

Royal Northern College of Music

# Ethics Framework

Framework

Department: Institutional

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RNCM  
ROYAL NORTHERN  
COLLEGE of MUSIC

## **1. Guiding principles and values**

- 1.1 The Royal Northern College of Music (the 'College) aims to promote and achieve the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct across all its activities and at all levels.
- 1.2 The College expects all members of its community, including staff (including emeritus and visiting staff), students, members of the Board of Governors and other individuals acting on behalf of or in the name of the College, to adhere to these standards and to act in accordance with its own core values and with the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- 1.3 The College is also committed to the ethical principles of respect for others, equity, diversity and inclusion, and seeks to provide a culture in which these values are embedded, and an environment which supports staff and students in maintaining the highest quality in all that they do.
- 1.4 The values, which guide the College's approach to ethics, are embedded within its Instrument and Articles of Government, Regulations, Codes of Practice and Policies. These encompass well-established ethical policies and procedures relating to the College's core activities of teaching, research, performance, knowledge exchange, fundraising, investments and procurement. These are kept under regular review.
- 1.5 The College:
  - strives to be a socially responsible organisation with high ethical standards and a tolerant, liberal, open-minded community;
  - has a zero tolerance policy to ethical breaches and expects its staff, students, governors and partners to adopt the highest standards of professional integrity, giving appropriate consideration to the ethical, social and environmental implications of all its activities;
  - recognises that integrity and high standards are of central importance to its commitment to research and performance. It is the responsibility of all members of the College's community to maintain professional standards by questioning their own findings, recording their results/outcomes truthfully, and attributing the contribution of others honestly;
  - expects that all its decision-making processes and activities will be informed by proper consideration of their ethical, social and environmental impacts;
  - expects all staff, students and governors to act according to its ethical values and principles. Unethical practice of any sort will normally result in disciplinary action;
  - promotes fair, equitable and inclusive employment practice that is consistently applied;
  - promotes the health, safety, well-being and security of all staff and students.

## **2. Purpose and use of the Ethics Framework**

The Ethics Framework comprises a comprehensive set of principles, structures, policies and procedures which together demonstrate the ethical standards that the College sets across its core activities: learning and teaching, research, fundraising and gifts, partnerships, finance (investments and procurement), and social responsibility and engagement. The Framework outlines the approach for each of these areas and gives links to more detailed information, including related policies, procedures, guidance documents, and points of contact for initial enquiries.

## **3. Corporate responsibility for ethics**

3.1 The Board of Governors has corporate responsibility for the approval and development of the College's Framework of Ethics. In supporting such a Framework, the Board furthers the College's aim to strive for the highest standards of professional integrity.

3.2 The Executive Committee demonstrates leadership in professional standards of conduct and ethical behaviour.

3.3 Corporate responsibility for addressing the ethical, social and environmental issues arising from learning, teaching, research and institutional practice is discharged by key committees or officers, including:

- learning, teaching and research by Academic Board, with recommendations from the Research Committee and the Education and Quality Committee.
- development and delivery of the Strategic Plan, policies and procedures by the Executive Committee;
- ethical investment by the Investment Sub-Committee reporting to the Finance Committee.
- business ethics by the Audit Committee/Finance Committee reporting to Board of Governors;
- personal and professional relationships by the Head of Human Resources reporting to the Executive Committee;
- ethical purchasing by the Director of Finance reporting to the Audit Committee.
- environmental audit by the Head of Operations reporting to the Executive Committee.

3.4 All formal committees of the College, in discharging their routine business, will seek to raise awareness of ethical considerations and to disseminate best practice appropriate to their terms of reference.

## **4. How to determine if something is unethical**

4.1 In addition to the processes outlined in this Framework, every member of the College is expected to act with integrity in their work. Good ethical conduct is not an isolated response to a specific problem but the process of making appropriate choices from day-to-day. When dealing with a situation with ethical implications individuals should consider the following questions and guidance:

- Is this within the law?
- Is this fair and equitable?
- Am I acting with integrity?
- Who will be affected by these actions and what could go wrong?

- Whose interests are being served here/who benefits?
- Am I confident that my decision is the correct action?
- How acceptable is this for a member of a higher education institution?
- How will it look to the general public?
- Could I justify my behaviour if asked?

4.2 Another perspective can often help to determine the way forward. If in doubt, individuals should contact their line manager, Head of School/Department or a member of the Executive Committee to discuss the situation.

