

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Outcome and Impact Framework 2021/22

Principal's Introduction

At the time of writing, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is continuing to deliver some carefully managed learning activity on site, following recommendations (and going beyond the baseline) set out in the latest available Scottish Government guidance to the HE sector.

The flourishing of our students, staff and programmes, notwithstanding these extraordinary circumstances, is something to be celebrated – the impacts of the pandemic will be felt for a long time to come, and it is worth acknowledging the considerable and sustained efforts that have gone into supporting the continuity of the student experience since the first lockdown in March 2020.

I believe that our very recent third-in-the-world ranking (QS Rankings, 2021) is testament to the RCS' international reputation for groundbreaking curriculum, research and professional activity, but that to achieve it – and to sustain our top ten position – in the current circumstances is all the more a recognition of our creative response to the global challenges of the moment. The pandemic is only one of these.

Like many organisations, we have undertaken much needed anti-racism work, leading to the publication and quarterly updating of our institutional [Anti-Racism Action Plan](#). We were privileged to participate in a Bloomberg funded concert '[Vital Signs of the Planet](#)' at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, as part of the opening events of the global COP26 summit. The place of the performing arts in meeting our climate change commitments may not be immediately obvious, but the proven social benefits of artistic inclusion, as well as the global audiences we reach with our activity – and therefore our message – places us in a position of responsibility to lead the way in developing sustainable arts and life practices.

We have made great strides – as a necessity – as an institution capable of delivering substantial digital/blended learning opportunities. Some of these are described in what follows, but we recognise the importance of achieving a suitable balance between continuing to develop – in partnership with our professions – pioneering approaches to digital creativity and dissemination of work, and sustaining the importance of the live, essential in-person experience.

For example, we have gained significant experience in streaming productions from our venues, where there have been no public audiences for over a year – for the benefit of both our remote audience(s) and our students' learning – but this comes at a significant cost that needs to be balanced against other important means available to support the student experience.

With our enterprising RCS@Home artistic broadcasts, the innovative thinking of our lecturing/tutoring, RKE and professional services staff, as well as our adaptive short course portfolio (delivering online provision), we have remained connected to our communities.

The renewed sense of purpose that we have found collectively at RCS to support our students and colleagues through the pandemic has enabled a cohesive RCS community to withstand the limitations on 'normal' activity.

Despite the significant responsiveness of our staff as expert practitioners and educators, and our student community (and an extraordinary effort on the part of our Students' Union to support students both socially and in learning), there remain some existential challenges for the Conservatoire. As the National Conservatoire, we recognise the cultural importance of ensuring that we take effective action to ensure the sustainability of the institution, as we seek to plan an ambitious strategic framework, whilst responding to 'emergency' needs of the moment.

Brexit has damaged our European recruitment, with applications down by up to 40% across disciplines. Not only does this lessen the cultural richness of artistic exchange, but it creates particular challenges in the compounding context of there being fewer Scots at the level required for Conservatoire study, following national underinvestment in preHE access to arts training.

The RCS and MEPG *Music for Scotland* initiative and the Government's manifesto commitment to free access for all young people at school to music tuition marks a significant step forward. However, as we are part of a competitive UK Conservatoire sector, our competitors are able to make scholarship offers to the best Scots, enticing them away to RUK institutions. Brexit has also adversely impacted graduate mobility and employment.

The pandemic has intensified this impact on the arts and cultural sector, which remained (physically) closed for longer than any other sector in the UK, unable to call on its usual sources of revenue, spending more on digital recording and dissemination and consequently less able to offer reliable employment opportunities to graduates.

We are taking steps to contain costs, grow income from external sources and from business development, improve the quality of music education in Scotland, broaden our international recruitment and create our next innovative curriculum review, all working towards the goal of maintaining our relevance to Scotland and our international standing and future sustainability.

This academic year has seen the continuation of ingenuity enabling learners on our highly practical courses to acquire the skills they need as graduates. However, this does not come without a considerable impact on student and staff wellbeing. Our community has been united in facilitating onsite activity, and noticeably the more in-person activity that has been undertaken safely (with no increase in an already low incidence of Covid outbreaks) the more compliant the community has been with our Covid restrictions. In the shorter-medium term, this is at least encouraging as we seek to mitigate the four harms of the pandemic.

Outcomes for Students: Fair Access and Transitions

Our Fair Access work is scrutinised and supported at the most senior level of the Conservatoire, where a Fair Access Committee, convened by one of our Governors in partnership with the Director of Fair Access and our Fair Access Manager, reports jointly to the Academic Board and the Board of Governors. The Committee comprises both staff and student representatives.

A plenary session is held as part of each Fair Access Committee, where external experts are invited to provide insight to a pertinent topic or theme. These sessions are used to benchmark our work with the Sector, learn from others and inform the development of future fair access work.

A Fair Access Plan: 2017-21 ([Fair Access Plan](#)) was approved in 2017/18. The Fair Access Committee and team are responsible for the implementation of the Fair Access Plan. A Fair Access Strategy is now well-developed, to run alongside the lifespan of the next Conservatoire Strategic Plan from 2022.

We continue to be effective in improving access to the Conservatoire's undergraduate programmes for people from SIMD20/40 data zones:

	Number of SiMD 20/40 students starting UG	% Scottish domiciled UG starts (SIMD 20 as % of SDUE)
2018/19	39 (of which 20 = SIMD20)	30% (15%)
2019/20	39 (of which 24 = SIMD20)	30% (19%)
2020/21	41 (of which 21 = SIMD20)	33% (17%)
2021/22	46 (of which 26 = SIMD20)	30% (17%)

Targets for 2021 were set as minimum 27 Scottish domiciled UG entrants (SiMD20) equivalent to 17.4% SDUEs. SiMD 20/40 target was at least 50 SDUEs equivalent to 32.3%.

