

DISABLED STUDENT'S HANDBOOK

For disabled students and applicants at the Royal College of Music

Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Welcome to the Royal College of Music | 3 |
| APPLYING TO THE RCM..... | 4 |
| Sharing a disability and confidentiality | 5 |
| Open Days/Auditions/Course offer | 5 |
| SUPPORT AT THE RCM | 6 |
| Sources of support and advice at the RCM | 7 |
| Studying, Assessments and Examinations | 7 |
| Disability support at the RCM | 7 |
| Students with Specific Learning Differences | 8 |
| Autistic students | 8 |
| Visually impaired students | 8 |
| Students with mental health issues | 8 |
| Health and Wellbeing | 9 |
| Your Health and Safety | 9 |
| IT and Assistive Technology | 9 |
| Library..... | 9 |
| Access to our buildings..... | 10 |
| Who can I contact? | 11 |
| FINANCIAL INFORMATION | 12 |
| Disabled Students Allowance | 13 |
| Government Regional Funding Bodies..... | 13 |
| USEFUL CONTACTS AND WEBSITES | 14 |

Welcome to the Royal College of Music

The participation of disabled students in all aspects of the academic and performing life of the RCM is encouraged and welcomed. As a leading conservatoire in the UK and Europe, we aim to provide musical education and professional training at the highest international level to meet the aspirations of as many as possible who have the ability and motivation to benefit. Students are recruited based on their musical abilities and potential. For further details refer to our prospectus which is available on [the RCM website](#) or from:

The Royal College of Music,
Prince Consort Road,
London SW7 2BS
Tel: 44 (0) 20 7591 4300

The RCM aims to ensure that no student, member of staff, or visitor is subjected to unfair discrimination whether direct or indirect.

This handbook provides information to prospective and current students of the Royal College of Music (RCM) about our policy and procedures for disabled students. It outlines arrangements to support disabled students including financial support, academic support, our buildings, facilities and equipment.

We hope you find it useful.

This handbook is available in alternative formats on request.

For further information, please contact RCM's Disability Advisor

Tel: +44 (0)20 7591 4339 or by email: disability@rcm.ac.uk

Sharing a disability and confidentiality

1. If you wish to, you can inform us that you have a disability when you complete your UCAS Conservatoires application.
2. If you have any disability-related issues or concerns you would like to discuss, please contact the Disability Advisor in confidence on 0207 591 4339 or email disability@rcm.ac.uk as early as possible. With your consent we can agree what information you would like shared with relevant staff, on a need-to-know basis.

Open Days

3. Open Days are normally held in the Spring. More information can be found on the '[Open Day](#)' section on [the RCM website](#). If you are thinking about applying and have concerns about access or wish to discuss disability support, please contact the Disability Advisor on 0207 591 4339 or email disability@rcm.ac.uk

The Audition

4. The audition normally lasts about 15 -20 minutes. You may be required to play a prescribed piece; some sight reading and/or pieces of your own choice and attend a brief interview. Some instrumentalists and singers will be required to play more than once, with a final panel later in the day. Find out more on the '[Apply](#)' section of the [RCM website](#).
5. If you have shared a disability in your application, the Disability Advisor will contact you to discuss any requirements for reasonable adjustments at audition, in confidence. Contact the [Disability Advisor](#) or [Admissions](#) for further information.

Course Offer

6. Offers are made based on musical ability and potential and are sent out either prior to Christmas, or approximately 3 weeks after your audition. Offers of a Scholarship award are made at the same time.
7. If you accept the offer of a place at the RCM, you are welcome to discuss any specific requirements you may have with the Disability Advisor, in advance of your arrival on the course. We can arrange for you to visit the College to assess whether there are any requirements you might not have thought of already.
8. When replying to your offer, you will again have the opportunity to inform us of a disability or health issue via an online form. The Disability Advisor will then contact you to discuss any support requirements. The information is also shared in anonymised form to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), for statistical purposes.
9. At the point of offer, you will also receive information about RCM's halls of residence, [Prince Consort Village](#) which has several accessible rooms.

