ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

The Royal Academy of Music moves music forward by inspiring successive generations of musicians to connect, collaborate and create.
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UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Continued overleaf

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HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

PURPOSE

1. The Academy is committed to ensuring that all members of our community are able to work and learn in an environment free from harassment and sexual misconduct. This includes providing the opportunity for staff and students to learn and engage in programs designed to raise awareness and prevent unwanted behaviours.
2. The Academy affirms its commitment to deliver timely support for staff and students who are affected by such behaviours including at the point of disclosure, during reporting and investigation processes, and to take reasonable steps to prevent its continuation.
3. This policy outlines the responsibilities, expectations and support available within the Academy and in connection with Academy activities, in order to create a culture where everybody feels safe.
4. Every member of the Academy community has a role to play in preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct. This includes taking reasonable steps to prevent unacceptable behaviour and to provide effective support to those who disclose their experiences.
5. Harassment and sexual misconduct are unacceptable and have no place at the Academy. Such behaviours are contrary to the Office for Students definitions where it relates to Higher Education, the Equality Act 2010, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Workers Protection Act 2023, and Employment Rights Act 2025, and in certain circumstances may constitute a criminal offence.
6. The Academy is also legally obliged to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of its workers (Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, as amended by the Employment Rights Act 2025).

SCOPE

7. The Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy applies to all staff, employees, students, visitors, and associates of the Academy.
8. Incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct can occur in-person and online, as well as through direct and indirect behaviour. Allegations of harassment and sexual misconduct will be investigated and may lead to serious disciplinary consequences. The Academy may also determine whether the matter needs to be referred to the police in addition to the consideration of disciplinary action.
9. The Academy is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct by third parties. In addressing incidents of harassment or sexual misconduct by third parties, the Academy will remain consistent as far as possible with this policy (see Third-Party Harassment and Sexual Misconduct).
10. Staff and students are encouraged to seek advice or raise concerns at the earliest opportunity by using the reporting processes outlined in this policy. Staff and students will be supported when raising concerns in good faith.

DEFINITIONS

HARASSMENT

11. **Harassment** as defined by the Equality Act 2010

    Harassment is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment where the conduct is related to:

    a) One or more of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

    b) Sexual harassment (see below).

c) Unfavourable treatment, where someone is treated less favourably because they have either submitted to or rejected sexual harassment, or related to sex or gender reassignment.

In deciding whether the alleged conduct constitutes harassment, the following will be taken into account:

a) The perception of the person who is at the receiving end of the conduct

b) The other circumstances of the case, and

c) Whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have the effect described.

12. **Harassment** as defined by the Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Harassment under this definition means a course of conduct carried out on at least two occasions that harasses one other person, or a course of conduct that harasses two or more persons at least once each. References to harassing a person include alarming the person or causing them distress.

Harassment of two or more persons includes persuading any person not to do something that the person is entitled or required to do, or to do something that the person is not under an obligation to do.

In deciding whether the conduct constitutes harassment, the following will be taken into account:

a) Whether the person knew the conduct amounted to harassment of the other, or

b) Whether a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounted to harassment of the other person.

13. **Stalking** is also a form of severe harassment where a person demonstrates an obsession with the person they're targeting through repeated unwanted behaviours that create an environment of fear and distress. This may include monitoring, following, uninvited intrusions into home, work, education, use of technology to track or contact, identity theft, or sharing private information.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

14. **Sexual misconduct** is any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature.

This includes but is not limited to:

Sexual harassment (Equality Act 2010) is unwanted conduct or behaviour of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Sexual assault is touching someone or causing them to engage in sexual activity without consent.

Rape is where someone with a penis intentionally penetrates another without their consent.

