

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

1. This code of practice applies to all non-UK students, regardless of immigration status, except where stated that a requirement refers only to Student visa holders. It supplements the admissions regulations stated in the RCM's general [Admissions Policy](#).
2. This document reflects the [Student visa regulations](#) at the time of writing. These are regularly updated by the UK Home Office and students requiring sponsorship in the Student route will always be required to demonstrate they can meet the rules of the Student visa route as applicable on the date of visa application.

Agents and representatives

3. Due to the specialised nature of its courses the RCM only recruits directly and is not affiliated with any recruitment agents in the UK or internationally. Applicants requiring support with their application should [contact our Admissions team](#). The RCM will not correspond with third parties regarding an application, unless the applicant has listed that person as their authorised contact in their UCAS Conservatoires application.
4. The RCM currently has two Honorary Representatives who assist with local arrangements for auditions in Japan and South Korea. These honorary roles may include limited local language support to some applicants auditioning at those venues. They are not recruitment agents: they are not permitted to charge any fees to applicants and receive no recruitment fee or commission from the RCM (though they may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses where applicable). They are authorised to provide high level information on the application and audition process if required, but have no role in decision making and are not permitted to provide immigration advice.

Misrepresentation by an applicant

5. Due to the high performance standards required, any instance of misrepresentation or impersonation during the audition process is likely to be exposed quickly following enrolment. Notwithstanding the RCM is vigilant against fraud at all stages of the admissions process and undertakes checks to ensure application materials are genuine. If the RCM or UCAS Conservatoires have any reason to suspect that an applicant has provided false or misleading information or application materials (including impersonation, plagiarism, misuse of generative AI or the alteration of documentation or video materials) an investigation will be undertaken. This may include contacting awarding institutions/bodies for verification or referral to UCAS' verification service.
6. The RCM reserves the right to cancel an application and any offer of a place made, without refunding the application fee, if having carried out any necessary checks we determine or have reasonable belief that an application contains false information. Should this occur the RCM will also withdraw Student visa sponsorship where applicable.

Entry requirements

7. UK and International students apply via the same process. Applications for taught programmes must be submitted through UCAS Conservatoires. Doctoral applications are submitted directly via an online form.
8. The information below outlines the standard entry requirements for the RCM's programmes; applicants must always meet the conditions stated in their individual offer. All conditions must be met before the RCM can make an offer unconditional, or issue a Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS) where applicable.

Auditions

9. Most RCM courses are performance-based and the audition is the primary basis for admission. As one of the world's leading conservatoires, the highest performance standards are required for entry. Years of training, often from early childhood, are required to be a credible applicant.
10. The majority of auditions take place in person, either at the RCM's London campus or overseas audition venues. Video auditions are permitted for many courses and principal studies where applicants are unable to attend a live venue (see the [RCM website](#) for details of eligibility for video auditions). Admissions assessments for non-performance courses may include assessment of a composition portfolio or research proposal, and/or an interview (in person or online). Auditions are assessed by panels of highly experienced Faculty members, with recommendations ratified by the SEC Admissions Committee.

Academic entry requirements

11. Applicants must also meet the relevant academic entry requirements for their programme. For full details see the [relevant course pages on the RCM website](#).
12. Evidence of qualifications must be in the form of an official award certificate or final academic transcript. The certificate or transcript must be on headed paper and state the awarding body/institution, the applicant's name, the title of the qualification awarded and date of award. The RCM uses the UK ENIC (National Information Centre for global qualifications and skills) database and guidelines published by UCAS when assessing the equivalency of UK and international qualifications.
13. Interim or provisional transcripts, or letters confirming expected completion, are not accepted for this purpose. The only exceptions permitted are official results notifications for A Levels and the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE), for which formal certificates are normally issued at a much later date.
14. Where the document is not in English this must be accompanied by a certified English translation. (The RCM may exceptionally at its discretion accept documentation in another language, but only where a Student visa is not required and where a member of the Admissions team speaks the language to a high enough degree of fluency to be able to approve the contents.)

English language entry requirements

15. All non-UK nationals must provide evidence that they can communicate effectively in English at the necessary standard to succeed on their course. The [full list of accepted English language tests and required scores](#) is published on the RCM website, along with the list of acceptable alternative means to meet the English language requirement.

