

**Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Quality Assurance Handbook**

QAH 8

ADMISSIONS POLICY

QAH8 ADMISSIONS POLICY

Introduction

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland seeks, through the range of its pre-HE programmes and through its recruitment and admissions processes, to develop and maintain a richly diverse learning community. It is the Conservatoire's strongly held belief that the professions it serves will be more effective and of greater benefit to society and culture at large if their members are representative of a diverse society. The Conservatoire therefore recognises that the pursuit of greater diversity in the student body requires an admissions process that is flexible and pays specific attention to the background, needs and potential of each individual applicant.

All Conservatoire programmes publish minimum academic entry requirements; one programme (the BA in Performance in British Sign Language and English) has no formal academic entry requirements.

Because the talent and potential of Conservatoire applicants cannot be demonstrated through prior academic achievement alone, all on-time applicants are invited to participate in an audition or interview process. This allows the Conservatoire to make a holistic decision with regard to an individual's potential to study and succeed at the Conservatoire, taking into account the context and circumstances of their pre-Conservatoire studies. This in itself demonstrates the Conservatoire's commitment to removing barriers to access.

The audition or interview process is usually conducted face-to-face either at the Conservatoire, or in another venue in the UK, Europe or internationally. Alternatively, and to facilitate applicants who would otherwise have to travel great distances at significant expense, applicants may be auditioned on the basis of an authenticated and referenced video of their audition material.

The audition/interview process enables the audition panel to consider the full range of the applicant's experience and achievements and to assess their readiness to study as well as their potential to succeed on their chosen programme.

The application of this Admissions Policy (which includes a Contextualized Admissions Policy) enables audition panels to consider every element of an individual applicant's experience, circumstances and potential.

The Admissions Process

The Conservatoire's admissions processes are designed to identify those applicants who are best suited to the programme of study applied for, on the basis of their talent and potential, as well as their prior achievements. The Conservatoire's admissions processes are fair, transparent, and fit for purpose.

Applicants to degree programmes apply online through UCAS Conservatoires (<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/conservatoires>). All on-time applicants will be invited to participate in an audition/interview process. For the majority of applicants, this is

conducted in Glasgow and therefore affords the applicant the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into the nature of the programme and the opportunities offered by the Conservatoire.

The admissions process for each programme is subject to annual review by the appropriate Programme Committee and School Management Team and, if required, consideration by the Quality and Standards Committee and approval by the Academic Board. Whilst the detail of the admissions process for each programme may vary, the following principles will be adhered to:

- All admissions decisions will be taken in the context of the Conservatoire's Equal Opportunities Statement and Disability Policy
- Audition/interview panels will comprise a minimum of two members of staff. All staff involved in the assessment of applicants will be prepared for that role, including staff from partner institutions.

Contextualized Admissions

For Scottish domiciled applicants only, the Conservatoire uses contextualized data to assist in identifying talent and potential that may not be fully demonstrated through prior academic achievement or through current quality of performance. The following types of data are considered:

Geo-Demographic: Applicants who live in postcode areas with the highest levels of disadvantage in Scotland.

Data Used: the applicant's postcode compared with postcodes within the lowest two quintiles of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (i.e. SIMD 20/40).

Educational Background: Applicants whose pre-HE experience and achievement was at a school with low attainment.

Data Used: the applicant's secondary school compared with the list of Scottish secondary schools with low rates of progression to HE as defined by the Schools for Higher Education Programme

Widening Access Background: Applicants who have successfully participated in a widening access programme.

Data Examples: Conservatoire Transitions Programme; a SHEP Programme (Focus West, Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS), Aspire North, Lift Off); Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP).

Care Experience: Applicants who are care experienced.

Data Used: data provided by the applicant in their application.

In the School of Music, audition panels make recommendations to the School of Music Management Team.

