

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Outcome Agreement 2023-24

Introduction

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is the National Conservatoire, educating learners of all ages in all performing arts, production arts and arts education disciplines. RCS has TDAP up to and including all taught postgraduate awards, and our Doctoral awards (DPerf, PhD) are validated by St. Andrew's University. The student population is 1240 (HE) and 916 across the preHE portfolio (including Junior Conservatoire, short courses and summer programmes).

The Strategic Plan 2030 is focused on maintaining and enhancing the quality of learner, staff, public and partner experience, whilst achieving financial sustainability following the impacts of Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, and a cost-of-living crisis on recruitment. This broad context for ongoing challenges regarding the Conservatoire's longer-term sustainability includes: potential applicants' perceptions of reduced public funding – and ultimately the value – of the performing arts to society (leading them to question whether employment as a performing or producing artist is viable, even though our graduate outcomes remain sector leading); a preHE school curriculum that either places the arts low in subject hierarchies of importance (UK) or creates so broad a curriculum as to leave a significant gap between school leavers' skills levels and those of a depth and specificity necessary to obtain a place in a Conservatoire; the perception of the UK's position on overseas and European learners; the complexity of the RCS, which is the largest Conservatoire in the UK, and which offers education in *all* performing and production arts disciplines. This leads to heavier staff costs than comparable institutions (particularly the monotechnic SSIs), which then has implications when pay awards, pension contributions and other costs must be taken into account. Despite these challenges, RCS has maintained a top ten position (currently 6th) in the QS World Rankings for Performing Arts Institutions, alongside peers – including others in the UK – that are at a significant financial advantage, either because they can draw from sizeable endowments, public and private funds closer to the truer cost of educating outstanding artists to the necessary professional level, or because they are less complex in size and scope (for example, staff costs are less). RCS, originally the Glasgow Athenaeum, was founded for the city and all its inhabitants, regardless of their social status, and its commitment to the arts considered essential to the wellbeing of the city and Scotland. These principles and purposes remain with us today.

There remain significant challenges in attracting high quality applications from EU countries, and overseas, given the financial impact on individuals is now substantial, and our scholarship programme does not have the resources to deploy annually that many competitors in England do (notably the other members of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music). Scottish-domiciled applicants are disadvantaged due to local authority de-prioritisation of access to quality arts tuition (such as instrumental music teaching), which in several disciplines needs sustained commitment from a young age to achieve the required standards. This uneven access has particularly impacted the confidence of young Scottish performing artists who might otherwise have been prepared for competitive audition at Conservatoire. As referenced briefly above, whilst efforts have been made in the school system to engage more learners in performing arts subjects, this has been at the expense of the specialist education that meets the skills needs for the standard to enter the Conservatoire. The Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications in performing arts subjects do not in themselves provide sufficient specialist skills to enable students to meet the audition standards required. Those with private means to supplement mainstream learning opportunities with specialist tuition therefore gain an advantage. Through our work with the Music Education Partnership Group and other entities, we continue to engage with school arts curriculum and access, and the students who matriculate to our MEd in Learning and Teaching in the Arts report that they join the programme in part seeking to enhance their own confidence and skills in the classroom. Dancers and other disciplines reliant on movement have been affected by prolonged lockdown

conditions that prevented specialist facilities from being used, which are necessary to prevent injury and build stamina.

The Strategy commits to diversify income streams in order to become financially sustainable in future. We are currently engaged in a discussion and bid with the Funding Council about an additional 1M SSI grant, which will be used for transformation and sustainability of the Conservatoire, and this resource is regarded as essential for the longer term, and to put RCS in a more competitive situation in relation to sister Conservatoires in England in particular. Our international success and profile, as well as our partnerships with all the National Companies provide a strong base for extending the commercial success of our short course portfolio. We are also exploring new international partnerships and course developments that will enable us to grow our international student population, as well as attract a diverse range of Scottish applicants to RCS, including strengthening our domestic partnership arrangements and scoping the potential for closer relationships with regional colleges and community arts organisations in the central belt. Above all our strategy draws on the growing strength of the recovering creative economy and our contribution to it, to focus on graduate opportunities here in Scotland, particularly in the fast-growing film and production industries. We continue to commit to supporting artistic excellence *and* access to Conservatoire education, as well as produce the next generations of performing arts teachers and cultural leaders.

Priority Area 1- Fair Access and Transitions

RCS meets its commitments to the Commission on Widening Access (COWA) targets through its Fair Access/Transitions work. RCS has received continued funding for this for 2023-4 from SFC.

The RCS Fair Access/Transitions programme 23-4 will have two strands as follows:

Strand 1 – Widening Access to the Creative Industries (WACI) Outreach to Schools and Communities

We will offer a national open-access programme for schools and communities in music, dance, drama, production arts and film. It will be targeted at marginalised learners, prioritising those who are from SIMD 20, care-experienced and estranged backgrounds. However, it will also support young people who face other barriers to access. These include attendance at a low progression school, D/deaf, rurality and black, indigenous and/or people of colour (BIPOC). The open access programme will raise awareness of and provide access and meaningful pathways to further studies and we will continue to extend our reach nationally through an annual outreach plan of action designed to reach, engage, gain trust and recruit eligible individuals from priority groups. We will work with key collaborators in targeted areas/communities of deprivation and rurality using both in person and technology enhanced methods to raise awareness.

Strand 2 – Transitions

We will offer an auditioned National programme for young people aged 7+. It will provide a progression route to degree study in the performing arts at RCS for people across Scotland with talent and potential, who are interested in pursuing further study and a career in the performing and production arts and will give them the best chance to gain access to undergraduate study at RCS and ultimately succeed in gaining employment.

An example of a case study includes:

[Adam Lee - RCS Ambassador for Woodwind \(Clarinet\)](#)

Please also refer to the RCS FA Case Study- Alumni (Sharon Mackay) document that has been submitted separately as a further example of a Transitions Alumni Case Study.

This strand will use a process of early and sustained intervention to progress young people, preparing them for the rigorous audition, interview and intense training on RCS' undergraduate programmes as follows:

- Aged 7-11 in music and dance (pre-Juniors)
- Aged 12-15 in music and dance.
- Aged 16+ in drama production and film

This work will ensure that we are aligned with other access programmes in Scotland, and we will continue to work with the National Schools Co-ordinator to develop the fair access work of RCS with the National Schools Programme for AY 2023-24 and beyond.

During 2023-4, RCS will work with SFC to restructure the Transitions programme and design a sustainable model that delivers the highest possible proportion of programme participants into HE studies at RCS.

The table below highlights elements of our supporting data that demonstrate current contribution to the work of COWA and National Measures. The census date of the data used here is 10th October 2023.

