

MUSEUM

ACCESS POLICY

Date approved: 4 September 2023

Name of the Museum:

Royal Academy of Music Museum

Name of governing body:

Governing Body of the Royal Academy of Music

Policy review procedure:

This policy will be published and reviewed every 18 months – 2 years, with a full review every 5 years.

Date at which this policy is due for review:

Updated every 2 years with full review by 04/09/2028

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Access Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of the Museum. This Policy will be shared with internal and external stakeholders via email, and will be published on our website to ensure availability to users and potential users.

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

Charity number 310007

Company registration number RC000438

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**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

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1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The Royal Academy of Music Museum holds collections of outstanding musical significance. It aims to use these collections to support the overall mission of the Royal Academy of Music (the Academy), which is to preserve and enrich international musical culture through the training and education of the most talented musicians to the highest standards. The Academy makes a significant contribution to the public benefit in terms of the advancement of education, the arts, culture and heritage, through its teaching, research, and other activities. It provides crucial contextual information for those developing and shaping their music careers via the Widening Participation programme which works to increase the ethnic and economic diversity of applicants to the Academy, Junior Academy and Junior Jazz.

This Policy aims to provide a framework for balanced and consistent access to the Museum and its collections to meet its Mission and Aims, in alignment with the Academy's Strategic Plan 2023-2026. The specific objectives for achieving our strategic aims for 2023-2026 are set out in Museum Action Plan 2023-2026, and in subsequent planning for 2026-2028. This document can be requested from the Head of Collections.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Collections Development Policy, Collections Information Policy and Collections Care and Conservation Policy.

A) THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC MUSEUM MISSION STATEMENT AND CORE AIMS

The Mission of the Museum is aligned with the wider mission of the Academy. The mission of the Museum is *to support the work of the Academy and to advertise it to the wider public, highlighting the potential of music to inspire, unite and stimulate through performance, displays and research.*

The core aims of the Museum are:

- To increase awareness, understanding and enjoyment of our collections of musical instruments, art, photographs, scores, manuscripts and other objects in the galleries and the wider Academy, through lively and innovative displays, interpretation, outreach and programming.
- To support the culture of musical research and practice in the Academy and beyond, through displays, events, collaboration and access to the collections.
- To provide access to the collections and information about them, for users within the Academy and the wider public, using digital means as well as traditional methods.
- To enable active use of the collections today whilst responsibly preserving them for tomorrow.

B) MUSEUM STRATEGIC AIMS FOR 2023-2026

- A. Interpretation and access: Increase the ease of use of the collections, and collections information for a range of audiences through performance and improvements to interpretation and access.
- B. Development of audiences: Redefine and improve public offering, both on site and online, to support access, engagement, learning, outreach activities and audience development
- C. Active Collaborations: Continue to find ways to support the Academy's Access and Participation Plan through internal collaborations and performance. Creatively develop collection-based opportunities to actively connect with other institutions, individuals, and communities.
- D. Documentation and Information: Improve our Documentation and information in relation to collections to meet the Primary Procedures of the Spectrum 5.1 standard, and improve access for both internal and external users through using digital/online methods as well as physical.
- E. Collections management and care: Improve the existing and develop further Collections Care and Conservation procedures to meet the Basic standards for all collections according to Benchmarks in Collections Care, in order to preserve the Collection for the present and future generations to enjoy and study.

2. LEARNING AND ACCESS PRINCIPLES

The Museum uses the term 'learning' in its broadest sense and values all kind of informal learning activities, as well as formal education. The Museum, Library and Archives Council's *Inspiring Learning for All* framework, updated in 2014 by ACE, is built on a broad and inclusive definition of learning, adapted from the Campaign for Learning. It identifies that:

- learning is a process of active engagement with experience
- it is what people do when they want to make sense of the world
- it may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, values, ideas and feelings
- effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more.

As a learning organisation, we aspire to develop and encourage:

- a shared vision of the Academy's role and purpose
- initiative, team-work and flexible approaches
- personal and professional development
- openness to new ideas and approaches.

The Museum is an important conduit for learning and access within the Academy, as well as an important resource for supporting pathways to future careers within music and we collaborate closely with colleagues in Academic departments, Widening Participation and Open Academy to deliver our learning and access activities.

3. SPECIFIC AIMS AND USER GROUPS

The Academy recognises that different users have different needs. The Museum exists to support the student, staff and research community (both internal and external), and emerging young musicians supported by Widening Participation work, and through the loan of instruments, to enrich the experience of audiences for music nationally and internationally. We are committed to widening our current provision to low or non-users by continuing our evaluation of the Museum and the user groups. We aim to provide a stimulating, enjoyable, relevant and appropriate environment and experience for every museum visitor.

