degree programmes (except BA Performance in BSL and English) apply online either through UCAS Conservatoires (<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/conservatoires>) or UCAS Undergraduate (<https://www.ucas.com>) depending on the programme of study as outlined on the website programme pages and [how to apply](#) webpage.

In addition to applying through UCAS, all applicants are asked to create an Acceptd account (<https://app.getacceptd.com/rcs>) for audition scheduling and where applicable, audition video/ portfolio upload.

All applications received by the published UCAS Undergraduate and UCAS Conservatoires deadlines will be given equal consideration.

Programmes within the UCAS Undergraduate scheme may participate in Clearing where places remain available. Clearing is not available for any UCAS Conservatoires programmes. Any programmes entering Clearing will be advertised on our website and managed in accordance with standard UCAS Clearing procedures.

Application and Audition Fees

Application fees are administered by UCAS.

Audition fees are paid either through UCAS Conservatoires or Acceptd, depending on the programme. The Conservatoire is committed to ensuring fair access to a conservatoire education for students who have the talent and potential to benefit from it, regardless of their background. In support of this, audition fee waivers are offered to applicants whom financial hardship may be a barrier to auditioning. If you are in receipt of free school meals and have marked this on your UCAS application, then you are not required to fill out this form as your audition fees will be waived via UCAS. To apply for the fee waiver, applicants who meet the eligibility criteria are asked to complete the fee waiver form (<https://www.rcs.ac.uk/study/audition-fee-waiver-form/>) and provide supporting evidence.

Entry Requirements

Admissions criteria, including minimum academic entry requirements, are subject to annual review by the appropriate Programme Committee. This review is based upon a comparison of the Student Success Profile of Non-Standard Entry Students and standard entry students.

The Programme Committee's report will be considered by the relevant School Management Team and the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. Proposed amendments require the approval of the Academic Board.

The primary basis for admission to RCS is the assessment of practical ability through the audition/interview/portfolio processes. However, applicants must also demonstrate that they have the academic skills necessary to succeed on their chosen programme.

Academic Requirements

All Conservatoire programmes publish minimum academic entry requirements except BA in Performance in British Sign Language and English and MA/MFA Acting/Directing Classical and Contemporary Text (CCT) which have no formal academic entry requirements. Admissions criteria are publicly accessible on the Conservatoire website on the individual programme webpages (www.rcs.ac.uk) and on the relevant UCAS website.

Admissions assess international qualifications and make decisions on appropriate international equivalencies. These equivalencies are based on information provided by the UK ENIC, the designated United Kingdom national agency responsible for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills.

English Language Requirements

Unless otherwise indicated, the language of instruction is English. All applicants whose first language is not English will be required to provide evidence that their English language level meets the entrance requirements for their chosen programme.

Students requiring a Student Visa to study in the UK must have a valid, recognised English proficiency test score that remains within the test provider's validity period. For a complete list of approved tests, please refer to the website: <https://www.rcs.ac.uk/study/international-students/english-requirements/>

International Applicants

As a world leading performing arts institution, we welcome applications from appropriately qualified international applicants. The following regulations apply to international students:

- Statutory regulations as set and monitored by UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI), which govern the ability to participate in learning within the UK, will be incorporated into the Conservatoire's decision-making processes. These include:
 - the ability to demonstrate an **appropriate level of written and spoken English** which enables full participation in the learning and assessment activities required by RCS: Note that UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) imposes minimum English language qualifications in respect of international applicants who require a Student Visa to study in the UK.
 - the demonstration of **academic progression**;
 - the applicant's **right to enter and or remain in the UK** for the duration of the chosen programme; and
 - the ability to demonstrate fulfilment of **UKVI's financial requirements**.
- International applicants must pay a deposit to secure their programme offer (unless in receipt of full funding). The deposit is non-refundable except in the following conditions - If your visa application is refused (unless on the basis of fraud), or if you fail to meet the conditions of your offer, we will refund 90% of your deposit (10% is retained as an administration charge). If you have to decline your place due to exceptional circumstances beyond your control (e.g. medical/family), we will consider a request for a refund on an individual basis and will require supporting documentation.

Non-Standard Entry Statement

The Conservatoire welcomes applications from individuals whose academic qualifications do not meet (in terms of equivalence) the normal minimum entrance requirements, where specified.

- E. Having satisfied the audition panel that they otherwise meet the selection criteria and demonstrate that they have the capacity to pursue the proposed programme, such applicants will be considered through the Conservatoire's Non-Standard Entry Policy (see: Appendix B: Non-Standard Entry Information: direct entry / accreditation of prior learning guidance).

Note that UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) imposes minimum English Language qualifications in respect of international applicants who require a visa to study in the UK that must be met. Tailored support will be provided to all non-standard entry students on the basis of a pre-entry assessment of individual need.

Applicants who do not meet the criteria for their selected programme at the time of audition, but who are deemed to have the potential to meet the criteria at a later stage may be invited to undertake some bespoke continuing education (see below).

Continuing Education: School of Music

The School of Music's Continuing Education programme, which is offered at two levels – higher and advanced – enables the creation of a bespoke programme based on an assessment of the particular needs of the individual student. Such individualised programmes may be used to facilitate access to Conservatoire programmes, transfer between programmes and as continuing professional development. Applications are made direct to the Conservatoire, and the application form can be found at: <https://www.rcs.ac.uk/courses/continuing-education/>

Alternative Programme Invitations

Applicants who, during the selection process, are considered better suited to an alternative RCS programme at the same level, will be invited to apply to the programme more aligned with their skill set.

Applicants with Disabilities

The admissions process takes place in the context of the Conservatoire's [commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#), its Disability Policy, and this Admissions Policy. Information on the Conservatoire's guidance on how to contact the Disability Advisor and the support available will be included in audition invitations and offer letters (also available on the [Conservatoire website](#)).

Applicants with a support need/s are invited to contact the Disability Advisor to discuss their specific requirements, which may include adjustments for the audition/interview. The Disability Advisor will, as a matter of course, contact all applicants who declare a support need on their application. Orientation visits can also be arranged directly with the Disability Advisor in advance of commencing studies.

Applicants under 18 years of age

We welcome applications from people of all ages and applications will be considered on their individual merits as long as applicants will be a minimum of 16 years of age by the time they matriculate (enrolment on a programme).

Scots Law recognises that despite having full legal capacity at 16, young people aged 16 can be vulnerable in certain situations. If an offer of a place is made to an applicant who will be under the age of 18 at the time of matriculation (enrolment), certain Scots Law and UK legislative procedures may be

necessary in order to fulfil our duty of care.

The Conservatoire does not consider applicants who will be aged under 16 at the point of matriculation (enrolment) for its higher education programmes. Those who fall into this category are referred to the relevant Juniors programme of the RCS.

Mature students

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

Guidance for Applicants with Criminal Convictions

This guidance covers relevant, unspent criminal convictions, proceedings, or investigations received by offer-holders and students in any country.

In addition, where an offer holder or student is under investigation by the Police or where criminal proceedings have been initiated, it is the responsibility of the offer holder or student to report this to the Conservatoire.

To facilitate this: following the acceptance of an offer by an applicant, we will ask the applicant to declare any relevant information relating to unspent convictions, proceedings or investigations, as detailed in Appendix D: Safeguarding Risk Assessment of Applicants Policy.

Where appropriate support cannot be put in place the Conservatoire may withdraw an offer.