Examples of sexual misconduct include, but is not limited to:

- **Physical contact of a sexual nature** such as touching, grabbing, pushing, groping, touching someone's clothing, spiking, sexual exploitation, sexual activity without consent.
- **Advances of a sexual nature** including asking someone out when unwanted, invitations or demands, grooming, coercion, offering sexual favours in exchange for something, making suggestions of sexual activity.
- **Remarks and comments of a sexual nature** such as jokes, innuendos, comments about appearance, a person's body or clothing, derogatory remarks, whistling, sexualised gestures or movements.
- **Sending or displaying material of a sexual nature** including images, videos, posts of a pornographic nature, sharing or threatening to share intimate images, online comments about someone, making, distributing or sending images or explicit content that others may reasonably find offensive (including made or AI generated).

Sexual harassment can take place online as well as in person, and reference is made to the Academy's Social Media Policy. A person can be sexually harassed even if they were not the intended target.

15. In deciding whether reported conduct constitutes sexual misconduct, the following will be taken into account:

    - Is the conduct by its nature sexual, or do the circumstances or purpose (or both) indicate that it is sexual?
    - Whether there was consent or a reasonable belief in consent to the sexual activity when considering all the circumstances.

16. Other unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature may still be considered misconduct even if it does not fall squarely within the definitions above.

CONSENT

17. **Consent** to sexual activity means that a person agrees **by choice** to *that* sexual activity and has the **freedom** and **capacity** to make *that* choice.

    Consent can also be given conditionally; to do something (i.e. put on a condom) or not do something (ie kissing and not intercourse). Consent can be withdrawn at any time.

    Freedom to consent, is when a person has the opportunity and autonomy to decide.

    Factors that may prevent, impair or influence someone's freedom include but are not limited to:

    - Threats and violence
    - Domestic violence including coercive and controlling behaviour
    - Harassing and stalking behaviour
    - An abuse of power, control or dependency (including emotional abuse or financial control)
    - Targeting due to an actual or perceived vulnerability
    - Grooming or exploitation

    Capacity to consent is when someone knows and understands the choice and its consequences. A person's capacity can be limited temporarily or more permanently, such as when a person is:

    - drunk or under the influence of drugs (causing significant impact to capacity)
    - asleep or unconscious
    - has a medical diagnosis, mental health condition or learning disability that limits capacity

18. **Conflict of interest**

    An actual or perceived conflict of interest may arise in circumstances where an individual's personal interests or commitments interfere with, influence or compromise their obligations towards the Academy, its students or staff members. A conflict of interest may be connected to intimate personal relationships such as family, romantic or financial arrangements, as well as connections outside the Academy (see also Conflicts of Interest Policy).

19. **Abuse of power**

    Abuse of power is where a person uses their position of power or authority to apply pressure in a way which may result in another person doing something, or refraining from doing something, that they may not have otherwise done. Abuses of power can include exploitative, manipulative, pressurising, coercive or grooming behaviours.

    Actual or perceived power or authority may relate to someone's role or position, prestige or reputation, a position of trust, or relate to power dynamics that exist or develop within intimate personal relationships (see the Intimate Personal Relationship Policy).

20. **Position of trust**

A position of trust is where an adult has responsibility and direct contact with children and young people under 18. The definition also extends to persons in positions of responsibility for adults at risk.

21. **Grooming**

Grooming is a process where someone desensitises another to certain behaviours over a period of time in order to exploit an imbalance of power for their own gratification. It often begins with befriending, offering gifts, compliments and making someone feel special in order manipulate them into doing something they're not comfortable doing.

Grooming can take many forms including coercion or encouragement to do things in exchange for sex and use of fear to prevent access to support and reporting.

It also often makes it more difficult to identify when abuse is happening, and survivors are left feeling a sense of complicity and self-blame. Sexual activity involving coercion, is not consensual.[1]

22. **Exploitation**

Exploitation can take many forms and occurs when a person is forced or coerced to do something that they don't want to for someone else's benefit or gain. It involves an abuse of power and can include sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of abusive behaviour and use of criminal behaviour as a form of control.

23. **Discrimination**

Discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly or less favourably based on a protected characteristic: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnant and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (Equality Act 2010).

