ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC London

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Table of contents

Scope of this policy....3
Equal opportunities....3
Application process....4
Application method....4
Auditions and interviews....4
- Taught programmes....4
- Research degrees....4
- Audition/Interview panels....5

Audition fees....5
Refunds....5
Scholarships, bursaries and other financial awards....5
Entry requirements....6
Academic requirements....6
English language requirements....6
Recognition of prior learning....6
Course eligibility for previous RCM students....7
Additional requirements for international students....7
Decision making....8
- Taught programmes....8
- Research degrees....8
- Scholarships and other financial awards....8

Communication of decisions....8
Fair admissions....9
Contextualised admissions....9
Disabled applicants....10
Applicants under the age of 18....10
Applicants with previous criminal convictions....11
Changes to advertised programmes....12
Misrepresentation or fraud by an applicant....12
Deferrals....12
Feedback policy....12
Subject access requests....13
Use of personal data....13
Complaints procedure....13

Terms and conditions.....13

Objectives

1 The Royal College of Music is one of the world's leading conservatoires. The RCM's admissions processes are intended to identify students with the skills and potential to achieve the highest standards of musical and academic excellence, regardless of their background.

Scope of this policy

2 This policy applies to all award-bearing programmes of study delivered by the Royal College of Music, excluding programmes delivered in collaboration with other providers.

3 The RCM is a signatory of the UUK-Guild HE Fair Admissions Code of Practice and this policy also draws on the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to Higher Education) and guidance provided by the Office for Students (OfS).

4 This document should be read in conjunction with other supporting RCM policies, which are available on the RCM website, including:

- Code of Practice for the Recruitment of International Students
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy
- Disabled Students' Handbook
- Access and Participation Plan 2025-29
- RCM Student Code and Procedures
- RCM Policy on HE Students Aged 16 or 17
- RCM Child Safeguarding Policy
- Applicant Complaints Procedure

Equal opportunities

5 The Royal College of Music is committed to a policy of equal opportunities. As a leading British conservatoire, it aims to provide musical education and professional training at the highest international level to meet the aspirations of as many as possible of those whom it deems to have the ability and motivation to benefit.

6 As an institution described at its foundation as one whose doors were to be 'thrown open to the whole world', the Royal College of Music acknowledges and welcomes influences from diverse social and artistic traditions. The RCM is committed to nurturing a community where diversity is recognised, valued and celebrated as strengthening our excellence.

7 The RCM is dedicated to providing a fair and transparent admissions process, that protects and prioritises the interests of applicants. Students are recruited on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential.

8 The RCM commits not to discriminate unfairly on the grounds of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership (all of which are "protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010), nor does it discriminate on the grounds of class or any other such unjustifiable cause.

Application process

Application method

9 Applications for taught programmes are submitted online via the UCAS Conservatoires application service for all applicants, whether UK or international.

10 Applications to the Doctoral Programme are submitted directly to the RCM, via a direct online form.

11 Where supporting application materials are required, such as a video audition or composition portfolio, these must be uploaded to the RCM's designated submission portal by the required deadline, in addition to submission of the UCAS Conservatoires application.

12 Where an applicant has previously applied unsuccessfully on two occasions, the RCM will not normally consider a further application for the same course. In such cases the application will be withdrawn and the audition fee refunded.

Auditions and interviews

13 All applicants who apply by the "on time" equal consideration deadline are guaranteed an assessment (audition, portfolio/application assessment and/or interview as applicable). Late applications may be considered where places remain. Detailed information on audition requirements and assessment processes is available on the RCM website.

Taught programmes

14 Performers are invited to attend a live audition in London or at one of the RCM's overseas audition venues.

15 The RCM encourages applicants to audition in person where possible. However auditions by video recording are available for most courses and principal studies, where applicants are unable to attend one of the RCM's audition venues in person. Video auditions are not currently offered for the Artist Diplomas in Performance and Opera.

16 Applicants for Conducting courses are initially assessed based on an online video submission, but if shortlisted are required to attend a final live audition round in London.