Applications from students who have declared a criminal conviction are subject to the same academic selection process as all applications and will be assessed using the admissions process outlined in this policy.

The declaration of live proceedings (i.e. charges made and have yet to come before a Court) or a conviction will be followed up independently by the Student Community Conduct Officer, under our: Appendix D: Safeguarding Risk Assessment of Applicants Policy regarding allegations of prior misconduct/criminal activity. The Conservatoire reserves the right to make any decisions it considers appropriate in the light of all the information provided. These may range from ascertaining appropriate levels of support to withdrawal of an offer or place.

Verification of the information provided by the applicant

If an application contains information reasonably believed by the Conservatoire to be misleading and/or has left out any relevant information this may lead to it questioning the validity of the information provided to the Conservatoire and the suitability of the application.

The Conservatoire may take any necessary steps to check with the applicant and other parties declared on the application, including but not limited to previous schools, colleges and examination and awarding bodies whether the information provided is accurate or complete; this may also include the Conservatoire conducting its own research to verify the information provided in an application from publicly available sources.

The Conservatoire retains the right to cancel an application or rescind an offer without refunding an application fee if the Conservatoire has determined, having carried out any necessary checks and due diligence, or has reasonable belief, that an application contains false and/or misleading information.

If an applicant believes that any information held about an applicant by the Conservatoire is incorrect, incomplete or inaccurate, they must notify the Conservatoire in writing by contacting the Admissions team.

5. RESPONSES AND COMMUNICATION

Service level

The Conservatoire aims to process applications quickly and effectively. All applications are acknowledged on receipt.

Applicant email enquires will be answered within 3-5 working days.

Applicants are required to provide all the information requested before a decision can be made.

RCS is committed to ensuring that any interaction with an applicant is conducted in a professional, courteous and respectful manner and it expects that any communication from an applicant is conducted in the same way.

Whilst we recognize how stressful applications to RCS may be, we will not tolerate inappropriate behaviour or language towards its employees or members of the wider RCS community during the admissions process. Hostile, aggressive or otherwise inappropriate behaviour or language, whether expressed verbally or in writing and excessive levels of contact, will be viewed seriously and may result in the withdrawal of an offer or the rejection of an application.

Programme changes and cancellations

Programmes, services and procedures are continually reviewed, enhanced, and revised and this may result in changes to or cancellation of programmes. Where any changes or cancellations occur, the Conservatoire will notify the applicant and provide an alternative offer where possible.

Exceptionally, changes may be required to be implemented at short notice to programme content or structure. Where the changes are deemed to significantly impact on the future students' experience of the programme, the Conservatoire will write to all applicants holding offers of admission to advise of the changes and, if applicable, to offer an alternative programme of study.

6. SELECTION PROCESSES

The Conservatoire's admissions processes are designed to be fair, transparent, and tailored to our specialist performance arts education. These processes identify applicants best suited for our programmes based on talent, potential, and prior achievements. This holistic approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation of an applicant's potential, considering their background and circumstances, and demonstrates our commitment to removing barriers to access.

Auditions/interviews are typically conducted face-to-face at the Conservatoire or other UK or international venues, and we encourage applicants to attend in person where possible. To accommodate applicants for whom travel to the Conservatoire is not possible, the selection process for most programmes can also be conducted via authenticated video auditions and/or online interviews.

General principles

- All on-time applicants will be invited to participate in the selection process. For the majority of applicants, this is conducted in Glasgow and, therefore, affords the applicant the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into the nature of the programme and the opportunities offered by the Conservatoire.
- Selection processes are reviewed annually by relevant committees and, if needed, by the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee and Academic Board. While specific processes may vary, the following principles apply:
 - All selection decisions will be taken in the context of the Conservatoire's Equality and Diversity Statement and Disability Policy
 - Audition/interview panels will normally comprise a minimum of two members of staff; where only one member of staff is available, the audition/interview will be recorded. All staff involved in the assessment of applicants will be prepared for that role, including staff from partner institutions.
 - In the School of Music, audition panels make recommendations to the School of Music Management Team.

Audition Panel Decision-making

All audition panels will arrive at their decisions in respect of each applicant taking account of the applicant's:

- performance at audition/interview;
- commitment to the particular programme;
- potential to benefit from the programme;
- academic qualifications
- English language level (where applicable)
- performance qualifications;
- Performance/practical experience;
- references
- contextualized data (detailed below).

Contextualized Admissions

RCS recognises that not all applicants have the same opportunities and is committed to ensuring fair access to all applicants. We strive to identify talent and potential, regardless of background or life circumstance and will use the following contextual information factors taken from the UCAS application and reference in assessing applicants:

Contextual Factor	Description	Evidence provision
Priority postcode area:	Applicants who live in SIMD 1 postcode areas. SIMD stands for Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, and SIMD1 refers to the 20% of postcodes in Scotland where young people are most likely to face multiple barriers to their progression and embracing their potential.	Postcode from home address in applicant's UCAS application. Postcode checker: https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/
Widening Access Programmes:	Applicants who have successfully participated in a National Schools Programme or other widening access programme: E.g. SHEP, Reach, ACES, Transitions (including WACI), Advance Higher Hub, Open Door.	Information included in the UCAS application https://www.sfc.ac.uk/student-interests/fair-access/national-schools-programme/
Care Experienced:	Applicants who are care experienced will have spent time living with foster carers under local authority care, in residential care (e.g. a children's home), looked after at home under a supervision order, or in kinship care with relatives or friends, either officially (e.g. a special guardianship order) or informally without local authority support.	You can indicate this on your UCAS application. You can ask your referee to include this in your reference, and you may be asked to provide supporting evidence. Examples of evidence include: • Letter from school/college • Letter from the relevant local authority • Letter from a relevant charitable organisation

		• Letter from GP or other health professional • SAAS Care Experience Bursary form, signed by the relevant professional • Court documents • Adoption certificates https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/care-experienced-students
Estranged:	A young person that does not have support from any parent/carer due to a breakdown in their relationship. This might be biological, step or adoptive parents, or possibly wider family members who have been involved in your care.	You can indicate this on your UCAS application You can ask your referee to include this in your reference, and you may be asked to provide supporting evidence. • Letter from school/college • Letter from student finance • Letter from GP or other health professional • Letter from the relevant local authority • Letter from a relevant charitable organisation https://www.ucas.com/estranged-students/applying-university
Carer:	An applicant who gives unpaid care to a family member, partner or friend who could not cope without their support. This may be due to a long-term illness, disability, a mental health condition, or an addiction.	Please contact RCS at the point of application to let us know about your circumstances. You can ask your referee to include this in your reference, or you may be asked to provide supporting evidence. Examples of evidence include: • Letter from school/college • Letter from GP or other health professional • Young Carers ID card • Letter from a carers' association • DWP Carers Allowance (benefit) letter • Young Carers Grant letter

Refugee/Asylum Seeker:	An applicant who is resident in the UK with refugee or asylum seeker status or granted humanitarian protection.	You can ask your referee to include this in your reference, and you may be asked to provide supporting evidence. Examples of evidence include: • Residence Permit (BRP card) Refugee Leave to Remain • Residence Permit (BRP card) Settlement Indefinite Leave to Remain • Asylum Registration Card (ARC)
Free School Meals:	Applicants who are eligible for free school meals and are resident in Scotland	You can indicate this or your UCAS application You can ask your referee to include this in your reference, or you may be asked to provide supporting evidence. Examples of evidence include: • Letter from school • Letter from the council • Proof of payment i.e. bank statement / remittance advice • Certificate of entitlement
Armed forces personnel, veterans and armed forces families (Service children):	Applicants who have served in the Armed Forces or whose parent(s) or carer(s) is serving in the UK Armed Forces, or has done so in the past	You can indicate this or your UCAS application You can ask your referee to include this in your reference, or you may be asked to provide supporting evidence.