Transitions

Transitions continues to be important to us strategically as it provides a vehicle to progress our development as the national Conservatoire. We were delighted to receive continued funding for one year (2021-22) for our Transitions programme and would like to concentrate on ensuring a longer-term arrangement is the focus of future discussions with our outcome agreement managers. In their 2020 Annual Report, the Commissioner for Fair Access recognised that targeted initiatives, such as the Transitions programme have been successful and had led to increases in access for the bottom two SIMD quintiles.

The Commissioner recommended that the SFC should guarantee continuing support for the access work of the RCS as one of the key institutions in creative art and design education.

Our targeted outreach activities and the development of resources has allowed us to extend reach nationally in targeted areas/communities of deprivation and rurality using both face-to-face and technology enhanced methods to raise awareness, and build routes to further study for those with talent and potential in the performing arts. Opportunities provided so far are listed in the 2020-21 self-evaluation appended to this document.

Care Experienced Students, Estranged Students and Carers

We have continued to work collaboratively with other agencies such as MCR pathways, Who Cares? Scotland and the Corporate Parenting Forum in Glasgow to recruit students with a care experienced background to our Transitions programme. For 2020-21 cohort we recruited 20 care-experienced students (14% of the cohort).

Fifteen Care Experienced students applied for entry to UG programmes at RCS in 2021-2, two of whom came from Transitions. Only one student was successful in gaining a place and they were a Transitions student. None of the other care-experienced applicants scored highly enough in audition, despite rigorously applying contextualised circumstances.

Whilst we have improved Transitions care-experienced numbers, we know that we need to find ways to increase our care-experienced entries to undergraduate study at RCS through pre-HE provision and contextualised admissions processes and this is something we will focus on in 2021-2.

We have refreshed our [Care Experience Website](#) and will review progress against our Corporate Parenting Action Plan. A revised action plan was created and was submitted with a 3-year review of our corporate parenting responsibilities in March/April 2021. We have also reviewed and updated our contextualised admissions policy and audition practices guidelines to include estranged students and carers. This was considered by our Academic Board in March 2021.



Contextualised
Admissions Explain

In line with some other HEIs, we have created a signposting page for estranged students alongside our Corporate parenting pages:

https://www.rcs.ac.uk/fair_access/fair-access/corporate-parenting.

We are in the process of signposting further information and guidance for estranged students. To date we have created further information on our portal:

<https://portal.rcs.ac.uk/estranged-students>.

We have begun work in collaboration with our Students' Union and our estranged/care-experienced undergraduates through focus groups. We are currently working with this group of students to make impactful and positive changes to the way we support them.

We continue to have strong mechanisms in place to support students with caring responsibilities. Following the Carer's Trust initial analysis of our offer to satisfy the requirements of their 'Going Higher Award', we have started to work towards this award with the aim of achieving it in 2022/3.

Articulation

RCS does not typically enable articulation for incoming students with advanced standing owing the particular nature of our programmes, which are delivered in small cohorts, requiring effective group cohesion from the outset, and in which the earlier years of the degree programmes are considered essential to later skill development that prepares a student for graduation and meeting programme learning outcomes effectively.

However, RCS operates a 'Non-Standard Entry' procedure that enables students with equivalent experience to enter programmes as appropriate. For example, an applicant to our MA Acting (Contemporary and Classical Text) may not possess an undergraduate degree, but may have acquired appropriate professional experience or another qualification (such as HND) and perform well enough at audition to demonstrate the required standard. 25 Non-standard entries were permitted in 2021/22.

The importance of the continuity and efficiency of the student learning journey is central to our support for students progressing and completing their studies on time. Our access thresholds are not expressed in conventional ‘academic standards’ as commonly understood and applied across the rest of the HE sector, but require a minimum threshold of academic performance plus meeting a threshold standard at competitive audition.

Our Contextualised Admissions Policy development underpins recent work to embed individual level indicators that flag up applicants eligible for free school meals and estranged students to audition panels.



ADMISSIONS
POLICY

In 2021-22 we are extending our data collection and reporting tools, to capture a richer data set reflecting the recruitment, retention and completion of SIMD20 students (including the above-mentioned individual level indicators, which are not flagged up in the CUCAS application system for Conservatoires).

This SIMD20 dataset will be compared with the institutional norm and reported on through the next self-evaluation exercise.

Scottish Domiciled UG/SIMD 20 Retention Progressing from Year 1 to Year 2 of their UG programme		Scottish Domiciled UG/SIMD 40 Retention Progressing from Year 1 to Year 2 of their UG programme	
Year	Retention	Year	Retention
21/22	95%	21/22	100%
20/21	96%	20/21	80%
19/20	83%	19/20	94%

School Engagement

We aspire to work with schools throughout Scotland, to promote progression. We have been funded in the west of Scotland through the SHEP programme via ‘Focus West’. Our WACI funding for 2021-22 was renewed, at the same rate as the previous year, following the review of the SHEP programme.

We intend to build on our digital engagement activity for schools and communities interested in the creative industries, extending our activity nationwide. To do this effectively we can draw on numerous examples of digital engagement pursued during the pandemic, and reported through our 2020-21 self-reflection.

Other Pre-HE activity: Junior Conservatoire Music

The Junior Conservatoire is the largest and most extensive Junior Conservatoire in the UK. The programme extends from open-access, early-years provision, through a primary instrumental programme leading to an auditioned, pre-junior programme to a more comprehensive, secondary-aged Junior programme.

The curriculum is designed to reflect the core undergraduate provision at RCS and offers a cohesive and progressive pathway from early years to higher education as well as providing access to excellence in a variety of different disciplines.

