

UKVI Academic Engagement Policy

This policy sets out the Conservatoire's institutional arrangements for complying with the [Home Office Student Academic Engagement Policy for Higher Education Providers](#) (October 2020). RCS will ensure that its sponsored students are academically engaging throughout the period of leave for which they are being sponsored. A student is deemed to be academically engaging if they are actively and consistently following their course of study.

RCS will monitor and review students' academic engagement for all its students at degree level or above in line with its existing policies on attendance in [Regulations Codes of Procedure and General Rules 2021-22](#)

The policy should be reviewed on an annual basis.

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1. Overview

All Conservatoire students are required to attend all lessons, classes, rehearsals, and performances as specified in their Programme Handbook. The engagement of sponsored taught students is overseen by the Head of Programme, and for research students by the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange.

Absences can be authorised in advance for taught students by the relevant Head of Department provided the student follows an established process. Absence due to sickness can be reported by a student before the class takes place via the [ASIMUT](#) system. Research students must RSVP to scheduled meetings with supervisors in advance.

Unauthorised absence is not permitted and can be flagged by tutors of taught students via their online class registers on the ASIMUT system. Absence information is transmitted from the ASIMUT system to the RCS Student Record System (SRS). An attendance register is taken at every registered class and when a sponsored student has an unauthorised absence, the reason is recorded as 'unknown' on SRS. For the purposes of monitoring the engagement of sponsored students at postgraduate level in the School of Music (SoM), the 1-2-1 lesson is used as the 'contact'. 1-2-1 lessons across the SoM take place on a weekly basis.

Some programmes in the School of Drama, Dance, Production and Film (DDPF) require the student to provide an immediate explanation for an unauthorised absence. These programmes are:

Programme	Action
BA Acting	The student is emailed immediately by the Head of Programme (copying in the Programme Support Administrator) and is asked to explain the absence.
BA Modern Ballet	Students who have not contacted their tutor/Head of Programme by 9.30am will be contacted by the programme team.
Musical Theatre (all programmes)	If a student fails to attend a class without requesting to be absent, the lecturer emails the Head of Programme on the same day of the missed class and marks the absence as unauthorised on ASIMUT. The Head of Programme e-mails the student to request an explanation for the unauthorised absence by return of e-mail.

2. How unauthorised absence is followed-up across the RCS

Notes are taken at all meetings to address unauthorised absence and are uploaded to the student's individual Student Contract on SRS. The point in time at which this type of meeting takes place depends on the student's programme of study. However, at no point does such a meeting take place later than 60 days (30 days for distance learning) after the date on which the student was first contacted about their unauthorised absence. RCS offers programmes of study which are intensive,

and most students, with the exception of research students, are required to be present in classes every day, Monday to Friday, during term-time. As registers are taken at all classes, unauthorised absences are followed-up quickly by departments. The action taken after unauthorised absence, and by whom, can be viewed in Annexe 1.

Meeting notes include the reason(s) for the lack of academic engagement and an action plan to ensure re-engagement with their studies. The contents of an action plan are often, but not limited to:

- Student being asked to register with a GP to address a health condition which has impacted on their attendance
- Student being asked to meet with the Disability Advisor to establish a learning agreement to provide adjustments for a previously undeclared disability
- Student being asked to attend the Effective Learning Service to address study skills issues which have prevented them from attending class.

If a student does not re-engage with their studies as per the actions in the notes of their meeting, the student is either asked to attend a disciplinary meeting in line with the Conservatoire's Student Disciplinary Procedure (fully detailed in the [Conservatoire's Regulations, Codes of Procedure and General Rules](#) or is required to engage with the [Fitness to Study](#) policy. If the disciplinary allegation of failing to re-engage is upheld or the student is deemed unfit to study, the Conservatoire would withdraw sponsorship. <https://portal.rcs.ac.uk/qualityassurance/wp-content/uploads/sites/897/2018/07/Student-Disciplinary-Flow-Chart.pdf>

The date of the disciplinary meeting or the start of the Fitness to Study process will be no more than 60 days after the date on which the student was first contacted about their lack of engagement. Due to Covid-19, the RCS has some sponsored students who are having to engage in distance learning due to travel restrictions. For these students, the timeframe will be 30 days. Once the Covid-19 pandemic has passed, RCS will not have any sponsored distance learning students.

3. Research students

At a minimum, doctoral students are expected to attend Annual Progress Review, study days and meetings with their supervisor and must RSVP in advance. Both RSVPs and attendance are recorded. As non-responses or declines to events are followed up beforehand, unauthorised absence is rare. Where it does happen, this is shared with the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange.