Direct Entry with Advanced Standing (beyond Year 1 of any programme)

Applications for direct entry beyond Year 1 will be considered on a case-by-case basis under the category of direct entry with advanced standing.

All applicants are invited to attend an audition or interview process (and, for some programmes, to undertake written assessments) in order that their suitability for their chosen programme(s) may be assessed. The selection procedure is a process that gives each candidate scope to demonstrate their skills and achievements, and it provides evidence of potential to a panel of experienced assessors.

All applicants are subject to the same selection process for their chosen programme/ discipline, irrespective of their academic qualifications.

Admission with advanced standing may be offered, depending on the availability of student places at any given time. This may vary on a programme-by-programme or discipline-by-discipline basis, e.g. because of the ensemble nature of the learning experience offered on the BA Acting programme, it may not be possible to offer entry with advanced standing to that particular programme.

Applicants wishing to apply for direct entry with advanced standing should mark the desired point of entry on their UCAS Conservatoires application form.

Applications for the accreditation of prior learning (APL) and for the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) will always be decided prior to the applicant's admission to the Conservatoire.

Following the appropriate selection procedure (including audition/interview), an applicant may be given a conditional offer. The offer will be conditional upon the confirmation of APL or APEL.

APL is confirmed by reference to the applicant's transcript and an evaluation of the modules on which the application is based. This is to ensure these are broadly equivalent to the learning expected of a typical student on the same course who has not been granted APL.

APEL is confirmed through performance at audition and the production of an appropriate portfolio of work.

7. DECISIONS

Applicants applying for full time HE courses will receive their decision on UCAS Conservatoires or UCAS Undergraduate following their audition via UCAS Track.

Applicants applying directly to the Conservatoire will receive the outcome of their application directly from RCS by email.

Decisions in respect of each applicant will be recorded in the manner prescribed for each programme (e.g. an audition report form) and retained in accordance with the Conservatoire's Records Retention Schedule.

School of Music Consultation Lessons

Offer holders for School of Music programmes will be offered consultation lessons to allow them to experience the teaching offered at RCS and help aid their decision-making process. The deadline for signing up for consultation lessons is normally the middle of January.

Replying to offers

If you receive an offer, you must reply through UCAS Track by the date given on UCAS Track.

Reserve Outcomes (UCAS Conservatoire applications)

A 'reserve' outcome indicates that RCS would like the opportunity to review its outcome to you in the light of acceptances/declines to its guaranteed offers. You will become part of a 'pool' of 'reserve' candidates and RCS may choose to make you a guaranteed offer if a suitable place becomes available. Reserve does not mean that a place has been 'reserved' for you. If RCS chooses not to make you a guaranteed offer, you will not have a place to start at RCS.

Offers to Undergraduate Applicants

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) sets Scottish undergraduate student numbers by prescribing the maximum number of Scottish students that each Scottish higher education institution can enrol in any one year through an allocation of 'funded places'.

The Conservatoire will make offers to Scottish domiciled applicants within the parameters of that limit, taking account of the number of students required within each specialist discipline to ensure a balanced cohort of students.

Deferral

Given the nature of the cohort recruitment approach that forms part of informing applicant selection processes, it is not normally possible for an applicant to defer a place on Conservatoire programmes.

Feedback to Applicants

Subject to the provisions of the Conservatoire's Data Protection Policy, feedback requests must be made in writing to feedback@rcs.ac.uk. The email must come from the address supplied on the UCAS Conservatoires application and must contain the applicant's full name, programme and UCAS Conservatoires personal ID number. See: Appendix C: Post Audition Feedback Policy for further details.

Surveys

If you are made an offer to the Conservatoire and choose to decline it, you will be sent an email inviting you to complete the online RCS Decliners' survey. These will be sent out on a rolling basis throughout the year. The purpose of the survey is to gather feedback so we can improve future applicant experience, and we would encourage you to complete the survey with your honest feedback.

If you accept your offer to study at the Conservatoire, then you will be sent an email invitation to complete the online RCS Acceptor survey. The invitation will be sent following matriculation. The purpose of the survey is to gather feedback on the application journey and to use this to improve the experience for future applicants. We would encourage you to complete the survey you're your honest feedback.

8. ONCE AN OFFER HAS BEEN ACCEPTED

Applicants who choose to accept their offer of a place are sent additional information prior to the start of their course, which provides essential advice and guidance to prepare students for the start of their studies. Further information regarding what happens after a student has accepted an offer and what communications to expect is detailed below:

New Student's Webpage

New incoming students holding accepted unconditional offers will be sent a link to the New Students webpage, which provides information on programme costs, term dates, departmental welcome messages, and FAQs outlining what to expect before commencing their studies.

Matriculation

An email will be sent from the end of July advising details to all unconditional offer holders (who have accepted their offer) giving details of the matriculation process and the documentation applicants must prepare for matriculation.

Safeguarding Risk Assessments

Applicants who have accepted an offer will be emailed by the Admissions team from the end of June until the enrolment period regarding declarations related to Safeguarding. For further details see: Appendix D: Safeguarding Risk Assessment of Applicants Policy.

PVG Scheme

Some courses (BEd (Hons) Music, Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Music), MMus (Performance and Pedagogy), BA Arts with Community and modules (e.g. Arts in Inclusive Practice, Community Music) at the Conservatoire require you to join the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme. This means that checks are carried out for any unspent and spent convictions and cautions. The checks also include any non-conviction data held by the police that may be relevant to course/module.

Applications for the PVG Scheme membership are processed and assessed by Disclosure Scotland which provides this service as a means of enhancing security, public safety and protecting the vulnerable in society.

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland will administer students applying to be members of the PVG Scheme in accordance with prevailing Disclosure Scotland requirements and related legislation e.g. the Data Protection Act. If you would like further details of the Disclosure Scotland process please visit their website at www.disclosurescotland.co.uk.

9. ADDITIONAL POLICIES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS) – Procedure for International Students

Introduction

A Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS) is a personalised, electronic document that is issued by the Conservatoire to each applicant who requires a Student Route Visa to undertake their course. The CAS is issued via the UKVI Student Management System (SMS) and tied to each individual visa application. If a student requires an extension or enters a new course (even if progressing at the Conservatoire) they must get a new CAS.

When issuing a CAS, the Conservatoire confirms to the Home Office that we have completed our due diligence believe the applicant to be genuine and credible and they meet all the requirements of the Student Route Visa. These requirements and duties are listed in [Document 2 of the Guidance for Sponsors](#).

Purpose

As a licensed student sponsor, the Conservatoire is legally required to comply with all UKVI regulations and will exercise due caution when issuing a CAS in order to protect its sponsor license. The Conservatoire is not obligated to issue a CAS to all applicants and reserves the right to deny or withdraw a CAS if we suspect that an applicant fails to meet the conditions of the Student Route.

Key Responsibilities

The applicant must provide all requested documents and information in a timely manner to allow sufficient processing time for the Home Office and RCS allowing the applicant to complete matriculation by the latest date of enrolment.