Measure	Measure Description	RCS Prediction 2023-4	Actual in 2022-3
A	Total number of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants (SDUE)	165	167
C1	The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled full-time first-degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	28 (17% of SDUE)	18 (10.8% of Scots Dom UG Entrants SDUE)
C2	The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes	52 (32% of SDUE)	43 (26% of SDUE)
D	The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants that are care experienced.	3 (1.8% of SDUE entrants)	2 (1.2% of UG entrants SDUE)
E2	The number and proportion of full-time first year students Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes returning to study in year 2.	16/17 (94% retained)	25/27 (93% retained)
E3	The number and proportion of full-time first year students Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants that are care experienced returning to study in year 2.	1/1 (100% retained)	2/2 (100% retained)

In 2022-23, our previous progress on achieving COWA targets stalled with SIMD 20 SDUEs (Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants) only forming 10.8% of our SDUEs. This is a noticeable decline on the previous two years. Thus in 2019-20 and 2020-21 we saw our SIMD 20 proportions of entrants sitting at 19.4% and 21.6% respectively. This is a disappointing outcome of that year's intake which we believe reflects changing talent pool conditions during COVID.

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on those from the 20% most deprived postcodes does not need elaborating in detail here, but it is worth observing that clearly the lockdowns as well as the cost-of-living crisis have reduced opportunities for young people in performing arts training, and provision was already uneven.

As a result of our concerns regarding talent pool development, we anticipated that a similarly low number of SIMD 20 entrants would be reflected in the latest data for the 2023-24 matriculation. We are predicting a better proportion of SIMD 20 students for 2023-24 (17%) than last year and believe we can build on this. We aspire to return to pre-pandemic progress that was on track to meet and indeed exceed COWA targets.

In Term 1 (Autumn 2022), Our Fair Access Outreach work engaged with 935 pupils who face diverse barriers to accessing the arts attending 41 schools in areas of disadvantage across Scotland.

By the end of the academic year 2022/23, we had worked with over 2000 people from 143 secondary schools, 15 primaries, 8 colleges and 3 universities across 25 of Scotland's 32 council areas.

Case Study

Please refer to the RCS FA Outreach Case Study (Reaching Disadvantaged People Across Scotland) document that has been submitted separately which provides a case study of Working in the Highlands of Scotland in collaboration with Dingwall Academy and Eden Court Theatre.

Priority area 2: Quality Learning and Teaching

RCS uses regular curriculum review and development opportunities to embed learning in programmes that is sector leading. Our size means that our engagement with students, from Senior Management Team through to all levels of the organisation, is built on the issues that young learners are passionate about, leading to progressive programmes, module content and industry partnership. Issues including citizenship, environmental sustainability, wellbeing, equality and inclusion are all foregrounded in curriculum design and consultation – our view is that productive engagement with these matters enhances and is enhanced by artistic skill, creativity and arts advocacy. A number of new initiatives that use the creative arts to illuminate and educate in these vitally important areas are embedded in core learning across the disciplines. Some of these initiatives are outlined below.

We have examined RCS production throughput to ensure that the workload on students and staff is reasonable, reflective of good industry practice, and informed by work-based learning opportunities that allow students to reach their fullest potential. In addition, we are implementing a new 'creative citizenship' module for all undergraduate students from September 2023, which will support students to understand the most effective ways of working together in a community, safeguarding their own wellbeing and that of others, and managing interpersonal dynamics as preparation for successful professional life. Following on from this, a suite of 'interdisciplinary and extended practice' (IXP) modules will be offered, which reflect the realities of portfolio careers in creative arts, giving students the experience and insights they need into self-driven, entrepreneurial work opportunities that connect with audiences of all kinds. IXP modules will give students the opportunity to engage in work on sustainable practice in the arts initiatives, and to explore issues in equality and inclusion in practice. Numerous industry professionals participate in advisory groups or review panels to assist programme teams and student representatives to arrive at an enhanced version of the programmes through the review process. We also engage alumni in this process, ensuring that their recent experience of study at RCS, as well as their own transition into professional life, gives current students a realistic and vibrant idea of possibilities.

We have worked intensively on student safety and wellbeing, giving it a core place in curriculum (see above) but also in strengthening our regulatory processes, including student complaints, appeals, support to study and disciplinary procedures. Learning Agreements and mental health support are also better supported than ever with staff resources increased in our disability service and with our diverse and extensive counselling team offering support across a wide range of expertise e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy, person centred counselling, counselling sessions provided in British Sign Language as well as specialist support in working with black and minority ethnic students around various areas of racial/ethnic discrimination and trauma, and with the LGBT + community. Training is offered to staff across a range of issues from anti-racism to informal resolution of complaints. We are also mindful of the need for safe working practices, and conscious that the professions which our programmes align with are themselves undergoing change following the pandemic. Reflections on working practices (long hours, especially for producers), workplace culture and safe space in rehearsals and performance, as well as good practice in relation to safe sound levels (especially for music students) all inform our approach to programme planning for the year ahead. Fast-developing issues including the acceptable use of AI, as well as its creative potential are also high on the agenda for discussion, research and creative exploration throughout our programme review process.

Throughout the year, students and staff are offered training across a broad range of fast-developing topics that enable the whole community to work together to drive change and progress in the performing and production arts, as well as the ways we teach and broaden participation in them.

In 2022-23 RCS undertook a full periodic review of BMus (Hons) and BEd. (Hons) Music undergraduate provision. The revalidated programmes will begin in September 2023. Looking ahead to 2023-24 AY, attention will be paid to student experience, seeking to make gains on the significant increase of over 10% in overall satisfaction in the NSS 2023. All of our undergraduate provision in Dance, Drama, Production and Film will undergo periodic review in 2023-24. The process will prioritise student experience and reflect back to students what they want to see in their learning, as well as challenge them to think in contemporary ways about the work they create and the world they live in.

Our annual review process (annual monitoring of programmes of study) ensures that the programme committee structure, overseen by Quality and Standards Committee, continues to make progress against actions in programme-level annual action plans. We will also prepare an annual NSS action plan for 23-24, in an effort to improve our outcomes. The Students' Union is committed to working with the Deputy Principal and QA/E colleagues at RCS to enhance communications between academic disciplines and student groups, as we seek to enhance the general understanding of the power of the student voice at every level of the organisation's deliberative structure.

The [Conservatoire's Strategic Plan 2030](#) was published in September 2023, having been approved by the Board in the summer. The plan is an ambitious commitment to sustaining and enhancing the quality of RCS staff, student admissions, curriculum and peer esteem, at the same time as contending with a deficit due to a number of factors. Whilst we have committed to certain efficiencies, in order to enhance student and staff experience, we are also developing longer-term income-generation plans to diversify our business for the benefit of the community as a whole. We plan to offer further high-quality CPD opportunities for professionals in the arts, as well as more flexible learning arrangements (included additional blended masters courses) to suit a broader spectrum of arts students and practitioners.¹

Our graduate outcomes data tells an encouraging story of graduate success. For the latest available Graduate Outcomes dataset (HESA 2020-21) over 91% of student respondents report that they are in positive destinations. The economic contribution of specialist performing arts graduates, and particularly production graduates, who are in constant demand in a growing industry, is notable. Whilst salaries in themselves are difficult to judge, given the nature of freelance and contract work, the consistency of employment status in highly skilled roles and/or further specialist study is testament to the continued strengthening of the arts professions, notwithstanding contrary public discourse and cuts to funding at all levels of education and professional practice.

