

CEDO Student Ideas Fund

[Please click here to submit an online application.](#)

What is the Student Ideas Fund?

The Student Ideas Fund supports current RCS students to develop new ideas outside of their coursework. It helps you:

- Explore creative ideas;
- Make or test your own work;
- Develop your career or business ideas;
- Take early steps toward a creative enterprise or project.

Ideas can be big or small, artistic, social, community-based, or career-focused. The important thing is that you are learning something new, trying something different, or developing skills and your portfolio.

The fund cannot be used for coursework. It is for extra-curricular projects only.

Successful applicants are encouraged to engage with the CEDO team for mentoring and support throughout their project. You will be invited to participate in our regular Funding Drop-In Sessions hosted by Entrepreneur-in-Residence Rachael Arnold. At these sessions, you can get advice on your project planning, budgeting, and reporting. This will help you take your project forward to the next phase.

We really encourage you to go to these sessions – it's hugely helpful to meet other awardees from across RCS Engage, to help each other through challenges and also receive personalised advice on managing your project as you go.

We will send you the link if you are successful with your application.

How much funding is available through the Ideas Fund?

- £1,000 per project
- Up to two Student Ideas Fund awards will be made each month during the academic year

- You can receive the Student Ideas Fund once per academic year
- Funds must be used within 6 months

What if I have access requirements?

If you have any questions or require further support, please email us at cedo@rcs.ac.uk.

We acknowledge that additional funding may be required for your own and your collaborators' access needs throughout a project. On the application form, you will be asked if additional funding is needed for accessibility requirements. Access costs are essential expenses that enable individuals to participate fully in your project, regardless of their personal circumstances or abilities. Please note this is not for audience participation.

Accessibility costs will be covered by a separate Access Award. If you select that you require access costs, and your application is successful, we will work with you to create a budget. These costs will be separate to the £1,000 Ideas Fund Award you are applying to. Access costs cannot make up more than 50% of your Project Budget (i.e. £500).

Eligible access costs may include, but are not limited to:

- Reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent and disabled individuals;
- Translation or interpretation services;
- Essential care costs for primary caregivers.

Am I eligible to apply?

To apply:

- You must be a current RCS student (there are some restrictions in place for international students – refer to section below)
- You must be the project lead
- You must be prepared to take out Public Liability Insurance for your project
- Funding must be spent within 6 months of receipt of the award.

Recipients can use the fund for the following types of activities:

- Extra-curricular projects
- Seed funding for early-stage ideas, projects or businesses

- To test or prototype an idea, project or collaboration through pop-up events, marketing, campaigns, brand development, research etc.
- To support starting up a freelance practice or company (i.e. set up costs, market testing, website)
- Registration and travel costs for attendance at industry training, informal courses/lectures (outside of your course), networking events or trade fairs that will support your idea's development
- Developing a prototype (i.e. an early, simplified version of a product or tool to test your idea's functionality and user reviews before making a final version)
- Public liability insurance
- Fees to cover your time and expertise on the project

The fund will not cover:

- Any retrospective costs from a project which has already taken place
- Any costs related to your curricular coursework
- Pieces of large-scale equipment including laptops
- Living costs, rent, overhead bills (Subsistence costs)
- Debts
- Business Consulting costs
- New instruments
- Membership of professional bodies
- Formal tuition fees

Student Visa Holders

If you are a Student Visa Holder you are eligible to apply for the Ideas Fund. However, there are conditions attached to your visa that you must be aware of before undertaking any form of work activity.

As per the terms of your visa laid out by the Home Office, you cannot: be self-employed or work in certain jobs.

You can work towards a business idea in a “*pre-trading phase*” and later, apply for a visa that allows entrepreneurship, like a talent visa, start-up visa, or a post-graduate work visa. Pre-Trading activities can include:

- business planning
- mentorship

- shadowing a professional
- attending professional training
- R&D, market research, prototyping, and other preparatory work.

However, it's critical that these funds are not used for activities directly related to trading, as this would be outside the scope permitted during the pre-trading phase and would be a breach of Student Visa terms.

You cannot undertake any paid work as an entertainer according to the terms of your visa. Therefore, this fund cannot be used by Student visa holders to pay for their own performance work or to pay for other Student visa to undertake entertainment work.

You should also check your eVisa to confirm the number of hours you are permitted to work per week. Any time spent working on this funded project should be counted towards your maximum allowance per week.

Student's studying on Visitor visas are not permitted to undertake any form of paid work and therefore can only participate on a voluntary basis.

Student visa holders are responsible for ensuring that their activities do not breach their visa conditions.

If you are unsure about any aspect of eligibility, please contact cedo@rcs.ac.uk.

Distance Learners

If you are a distance learner, on one of our Online & Blended Learning courses (i.e. MA Creative Arts Practice) you are eligible to apply for the Ideas Fund.

However, your project must be undertaken in your primary country of residence.

You are solely responsible to ensure that your activities do not breach the terms of any visa conditions laid out if you enter the United Kingdom.

Public Liability Insurance

You will be asked on the application form whether your project needs public liability

insurance. These projects are outside the curriculum, so they are not covered by RCS insurance.

Public liability insurance protects you if someone is injured or property is damaged during your project.

We strongly encourage you to consider whether your project needs this insurance, and we may recommend it if necessary.

If so, one option is for you to join your industry union which will allow you to access their public liability insurance for members (you should be able to join your union at a student rate):

- [Musicians Union](#)
- [Equity](#)
- [BECTU](#)
- [Scottish Artists Union](#)

If you are unsure about how to take out public liability insurance, or whether your project requires it, please contact us at cedo@rcs.ac.uk.