DPerf students are required to undertake 120 credits of supplementary studies with most students undertaking most credits at RCS. Unauthorised absence on individual modules follows the process in place for taught components and has been escalated to the Doctoral Degrees Coordinator where explanation for non-absence has not been given, or a student has persistently not engaged.

Annual Progress Review (APR) is the central point where participation in RKE activity is monitored and discussed. Failure to engage can result in a less than satisfactory (APR) outcome from the Research Degrees Committee including possible termination of studies.

RKE induction events, the Handbook, and relevant Policies make clear that a) attendance as outlined above is mandatory and that b) the Conservatoire must be informed of any change in location or address.

The explanation about 'the maximum period of non-engagement before intervention takes place' (60 days) accords with the formal expectation that students and supervisors will have 10 substantive points of contact each academic year.

4. Placements (work and study)

When a sponsored student is on a study placement overseas, RCS staff remain in regular contact with the student to ensure they continue to academically engage and to support them pastorally. The means of contact, and how often it takes place, depends on the student's programme of study and the type of study exchange. At the very minimum, sponsored students are responsible for submitting a UKVI Attendance Monitoring Form to the relevant RCS staff member on a weekly basis. If the student fails to do this, they will be sent a reminder, after which, if the forms are not submitted, their Head of Programme will intervene. If re-engagement with the process is not established, the actions detailed in section 2 of this policy would be taken.

Not all programmes of study offer work placements to students. The programmes which offer placements can be found in Annexe 2.

5. Dissertation periods

Very few programmes at RCS require students to write a dissertation. Where a dissertation is required, it is completed alongside taught elements of a programme and engagement is monitored as outlined in the previous sections.

6. Student Union Sabbatical Officers

The SU President is the only sabbatical officer at RCS. They are an RCS employee, have a contract of employment, and are subject to the same non-attendance disciplinary procedures as other staff. Details are in in the [RCS Absence Management Policy](#).

Annexe 1

Programme	Follow-up
Bachelor of Music (all strands)	Tutors must report to their Head of Department (HoD) if a student misses two consecutive 1-to-1 lessons. This results in an initial meeting between the student, the tutor and the HoD. For Core Curriculum Studies, tutors inform the HoD or the Head of Programme (HoP) if a student misses three or more classes. Any student with more than a 30% absence rate can be refused the opportunity to submit work for assessment, thus automatically failing the module. If the student is unable to satisfactorily explain the unauthorised absences or does not respond, an initial investigatory meeting is arranged between the student and the HoP.
Master of Music/ Master of Arts Music	If a sponsored postgraduate student in SoM misses a 1-2-1 lesson it will be marked on their Student Record, along with any other unauthorised absences. Tutors report to their HoD if a sponsored student misses two consecutive 1-to-1 lessons. If the student is unable to satisfactorily explain the unauthorised absences or does not respond, an initial investigatory meeting is arranged between the student and the HoP.
Bachelor of Education Music	If a tutor notes that a sponsored student has had three unauthorised absences, an initial informal meeting to discuss these absences takes place with the joint Heads of Programme. The same meeting would take place should a student's rate of unauthorised absence reach 20%. If unauthorised absences continue, the Fitness to Study process is triggered.
Bachelor of Arts Acting	If a student has more than three unauthorised absences the student is invited to a face-to-face meeting with the HoP to ascertain if there is a problem with engagement. The same process applies to online delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic. The department looks at persistent absenteeism on a case-by-case basis, as they deal with such small numbers. A move to the Fitness to Study procedure might be appropriate in some cases but not all, and it would be a last resort. Usually the department can deal with cases at a local level, adjusting or instigating learning agreements as necessary.

	Dialogue is often on-going and solutions are usually arrived at.
Bachelor of Arts Modern Ballet	Students have a clear and detailed attendance policy which covers illness and injury. Staff hold a detailed absence/injury log which is updated every day. Any students who are absent must email their tutor (copying in Head of Programme) by 9.30am on the day of absence. The student must then log absence into ASIMUT to register their illness/injury. Students who have not contacted their tutor/Head of Programme by 9.30am will be contacted by the programme team. Students with an injury preventing them from actively participating in classes, modify their participation in agreement with physio and staff. The same policy applies to online learning and absence of more than 3 days or more without reason is followed up in a tutorial with the student's year tutor. Notes are taken at the tutorial and uploaded to the Student Contract. If unauthorised absence continues the Fitness to Study process would commence.
Bachelor of Arts Contemporary Performance Practice	If a student has three unauthorised absences this is then investigated by the level co-ordinator and Head of Programme. Notes of the meeting are added to the Student Contract. If unauthorised absence continued the student would follow the disciplinary procedure.
Bachelor of Arts Filmmaking	The tutor contacts any student by Teams or email if there is more than one unauthorised absence. Any further unauthorised absences are reported to the HoP who will meet with the student and the year group coordinator to investigate further and discuss how the student can re-engage. Notes are taken at this meeting and uploaded to the Student Contract. Online classes work in the same way as in-person work; a register is taken, and unauthorised absences are reported. For longer term directed work e.g. Script Writing and Research Project there are tutorial meetings and deadlines to be maintained. Failures to meet deadlines/attend meetings are followed up by the tutor.
Master of Arts/Master of Fine Arts Contemporary Performance Practice	Any sustained period of unauthorised absence, would initiate a fitness to study meeting to address it.
Musical Theatre (all programmes)	If a student can't attend a class (in-person or online), they are expected to e-mail the

