

Report  
for  
The Royal Academy of Music

Executive Summary

Review and reflections of the DEIB Journey  
by  
Blueprint for All Consulting

12.6.2024

# Contents

Executive Summary .....	2
1. Overview .....	2
2. Summary of Findings.....	2
3. Three Years On Reflections on the DEIB Journey:.....	3
Overall Environment.....	3
Experience with DEIB Initiatives: .....	3
Positive Changes in Work Environment: .....	3
Impactful Aspects of DEIB Strategy: .....	4
Challenges and Concerns: .....	4
Additional Resources or Support Needed: .....	4
4. Summary of Recommendations .....	4
Senior Leaders & Management Accountability .....	4
Policy and Process .....	4
Management Training .....	5
Workplace/Learning and Performing Environment .....	5
Staff Diversity.....	5
DEIB Task Team Formation .....	5
Student Diversity .....	5

# Executive Summary

## 1. Overview

In the wake of George Floyd's tragic murder in 2020, The Royal Academy of Music embarked on a critical journey to enhance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB). This journey, beginning with introspection and a proactive review, aimed to create a more inclusive environment in all aspects of the Academy's functioning. Blueprint for All was initially commissioned in 2020 to conduct a comprehensive review of the Academy's processes, policies, and procedures, laying the groundwork for significant advancements.

Since then, the Academy has made significant progress, implementing key recommendations from the initial report, which have considerably strengthened DEIB principles within the institution. This progress underscores the Academy's commitment to being an inclusive, world-class conservatoire.

Blueprint for All was commissioned to review progress made three years after our initial audit. It involved a detailed evaluation of the newly adopted policies, protocols, and processes for their effectiveness and relevance to the Academy's DEIB goals.

A vital component of this review has been the feedback from key stakeholders, including students, academic and instrumental staff, and the Senior Management Team (SMT). Many of these stakeholders provided insights during the initial analysis three years ago. Their candid and insightful feedback has been invaluable, offering a benchmark for progress and guiding the future direction of the Academy's DEIB strategies and actions.

This review revisited these areas and included reflective questions to understand the impact of the changes implemented at the Academy.

This executive summary provides an overview of the Academy's progress and the path forward for its commitment to DEIB.

## 2. Summary of Findings

Our review process involved reassessing the Academy's progress in DEIB, followed by reflections and feedback from key stakeholders.

**Senior Leadership & Management Accountability:** Interviews with the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Department Heads revealed a positive adoption of the recommended changes, contributing significantly to the Academy's DEIB efforts. However, improving the lack of ethnic diversity in the SMT, despite its good gender mix, remains an ambition.

**DEIB Agenda and Strategy:** The Principal, supported by the Deputy Principal and Dean of Students, continues to lead the DEIB agenda effectively. Staff and students expressed appreciation for the DEIB Council's efforts. The Academy's DEIB strategy, updated in November 2022, underscores a structured approach to advancing DEIB, with an added focus on 'Belonging'.

**Policy and Process – Staff Recruitment and Retention:** While there have been improvements in the diversity of professional and support services staff, the diversity among faculty staff still needs improvement. The Academy has attempted to enhance faculty staff diversity by engaging visiting professors from diverse backgrounds to support the academic and instrumental curriculum. The new Director of Human Resources is revising recruitment policies to align with DEIB goals.

**Performance Management Policies and Practices:** Notable developments in management training and feedback practices have been observed. Continuous feedback systems have been introduced.

**Workplace Environment and Academy Organisational Culture:** The Academy has experienced a significant positive cultural shift, with a more welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. The enhancement in safeguarding and DEIB practices has been acknowledged, reflecting a proactive approach to creating a safe and inclusive learning and working environment.

**Student Experience:** Challenges in achieving student body diversity persist, primarily due to factors beyond the Academy's admission criteria. However, efforts such as Open Academy, the work of the Widening Participation Team, and the early thinking on introducing a Foundation Year course are commendable steps towards increasing ethnic diversity.

**Curriculum Diversification:** The Academy has made strides in diversifying the curriculum, focusing more on compositions from diverse backgrounds and introducing the "Diverse Voices" elective module.

The following gathers reflections and insights from those closely involved with or impacted by these initiatives, offering a candid assessment of the progress, impact, and future challenges.

### **3. Three Years On Reflections on the DEIB Journey:**

#### **Overall Environment**

Interviewees universally acknowledged substantial positive changes towards DEIB, emphasising the leadership's role in fostering an inclusive, safe and supportive environment.