All audition panels (and, in the School of Music, the School Management Team) will arrive at their decisions in respect of each applicant taking account of the applicant's:

- a. performance at audition/interview;
- b. performance in the entrance examination (if applicable);
- c. demonstrable commitment to the particular programme;
- d. potential to benefit from the programme;
- e. academic qualifications (including English language qualifications, where applicable);
- f. performance or production qualifications;
- g. performance or production experience;
- h. references;
- i. contextualized data (detailed above).

Offers to Undergraduate Applicants

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) limits Scottish and EU (excepting rUK) undergraduate student numbers by prescribing the maximum number of Scottish/EU (excepting rUK) students that each Scottish higher education institution can enrol in any one year through an allocation of 'funded places'. The Conservatoire will make offers to Scottish and EU (excepting rUK) domiciled applicants within the parameters of that limit, and taking account of the number of students required within each specialist discipline to ensure a balanced cohort of students. Additionally, the SFC agrees annually with the Conservatoire a target intake of students from the most socio-economically deprived areas of Scotland (i.e. postcodes within the lowest quintiles of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) and allocates additional funded places to accommodate that target intake.

The Conservatoire sets target intake numbers for applicants from England, Wales and Northern Ireland (collectively known as 'rUK') and international (non-EU) applicants. Those targets are predicated on the number of students the Conservatoire can physically accommodate within each programme, and on the number of students required in each specialist discipline, to ensure a balanced cohort of students, always applying the same entry standards as for applicants domiciled in Scotland/EU (excepting rUK). (There are specific English language requirements for non-native speakers of English – see below.)

Within the pool of undergraduate applicants who meet the standard required for entry to the programme, priority is given to Scottish-domiciled students who are care experienced, or carers, or who live in postcode areas defined by the lowest quintile of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Offers to Postgraduate Applicants

For postgraduate programmes, the Conservatoire sets intake targets for UK/EU students, and for international (non-EU) students. Targets are predicated on the number of students the Conservatoire can physically accommodate within each programme, and on the number of students required in each specialist discipline to ensure a balanced cohort of students, subject to meeting the minimum threshold requirements for admission to the programme. (There are specific English language requirements for non-native speakers of English – see below).

Decisions in respect of each applicant will be recorded in the manner prescribed for each programme (e.g. an audition report form) and retained in accordance with the Conservatoire's Records Retention Schedule. The outcome of all applications will be notified to applicants in writing via UCAS Conservatoires.

Within the pool of postgraduate applicants who meet the standard required for entry to the programme, priority is given to applicants who are care experienced and carers.

Direct Entry (beyond Year 1 of any programme)

Applications for direct entry beyond Year One will be considered on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the Conservatoire's Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning policy (QAH 9).

Admissions Criteria and Information to Applicants

Admissions criteria, including minimum academic entry requirements, are subject to annual review by the appropriate Programme Committee. This review is based upon a comparison of the Student Success Profile of Non-Standard Entry Students and standard entry students. The Programme Committee's report will be considered by the relevant School Management Team and the Quality and Standards Committee. Proposed amendments require the approval of the Academic Board.

The Conservatoire website (www.rcs.ac.uk) and prospectus provide information on general academic entrance requirements. Details of admissions criteria and audition/admissions processes for each programme appear in the prospectus and in the relevant online Applicant Guide. These publications are subject to annual review and the appropriate Director of School must confirm that all such material is full and accurate prior to publication.

The Conservatoire organises a number of Open Days each year, as well as weekly building tours. Upon request, the School of Music may organize advice lessons for prospective applicants. Wherever possible, best efforts will be made to accommodate requests from individual prospective applicants to visit the Conservatoire at a time convenient to them.

General information requests received from prospective applicants will be dealt with through the Recruitment and Admissions department. More detailed requests will be referred to the appropriate member of academic staff.