Enhancements to the student experience will include clearer communication with students, and better contextualising them from day one on their courses, so that they understand the complexity of the conservatoire, and how this maps to the profession. We are working over the next year to reduce operations in 'silos', which is easy to fall into when performance disciplines are so highly specialised and require their own protocols and skills pedagogies. However, this can have the unintended effect of creating siloed student views of the institution, and a lack of context of how the different disciplines co-exist within a small, in-demand estate with double the student numbers on site compared with those at the time the venues were built in the late 1980s. Our efforts to embed collaboration more fully in every student's learning experience will result in more effective employment skills for graduates as well as innovation in productions and performance outputs across the portfolio. We also intend to explore productive regional collaborations with colleges and neighbouring institutions, to evaluate where shared provision, articulation routes or partner arrangements might benefit both organisations and learners, whilst maximising resources available. The discipline most

¹ Refer to the Outcome Agreement Self-Evaluation for 2022-23, QAA discussion of Enhancement Theme activity

amenable to this collaborative approach is dance, and our priority at the moment is to pursue ongoing discussions with Glasgow Clyde College (Annie'sland Campus) to explore the potential for a 1+2 model in commercial dance through building an articulation route from the HN Dance to entry to Year 2 of a BA Commercial Dance at RCS. We are sure that there would be interest, in particular from young Scots, in such a programme – as ever, the challenge is a logistical one to appraise the space arrangements, teaching model, recruitment and resource required to make the pathway work effectively for all involved.

RCS promotes a lively and interactive feedback culture across its activities – there is a whole institution investment in student support. Student representatives participate in every committee of RCS, including at Board level. There are informal and formal mechanisms for students to feedback, within their departments or to senior management, as well as regular participation in action planning and monitoring. Student performances also tend to be assessment points, but audiences comprising staff, fellow students and the public provide further and immediate sources of feedback to students on their learning and outcomes. There is a culture of “soft” interaction between student peers and staff in these situations, and this extends to a “quality culture” in which constant dialogue between small programme teams and cohorts leads to continuous enhancement throughout the academic year.

Our Student Union President has contributed the following reflections for this Outcome Agreement:

Student Partnership Agreement

For the coming academic year (23-24), The SU President has been working closer with SPARQS and has considered SPAs from other Scottish HEI's to observe best practice. There is now a focus for the coming year for the SUP and Deputy Principal to agree at the start of the AY a new SPA framework with a smaller range of broader areas of activity that are important to the students. The clear articulation of these will enable wider group/s of stakeholders to be involved in developing partnership projects. The visibility of these projects, and simple 'you said, we did' campaigns will give enhanced visibility to the impact of the student voice at all levels in RCS.

SU Structure and role

In T1 of AY22-23, The Students' Union and the CSMT agreed upon a 92% uplift in the Annual grant that the Conservatoire gives to the Students' Union with the majority of the uplift to go towards funding a second sabbatical officer. Following elections in AY 2022-23, a new SUVP took up post at the commencement of AY 2023-24. The second sabbatical officer's role is primarily focused towards increasing the support to both students and staff specifically in the area of student engagement and representation. Additionally, the role would allow for SU sabbatical officers to attend a greater number of Board of Governor and Academic Board Subcommittees than in previous years.

Plans to enhance the student experience

The New Students' Union Sabbatical Officer (Vice President) has been reviewing the Conservatoire's Student Engagement and will share their findings to the BoG, Academic Board, as well as CSMT. New avenues and approaches to enhancing student experience will be trialled over 2023-24, notably a simpler, but more visible and relevant set of principles in the Student Partnership Agreement.

Priority Area 3: Coherent learning provision

RCS is deeply engaged in the local and national performing arts professions. Our graduates can be found in every National Company, and many have their own enterprises. Our curriculum design, as well as the core elements within it, including concerts and productions are informed by our industry-led staff who work directly with students to ensure that their learning and assessment experience reflects the skills demands of the profession. Significant amounts of credit in all programmes are focused on skills development, requiring these to be firmly established in order to attain the required level of practice to be able to operate with creative autonomy in professional life.

We are aware that the fastest developing industry in the creative arts in Scotland is film and production, with many new and established companies choosing to film, produce and complete post-production here. As a consequence, we have a keen understanding of where there are skills gaps in the workforce – particularly in relation to designers, makers and technical producers, and our provision is responsive to this. Throughout 2023-4 we will be redesigning our Filmmaking course, as well as beginning to develop cognate programmes (such as music-for-film, screenwriting) at Masters level. This is in direct response to known demand in the industry and to peer discussions with Screen Scotland and BBC Studios. A priority for 2023-4 is to take forward these partnerships and to work with organisations to collaborate on opportunities for learners and professionals to upskill. The pandemic saw a number of scenic and technical producers depart the profession owing to the closure of venues, whilst their practical skills could be turned towards immediate opportunities, such as building or electrical work. As Scotland becomes a preferred venue for filming and producing, the infrastructure to support its ambition and potential needs to grow rapidly. RCS trains students from matriculation with a view to fulfilling industry demands. We will work closely with professional and other educational organisations to ensure that the opportunities to be coherent across the sector are seized, including offering PreHE short & summer courses, microcredentials, and degree provision. There are discussions ongoing with St. Andrew's University to evaluate the potential for joint awards involving RCS's practice-led curriculum, research and engagement, and the University's leadership in research-led advancement of knowledge and skills.

Given the closeness of our relationships with industry, at national and local level, the human impact of our work can be observed in audience engagement and seeing projects brought to fruition between committed partners. Students experience a 'proto professional' environment at RCS in which they often have one foot in the education environment and one in the professions throughout their studies.

Priority area 4: Work-based learning and skills

All RCS programmes include work-based or work-related learning as a core principle. Visiting staff from the professions, employers and agents are involved in delivery onsite in our specialist venues, or in Glasgow and beyond at public venues (for example the Tramway Glasgow, Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, or Dalkeith Palace). We have always referred to the ‘proto professional’ learning environment at RCS – balancing the education setting with the public- and profession-interfacing that forms a key part of every student’s experience. As well as our own specialist staff, students work with a range of professionals who are active practitioners across Scotland and the world.