Issuing a CAS does not guarantee that a visa application will be successful, and it is the applicant's responsibility to check that all the Student Visa requirements are met with their application. The Conservatoire is not responsible for any decision made by the Home Office.

The Conservatoire's Authorising Officer is the Head of AAS. They maintain ultimate legal responsibility for all aspects of student sponsorship.

Issuing a CAS

A CAS can be assigned no more than 6 months prior to the start date of the programme if they are applying from out with the UK and no more than 3 months if the application is to be made in the UK.

The Conservatoire will only issue a CAS and sponsor an application where it believes that the visa application will be successful and the applicant will be able to undertake their programme of study before the **latest date of enrolment**. To assess this, the following will be requested from the applicant:

- Copies of academic qualification on which the offer of a place was based. Including Non-Standard Entry Statement (if required)
- Evidence of English Language that meets the UKVI and RCS requirements (if required)
- A copy of a valid Passport that will be used to make the visa application
- A completed CAS Evidence form
- Tuition fee deposit (if required)
- Parental consent (if required)
- UCAS application
- Audition score

The Conservatoire reserves the right to check other documents, including, but not restricted to the following:

- Financial evidence that meets the UKVI evidentiary requirements
- Copies of previous visa information including CAS and Visa Refusal notifications
- Immigration History Check from the Home Office

All of the above documents must meet the current requirements stated in the [Immigration Rules](#) and the [Student and Child Student Caseworker Guidance](#).

The Conservatoire **will not** provide a CAS under the following circumstances:

- The programme of study does not meet the requirements of the Student Visa Route
- The applicant is believed to have submitted fraudulent documents
- The applicant has made a false declaration
- There is any reason to suspect that the applicant will not comply with conditions of their visa
- The applicant has not paid their tuition fee deposit (or is exempt from paying)
- The dates of the CAS will lead to the student exceeding the maximum time limits for study under the Student Route (if applicable)
- There is reason to believe that sponsoring the student would put the Conservatoire's Student Sponsor status at risk

The Conservatoire reserves the right to deny or withdraw a CAS in other circumstances as deemed appropriate.

Time limit on study and academic progression

The Home Office limits the time anyone can spend studying in the UK on a student visa at undergraduate degree level. This includes leave granted under a Tier 4 visa, and/or a student visa. There are currently exemptions to this rule including Music at a Conservatoire (note that the exemption is only for Music and not all courses).

The Conservatoire may request an Immigration History Check from the Home Office as part of the CAS assessment.

Academic progression applies to those who are applying for a Student Visa in the UK and have previously studied on any student visa that was in place before 31 March 2009.

If an applicant is applying for a course at the same level, they must demonstrate that they are making continuous academic progression. This means the new course must normally be above the level of the previous course studied on a Tier 4/student visa. If a new course is at the same level as the previous course, it can be considered to represent academic progression if the new course is related to the previous course OR the previous course and new course combined support the applicant's career aspirations. If the applicant has undertaken previous studies at the same level in the UK and, the CAS will need to include a justification of how this represents academic progression in order for you to fulfil the academic progression requirement. Wording for this is included in the CAS issuing guidance. This justification requires sign off from the UKVI Compliance and International Student Experience Manager.

Students who require a new CAS to allow them to complete their course e.g. to undertake resits, must have on campus requirements otherwise a Visitor visa may be sufficient, and a new CAS will not be required.

Furthermore, applicants who have previously had leave must have successfully completed the course for which your last Tier 4/student visa was granted. The Conservatoire is required to see evidence of this before issuing a CAS. A new course at a lower level is not considered to represent academic progression and students would be required to apply for new student visa from outside the UK.

Sending a CAS to an Applicant

The final CAS will be emailed directly to the applicant on the email address they provided at time of application. If the applicant wishes this to go to a different address, they must confirm this in writing and this should be uploaded to the Files section on SRS.

Visa Refusals

All applicants are required to provide the Home Office decision letter of any visa refusal even if it was for previous leave at a different sponsor.

If the refusal is related to a Conservatoire application, they should contact the Conservatoire for advice immediately. The Conservatoire will be able to assess if there are grounds for an Administrative Review.

The Conservatoire will only consider issuing another CAS if the applicant can demonstrate that the reasons for refusal have been mitigated. A further CAS cannot be issued for the same intake if the applicant will not be able to start their programme before the latest date of enrolment.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For further guidance and assistance, please contact:

Gill Mackenzie

UKVI Compliance and International Student Experience Manager

international@rcs.ac.uk

10. APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

There may be occasions where an applicant considers that the Conservatoire has failed to meet its high standards in the consideration of their application.

Disagreement with the academic judgement of the audition/interview panel in reaching their decision based on aspects of the applicant's profile does not constitute grounds for an appeal by an applicant. Appeals will only be considered in relation to non-adherence to policy and procedure.

All appeal requests should be made in writing, providing full name, admissions ID or UCAS Personal ID and the programme of study applied for and sent to the Admissions Team (Admissions@rcs.ac.uk) within 10 working days after receipt of feedback if this has previously been requested.

The Assistant Registrar (Recruitment and Admissions) will then make the necessary investigations, and where relevant will include a review of the admissions decision and include discussion with the relevant Programme Team. The Assistant Registrar (Recruitment and Admissions) will respond to the applicant, in writing with the outcome of the appeal normally within 10 working days.

If it is found that the outcome of an application was affected by either non-adherence to a policy or defective procedure, the applicant concerned will be offered a re-audition.

Applicants or their representatives who are dissatisfied with the service provided by Admissions should refer to the Conservatoire's Complaints Procedure. This procedure cannot be used to change an admissions decision.

Complaints regarding non-appeal matters can be made in person, by phone, in writing, by email at complaint@rcs.ac.uk or by completing our Complaints Form at <https://www.rcs.ac.uk/complaints/>

Data Protection

Applications will be processed in accordance with the Conservatoire's Data Protection Policy. Application forms and related documents will be kept in accordance with the Conservatoire's Retention of Records Policy. <https://www.rcs.ac.uk/privacy-policy/>

APPENDICES

- A. Terms and Conditions following Acceptance of an Offer
- B. Non-Standard Entry Information: direct entry / accreditation of prior learning guidance
- C. Post Audition Feedback Policy
- D. Safeguarding Risk Assessment of Applicants Policy

APPENDIX A:

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Terms and Conditions (following an acceptance)

Once you have accepted your offer, you are considered as having entered into a mutual relationship with the conservatoire. These expectations are held in good faith.

These Terms and Conditions apply following your acceptance of an offer of a place at the Conservatoire.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Terms and Conditions of Admission and Matriculation describe the principal rights, duties and obligations of applicants and enrolled students (hereafter “you”) and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (hereafter “RCS”) both during the admission process and after enrolling on a course of study.
- 1.2 This agreement is governed by Scots Law and is subject to exclusive jurisdiction of the Scottish courts as regards any claim or matter arising under this contract.
- 1.3 RCS will aim to provide the learning opportunities advertised at the point an applicant accepts an offer of a place to study. These learning opportunities will be based on information RCS publishes on its website. RCS will endeavour to ensure that this information is an accurate reflection of what you will study.
- 1.4 In practice, programmes will change over time for reasons such as subject advancements, programme revalidation or staff changes:
 - a) If a course’s content is to change substantially from that advertised, prior to you starting the course, RCS will contact you to advise accordingly. In the unlikely event that the RCS is unable to offer you the advertised programme then it will endeavour to provide you with an alternative programme at RCS (where applicable).
 - b) If, during your period of study, your course’s content is to change substantially from that originally advertised RCS will communicate these changes to you accordingly.
- 1.5 Some courses may require you to agree with the terms and conditions of professional, statutory and/or regulatory bodies or third-party providers and by accepting these terms and conditions you agree to be bound by their requirements (Details of these requirements are available on the programme web pages).
- 1.6 These terms and conditions, together with the RCS’s policies and regulations, form the contract between you and RCS (hereafter “the Contract”).