Systemic Barriers

We believe there can be no innovation in the performing arts unless systemic barriers are challenged, and actions taken to address structural inequality in the arts and higher education. We have therefore committed that at least 50% of this funding will be given to projects which are led by:

- people from the global majority and those from the global south
- people from working class backgrounds
- those who are neurodiverse and/or disabled people
- members of the LGBTQIA+ community
- care-experienced people
- migrants
- people who are or have been homeless
- those with lived experience of the criminal justice system
- Romany travellers
- those who face barriers to opportunities due to mental health issues, substance misuse, and unpaid caring duties

If you feel that this list is not representative of people facing systemic barriers, please let us know, so we can continue to improve our process.

On application forms, you will be asked if you identify as part of one or more of these communities (you will not be required to select which category). No proof will be required, and we expect our RCS community to be honest and only select this option on the form if it does apply to them.

Can I pay myself and my collaborators?

It is important that you and your collaborators are paid fairly for your time and expertise. Wherever possible, aim to pay at least the [Real Living Wage](#) or appropriate union rates, and clearly show this in your budget.

We understand the funding is limited, so plan your project carefully to ensure fair pay—this may mean working in stages or scaling the project to fit the budget. If your project

involves community participants (e.g. workshops or research), consider how you will fairly recognise their time and contribution.

If you need support planning your project stages, CEDO can support you with a Clinic session. [Click here to sign up for a CEDO clinic](#) to help you plan your project.

International Students: Please refer to section above.

Application Criteria and Assessment

Applications will be assessed by the Creative Enterprise Development Office and a team of lecturers from across a number of disciplines represented at RCS.

Application deadlines are as follows:

- Tuesday 27 October 2026 at 17:00 (panel meets in early November, applicants could expect to receive funds in December)
- Tuesday 24 November 2026 at 17:00 (panel meets in early December, applicants could expect to receive funds in January)
- Tuesday 8 December 2026 at 17:00 (panel meets in early January, applicants could expect to receive funds in February)
- Tuesday 26 January 2027 at 17:00 (panel meets in early February, applicants could expect to receive funds in March)
- Tuesday 23 February 2027 at 17:00 (panel meets in early March, applicants could expect to receive funds in April)
- Tuesday 23 March 2027 at 17:00 (panel meets in early April, applicants could expect to receive funds in May)
- Tuesday 27 April 2027 at 17:00 (panel meets in early May, applicants could expect to receive funds in June)
- Tuesday 25 May 2027 at 17:00 (panel meets in early June, applicants could expect to receive funds in July)
- Tuesday 15 June 2027 at 17:00 (panel meets at the end of June, applicants could expect to receive funds in July)

Any application received after the date will be rolled forward to the next month's prizes. Applications received after the deadline in May will not be accepted.

Those **applications which make the strongest case for funding will be selected**. We are looking for applicants to **articulate clearly and specifically the opportunity that the prize will provide**. It is vital that you **highlight the difference that this small pot of funding will make towards the development of your idea**.

A strong application is expected to do the following:

- Clearly communicate the core idea;
- Give indication of how the idea can grow and develop with this funding;
- Provide a clearly-defined plan and timeline for how the funding will be used;
- Provide a realistic indication of costings for the project and how the funding will be used.

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Video application will also be considered. If you would like to apply this way, please contact Stephanie at cedo@rcs.ac.uk.

Before submitting this application, please be aware that The Research & Knowledge Exchange Department and The Royal Conservatoire expect you to act as leader on your project and that all responsibilities and accountabilities for its administration are devolved to you.

By submitting an application, you are agreeing to take ownership of your project.

We take your privacy very seriously. Please find a copy of our privacy notice at: www.rcs.ac.uk/policy/privacy

Criteria Item	Weak (1 point)	Satisfactory (2 points)	Strong (3 points)
Tell us about your idea (up to 100 words)	The project idea is unclear and underdeveloped. Application does not indicate any potential for impact.	The project idea is somewhat clear. Application makes some indication of potential for impact.	Concisely and clearly communicates the idea. Applicant clearly describes potential impact.
How will you do it? (up to 100 words)	No timeline provided or timeline is unrealistic. Minimal information provided on the applicant's plan.	Applicant provides some information on their plan. Applicant highlights some milestones but there is a lack of detail. Timeline is somewhat realistic.	Applicant has a clearly-defined plan. A detailed and realistic timeline is provided.

What would success look like? (up to 100 words)	Applicant provides little or no explanation of what success would look like for their project. No indication is given of how progress or outcomes will be reviewed.	Applicant gives a general idea of what success would look like. Some indication is given for how the applicant will monitor progress, but it lacks detail.	Applicant gives a clear idea of what success would look like and how they will know if they have achieved it. Some practical ways of checking progress or gathering feedback are provided.
How will this funding help you grow and develop? (250–300 words)	Applicant does not indicate how this idea will grow or how it will create a learning opportunity for them.	Applicant gives some information on how this idea might develop in the future. Some detail is provided for how the idea creates a learning opportunity.	Applicant outlines how the idea can grow and develop with this funding. There is information provided for how their idea may help them learn new skills or creates a learning opportunity.
How will you use the funding? (250–300 words)	Minimal information provided for how the funding will be used.	Applicant gives some idea of how the funding might be used, but it is unrealistic or lacking in detail.	Applicant provides detail how the funding will be used, including realistic costs.