24. **Victimisation**

Victimisation is where someone is treated less favourably as a result of bringing a complaint of harassment, sexual harassment or discrimination, or supporting someone making a complaint, or are perceived to have done so (Equality Act 2010).

25. **Intimate personal relationships**

An intimate personal relationship is a close consensual relationship that is more than merely a professional relationship or friendship. It is where the nature of the relationship includes one or more of the following elements:

- Physical intimacy or sexual activity whether brief, one-off or repeated
- Romantic or emotional intimacy
- A financial relationship
- A family relationship

Staff and students are advised to refer to the Intimate Personal Relationships Policy for information.

POLICY STATEMENT ON HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

26. The Academy does not tolerate incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct by any member of our community. We take our obligations and responsibilities seriously including taking steps to reduce the likelihood of incidents, protect staff and students, and respond when incidents are reported to have occurred.
27. We recognise that incidents of harassment or sexual misconduct may take place in a range of circumstances including:

[1] **SurvivorsUK | Grooming** Common Feelings & Effects that Survivors Experience

- Within or outside a work or educational context
- During social events, projects, or placements within the UK or abroad
- Involving members of another institution or visitors
- In halls of residence or student accommodation

Students and staff will be supported when reporting allegations of harassment and sexual misconduct in good faith. Allegations will be investigated in line with Academy disciplinary processes, which may result in dismissal or expulsion.

28. If concerns of misconduct are raised or identified, the Academy reserves the right to instigate an investigation, which may result in disciplinary proceedings.

THIRD-PARTY HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

29. Harassment or sexual misconduct by a third party will not be tolerated. A third party is anyone who is not a staff member or student and may include freelancers, contractors, visitors, audience members, clients, external partners, and guests.
30. The Academy is committed to taking **all** reasonable steps to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct by third parties and to address reports incidents promptly and consistent with this policy. Where concerns are identified, the Academy may take action including requiring an individual to leave Academy premises, restricting or terminating access to Academy activities, ending a contractual relationship, referring the matter to the individual's employer, contractor or institution, or reporting the matter to the police where appropriate.
31. The Academy will seek to ensure that third parties are informed about this policy and Academy's Code of Conduct. Heads of Department and managers are encouraged to consider, identify and assess risks and implement reasonable measures to prevent and address the potential of harassment and sexual misconduct taking place in partnership with external partners.
32. Staff and students can report incidents to the head of the relevant department or via Report + Support. Third parties can also report behaviour of concern through this portal. All reports will be considered and addressed in accordance with the Academy's policies and procedures.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

33. The Academy is committed to supporting students who experience harassment and sexual misconduct, whether the incidents take place within the Academy community or elsewhere during the course of their studentship.
34. We recognise that students may experience unwanted behaviour in different contexts and circumstances including by those known or unknown to them, within public spaces, whilst travelling, socialising or working.
35. Students are made aware of this policy and procedures each year through awareness raising activities around behaviours, mandatory online training modules, as well as in-person training and workshops. Additional support and specialist advice is also available, including links through to external services.
36. A student who has experienced unwanted behaviour including harassment and sexual misconduct is encouraged to report this at the earliest opportunity so support can be offered. Student reporting routes include:
    a) **Anonymous reports:** we accept anonymous reports via Report + Support and recognise that students may feel worried about disclosing with their details. The report will be reviewed to determine what steps can be taken. However, the limitations of anonymity mean it will not be possible to provide direct support or take formal action.
    b) **Early resolution:** an informal process to address straightforward concerns at a local level, for example through a Head of Year, Postgraduate Tutor or Head of Department. We recognise that

this route may not be suitable for addressing complex or serious incidents particularly relating to harassment and sexual misconduct. Students can also submit a concern with their details via Report + Support to access support and advice.

c) **Specialist support and advice:** the Academy's Senior Case Manager can be contacted directly to discuss incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct as well as reporting and support options. Students may also be signposted to specialist support by a staff member or student representative.

d) **Formal complaint:** this process enables formal complaints, including allegations of misconduct against staff or students, to be investigated in line with the Academy's complaint and disciplinary procedures. The Student Complaints Procedure is outlined in the **Academy Regulations** and formal complaints are investigated by the Senior Case Manager or another investigator.

e) **Third-party reports:** we recognise that a witness/bystander or individuals in receipt of a disclosure from a friend or colleague, may also want to report the information and access support. Whilst it is advised that they do so with the knowledge of the person who has experienced the conduct, a third-party can also access support and advice through the routes outlined above.