By accepting the terms and conditions you are agreeing to:

- a) Produce proof of identity and documentary evidence that you meet the entry requirements for the course or programme or have qualifications considered equivalent by RCS and that you meet any requirements set by the UK immigration authorities.
- b) Pay the tuition fees and any additional charges prescribed for your course or programme, in accordance with the published payment schedules.

- c) Abide by RCS Rules, Regulations, Policies, Procedures and Codes of Conduct, issued under the authority of The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Board of Governors and the Academic Board.

1.7 When accepting the terms and conditions RCS agrees to:

- a) Provide access to the range of learning opportunities within each module/component appropriate to the level of the qualification, as described in the relevant Programme Handbook.
- b) Apply its policies, procedures, and regulations fairly and consistently.
- c) Give you adequate notice of any substantial change to a course of study which might affect you.
- d) Take reasonable steps to keep you informed of any issues which may affect your studies. This may be via the website, student portal, email, or text.

1.8 Any queries or concerns relating to these terms and conditions should be directed by email to Admissions at admissions@rcs.ac.uk

2 APPLICATIONS

2.1 You must ensure that all information supplied to RCS for entry to a programme of study, for professional, statutory and/or regulatory body entry or for immigration purposes is true, accurate and complete. Applications found to include false, incomplete, or misleading information may be withdrawn by RCS or the offer amended.

2.2 False Authorships: Any submission of written work presented in support of your application, such as a personal statement, portfolio of work, audition task responses or research proposal, must be your own work; authored by you and should not be attributable to third party/ generative AI and/or other software tools.

All submissions are subject to verification and authentication checks by the Admission Service. Any submission assessed as false authorship may lead to the withdrawal of your application or offer.

2.3 All qualifications must be verified by an official source, such as UCAS, or by acceptable copies thereof presented to RCS upon request. If, following enrolment, it is identified that you have failed to declare such information then RCS shall implement misconduct proceedings in accordance with the **Regulations, Codes of Procedure and General Rules**.

2.4 RCS will not accept applications from students who owe RCS money for any reason. The amount due must first be cleared before the any application can proceed.

2.5 Your offer may be issued as a 'conditional' or 'unconditional' offer. A conditional offer letter will state the conditions you must fulfil to be admitted to the course of study. The offer of a place may be withdrawn if the conditions are not met by the date stated in the offer letter.

2.6 Applicants applying via UCAS are responsible for adhering to application and acceptance deadlines together with UCAS terms and conditions.

2.7 To accept an offer of admission you must follow the guidance given in your offer letter. If you are a UCAS applicant this will be done via your UCAS Track.

2.8 If RCS suspects that an application is fraudulent, it will contact you asking for an explanation. If it is confirmed that the application is fraudulent, and RCS deems your

explanation inadequate, or no response is received from you, then RCS will cancel the application and/ or revoke any offer which may have been made to you whether conditional or unconditional.

- 2.9 If, following enrolment, RCS suspects that an application has been fraudulent then RCS shall implement misconduct proceeding in accordance with the Regulations, Codes of Procedure and General Rules.

3 DECLARATION OF CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS, INVESTIGATIONS AND PROCEEDINGS

- 3.1 By accepting the RCS offer, you are confirming that:

- a) You have declared, or will declare, any relevant criminal convictions or pending criminal charge/case in accordance with the Criminal convictions section of the Admissions Policy as may be amended from time to time.
- b) You accept that your offer may be withdrawn, or you may have your enrolment terminated if you have any conviction or pending charge that prevents you from being able to undertake your course (as determined by RCS or the relevant professional, statutory, or regulatory body).
- c) As an offer-holder or a student, if you come under investigation by the Police or criminal charges or proceedings are initiated you have a duty to immediately submit a disclosure form to report this to RCS without delay.

4 CANCELLATION OF ADMISSION

- 4.1 If you accept either a conditional or unconditional offer of a place, you have a statutory right to cancel within 14 days from the date we receive formal notification of your offer acceptance through UCAS. To cancel, you must notify RCS in writing by email at admissions.ac.uk. RCS may cancel your contract prior to enrolment at any time in accordance with Academic Regulations or the Tuition Fee Policy. RCS may also cancel its contract with you, with immediate effect by contacting you in writing, if between accepting an offer and enrolling on the programme:

- a) There is a change in your circumstances which RCS deems makes it inappropriate for you to study on the programme; or
- b) RCS becomes aware of information, which it was not aware of previously, makes it inappropriate for you to study on the programme.

5 Matriculation - the administrative process for becoming a registered student

- 5.1 You are required to matriculate at the time of initial admission to your course and at the start of each subsequent academic year during the period in which you undertake the programme. This process reaffirms your acceptance of RCS terms and conditions. Students who are in debt to RCS for their tuition fees will not be allowed to matriculate. Students will not be prevented from matriculating if they have non-academic debt.
- 5.2 Matriculation must be completed by the commencement of the programme and only by prior arrangement will late arrivals be accepted onto the programme of study and matriculation permitted.

If you fail to matriculate with the given timeframe RCS reserves the right to withdraw you from your programme and you are not entitled to attend classes or participate in assessments.

- 5.3 Exceptionally, where there are conditions of admission outstanding post-matriculation, for example a Disclosure Scotland check, that you subsequently fail to meet, then your offer of admission will be withdrawn.
- 5.4 If you are subject to immigration controls, you will need to demonstrate your immigration status at matriculation. If you fail to demonstrate that you have a valid immigration status, or you are refused a visa to study in the UK, RCS will not allow you to matriculate

6 IMMIGRATION

- 6.1 In applying to RCS, you are confirming, where required, that you are eligible to apply for a Student Route Visa. If you fail to demonstrate that you have a valid immigration status to undertake the proposed course of study, or you are refused a student visa, you will be withdrawn from RCS.
- 6.2 For students requiring a visa, you must declare any prior visa refusals from the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) division of the Home Office on CAS evidence form
- 6.3 By accepting these terms and conditions you consent to the RCS contacting the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) division of the Home Office to verify your previous immigration history and current application status as necessary.
- 6.4 If you require a visa to study in the UK, you must comply with RCS requests for additional information and documentation in order to enable RCS to issue a Certificate of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) where appropriate.
- 6.5 It is your responsibility to provide RCS with evidence of supporting financial resources as required for a CAS to be issued.
- 6.6 RCS reserves the right to refuse to issue a CAS when it is not satisfied the visa application will be successful or when it will be too late for you to enrol on the course. RCS also reserves the right to withdraw a late application when there is a significant risk that the remaining time for processing is insufficient.
- 6.7 All students subject to visa regulations are required to re-register with RCS at points throughout the academic session and will be advised accordingly. These will be called "Checkpoints"
- 6.8 It is your responsibility to comply with the conditions of your student visa whilst enrolled at RCS.
- 6.9 RCS is required to withdraw sponsorship of your Student Route Visa if you do not comply with UKVI rules, including but not limited to:
- a) A sponsored student does not arrive for their course either following a refusal of entry clearance or leave to remain, or where leave is granted but the student fails to matriculate.
 - b) A sponsored enrolled student is absent without permission and contrary to attendance requirements.
 - c) A sponsored student chooses to suspend their studies, is no longer actively studying and RCS cannot fulfil its sponsor duties.
 - d) A sponsored enrolled student leaves their course earlier than expected.
 - e) A sponsored enrolled student changes the course they are studying; or
 - f) RCS discontinues a sponsored enrolled student's studies.