The Juniors programme attracts students from the north of England and distant rural locations in the Scottish Highlands, as well as many students from the central belt and cities across Scotland.

Students experience blended learning, in order to be able to engage fully with learning from remote locations (and during the pandemic this became the norm for everyone, albeit that we have now reinstated some in-person weekly activity in Glasgow).

Our sister Junior departments have resumed fully face to face learning and live audiences for concerts and we are keen to move from our reduced cohorts to our full programme in the new year.

The number of Scottish-domiciled students from the Junior Conservatoire (Music) progressing to the BMus (Hons) (Performance) in 2021-22 was 17 (51.5% of the Scottish-domiciled intake (SDI) into BMus1 for AY 2021-22). This compares to 16 in 2020-21 (64 % of SDI) and 19 students (44% of the SDI) in 2019-20
Junior Conservatoire students who progressed to the BEd (Hons) in Music included 4 in 2021-22 (23.5% of SDI), 6 in 2020-21 (24% of SDI), and 6 in 2019-20 (25% of SDI).

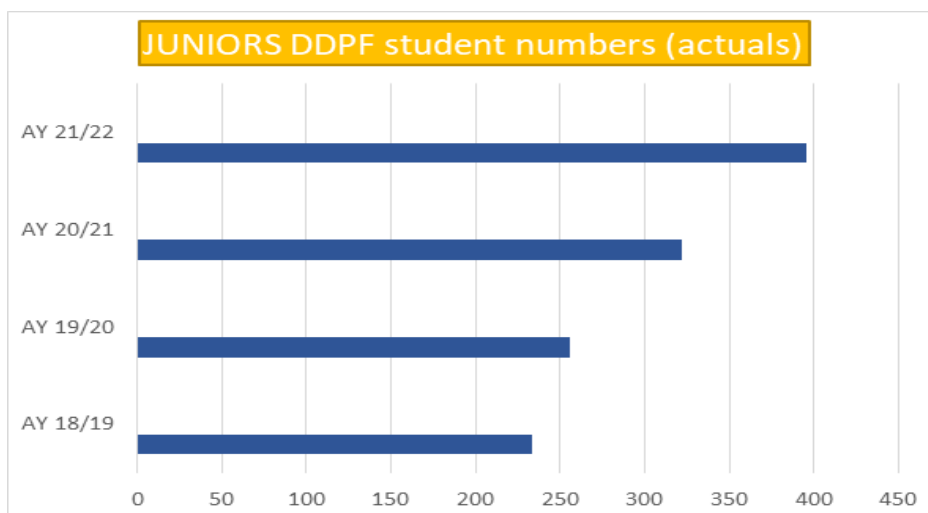
	SoM Scot domicile total Intake 2021/22	Students who came through Junior Conservatoire (Music)	% from Junior Conservatoire (Music)	SoM Scot domicile total Intake 2020/21	Students who came through Junior Conservatoire (Music)	% from Junior Conservatoire (Music)
BEd	17	4	23.53	25	6	24
BMus (Composition)	8	4	50.00	4	0	0
BMus (Jazz)	7	4	57.14	5	2	40
BMus (Performance)	33	17	51.52	25	16	64
BMus (Piping - Trad)	5	0	0.00	5	1	20
BMus (Trad)	13	1	7.69	9	2	22.22

Dance, Drama, Production and Film Juniors

Juniors DDPF comprises specialist programmes of study providing experiential learning and formal pathways to HE study: Acting, Contemporary Performance Practice, Ballet, Musical Theatre, Production and Film.

We recognise the requirement to ensure targeted skills development and work closely with our HE staff to ensure our Juniors training is relevant and highly bespoke to the individual learner.

This Academic Year, we took the decision to grow our provision through enhanced levels of training, specifically reflecting the lack of in-person activity across the sector to give our talented Scots the best environment to thrive. This growth will support our scaffolded approach to Juniors DDPF complimented by enhanced performance opportunities to best prepare our students for onward study.



High Quality Learning, Teaching and Support

We have taken significant measures to protect the student experience, and quality of learning in the ongoing public health context. Alongside our strategic academic risk registers, we have implemented an Academic Continuity Group convened by the Deputy Principal, that has met weekly (and continues to) throughout the pandemic. This group comprises academic leadership at RCS, as well as Human Resources, Estates, Marketing and Communications and Health and Safety colleagues. It enables us to make decisions about learning and teaching provision against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving pandemic situation, uncertainty in guidance (which can only respond to the latest available information the Governments and public health have) and make adaptive changes to plans with the best available information at the time.

The agility of the group, and the ability to effect plans to graduate our students successfully in 19-20 were a major contributor to our being able to undertake carefully paced, planned in-person activities in T1 of 2020-21, in the context of SG Level 4 restrictions. The ACG continues to plan on the basis of the latest Government advice, and ensure the needs of learners are met.

Having implemented a 'No Detriment' policy in 2019-2020, and a 'No Disadvantage' or 'Safety Net' policy in 2020-21, for 2021-22 we are pursuing a 'personal mitigating circumstances +' approach, which supports students as individuals relative to their particular circumstances, enabling more time to complete assignments, for example, or facilitating submission in alternative formats as appropriate.

In each year that the pandemic has affected so far, we have been guided and counselled by our Academic Board.

We have continued to conduct rigorous annual monitoring of academic programmes throughout the pandemic period, and this process is currently underway for 2021-22 (involving self-reflection on 2020-21 student feedback, performance indicators such as progression rates, student achievement rates, etc.).

The NSS outcome for 2020-21 was disappointing (79% overall satisfaction) when compared with our performance in 2019-2020 (86%) although this is slightly better than the national average outcome. Programme teams respond to programme-specific feedback received through NSS, internal surveys, external examiner reports

and programme committees in the annual monitoring process, producing an annual action plan for the year ahead.