Sources of support and advice at the RCM

10. All students can access [Student Services](#) who offer advice and guidance on a range of issues, including finance, health and wellbeing, pastoral support, accommodation and disability support. There is also a free counselling service.
11. Academic advice and support is available via your Personal Adviser, seminar leaders, module leaders, or programme leaders. For principal study matters, your principal study professor or Head of Faculty will be able to offer advice.
12. Students can access careers advice and professional development through the [RCM Creative Careers Centre](#).
13. We have strong links with the [Imperial College Health Centre](#) who provide access to doctors, nurses, specialists, mental health practitioners and counsellors. Students (including residents of Prince Consort Village) can register as NHS patients. If you have an ongoing medical or mental health condition we recommend you book an appointment at the earliest opportunity to ensure continuity of care. Students from outside the UK should be aware that some medications may not be available over the counter in the UK, and specialist care usually requires a referral from a General Practitioner (GP).
14. Students seeking spiritual support or links with a faith community are welcome at the [Imperial College Chaplaincy](#).

Studying, Assessments and Examinations

15. The RCM's virtual learning environment 'Learn' enables students to access course outlines, syllabuses and learning materials and submit coursework. You will also have access to online resources such as Grove Online and JSTOR etc.
16. All students can record classes with the permission of the professor, in line with [RCM's Recording Policy](#)
17. Disabled students who choose to set up a Learning Support Agreement can discuss arrangements for assessments and examinations, such as additional time, rest breaks, additional hearings for aural assessments and alternative formats.
18. At the RCM there are opportunities for students to study abroad for 3-9 months under the Exchange programme. For further information contact the [Deputy Registrar](#) in the Registry. If students have a Learning Support Agreement the Disability Advisor can arrange for this to be shared with the overseas institution to ensure continuity of support.

Disability support at the RCM

19. The Equality Act 2010 defines someone as having a disability if:
 - they have a physical or mental impairment, *and*
 - this has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
20. Each student who informs us of a disability will be offered the opportunity to set up a Learning Support Agreement with the Disability Advisor which will be tailored to their individual requirements.
21. The Learning Support Agreement details potential barriers to learning, and any reasonable adjustments that are required, such as extra time for exams or flexibility for coursework submissions. This confidential document is shared with the student's consent with those who need to know and can be reviewed at any time if circumstances change or you feel the need. The aim is to ensure that any support requirements are met without

you having to ask each time. We encourage feedback on the Learning Support Agreement process to ensure we are meeting students' support requirements.

22. UK Home-based disabled students are eligible, and encouraged, to apply for the [Disabled Students Allowance](#) (DSA) from their relevant Student Finance body, to pay for any study related costs that may help to remove barriers to learning.
23. International students and others who are ineligible to apply for DSA should contact the Disability Advisor to discuss their requirements and possible sources of funding.

Students with Specific Learning Differences (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD)

24. A range of reasonable adjustments may be made, according to individual requirements, for students who have Specific Learning Differences, including extra time for assignments and exams. We are aware that some students with Specific Learning Differences may find aspects of music, such as sight reading, particularly challenging. We therefore encourage applicants and students to discuss their support requirements with the Disability Advisor.
25. Students who do not have a prior diagnosis, but who think they may have a Specific Learning Difference, can arrange an initial screening with the Disability Advisor, who will also be able to advise on next steps for a full diagnostic assessment, if required. Students can contact the Disability Advisor to discuss this in confidence, at any time during the year.

Autistic students

26. Autistic students can discuss their support requirements with the Disability Advisor. Individual inductions and tours of the College can be arranged, if helpful, and a range of reasonable adjustments can be agreed, for example extra time for assignment submissions and exams and regular check-ins with a Personal Advisor. We can also issue guidance to professorial staff to raise awareness, for example about any specific communication requirements. We have a room for students who may benefit from being able to access a calm space whilst in College.

Visually Impaired Students

27. Prospective students with visual impairments are encouraged to contact the Disability Advisor to discuss their requirements. We can arrange orientation training around our buildings with the [RNIB](#) or [Guide Dogs \(London\)](#) along with a range of other support, including enlarged documents, access to assistive technology on student PCs and Braille materials.

Students with mental health conditions

28. We encourage students with mental health conditions to discuss their support requirements with the Disability Advisor. A Learning Support Agreement could acknowledge that your condition fluctuates, for example, meaning some days are more of a challenge. We recommend that you register with the Imperial College Health Centre or other GP practice ([find a GP here](#)) to ensure ongoing support.

