



ACCESS AGREEMENT

Revised for 2008-09
November 2007

Royal Northern College of Music Access Agreement 2008-09

Access Agreement 2008-09

1. Introduction

1.1. The RNCM is committed to the application of only one criterion for entry to its programmes, beyond the normally expected minimum educational requirements, and that is musical talent and potential, as assessed at audition.

1.1.1. The College guarantees to audition all credible applicants to its undergraduate programme.

1.1.2. The College provides equal opportunity training to all who are involved in the application and audition processes, to ensure that there is no discrimination applied in this phase of selection.

1.2. The College is aware that the full economic cost of its programmes of study is around £14,000 per student per annum. This has implications for the implementation of variable fees.

1.2.1. The College is, and will continue to be, highly dependent upon continued grants from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), currently expressed as an institutional premium, in order to deliver its programmes. An undergraduate fee of £3,145 will be less than 25% of the full economic cost.

1.2.2. HEFCE have announced that this premium will be reviewed in the next two years, alongside the review of the general funding methodology.

1.2.3. Continuing delivery of additional access measures and bursaries, to be funded from the additional fees collected, is dependent upon continuation of the existing level of direct HEFCE funding.

1.3. In 2005 the College was awarded by HEFCE funding for a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). The CETL is founded upon the principles of widening access to high quality music tuition, as articulated in the DfES Music Manifesto (published July 2004) and supports the College's commitment to Fair Access by:

1.3.1. providing access to high quality, specialist instrumental tuition for those pre-tertiary pupils who may otherwise be unable to achieve the standards required for entry to higher education (HE). This will include developing a Junior Wind, Brass and Percussion Project to run alongside the award-winning Junior Strings Project, expanding community outreach and in-reach activities, facilitating staff secondments to local education authority music services (LEAs) and schools and exploring flexible pre-tertiary provision through the Junior RNCM and/or Associate Student Scheme;

Royal Northern College of Music Access Agreement 2008-09

- 1.3.2. working with other agencies 'to develop a world class workforce in music education' (Music Manifesto, 2004) by enhancing the quality of teaching provision, both regionally and nationally, through providing viable routes for accreditation and opportunities for continuing professional development;
 - 1.3.3. encouraging talented undergraduate and postgraduate students to pursue careers in music education by expanding pedagogy within the curriculum, providing all students with placements in LEAs/schools and on community outreach projects and offering a range of exit points to facilitate access on to teacher training programmes;
 - 1.3.4. enabling the institution to engage in pedagogical research and team pedagogical research with partners in the HE sector to explore ways of enhancing the quality and diversity of music education at pre-tertiary levels.
- 1.4. The College recognises that these policies alone will not ensure equality of access for potential students from all backgrounds. The level of musical ability required on entry is very high, and there are a number of barriers (see 2. below) which will need to be overcome for some disadvantaged groups of potential students, given the unequal provision of music education in schools. The College will therefore:
- 1.4.1. continue its existing activities in support of pre-HE musical education in the northwest region;
 - 1.4.2. continue its commitment to participate in Manchester Aimhigher and similar regional and local initiatives to raise aspirations and encourage participation in HE;
 - 1.4.3. continue to operate its junior RNCM activities, within the context of the RNCM Centre for Young Musicians, and provide bursaries to those in financial need using the government's Music and Dance Scheme and the available charitable funding sources;
 - 1.4.4. continue its programme of education projects in schools in the region, subject to ongoing funding;
 - 1.4.5. continue its link with, and support for, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), and in particular, the ABRSM's initiatives in the field of pre-tertiary music education and training;
- 1.5. The College already provides scholarships and bursary support to students at a level in excess of £600,000 per annum, mainly applied to overseas and postgraduate students, from a range of charitable sources.
- 1.5.1. The College has substantial experience in the management of the bursary process and effective procedures for the processing of bursary applications.

Royal Northern College of Music Access Agreement 2008-09

1.5.2. Subject to ongoing support from charitable funding sources, this level of bursary provision will be maintained, and the College is committed to expanding the level of endowments to enable the bursary scheme to continue to expand.