MEd Learning and Teaching in the Arts

Launched in 2014 as a part-time, blended learning programme, our MEd in Learning and Teaching in the Arts is designed to meet the professional development needs of arts educators across all formal and informal education contexts and across all artforms. The SFC Upskilling Fund makes it possible for Scottish-domiciled arts educators to study on this three-year programme, to enhance their practice, develop new and innovative ways of supporting the full spectrum of arts education from early years, primary and secondary school, tertiary education and in a diverse range of informal learning contexts from private practice to the participatory arts. The table below highlights the current balance by context and discipline:

Context	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Non-formal	Total by Discipline
Music	5	2	5	9	21
Drama	2	4	1	8	15
Art and Design	0	5	9	1	15
Dance	2	2	0	5	9
Multi-Arts	2	2	1	1	6
Musical Theatre	1	0	1	1	3
Production	0	0	1	1	2
Film	0	0	1	0	1
Total by Context	12	15	19	26	72

As the participants on the programme are also professional practitioners, we have built up a network of practice across the spectrum of arts and arts education organisations. As well as having participants working as teachers in local authorities, in our current cohort, organisations represented include:

Tertiary Education	Non-formal (large scale)	Non-formal (smaller scale)
City of Glasgow College Dundee and Angus College Edinburgh College Glasgow School of Art Dundee University UHI Perth Royal Conservatoire of Scotland QAA Scotland Dance School of Scotland	Glasgow City Council Glasgow Life Glasgow Create Scottish Youth Theatre Scottish Ballet YDance Edinburgh International Festival Dundee Instrumental Music Service	Bute Drama Studio (Youth Theatre) Toonspeak Replico Productions Glasgow School of Ballet Livewire Theatre Company

In their final year of study, students undertake a self-designed project designed to impact their sector in some way. A summary of Final Project outcomes can be found here: <https://portal.rcs.ac.uk/pglt-welcome-page/welcome-to-the-postgraduate-learning-and-teaching-community/final-project-examples/>. We have also launched a podcast series of interviews with MEd graduates and other arts educators including renowned teaching artist Eric Booth. These can be found here: <https://portal.rcs.ac.uk/arts-educator-interviews/>

The MEd team and recent graduates are currently collaborating with the International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC), The Necessary Space, and Creative Scotland in the development of a Scottish arts and arts education hub. Following research reports into arts support in Primary schools undertaken by members of the MEd team and external partners, we are working with Education Scotland on supporting the professional development of teachers in the primary and secondary schools sector in the arts.

The MEd programme has just been reaccredited by AdvanceHE to award Fellowship (formerly HEA) to participants in the tertiary sector, and Scottish teachers on the MEd continue to gain GTCS Professional Recognition in Creative Arts Education alongside their MEd award.

Music Education Partnership Group

RCS is a founding member of the Music Education Partnership Group, and takes a leading role in the Group's activities under the banner '[We Make Music Scotland](#)'. The Director of Music currently chairs a project investigating the career-long professional learning (CLPL) needs of teachers in the formal sector (early years, primary, secondary, instrumental and ITE). An initial report is being compiled and, in the meantime, a very successful teacher workshop on Composition in secondary schools was hosted by RCS, under the auspices of the CLPL project.

Business Development

Our portfolio continues to expand both strategically and in response to growing market appetite for Short Courses. Short Courses is an integral part of our work - supporting our talent development pipeline, offering CPD, upskilling, awarding credit for pre-HE and HE modular provision, delivering summer courses and offering alternative access into our delivery. This area will continue to grow, both in terms of ambitious provision and in volume of courses on offer in response to exceeding our targets in the previous academic year. We will focus on summer school growth, the development and delivery of credit-rated short courses and invest in critical digital and human infrastructure to deliver our plans.

We will continue to run our highly successful [Music Leaders Awards](#) (Bronze, Silver and Gold) and deliver pilots in other disciplines such as film, musical theatre and acting. This project works in partnership with school provision and has been highly successful to bridge the gap between the school sector and our provision as a mutual benefit.

During 23-24 we will also enter into the design and testing phase for the development of a new portfolio of Low-Residency Masters provision, enabling us to capitalise on the learning from our other blended provision at Masters level. We anticipate recruiting 75 students on four complimentary pathways from September 2025. These courses will be heavily influenced in their design and delivery by working professionals and Conservatoire alumni, who will support us to form industry panels, for example, that will evaluate students' work, and participate in residential activities with cohorts. Our worldwide reputation is in part due to the profile of successful graduates, and we hope to be able to leverage their goodwill to engage in the next generations of arts practitioners to come through our institution. Additionally, it is likely that at least some of this, and our residential masters provision, will be conceived in a 'company model', meaning that particular roles and functions are assigned to members of a cohort, to simulate professional working practices and environments, in which specialists work as a team on a production or performance outcome. We also intend to work closely with our partners, including various departments of the BBC – with whom we have a comprehensive MoU – to engage with the latest professional developments in the various disciplines.

Priority area 5: Net zero and environmental sustainability response

We recognise that RCS currently lacks expertise or capacity to develop a CNZ Plan. We aim to employ a full time Carbon Manager to help map out our current baseline consumption across the institution and to help develop the Plan. Our target is to recruit before the end of calendar year 2023 and have a plan in place by October 2024. The Sustainability Committee worked to develop a Sustainability Policy and Action Plan in 2022-23.

RCS is taking a whole-institution approach to the climate emergency. Some of the measures are small but signal a community commitment (such as the roof vegetable garden which supplies the café bar at Renfrew Street that serves a significant proportion of our students and staff on a daily basis), and other larger initiatives will require investment and expertise (as noted above) to deliver.

Learning, Teaching, Skills & Student/Staff Engagement

Sustainable practice is a key theme in RCS curriculum review (Institution-Led Review) 2023-24, and the 23-24 staff development day is dedicated to exploring a Conservatoire-wide ambition to become an environmentally sustainable organisation. The theme for the development day arose following the first iteration of [Carbon Literacy Training](#) at RCS. The training in Sustainability for students and staff encourages sustainable approaches to creative practice while many projects at undergraduate and postgraduate level are explicitly exploring themes of environmental crisis. We seek to develop studies in local community arts practices, which will deliver learning on sustainable practice ('art-making'), and have already used site-specific projects to highlight climate issues.

We are piloting an initiative to ensure at least one production per year fulfils the [Theatre Green Book](#) principles. As we amass experience in this work, we will utilise the knowledge and insights gained to expand this commitment while mindful of budgetary constraints. In 2023-24 we will continue our planning to undertake joint enterprises with Scottish Opera, in which the potential for sharing set and production materials remains an important, and sustainable cornerstone of discussions so far, reducing the net contribution of each institution to waste, by re-using, recycling and repurposing set builds and materials. Our Head of Central Production Unit has also been leading on [ARMS work](#).

A Sustainability Prize to celebrate student work that is created with a sustainable process or disseminates or explores climate emergency has been running for two years. The 2022-23 prize winners include Penny Chivas: MEd in Learning and Teaching in the Performing Arts for her performance work *Burnt Out* and work in ecopedagogy in dance (2022) and Jaime Diaz, 2nd year PhD student in sound (2023) for their composition *Songs Without Words for the End of the F*cking World*.

All new students from 23-24 will receive a sustainability session which will include details of the sustainability culture in Glasgow in particular as part of induction.

Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

RCS pursued artistic initiatives as part of our involvement in the COP26 hosted in Glasgow. Subsequent reflection and evaluation of art-making and debate that was led through RCS Research and Knowledge Exchange initiatives and the RCS COP26 Taskforce, collaborations and the work of students and staff can be found [here](#) (published 2023). The publication includes a list of resources for performing artists to support environmentally sustainable practice.

Estates and supply chains

Wherever possible RCS sources local products and services, in an effort to minimise travel and long-range transport of goods. We currently have an invitation to tender out, due to close

in mid-September, for an ambitious Solar PV project for both parts of our Campus (Renfrew Street and Wallace Studios at Speirs Locks).