Health and wellbeing

29. We encourage all students to prioritise their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing, and the College offers various resources and activities to support this, including
- Information about exercise, health, relaxation, mental health support, and healthy eating
 - Access to free weekly meditation/mindfulness sessions
 - Free yoga sessions
 - Extra-curricular Alexander Technique sessions
 - Massage for musicians (at a reduced rate for students)
30. The RCM Counsellors offer short-term, focused counselling support (6 sessions). If longer term therapy or psychological support is required, Student Services can provide information about alternative providers.
31. All students can access [Togetherall](#) for free - a 24/7 online service that provides advice and support for those dealing with low mood, anxiety and other mental health issues.
32. The [RCM Student Union](#) run several societies (subject to student interest). RCM students can also join one of the many sports, leisure and fitness societies at the neighbouring [Imperial College Union](#).

Your Health and Safety

33. If you have a medical condition which may require support from first aiders, please discuss in confidence with the Disability Advisor in the first instance, who can then inform first aiders if required.

IT Facilities and assistive technology

34. Sibelius, Microsoft office, video and sound editing and playback software are installed on all college student PCs. The PC's at College for student use all have Windows 11 installed, with in-built accessibility features and tools available, including screen readers, display and vision, voice command, and audio features.
35. We provide free Microsoft Office 365 to all current students and staff. The text-to-speech feature is available on the Microsoft Office apps installed on College computers such as Word, Outlook, Powerpoint, and OneNote. All RCM students have access to both web and desktop versions of all Microsoft 365 applications.
36. There is free access to wi-fi across the college, via Eduroam, and you can connect using your RCM login.
37. A free print credit allowance is given at the start of each academic year.
38. The Creative Media Suite has iMac's installed, which have in-built accessibility features and tools on the Apple Operating System. These devices are managed by the Studios team.

Library

39. RCM Library staff are happy to respond to individual access requirements, answer any queries and offer support for locating materials in the Library. There is also a variety of online resources, including journals and books, which can be accessed remotely. Loan periods for library materials are generous.

Access to our buildings

40. Students who may need assistance exiting the building during an emergency evacuation (e.g. in the event of a fire alarm) are encouraged to set up a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan or 'PEEP' with the Disability Advisor.
41. There are seven main areas on the campus of the Royal College of Music - the Blomfield Building, public areas (such as the café, bar, museum and performance hall), the South Building, the Opera School, the Britten Theatre, the Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall, the Percussion Suite and RCM Jay Mews (where Student Services is located).
42. **Blomfield (main) Building** - The entrance, built in 1894, has eight steps up from the pavement and two inside the main doors. There is a Sesame access lift system, providing level access. This building contains most of the teaching and practice rooms and the Library and is generally accessible for wheelchair users via lifts. It also contains the Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall which has a platform lift at the eastern entrance to the auditorium. The public areas of the College are all fully accessible. A platform lift in the Atrium serves the basement (Museum, Library, performance studio and Britten Theatre).
43. **South Building** - A passenger lift in the South Building serves the café, bar, Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall and stage, basement level (as above) and sub-basement level (performance hall). There is step-free access between the Blomfield and South Buildings via the ground floor café.
44. **The Opera School** – There is stepped access only to some Vocal & Opera teaching rooms (OP1, OP2, OP3 and OP4). Where required, suitable alternative rooms will be identified.
45. **RCM Jay Mews** – This is located approximately 3 minutes' walk from the Blomfield Building and is close to the Royal College of Art. Please note access to this building is via a path with irregular cobblestone paving outside the building and in the street. Alternative arrangements can be made to ensure that students who are unable to access RCM Jay Mews can still access classes, activities and services.
46. **Parking** - There are blue-badge car parking bays on Prince Consort Road and around the Royal Albert Hall
47. Where any additional assistance is required to access our buildings, the RCM Facilities team is always happy to help.
48. Students who have mobility difficulties or who are visually impaired may be eligible for the [London Taxicard scheme](#) which provides subsidised taxi journeys.

