

National Student Survey

2020 FEEDBACK

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RNCM
ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE of MUSIC

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2020 FEEDBACK

The College takes feedback that it receives through the National Student Survey very seriously and, although there was a huge amount of positive feedback received on students' experiences through the NSS 2020, this document contains a response to some of the less positive comments, and some of the enhancements we will be making in response to this feedback.

Although some of these enhancements are completed, on the whole this is an ongoing process of constant development, discussion and refinement in these areas, including continuing conversations with the SU and student representatives, and through various College committees.

As ever, we very much welcome feedback on any of these areas at any time throughout the year.

NSS FEEDBACK

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

YOU SAID:

A lack of communication between departments has had a negative effect on my course and my education. Performance and academic studies could complement each other more.

CURRENT WORK IN THIS AREA:

Throughout this last year, and in particular during the COVID crisis we have centralised communication through Moodle to provide clear information to students on the regular changes as they happen in different areas of College.

One-on-one meetings have been put in place for all finalists with a senior member of staff to consider their whole studentship, with a view to maximising chances of getting the best degree possible in Summer 2021.

Longer term into next year the UG revalidation process that we are going through is an opportunity for all colleagues to address this and to draw a closer connection between activities which are credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing.

YOU SAID:

Timetabling of performance activities is often clustered into extremely intense periods. Intense periods of performance activities always clash with academic deadlines.

Orchestral schedule was sometimes too rigorous to allow individual technical advancement. Sometimes, I wish I could have more space to simply focus on my own work and development.

CURRENT WORK IN THIS AREA:

There are a number of reviews taking place at present over this academic year which help to alleviate the bottleneck in certain students' activity throughout the year:

The UG Revalidation process will help here, designing modules with the opportunity for students to opt earlier on and across programmes; considering the opportunity for students to play their 2nd instrument more could alleviate pressures.

We are developing a better understanding and alignment of planning cycles across the Academic Studies, School activity and the performance programme.

We are in the process of reviewing all ensemble work (between chamber music, schools and P&P), with an aim of creating a more cohesive programme to limit clashes of activity.

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

YOU SAID:

There is a lack of clarity in marking guidelines for performance-based modules. Recital marking has seemed random - use of overly complex language, which when broken down into simpler language didn't actually make sense.

CURRENT WORK IN THIS AREA:

This academic year a new Principal Study panel and moderation process was implemented for UG4 and PGT students to ensure greater parity of feedback across schools of study. A 10% sample was moderated by a 2-person panel. All recitals were recorded to support this process and the work of external examiners.

Last Spring briefings on performance assessment were carried out for students to introduce the new protocols, and to provide an open forum for discussion of the assessment process between staff and students, and to share how our assessment criteria is applied by a panel.

More detail on links between learning outcomes, feedback and marks on the UG3 and UG4 recital feedback was introduced in 2020-21. Feedback is now written up from the perspective of the entire panel by a single author, drawing on comments from all examiners, and the addition of tick boxes relate feedback and mark to learning outcomes. We are now considering the implementation a similar form for Years 1 and 2 as well.

These processes are under constant review and will be discussed and refined on a regular basis. Longer term, as part of revalidation of the UG degree programme, the learning outcomes and marking criteria for Principal Study will be reviewed in detail.

LEARNING COMMUNITY

YOU SAID:

Performance opportunities could be more fairly distributed.

CURRENT WORK IN THIS AREA:

There is a very fair system in place, and a balance of performance activity that is audition-based and non-audition-based, to allow activity to be shared across all students in College as appropriate. This is overseen by the Heads of School and the Head of Orchestras and Ensembles to ensure an even spread of activity amongst students. These colleagues will ensure that there is better communication with students on how decisions are made and what happens behind the scenes to make these decisions.

YOU SAID:

More opportunities are needed for BAME students.

WE DID:

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum (constituting staff and students) has written a detailed and ambitious action plan to support BAME students in College, which is published publicly online. In addition, this year a new collaborative SU / staff group has started to work on an *Underrepresented* project, looking at diversity across the institution, and the provision of resources to enable change in this area.

We have established more opportunities for mentoring and networking, both online with BAME alumni through RNCM Connect and at the RNCM via the new BAME staff and student support group.

We are in the process of developing an Inclusive Curriculum Design framework that will underpin our curriculum and ensure that we are working to represent BAME musicians through the content of our degree programmes.

YOU SAID:

It is very difficult to cope with pressure and demands of playing if you feel early on that you may be suited to an alternative career.

I have a few concerns about student support. I feel that some issues and their resolutions have not yet been well addressed and therefore the relevant procedures aren't yet in place. I would advise more health awareness days, for example and would like to see effort to include as many as possible within the college.

CURRENT WORK IN THIS AREA:

A new Cross-College Well-being Working Group has been set up this term to create a clearer strategy to build on the support already in this area.

During the COVID pandemic, Michelle Phillips (Deputy Head of Undergraduate Studies) has been assigned the pastoral role of supporting online students, to make sure that they are supported through this difficult period.

Career-facing pathways are being built into the curriculum as part of the UG revalidation, with the opportunity to explore different options earlier on in the degree programme.

MUSIC PROFESSION

YOU SAID:

I think there could be more emphasis on different ways to be a musician in the business. Academic courses should be tailored more to finding you a job in the music profession.

CURRENT WORK IN THIS AREA:

At present we are in discussions with the SU about providing additional career support for leavers this Academic year, particularly given the present challenges around the COVID situation.

The RNCM has recently established RNCM Connect, an online portal for RNCM alumni and current students which enables them to network and connect. Through RNCM Connect, students will be able to find potential mentors, establish groups of communities of interest and find job opportunities

Although the UG degree programme already has a strong emphasis on the music business and profession, the UG degree revalidation process will add to the options and will enable students to shape individual pathways leading towards different strands of the profession with greater focus. There will be a reworking of the areas of artist development and career development as part of this process.