Our Emissions over Scope 1 and Scope 2 and what we can measure in Scope 3 continue to fall. A new Carbon Manager will support the delivery of an action plan to ensure RCS meets its obligations across these measures.

Our estate and supply initiatives intersect with behavioural, or community commitments that we are pursuing across all the areas of the Conservatoire's activity. We have reduced the presence of single-use plastics, implemented LED lighting across the buildings, provided more drinking water and emphasised green-friendly behaviours in our travel policy. In 2023-24 this will impact the development of our Student Recruitment Strategy, requiring smart travel planning to maximise recruitment engagement whilst minimising carbon emissions. We are committed to ensuring zero waste is routed to landfill from our Estate.

We continue to invest in the upgrade of the Building Energy Monitoring System to provide better data and allow more sophisticated management of energy consumption.

Partnerships and place making

As a small institution we are particularly keen to partner with experienced specialists and organisations to deliver our commitments in relation to our net zero obligations. RCS is part of the Scottish Creative Arts Sector initiative, which continues to assess the feasibility of shared sets/props resource to minimise waste and duplication of activity that, with smarter sharing, could lead to a reduction across the creative sector in emissions. We engage with a local Community Interest Company [ReSet](#) to remove old holdings of stage sets from our sites and to provide re-purposed materials that RCS producers can use for upcoming productions. We continue to engage with the Glasgow City Council 'Golden Z' Plan to regenerate the City Centre, including scoping the re-purposing of property for creative uses. We promote the Cycle-to-Work scheme and operate a cycle-friendly campus on both of our sites.

Institutional governance and leadership

RCS now has a baseline established 60/40 present-on-campus: work-from-home hybrid arrangement available to staff. In practice, a proportion of staff are able to avail themselves of this opportunity. This enables some staff to reduce their travel into campus, and many meetings, including subcommittees of the Board remain online, to reduce travel for in-person events. Across the institution, we utilise the online environment for convenience in meetings with partners from across the UK, reducing in-UK travel, particularly by senior staff who would otherwise have travelled for meetings in London and other major cities in England, or across Scotland, in particular. In-UK air travel for business is strongly discouraged unless unavoidable.

We have moved our investment management service to a company which will support the Conservatoire to develop our investment policies in terms of [Environmental, Social and Governance](#) responsibilities. This developing relationship with a forward-thinking investment management company supports enhanced transparency and engagement on these important issues with staff and students.

The RCS Sustainability Committee is launching the institutional [Sustainability Policy](#) at the outset of the AY 2023-24. Students and staff are members of the committee.

Emissions source (tCO₂e)	2022/23	2021/22
Fuel combustion: Natural gas	425	479
Purchased electricity	333	318
Total emissions (tCO₂e)	758	797
Intensity: (tCO₂e per square metre)	0.0336	0.0353

Thus represented a year-on-year reduction in Scopes 1 and 2 emissions of 5% and the target is to achieve a similar reduction in 2023-24.

Priority Area 6: High-Quality Research and Innovation

Effective use of SFC core research grants in AY 2023-24

At the Conservatoire, the Research Excellence Grant (REG) is allocated to support the excellent research that is conducted by staff across the institution. REG provides support for this work directly through an allocation to our institutional Athenaeum Awards, which are a scheme of small, responsive staff research grants described in more detail below; it also provides further support by underpinning the Research and Knowledge Exchange Directorate. This autonomous unit, led by the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange, employs c.10 FTE (18 H/C) staff (cf. 3.4 FTE, 6 H/C in 2014) and is charged with:

1. leading by example in all areas of research, impact, knowledge exchange and innovation;
2. driving institutional policy and strategy, and promoting external collaborations, for these areas;
3. supporting staff research and researcher development;
4. overseeing doctoral degree provision (validated by the University of St Andrews);
5. all research office functions.

The directorate unites functions that in larger institutions would be distributed across academic and professional services divisions: REG directly supports researchers within the directorate and, through its research development and capacity building activities across the institution, also provides further indirect support for staff across the institution.

The Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG) supplements institutional funds in providing project support for doctoral students, and also contributes to the cost of centrally organised research training for students, and professional development for supervisors. Student training is delivered on a whole-cohort basis across four compulsory days each year, supplemented by individually tailored training according to individual need. In delivering this, we draw fully on the offer of our validating partner, the University of St Andrews, and where necessary the RPG helps support travel to and from the university for in-person research development. Staff development supported by the RPG includes both regular update training, mentoring and skills sharing sessions that take account of the particular circumstances of the Conservatoire, such as supporting part time students (of which the Conservatoire has a high proportion). In AY 2022-23, Conservatoire staff contributed to training sessions run jointly by the Conservatoire and the University, for staff from both, and this will continue in 23-24. All such activity is underpinned by the RPG and supports our ambition to provide outstanding doctoral training.

Supporting sustainability and future research excellence

Within our new strategic plan, 'Research and Ethical Practice' is one of five supporting plans, central to the ambitions of the overall institutional strategy. The bringing together of research and ethical practice within the structure of the plan specifically highlights our belief that a positive research culture is a necessary precondition of an excellent and sustainable research environment.

Within the Strategic Plan, management of staff time and professional development is a significant thread and the rolling out of consistent workload allocations for research and engagement within the 'People and Culture' supporting plan will be underpinned by a new approach to staff development that is more closely attuned to individual needs in learning, teaching, research and engagement. This is part of our ongoing work of increasing alignment with the principles of the Research Development Concordat and we consider it integral to ensuring the sustainability of our research community; in addition, it is necessary to optimise the conditions for grant capture, which is a significant challenge for us, but necessary if our continued growth is to be financially sustainable. The new Strategic Plan includes KPIs around growth in staff with Significant Responsibility for Research, and around research outputs and grant applications.

Our international profile for research excellence among peers is strong – as indicated by the QS World Ranking for Performing Arts, which is strongly weighted towards peer perceptions

of research excellence. To extend and develop our profile further, we have specific plans (within the Research and Ethical Practice, and Engagement and the Creative Economy supporting plans) to embed more completely in our institutional communications the research and engagement work of staff across the institution, developing a stronger narrative around the world-leading expertise of our staff. Research Groups around '[Creative Health](#)' and '[Art-making in the Anthropocene](#)' have been established with leadership from members of the RKE directorate; these will be highlighted as part of this communication work, helping to support our weaker standing among funders and also develop the way the Conservatoire is understood by the wider public (including the 'users' of research).

Enabling excellent research environment and positive cultures

The Research and Ethical Practice plan includes outcomes for research culture that characterize our attitude to research and the ethos of our work, and establish expectations for behaviour within our community of researchers. The outcomes are:

1. We are a compassionate community of enquiring artists
2. We are known, in Scotland and globally, to cherish creative experimentation, new work, and purposeful artmaking
3. Through our research, we take responsibility for the future of our artforms, our society and our place

All development work that we do will be aligned to and tested against these outcomes. As noted in previous Agreements, it is a principle of our approach to support for staff research that it is available to all staff, whether full-time, pro rata or hourly paid; to those who have Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR), and those who do not. This approach reflects the reality of supporting a positive research culture in a still-developing environment that comprises of disciplines where the boundary between research and professional practice is porous; it also reflects a belief that the sustainability and vitality of the environment are best promoted by treating it as a single ecosystem.