17 Composition applications are initially assessed based on the candidate's composition portfolio. Shortlisted applicants are invited to an interview. Shortlisted applicants for Composition for Screen courses are also required to complete a short practical task prior to the interview. Applicants who are unable to attend an interview in London may be interviewed online.

18 For certain performance courses/specialisms where there are large volumes of applications, and for overseas audition venues, the RCM may require applicants to submit a video audition (referred to as a pre-screening video) for assessment by a first-round panel, with only shortlisted applicants invited to attend a live audition panel.

19 Applicants for the MSc in Performance Science are shortlisted for interview based on their application form (and accompanying application materials where applicable). Interviews normally take place online.

Research degrees

20 Doctoral applicants are assessed based on their research proposal, which may include submission of creative practice such as scores and video, along with a writing sample. Only

shortlisted applicants are invited to participate in an interview. Interviews normally take place online via Microsoft Teams.

Audition/Interview panels

21 Most live performance auditions consist of a single panel, but for some larger Faculties where it is not possible for the Head of Faculty to be present on all panels, applicants may be referred to a second panel. This will always take place on the same day.

22 Audition/interview panels for most programmes normally consist of two panellists, who will be experienced members of RCM Faculty.

Audition fees

23 All applicants must pay the relevant audition/assessment fee before their application can be assessed. Audition fees are published on the RCM website and revised annually.

24 Audition fee waivers are offered for UK-domiciled undergraduate applicants for whom financial hardship may be a barrier to auditioning. The purpose of these audition fee waivers is to encourage applications from prospective students from groups currently underrepresented in UK higher education. Requests for waivers are assessed by a designated member of the Student Services team and administered by the Admissions Officers. Details of how to request a waiver are available on the RCM website at https://www.rcm.ac.uk/apply/auditions/feewaiver/.

25 Applications through UCAS Conservatoires are also subject to the UCAS application fee. UCAS will waive this for UK applicants who are eligible for means-tested Free School Meals and (with effect from the 2027/28 application cycle) care leavers.

Refunds

26 Applicants who change their mind have the right to withdraw their application and obtain a refund of the audition/assessment fee within 14 days of submitting their application. Those who applied through UCAS should contact UCAS directly to request this. If applying directly to the RCM, applicants should e-mail admissions@rcm.ac.uk to request their withdrawal. Unless notification of withdrawal is received within 14 days, refunds will not normally be granted unless there are exceptional extenuating circumstances.

Scholarships, bursaries and other financial awards

27 Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the RCM offers a range of awards to help students fund their studies.

28 RCM Scholarships are available to support students on our performance and composition courses. Awards range in value from a modest contribution towards tuition fees, up to full tuition fees for applicants who demonstrate the greatest potential. Scholarships are awarded based on performance at audition; there is no separate application process.

29 As part its commitments in the RCM's Access and Participation Plan 2025-29, means-tested Undergraduate Bursaries are offered to support UK-domiciled undergraduate students from low-income backgrounds with their living expenses.

30 Studentships are available for Home fee-paying students commencing study on the MSc in Performance Science between 2026 and 2028. The availability of further Studentships beyond that point is to be confirmed.

31 Doctoral Scholarships are available to assist with the cost of PhD studies.

32 Full details of available awards, eligibility criteria and how to be considered are available at https://www.rcm.ac.uk/apply/feesandfunding/scholarships/

Entry requirements

Academic requirements

33 The primary basis for admission to the RCM for most courses is the assessment of practical ability. This is assessed through the audition process. Music grade examinations are not accepted in place of an audition or academic qualifications.

34 However, applicants must also demonstrate that they have the academic skills necessary to succeed on their chosen programme. The RCM's minimum academic entrance requirements for each programme are reviewed on a regular basis and are published on the RCM website.

35 The RCM welcomes applications from candidates from a broad range of academic backgrounds, and applicants whose qualifications are not listed are invited to contact the Admissions Team to discuss their suitability for their preferred course. In the case of mature students, relevant professional experience may sometimes be accepted in place of formal academic qualifications.

36 The RCM uses the UK ENIC (National Information Centre for global qualifications and skills – formerly NARIC) database and guidelines published by UCAS when assessing the equivalency of UK and international qualifications.