Equality and Diversity Statement

The Conservatoire welcomes a diverse population of students and staff. The Conservatoire believes that excellence is achieved through recognising and celebrating the value of every individual. The Conservatoire is committed to promoting equality in all of its activities and aims to provide a vibrant performing, learning, teaching, working and research environment that respects the diversity of students and staff, enabling them to achieve their full potential, contribute fully, and

to derive maximum benefit and enjoyment from their involvement in the life of the Conservatoire and beyond.

The Conservatoire is committed to equality of opportunity both as an education institution and as an employer. Equality of opportunity means striving to ensure that no student or member of staff receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, actual or perceived religion or belief, sex and actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Application and Audition Fees

Where the application and/or audition fee may present a barrier to application, the Conservatoire will consider requests in writing to waive or refund the fee, providing there is clear evidence of financial need.

Scholarships (Bursaries)

Scholarships may be offered in recognition of talent and potential, and/or financial need, to enable study.

Language of Instruction

Unless otherwise indicated, the language of instruction is English. Non-native speakers of English are required to demonstrate sufficient understanding of the English language, normally through benchmarking against the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Detailed advice is given in the Guides to Applicants. Note that UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) imposes minimum English language qualifications in respect of overseas (non-EU) applicants who require a Tier 4 Visa to study in the UK.

Applicants with Disabilities

The admissions process takes place in the context of the Conservatoire's Equal Opportunities Statement, its Disability Policy, and this Admissions Policy. All applicants who have disclosed a disability will receive a copy of the Conservatoire's guidance 'Information for Students with Disabilities' (available on the [Conservatoire website](#)). Applicants with a disability or special need are invited to contact the Counsellor and Disability Advisor to discuss their specific requirements, which may include special arrangements for the audition/interview. The Counsellor and Disability Advisor will, as a matter of course, write to all applicants who declare a disability or special need on their application, and will provide information about applying to and studying at the Conservatoire. The Counsellor and Disability Advisor is also available to meet applicants when they come for audition/interview to discuss their particular requirements, sources of further information and any special funding that might be available.

Non-Standard Entry

The Conservatoire welcomes applications from individuals whose academic qualifications or English language qualifications do not meet (in terms of equivalence) the normal minimum entrance requirements, where specified. Having satisfied the audition panel that they otherwise meet the selection criteria and demonstrate that they have the capacity to pursue the proposed programme, such applicants will be considered through the Conservatoire's Non-Standard Entry Policy (QAH 9). The appropriate Head of Department/Programme will, using the standard pro-forma, make a case in support of the particular applicant's admission for consideration by a panel comprising the Convener of the Quality and Standards Committee and two other members of the Committee.

A summary report of all non-standard entries will be made to an early meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee each session. Tailored support will be provided to all non-standard entry students on the basis of a pre-entry assessment of individual need. This will be monitored by the relevant Head of Department/Head of Programme in the context of the individual student's progress.

Guidance for Applicants with Criminal Convictions

The Conservatoire believes that an unspent criminal conviction should not automatically prevent an individual from studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Disclosing a criminal conviction is not a requirement of an application to study at the Conservatoire and applicants will only ever be assessed on their application, audition/interview and suitability for the course. The exception to this are below:

- a. Students who are required to join the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme due to the nature of their course
- b. Students who are required to join the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme or require an Enhanced Disclosure Check due to the nature of certain option modules.
- c. Student who require a visa to study in the UK who are required to disclose this information as part of the visa application process.

Though there is no need to declare a conviction as part of your application, applicants currently on licence are expected to make us aware of any conditions which may prevent them from fully engaging with their course and broader Conservatoire community. This is particularly pertinent when considering applying for a place in Liberty House Living. Where possible the Conservatoire will undertake to make reasonable adjustments where available.

The Conservatoire is able to give specialist advice and support for student entering our community from many different backgrounds. Students coming to the Conservatoire with a spent or unspent conviction may find it useful to connect with these services and gain additional support with studying at the Conservatoire. Disclosing convictions in order to utilise a service (e.g. financial advice) is dealt with confidentially and you will only be asked for enough information required to provide the service you require.