1.5.3. The College is committed (subject to continued availability of funding) to the continuation of the Instrument Purchase Scheme, established through a grant from the Foundation for Sports and Arts (FSA). Under this scheme instruments can be acquired for students to use while at College and for up to two years thereafter, while establishing themselves in the profession.

1.6. Conservatoires UK Admissions System (CUKAS)

1.6.1. The College, through its membership of Conservatoires UK, has contracted with UCAS to establish a small system (CUKAS) for entry to all its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This system was operational from May 2005 for the 2006 Entry, and has standardised the process for entry to RNCM with that relating to the bulk of HE institutions nationally.

1.6.2. Amongst other objectives, one of the aims of this system is to make the application process to RNCM more accessible for those candidates in schools and colleges which are less familiar with conservatoire practices.

2. Barriers to Entry

The College has considered the information available about its performance in fair access and widening participation and has concluded that a number of barriers still discourage applications from disadvantaged groups. These include:

- 2.1. The cost of study at HE level, even given the substantial support from government;
- 2.2. The cost of auditions – the audition fee plus the cost of travelling to Manchester;
- 2.3. The inequalities in music tuition provision nationally at pre-tertiary levels;
- 2.4. The limited aspirations of young musicians from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- 2.5. The lack of availability of suitable quality musical instruments.

3. Fee limits

3.1. The College proposes to charge the maximum fee of £3,145 to all fundable UK and EU undergraduate students in 2008-09, who fall within the scope of “variable fees” introduced in 2006. This charge will be increased with

Royal Northern College of Music Access Agreement 2008-09

inflation in line with government regulations in future years. Table 1 shows the approved estimate of the expected additional fee income to the College arising from variable fees:

Table 1 Estimates of additional fee income

Year	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Additional Fees	£395,000	£619,000	£834,000	£808,000

4. Bursary support for students

- 4.1. Government policy requires that the College offers a minimum bursary of £310 to all students who have been assessed to receive full state support. The College proposes to provide bursaries of £1,050 for those students in receipt of full state support (and returning students liable to pay the higher fees with family income up to £25,000) and a bursary of between £310 and £1,050 for those whose family income is greater than £25,000 but less than £40,000. These bursaries will address in some measure barrier 2.1 above.
- 4.2. Bursaries between these limits will be calculated on a sliding scale, so that for example, if the parental income is £30,000, the bursary will be £800, if £35,000, £550. These will, of course, be in addition to the state support.
- 4.3. The maximum bursary of £1,050 will be more than sufficient, together with the levels of government support already announced by government (£2,835 in 2008-09), to cover the residence fees at the Sir Charles Groves Hall of Residence, for those from the lowest income families. The Hall, which provides self-contained facilities, was completed in 2002 on the College campus under a PFI deal, and all new entrants to the College are encouraged to reside there.
- 4.4. The College will invite all UK and EU undergraduate students to apply for bursary support under this scheme, and those assessed eligible for state support will be asked to provide a copy of that assessment as evidence of eligibility. The College's Student Awards Committee will then determine the bursary to be awarded to each student, in accordance with the above scheme.
- 4.5. Bursary support will be paid to students in termly instalments, and will be reassessed each academic year.
- 4.6. This bursary scheme will be equally available to all undergraduate students, whether from the UK or elsewhere in the EU. Arrangements for bursaries for overseas (outside EU) undergraduate students and postgraduate students will remain as at present.
- 4.7. A summary of the additional amounts to be made available for bursaries by the College for UK and EU undergraduate students is shown in Table 2 below:

Royal Northern College of Music Access Agreement 2008-09

Table 2 Funding to be made available for UG bursaries

Estimate	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
UG Bursaries	£58,000	£124,000	£167,000	£162,000

5. Provision of information to students

- 5.1. Information about the Access Agreement will be included in the RNCM prospectus and published on the College website with links to the CUKAS site. The website will also include illustrations of the method of calculation of bursaries each year.
- 5.2. There will be a session at the College Open Days explaining the Access Agreement.
- 5.3. Details of the bursary scheme will be sent to all students offered a place, together with a bursary application form.

