

ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE (ESG) STRATEGY 2024/25 TO 2026/27

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Version 1

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

The Academy's first Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Strategy sets out a three-year framework (2024/25-2026/27) to improve, in particular, our environmental sustainability performance and make a positive impact across our buildings, operations and community. The strategy aims to embed environmental, social and governance considerations and decision-making throughout the Academy as we work towards the government's target of Net Zero by 2050.

While ESG requires leadership commitment, success depends on engagement across the whole Academy. This strategy therefore emphasises the adoption of sustainable practices and ethical, responsible behaviours at all levels of the organisation, from procurement decisions to cyclical events in the academic calendar and daily operations.

The development of this strategy marks an important step in our sustainability journey, recognising both the need for environmental action and our responsibility as an educational institution to lead by example. We acknowledge that meaningful change requires a co-ordinated approach across every aspect of Academy life - from how we maintain our historic buildings to how we conduct our daily operations and engage with our wider community.

This three-year timeframe allows us to establish baseline measurements, learn about our consumption and implement key initiatives, so that we can build the foundations for longer-term environmental improvements. Through the setting of realistic yet ambitious targets, we aim to create lasting change while developing our understanding and capabilities in environmental management. The relatively short timeframe also enables us to remain agile and responsive to emerging legislation, trends and changes in the sector or nationally.

The ESG strategy is supported by policies, commitments and plans, which can be found on the Academy's ESG area of the [website](#). These documents provide detailed guidance for implementation across different areas of our operations and will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain current and effective.

ASSESSMENT OF PRIORITIES

CONTEXT

During the 2023/24 academic year, following the appointment of the Audit Committee as the body with senior oversight of ESG, the designation of an SMT representative, and the formation of the new ESG Committee at senior sub-committee level, we undertook a comprehensive assessment to identify key strategic priorities.

To gather information and improve our understanding of recognised standards and best practice, the ESG Committee initially referred to three primary external frameworks: the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the People and Planet University League, and the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice. These frameworks provided

valuable reference points for developing our level of collective understanding, areas of action and priorities.

We examined global and national issues relating to the environment and climate change, alongside analysing environmental issues specific to the UK higher education and charity sectors. We also conducted an internal review to capture existing progress across social and governance areas. Throughout the year, we gathered valuable perspectives from both students and staff through ESG Committee membership and various engagement activities.

The Academy already maintains strong foundations in social and governance matters. We have established groups, comprehensive policies and frameworks that effectively oversee areas such as diversity and inclusion (known internally as Belonging), fair recruitment practices for students and staff, and our current staff benefit and wellbeing programs. We undertook an all-staff Survey via People Insights in April 2024 and have just commissioned a review of our staff pay and reward framework via Reward Connected.

Our governance structure demonstrates robust institutional oversight, with decision-making led by an increasingly diverse senior staff base and Governing Body operating under the Higher Education Code of Governance. Regular reporting requirements ensure appropriate accountability. Given this strong foundation in social and governance areas, the ESG Committee determined that this first strategy should prioritise environmental matters, where we have identified the greatest scope for development and improvement.

PRIORITIES

Through this assessment process, we identified seven priority areas that align with our current operations and institutional projects:

1. Waste management
2. Energy and carbon management
3. Water
4. Sustainable construction and refurbishment
5. Engagement and partnerships (staff, students, locally)
6. Travel
7. Research

For each of these areas, the ESG Committee has established specific targets and actions. These are designed to strengthen our understanding of current ESG activities, enhance our data collection and analysis capabilities, and improve our reporting processes. This structured approach will enable us to build a more comprehensive and confident environmental management framework.

OVERSIGHT

Effective leadership and governance structures are vital to achieving the objectives set out in this strategy. The Academy's ESG Committee is responsible for implementing this strategy with support from relevant colleagues and teams across the Academy, most notably the Estates

Team. The Committee will report progress to the Academy's Audit Committee on a termly basis, ensuring regular oversight and accountability.

The success of this strategy relies on co-ordinated action across the organisation. All departments and the Student Union have specific responsibilities for environmental sustainability improvements within their areas, guided by the overall framework and targets set out in this strategy.

We also anticipate and welcome the future nomination of an ESG representative from the Governing Body to strengthen accountability and governance, ensuring strategic oversight at the highest level.

ACTION PLAN

The targets and actions below have been developed by the ESG Committee through a process of research, consultation and collaboration. Year-end completion timeframes are included under each target area. For the purpose of tracking progress towards the completion of actions, regular updates will be received at the twice termly ESG Committee meetings via a standing agenda item and via an annual report to Audit Committee.

1. WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Academy has made consistent efforts to promote and encourage recycling and appropriate waste management by students and staff for several years. We have recently initiated a more regular dialogue with our waste partners Grundon and have since commissioned a waste audit, which provided valuable data to inform our targets and actions in this area.

Target	Key Performance Indicators	Action(s)	Monitoring and reporting	Timeframe	Persons and teams responsible
Improved compliance with waste handling and lower levels of cross-contamination of materials.	Improvement of at least 20% of recycling compliance (correct items in recycling) and overall in key communal areas.	Trial of Nando waste management system via DOC cleaning.	Report on trial once completed.	June 2025	JG and CJ
	A reduction of recycled materials appearing in general waste in external bins to less than 40% of total recyclable materials.	Ensure all cleaning staff are trained to ensure correct disposal of waste.	Annual waste audit report presented to ESG Committee with comparative data from previous years.	September 2025	Estates and cleaning contractor Overseen by CS from ESG Committee.
	Increase amount of recyclables in DMR (dry mixed recycling) bins to 90%.	Liaise with waste partner with a view to implementing improved	Annual waste audit report presented to ESG Committee with	June 2026	Grundon Waste Management

		signage for internal and external bins.	comparative data from previous years. ESG survey questions integrated into Institutional Survey.		Overseen by SG from ESG Committee.
Increased staff and student awareness of and compliance with waste separation.	Student and staff engagement and participation in promotional activities. Improved awareness of what can and cannot be recycled.	Waste Awareness activities in collaboration with our waste partner, Grundon.	Annual report from ESG Committee to Audit Committee.	June 2025 June 2026 June 2027	Grundon Waste Management Overseen by SG from ESG Committee.
Expand food waste recycling.	Increased food waste collection (metrics to follow).	Explore feasibility of providing more food waste bins, appropriate disposal and collection.	Comparison of before and after datasets, annual report to ESG Committee.	June 2025 June 2026 June 2027	Estates team Overseen by CS from ESG Committee.

2. ENERGY AND CARBON MANAGEMENT

The Academy has undertaken carbon footprint reporting at particular points over the past few years in order to gain a deeper understanding of our current position as far as energy use, emissions and compliance is concerned. We are now looking to scale up our awareness of this practice, improve the data that is available and set a clear baseline so that we can be more confident and transparent about our sustainability impact and progress. The Academy is now on 100% renewable energy tariffs across all buildings including the main site, York Gate, St Marks and Cross Keys.

Target	Key Performance Indicators	Action(s)	Monitoring and reporting	Timeframe	Persons and teams responsible
Develop awareness of energy consumption across electricity, (specifically lighting), and gas.	Clear set of metrics available to ESG Committee.	<p>Gather energy usage data via Building Management System (BMS) or via TEC reporting service.</p> <p>Provide total consumption (kWh) of mains gas and electricity consumption for each building.</p> <p>Measure and review energy usage data to inform benchmarking and target setting.</p>	<p>Summary energy report analysis to ESG committee, referencing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Management System • EPC/DEC • Carbon footprint and scope 3 gap analysis • Gas and electricity usage stats • Breakdown of energy/carbon across sites 	September 2025	<p>Estates Team</p> <p>Overseen by JG and FL from ESG Committee.</p>
Reduce energy consumption via selected eco-efficiency measures	To follow in interim Strategy update once metrics are confirmed.	Identify opportunities for energy saving solutions appropriate to different buildings.	Identify and report to committee about options considered with Estates.	December 2025	<p>Estates Team</p> <p>Overseen by JG and FL from ESG Committee.</p>

<p>Promote awareness of energy efficiency and good practice among staff and students</p>	<p>50% increase in the number of staff participating in energy saving initiatives.</p>	<p>Focussed communication and topics through targeted ESG awareness activities.</p> <p>Bring in external speaker(s) from energy and procurement organisations such as TEC.</p>	<p>Increased presence of ESG content in general Academy comms.</p> <p>ESG committee annual report to Audit Committee.</p>	<p>June 2025 Ongoing</p> <p>March 2025 and ongoing.</p>	<p>Marketing, Communications and audience engagement team.</p> <p>ESG Committee</p> <p>Overseen by JG and FL from ESG Committee.</p>
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3. WATER

The Academy has made consistent efforts to promote responsible water use and the consumption of tap water through the increased provision of water points throughout the main building since 2019. We have a fairly limited awareness of our usage in terms of water supply and water treatment and had to rely on secondary data (estimates) for our Carbon Footprint Gap analysis.