37. Support for students raising a concern or complaint will be addressed at the earliest opportunity following disclosure. This includes assessing the needs and wishes of the student as well as the specific circumstances of the incident to ensure that support is effective and kept under review. (See Student Guide – Support for complainants on SharePoint).

38. Support is also available to students who have been accused of misconduct throughout an investigation and disciplinary process, which will be discussed and kept under review. (See Student Guide - Support for respondents on SharePoint).

ADVICE FOR STAFF IN SUPPORTING STUDENT DISCLOSURES

39. Staff members play an important role in contributing to an environment free from harassment and sexual misconduct as well as supporting students who wish to make disclosures.

40. Staff are made aware of this policy, procedures and responsibilities each year. Staff undertake training through mandatory online modules, in-person sessions, as well as enhanced training for those in specialist roles.

    This training is designed to ensure that staff are aware of and can recognise the unwanted behaviours associated with forms of harassment and sexual misconduct as well as responding to disclosures.

41. Staff involved in coordinating visiting staff, workers and contractors must also make sure that the third parties are familiar with the contents of this policy and know how to support students to raise concerns.

42. Staff members may receive disclosures at any time from students who have experienced harassment and sexual misconduct, which could be from the student themselves, a witness or third-party. Therefore, it is important that the following steps are taken to ensure that students can access the right support at the earliest opportunity.

    Initial action in receipt of information or a notification about an intimate personal relationship:

    a) Recognise the important step that has been taken to share the information including the relationship of trust created, which may have been a difficult first step towards accessing support.

    b) Respond to the disclosure with sensitivity; take the time to listen as well as ask what support the student needs and what they want to do next. An option is to signpost them to this policy or connect them to someone who can provide specialist support.

    c) A supportive approach to disclosures should prioritise safety, trust and choice, as well as empowering and involving the student to feel included in the decisions that affect them.

    d) A staff member should support the student to seek advice from the Senior Case Manager where the disclosure indicates behaviour that may amount to harassment or sexual misconduct.

43. Staff are also advised to consider the principles of confidentiality, fairness and natural justice when handling disclosures. For further information see Confidentiality and Use of Information.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF EXPERIENCING HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

44. The Academy takes its responsibility towards staff seriously and takes reasonable steps to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct through awareness raising, mandatory training for staff, specialist roles and support.
45. Staff members who experience harassment and sexual misconduct can access support through their line manager or HR People Partner. We recognise that staff may experience factors that make it more difficult to report behaviour; disclosures will be managed sensitively and confidentially.
46. Allegations of misconduct will be managed and investigated in line with the Academy's Dignity at Work Policy, Grievance Policy and Discipline and Appeal Policy. Staff can use Report + Support anonymously or with their details, which will be reviewed by the Director of Human Resources.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND USE OF INFORMATION

47. All information disclosed in relation to harassment and sexual misconduct must be handled sensitively and remain compliant with the principles of data protection, confidentiality, fairness and natural justice.
48. **Confidentiality** is about protecting personal information. It means that when information is disclosed, it should not be disclosed further without consent. In relation to disclosures of harassment and sexual misconduct, it is important that the reporting party is involved in and understands what will happen to the information they have provided. Breaches of confidentiality may be considered under the disciplinary procedures.
49. **Data Protection** outlines the rights and obligations around the handling of personal data including the lawful basis to use information in certain circumstances. Personal data will be stored and processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Please see http://www.ram.ac.uk/privacy for more information.
50. **Fairness and natural justice** are key principles linked to the use of information particularly during complaint, investigation and disciplinary processes. When an allegation is made, the relevant procedures, actions and decisions must be fair and take into consideration all involved. The person should be notified of the allegation, have the opportunity to respond and for decisions to be made impartially, in good faith and free from reasonable perception of bias.

