



Degree Outcomes Statement 2025

The RNCM has published a degree outcomes statement in line with the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) [Statement of Intent](#). The statement analyses the RNCM degree classification profile over the past five years and helps assure the College that it meets the Office for Students' ongoing conditions of registration on academic standards (B4 and B5).

The statement covers final classifications for graduates on **Level 6 FHEQ** courses. At the RNCM, this includes:

- Bachelor of Music (with Honours) (BMus)
- Bachelor of Music (with Honours) in Popular Music (BMPM)
- Graduate Diploma of the RNCM (GRNCM)

Introduction

The Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) is a sector-leading music conservatoire in Manchester, UK with an internationally renowned reputation. The institution attracts the most talented students, teachers, performers, conductors, composers, and researchers from across the world to engage in its taught and research degree programmes. Of its just under 900 students, 62% are undergraduate (FHEQ level 6).

Our current Strategic Plan, [Defining the Future of Music](#), charts a six-year strategy that is ambitious and exciting. The RNCM exists to educate and train musicians to the highest level in an environment that is musically and creatively stimulating and rich in opportunity; it is focused on nurturing and developing students' capacity to innovate, to inspire others and to be musical leaders of the future.

The RNCM has been awarded Gold in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The RNCM received Gold for both Student Experience and Student Outcomes. This rating was awarded in 2023, for four years. Learn more about the outcomes on the [Office for Students website](#).

The RNCM received its fifth Times Higher Education Award in 2023 for 'Outstanding Entrepreneurial University'. Prior to this, the RNCM won four THE Awards for Widening and Participation Initiative of the Year (2020), Outstanding International Student Strategy (2016), Excellence and Innovation in the Arts (2015), and Technological and Digital Innovation (2022). The College also received a Global Teaching Excellence Spotlight Award and two Greater China Awards, all of which highlight our commitment to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to create an incredible future, inspired by music.

For the second year running, the RNCM has been ranked No 5 for music in the QS World University Rankings. The 2025 survey of more than 1,700 international institutions also placed the College in the top 10 globally for performing arts.

1 RNCM Undergraduate Degree Classification Profile

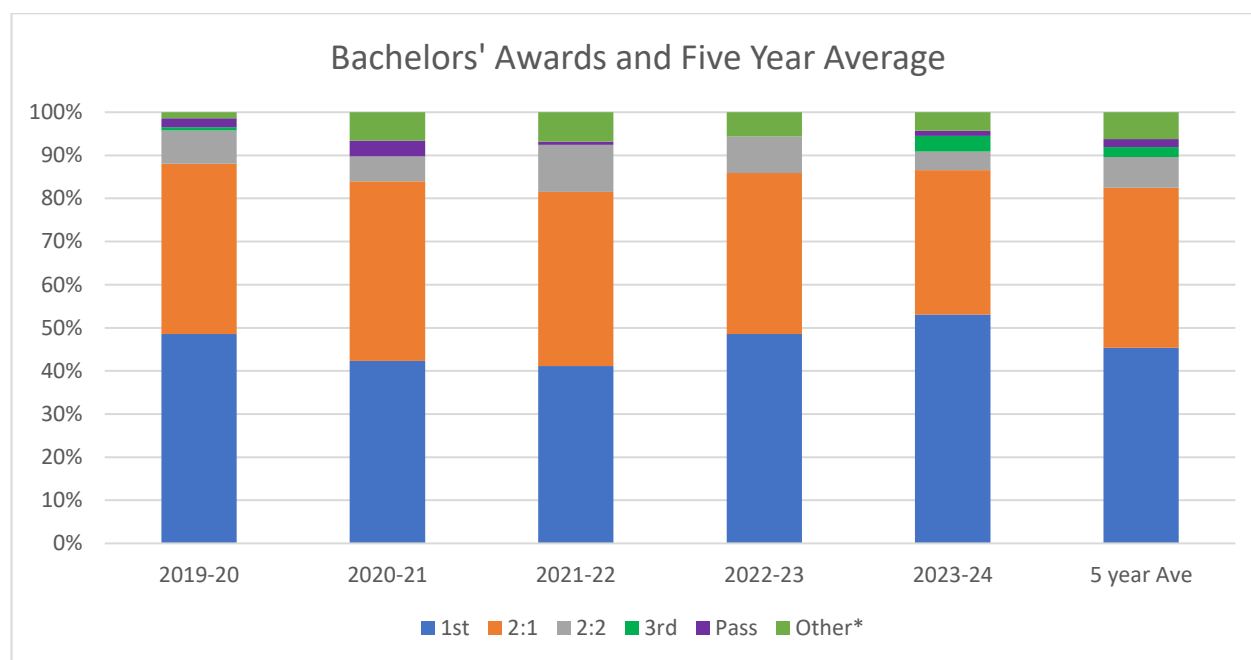
Universities UK reported that institutions from across the UK had agreed new principles to tackle grade inflation, reconfirming the sector's strong collective commitment to protect the value of qualifications. The RNCM compared its algorithms against the UUK principles and found that the RNCM's practice is