The action plan is focused on enhancement of learning, teaching and student support, informed by the data and evidence reviewed.

These are reviewed by the Quality and Standards Committee (including an external 'critical friend' from the RCS Academic Board) in January of each year, and feedback provided to all programme teams.

Programmes have particularly reflected on their digital strategies during the pandemic, and the feedback and quality of the online learning provision.

Staff have been supported with training and support materials focused around the sector's Enhancement Theme on Resilient Learning Communities, which has encouraged the cross-conservatoire sharing of best practice in blended learning.

Our ELIR4 action plan has progressed in the last academic year, particularly the development of an institutional assessment strategy, late drafts of which are with staff and students for consultation.

Impact of the pandemic/public health emergency: learning with impact Case Study from the School of Dance, Drama, Production and Film

A piece conducted within the MA Classical and Contemporary Text programme entitled [Triptych](#) is representative of everything we want our students to be doing/making on the Classical and Contemporary Text Programme.

The piece represents a deep engagement with the world from the artist's lived experience as a self-identified mixed-race, working-class person. She has taken her lived experience, probably most directly captured in her written component of Triptych (part three), translated it into an advanced and elaborate performed metaphor (part two), and also channelled it into a canonical text (Hermione from Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* in part one).

It is the very honest voice of an artist of colour and her relationship with herself, her original work and more canonical classical work lends extraordinary depth and complexity to all three.

As noted in the introduction, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The Head of Programme writes 'It seems to me that the artist is exploring questions of what it means to live in a world that is fundamentally unjust and what happens when it seems that's the only world there is.' The artist thought that was an apt summary of what the work is doing. I'd suggest that in all the thinking we're doing about social justice, equity, anti-racism, etc., the piece has only become more timely and more valuable as a message to RCS and the wider world.

Case Study from the School of Music: one outcome of moving learning and teaching online in response to Coronavirus

In March 2020 (and again in January 2021), the School of Music had to make an immediate switch to online learning and teaching.

This was very hard for all of our disciplines, which are performance based. In addition, with remote learners spread across the globe, some have felt disconnected from their peers, and we have found it challenging to maintain a community of virtual learners.

However, there has been one advantage, although this has not been universal across all disciplines. Pre-lockdown, Performance Classes afforded weekly opportunities for students to perform live to their peers, and for peers give feedback to the performers as part of the class. Through lockdown, these moved online, and students submitted recordings rather than performing live, enabling them to select their best recording of the work, if they wished to do so, and in some cases this has also helped to overcome performance anxiety associated with performing live. The peers then reviewed the recordings and gave written feedback (in some cases verbal feedback, depending on the department).

It has been our experience that this approach to providing peer-to-peer feedback affords greater opportunity for reflection, which results in feedback that is richer and of a higher quality, in that it is generally longer and more considered than the in-the-moment feedback that might be given in a live class situation.

Some students can sometimes feel embarrassed at having to articulate their thoughts coherently in real-time. Thus, the performers have benefitted from gaining deeper insights into their work, and the student peers have benefitted from the discipline of constructing more meaningful feedback, extending their vocabulary, and learning from other peers who have provided written (or verbal) feedback.

RCS at Home and RCS Presents Case Study

RCS at Home and RCS Presents were created and launched as digital public platforms in March 2020.

[RCS At Home](#) was an essential way of reaching our community (our audiences and students' families) and sustaining a presence in reminding people that the creative arts are one element of life that enables social cohesion and a shared sense of purpose. It was also a vehicle to share work recorded prior to the pandemic or developed in new ways during the pandemic.

Equally, seeing footage from around the world of people turning to music and other participatory art-making, from their balconies in lockdown, it became immediately clear that RCS too had a role to play in promoting good morale both within our own learning community, and further afield.

Some of the earliest RCS at Home content included a [performance from Traditional Musician of the Year and RCS Lecturer Jenn Butterworth](#) streamed from her living room; BBC Philharmonic clarinettist and graduate [Fraser Langton playing every part in a Quarantine Clarinet Quartet](#); a [Wellbeing blog series](#) aimed at keeping us physically and mentally healthy and an [Exchange Talk](#) with Dr Emily Doolittle discussing her research on bird song. Principal Jeffrey Sharkey also took part, performing Scott Joplin on the piano from his living room on the first day of RCS at Home.

For more information and further examples please see <https://www.rcs.ac.uk/review/rcs-at-home-creatively-connecting>.

Student Wellbeing Support: RCS 'Home from Home' Case Study

The RCS 'Home from Home' initiative is a collaboration between External Relations, the Students' Union and Academic Administration and Support colleagues.

Building on our annual ['welcome home'](#) theme that supports matriculation and welcome week, the initiative sought to offer support and social interaction for

students and staff during the periods of lockdown, and a continuity from the start of the pandemic that is ongoing, to support student mental wellbeing.

The project has supplied amenities to students isolating, as well as social events for online participation. There is also a wealth of information made available to students regarding mental health support and travel restrictions, quarantine requirements and hardship funds including quarantine costs. Some detail is provided here:

<https://www.rcs.ac.uk/news/home-from-home-the-fun-and-games-keeping-students-and-staff-connected-this-term/>

The initiative won the '[Supporting Student Wellbeing](#)' award (Herald Higher Education Award) sponsored by the SFC earlier in 2021. We have also expanded our counselling service to include CBT and other therapies, as well as diverse counsellors to support our BIPOC community.

Student Voice

Students are represented at all levels of the Conservatoire's deliberative structure, including the Academic Board, and the Board of Governors.

Students have been represented by the SU President, or their delegate throughout contingency planning for academic delivery, and whilst No Detriment and similar policies were devised. SU executives and the Academic Management Team meet at least weekly, and the SUP regularly meets with other executive team members including Directors of HR, External Relations and Director of Finance & Estates.