The Athenaeum Awards reflect our ambitions for positive research culture. Although they are competitive, all applicants are offered mentoring from a colleague in the RKE directorate as they make their application. This might include support in framing their proposal, or in developing their public engagement and routes to impact, or in budgeting. All applications are understood as professional development opportunities for colleagues, and where applications are unsuccessful, colleagues are directed to a Research Clinic for further support. It is usually a condition of funding that successful applicants undertake some public engagement, and many awards contribute part funding to projects that are also supported by industry, charities or government; several have led to further externally funded projects.

Recognising our obligations under the Research Integrity Concordat, our annual statement on Research Integrity for AY 2022-23 is to be approved by the Board of Governors in October 2023. A statement for AY 2023-24 will be prepared for approval and publication in October 2024.

Priority Area 7: Universities Innovation Fund

As we approach the final year of the University Innovation Fund (UIF) and work towards the implementation of the new Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) in 24/25, we have begun to shape the next phase of KE & Innovation support at RCS. This followed our internal service review last year and the dissemination of our publication [*Making It Happen.*](#)

This next period of Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Support will see KE become deeply embedded in the institutional mission for the first time at RCS, setting up new pathways for success and impact. Notably, going forward, KE at RCS will be reframed as **Engagement**, and will sit alongside **Education** and **Research** at the heart of the organisation's mission.

Everything we do at the Conservatoire relates to our specialist knowledge and expertise. Our research develops new knowledge and expertise; our learning and teaching see us pass on our knowledge and expertise to our students, our engagement uses our knowledge and expertise with and for audiences, learners, businesses and communities beyond the institution, for wider social, cultural and economic benefit.

Our aim is to make visible the external Engagement work undertaken by our staff and ensure that it is rooted in the institutional success narrative. Engagement activity has often gone under the radar, often because it is so fundamental to our work and ways of working at RCS that it is not fully articulated or recognised. Engagement happens right across our Conservatoire in big, small, formal and informal ways and our plan over the next few years is to significantly improve how we capture, measure and report it, so that it can be shared more widely. This will inevitably lead to new forms of support for the **Engagement** ambitions of our staff as we co-develop this with our colleagues in the coming years.

Though still at an early stage, our work this year will focus on developing and strengthening the infrastructure for Engagement. This can be evidenced through the **Engagement and Creative Economy Action Plan**, one of five supporting action plans within the new RCS Strategy 2030. This connects Engagement infrastructure development work with the People and Culture Action Plan and the Organisational Resilience Action Plan.

Key Areas of work for 23/24

Our planned work in the 23/24 academic year is extensive and will align to three key strategic areas.

1. RCS Strategy 2030 – Engagement & Creative Economy Action Plan
2. Entrepreneurial Campus
3. Scotland's Innovation Strategy

1. **Engagement & Creative Economy Action Plan, RCS Strategy 2030.**

This action plan pulls together a range of KE infrastructure and policy developments that have been progressing for some time, initially catalysed by our participation in the UK's first KE Concordat exercise. The Plan consists of five projects that will develop and grow between now and 2030.

- **Project 1 - Creative Support Service**

Supporting the artistic futures and sustainable careers of our students and alumni, we will establish a centrally positioned advice and guidance service covering the practical aspects of freelancing, project development and company creation. Delivered by our Associate, [Rachael Brown of Creative Entrepreneurs Club](#), it will be framed as a Pop-Up service in this first year as we mix delivery with consultation and development. Our aim is to finalise the longer-term delivery model by May 2024. *See more detail below as part of Entrepreneurial Campus section.*

- **Project 2 - RCS Innovation**

A support system to catalyse the innovation potential and ambitions of the Conservatoire community and a platform for us to demonstrate how performing and production artists can make significant contributions to Scotland's green recovery, wellbeing economy and a just transition to a net zero carbon society. [The Innovation Studio Pilot](#) will finish on 31st March 2024. A key aim from the pilot is to establish an ongoing resource to support innovation, creative experimentation, collaboration and interdisciplinary work. The seed funding has been shaped around themes of Green Recovery, Creative Health and Creative Placemaking. *See more detail about the Innovation Studio pilot activity this AY as part of Scotland's Innovation Strategy section.*

- **Project 3 - Engagement Data Gathering & Story Telling**

A major project in this AY to establish a robust and user-friendly system to capture, articulate, measure and share the extensive engagement activities of RCS staff and to draw these into data, stories and case studies that help us to demonstrate and celebrate the achievements of our staff and the impact that they and the Conservatoire has in civic life.

Phase 1 (23/24) will include the following development actions to establish the framework for engagement and the mechanisms we will use to gather the data, draw out the stories and celebrate success.

- a) an extension of the current [PURE](#) research data gathering system to capture Engagement as well as Research activity, opening the system to all staff involved in external engagement activities for the first time.
- b) Develop an Engagement Comms Plan i.e., annual data reports, case studies and external impact narratives of staff engagement activity. Developing a new approach to Engagement Comms internally and through external publications and the RCS website.
- c) Develop a suite of Induction and Information resources for staff on Engagement services, highlighting the support available to them as they develop their external projects and partnerships.
- d) Produce more substantial annual HE BCIS returns (Higher Education Business & Community Interaction Survey) to HESA ([link](#)), demonstrating the success of our Engagement activities from data gathered.
- e) Create new set of benchmarks and KPIs with RCS colleagues, from which we can start to tell the story of what good Engagement looks like and how best to support and celebrate it.
- f) Establish an internal Engagement Data Gathering and Story Telling Working Group for 18 months to bed in Phase 1 of the project.

- **Project 4 - RCS Industry & Community Engagement Services**

We plan to create better visibility of the wide range of external engagement services offered by the Conservatoire. Our aim is to better connect and enhance the access points to our service provision, giving clarity to customers and partners. This work will happen across several departments and is at an early stage. We will explore how best to connect Contract Research and Consultancy with Executive Development Programmes. This will allow us to demonstrate further the impact and value of Conservatoire expertise in a range of industry and community contexts.

- **Project 5 - Engagement Infrastructure Development**

This short-term project will focus on strengthening the Engagement Infrastructure at RCS to enable a thriving environment. There are two components to this.

- a) Publish the first RCS Intellectual Property Policy which will be drafted in October for approval by Academic Board and Board of Governors. Final draft in November 23.
- b) Develop a workload model for Engagement activity through a consultation process this AY with staff. Led by colleagues in HR, this will map the first steps to a recognition and rewards system for Engagement activity and connect with the RCS Strategy 2030 People and Culture Action Plan.