in-line with the sector.

In September 2024 the OfS published an updated Analysis of degree classifications over time: changes in graduate attainment from 2010-11 to 2022-23. The College has implemented a data driven Continuous Monitoring process with statistics being considered by Programme Boards and reported through to senior committees. The Academic Board receives longer term statistics and external comparator data for strategic comparison and development.

Bachelors level awards

The following chart shows the classification outcomes from 2020 to 2024 for all Bachelors level awards.



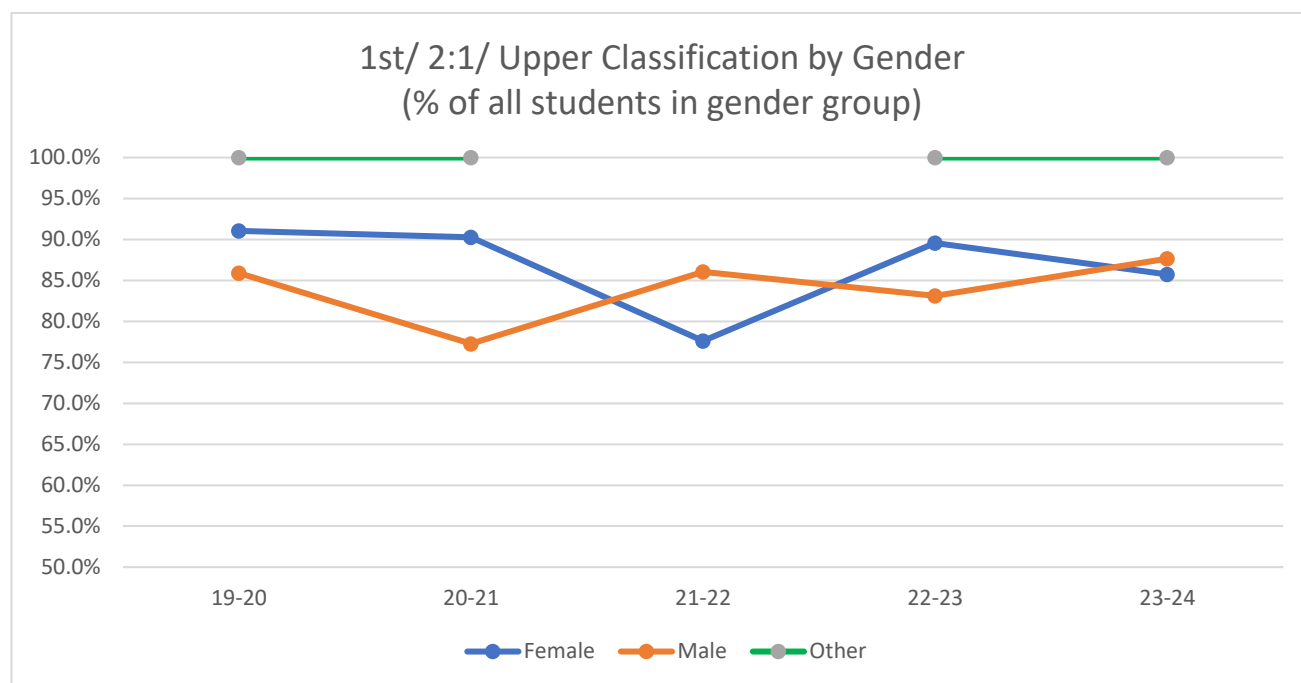
External Examiners' reports confirmed that the assessment processes measured student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programmes and they considered that the academic standards and the achievements of students were comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which they had experience.