	<p>relevant lecturer and copy in the HoP prior to the start of that class, providing reasons for their absence and providing an expected return date. They are also expected to request their absence as authorised on ASIMUT. If a student fails to attend a class without having done the above-mentioned steps, the lecturer emails the HoP on the same day of the missed class and marks the absence as unauthorised on ASIMUT. The HoP e-mails the student in question and requests an explanation for the unauthorised absence by return of e-mail. If a response was not received and/or the unauthorised absences continued, the HoP would request an informal discussion meeting with the student to ascertain what the challenges were in relation to communicating absences appropriately, and what the reasons for absence were. This would be documented in an e-mail sent by the HoP to the student following that meeting, outlining what had been discussed and agreed as a way forward in relation to re-engagement with studies. The text would also be uploaded to the Student Contract. If the situation was to continue; or to happen again at any other point within that academic year, the HoP would instigate a more formal process - either through Fitness to Study or Disciplinary Procedures - depending on the circumstances.</p>
<p>Bachelor of Arts Production Arts and Design/Bachelor of Arts Production technology and Management</p>	<p>Unauthorised absence is formally addressed when three points of contact have been missed. Staff make contact to make sure there isn't an issue and to ensure the student is aware of the RCS absence reporting systems. If there are recurring unauthorised absences the HoP would have a meeting with the student which would be recorded and added to the student contract.</p>
<p>Bachelor of Arts in British Sign Language and English</p>	<p>All tutors are responsible for inputting absences into Asimut, where guest lecturers do not have access to Asimut they must let HoP know of any absences. If a student has an unauthorised absence, HoP will contact them to investigate. When there has been no response previously (only once) we then make contact with the Head of DDPF and instigated a fitness to study process.</p>

Annexe 2

Programme of study	Details
BA Modern Ballet	Some students are invited to complete a placement with Scottish Ballet, who operate a similar attendance policy to RCS. Placement students have a designated 'placement supervisor', who is responsible for updating the programme team on attendance/progress.
BA Contemporary Performance Practice	The placement supervisor liaises with the student and placement provider and has a check-in meeting during the placement. There is a memorandum of agreement in place.
BA Filmmaking	Work placement paperwork is submitted by the student and is followed up the HoD. There is a mid-placement check-in point, and placement providers are asked to alert RCS to any issues or unauthorised absences.
MA/MFA Classical and Contemporary Text (Acting/Directing)	<p>All students attend Shakespeare's Globe for four weeks and RCS receives and approves a detailed handbook for those weeks, including a detailed schedule of all activities, ensuring that the students are appropriately academically engaged.</p> <p>MA/MFA students can do a work placement in Term three and RCS ensures that the opportunity is appropriately rigorous. A conversation takes place with the provider as they would need to assess the student from a process perspective. The programme team knows in advance what the student's activities would be and would expect communication if anything is going wrong. This would be approved prior to the student undertaking it.</p>
BA Production Arts and Design/Production Technology and Management	The longest placement is four weeks and there is a mid-placement check-in point and placement providers are asked to alert the HoP to any issues or unexpected absences.
Research students	Placements and internships may be undertaken as part of a PhD or DPerf but these are rare, are applied for on an individual basis, and often run in conjunction with a third party e.g. the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities. Two doctoral policies may be drawn upon in support - Location of Studies

	<p>and Leave of Absence - and both include text specific to sponsored students. The former requires students who will be outwith commutable distance from Glasgow to apply for the necessary permission (outlining how they will maintain contact with the research community and supervisor); the second considers a request for an interruption to studies while the placement is ongoing. While on any placement or internship, the student maintains contact with their supervisor and the doctoral programme team, as has been agreed. If there is an overlap with the timing of Annual Progress Review, the student will still take part in APR.</p> <p>Although the point above only mentions work placements, the same protocol also applies to periods of fieldwork undertaken (where there is a separate Policy detailing expectations and requirements on engagement).</p>
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