2. Entrepreneurial Campus

With [Scotland's Entrepreneurial Campus blueprint](#) now live, we have responded to the opportunity through several projects and partnerships. We are re-shaping our Make It Happen enterprise support strand into a centrally positioned Creative Support Service. We are strengthening and growing our successful collaboration on [SHIFT](#) and we are part of an exciting new Creative Arts Founders Fund led by University of Glasgow in partnership with RCS and GSA. With scope to develop stronger alliances across the HEI sector, we look forward to the opportunity that Entrepreneurial Campus presents this year. This work also represents direct alignment with Scotland's NSET plan.

Project 1 – Creative Support Service

We will establish a Creative Support Service Working Group and invite colleagues from the across the Conservatoire to participate as we develop these services. This is essentially our take on an **Entrepreneur in Residence** service. **The Year 1 Pop Up Delivery Model will utilise the UIF uplift for Entrepreneurial Campus activity** and includes the following outputs;

- a) Curation, Organization, and Delivery of Events Programme -
6 events per academic year: Delivery targets: 120 attendances in total
- b) Monthly Advice Clinics (1:1 sessions)
2 days per month: Delivery targets: 14 sessions per month, 112 attendances in total
- c) Specialist Mentoring in Funding Applications
2 days of online support available as and when required. Delivery targets: 14 attendances in total
- d) Creative Support Service Development. Convene 4 focus groups within academic year to include staff, students, and alumni. Delivery targets: Between 40-50 attendances in total
- e) Quarterly Reporting/ Meetings/ Development of in person and digital services.
Delivery Target : 8 days

Project 2 – Creative Arts Founders Fund

A joint innovation fund for early-stage projects with potential to scale impact in creative arts. Funded by the UIF in support of The Entrepreneurial Campus, and offered in partnership by University of Glasgow, Glasgow School of Art, and The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. A fund has been established to support innovation and entrepreneurship in Creative Arts, Arts & Humanities across three HEIs. Up to £10k available for eligible projects in arts and humanities Open to all academic staff in participating institutions The fund will support activities that help develop early-stage ideas into scalable propositions; and/or provide seed funding to de-risk projects for further applications for grant funding. This project will help to establish a pipeline for scalable staff ventures for the very first time at RCS and we are extremely grateful to our colleagues at the University of Glasgow for opening this avenue of development to us. With no spin-out culture at RCS, this offers a chance to begin to explore the pathways and support required to assist staff ventures with impact potential.

Project 3 – SHIFT

Now in its 5th year, [SHIFT](#) is available to 100 participants annually and takes place in early September. The programme targets and prioritises new graduates as well as those coming up to their final year but is open to all through an application process. With capacity in the current model, we are happy to extend places to other specialist HEI cohorts in the creative arts and will work with network colleagues this AY to explore how best to do this.

In 2022, we added [SHIFT PLUS](#) as an optional credit pathway to participants. This micro credential in Creative Entrepreneurship was developed with colleagues from RCS Short Courses. 12 people took SHIFT PLUS last year and 20 are registered to take the module this year. SHIFT PLUS provides 20 credits at Level 11. There is scope to develop this too which we will explore with colleagues during this AY.

Project 4 – MOU with Glasgow City Region HEIs.

Facilitated by Dr Orla Kelly, UIF Collaboration Manager, the six Glasgow City Region HEIs aim to formalise our ambition to collaborate further through an MOU this year.

3. Scotland's Innovation Strategy

While Creative Arts has not been specifically highlighted as a sector with innovation potential in Scotland's recently published [Innovation Strategy](#), at RCS we have been working to identify how we can contribute to national priorities through [Innovation Studio](#). A resource for the RCS community to support: Creative Experimentation; Collaboration; and Interdisciplinary Work. It is currently in a pilot phase, which began in March 2022 and will run until March 2024.

Together with our part time [Innovators In Residence](#), and our Associate Dr Michael Johnson from GSA Innovation School, we have worked to address two key things. How to create better access to Innovation support services and how to tell the RCS Innovation story at ecosystem level.

Our Innovators in Residence have identified barriers to innovation, and we have shaped the final set of deliverables in our Innovation Studio pilot around these.

Innovation Studio projects this academic year include:

- Innovation Studio Seed Funding, Innovation Residency for RCS Staff, Mapping [Creative Health](#), Mapping Creative Place-Making, Funding support for Black Student Union & Student Collaboration Society, RCS Innovation Stories on Film - short documentary films about our artists and their innovation work, Small Seed Funds for master's in music students developing innovative projects.

UIF 7 Collaborative Outcomes for AY2023/24:

As we have in previous years, we will play our part where appropriate in the collaborative aspect of UIF. This has been a rich area of work and as a Small Specialist Institution (SSI) we have appreciated the collegiate approach in Scotland and the learning, sharing and co-creation work we have undertaken together.

MATCH FUNDING

The Royal Conservatoire is not in a position to provide match funding in cash terms. However, as noted in previous papers, the Conservatoire invests considerable resources in professional teams devoted to effective Public Engagement – these teams are not funded by UIF and so their budgeted staff costs for offer indicative match funding in kind for the UIF, as follows:

Staff costs* *Artistic Planning* • Responsible for management of all aspects of the Conservatoire's performance programmes and other public engagement. £238,534

Front of House and Box Office • Public-facing staff supporting performance programmes and public engagement £324,598

Short Courses • Courses for adults and young people (staff related to SFC-funded Transitions initiative are not included, nor are Junior Conservatoire staff) £497,823

TOTAL £1,060,955 *Including superannuation and NI. Staff in these teams with a student-facing remit have been omitted.

Research case study:

"The Voice of the Child": A partnership research project supported by the Research Excellence Grant.

In a collaboration between the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) and Starcatchers, Scotland's arts and early years organisation, Dr Rachel Drury's research project, "The Voice of the Child," exemplifies the significance of undirected core university research funding. This initiative, supported by Innovation Voucher investment and support from Cattanach, was further supported by the Conservatoire through its Research Excellence Grant (REG), and is an example of how small allocations from the REG can produce outcomes that closely align with Scottish Government priorities.

"The Voice of the Child" is a pioneering project exploring how the participatory rights of pre- and non-verbal children, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), can be realised through the arts. Outputs so far include [an initial report](#), [seminar](#), [podcasts](#) and a research report and reflective guide for use by other organisations.

The investment of small allocations of REG over the past two academic years has supplemented the specific support awarded to this project by other sources by permitting Dr Drury to develop the work beyond the original remit of the Innovation Voucher work; it has not only contributed to advancing our understanding of communication and rights-based approaches in the arts with pre- and non-verbal children but also aligns very closely with national priorities outlined in the National Performance Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals and the incorporation into domestic Scots law of the UNCRC.

"The Voice of the Child" illustrates the impact of REG funding in contributing to a cocktail of funding: the initial investment from Interface (Innovation Voucher) with Cattanach was catalyzed by the further support of the Conservatoire's investment, resulting in a follow up phase funded by Creative Scotland, the Charles Gordon Foundation and Cattanach, and an ongoing partnership with Starcatchers.

This case study not only demonstrates the transformative potential of core funding but also underlines the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's commitment to advancing impactful research that aligns with national priorities and fosters clear societal benefits.