Graduate Diploma (GRNCM)

GRNCM students complete a Bachelor's degree with the University of Manchester concurrently with a graduate diploma at the RNCM. Places are limited and the application process is highly competitive, resulting in highly motivated and talented students, which is reflected in the outcomes.

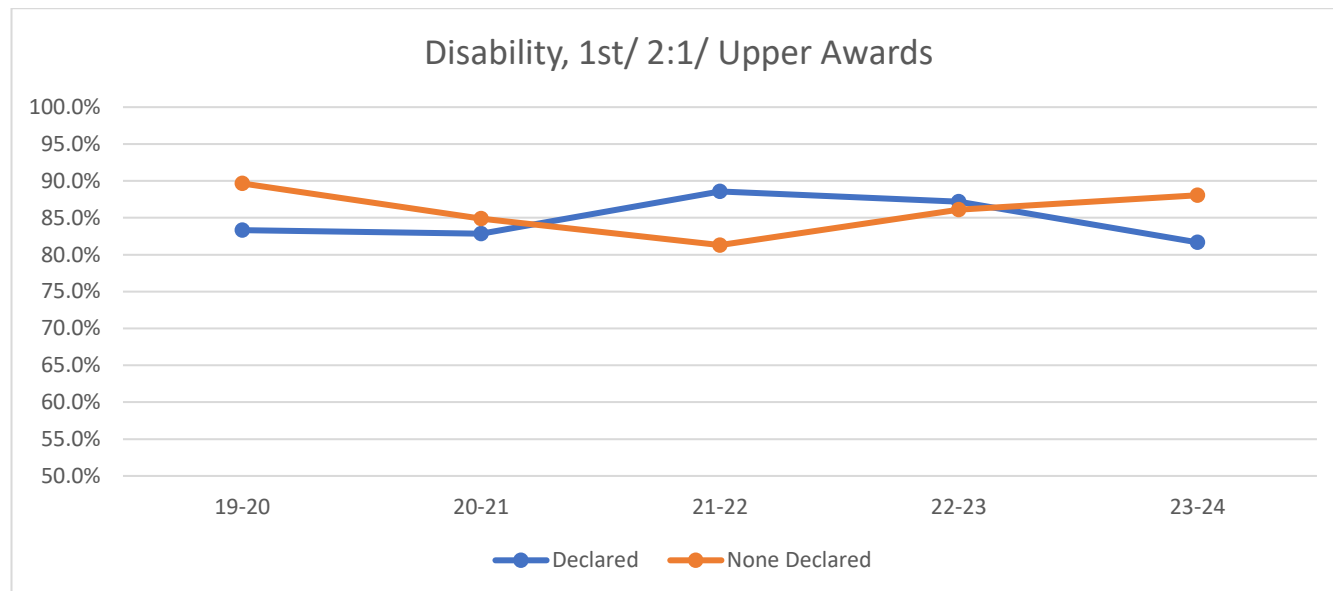
Classifications are separated into an Upper award (over 60%) and Lower (40% to 59%). From 2020 to 2024, 100% of students received an Upper award.