Student partnership is determined through the annual authorship of a partnership agreement, and the Chair, Principal and Deputy Principal have all attended Student Council meetings to discuss important issues.

The executive has worked together with the RCS Black Union and SU to devise an institutional Anti-Racism Action Plan.

Students are part of the annual monitoring of programmes, and co-author the annual action plans. Senior Staff have devised action plans in response to NSS and other survey feedback, which is reported through the Academic Board.

A recent audit of Student Experience as led by the Academic Contingency Group, conducted by our appointed independent auditors, found no issues to report and highly commended the work of the group, and the student-staff partnership.

Graduate outcomes, Learning with Impact & work-ready graduates

The latest graduate outcomes data available (2018/19 – LEO) shows 90% of RCS graduates in employment or further study 15 months after graduation.

This is above the HESA average of 86% for creative arts graduates. Of these respondents, 87% reported their employment or study as meaningful, and 50% of Scots respondents were employed full-time. 75% were in highly-skilled roles, and 22% in further study.

In addition to our usual offering to alumni, 2020-21 graduates have been supported with a package of measures, owing to the ongoing pandemic situation.

These include future RCS performance opportunities and access to the RCS recording studio for free; discounts on [RCS short courses](#); free access to selected modules; extended use of RCS email account; extended access to mental health

and counselling services; eligibility for the [Make it Happen Fund](#) and access to [Make it Happen Workshops](#). Drama, Dance, Production and Film graduates are eligible for the [Bruce Millar Graduate Fellowship](#).

Throughout the pandemic, RCS has engaged with our partners including the National Companies (performing and production arts).

Using blended learning methodologies, it has been possible to expose students to a wide range of high-calibre international and national individuals and organisations to inform their learning and awareness of professional standards and experience.

Students have benefited from placements in the creative industries, and although much of that activity had to be adapted or postponed during the worst of the pandemic, creative conversations have continued with relevant artists, agents and employers.

We successfully delivered our MEd., supported by upskilling funds from SFC, which enables those in full- or part-time work in a relevant field to upskill, undertake a pedagogy project, and provides the possibility of enhancing employment opportunities on graduation.

The MEd. model of blended learning is replicated in microcredential format across our portfolio of short courses, many of which have been delivered fully online throughout the pandemic, and some in partnership with professional partners.

Our BEd and PGDE Music students have a unique identity in the Conservatoire; not only are they students of Music but are student teachers, developing their knowledge, understanding and skills of learning in teaching in the Primary and Secondary school.

As such, our student teachers have not only been coping with the demands of an online and blended approach to their Music studies but have also experienced changes to school placement.

For RCS students, while they had experience of using digital resources for module coursework and assessment in Music studies, the use of digital recordings was new for School Experience.

Recordings were uploaded to RCS OneDrive and assessed by an RCS tutor in advance of a Professional Learning Conversation between the student, school mentor and RCS tutor.

Students submitted a variety of different recordings ranging from 'edited highlights' to a continuous shot of a lesson.

One school mentor deemed a digital recording to be an invaluable tool for supporting the development of student teachers, allowing them to deepen their skills of reflection and to begin to articulate their professional choices.

Equalities and Inclusion

In 2021 we are undertaking a review of our Equality Outcomes we set for 2017-2021. RCS will also set new outcomes to meet by 2025.

In relation to the outcomes for 2021, we had committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. Like many other institutions, we had not fully appreciated what that meant until our partnership work with our Black Union (students) and other minority groups led to the production of our institutional Anti-Racism Action Plan in September 2020.

There are now school and departmental-level plans that relate to specific disciplines, and which address anti-racism in all aspects of learning and practice, from our costume department (production) hair and make-up, to repertoire choices and programming diverse visiting artists.

We have made progress in diversifying our staff, as well as our Board, recently appointing a number of new governors for 2021. Additionally, we have implemented regular staff and student anti-racism training, and are developing in-house training modules specific to our operating context. We offer funding to student and staff-proposed projects via the RCS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum.

For our commitments to 2025, we intend to continue to develop our anti-racism work and enhancing accountability, and to focus on supporting the participation of neurodiverse staff, students and visitors in our work.

Although we have made progress in raising awareness surrounding gender based violence, recognising and reporting it, we further intend to consider, through our forthcoming curriculum review, how we can best embed the healthiest perspectives and attitudes in our techniques and subject matter in the learning environment. We have undertaken considerable work in our library (digital and print) collections, along with student partners, in order to contextualise the contents and raise awareness of potentially challenging subject matter.

We have revised our Dignity at Work and Study Statement in consultation with the EDI forum, Students' Union and the Staff Consultative Forum, including foregrounding the value of mediation as a first step towards dispute resolution in the workplace.

We still have work to do to advance accessibility to our performance spaces and specialist learning.

This is brought especially into relief by the presence of our BA Performance (BSL and English) colleagues and students. This is a group especially hard hit by the pandemic's disproportionate impact on disadvantaged groups and as a consequence, recruitment has suffered due to lack of preHE opportunities. We have introduced evening and weekend classes to develop interested young people who may progress to our BA course.

The course is currently awaiting revalidation, and we are evaluating whether it is best to wait to undertake this alongside all other UG programmes undergoing review in 21-22, so as to maximise opportunities for shared learning, or to progress it earlier, in order to try to recruit a new cohort for 2022.

Either way, we are grateful for both the ongoing support of the SFC for this pioneering programme, and for the flexibility shown towards the most effective use of the funds to develop learning in this much-needed area, for both the institution and learners.

Responsive institutions and Climate Emergency

Our forthcoming curriculum review process provides another opportunity to appraise provision on a number of fronts: working with professional partners, we will update our graduate attributes and outcomes to align them with the latest skills recognised and sought after in the creative industries.