Programme	English level required
Bachelor of Music(Hons) Graduate Diploma in Vocal Performance Master of Performance Master of Composition Artist Diploma in Performance Artist Diploma in Composition Artist Diploma in Opera	CEFR B2 (equivalent to IELTS 5.5 overall, with a minimum of 5.5 in all 4 components)
Master of Music in Performance Master of Music in Composition MMusEd Teaching Musician MSc in Performance Science Artist Diploma in Conducting Doctoral Programme	CEFR C1 (equivalent to IELTS 7.0 overall, with a minimum of 5.5 in all 4 components)

16. These scores comply with the minimum requirements set by the Home Office for the sponsorship of students on courses at RQF Level 6 and above at the time of writing.
17. Upon receipt English language test certificates are checked for authenticity using the relevant test provider's verification service.

Confirmation of Studies (CAS) issuing policy for applicants requiring a Student visa

18. A CAS will only be issued once all entry requirements for the course are met, and not more than 6 months before the start date. For students commencing a new course, CAS will not normally be issued less than 3 weeks before the course start date, unless exceptionally agreed. Where necessary, applicants may be required to provide assurance they intend to apply using a priority visa service to enable them to arrive by the specified latest enrolment date.
19. As part of its sponsor duties and to maintain its license to sponsor international students, the RCM must ensure the number of visa refusals per year does not exceed a specified threshold, and maintain low numbers of non-enrolments and non-completions of courses. Before issuing a CAS sponsoring institutions are required to verify that, to the best of their knowledge based on the information provided, a student has a genuine intention to study, is likely to meet the requirements of the Student visa route, and is not subject to the [General Grounds for Refusal](#), although the final decision on whether a visa is granted always rests with the Home Office.
20. The RCM reserves the right to refuse to issue a CAS where a student meets the entry requirements of the course, but there are reasonable grounds to believe there is a high risk the visa application will fall for refusal, which may negatively impact the RCM's Student Sponsor License.
21. In assessing whether to grant visa sponsorship, the RCM will have regard to Home Office regulations and guidance, including but not limited to the [Immigration Rules](#) (especially [Appendix Student](#) and [Appendix Finance](#)) the [Student Sponsor Guidance](#) and the [Student Route Caseworker Guidance](#).
22. Applicants are required to submit a CAS Request Form, confirming their personal details and providing further information on any previous UK study history or history of visa refusals/overstaying, and their ability to meet the conditions of the Student route. Forms are assessed by a member of the RCM's International team before a CAS is issued. Where necessary, the RCM may request further information, or contact the Home Office via the UKVI Sponsor Management System (SMS) to confirm an applicant's immigration history or current status.
23. A CAS will not normally be issued for courses shorter than 6 months that can be completed using the Standard Visitor route.

Academic progression requirements

24. Student visa applicants must demonstrate they are progressing academically if they wish to apply for a further course in the UK. The new course must normally be above the level of the previous course for which they were granted permission under the Student route. For example, if a student's previous course was at RQF6 (Bachelor degree level) their next course should be at least at level RQF7 (Masters level).
25. Students cannot be sponsored in the Student route for study at a lower level than a previous UK course.
26. Applicants can exceptionally be sponsored for study at the same level provided:
 - a. the new course is related to the previous course for which the student was granted permission on the Student route (meaning that it is either connected to the previous course, part of the same subject group or involves deeper specialisation); or
 - b. the student's previous and new course combined support the student's genuine career aspirations.
27. Where it is unclear from the application whether the new course genuinely represents academic progression, the RCM may request more information from the applicant, such as the syllabus for the previous course. The case will be considered by the Deputy Academic Registrar and/or Academic Registrar, along with the relevant Head of Faculty/Head of Programme, to determine whether there is a robust case for academic progression.
28. The RCM will not sponsor a student where the new course is related to the previous course, but the content of both courses is so similar there is insufficient justification for progression.
29. These requirements do not apply to previous courses studied outside the UK.

Successful completion of most recent UK course

30. Where a student is extending their Student visa permission for further study on a new course in the UK, the RCM must confirm on the CAS it has seen evidence the student has successfully completed the course for which their most recent immigration permission was granted.
31. This course may not be the same qualification as that submitted to meet the RCM entry requirements. In such cases, despite meeting the RCM's academic entry conditions, a CAS cannot be issued until confirmation is received of successful completion of the most recent course. For this purpose, if the applicant is still awaiting their results, the Student visa rules permit the RCM to accept an official letter from the current institution, stating that the student is "highly likely to complete their course successfully". Without this the student is ineligible for apply to extend their immigration permission in the UK and must return overseas to apply from their home country.
32. For students relying on a "highly likely to complete" letter, the final certificate/transcript confirming successful completion must be provided to the International team as soon as their final results are confirmed and no later than the end of the Autumn term of the first year of study. Failure to provide this will result in termination of studies and withdrawal of visa sponsorship.
33. Whilst subsidiary study (such as evening classes) is permitted under the Student route, students are not permitted to be registered at two institutions at the same time on full-time courses requiring sponsorship. If a student still requires visa sponsorship by their current institution to complete teaching or assessment for their previous course and will not complete in time to meet the RCM's latest enrolment date (other than as described in paragraphs 31-32), a CAS cannot be issued and the applicant must re-apply for the following year.