Gender - 1st/ 2:1/ Upper Classification Comparison



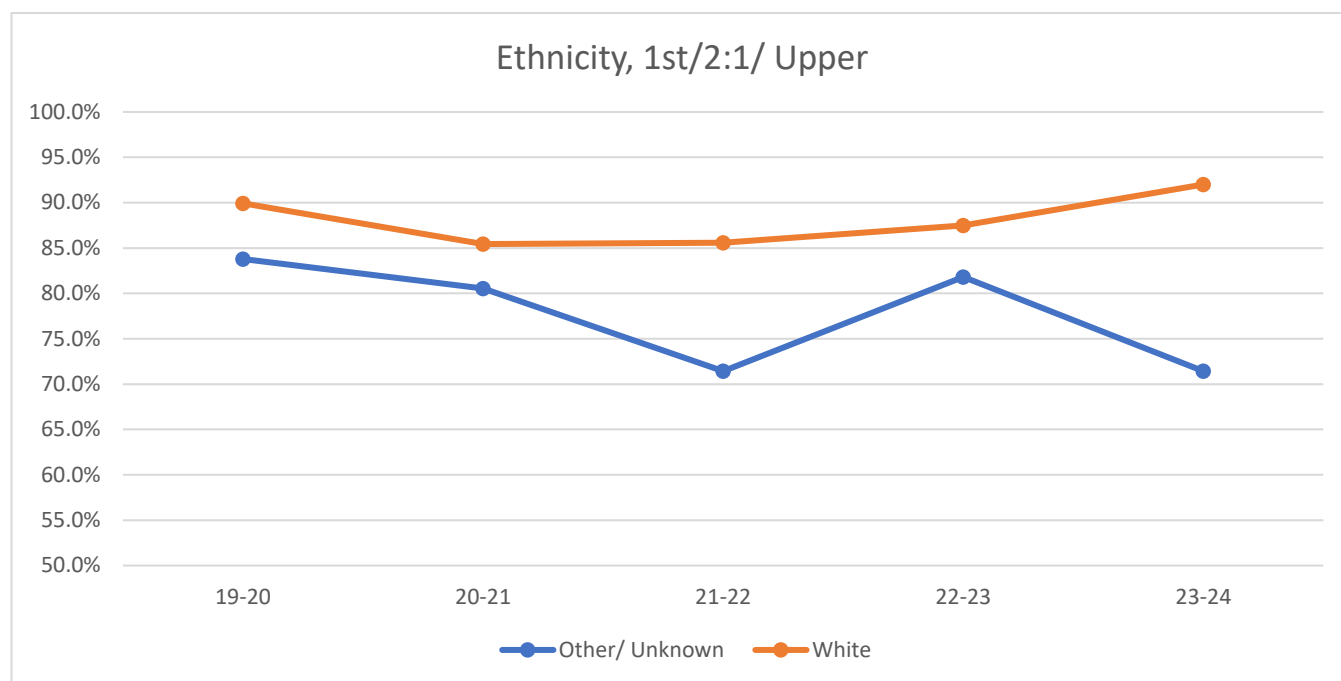
Records on students who identify as 'other' gender are fairly new and the number of students selecting this option when registering is anticipated to increase. The classification of these students is currently 100% receiving a 1st or 2:1 award. There were no graduates in this category in 2021-22.

Disability - 1st/ 2:1/ Upper Classification Comparison



Students with a declared disability have seen lower outcomes generally however, the work within the RNCM to support students is seeing positive results. The RNCM's reviewed Access and Participation Plan will include a focus on inclusion activity for Neurodiversity.

Ethnicity - 1st/ 2:1/ Upper Classification Comparison



This two-part split of 'white' and 'other or unknown' ethnicity shows that the percentage of high awards is encouraging overall but there is more work to be done to gain parity across ethnicities. The RNCM Access and Participation Plan has been developed to encourage participation and improve outcomes.