We will continue to develop our microcredential offer in order to offer an innovative, blended and skills-focused portfolio, capitalising on the success of our courses in creative leadership and fundraising, for example.

Curriculum review also provides an opportunity for an evaluation of RCS’s approach to sustainability goals, including embedding practices and awareness into the curriculum itself, as well as investigating newer sustainable methods of production. The reach of the arts, as proven during the pandemic, enables us to frame messages and learning in a particular way which engages a wide spectrum of society, never more so than when we have reached a global audience virtually through the pandemic.

Our Sustainability Committee has resumed its work as we have regained the use of our buildings, and shifted emphasis in strategic planning from an estates-driven approach to institution-wide strategic thinking and culture change.

The Conservatoire has had the privilege of participating in some high-profile COP26 performances, on the world stage, as well as launching its [climate portal](#) and climate café initiatives during the COP conference itself.

RCS has divested from direct holdings in fossil fuels and as of December 2020 only 1.7% of the value of the investment portfolios remained invested in this sector. By the end of 2021, the balance will have been disposed of.

At present, an upper limit of 15% of the portfolio value has been set for holdings in renewables. At December 2020 this was 10%.

	Annual % movement 2018-19 to 2019-20
Fossil fuels non-residential	-13.88
Grid electricity	-26.47
Water and sewerage	-18.77
Waste to landfill	0*
Recycled waste	-48.37

* The waste contract RCS now has, which covers all waste, guarantees zero waste to landfill.

This has been the case throughout the period noted above.

Year-on-year RCS targets a 5% overall reduction in carbon emissions.

A solar panel project for the Renfrew St campus will be progressed when it is safe and practical to do and a rainwater harvesting system at Renfrew St also remains under consideration.

We are also looking at the feasibility of expanding the use of air source heat pumps to reduce gas consumption and will undertake a cost benefit analysis on improving the insulation on the third floor and increasing the proportion of triple glazed window units in the Renfrew St building.

The carbon emissions picture overall tells a positive story over recent years. The figures have been distorted due to the impact of the pandemic with the campus effectively closed from mid-March until the end of July 2020 which reduced energy consumption significantly.

Conversely in 2020-21, in order to provide a safe working environment and comply with government guidelines, it was necessary to increase ventilation via keeping windows open and increasing the running times of the air handling equipment. In steady state the consumption trend remains on a downward trajectory.

Year	tCO2e			
	Scope 1	Scope 2	Scope 3	Total
2014-15	362	832	126	1,320
2015-16	379	698	83	1,160
2016-17	343	574	63	980
2017-18	427	451	47	925
2018-19	417	408	40	865
2019-20	355	274	28	657
2020-21	506	297	27	830

As RCS's strategic planning process continues, we will review our staff travel arrangements and in common with many international institutions in our sector, evaluate the necessity for travel to conferences and other events. It is highly likely that learnings from the pandemic period will inform the future of the creative arts, and associated organisations, thereby reducing carbon emissions and contribution to climate change.

Our high success rate for sustainable graduate employability, partnership with the professions/industry and the range of employments open to performers and producers of the highest calibre indicates that graduates receive support to develop the meta skills necessary to launch and sustain a career, as well as the adaptability and resourcefulness to adjust to changing circumstances affecting the industry.

Research Excellence and Sustainability

Our research culture is built around practice and applied research *in* the performing arts as well as a range of work *on* the performing arts, and it remains our strategic ambition to continue to grow the quantity and quality of our research. While excellence and sustainability are closely coupled in any research environment, for the Conservatoire, as an internationally-regarded but still-developing centre for research, the two are inseparable.

As noted in the Self-Evaluation for 20-21, our submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 indicated some success in supporting research excellence and sustainability: the size of our submission (FTE staff submitted) increased by around 75%, and we anticipate that the overall quality profile will roughly mirror that of REF 2014 (albeit with different contributions from the individual profiles for outputs, environment and impact).

Just as 20-21 was dominated by preparations for REF, so the 21-22 will be dominated by the strategic planning for future excellence when the result of REF, and the funding implications that flow from it, are known.

Although the institutional strategic plan has been delayed by the global pandemic, our draft Research and Knowledge Exchange strategies for two 'emergency years'

(21-22 and 22-23) are all but complete, and we now await the results of REF 2021 and the outcomes of the various reviews arising from the SFC's Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability to inform our future strategies to maximise the excellence of our research and ensure its sustainability for the longer term.

Reviewing our submission to REF 2021, the strengths that we have identified to inform those longer-term strategies include: demonstrable progress and clear fulfilment of past strategic goals; evidence of an interdisciplinary, impact-driven culture; our particular approach to support for staff research; our excellent specialist facilities; and 'punching above our weight' in contribution to the wider research infrastructure.

The weaknesses that we will seek to address in future strategy include: limitations that arise from our lack of an academic promotion structure; the need to grow post-doctoral research and extend our still limited external research income.

Drawing on the resource provided by the Research Excellence Grant (REG), we continue to invest in research staff and the environment for research at the Conservatoire.

The strategic appointment of two 'Athenaeum Research Fellows' within the Research and Knowledge Exchange directorate, and the work these two Fellows, has proven to be transformative, particularly their support for the research of colleagues and interdisciplinary working.

It is a principle of our approach to support staff research that it is available to all staff, whether full time, pro-rata or hourly paid. This approach reflects the reality of supporting a still-developing research environment in 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.

All of the research support activities that we undertook in the pre-Covid context have been sustained through the pandemic, with uptake from staff increasing as we have moved to new formats. In AY 21-22, we will review the lessons learned from the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic to ensure that our future support for staff research draws on the best of new and well-established approaches.

