Royal Academy of Music

Learning and Teaching Strategy 2014-19

1. Purpose of the Strategy

This sets out the Academy's priorities in teaching and learning for 2014–19 and maps its expectations and ambitions regarding the quality of its educational provision. It establishes a framework for future developments to the curricula of the Academy's core programmes of study, their delivery, support and resourcing. In so doing, it amplifies a series of broad educational aims set out in the Institutional Strategy for this period.

This strategy should be read in conjunction with other Academy documents, in particular:

- Institutional Strategy 2014–19
- Assessment Strategy 2014–19
- Access Agreement
- Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2012-16
- IT Strategy 2011–14
- Programme Specifications
- Academic Regulations

2. Background to the Strategy

This Strategy has been developed by the Standing Committee of Academic Board [SCAB] and approved by Academic Board. It will be reviewed every 5 years by SCAB, taking account the dynamics of other Academy Strategies; outcomes of the Annual Monitoring Process of programmes; outcomes of Periodic Reviews; changes to government policy (for example with regard to sustainability, skills development, and widening participation); legislation bearing on teaching and learning; external regulation, policies and guidance (from HEFCE, the QAA, Research Councils, the Office of Fair Access, and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator); competition from other Conservatoires in the UK and internationally; the provisions of the Bologna Accord and other international influences.

3. Strategic Aims

In furtherance of the Academy's Mission, its strategic aims in learning and teaching are to:

3.1 attract and support outstanding students from the UK and overseas

3.2 continue to provide a stimulating educational and artistic environment with a strong ethos of professional development

3.3 maintain, within the resources available and paying due heed to student demand, provision in the widest range of musical disciplines

3.4 develop knowledge, skills and professional values which are relevant at all stages of each student's career and which equip students to continue to learn throughout life

3.5 produce graduates who have the potential to make a significant contribution to the music profession.

In support of these aims the Academy will, within the resources available:

3.6 maintain the standard of its degrees and other qualifications at the highest internationally-competitive level

3.7 centrally and through its academic departments, engage with relevant professional partners

3.8 maintain and enhance the quality of student learning opportunities, including participation in artistic events

3.9 support students in reaching their full potential both professionally and academically

3.10 promote the principle of students taking responsibility for their own learning

3.11 maintain the primacy of one-to-one and small-group teaching.

These aims will continue to be grounded in an institution where:

3.12 the educational activities of the Academy are paramount

3.13 students and staff are of the highest calibre and from diverse backgrounds

3.14 student retention and standards of achievement are expected to remain outstanding

3.15 students are following full-time programmes of study 'in residence' at the Academy

3.16 teaching is informed by professional experience at the highest standards and, where appropriate, carried out by those engaged in original musical research and/or creative work at a high level

3.17 programme content is driven by the need to balance professional and academic training

3.18 there is a significant level of departmental autonomy in the delivery of relevant areas of provision, balanced by proportionate central mechanisms to assure the quality of provision

3.19 we will enhance standards through scrutiny of External Examiners' reports, institutional student feedback, the National Student Survey, annual monitoring processes and other internal quality assurance mechanisms

3.20 the Academy's graduates are highly sought-after by employers and other HEIs internationally

3.21 the protection and development of the Academy's reputation and 'brand' is critical.

4. Curriculum Design and Delivery: General

4.1 Design

The Academy believes that the most important influences on curriculum design are:

- The professional expertise of leading practitioners and academic expertise of leading scholars in the field, thereby ensuring reciprocity between high-quality practice and/or research and high-quality teaching
- The changing demands of the music profession, thereby ensuring that students' educational experience is relevant to their chosen career
- The balance between a centrally-controlled framework designed to develop core knowledge and skills, departmentally-determined activities designed to develop discipline-specific knowledge and skills, and flexible curricular choices, thereby enabling students to tailor their programmes to their individual learning needs

4.2 Delivery

The Academy believes that high-level training for the music profession is best conducted on fulltime programmes of study with an emphasis on one-to-one and small-group tuition delivered face-to-face. These will include principal study lessons, performance classes and workshops, ensemble coaching, supporting-studies classes, academic studies seminars, and professional development seminars. The Academy recognises that some elements of the curriculum (especially at undergraduate level) are effectively delivered to larger groups, such as large-ensemble projects, opera and music theatre projects, and some core academic modules. In Academic Studies cohort lectures will be supported by small-group seminars.

The Academy will continue to place emphasis on the educational and professional-development value of master classes and seminars delivered by distinguished visitors.

Open Academy will continue its strategic work with partner organisations and local education authority providers of music education for students to benefit from engaging in innovative creative learning and participation projects, and discovering an application of their skills beyond the traditional concert platform.

The Academy will continue to monitor the workloads of students and staff with a view to ensuring that individuals are not overloaded.