English language requirements

37 English is the medium of tuition at the RCM, and an acceptable level of proficiency is essential for all programmes. Applicants who are not UK nationals are required to provide evidence of their English language ability. The RCM's English Language Requirements and acceptable forms of evidence are published at http://www.rcm.ac.uk/apply/englishlanguagerequirements/.

Recognition of prior learning

38 Applications may be considered for direct entry into year 2 or year 3 of the Bachelor of Music programme. Applicants should indicate their preferred year of entry for the BMus in their UCAS Conservatoires application. Direct entry to year 4 is not permitted.

39 Offers are made subject to:

40 Performance at audition being of a suitable standard for higher year entry (if not, entry to a lower year may be recommended).

41 Submission of an official academic transcript evidencing previous study on a music degree course at a higher education institution. For direct entry into year 2 students must have successfully completed 120 FHEQ credits (equal to 60 ECTS or other international equivalent) at bachelors degree level. 240 credits (or equivalent) are required for direct entry into year 3.

42 The BMus Programme Co-ordinator or Director of Programmes must approve the content of the previous course as being broadly commensurate with the content and standard of the first year(s) of the RCM BMus.

43 Applicants may be admitted to the MSc in Performance Science with credit for appropriate prior learning (including experiential learning) provided there is a reasonable expectation that the applicant will be able to fulfil the objectives of the programme by its completion). Offers will be made subject to:

44 Approval from the Programme Leader and Director of Programmes.

45 Submission of a full academic transcript of study on a relevant course from the previous higher education institution commensurate with the content and standard of the RCM MSc programme.

46 Where credit is given for experiential learning, the student may be required to undertake assessment for the appropriate credits and/or grade to be determined.

47 Normally, an applicant shall not be admitted with more than half the credits required to qualify for the award which that applicant is seeking, unless there is an exceptionally close match between the applicant's prior learning and the requirements of the programme.

48 The number of modules for which credit on entry is given shall be determined by the Head of Programmes, in liaison with relevant members of the programme team. The grades to be given shall be determined by the Board of Examiners.

49 It may be determined that applicants with a particular qualification are to be admitted regularly with a standard amount of credit.

50 Due to the structure of the courses, entry with advanced standing is not normally permitted for the Masters Programme in Performance / Composition (MPerf, MComp, MMusPerf, MMusComp), Graduate Diploma in Vocal Performance or Artist Diplomas.

51 Doctoral students may exceptionally be permitted to transfer to the RCM, for example where their lead supervisor moves institution. In such instances students will normally only be permitted to transfer into year 2 of the programme (or part-time equivalent), depending on successful completion of any Annual Progress Review at the previous institution. Students will be assessed on existing research material, and a proposal for the broader work itself.

Course eligibility for previous RCM students

52 Applicants who have previously completed a course of study at the RCM are not eligible to apply for another RCM course with a high proportion of identical or highly similar content, or to repeat the same course on a different principal study. Examples include:

53 Applicants who have previously completed the RCM Bachelor of Music(Hons) are not eligible for the Graduate Diploma in Vocal Performance, which mirrors the content of year 4 of the BMus.

54 Applicants who have previously studied on one of the pathways of the Masters Programme in Performance / Composition (MPerf, MMus, MMusPerf, MMusComp), the Master of Education (discontinued) or the MMusEd Teaching Musician (discontinued), are not eligible to apply again to one of these courses.

Additional requirements for international students

55 In addition to the RCM's normal entry requirements, international students requiring a Student visa to study in the UK must meet the requirements set by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) in the Immigration Rules, including the English language requirements.

56 Student visa applicants must demonstrate they are progressing academically if they have previously studied in the UK and wish to apply for a further course in the UK. Other than limited permitted exceptions, 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). Students cannot be sponsored in the Student route for study at a lower level than a previous UK course.

57 As part of its duties as a sponsoring institution, the RCM is only authorised to issue a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to students who it reasonably believes to be genuine students, and who will meet the requirements of the Student visa category, as stated UK Immigration Rules. RCM reserves the right not to issue a CAS where it believes that a Student visa application is likely to be refused.