2 Assessment and Marking Practices

The RNCM's [Academic Regulations](#) are approved by the Academic Board, which holds ultimate responsibility for the quality and standards of academic programmes in the RNCM. The Regulations are informed by the OfS B Conditions of Registration and meet the general guidance for the exercise of taught degree awarding powers as recommended by the OfS.

All taught programmes are governed by the RNCM's Academic Regulations, which include the Assessment Regulations.

Assessment, marking and moderation practices are set out during each programme approval process. Programme approval panels are established to include a minimum of two external experts with relevant academic/ professional expertise; and at least one student member.

The approval panel considers the appropriateness, currency and relevance of the structures and content of the programme, including assessment, and consider the programme in relation to external points of reference including the OfS 'B' Conditions of Registration, the OfS Sector Recognised Standards and informed by subject benchmark statements, and requirements of the music profession.

Marking and Moderation

Marking guidelines are employed for all assessments within each programme, details of which are published in each Programmes' Handbook.

All internally set, summative assessment and examinations at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level are subject to internal moderation and oversight by an external examiner.

Marking panels are employed for all performance assessments and are witnessed and blind-marked by at least two assessors for assessments at Level 6 and above. In addition, the RNCM has introduced

cross-school moderation of Performance Study Recitals at levels 6 and 7 by an approved Moderation Panel.

Calibration of Marking

- Programme specific regulations are set out in each Programmes' Handbook.
- Programme Leaders and Module Coordinators provide marking standardisation briefings and guidance to markers.
- Principal Study Panel Chairs meet annually to clarify their role and duties.
- The moderation panel attend an annual standardisation meeting prior to the assessment period.

All programmes leading to an award of RNCM are subject to **Continuous Monitoring of annualised data** throughout the year by the Degrees Committees, reporting to the Education and Quality Committee. This includes monitoring of results data and the receipt of external examiner and specialist assessor reports.

External review of the overall standards of assessment is provided by two means:

- **External Examiners** are invited to inspect a sample of marked and moderated written work and to attend a sample of live practical assessments across all modules which occur in the years of the programme under their jurisdiction.
- **Specialist External Assessors** are external professional musicians who are appointed as expert external members of taught performance assessment panels. Each 'live' performance panel at level 6 or above includes a Specialist External Assessor.

The RNCM ensures that there are no reciprocal external examiner/ assessor appointments between institutions with an annual survey of internal staff members acting as examiners at other institutions.

3 Academic Governance

Details on the Governance of the RNCM may be found here:

<https://www.rncm.ac.uk/about/RNCM-information/about-the-governors/>

Committees

Within the RNCM, three bodies derive their powers and responsibilities directly from the provisions of the RNCM's Instrument and the Articles of Government, namely the Board of Governors (the 'Board'), the Academic Board, and the Principal.

The Academic Board acts autonomously and may establish committees or other deliberative or advisory bodies with duties and powers it directs. The Academic Board receives assurance reports relating to Academic Standards, including External Examiner's Reports, summaries of programme monitoring and results analysis.

The Academic Board has established an Education and Quality Committee for taught degrees which is responsible for safeguarding and enhancing the student learning experience and the maintenance of academic standards for taught degrees. It is responsible for the RNCM's Education Strategy, academic policies, and procedures. The Committee provides a forum to debate national developments and operational aspects of learning and teaching, academic standards and strategy, quality assurance and the professional development of tutors.

Each year EQC receives reports on the Continuous Monitoring of programmes, External Examiner reports, classification analysis, and details of staff performing external examining duties at other HEIs.

EQC also receives an update on current sector news and mapping to new and revised regulations and guidance documents from the OfS, OIA, QAA etc., which informs the annual review of the Academic Regulations.

The **Academic Quality Handbook** provides a reference document for staff that sets out the policies, procedures and guidance that define and assure the academic standards and quality of the RNCM's programmes. The overarching regulations for taught programmes are set out in the **Academic Regulations**.

The RNCM regularly reviews its academic quality procedures in light of internal and external changes, to reflect sector-wide good practice and teaching excellence.