7 FEES

- 7.1 Tuition fees are reviewed annually and increase from year to year.
- 7.2 The tuition fees for all courses are published on the RCS website.
- 7.3 You are liable for the full payment of tuition fees for your course including accepting responsibility for securing any sponsorship, and payment thereof, or reduction in fees due to recognition of prior learning.
- 7.4 If you are sponsored for your studies, you must provide Student Finance with proof of sponsorship at the start of each academic year.
- 7.5 You are responsible for notifying RCS should there be any change to the arrangement for the payment of your tuition fees for your course.
- 7.6 By accepting RCS's offer of a place, you agree to the assessment of your fee status as stated in your offer letter.
- 7.7 At matriculation, if you have not paid your tuition fees or set up a payment plan by the due date, RCS will refuse to allow you to matriculate on your chosen programme of study and terminate your enrolment and this Contract.
- 7.8 International students are required to pay a deposit to secure the offer as advised at point of offer and should do so by the stated deadline.
- 7.9 You are responsible for your own living expenses throughout the duration of the course. If you are an international student, it is a requirement of your visa to ensure that you have sufficient financial resource to support yourself throughout your studies.
- 7.10 Continued non-payment of tuition fees will result in your account being passed to an external debt collection agency.

8 RULES, REGULATIONS & BEHAVIOURS

- 8.1 In addition to UK and Scottish legislation, RCS is governed by internal policies, procedures, and regulations. A summary of those specifically relating to matriculated students is provided in the **Regulations, Codes of Procedure and General Rules Handbook**. An annually updated version of this is provided to a student as part of the matriculation process.
- 8.2 The internal policies, procedures and regulations are put in place by RCS to govern and effectively manage academic and non-academic matters of RCS. **You should familiarise yourself with RCS policies, procedures, and regulations both before accepting an offer of a place to study at RCS and as part of the matriculation process.** You must adhere to all RCS policies, procedures and regulations following matriculation.
- 8.3 RCS expects students to behave with due regard to others and to contribute positively to the learning process by applying themselves to their studies for the duration of their time at RS, from application through to graduation, as per the **Regulations, Codes of Procedure and General Rules**.

9 DATA PROTECTION

- 9.1 RCS will comply fully with the provisions of the current Data Protection legislation when processing your personal data. RCS privacy notices, which give full information on how your personal data will be used, can be found on the RCS [website](#).

10 APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

- 10.1 Whether during the application process or as an enrolled student, you feel that you have been unfairly treated, that RCS has not adhered to its own policies or you wish to appeal against a decision of RCS then there is a fair and equitable Complaints and Appeals Procedures in place, full details are on the RCS [website](#) Where a complainant or appellant has exhausted the internal processes, they are then entitled to take the complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

11 LIABILITY

- 11.1 RCS will take all reasonable steps to ensure your safety whilst on RCS property.
- 11.2 RCS does not accept responsibility and excludes liability for damage to your property or intellectual property other than through the negligence of its staff and agents. RCS shall not be held responsible for any injury or damage to property caused by another student or by any person other than an RCS employee or representative.
- 11.3 You are advised to insure your property against theft and other risks.
- 11.4 In the event of an activity or action occurring which RCS cannot control - such as a civil emergency, on-campus emergency, terrorism, industrial action (including by its own staff), concern regarding the transmission of serious illness or 'acts of god' RCS will endeavour to keep you informed and take all reasonable steps to provide the teaching, examination, assessment and other educational services set out in its prospectus, handbooks and other literature (including on its website). However, RCS will not be held responsible for any loss, damage, expense or inconvenience resulting from any delay, variation or failure in provision arising from circumstances beyond the RCS's reasonable control.

12 WITHDRAWAL

- 12.1 You may withdraw from studying at RCS at any time after matriculation. By cancelling the contract in this way, you may lose all or part of your tuition fee in accordance with the fee regulations in the **Regulations, Codes of Procedure and General Rules Handbook**.

13 COMMUNICATION WITH RCS

- 13.1 RCS will assume that the last home address, term-time address and email address that you told us about are your current contact details. You must inform promptly if any of the details change.
- 13.2 Once you have started your programme RCS will use your RCS email address to contact you. It is important that you check your RCS email account regularly.

14 TERMINATION

- 14.1 RCS may terminate your contract following matriculation at any time in accordance with **Regulations, Codes of Procedure and General Rules** or the **Tuition Fees Policy**.
- 14.2 If your contract is terminated by RCS, then you:

- a) Are not entitled to matriculate on your programme of study.
- b) Will have your sponsorship withdrawn if you are an international student on a Student Route visa.
- c) Must pay all outstanding fees, charges, and debts immediately.

APPENDIX B

Non-standard entry: APL and APEL Processes

1. Applications for the accreditation of prior learning (APL) and for the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) will always be decided prior to the applicant's admission to the Conservatoire.
2. Following the appropriate selection procedure (including audition/interview), an applicant may be given a condition offer. The offer will be conditional upon the confirmation of APL or APEL.
3. APL is confirmed by reference to the applicant's transcript and an evaluation of the modules on which the application is based. Staff must identify a match between the level, the learning outcomes and the volume of credit associated with the module(s) passed by the applicant and the corresponding Conservatoire module(s). The award of credit through APL should be reported to the appropriate Board of Examiners/Progress Committee and the appropriate External Examiner should be invited to comment.
4. APEL is confirmed through performance at audition and the production of an appropriate portfolio of work that demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Audition Panel that the applicant has, through experiential learning, met the learning outcomes of certain corresponding Conservatoire modules. The award of credit through APEL should be reported to the appropriate Board of Examiners and the appropriate External Examiner should be invited to comment.
5. For (i), all candidates are auditioned or interviewed, and they may be asked to undertake written assessments at the appropriate level or to submit examples of project work. The criteria used for the assessment(s) are the same as those used for the various levels of the degree programme.
6. For (ii) in the context of the SCQF, recognition may be given for all relevant forms of assessed achievement gained in higher education, further education, or at other levels, and appropriate specific credit awarded. Account will also be taken of the time which may have elapsed since the recorded achievement and of any subsequent use or updating of an award. Normally, the maximum volume of credit which may be acknowledged through APL is 240.
7. In arriving at a final decision on selection and APL, the greatest weight will normally be given to demonstrated ability and potential in practical/performance components (or musical composition), with credit equivalence being accorded to other relevant components.
8. The Assistant Registrar (Recruitment and Admissions) is available to support applicants and staff throughout the process of application and assessment for recognition of prior learning.