Some part-time and instrumental staff found adapting to changes more challenging than full-time staff and students. The learning environment is noted to be more open, caring and collegiate. However, there is recognition that continued efforts are needed to sustain momentum and embed learning and practices across all levels.

#### **Experience with DEIB Initiatives:**

The introduction of the Report and Support portal and in-house counselling services were highlighted as critical initiatives enhancing the DEIB environment.

There is a noted increase in collaboration and understanding among students and staff working together to embed DEIB.

#### **Positive Changes in Work Environment:**

Staff noticed a shift towards a more collaborative atmosphere. Introducing staff and student lanyards has helped in professional recognition, positively impacting staff morale. Cross-departmental staff involvement in strategy setting has encouraged greater socialisation.

## Impactful Aspects of DEIB Strategy:

The Academy's strategic aims reflect a comprehensive commitment to DEIB. Initiatives such as Widening Participation and collaborating with the Students Union and external organisations have been pivotal in achieving this.

## Challenges and Concerns:

- Concerns were raised about maintaining momentum for DEIB and recognising the key people driving change, with a need to embed DEIB across the organisation.
- The lack of ethnic diversity among staff remains a significant concern.
- Ensure any DEIB changes are not perceived as tokenistic; it is essential to consider the context and scope of the changes being implemented.
- While regular updates and town hall meetings are well-received, there is a need for more regular and targeted communication on DEIB strategies and goals.
- Varied experiences were reported regarding career development opportunities, with some noting a supportive working environment for women and work-life balance but very little personal training and development.

## Additional Resources or Support Needed:

- More professional and social opportunities for staff interaction across departments.
- Additional management training and department-based training were suggested.
- Classroom or group-based in-person DEIB training.
- Guidance for faculty staff on sensitive diversity issues such as gender identity and racism.
- Addressing physical accessibility challenges in the building.

Overall, the reflections and learning from the past three years at RAM indicate significant progress in DEIB, with a clear commitment from the leadership. However, challenges remain in sustaining momentum, enhancing faculty diversity, and ensuring inclusivity in all The Academy's operations. The feedback underscores the need for ongoing efforts to embed DEIB deeply within the institution's culture.

## 4. Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations for RAM to continue its journey towards becoming a more inclusive and diverse educational institution.

### Senior Leaders & Management Accountability

**Regular DEIB Agenda Item:** Include DEIB as a standing item in all management meetings to ensure continuous focus and action on these issues.

**Communications Campaign:** Develop a campaign to highlight The Academy's commitment to staff and student diversity, both internally and externally. Utilise various communication channels, including methods like poster campaigns in strategic locations.

### Policy and Process

**Transparent Recruitment:** Support the new Director of Human Resources in implementing fair and transparent recruitment processes. Embrace Positive Action where necessary to attract diverse staff.

**Mandatory Training Compliance:** Enforce compliance with mandatory DEIB training for all staff and consider ongoing and refresher training opportunities.

## **Management Training**

**Team Leadership Development:** Provide specialised training for staff managing teams, focusing on team leadership and DEIB.

## **Workplace/Learning and Performing Environment**

**Accessibility Audit:** Conduct a comprehensive audit for physical disability access and consider innovative solutions for the academy's infrastructure challenges.

**Quiet Spaces:** Explore multi-use spaces and creative solutions to address the need for quiet spaces for neurodiverse individuals and others with sensory sensitivities. Create a Multifaith/reflection/quiet space for all.

## **Staff Diversity**

**Broadening Recruitment:** Actively seek to expand the search for diverse faculty candidates. Recognise the value of diverse teachers as role models, particularly for ethnically diverse students.

**Long-term Commitment:** Maintain a long-term perspective on diversity and inclusion, regularly evaluating and adapting strategies.

## **DEIB Task Team Formation**

**Task Team for Diversity:** Establish a task team with faculty staff, in collaboration with the Director of Human Resources, to focus on strategies for increasing ethnic diversity amongst its staff.

## **Student Diversity**

RAM is making progress in increasing student diversity through its numerous outreach programmes and is forward-thinking about considering a Foundation year programme to bridge the socio-economic gap between students.

We express our sincere gratitude to all the participants who participated in the interview process and shared their valuable feedback during this review. The insights and perspectives shared by each interviewee have been instrumental in shaping the recommendations. It is worth noting that their inputs will continue to be critical in guiding The Academy's future Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) strategies. We are confident that the contributions made by each participant will help create a more inclusive and equitable work and learning environment that continues to foster diversity, respect, and belonging for all.

END