6. Outreach Work and Other Measures

- 6.1. In order to address barrier 2.2, the College proposes to provide support for audition costs for applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds. An audition fee is payable on application through CUKAS, which will be refunded to applicants whose families are in receipt of means-tested state benefits. In addition, the College will refund up to £50 of the cost of travel to the audition for such applicants. Following experience during audition period for 2006 entry, the budget made available for this has been reduced to £1,000 per annum.
- 6.2. To address the inequalities of instrumental/vocal tuition in pre-tertiary education (see 2.3 above), the College proposes to make available funds from additional fee income to support pupils from state schools and disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in the College's junior provision. It is proposed that the College will provide a full bursary from the additional fee income for at least one new place each year in Junior RNCM, and seek charitable support to increase the number of supported places available to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The College acknowledges that some pupils, especially those playing 'rarer' instruments such as oboe, bassoon, French horn, viola and double bass, will require additional support and guidance prior to entry to the Junior RNCM. Some of these funds, therefore, may be directed towards workshops and other Centre for Young Musicians events which raise the aspiration of these young musicians and guide them towards application for the Junior RNCM when appropriate. Entry to the Junior RNCM will remain dependent upon the College's assessment of the pupils' talent and potential.
- 6.3. In addition, to address 2.3 and 2.4 above, the College will develop the activities of the new Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, as described in 1.3 above. The College will continue to work with Aimhigher

Royal Northern College of Music Access Agreement 2008-09

and other regional initiatives and develop closer links with the LEA Music Services. In particular, it is proposed to deploy staff of the College, using the additional fee income to further develop those links.

6.4. To address the problem of the inadequacy of instruments for many young musicians (see 2.5 above), the College proposes to apply the principles of the FSA scheme (see 1.5.3 above) to create a fund for the benefit of pupils who attend the Junior RNCM and other Centre for Young Musicians activities. Into this fund the College will contribute an amount of at least £10,000 per annum, actively seeking charitable funding to add to this figure. This fund will finance the costs of providing good quality musical instruments to pupils in the Centre for Young Musicians from disadvantaged backgrounds. Instruments will normally be provided using the following criteria:

6.4.1. pupils aged 16 – 18 who are likely to be applying to RNCM at HE level

6.4.2. pupils who play or who are advised by the Centre for Young Musicians to begin playing very expensive, 'rarer' instruments e.g. oboe, bassoon, French horn, viola and double bass

6.4.3. 'doubling' instruments which will enhance greatly the musical experience of pupils in chamber music and ensembles e.g. alto flute, cor anglais, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone, piccolo trumpet.

6.5. A summary of the minimum additional amounts to be spent on outreach work and other measures is shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3 Minimum amount to be spent: outreach work and other measures

Year	See para:	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2009-10
Audition Costs Refund scheme	6.1	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
Outreach projects, including JRNCM places (net of charitable funds).	6.2 & 6.3	£21,000	£25,000	£28,000	£30,000
Provision of instruments	6.4	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
Total Outreach and other measures		£32,000	£36,000	£39,000	£41,000

Comment [R1]: Combine 2 lines and rename. Also combine budgets as agreed at the meeting on 18 September.

7. Milestones

7.1. The Higher Education Statistics Agency publishes three performance indicators relating to "fair access". For two of them historic data for the RNCM is not available and current data is unlikely to be available until December 2008.