4.3 Does the person making the decision have the appropriate authority or expertise? It is not feasible for an individual to be an expert in every single field of activity. Please check this Framework and the College's website to see if there is a specific policy or guidance that relates to the specific concern or issue. It should not be assumed that there is no policy in place. Where a policy does exist, and further clarification is required, please direct the enquiry to the appropriate contact specified in the policy document.

## **5. Other sources of help and advice on ethical issues**

5.1 Where an individual discovers information which they believe shows malpractice, impropriety or wrongdoing within the College, then disclosure of this information should not be jeopardised by any fear of reprisals, provided it is made lawfully, without malice and in the public interest. Indeed, it is hoped that malpractice itself will be discouraged by the protection given to those who disclose information that is genuinely in the public interest. All concerns will be treated sensitively and in the strictest confidence.

5.2 Various channels exist through which members of the College can raise ethical concerns or seek advice (see section 12 below), for example:

Director of Finance  
 Deputy Principal (Performance and Programmes)  
 Deputy Principal (Operations)  
 Director of Programmes  
 Clerk to the Board of Governors  
 Line manager  
 Head of Human Resources  
 Heads of Schools/Departments  
 Principal Study Tutor  
 Staff and student representatives including the recognised Trade Unions and the President of the Students' Union.

## **6. Learning and teaching**

6.1 The College will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity, including fair and inclusive admissions, learning and assessment for students. The Academic Board is granted authority under the Articles of Government for regulating teaching and assessment, including examining and the conferment of academic awards of the RNCM. In practice, detailed ethical aspects of teaching are delegated to other College committees, notably the Education and Quality Committee and Board of Examiners. The senior member of College staff responsible for ethical matters in learning and teaching is the Director of Programmes.

- 6.2 The College is committed to an inclusive learning environment that enables all students to reach their full potential. This accords with the duties under the Equality Act 2010 to treat students, staff and visitors to the College with dignity and respect, not to unlawfully discriminate as set out in the Equality Act, and to promote good relations and equal opportunities. It also underpins the College's Access and Participation Plan.
- 6.3 Students are accepted on academic merit regardless of their personal characteristics or circumstances and of their opinions lawfully expressed. The Academic Board has overall responsibility for ensuring fair access to the College.
- 6.4 The College is committed to excellent scholarship on the basis of academic integrity, honesty and respect for the intellectual activity of others. Education is supported by the work of the Education and Quality Committee, which reports to Academic Board. The ethical aspects of programmes are considered as part of the programme approval process and within the annual review of programmes.
- 6.5 Students' academic progression is based on academic achievement. Students are expected to demonstrate a level of independent thought and the provision of clear referencing to all sources consulted. The College reserves the right to use all legitimate means at its disposal to detect plagiarism wherever it arises and to take the appropriate action in response to the identification of any academic malpractice.

## 7. Research

- 7.1 The College expects all members of staff and students to observe the highest ethical and professional standards in their research and are committed to ensuring that all researchers should be able to pursue their work in an atmosphere free from prejudice and harassment. The senior member of College staff responsible for ethical matters in research is the Director of Research.
- 7.2 The College has a policy on Good Research Conduct which prescribes standards of work and conduct expected by all persons engaged in research. The policy also outlines the process for managing allegations of research misconduct, including falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, collusion and other forms of academic misconduct including inappropriate authorship or lack of authorial recognition.
- 7.3 All individuals engaged in research; including visiting researchers, must be honest, accountable and lawful in respect of their own research as well as that of their students and others working with them on research. Responsible ethical conduct is expected in all aspects of research, practice-based and non-practice-based, including applying for funding, designing studies, generating and analysing data, using equipment and facilities, publishing results, and acknowledging the direct and indirect contribution of colleagues, collaborators and others. The core elements of research integrity are:
- *Honesty* in all aspects of research;
  - *Rigour* in performing research and using appropriate methods;
  - *Transparency and open communication* in declaring conflicts of interest, in the reporting of research data, in making research findings widely available and in presenting work to others;
  - *Care and respect* for all participants in and subjects of research.

7.4 The Research Ethics Committee considers and approves proposals for practice-based and non-practice-based research projects involving other people (“human participation”) or databases of personal information, carried out by College staff, visiting researchers and postgraduate students, on College premises and elsewhere. It also considers and approves proposals for research projects carried out by external researchers on College premises or involving College students and/or staff, even where such projects are funded externally and have been approved by external bodies.