INVESTIGATIONS INTO HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

51. The Academy will investigate allegations of harassment and sexual misconduct in accordance with the provisions of this policy as well as relevant student and staff complaint and disciplinary processes.
    a) An allegation by a student about another student will be investigated under the Student Complaint Procedure and Student Disciplinary Code (Academy Regulations).
    b) An allegation by a student about a staff member will be investigated under the student complaint procedure. If potential misconduct is identified, the investigation will continue within the staff disciplinary process, in conjunction with HR.
52. Investigations are carried out by an independent member of staff who receives specialist training to enable them to gather, review and make decisions in a fair, impartial and balanced way free from reasonable perception of bias.
53. An investigation may be instigated:
    a) On receipt of a formal student complaint or staff grievance.

b) Where it is necessary to review whether there is a reasonable likelihood that misconduct has occurred, for example, where multiple concerns are raised about the same person, or the nature and seriousness of an incident indicate an investigation is necessary.

c) Following notification of behaviour that raises concerns about a person's suitability to continue as a staff member or student, for example due to reported behaviour outside the Academy.

54. In circumstances where a criminal offence may have occurred, the student or staff member will be supported to report this to the police and/or access specialist external support. A criminal investigation will take priority over an internal disciplinary procedure, although precautionary measures will be reviewed and may still apply.

55. The Academy will consider whether a referral is required without consent in circumstances where there is a safeguarding concern or an imminent risk of serious harm, which will be assessed in consultation with the Safeguarding Lead.

DECISIONS AND OUTCOMES

56. Decision-makers involved in disciplinary processes receive specialist training to enable them to reach fair, balanced decisions in compliance with the principles of natural justice. Investigators and decision-makers are selected to ensure that they are independent and free from reasonable perception of bias.

57. The standard of proof for decision or outcome to student or staff investigation is the balance of probabilities. Therefore, any reference to definitions used in criminal law does not create a requirement to meet the criminal standard of proof in an internal Academy investigation.

58. An outcome reached as part of a staff or student investigation of disciplinary procedure does not constitute a legal ruling on whether or not criminal activity has taken place.

59. Those involved in an investigation and disciplinary process will be given sufficient information to understand the outcome of a process including any decisions made and reasons for them.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

60. This policy and procedures are designed to ensure that the principles of freedom of speech within the law and academic freedom are protected. Our approach encourages open and honest debate, which also supports a respectful and inclusive community whilst recognising that some expressions of free speech within the law may be considered offensive and unwelcome. (See Freedom of Speech Policy).

61. Academic freedom presumes that students exposed to higher education materials and/or statements made and views expressed as part of teaching, research or discussions about subject matter connected with the content of a higher education course, is unlikely to constitute harassment.

62. Where required, allegations of misconduct will be considered in conjunction with these principles and obligations to ensure a balanced and fair approach is taken in the circumstances.

RELATED POLICIES

Staff must review and comply with this policy in conjunction with the following:

1. Academy Regulations
2. Intimate Personal Relationships Policy
3. Dignity at Work Policy (via HR)
4. Social Media Policy
5. Safeguarding Policies (under-18 and over-18)
6. Freedom of Speech Policy
7. Conflict of Interest Policy (via HR)

Alternative format

If you need help accessing this information or need it in an alternative format, please contact the general office on go@ram.ac.uk or call us on +44 (0)20 7873 7373.

Version history

Version number	Date effective from	Amendments made	Previous version location
v1.1	23 JUNE 2025	New policy	Information outlined in Dignity at Work Policy 2021 (staff) and Academy Regulations (students)
V1.2	3 AUGUST 2026	Refreshed links	Policy repository.
V1.3	16 OCTOBER 2026	Updates regarding the Employment Rights Act 2025	Policy repository.