TECHNOLOGY GUIDE FOR RCM STUDENTS

At the RCM we believe that developing a broad set of skills in technology is vital to a successful and sustainable career in music. Whether in recording your performances or in managing your career online, we aim for all RCM students to become technologically empowered musicians.

The RCM provides a wide range of technology equipment and software to support your studies. This guide will introduce you to the facilities and services that are available and make recommendations for the personal devices and software we recommend students have to make the most of their time at the RCM and the services and support available.

Computers and tablets

The College has a number of workstations equipped with Sibelius and Microsoft Office available for students in a range of locations across the College.

It is essential, however, that students are equipped with a personal computer to access all aspects of their programme. We recommend a laptop computer with an integrated webcam and microphone (for web calls and online classes) with the following minimum specifications:

- i5 or higher processor
- 8gb Ram
- 256gb hard drive

An external hard drive for backups and media storage is recommended, but the College also provides 1tb of cloud storage to every student with their RCM account.

Mac vs PC

Either a PC or Mac laptop can provide all the functions needed for study at the RCM. Both Apple and Microsoft offer discounts to students. The RCM also has a partnership with Dell offering similar discounts.

An M1 Macbook Air at £900 (with education discount) would be an excellent choice and while the price may be higher, it includes software for Audio and Video editing which can add several hundred pounds to the cost of a windows machine.

A Microsoft Surface Go Laptop configured to an equivalent specification costs around £800 (with education discount) but does not include applications for Audio or Video editing.

There are cheaper Windows options (from around £600) available at the minimum recommended specifications. You can see some options here.

iPads/tablets

We do not recommend that students attempt to complete their programme with a tablet as their only device for College work, but it is a very useful device to own in your time at College and can serve many useful purposes such as:

- Convenient access to digital score platforms such as Nkoda, Henle (supplied to all students) and other digital library resources.
- As a portable device for accessing online classes on the go
- As a device for audio and video recording of your practice and performances
- As a metronome, tuner and creative musical aid

While there are many options, we recommend the entry level iPad as the best value at £310 or £410 (with education discount) depending on storage options.

Software and facilities

The RCM provides students with access to a range of software much of which is available to use both and off site.

Microsoft 365

Every RCM student has a full Microsoft 365 account including access to desktop and online versions of Word, Powerpoint and Excel etc as well as 1tb of online file storage. Log in with your normal RCM email address and password at www.rcm.ac.uk/office365.

Learn.rcm

Learn is the RCM's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and supports your study with access to class materials, interaction and assignments. It is also where you can find key information about RCM departments.

Panopto

Many of the RCM's performance spaces are equipped with high quality Audio/Video recording systems using the recording software Panopto. Students can book these spaces to make, edit and store their own recordings.

Noteflight

While it is recommended that composition students have a copy of Sibelius, (education discounts are available), we provide the online notation software, Noteflight to all students. Noteflight is accessed via your Learn.rcm dashboard.

Loan equipment

The Technology Team offers a range of equipment for students to borrow including recording devices, cameras, microphones and amplification equipment. Click here for the Technology guide and here for further information on the loan equipment.

RCM Studios

If you require the highest quality recording for an audition or promotion, professional audio and video recording services are available at a subsidised rate to all RCM students in the RCM studios.

Other software you may need

It is highly recommended that students have software for editing audio and video recordings. Here are some free or affordable options:

Audio editing

- If you have a Mac computer, you can download Garageband for free from the App store.
- Bandlab is a free and easy to use online platform which also has iOS and Android Apps. For PC users, Bandlab files can be transferred to the full DAW Cakewalk which is also free.
- Reaper is a very good value option when more advanced features are needed. It is free to trial Reaper and a full license is only £60.

Video editing

- If you have a Mac computer, you can download iMovie for free from the App store.
- Davinci Resolve is an excellent video editing platform with a free option that works on Mac and PC.
- Shotcut is another good free option for Mac or PC.

Other useful equipment

Microphones

It is useful to have a good quality microphone for recording yourself and improving audio in online classes. A USB condenser microphone (preferably stereo) is a good choice for balancing quality, flexibility and convenience. *(Please note that a different approach may be recommended for loud instruments such as brass and percussion, please seek advice from your faculty if unsure).*

We recommend the following options (please check compatibility with your device):

- AKG Lyra
- Blue Yeti
- Shure MV88+ Video Kit

Headphones

While Bluetooth headphones are common and very convenient, it is a good idea to have a pair of good quality wired headphones for listening and editing recordings. The following are good choices:

- Audio Technica ATH-M30x
- Audio Technica ATH-M40x
- Beyerdynamic DT770 Pro