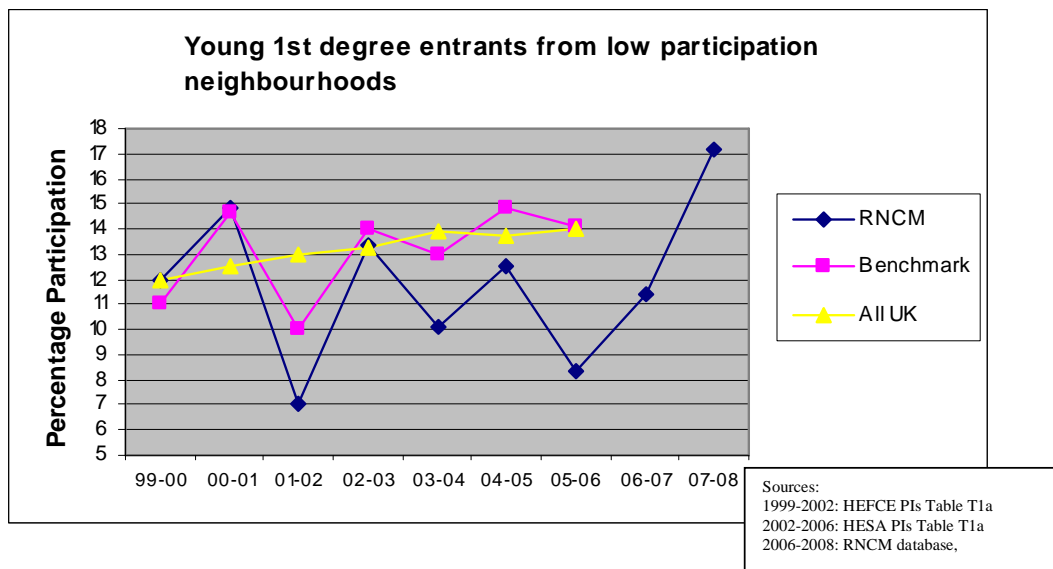
7.2. The most appropriate performance indicator selected by the RNCM is based on the characteristics of the students home postcode neighbourhood. The weakness of this indicator is acknowledged, but historic information is readily available, published by HESA from 2002-03, and by HEFCE in earlier years.

Royal Northern College of Music Access Agreement 2008-09

7.3. The published statistics for RNCM are quoted in Table 4 below, and are not out of line with the sector average (2001-02 seems to be anomalous). The College itself has calculated from its database provisional values for the same indicator for 2006-07 and 2007-08, also shown below, which is subject to confirmation by HESA in due course. Even excluding 2001-02, the figures show considerable variation, since statistically the numbers at RNCM are very small, involving only 10 - 20 individuals in any one year.

7.4. UK average and benchmark data are shown beside the RNCM data in table 4. The measures proposed above in paragraph 6 are unlikely to have an identifiable effect in the early years but, the College plans to achieve 15%, taking one year with another, for the period after 2011.

Table 4 Performance Indicators



8. Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

8.1. There will be regular reports to Directorate providing all the relevant statistics of applicants, places offered, registrations, to enable the College to monitor its performance in respect of this Access Agreement.

8.2. There will be an annual report to the Board of Governors each year, on the implementation of the Access Agreement. This will provide final statistics for the previous year, based upon the HESA submission and preliminary results for the current year (post registration and main auditions). This annual report will be made available to the Director of Fair Access.

Royal Northern College of Music

Access Agreement 2008-09

9. Summary

- 9.1. The College proposes to recycle 25% of the additional fees collected over the next four years. Of this 19% will be made available for bursaries to students and a further 6% spent on a number of outreach and other measures to mitigate the range of barriers which prevent disadvantaged students from successful entry to the College. Table 5 below shows the analysis of these amounts year by year and summarises the information presented in earlier tables.
- 9.2. The balance of the funding will be utilised to enhance the unit of resource for the College's programmes, improve the quality of provision for the student and to reinforce the institution's position as a leading national and international conservatoire.
- 9.3. The College's actions outlined in this agreement will stabilise the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in 2006, when higher fees are introduced, and increase it in the longer term. Because so many actions will take some years to bear fruit, the College is setting a milestone from 2011 of 15% (taking one year with another) for its key performance indicator, the percentage of young entrants to the undergraduate programmes from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 9.4. The College is committed to the delivery of these actions, in as much as additional resources are available from additional fees charged. However, if the review of the funding methodology by HEFCE (see 1.2 above) reduces the additional resources generated by the higher fees set out in Table 1 above, these measures will need to be reviewed.

Table 5. Summary of Financial Tables in Submission

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Total for period
Additional Income	£395,000	£619,000	£834,000	£808,000	£2,656,000
Bursary Costs	£58,000	£124,000	£167,000	£162,000	£511,000
Outreach Costs	£32,000	£36,000	£39,000	£41,000	£148,000
Total Committed	£90,000	£160,000	£206,000	£203,000	£659,000
Percentage Committed	23%	26%	25%	25%	25%