## **8. Partnerships**

8.1 The College carefully scrutinises and where appropriate approves academic collaborations with other Higher Education Institutions, professional bodies or organisations which support the College’s strategic aims, bring benefits to those involved, and are not discriminatory. Appropriate due diligence is undertaken to ensure that partners are of an equivalent quality and ethical standard.

8.2 The College has significant international activity including partnerships, exchanges, student recruitment, and specific projects. The College will undertake all such activities with appropriate scrutiny, ensuring that fair and accountable standards are understood and applied. Appropriate contracts, including standards of conduct in business, are in place where agents or ambassadors are used in the pursuit of College activity.

## **9. Fundraising and gifts**

9.1 All gifts should be compatible with the mission of the College and of its strategic priorities as well as in compliance with current UK treasury regulations and UK, European and international laws. The senior member of College staff responsible for ethical matters in fundraising and gifts is the Director of Development.

9.2 All gifts to the College should be directed and processed by the Development Department in accordance with the Ethical Fundraising and Gift Acceptance Policy. All potential donors and donations, regardless of the potential gift amount, should be discussed with the Director of Development or their nominee at the earliest possible stage and before any donation is accepted. Potential reputational risks resulting from negative public perception will be considered.

9.3 The College will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it is aware of the source of funding for each gift and has processes in place to satisfy itself that the funds do not derive from activity that was or is illegal, or runs counter to the core values of impartial, independent research scholarship and teaching. Due diligence will be undertaken where appropriate.

9.4 All donations will be used to support the educational mission of the College. The College is required to comply with charity law, and to act within its objects for the advancement of education (which includes matters such as research, knowledge advancement and dissemination, and scholarships).

9.5 Donations from unidentifiable sources will not be accepted by the College.

9.6 The College will use best endeavours to respond to donor’s requests in terms of the mode, frequency and availability of information from it. Any donor records maintained by the RNCM are kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. Donors have the

right to see their own donor record, and to challenge its accuracy. The RNCM will not sell either its donor or alumni lists.

- 9.7 Donors accept that the management, and governance of programme and/or activities funded through philanthropy, rests solely with the College.

## **10. Finance (investment and procurement)**

- 10.1 The College aims to develop relationships with its suppliers, contractors and other partners based on honesty, fairness and mutual trust.
- 10.2 Members of staff, the Board of Governors or others with budgetary or other significant authority must take proper account of any conflict of interest that may arise from their position within the College on the one hand, and membership of or connection with other bodies and individuals outside the College on the other.
- 10.3 No member of staff or member of the Board of Governors may give or accept money, gifts or hospitality over £50 or anything else which could be construed as being intended as a bribe to or from a student, supplier, business partner or other party. Gifts over this amount must be declared on the Gifts and Hospitality Register. Any other questions regarding acceptance of gifts should be referred to the Ethical Fundraising and Gift Acceptance Policy.
- 10.4 The College will aim to ensure a satisfactory return on investment in order to financially support its aims and objectives. Appropriate ethical investment guidelines will be agreed between members of the Investment Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee and external managers of College investment funds in accordance with the College's Ethical Investment Policy. Compliance with such guidelines will be regularly monitored.

## **11. Social responsibility and engagement**

- 11.1 The College will maintain strong connections with its professional, alumni, community and stakeholder networks in Manchester, regionally, nationally and internationally to enhance the impact of its work. It will continually develop the quality and breadth of its partnership activities in a collaborative spirit.
- 11.2 The College will offer community access for all those who have the potential to benefit from high quality musical and educational experiences and will attract new audiences through a responsive and innovative performance programme. An extensive range of international artistic, educational and business partnerships will extend its reach at a global level.
- 11.3 It will have an influential voice in policy-making through its position among key national and international bodies concerned with music education and performance.
- 11.4 Its spirit of engagement the College will foster a sense of social responsibility throughout its community as articulated in its Public Value Statement.

## **12. Related documents**

Policies forming a part of the Ethics Framework:

- Access and Participation Agreement
- Anti-bribery and Anti-fraud
- Collaborative Provision and Professional Partnerships

- Conflict of Interest
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging
- Ethical Fundraising and Gift Acceptance
- Good Research Conduct
- Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing)
- RNCM Code of Practice on Freedom of Expression
- Student Conduct and Discipline

Other related policies and regulations:

- Academic Integrity
- Academic Regulations
- Child Protection
- Data Protection
- Disclosure and Barring
- Financial Regulations
- Freedom of Information
- IT Policy
- Staff Disciplinary
- Staff Grievance
- Staff Recruitment and Selection
- Student Charter
- Investment and Treasury Management