4 Classification Algorithms

A condition of registration with the OfS requires higher education providers to ensure that the qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time.

Universities UK reported in July 2020 that institutions from across the UK had agreed new principles to tackle grade inflation, 'reconfirming the sector's strong collective commitment to protect the value of qualifications.

The RNCM is compliant with these principles, as follows:

- The RNCM has no discounted marks in any year of study.
- The RNCM permits border-line classification of two percentage points for Bachelors' programmes and rounding takes place once at the final stage.
- The RNCM weighting has emphasis on exit velocity with 0/0/33/67 across its four-year programmes.

Undergraduate Degree classifications at the RNCM are calculated according to algorithms which have not changed since they were strengthened in 2008-09 with the tightening of the requirements for the borderline cases from 3% to 2% in each band.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, alternate assessments were developed and a **no detriment** policy was implemented for affected students. Regulations have now returned to those agreed at point of validation.

The progression requirements for each programme may be found in the Programme Specifications on each programme's webpage: <https://www.rncm.ac.uk/study-here/what-you-can-study/undergraduate/>

5 Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

An overarching **Education Strategy** outlines seven aims to develop exceptional musicians with the artistic integrity, creativity and imagination to drive the music profession forward and ensure music remains relevant to future generations. The aims are picked up by the Continuous Monitoring action plan.

The diversity of the learning and teaching methods employed in the curriculum enables students to acquire and apply a broad range of skills. As performers, students learn communication and presentation skills as a soloist and as a member of ensembles/ bands in a professional environment. They employ sophisticated self-devised strategies for study, practice and learning and identify and apply strategies for mental preparation for performance in a variety of contexts.

Teaching methods aim to support the learning needs of all students. The essential specialist training for performers, composers and producers is necessarily one-to-one, complemented and supported by performance classes, masterclasses and small ensemble coaching.

The range of creative and innovative learning and teaching methods are diverse, complementary, challenging and stimulating, with a variety of modes of interaction between students and their tutors and industry professionals. Students' experience of the global music profession is further enhanced through regular masterclasses delivered by a range of world class musicians.

This variety allows students to learn in numerous different contexts within each year and module of the programme. Most modules include more than one teaching method and all teaching at the RNCM requires students to take responsibility for their own private study, practice, reading, and listening. The RNCM's virtual learning environment is used to support all areas of study, and includes activities, supporting materials, details of modules, and multimedia content. The VLE is also the repository for student assignment submissions and the return of feedback. It links directly to library resources, including online content, facilitating research and enabling ready access to materials set by tutors for preparation in advance of classes.

6 Identifying Good Practice and Actions

Good practice is identified through staff development events, Degree Committee meetings, Continuous Monitoring, annual SEA and EE reports.

The RNCM has moved from an Annual Review of its programmes to a **Continuous Monitoring Process** which embeds discussion between staff and students, facilitating partnership in the monitoring of quality and standards, as well as the enhancement of programmes of study. The action plan (Student Experience Enhancement Record) informs the activities of each degree management committee.

A summary of good practice is presented to the Academic Board annually via the Continuous Monitoring end of cycle report.

7 Risks and Challenges.

The Risk Management Policy forms part of the RNCM's strategic planning and performance management procedures. Risks are regularly reviewed and recorded in the RNCM's Strategic Risk Register with agreed actions and management responses reviewed at the RNCM's Executive and Audit and Risk Committees.

The Continuous Monitoring process considers challenges to programmes of study and the action plan opens and closes action points identified by the committee on a cyclical basis. The Committees reflect on enhancements from the previous year and current data in a continuous cycle of monitoring activity.

Sector risks relate to the decline of music education in schools, which disproportionately affects less affluent families. The RNCM has developed flagship projects around access with the [RNCM Engage](#) programme which includes initiatives such as Pathfinder, Young Voices, and Young Projects, which are open for all young players of school age, whether a beginner or more experienced.