APPENDIX C

Post-Audition Feedback Policy

1. Programmes at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland are very competitive and attract high numbers of applications. In line with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts, we have put in place a process for the provision of feedback where possible.
2. Feedback requests must be made in writing to feedback@rcs.ac.uk. The email must come from the address supplied on the UCAS Conservatoire application and must contain the applicant's full name, course and UCAS Conservatoires personal ID number.
3. Feedback requests will only be accepted from the applicant themselves. Requests from third parties will not be acknowledged.
4. Feedback requests must be received within eight weeks of the audition/ interview date. Requests received after eight weeks will not be dealt with.
5. Feedback will usually take the form of a scanned copy of the audition decision sheet (assessment criteria). This will be emailed directly to the applicant. Feedback may take up to six weeks to process from the date of the request.
6. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland will not enter into a dialogue with applicants regarding the provision of feedback. Our courses are highly competitive, and applicants need to recognise that feedback may simply state the fact that other applicants were stronger or that the course is not, in our opinion, suitable for them.
7. Applicants should not consider the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland as arbiters of their ability. Feedback given is based on performance in the audition/ interview and suitability for a particular programme of study. Applicants who are unsuccessful in their application to us, may go on to gain places at other conservatoires, and similarly, applicants whom we accept, may have been unsuccessful elsewhere.

8. There may be occasions where an applicant considers that RCS has failed to meet its high standards in the consideration of their application. Disagreement with the academic judgement of the Audition/Interview Panel in reaching their decision based on aspects of the applicant's profile does not constitute grounds for a complaint by an applicant. Complaints will only be considered in relation to nonadherence to policy and procedure.

8.1 Complaints can be made in person, by phone, in writing, by email at complaint@rcs.ac.uk or by completing our Complaints Form at www.rcs.ac.uk/complaints.

8.2 The following information will be required when making a complaint: Your full name and address

- As much as you can about the complaint
- What has gone wrong
- How you would like the matter to be resolved
 - Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:
The event/issue you want to complain about
- Finding out that you have a reason to complain. In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

8.3 We will give you our decision in five working days or less. Should the complaint

- need to be investigated, a full response to the complaint will be given to you within
- 20 working days. If the investigation is likely to take longer, you will be informed.
- 8.5 Please refer to the Complaints Handling Procedure Guide for more information
- <https://www.rcs.ac.uk/complaints/>

APPENDIX D:

Safeguarding Risk Assessment Policy (Applicant and Offer Holders) regarding allegations of prior misconduct/ criminal activity

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland takes its safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Entering into the RCS means becoming part of a community based on trust. The policy below sets out how we manage situations where an applicant is looking to matriculate at the Conservatoire but there are reasons for us to consider that there are safeguarding risks associated with their entry.

Where the Academic Registrar and Secretary considers that there is a need to convene a pre-matriculation risk assessment panel (see section 6 below), this will normally take place in **mid-August prior to matriculation opening**. This is to ensure that there is time to consider and plan adjustments where these are deemed necessary.

Should an applicant feel that they may fall within this policy and decide to disclose during the Recruitment and Admissions process, the Conservatoire may undertake a risk assessment earlier than mid-August.

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 The Conservatoire takes the safety of all its community seriously. RCS uses a risk assessment process to ensure that applicants coming into the community will be fully able to engage in their studies and work collaboratively with their cohorts. One area of risk we manage tightly with regards to this is risk assessing offer holders who have a record of prior criminal conduct. This is not to deny the candidate but, where possible to make sure that we can mitigate any risks to both them and the rest of the community.
- 1.2 Disclosures of other forms of misconduct about a specific applicant may also fall under this guidance depending on the nature of the allegations and the risk assessment process that might be required following such allegations.
- 1.3 For the purposes of the Admissions Policy, relevant offences include the following non-exhaustive list of offences and/or the equivalents in other worldwide jurisdictions:
 - Any kind of violence including (but not limited to) threatening behaviour, offences concerning the intention to harm or offences which resulted in actual bodily harm;
 - Offences listed in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 or the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016;
 - The unlawful supply of controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking;
 - Offences involving firearms; Offences involving arson; Offences involving fraud or embezzlement;
 - Offences involving theft;
 - Offences listed in the Terrorism Act 2006;
 - Offences listed in Schedule 1 to the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007;

- Offences listed in the Bribery Act 2010;
- Offences listed in the Criminal Finances Act 2017;
- Offences listed in the Computer Misuse Act 1990. 5.7.6.

1.4 Any information received from declarations will be used to undertake a risk assessment to understand if any mitigating measures need to be put in place during the period of the student's studies.

1.5 This guidance sets out clearly how and when we progress with such risk assessment procedures.

1.6 Applicants and offer holders are not formally members of the RCS community and under no contractual or legal obligation with respect to RCS's regulations, policies, and procedures as they relate to students who have formally enrolled in the institution.

1.7 Applicants and offer holders, retain certain rights, including those regulated by consumer law pertaining to higher education, including but not limited to a fair and transparent application process.

1.8 Offer holders who have accepted their offer are considered as having entered into a mutual relationship with RCS where they expect to enrol and we expect them to enrol. These expectations are held in good faith.

2. BASIS OF ADMISSION

2.1 RCS takes all applications on merit, assessing them, through audition, portfolio and interview, as appropriate, without prejudice and without undue influence of information which has no material bearing on the application.

2.2 This obligation means:

- RCS *cannot* require that an application be withdrawn nor can it *reject* an application as a consequence of an allegation of misconduct.
- RCS may only decline to give consideration to an application as a consequence of risk assessment, in which case, full a rationale will be given.
- Likewise, if the application process has concluded, and an offer has been made, RCS *cannot* withdraw that offer, except as a consequence of risk assessment, in which case, full rationale will be given.
- Where an **offer has been accepted**, RCS cannot rescind the offer, **except** in a situation where it identifies, as part of a formal risk assessment process, that the good faith basis of the mutual relationship has in some way been undermined and that trust in the applicant is below a standard that we would expect for someone to join the community.

2.3 RCS is obliged to consider the impact of any decision to admit an applicant/offer holder to its community. In this RCS, bases its offers on trust. The principles underpinning this trust and any action by RCS where a disclosure of prior misconduct has been received about an applicant or offer holder are:

- 2.3.1 **Community safeguarding** - includes the requirement to consider the impact of any outcome decision on students and staff, bearing in mind that RCS is an education establishment for children and young adults as well as a higher education institution;
- 2.3.2 **Community reputation** - includes the requirement to consider the impact of any outcome decision on the reputation of the RCS, the responsibility for which sits with the Board of Governors.

2.4 As part of due diligence prior to enrolment, there are circumstances in which RCS may undertake a process of risk assessment. These circumstances are normally initiated because the institution has reason to believe that:

- 2.4.1 There has been dishonesty or with-holding of relevant information on the part of the applicant or offer-holder during the recruitment and admissions process;
- 2.4.2 There is reason to believe that admission to the Conservatoire places risk on the RCS in terms of its commitment to a sense of mutual trust within and across its community of staff and students and/ or external reputation.

3. DEFINITIONS OF MISCONDUCT PERTAINING TO THIS GUIDANCE

An alleged act will be regarded as misconduct which undermines our trust in an applicant, and therefore the subject of this procedure:

- 3.1 if it constitutes or is likely to constitute improper interference with the proper functioning and activities of the Conservatoire; or
- 3.2 if it in any way interferes with, or is likely to interfere with the work, study, or life of members of the Conservatoire; or
- 3.3 if it damages or is likely to damage the reputation of the Conservatoire.

4. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING APPLICANT/ OFFER HOLDER RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Conservatoire upholds the following principles for risk assessment relating to applicants/offer holders:

- to work from a position of sensitivity and duty of care for all parties;
- to maintain, where possible, confidentiality;
- to safeguard all parties involved from harm, including risk of harm;
- to ensure procedures are able to manage proportionality;
- to base judgements on balance of probability.