Target	Key Performance Indicators	Action(s)	Monitoring and reporting	Timeframe	Persons and teams responsible
Develop awareness of water supply and water treatment data across all sites.	Obtain metered water consumption data for all buildings.	Contact current supplier to request more comprehensive consumption and billing data.	Review consumption data and bills and report to ESG Committee.	September 2025	Estates Team Overseen by ESG Committee rep IS.
Set baseline water consumption and consider options for improved water usage	Availability of baseline metric.	Interrogate metrics and information from supplier plus internal information from Estates colleagues.	Report to ESG Committee	December 2025	Estates Team Overseen by ESG Committee rep IS.
Engage students and staff in water awareness and good practice	Embed a water awareness day/event in annual calendar of environmental activities.	Focussed communication and topics through targeted ESG awareness activities. Stop the sale of single use water bottles in the canteen.	Increased presence of ESG content in general Academy comms. ESG committee annual report to Audit Committee.	June 2025 and ongoing	Marketing, Communications and audience engagement team. ESG Committee Overseen by ESG Committee rep IS.

4. SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION AND REFURBISHMENT

Selecting environmentally responsible suppliers and providers that follow eco-policies and offer sustainable products and services.
Lonon City Island, museum and library project groups

Target	Key Performance Indicators	Action(s)	Monitoring and reporting	Timeframe	Persons and teams responsible
Develop awareness of ESG considerations in the planning stages of construction and refurbishment projects to ensure alignment with institutional ESG strategy.	70% of contractors used by the Academy have a sustainability policy in place. 70% of construction and refurbishment projects screened for ESG impact during planning stage.	Create an ESG impact assessment template for use in planning of construction and refurbishment projects. Complete an audit of current contractors' sustainability policies.	ESG committee annual report to Audit Committee.	June 2026	ESG Committee rep JG in partnership with Estates team
Promote awareness and consideration of sustainability factors (durability, materials, certifications) in the selection and purchase of furniture.	50% of all furniture purchases reviewed for sustainability factors, with a 20% increase in sustainable furniture purchases by the end of 2025.	Create an ESG impact assessment template to support decision-making in relation to the purchasing of furniture and equipment.	ESG committee annual report to Audit Committee.	June 2026	ESG Committee
Ensure consideration has been given to ESG factors in the design and procurement of sets and production materials for Opera and Musical Theatre.	ESG impact assessment carried out for all productions from 2025/6 onwards.	Embed consideration of sustainability factors and use of ESG impact assessment during production planning processes. Implement the guidelines from https://theatregreenbook.com/	ESG committee annual report to Audit Committee.	September 2025	ESG Committee

5. ENGAGEMENT

Target	Key Performance Indicators	Action(s)	Monitoring and reporting	Timeframe	Persons and teams responsible
Increase engagement and sustainability/climate literacy among students and staff.	Number of staff participating in ESG initiatives	ESG Committee to programme awareness events for staff and students.	ESG annual reporting to Audit Committee.	June 2025	ESG Committee Student's Union Marketing, Communications and Audience engagement team Heads of Department
	Expansion of ESG components in student enrolment week	Input from the MCA team on how we embed ESG messaging into our general comms.	Increased presence of ESG content in general Academy comms.	June 2026	
	Expansion of ESG components in new staff induction	Departments are encouraged to include ESG commitments in their team strategies and to reference ESG considerations in the annual planning cycle.	Annual departmental reporting as part of the planning cycle (principal study and professional services departments).	June 2027	
	All staff enrolled on ESG training module via online learning platform.				
	Increased positive behaviour changes across the Academy community as evidenced in data collection for other target areas (water, energy, waste management).				

<p>Explore external partnerships and increase peer engagement in the sector to promote a climate-conscious musical community.</p>	<p>ESG Committee develops better understanding of best practice across the sector</p> <p>ESG to consider and agree any appropriate external partnerships.</p>	<p>ESG Committee to build relationships across the sector to establish best sustainability practice</p> <p>ESG committee to consider building better connections with existing organisations who are scaling up their ESG activities such as Conservatoires UK (CUK), the Association of European Conservatoires (AEC).</p> <p>ESG Committee to explore potential formal partnerships which promote climate-consciousness within the performing arts sector.</p>	<p>ESG Committee annual reporting to Audit Committee.</p>	<p>September 2025 and ongoing</p>	<p>ESG Committee members</p>
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6. TRAVEL

The Academy has long promoted the use of sustainable travel options to staff for commuting, offering a season ticket loan and cycle to work scheme. Our Hybrid working policy supports working from home for the majority of professional services staff for 40% of the working week to allow carbon footprint reduction related to commuting. When choosing transport for business travel, we encourage staff to choose sustainable options, balancing this with the need to deliver value for money. We prioritise accommodation with recognised eco-credentials.