PVG Scheme and Enhanced Disclosure Checks

Due to the nature of some courses and modules at the Conservatoire, you may be asked to join the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme or complete an Enhanced Disclosure check. This means that checks are carried out for any unspent

and spent convictions and cautions. The checks also include any non-conviction data held by the police that may be relevant to course/module.

Applications for the PVG Scheme membership and Enhanced Disclosure checks are processed and assessed by Disclosure Scotland which provides this service as a means of enhancing security, public safety and protecting the vulnerable in society.

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland will administer students applying to be members of the PVG Scheme and who require an Enhanced Disclosure check in accordance with prevailing Disclosure Scotland requirements and related legislation e.g. the Data Protection Act. If you would like further details of the Disclosure Scotland process please visit their website at www.disclosurescotland.co.uk.

A member of staff from the Conservatoire will only contact you directly should any issues arise from your PVG scheme membership or Enhanced Disclosure check. Using the information received from your PVG scheme membership or Enhanced Disclosure check, a panel will risk assess any criminal convictions and cautions. The panel will normally be convened by the Academic Registrar and will consist of the Director of the School to which the applicant has applied, the Programme Head and the Assistant Registrar (Admissions). The Principal may appoint alternative members to the panel in the event of one or other of the members being unavailable or otherwise unable to participate.

The panel will decide whether or not the student should be considered further in the light of information received regarding the criminal conviction. Each case will be looked at individually and the circumstances of each case will be considered. It is not therefore possible to give an answer as to whether any particular type of offence would result in a decision to remove a student from a course or module. In arriving at its decision, the panel may take legal or other professional advice.

If the panel decides that the student poses an unacceptable risk to commence a course or module, the Academic Registrar will write to the applicant accordingly, giving the reasons for that decision.

The student will have the right of appeal against the panel's decision to the Assistant Principal within 28 days of its receipt. Appeals will only be considered if the student provides additional/relevant information or if RCS has failed to comply with the procedures set down in this document.

Should a student with a declared conviction or caution continue on their course or module, the panel has the right to determine whether the Head of Department/Programme, the Royal Conservatoire Counsellor or any other relevant member of staff should be made aware of the student's criminal conviction. The number of people who would be informed about the conviction will be limited to those required to ensure the safety of others. The panel may involve special arrangements being put in place for the duration of the student's course or module.

Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme

Certain Conservatoire programmes involve students coming into contact with young or vulnerable people. Such students will be required to become members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme. Academic Administration and Support staff will administer this process in accordance with the Conservatoire's Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme Policy and will undertake checks on entrants to programmes identified by the appropriate Director.

Feedback to Applicants

Subject to the provisions of the Conservatoire's Data Protection Policy, feedback requests must be made in writing to feedback@rcs.ac.uk. The email must come from the address supplied on the UCAS Conservatoires application and must contain the applicant's full name, programme and UCAS Conservatoires personal ID number.

Data Protection

Applications will be processed in accordance with the Conservatoire's Data Protection Policy. Application forms and related documents will be kept in accordance with the Conservatoire's Retention of Records Policy.

Changes to Programmes

The Conservatoire will inform applicants and prospective students, at the earliest opportunity, of any significant changes to a programme to which they have applied. In such cases, students will be advised of the options available in the circumstances.

Complaints

There may be occasions where an applicant considers that the Conservatoire has failed to meet its high standards in the consideration of their application. Disagreement with the academic judgement of the audition/interview panel in reaching their decision based on aspects of the applicant's profile does not constitute grounds for a complaint by an applicant. Complaints will only be considered in relation to non-adherence to policy and procedure.

Complaints can be made in person, by phone, in writing, by email at complaint@rcs.ac.uk or by completing our Complaints Form at <http://www.rcs.ac.uk/complaints>.

If it is found that the outcome of an application was affected by either non-adherence to a policy or defective procedure, the applicant concerned will be offered a re-audition.