58 For further details, including the RCM's policy on visa sponsorship and the issuing of CAS, see the Code of Practice for the Recruitment of International Students.

Decision making

Taught programmes

59 Recommendations for admission are made by audition/interview panels and relevant Heads of Faculty. Final decisions on admission are made by the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) Admissions Committee, which meets twice annually in December and February. Decisions made outside the main committee cycle may be approved by Chair's action.

60 Outstanding applicants for performance and composition programmes may be offered a place verbally "over the table" on the day of audition, provided either the Director or the relevant Head of Faculty is a member of the audition panel. This offer must subsequently be confirmed by the SEC Admissions Committee. Over the table offers are still subject to the normal entry conditions of the course.

61 Where an applicant is unsuccessful, but is deemed suitable for admission to another programme, an offer for the alternative programme may be made.

Research degrees

62 Recommendations are made by the interview panels, and final decisions are made by the Research Degrees Committee (RDC).

Scholarships and other financial awards

63 Decisions on the award of scholarships and awards for taught programmes are taken by the SEC Scholarships Committee, following recommendations from the relevant Heads of Faculty. Decisions made outside the main committee cycle may be approved by Chair's action.

64 Decisions on the award of doctoral scholarships are made by a sub-group of the Research Degrees Committee.

Communication of decisions

65 Applicants who apply through the UCAS system are notified of the outcome of their application via the UCAS Hub. Conditions of entry and the deadline(s) by which these must be met are also communicated via the Hub. In addition, successful applicants receive an offer e-mail directly from the RCM with further information about studying at the RCM and guidance on next steps.

66 Applicants for courses with direct application to the RCM are notified of results and conditions directly via e-mail.

67 Applicants who audition during the main London audition period in November – December will normally receive decisions on places before Christmas. Those who are awarded scholarships will be informed via email in a timely manner after receiving an offer of a place.

68 Results of auditions held outside this period are normally communicated within two weeks of the date of audition/interview.

69 Unless the applicant expressly gives consent to a third party (e.g. a parent) to communicate on their behalf, the RCM will not enter into any communication about the application with anyone other than the applicant.

Fair admissions

70 The RCM takes the following steps in supporting fair admissions:

71 The RCM undertakes to ensure transparency throughout the application process.

72 The RCM commits to providing complete, accurate and timely information to applicants, to ensure they can make informed decisions about the best course of study for them, in compliance with Competition and Markets Authority guidance.

73 The RCM ensures that all information and guidance on the website is clear, accurate, accessible and regularly maintained, to enable applicants to make an informed choice about their place of study. This includes, but is not limited to, entry requirements, audition requirements and course details. The website and prospectus are revised prior to the opening of the new admissions cycle in July each year.

74 All applicants for performance and composition courses who apply by the equal consideration "on time" date for their programme are guaranteed an assessment. This ensures that no applicant with the talent to succeed is overlooked for consideration, even if they have a non-traditional academic or musical training background.

75 In addition to the current level of academic and practical ability, the panel will also take into account evidence of talent, potential for future development and potential to benefit from the chosen course.

76 Audition/interview panellists receive appropriate training and assess candidates individually against an agreed set of criteria.

77 Recommendation for admission is based on the performance in the audition/assessment, and not any prior knowledge of the candidate (including existing RCM or Junior Department students).

78 Consideration is given to achieving a gender balance and diversity among panellists, where staffing within the relevant Faculty permits.

79 Offers are normally conditional on applicants demonstrating that they meet the entry requirements for their course. Unconditional offers are only made at the point of offer where an applicant is deemed to have already met all the relevant entry requirements.

Contextualised admissions

80 The RCM is committed to increasing access to conservatoire education from under-represented groups, as stated in its Access and Participation Plan.