4.3 Student Attributes

Curricular developments at the Academy will be founded on the basic principle that they enhance the opportunities for students to develop one or more of the following key attributes:

(a). Creativity

- An individual artistic personality

- High-level skills of technical delivery
- Imagination in creative concept and design
- Control in relating artistic means to ends

(b). Reflectivity

- Knowledge and understanding of music from a variety of perspectives (historical, theoretical, critical) and within a variety of repertoires
- Understanding of performance and compositional values as transmitted through different traditions
- Ability to critique one's own and others' creative work
- Ability to communicate one's ideas effectively, to marshal information or evidence in support of an argument or judgement

(c). Sociability

- Versatility in generating creative material and ideas for a collaborative enterprise
- Resourcefulness in communicating artistic intentions to others
- Skills in responding to the artistic intentions of others
- Skills in negotiating a role within a group, whether as leader or participant

(d). Employability

- Innovation in finding new materials and new modes of presentation
- Imagination in reaching out to new audiences
- Skills in self-promotion and career development
- Research capacity for discovering new creative possibilities.

5. Curriculum Design and Delivery: Undergraduate

5.1 The Academy will continue to concentrate its undergraduate provision at levels 4–6 of the QAA's *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*.

5.2 The Academy will aim to enhance the learning experience of its undergraduates by:

- Strengthening the programme's tripartite core ethos: Artistry, Belonging, Challenge
- Developing greater flexibility in the delivery of electives and ensuring parity of assessment
- Reinforcing the essential position of chamber music within the programme and ensuring appropriate opportunities for musical development in this area
- Embedding the Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) module across the Academy
- Providing greater focus to history-related modules and enhancing opportunities across the programme for a greater degree of reflective, critical thinking
- Rationalising Professional Development Activity and improving feedback mechanisms
- Enhancing student support systems and improving the student experience.
- Integrating core modules and reinforcing cross-references between these and Principal Study / Professional Development Activity teaching

6. Curriculum Design and Delivery: Postgraduate Taught

6.1 The Academy will maintain the diversity of its postgraduate taught provision with MA, MMus (composition) and PGDip (Music Theatre), and Professional, Advanced, and CPD Diploma qualifications. The Academy will continue to award the DipRAM to those who achievements at postgraduate level are outstanding.

6.2 The Academy will continue to develop its support for the Professional Portfolio module of its masters' programmes. Enhancements will include revisions to the information, advice and guidance given to students and the development of online resources to support their learning.

6.3 The Academy will continue to develop the range of faculty activities available to its postgraduate students.

7. Postgraduate Research

7.1 Applicants for postgraduate research programmes will be accepted on the basis of their potential to succeed at a high level in the programme, the congruence of their research proposal to the Academy's research profile, and the availability of one or more Academy research supervisors with relevant expertise.

7.2 The Academy will continue to seek strategies for providing financial support to students.

7.3 The Academy will continue to refine its models of practice-led research projects in order to enhance the planning stage of PhD projects.

7.4 Skills training for MPhil/PhD students will focus on areas of demonstrable student need and demand. The Academy will aim to ensure that students are adequately supported to make the most of what is offered by the learning and research environments of the Academy and other PG research provision (especially the IMR) in the University of London.

7.5 The Academy will continue to develop the Research Student Seminars which provide a focused and productive training environment for both students and supervisors (both current and potential).

7.6 The Academy will aim to explore potential collaborations with other institutions which share a practice-led environment, or which offer expertise that is valuable to our own research students.

7.7 The Academy will continue to build on its current successful completion rates by developing the information, advice and guidance to applicants and students at the start of the programme, thereby improving the management of expectations with regard to workloads and standards.

8. Lifelong Learning and Continuing Professional Development

8.1 The Academy will continue to support the work of the Junior Academy as a means of developing the potential of pre-HE learners and as an instrument of widening access.

8.2 The Academy will develop an alumni network as a vehicle – inter alia – for promoting CPD opportunities to its graduates.

8.3 The Academy will build on its current lifelong learning offerings to offer a balanced programme of single events and series of events, with a view to widening access and enhancing our service to the local and wider community.

9. International policy

9.1 The Academy will continue to support opportunities for student and staff exchanges with overseas institutions. It will seek to develop the range of its partnerships with overseas institutions.

9.2 SCAB will review the protocols for international exchanges and collaborations to assess opportunities, risks and benefits. Any provision offered in collaboration with an overseas institution will need to meet the Academy's expectations for such arrangements, including compliance with the precepts of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B10 'Managing HE provision with others'..

9.3 Students needing additional support with English language will be identified as quickly as possible and appropriate language teaching made available to them.

10. Information, Advice and Guidance

The fundamental principles underpinning the provision of information, advice and guidance for Academy students and staff will continue to be accuracy, currency, transparency, completeness, accessibility and comprehensibility. The Academy will continue to review its programme and departmental documentation with a view to making it clearer and more readily understood by students and staff. The accessibility of online information about the programmes will be improved by an enhanced search facility and through a clearer and more interactive student charter on the external website.