Target	Key Performance Indicators	Action(s)	Monitoring and reporting	Timeframe	Persons and teams responsible
Develop a dataset on travel activities undertaken by staff and students with the aim of reducing environmental impact. A subset of this data will cover research staff.	<p>70% capture rate of all travel taken for Academy business within the academic year.</p> <p>Ensure minimum 50% of travel undertaken for Academy business (Scope 3) is tracked using Xledger.</p>	<p>Implement an annual travel data collection process via a staff survey to cover commuting and home working.</p> <p>Introduce a mechanism to record business travel and accommodation data eg return distance by travel mode and hotel stays and location.</p>	Annual report to ESG Committee with comparative data from previous cycles to track progress.	<p>October 2025</p> <p>June 2026</p>	Relevant department administrators, Research Office, ESG Lead, Department Administrator Team Leader.
Embed consideration of environmental factors into decision making when planning travel dates, frequency and in selecting lower impact modes of transport for Academy business.	<p>A measurable increase in the use of sustainable travel options (metric to follow in second cycle once baseline known).</p> <p>A measurable reduction in taxi fare claims within the first year, indicating a</p>	Develop and disseminate sustainable travel policy including a travel needs assessment template to aid decision-making.	<p>Conduct annual surveys to gather data and information on consideration of travel options.</p> <p>Ensure survey responses can be filtered to identify different groups of</p>	<p>March 2026</p> <p>March 2027</p> <p>April 2026</p>	Relevant department administrators, Research Office, ESG Lead, Department Administrator Team Leader.

	shift towards more sustainable travel choices.		staff (research, teaching, etc).		
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7. RESEARCH

Research at the Academy is often practice-based and collaborative. Research staff and students should strive to design, conduct and disseminate research in a way that is mindful of environmental footprint, and which seeks to mitigate any negative impacts where possible. Indeed, much research undertaken at the Academy promotes positive impacts to society that may conflict with negative environmental impacts, so a balanced approach maintaining the values of research excellence and integrity, while reducing any negative environmental impacts, inform the targets and actions in this area. These targets and actions interact with other areas of the overall strategy but are monitored and progressed under the aegis of the Research Office in response to sector practice.

Target	Key Performance Indicators	Action(s)	Monitoring and reporting	Timeframe	Persons and teams responsible
Foster external partnerships and increase researcher engagement to promote a climate-conscious research community.	Research Office develops better understanding of best practice across the sector	Research Office to build relationships across the sector to establish best sustainability practice.	Research Office reporting to ESG Committee.	June 2025	Research Office
	Research Office to work with ESG to consider and agree any appropriate external partnerships.	Research Office to encourage research which itself aims to promote sustainable development.		June 2026	
		Research Office to grow and support Knowledge Exchange partnerships focussed on the environment.		June 2027	

<p>Increase engagement and sustainability/climate literacy among research staff and students.</p>	<p>Expansion of ESG components in new staff induction.</p> <p>All staff enrolled on ESG training module via online learning platform.</p>	<p>Develop tailored training for researchers on sustainable research practices.</p>	<p>Research Office reporting to ESG Committee.</p>	<p>September 2026</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Research Office</p>
<p>Embed awareness and consideration of sustainability factors in the design of research projects.</p>	<p>Data capture on funding applications submitted.</p> <p>Research Office develops guidance document for researchers on codes of practice for sustainable research.</p>	<p>Create a Research Office impact assessment template to support researcher decision-making in relation to sustainable project design.</p> <p>Review sustainability considerations in the design of research projects requesting internal Academy funding.</p> <p>Set up a peer review process for external funding applications which considers sustainable project design as a facet of Responsible Research Innovation.</p>	<p>Research Office reporting to ESG Committee.</p>	<p>June 2026</p> <p>September 2025</p>	<p>Research Office</p>

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This strategy provides a clear and purposeful framework for action, setting defined targets and reaffirming our commitment to continuous improvement, environmental sustainability, Belonging, increasing awareness among staff and students, equality, and ethical leadership practice. With these principles at its core, our focus now turns to implementation. Achieving meaningful progress will require collective responsibility, and every member of the Academy community has a role to play in advancing the goals outlined in this plan.

To ensure accountability and sustained momentum, we will rigorously monitor our progress, engage meaningfully with stakeholders, and remain responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities. The ESG Committee will provide structured oversight, with regular reporting to the Audit Committee and Governing Body, ensuring transparency and strategic alignment.

We invite all members of our community to contribute to this vital mission, fostering a culture of responsibility and ambition that will shape a more sustainable and equitable future for the Academy