81 Students from under-represented backgrounds may face various barriers to conservatoire education, which can include: a lack of access to high quality music tuition or conditions conducive to regular practice; financial difficulties; a lack of role models with whom they identify; a lack of family stability or support; low aspirations or a perception that study at a leading conservatoire is "not for them". Use of contextual data to inform admissions decisions has been widely accepted across HE and has been demonstrated to increase equality of opportunity

82 For undergraduate courses where the applicant applied through UCAS, contextual data is made available to the SEC Admissions Committee to support the decision-making process where it has been provided. This may include, but is not limited to:

83 Eligibility for means-tested Free School Meals (FSM)

84 Declaration of a disability

85 Ethnic background currently under-represented at the RCM and the wider classical music industry

86 Prior experience of the care system

87 Where the decision on whether to offer a place to a student is borderline, the Committee may give favourable consideration to applicants with one or more of these indicators.

88 As the RCM's standard academic entry requirements for the BMus course already represent the sector minimum (EE at A level or equivalent), no variation to the academic conditions of entry will normally be applied.

Disabled applicants

89 The RCM welcomes and encourages applications from disabled people.

90 The RCM will make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, as agreed by Student Services, to remove any barriers to participation. With the applicant's consent, any agreed reasonable adjustments and relevant information will be shared with the audition/interview panel and, where applicable, those administering the audition. Applicants are invited to share a disability at any stage in the application process, although they are encouraged to do so as early as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place. Prior to audition/interview the Student Services team will contact all applicants who declare a disability to discuss their requirements.

91 Successful applicants who share a disability or support requirement will be offered the opportunity to arrange a Learning Support Agreement tailored to that individual. A meeting is held between the student and the RCM's Disability Advisor to discuss and agree support needs in the context of the programme and related activities. With the student's consent, information about any reasonable adjustments will be shared on a need to know basis, to ensure support can be implemented. Further information on disability support at the RCM can be found at https://www.rcm.ac.uk/life/studentsupport/disabilities/

Applicants under the age of 18

92 The RCM's senior college is an adult learning environment providing degree-level education and, as such, students are normally over the age of 18 at the point of commencing their studies.

93 Applicants may exceptionally be admitted below the age of 18, provided they are able to meet the standard entry requirements and can demonstrate the required emotional and intellectual maturity to engage fully with the curriculum and integrate socially in a higher education environment. In most cases this will be for a short period prior to turning 18 during the first term of their first year of study.

94 The Admissions Committee will take into consideration the applicant's readiness for and ability to cope with degree-level study before offering a place. An additional interview with the BMus Programme Co-ordinator and/or Director of Programmes may be required to assess this.

95 Applications from applicants below 16 years of age will not normally be considered.

96 As a Higher Education Institution, the RCM does not hold a Child Student sponsor licence, and therefore is only able to sponsor students aged 16 and above who require a visa to study in the

UK. The Home Office will require written evidence of parental consent to live and study independently in the UK.

97 Notwithstanding, all persons under the age of 18 are considered to be children in UK law, and the RCM has a duty of care to them.

98 In support of this, the RCM requires the written permission of a student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) prior to enrolment.

99 Applicants who will turn 18 during their first year of study are eligible to apply for accommodation at Prince Consort Village. Parents of younger applicants should make suitable alternative arrangements.

100 Please refer to the RCM's Policy on HE Students aged 16 or 17 and Safeguarding Children Policy for further details.

Mature students

101 Applications are welcomed from mature students (defined for this purpose as applicants over the age of 21 for undergraduate degrees and over 25 for postgraduate degrees). The RCM has no maximum age for admission.

102 Whilst usual entry requirements normally still apply, consideration may be given to relevant professional experience. Applicants may be required to provide evidence of this in the form of a CV, written statement of experience, or alternative entrance assessment to benchmark subject knowledge.

103 Applicants with caring responsibilities are encouraged to discuss with the Student Services team whether they would benefit from any additional support.

Applicants with previous criminal convictions

104 The RCM believes that a prior criminal conviction should not normally be a barrier to those who wish to further their education. Therefore applicants are not required to declare previous convictions at the point of application. However, applicants are encouraged to disclose convictions at an early stage prior to enrolment where additional advice or support may be required.

105 A DBS check is also required for some optional modules at BMus or Masters level that include placements in educational settings.