Student Halls and Accommodation

49. [Prince Consort Village](#), RCM's hall of residence in Shepherd's Bush has 13 accessible rooms (7 studios and 6 en-suite rooms), as well as 23 practice rooms, and the building is accessible throughout. The hall benefits from 24-hour security, a range of social events and a team of friendly staff who offer pastoral support.

Monitoring provision for disabled students

50. We welcome feedback from students and actively collect this through annual monitoring, committees and informal discussion. The responsibility for the monitoring and review of the College's support services lies with the RCM Council and is undertaken by the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee, the Directorate and the Senate.

Future disability-related developments

51. The RCM is committed to the continuing development and review of policies and practices designed to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment of those who are, or who seek to be, its students. It will, where necessary, initiate new policies and practices, taking due account of our legal duties and obligation.
52. The College will encourage greater awareness of its aims, policies and procedures in the field of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging and provide appropriate information and training as required. We are continually working to enhance the provision for disabled students, including regularly reviewing policies, procedures and staff training.

Who can I contact?

53. The Disability Advisor is responsible for the coordination of support for disabled students. Contact them if you have any further questions. In the absence of the Disability Advisor, you can also contact the Student Services Manager.

Email: disability@rcm.ac.uk / studentservices@rcm.ac.uk

Tel: 44 (0)20 7591 4339

54. For queries relating to the application and admissions process, please contact the Admissions Team

Email: admissions@rcm.ac.uk

Tel: 44 (0)20 7591 4362

Is there any extra financial help?

55. The [RCM web pages on Fees and Funding](#) has links to trusts, charities and other external organisations who may be able to offer financial assistance, including those who provide grants and loans for disabled students.
56. The RCM Hardship Fund provides limited, discretionary assistance to students who are either:
- experiencing short term financial hardship due to circumstances outside of their control that could be not be foreseen or were of an unexpected nature or
 - seeking financial support with the costs of treatment for a performance related injury, that cannot be met elsewhere
57. For general enquiries about finances and managing your money please contact [Student Services](#)

Disabled Students Allowance

58. Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) helps Home (UK based) disabled students by paying for additional study-related support that may be required due to any potential barriers to learning. DSA is paid to undergraduate and postgraduate students by Student Finance England, Student Finance Wales, the Students' Awards Agency for Scotland or Student Finance Northern Ireland. DSA is not means-tested.
59. If you are a student from outside the UK, you are not usually eligible for the allowance, however, RCM has a small fund dedicated to supporting those who are not eligible for DSA.
60. DSA gives some assistance towards equipment such as computers and assistive software, if required. You may need to pay a contribution towards the costs of a computer.
61. DSA may also pay for the provision of specialist study skills tuition, mentor support, and other forms of support as required, such as sign language interpreters, communicators and mobility-enablers.
62. You can also apply for assistance with travel expenses if you incur extra costs due to your disability.
63. We suggest that you [apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance](#) as early as possible, ideally before you start your course, so that when you arrive any support arrangements are already in place. The Disability Advisor can assist you with this. You will need to apply to your relevant Student Finance body (see below) and provide documentary evidence of your disability. Once your application has been accepted you will be asked to undertake a Needs Assessment, to determine what support for your studies is recommended.

Student Awards Agency for Scotland

www.saas.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 555 0505

Student Finance England

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa/how-to-claim>

Tel: 01325 215194

Student Finance Wales

www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Tel: (undergraduate): 0300 200 4050

Student Finance Northern Ireland

www.studentfinancenir.co.uk

Tel: (undergraduate): 0300 100 0077 / (postgraduate): 0300 100 0493

British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM)

www.bapam.org.uk

Tel: 0208 167 4775 / Email: info@bapam.org.uk

British Dyslexia Association

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

The National Autistic Society

www.autism.org.uk

The ADHD Foundation

www.adhdfoundation.org.uk

Mind (national mental health charity)

www.mind.org.uk

Tel: 0300 123 3393 / Supportline: 0300 102 1234

British Stammering Association

www.stamma.org

Tel: 0808 802 0002 / Email: help@stamma.org

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)

www.rnib.org.uk

Tel: 0303 123 9999 / Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Royal National Institute for Deaf people (RNID)

<https://rnid.org.uk>

Tel: 0808 808 0123 / Email: Contact@rnid.org.uk

Nicola Smith

Student Services Manager

Last updated July 2025