5. PROCEDURES

Receipt of Allegation

- 5.1 On receipt of an allegation of prior misconduct against an applicant or offer holder a Risk Assessment will be instigated. The Academic Registrar and Secretary will lead the risk assessment and will establish a **Risk Assessment Panel**.

Allegations which may also be a criminal offence

- 5.2 The Conservatoire expects that allegations of a criminal offence will previously have been reported to the police and that where available, the outcome of that is included in any application made to one of our programmes.
- 5.3 As part of the Risk Assessment process, RCS reserves the right to forward any allegations of potential criminal activity to the authorities, if risk assessment concludes that this is necessary or desirable.
- 5.4 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on educational establishments to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. A child is anyone under the age of 18. Allegations relevant to this statutory duty will be reported to the police.

Verifying disclosures of misconduct

- 5.5 RCS recognises that people who report disclosures of misconduct do so from a place of good intention and desire to protect the community of the Conservatoire. However, RCS cannot accept an allegation of misconduct entirely based on a single anonymous report.
- 5.6 The identity of individuals who make allegations against others will be kept confidential to the extent that this may be practical. However, those accused of misconduct have the right to answer, which in most cases will mean that the identity of those making the allegation will be made known to the accused.
- 5.7 Following any disclosure of prior misconduct to RCS, the Academic Registrar and Secretary will undertake an investigation to ascertain the veracity of the disclosure. This will include but is not limited to:
- Checking applicant references;
 - Due diligence checks including requesting further references where the available reference is considered inadequate;
 - Asking for additional witness statements.

Impact of non-disclosure by an applicant at application/ acceptance of an offer

- 5.8 Whilst the RCS recognises an applicant's right to privacy, not disclosing prior misconduct that might also constitute a crime for which an applicant/offer holder is under police investigation may be considered a breach of trust and will be taken seriously as part of any risk assessment.
- 5.9 This is particularly the case for the following forms of misconduct:
- (a) bullying, sexual harassment, sexual assault, online harassment, hate crimes, hate incidents, stalking or discrimination related to any of the following:

- race, nationality and/or culture
 - religion and/or belief (for example, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism)
 - gender and Gender Identity (for example, misogynistic abuse, transphobia)
 - sexual orientation (for example, homophobia, biphobia)
 - disability including learning disabilities, mental health, physical disabilities
 - age
- (b) possession or use of drugs which are prohibited in law; and
- (c) falsification and/or misrepresentation of any aspect of an application to RCS, including personal information, personal experience, qualifications and references.

5.10 In addition to the above, any allegation relating to potential criminal activity (of any nature) may be considered to be misconduct. However, RCS will neither investigate alleged criminal activity, which ought properly to be reported to the authorities, nor will RCS discriminate against applicants within the application and offer process who have previously discharged convictions. Allegations of this nature may still be subject to risk assessment within this procedure.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT PANEL

6.1 The Panel shall comprise:

- Deputy Principal
- Director of Human Resources
- The Academic Registrar and Secretary (or nominee)
- The President of the Students' Union
- A member of academic staff (normally, the Course Leader or Study Area Leader of the applicant)

Consideration of Allegation and Evidence

6.2 The Panel will first consider the nature of the allegation and the evidence submitted. If sufficient evidence is presented, it may choose to make its decision based solely on the nature of the allegation and that evidence;

6.3 If evidence is inconclusive, or if the Panel considers it appropriate, it may invite further oral evidence, by means of meetings with those making an allegation, and the subject of that allegation.

6.4 The Panel will be mindful of, and will give consideration to such policies and procedures of RCS which may have a bearing on the case, including but not limited to **Admissions Policies, the Safeguarding Policy, and the Prevent Policy**.

Conduct of Evidential Meetings

6.5 Where meetings have been arranged, they may be with the whole Panel or with select members of the Panel, but a minimum of two, one of whom will record the meeting in writing.

6.6 Students and applicants/offer holders invited to such meetings are permitted to be accompanied to the meeting, in a non-legal capacity. Applicants and offer holders who are

under the age of 18 at the time of the meetings will be invited to be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or supporting adult.

6.7 A note of the meeting will be made and will be shared with the participants who will be asked to agree its accuracy, in writing.

Issues for Risk Assessment

6.8 The Risk Assessment Panel will consider the following substantial matters:

- Whether, in light of all evidence submitted and collated, the allegation of misconduct is proven or is otherwise credible on the balance of probability;
- Whether, in light of the above, the issue has a bearing on the studentship of the subject of the allegation, the studentship of another member of RCS, the general delivery of a course or aspect of a course, and/or the reputation of RCS.
- Whether any decision previously taken with respect to an application or offer should be reviewed.

Outcomes Available to the Risk Assessment Panel

6.2 The following outcomes are available to the Risk Assessment Panel, which will record both its decision and a full rationale for its findings (– proforma):

- (a) That the allegation is not proven or is not credible and that the application may proceed;
- (b) That the allegation is proven or is sufficiently credible, but that it has no material bearing on the studentship of the applicant, of other members of RCS, on the delivery of the course or on the reputation of RCS and that consequently the application may proceed;
- (c) That the allegation is proven or is sufficiently credible and that it has a material bearing on the studentship of the applicant, of other members of RCS, on the delivery of the course or on the reputation of RCS to such an extent that it is unreasonable to admit the applicant.

6.10 In the event of the Panel determining above, the Panel shall further consider:

- (a) Any action which may be taken to mitigate against the impact of the allegation, such as reasonable adjustment to the course or its delivery, or other aspects of the student experience at RCS and would facilitate permitting an application to proceed; or
- (b) That no action presents itself to mitigate against the impact of the allegation, in which case it will recommend to RCS that the application cannot proceed. If an offer has been made, it will be rescinded.

7. INFORMING PARTIES OF THE OUTCOME AND RIGHT OF APPEAL

7.1 The applicant against whom the allegation has been made will be informed in writing of the outcome of the Risk Assessment and the recommendation of the Panel, normally within 40 working days. A full rationale for the outcome decision shall be given.

7.2 Where the allegation has been made and has been considered within 40 working days of the first day of the Academic Year (or other first date of registration), the applicant will receive an interim outcome which suspends the invitation to register as a full-time student, and without other prejudice, will not be permitted to embark on the course until the Risk Assessment has been completed.

7.3 Where the Risk Assessment Panel has recommended proceeding with the application, but with mitigation, the applicant will be invited to accept or decline the basis of that mitigation (see also right of appeal below).

7.4 Where the Risk Assessment Panel has recommended that the application cannot proceed, or that an offer be rescinded, the applicant shall retain the right of appeal, but may not register as a student if the course begins during the period of appeal.

Right of Appeal

7.5 An applicant who is unsatisfied with the decision of the Risk Assessment Panel may appeal in writing to the Principal, within 28 days of communication of the Risk Assessment decision. The Letter of Appeal may address any matters of fact or of interpretation.

7.6 The Principal will consider the Appeal together with one other member of the Senior Management Team not previously involved in the case. With respect to the Appeal, the decision of the Principal is final.

7.7 The student, member of staff or member of the public who first made the allegation of misconduct will be informed of the outcome of the Risk Assessment (6.9 above) but will not be informed of the rationale nor will any evidence presented by other parties be shared. However, in the event that the application is to proceed or proceed with mitigation, RCS will also offer support to any students or staff who may perceive themselves to have been affected by the decision.