Although some aspects of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers present challenges to us – for example, those relating to promotional structures – our approach will be wholly aligned with the Concordat.

Research ethics are overseen by the Conservatoire's Ethics Committee, which is itself overseen by the Academic Board. We believe we have robust processes in place for research integrity across our ecosystem, and keep these under constant review to ensure that we adhere to the precepts of the Research Integrity Concordat. We have successfully continued to use REG funding to lever additional funding from external sources (for example, from the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Carnegie Trust).

REG also enables us to participate in the Doctoral Training Partnership within the Scottish Graduate School for the Arts and Humanities (SGSAH); it allows us to pursue partnerships such as those for applied research with partners such as Creative Scotland and Scottish Ballet; and it permits us to fund specific staff research projects through our *Athenaeum Awards*.

Use of the Research Excellence Grant: A Case Study

The specific case of our *Athenaeum Award* to James Slimings illustrates how our investment of REG works in practice. An seedcorn award supported the first 'Spheres of Singing' online conference in May 2020, leveraging additional external funding and enabling a range of outputs and outcomes including: development of Scotland's Singing for Health Network, a journal article focussing on the online conference as an accessible space, a proposal for an edited themed collection examining Singing and the Online World, and an interdisciplinary seminar series at Glasgow University.

A subsequent *Athenaeum Award* to Mr Slimings then funded a series of podcasts to increase further the impact of the original event; these have now lead to a further conference (Spheres of Singing 2022) and a successful RSE Research Networking award for Conservatoire colleague Dr Robertson-Kirkland to develop Scotland's Singing for Health Network. Relatively small but targeted investments have helped to develop a vigorous trans-institutional network.

Doctoral Degrees

Doctoral degrees at the Conservatoire are validated by the University of St Andrews, following a historic agreement in 1999, and research students benefit from a wide range of research training opportunities both at the Conservatoire, through St Andrews (and, specifically, the Centre for Education Enhancement and Development or CEED), and through SGSAH, of which the Conservatoire was a founder member. During the global pandemic, we significantly reinforced our support for students – both pastoral and academic – with our existing events moving online and being supplemented with new strands of activity designed to support our postgraduate researchers both individually and collectively, to successful completion in the current circumstances.

As with our support for staff, we will now review the lessons learned to ensure that our future support for postgraduates draws on the best of the new approaches we have developed.

Partnerships

As well as working with our colleagues across the Scottish sector, and our wider peer group of conservatoires across the UK and internationally, we undertake many innovative projects in applied research, as noted above.

These projects are not just indicative of our interest in high-impact research: they are a reflection in research terms of how we understand our wider role as the national conservatoire.

This sense of a wider role also underpins initiatives such as 'SHARE', our initiative with St Andrews University to support interdisciplinary research across the arts and sciences. We will continue to pursue relevant research partnerships, and projects that maximise the impact of our contribution as Scotland's national conservatoire.

For 20/21 our objectives in research are to:

1. Finalise our emergency-years strategy for Research, in the context of the outcome of REF 2021 and the funding that flows from that outcome.
2. Review our approaches to staff and student research support, drawing on the lessons learned during the global pandemic.

3. Sustain and extend our partnership working in the emergence from the pandemic.

Knowledge Exchange and Innovation

Our objectives for 21/22 in KE and Innovation are to:

1. Pursue the challenging development plan for KE which we developed as part of our participation in the development year of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat, and finalise our emergency-years strategy for KE and Innovation
2. Sustain our programme of enterprise support initiatives, *Make it Happen*, and the *SHIFT* summer school, together with other contributions to the collaborative sectoral effort of the UIF.
3. Launch a 2-year *Innovation Studio* pilot, realising the developmental work undertaken towards our proposed 'Innovation Hub' in a programme of challenges that are specifically conceived to focus our KE and Innovation activity on Scotland's economic and social recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our KE Development Plan was worked out within the framework of the KE Concordat development year and submitted for review by the Concordat's panel of expert reviewers in July, building on preparatory work undertaken in 19-20 through our Internal KE Audit (or IKEA); the Conservatoire was one of three Scottish HEIs to complete the KE Concordat development year.

The Plan is designed to build on the experience of the past five years' development in KE and Innovation at the Conservatoire and achieve a further step-change by embedding KE more completely as the third 'mission' of the institution. As part of the Plan, senior staff from across the institution will be supported by members of our Board to pursue a series of linked work packages.

Reviewing our reflective analysis and Plan, the KE Concordat reviewers commented that it represented a "clear, relevant and ambitious strategy ... a welcome, Plain English and honest approach. The professional KE team have clearly achieved considerable impact and the policy engagement".

The reviewers recommended that "the institution should be encouraged to adopt a higher profile in the sector given their positive approach and practices" and also noted that the ambitious timescale that we have set ourselves may prove challenging.

Universities Innovation Fund

The Conservatoire's allocation from the UIF will support all three of our objectives for KE in AY 21-22. It will enable us to continue the work begun in the KE Concordat development year (by supporting the cost of the KE team that will deliver this strategic project), and directly support the delivery of *Make it Happen* and *SHIFT*, developed and delivered in partnership with Queen Margaret University and the Glasgow School of Art.

The UIF will also part-fund the 2-year Innovation Studio Pilot, in a mix of funding that includes further support from a private donor, and other sources.

As noted in previous years, the Conservatoire is not in a position to match fund the UIF award in cash terms, but the sums it spends each year in public engagement

roles exceeds by some margin the UIF grant and may be considered a match-funding in kind.

In all respects, we direct our UIF resource to areas that will create the strongest impact, with both immediate and longer-term benefits, and to the wider collaborative sectoral effort that lies at the heart of the UIF approach.