106 Where an enhanced criminal record check identifies a criminal conviction, the RCM will consider, based on the evidence, whether the nature of the conviction may prevent an applicant from undertaking / continuing on their course, and whether an applicant poses an unacceptable risk to the RCM's community. In most cases a conviction is unlikely to be a barrier to study. However, if the risk is assessed as too high then a place may not be offered or may be rescinded.

107 As part of the visa application process international 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.

108 Information on criminal convictions will be treated in strict confidence as sensitive personal data, and only seen by staff directly involved in the decision on admission (normally the Deputy Director, Academic Registrar, Deputy Academic Registrar and the course leader).

109 Applicants whose conviction may mean that they need additional support in order to apply to or study at the RCM are encouraged to discuss their circumstances with the Student Services team so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place.

Changes to advertised programmes

110 In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for the RCM to amend or withdraw a programme. In the event that this occurs, the RCM will inform all applicants affected in a timely manner, and suggest alternatives if possible.

Misrepresentation or fraud by an applicant

111 Due to the high performance standards required, any instance of misrepresentation or impersonation during the audition process would quickly be exposed 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 documentation (including impersonation, plagiarism, misuse of generative AI or the alteration of video materials) it will undertake an investigation which may include, but is not limited to, contacting awarding institutions/bodies for verification or referral to UCAS' verification service.

112 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.

Deferrals

113 In most instances the RCM does not normally permit applicants to defer an offer of a place to the following year.

114 Deferrals may be permitted where there are exceptional personal circumstances, subject to the approval of the relevant Head of Faculty/Programme, and for a maximum of one academic year.

115 Reasons for deferral that will not normally be approved include inability to meet the required academic or English language requirements or to obtain a Student visa by the required deadline(s), or inability to raise the required funding. In these circumstances applicants are encouraged to reapply for the following year, when they can also be reconsidered for scholarship funding.

116 Applicants should have an unconditional offer (GU status) at the point they defer. Notwithstanding, applicants for performance and composition courses are required to undertake a confirmatory audition, to ensure that their level of practical skill has been maintained during the deferral period. Should their standard has fallen below the benchmark for entry for that year, the applicant will be considered not to have met the entry requirements for the course and the offer of a place will be withdrawn.

117 Any offer of a scholarship may not be deferred, but applicants may be re-considered for an award based on performance in the confirmatory audition.

Feedback policy

118 Requests for feedback should be submitted in writing to admissions@rcm.ac.uk within two months of notification of the outcome of the audition. Requests received later than this will not be processed.

119 Doctoral applicants may request feedback on their research proposal from the Head of Research at researchdegrees@rcm.ac.uk.

120 Feedback requests will only be accepted from the applicant themselves. Requests from third parties will not be acknowledged.

121 Requests will normally be processed within 20 working days of receipt. Applicants auditioning during the main audition period in November/December should note that the RCM is closed between Christmas and New Year.

122 The purpose of the audition is only to assess an applicant's suitability for the specified course; it is not intended as a consultation. The RCM's courses are highly competitive and applicants should be aware that feedback may simply state that other applicants were stronger or that in the opinion of the panel the course was not suitable for them.

123 The RCM will not enter into a dialogue with applicants regarding feedback.

Subject access requests

124 Under data protection legislation, all applicants have the right to see information held by the RCM relating to their application. Subject Access Requests should be submitted to the RCM's Data Protection Officer by completing the form available at https://www.rcm.ac.uk/websitepolicies/privacy/

Use of personal data

125 For information on how the RCM processes candidates' personal data, please see the RCM's Privacy Statement.

Complaints procedure

126 Admissions decisions are final and there is no right of appeal against the academic or artistic judgement of such decisions. However, applicants may submit a complaint or appeal if they believe there has been a procedural irregularity in processing their application. Further details are available in the RCM's Applicant Complaints Procedure.

Terms and conditions

127 In accepting the offer of a place at the RCM, applicants agree to the RCM's Terms and Conditions, which are available in full at https://www.rcm.ac.uk/about/strategies-values/registrationterms/ . Applicants have the right to cancel this agreement at any time within 14 days of acceptance of their offer. However, they waive the right to cancel if the RCM provides any of the stated services within the 14 day period.

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