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FAIR ACCESS

Transitions Graduate Case Study

Sharon Mackay

Transitions Graduate Case Study – Sharon Mackay



Sharon Mackay, from Thurso in the far north of Scotland, graduated from the BA Acting course at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2019.

She was a Transitions student for two years prior to gaining a place on her undergraduate degree. She tells us:

“Transitions gave me the confidence and support to keep working towards my goals. I always felt so accepted and understood by the team and the other students. Transitions continues to inspire me to bring all of who I am to my work, and to be proud of how hard I've worked to get where I am”

Sharon has grown a successful portfolio career since graduating. When we interviewed her, she explained the benefits of her varied work:

“Having a portfolio career means that you are constantly challenging yourself to reflect on what your strengths are and how you can combine these elements to each different job. It gives you a wider understanding of the industry and an appreciation of everyone’s role within that as you experience things from different perspectives. Also, I just love the variety!”

Working to Support Others

Sharon worked at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland supporting a visually impaired student for three years when she first graduated. This job as a Study Support Tutor involved working closely with the student every day throughout their studies. Sharon developed skills to provide audio description, adapted exercises to ensure they were of maximum benefit to the student and created innovative ways of working with visual/written information using touch and voice. Sharon worked with the student to provide agency, creating ways of using guiding techniques within physical exercises which ensured that the student remained in control of all artistic choices in a safe environment. She tells us:

“My favourite memory of this was when we worked out how to successfully complete an exercise which involved one large skipping rope and each of the students having to run in from different sides, jump once and then make their way back out before the next person jumped in (we originally thought this was impossible)”

“I love getting the opportunity to work as part of the transitions team because I get to be around people who are so excited and passionate about starting their journey in the arts”

She has continued to work for Transitions within several different roles including student assistant, coach and lead tutor for our new Get Into Musical theatre programme. Sharon believes:

“It’s important to have some form of teaching or working with young people as part of my practice because it reminds me of why I do the work I do”

Continuing Professional Development

Sharon is committed to developing her career potential. Working with Transitions gave her an opportunity to train as a life coach. She supported coachees to find their own answers, building up their ability to trust their own decisions, and found this life and career changing:

“Coaching has had a massive impact on how I approach all manner of conversations”

Sharon has now gained the Relational Dynamics 1st accreditation in Coaching and uses this in all career aspects.

Since graduating from her degree, she has also completed and passed the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland’s PGcert in Learning and Teaching in the Arts. Through this, she learned further how to explore and implement coaching and formative assessment into her sessions.



Global Portfolio Career

Since graduating, Sharon has trained as a professional intimacy coordinator. She tells us the most rewarding part of the job for is working with the actors to make sure that they have agency within those spaces. She supports actors to work together to make sure that they tell the story they want to tell from a character perspective, whilst respecting their own personal boundaries.

“I believe there are a million different ways to tell a story and that's incredibly exciting”

She combines working globally with supporting students on RCS's productions . Sharon's training enables her to create safe professional working environments and she is at the front of contributing to positive work-practice changes within the creative industries:

“I'm starting to see a complete change of culture in relation to how actors physically interact with each other”

“I have been lucky enough to work in the Uk and Ireland and across Europe for companies like Netflix, BBC, CBBC and ITV which I never imagined was possible”

“Supporting performers’ mental health has been a key aspect of my work...I want to help create an industry which believes in putting the person before the art”

Wellbeing and a sense of belonging are important aspects of Sharon’s work in the creative industries. She has trained as a mental health first aider and uses this knowledge in her creative work.

Sharon’s portfolio career has enabled her to work with communities across Scotland with the Scottish Community Drama Association. Under the mentorship of Carole Williams, their National Drama Advisor. Through this work, Sharon has developed an understanding of the how drama, often supported by committed volunteers can impact communities so positively:

“Each of the SCDA clubs is run by their volunteers and that for me is the heart of theatre – it’s sharing those experiences as a group and providing a place where everyone is welcome to express themselves and their story”



Royal Conservatoire
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FAIR ACCESS

[RCS.AC.UK/FAIR-ACCESS](https://rsc.ac.uk/fair-access)



Reaching Disadvantaged people across Scotland

Working in the Highlands of Scotland

Fair Access Case Study

This fair access work aimed to engage with schools and disadvantaged pupils in the Highlands of Scotland in a variety of ways. Our objectives were to develop relationships with key organisations in the area, to highlight and extend our Fair Access offers to young people in the Region who face multiple and varied barriers to accessing higher education (including living in a SIMD 20 or 40 postcode areas, rurality and d/deaf) and to work with young deaf people in these schools who face additional barriers due to their sensory impairment and to provide tools to support them in their SQA examinations.

The work included working in partnership with Dingwall Academy and Eden Court Theatre in Inverness. Eden Court offers SQA courses in Drama at Nat 5 and Higher levels for pupils whose schools don't teach drama. Dingwall Academy is the largest secondary school in the Highlands with a roll of 1050 pupils.



Reaching Disadvantaged people across Scotland



Fair Access staff in collaboration with two staff (one hearing and one deaf) and one student from our BA Performance programme ran Deaf Awareness training for Eden Court theatre staff and a workshop for their N5 Drama class, which comprises pupils from across the region, including one deaf pupil from Dingwall Academy. Staff also led four workshops at Dingwall Academy with a N5/Higher Drama class with a mixed group of hearing pupils (who were learning BS)L and deaf pupils.

These workshops aimed to build confidence and communication skills through drama and explore ways to analyse and present texts for SQA assessment. During our time in the Highlands, RCS met teachers in a variety of subjects to share information about Fair Access and upcoming projects in partnership with Eden Court.

Fair Access Case Study



Drew Graham, Principal Teacher of Deaf Education at Dingwall Academy commented on the impact of the work on specific pupils who faced challenges:

“I’m amazed to see how J has involved himself. We didn’t think he’d stay at all as he has such issues focussing. He’s more responsive than I’ve ever seen him, getting right in there. It’s because of how Ramesh is working with him and building on what he’s good at”

Our work helped us to build relationships with schools in areas of disadvantage and to reach young people who face multiple barriers to accessing performing and production arts. Drew Graham told us about the positive effect our work had had on one pupil:

“S has all sorts of issues going on at home. His dad died last year and his mum struggles with him and his brother, who is a year older and always getting brought home by the police. He’s involved himself in the drama and I think he’d be ideal for other Fair Access projects as well”

Many pupils at the school face barriers due to rurality and the fact RCS came to the school was noted positively by pupils and staff.

Further Afield

In Term 1 (Autumn 2022), Our Fair Access Outreach work engaged with 935 pupils who face diverse barriers to accessing the arts attending 41 schools in areas of disadvantage across Scotland.

By the end of the academic year 2023/24 year we had worked with over 2000 people from 143 secondary schools, 15 primaries, 8 colleges and 3 universities across 25 of Scotland’s 32 council areas.



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Outcome Agreement between the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2023-24

On behalf of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Signed: 

Print name: Professor Jeffrey Sharkey

Position: Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Date: 27 October 2023

Signed: 

Print name: Professor Dorothy Miell

Position: Chair

Date: 27 October 2023

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed: 

Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 15 January 2024