

September 2021

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland: Institutional Anti-Racism Plan

Quarterly Update

Covering note

As we begin another academic year under COVID-19 restrictions, we remain conscious of the increasing pressures on all students and staff, but especially those in under-represented groups. For example, the effects of racism and intimidation of East and South East Asian people because of ignorance about the origins and causes of COVID-19 is still felt by a number of our community members. Although students can experience the impact of racism in Glasgow/Scotland/the UK that is not directly related to their studentship at RCS, it nevertheless brings with it a burden that can affect studies, the experience of the Conservatoire and a general feeling of threatened safety. The creation of the Asian Union at RCS offers an opportunity for students to come together, share their experiences and seek support as needed, giving their presence at RCS a voice and visibility as an effective advocate for positive change and awareness.

If you would like to become involved in anti-racism work at the conservatoire, please contact deputyprincipal@rcs.ac.uk

Substantive Updates

The following updates are given against the headings in the RCS Anti-Racism Action Plan. These speak only to the institutional-level activity, and acknowledge that there is now considerable department- and service-level anti-racism activity, which is developed in partnership with students and staff, and scrutinised in particular at School Management Teams. Reports are given in updates to the Academic Board, and the Board of Governors of the Conservatoire. Increasingly, our ARAP is cited as an example of good practice by other institutions or by our increasing network of contacts in our sector who work in this area. Because of this profile, and the scrutiny of our plan and actions, it is particularly important to maintain its focus, and momentum, in order to continue to push for an actively anti-racist environment at RCS. Our work bears a responsibility to lead other initiatives and engage with other organisations on their own path to anti-racism.

Accountability

RCS continues to explore the possibility of joining the AdvanceHE Race Equality Charter, and the Deputy Principal Lois Fitch has been discussing becoming a member of a working group that will consider how SSIs (Small Specialist Institutions) can satisfy the requisite thresholds and gain membership.

We are developing in-house training and also customising the AdvanceHE Race Literacy Glossary to be supplied to new students and staff (including visiting staff) on induction. Both schools undertake focused 'single agenda item' sessions on anti-racism work now that the academic year has begun, and over the summer, online training was undertaken during schools planning week. Departmental-level anti-racism plans are standing items on agendas in DDPF management team meetings and there are monthly sessions scheduled throughout 2021-22.

In order to enhance accountability, SU reps will be invited to join key meetings, and management teams will focus on securing formal routes of communication and collaboration with the student body.

Curriculum

The majority of the work contributing to anti-racist curriculum has occurred at programme and departmental level (and the School of Music's own Anti-Racism Action Plan). RCS will begin a Curriculum Review project in September 2021 in which anti-racist initiatives will be a priority requirement. The SDDPF commit to termly review of programme level Anti-Racism Action Plans at a management team level. All programmes now have their own ARAPs and these are updated regularly.

A key pedagogical focus via *Learning to Collaborate* on Anti-Racism in a Conservatoire setting is to be introduced in 2021-22 (and subject to significant development in the ensuing Curriculum Review)

The Whittaker Library continues to work on supporting diversity in the curriculum and in our collections. In addition to our published collection statement, acknowledging the work to be done, we have continued over this quarter to develop our reading lists analysis project which supports colleagues to produce inclusive reading lists. This work involves the library team analysing lists to review the dominant voices and narratives in subject areas, and recommending resources, publishers, performers, creators and makers in support of building inclusive collections, reflective of the global performing artist talent pool, and the RCS stance on anti-racism and injustice. Outputs of this work also include the continuous updates to our [Diversity Portal](#) page

The feedback received on this work has indicated its value to our community. A head of department stated:

"The work you did on the diversity of our reading lists was hugely helpful and something we will be using as a central element of our Anti-Racism Action Plan.....For some time we had been planning to do an analysis of this, but weren't clear how to...in response to your reports, we are considering employing someone to engage in an exploration of published, non-western education approaches, so that we can really enhance our understanding of learning & teaching from a more global perspective. So, in summary, your work on the diversity reports has been extremely useful, and it would be excellent if it were to continue as we try to diversity our outlook. Thank-you!"

RCS has subscribed to the Black Lives in Music initiative for one year initially: [Black Lives in Music](#). Members of the organisation have attended School of Music Management Team meetings to discuss diversification of curriculum and practices.

Representation

The effort to increase representation at all levels on our staff, as well as our student population, is ongoing. Methods include using (where appropriate) recruitment consultants with specialisms in finding diverse candidates; including students in discussions with departments and National Companies on issues of race and representation; recognition of the need for inclusive discussions prior to decision-making on repertoire (although this is not failsafe, and more discussions need to be put in place early enough in the planning cycle to ensure all voices are heard); recruitment of academic staff requires commitment to (and experience of, especially in senior roles) anti-racist work in job descriptions.

Staff and Student Training

Training is being offered to students and staff on induction. Further training and support resources are in development in-house, with focused activities being devised to enable detailed engagement in particular areas, for example, drama disciplines. Staff will be using some training opportunities to work together towards better shared understanding of both anti-racist practice and active bystander responsibilities in the week before Winter break.

We are continuing to develop materials disseminated to contracted staff who work with our students, to support their work in a positive way and to ensure that they operate within RCS community standards of behaviour in relation to race and other protected groups.

We are part of the CUK EDI Forum's Decolonising the Curriculum Working Group.

RCS remains an active member of the Scottish Race Equality Forum, a network of HE/FE EDI practitioners.

Transparency

We continue to publish quarterly updates on our ARAP, but we remain focused on self-reflection and improvement of the experience of all our community, and especially those who have experienced, or continue to experience, discrimination. As the pandemic continues there have been changes in behaviours and interactions between members of the community, some positive and some less so. We recognise the importance of maintaining vigilance with regards to racism in the heightened and hybrid environment within which we currently work. We also recognise that all our community deserves to feel safe, and that divisive media, social media and extreme politics taking hold in wider society can influence the culture of an organisation, by

both creating anxiety around the principle of free speech, and normalising extreme opinions, and ways of communicating them, that are damaging.

An ongoing project for AY 2021-22 is to re-establish our in-person artistic activity as the core of our common purpose, to continue to educate our community about the importance of anti-racist engagement, and enabling our art forms to become the primary focus of positive expression of the power of working together effectively.