Financial requirements

34. All international students must plan their finances carefully to ensure they can support themselves during their time in the UK. The [Home Office guidance on financial evidence](#) requires students to hold evidence, in an approved format, of sufficient funds to cover at least the first year of tuition fees, plus a specified minimum amount for maintenance (living expenses). Students should also ensure they have sufficient funds available to pay the visa application fee and Immigration Health Surcharge. These figures represent a minimum and most students will require more to live comfortably in London.
35. Student must declare in the CAS Request Form they hold the required funds for their first year of study, and provide details of where these are held and what evidence they plan to submit to prove this. If this form indicates the applicant may not be able to meet the requirements, or there are other factors in the applicant's background that lead to them

being considered higher risk, the International team will request additional information, with supporting evidence if necessary, before issuing a CAS.

36. In assessing financial means the RCM will take into account any scholarship or other funding it is providing.
37. The RCM reserves the right to insist on inspecting bank statements and/or other financial evidence for any student before issuing a CAS. This is compulsory where a previous application has been refused on financial grounds.
38. A high proportion of the RCM's applicants are from countries eligible for the "[differentiation arrangements](#)" or are applying in the UK, and therefore are not routinely required to submit financial evidence in their visa applications. However, these applicants may still be requested to submit financial evidence by the Home Office caseworker, so should prepare their documentation just in case in the usual way.

Assessing credibility and other requirements

Credibility

39. Applicants must satisfy the RCM of their genuine intention to live in the UK during term-time, study full time, and to adhere to the Student visa conditions during their stay.
40. When assessing whether the student is a credible Student visa applicant, the RCM may consider factors (where known) including but not limited to:
 - a. General grounds for a Student visa refusal in the Immigration Rules
 - b. Previous visa refusal history
 - c. Breach of previous visa conditions or overstaying
 - d. History of non-completion of previous course(s)
 - e. Unexplained gaps in study of more than 5 years or previous work/study in unrelated disciplines
41. If in doubt the RCM may require a student to attend an additional interview with the International team before granting a CAS.

Prior criminal convictions

42. As part of the visa application students must disclose all offences and consequent penalties both in the UK and overseas. The RCM reserves the right to withhold/withdraw visa sponsorship where the [Home Office guidance on grounds for refusal](#) indicates the application is likely to be refused. Applicants with previous convictions or cautions are advised to contact the Deputy Academic Registrar (nicola.peacock@rcm.ac.uk) at an early stage to discuss their circumstances. Disclosures will be handled confidentially as outlined in the RCM Admissions Policy.

Under 18s

43. The RCM's senior college provides degree-level education and as such students are normally over the age of 18 when commencing study. Applicants may exceptionally be admitted under the age of 18 with evidence of parental consent and subject to the conditions of the RCM's policy on [HE Students aged 16 or 17](#). Evidence of parental consent must also be submitted as part of the Student visa application if the student will be under 18 on the date of visa application, even if the student will turn 18 by the first day of term.
44. The RCM does not hold a Child Student sponsor licence and is therefore unable to sponsor applicants under the age of 16.

Student visa for Part-time study

45. The RCM will not normally sponsor students in the part-time Student visa route. The part-time visa is generally unsuitable for the RCM's courses as no work is permitted, which excludes students from gaining valuable professional experience through performance-based work placements. An exception may be made where a reduced study intensity is necessary due to health or other mitigating circumstances, normally to enable a current student to complete their course.

Visa refusals

46. Applicants whose visa application is refused may request one further CAS on condition that:
- Satisfactory assurance is provided, with supporting evidence as required, that the reason for refusal has been rectified, and
 - Permission is granted for late enrolment if applicable, and
 - Sufficient time remains to complete the visa application process, travel to the UK and enrol by the latest enrolment date (normally one month after the course start date).
 - Sufficient CAS remain in the RCM's annual allocation from the Home Office.
47. The RCM has a limited allocation of CAS and will not normally issue more than two CAS to a student in respect of the same course.

Non-enrolment

48. Where a student fails to present at New Student Check-in and enrol by the latest enrolment date, the RCM will withdraw visa sponsorship and the Home Office will consequently curtail the visa.
49. Should the student still be awaiting a decision on a visa application, they are advised to withdraw the visa application as soon as possible to avoid receiving a refusal decision, which may affect future immigration applications to the UK.

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