



ROYAL
ACADEMY
OF MUSIC

Junior Academy

Annual assessments

Notes for parents

Student assessments at the Junior Academy (JA) have two primary objectives. Firstly, to allow the Director to keep abreast of students' performance progress on an annual basis whilst agreeing targets and aims for the future 12 months. Secondly, to enable the student to talk openly about how they feel they are progressing, both in a general musical sense and more specifically about their time at JA.

Who is involved?

All students have an annual assessment, with the exception of those in Year 13.

There are two different formats for assessments, depending on which year the student is in.

Assessment Style 1: Students in their first year at JA and those in Year 11 and Year 12

Assessment Style 2: Students in any other year (except Year 13)

What does it consist of?

Assessment Style 1:

The assessment takes about 20 minutes and will comprise the following:

- Performing two contrasting pieces on their first study instrument, or one more substantial piece. If time allows, the student may also perform a piece on their second study instrument.
- A short discussion will follow, based upon both the self-assessment form (which the student completes in advance) and their performance of the two pieces. Particular emphasis will be placed upon how the student feels they have progressed over the last 12 months; things that have gone particularly well and areas that they (and their teachers) consider need greater focus and attention. Wider discussions could include flagging anything new they would like to experience in their remaining time at JA and the setting of targets and aims for the forthcoming year. For older students, discussion and guidance can be given for their musical studies post-school and JA.

Assessment Style 2 (also known as Performance Platform assessment):

- The student will perform one piece in a 3.45pm Performance Platform which the Director of JA will attend.
- A short discussion may follow, based upon both the self-assessment form (which the student completes in advance) and their performance in the Platform. Particular emphasis will be placed upon how they feel they have progressed over the last 12 months, things that have gone particularly well and areas that they (and their teachers) consider need greater focus and attention. Wider discussions could include flagging anything new they would like to experience in their remaining time at JA and the setting of targets and aims for the forthcoming year.

When and where?

Assessment Style 1:

These take place during the Autumn term (second half) and Spring Term, at a time on a Saturday when the student has a break. The Operations Manager organises the schedule and any re-scheduling (due to illness, etc). Year 11 assessments will take place towards the end of the Autumn Term (with the exception of any Year 11 students who joined JA at the beginning of that term; in this case, they will be assessed in the Spring Term). There may also be opportunities for students to have assessments on weekdays in the Spring Term, if convenient for the student and parents.

Assessment Style 2:

These take place during the Spring and Summer terms. The Operations Manager organises the schedule and any re-scheduling (due to illness, etc) by allocating a date for the Performance Platform.

All schedules are displayed on the notice board each Saturday and students are urged to check these to confirm the date of their assessment.

Is it pass or fail?

No, certainly not in the sense of a Grade examination. The assessment is a monitoring process, gauging the progress of each student. It is important to note that the assessment will not be judging students relative to others in either their year or their instrument; rather, the process is focused entirely on the individual and helping them to achieve the most from their time at JA.

The Director will take notes on the students' performances and discussions. These are for record-keeping purposes only and will not be disclosed to students or parents. The Director may refer to these notes in the future for a number of reasons, e.g. when deciding orchestra personnel and seating for a new year, allocating chamber groups, writing student references for scholarship and grant applications and so on. Teachers are asked to provide information on how they feel their student is progressing, but these comments are not read until after the assessment has taken place. Teachers are also welcome and encouraged to discuss an assessment of their student with the Director after it has taken place.

What happens after the assessment?

Assuming all is well, the student's life at JA continues as normal.

In the very few cases where the Director feels the student is under-performing or has other reasons for concern about their progress (and ultimately their suitability to remain as a student at JA), the following will happen without delay:

1. The Director will discuss the assessment and their concerns with the student's first study teacher. The Director may also approach second/third study teachers to gain a more rounded picture.
2. The Director will contact parents, where appropriate, to ascertain whether there is any 'behind the scenes' information that the Director should be aware of and take into account.

Re-assessment

If a re-assessment is deemed necessary (as an outcome of steps 1-2 above), then the timing of it will be discussed carefully with the student's teacher before the student is informed. Both the Director and student's first study teacher will be present for the re-assessment. It is crucial that sufficient time is given for both the teacher to help the student improve in certain areas and for the student to have sufficient time to work and practice effectively. If possible, the re-assessment should take place after either the Christmas or Easter holiday to allow the student focused time to work without the pressures of school life. When first awarding the student a place at JA, we made a commitment to support the student's musical development and ultimate success. As such, the assessment process is in place to support this commitment. The re-assessment therefore ensures every effort is being made for the student to retain his or her place at the JA.

Is a student ever asked to leave the Junior Academy?

Other than for non-musical reasons, our aim is that no student should ever be asked to leave JA. However, if it is felt by the Director after the re-assessment that it is not in the student's best interests to remain at JA, parents will be invited in with the student to be informed of the decision. Every effort will be made to help the student find either an alternative musical establishment more suited to their needs or individual teachers.

Howard Ionascu
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September 2017