Innovation Studio

Supporting the long-term ambition to realise the innovation potential of the Conservatoire's performing and production artists, and as part of our two-year pandemic recovery strategy, we will launch and deliver *Innovation Studio*. *Innovation Studio* will facilitate new knowledge exchange (KE) opportunities, new modes of working and new collaborations that support creative experimentation and testing, skills development and co-creation. The project will unlock powerful practices and opportunities, and pave the way for a future Centre for Innovation at the Conservatoire.

The aims of *Innovation Studio* are:

- To unlock the innovation and knowledge exchange potential of our Conservatoire community and extend our reach and impact in the world;
- To leverage new projects, partners and sources of funding;
- To facilitate new strands of innovative research;
- To establish a dynamic creative hub and support service with ambitious long-term goals that extend beyond the pilot phase;
- To develop an imaginative Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Strategy that establishes this work as central to the institution's future ambitions;
- To strengthen our role as the national conservatoire and set ambitious goals for our contribution to society in three key challenges: the Green Recovery; Place-Making and Sustainable Communities, and Health and Well Being.

Our students, staff and graduates have the innovation potential and industry expertise to support Scotland's recovery and transformation. *Innovation Studio* will provide focused support and seed-funds to unlock interdisciplinary approaches to local, sectoral, national and global challenges. It will offer our creative community additional tools and provocations as they seek to expand their sphere of influence and adopt new methods of creation and new routes to impact.

Three innovation challenges, each lasting 5-6 months are the heart of *Innovation Studio*, and three cross-cutting themes – Digital Pivot, Future Skills and Equality and Diversity – will inform and inflect our work on those challenges.

The central challenge programme will be supported by two subsidiary programmes, a Crowdfunder Lab and a Creative Accelerator.

Throughout the pandemic, our staff, students and alumni have worked at the cutting edge of the performing arts, delivering rapid solutions to the challenges of creative production through rapid experimentation with digital and hybrid modes of delivery and audience development.

There is rich experience to share with the wider arts sector and an ambition to explore innovative working with communities beyond the creative arts, as a vital route to social innovation, recovery and resilience.

The following chart summarises the *Innovation Studio* proposition:

innovation STUDIO

Strategic Purpose ↓

To unlock the innovation potential of performing and production artists at RCS and extend our reach and impact to the world.

With a thematic focus on →

Green Recovery. Place Making & Sustainable Communities. Health & Well Being.

Cross cutting themes →

Digital Pivot. Future Skills. Diversity & Inclusion.

By delivering 3 programmes →

Programme results ↓

- New Project Development
- New Business Development
- Digital Assets
- New Research
- Enhanced skills for the future economy
- New Research Pool
- New delivery contexts
- Talent Partnership Pipeline
- RCS Innovation Community

Supported by

- Knowledge Exchange Team
- Creative Entrepreneurs in Residence
- Industry Specialists
- Steering Group

Key Stakeholders

- Scottish Funding Council
- Industry & Business
- National & Local Government
- International Partners & Networks
- RCS Community of Artists

Programme 1

The Innovation Challenges ↓

Challenge ① - Green Recovery **Challenge ②** - Placemaking **Challenge ③** - Health & Well Being

Each Innovation Challenge lasts 5-6 months.
Each Innovation Challenge has a distinctive work package of Commissions & Laboratory.

Each Challenge will include the following Activities;

COMMISSIONS -

A chance to test new ideas with funding and support

- The Research & KE Fund
- The Business Ideas Fund
- The Collaboration Fund

LABORATORY -

A virtual space to learn, play and grow new ideas.

- Provocation Sessions
- Inspiration Events & Digital Content
- Workshops
- 1-2-1 Advice Clinics
- Artist Residency opportunity aligned to each Challenge
- End of Challenge Sharing

Programme 2

Crowdfunder Lab ↓

3 workshops plus 1:1 Mentoring sessions up to campaign launch to teach the skills and strategy required to run a successful crowd-funding campaign.

Programme 3

Creative Accelerator ↓

A specialist business development accelerator programme to develop transformational ideas, projects and companies that have potential to achieve high levels of impact locally and globally. The Accelerator will combine creativity, transdisciplinary working, business innovation, expert support and seed funding.

University Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22
A Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants	148	145	150	136	133	123	152
B Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes	21	22	22	17	0	24	33
Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0
C COWA measure: Total number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants	148	145	150	136	133	123	152
COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas	11	19	20	18	20	21	26
COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas	7.4%	13.1%	13.3%	13.2%	15.0%	17.1%	17.1%
D Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	2	1	0	1	1	1	1
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	1.4%	0.7%	0.0%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%
E Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants	123	148	144	150	136	128	123
Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2	122	138	140	144	127	123	119
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2	99.2%	93.2%	97.2%	96.0%	93.4%	96.1%	96.7%
F The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey	-2	1	0	-4	-7	6	-1
G1 The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey				76	85		
The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				75	79		
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				98.7%	93.0%		
G2 The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment				71	72		
The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment in professional employment				34	21		
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment in professional employment				47.9%	29.0%		
H Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers							Will be confirmed at end of AY21/22
	123	131	107	137	137	125	

Comments

- QB In the absence of the UCAS data, this data has been taken from information collected at matriculation and is subject to change. It has been presumed that "HN entrants" means any student with an HND/ HNC qualification on entry
- QE The 123 "Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants" comes from last years' intake number on previous column
- QF Benchmark = 80
- QH This has not been completed. The number of "Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers" will be known at the end of AY21/22.

Outcome Agreement between the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2021-22

Signed: 

Print name: Jeffrey Sharkey

Position: Principal

Date: 04/07/22

Signed: 

Print name: Nick Kuenssberg OBE

Position: Chair

Date: 28/06/22

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed: 

Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 28 July 2022