11. Supporting the Student Learning Experience

11.1 The Academy recognises the importance of a coherently reciprocal system of teaching and student support. The Academy will ensure that students are supported by a personal tutor system, a welfare and counselling service, a professional development service, and a student financial service.

11.2 The Academy is committed to providing high-quality skills support for all students and will support staff in its delivery. The English Language Teaching Team will continue to provide support for students whose first language is not English. The Academy will develop its academic skills support provision for all students.

11.3 The Academy will continue to provide support for students with disabilities, consistent with its Equality Scheme and Action Plan. It will provide students with advice and support from initial enquiry through to final outcome. Monitoring and impact assessment will ensure that appropriate goals are set and, where possible, timely action carried out.

The Academy will continue to provide full or partial scholarships for students selected primarily on their potential to excel on the programme to which they are applying. It will continue to provide support where possible to students in need through the hardship fund and bursaries.

12. Resources for learning

12.1 The Academy will ensure that the physical and virtual infrastructure for learning and teaching meets the needs of its students and teachers and takes account of best practice in the sector.

12.2 The Academy will maintain its instruments in excellent working order. The mechanisms in place to ensure equality of opportunity to access Academy instruments will be periodically reviewed to assess their effectiveness.

12.3 The Academy will continue to assess periodically the mechanisms in place to ensure that the use of available practice, rehearsal and teaching space is optimised.

12.4 The Academy will continue to invest in its library provision, mindful of the utility of acquiring hard copies of scores and parts while pursuing opportunities offered by developing technologies to improve access to other types of text.

12.5 The Academy will continue to invest in network resilience. It will enhance online provision through the development of a new intranet and internet sites. It will support students and staff in the use of these sites with regular training events and an ongoing help desk.

12.6 The Academy's IT Department will continue to support student learning through the following:

• Provide suitably equipped, dedicated spaces to promote student learning enabled by technology
• Maintain and improve the wireless network
• Maintain and improve the intranet.
• Maintain and improve the recording studios
• Promote awareness of the creative technology resources
• Provide access to technology systems for disabled students.

12.7 The Academy will enhance its support for students' professional development by equipping, maintaining and servicing recording studios on site.

12.8 The Academy will continue to seek external sources of funding to digitise and make available online its collections as a means to enhance students' learning experiences.

13. Student Engagement

The Academy believes it is important that students have a voice at all levels of academic governance, from the Governing Body through all Academic Committees (except the Examinations Board and its subcommittees) and at departmental meetings. Periodic Review panels will include student membership. The Student-Staff Liaison Committee will continue to give students the opportunity to voice concerns regarding non-academic matters of the Academy. Students may be invited to participate in the appointment process of new academic staff, though they will not be members of appointments committees.

These arrangements are designed to ensure that students' experiences are taken into account in the planning, delivery and review of programmes of study. Student feedback on each module is used to improve programmes as necessary, and any action taken is reported back to students. Results of the NSS are carefully analysed by the Undergraduate Programmes Board in order to identify areas for action.

14. Staff

14.1 The Academy will seek to sustain the recruitment and retention of leading practitioners, scholars and teachers, supported by high-quality staff development and training opportunities, to maintain an environment in which excellent teaching can flourish.

14.2 The Academy acknowledges the need to ensure that staff workloads are managed appropriately to allow staff to perform their various teaching, administrative and (where appropriate) research duties.

14.3 Staff will be encouraged to pursue professional development in their teaching and supervision.

15. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

15.1 The Academy remains committed to best practice in its quality assurance procedures, mechanisms, and their operation. We will continue, through close engagement with the HE sector and the music profession, to seek systematically and strategically to improve the educational experience and professional training of our students.

15.2 The Academy will continue to engage with the HE sector, building strong links with other HEIs, national HE agencies and other relevant subject-area and professional bodies in the UK and overseas. Senior staff, together with other managers and administrative staff, will regularly attend meetings and conferences organised by UUK, HEFCE, QAA, AHRC, OIA and the AEC. Teaching staff at the Academy will continue to be encouraged to act as external examiners and specialist external assessors at other institutions, both in the UK and overseas, as a means of ensuring the quality of the Academy's standards. We will seek to develop these links so that our policies and operations are better informed – as appropriate – by good practice in the sector as a whole; so that we can benchmark our activities against the best in the sector; and so that we can represent and promote the views and issues affecting the Academy – and, generically, small specialist institutions – regionally, nationally and internationally.

15.4 The Academy will ensure an effective monitoring and academic audit process is in place across all of the elements which underpin the quality and standards of its programmes of study. The Academy's Academic Board will continue to monitor the effectiveness of our processes for the annual monitoring of our programmes of study. We aim to achieve an efficient system which is: informed by accurate and current management information; based on risk analysis and assessment; takes a light touch; results in viable action plans, carried out promptly. These are values that will also continue to underpin departmental review and planning processes.