A) STUDENTS

The Academy aims to provide a learning space for students of the Academy as a member institution of the University of London, both formally and informally to develop an additional level of learning. We encourage use of the galleries for classes, performances and research into the collections to inform study, projects and performance. Students may apply through the Curator of Instruments and on the recommendation of their Head of Study to borrow certain instruments from the collection to enhance their performance skills and their awareness of the historical context and significance of the collection.

B) STAFF

Museum staff work alongside Academy colleagues to develop classes and events relevant to the collection and the students' studies. We aim to inspire research into our collections that can assist the staff to cultivate their own personal skills and development and inform the University syllabus.

C) WIDENING PARTICIPATION

Supporting young people into a conservatoire education can be a challenge, given the economic support and number of hours of practice and training required to gain a place at small, specialist institutions. This is specially noted for young people from lower incomes and lower participatory neighbourhoods, intersecting with global majority heritage. The Museum and its Collections is able to provide contextual learning, and motivation for this process, and has become an important element in many of the onsite Widening Participation activities that take place (including Community First Strings Experience, Composers Club and our Summer School programmes: Springboard to Grade 5 Theory and Inner Ear).

D) RESEARCHERS

We welcome external researchers from across the world and facilitate access to our Museum and Archive collections. Researchers can enquire via email, phone or the website enquiry portal and can arrange digital access or a physical visit to view collection items, supervised by Museum staff. We also respond to more informal queries from members of the public; many seeking information about relatives who are alumni, image usage requests, or information about collection items or other musical items in their possession.

E) VISITORS

The Academy offers a wide range of enjoyable and effective programmes which engage and inspire visitors with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities. We develop sustainable programmes and partnerships that encourage new visitors, to benefit from our learning opportunities. We offer a variety of hands-on and other informal learning opportunities to assist in overcoming learning barriers. Specific times for public visits are advertised, often to coincide with other events taking place which might be of interest or benefit to the public, such as lunchtime concerts or performances in the theatre, and some events take place in the Museum itself. We encourage visits from the local community and public including families, tourists and other visitors to the Academy.

F) GROUPS

We are a small Museum and need to balance access requirements with the operational and educational needs of the institution. We encourage pre-booked visits from schools, colleges, other universities, museums and other organisations such as community and specialist groups. We aim to develop a suitable programme of events that will encourage these groups to visit on multiple occasions to benefit from our collection. We work with the Open Academy department and the Widening Participation Department to deliver these activities.

G) DIGITAL USERS

Our website incorporates a collections search facility, suitable for both the professional researcher and for people planning visits. Regularly changing features on collection items such as Object of the month and Highlights of our collections give digital visitors a reason to return and offer a 'way in' to searching and experiencing our collections. Most of our extensive art collection is now also available on Art UK and all of our instruments are listed on the MINIM UK website – a national database of musical instruments. Work is ongoing to create more in-depth digital exhibitions. We also engage with digital audiences through social media, in collaboration with Communications and Marketing Department.

H) CONCERT AUDIENCES

Our collection of playable musical instruments is unique in the UK; many of these are available to students and other selected professional musicians through our special loans collection and this represents an important strand to our access and outreach work. Our instruments are played across the world in concerts, recordings, auditions and competitions, reaching thousands of people, and it is a requirement of the loan that borrowers highlight that the instrument belongs to the Museum. In this way we provide intellectual access to, and enjoyment of, many of the instruments in our collection and encourage further engagement with the collection as a whole.

4. AUDIENCE RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

We evaluate the impact of our learning programmes, exhibitions and events regularly to ensure they are meeting our core aims and always seek ways to improve using gallery feedback forms, visitor surveys and staff training, as well as web analytics to track digital engagement.

5. ACCESS

The Museum actively seeks to make its collections and building more accessible to as wide a range of users as possible. We define access as something that is made possible when physical, intellectual, social, attitudinal, emotional, cultural, sensory, financial and technological barriers are removed or reduced.

We adhere to all national and international statutes of law, including, but not exclusively, the Equality Act 2010, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 1998 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. This policy is consistent with the Academy's Equality and Diversity Policy. We follow national standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines including, but not exclusively, BS8477:2007 Code of practice for customer service, PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management and PAS78 Guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites.

Institution wide, we also adhere to the Academy's Access and Participation Plan.

A) PHYSICAL

A rolling programme of displays provides access to material in store, as well as longer-term access provision through the three permanent galleries. We follow BS8300 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. The Museum has a step-free accessible entrance which is clearly signposted with easy access to all floors via a lift. The Museum also has two step-free and accessible toilets. Information about accessibility is available on the Museum website. A leaflet is available in the Museum outlining the Museum's step-free access routes (and throughout the Academy). A wheelchair can be provided upon request. We provide physical facilities in conjunction with the Academy as a whole that enhance users' experience of the Museum and balance the physical needs of the collection with visitors' needs. Future gallery development will bear access needs in mind during planning and realisation.

B) GEOGRAPHICAL

We are aware that visitors may live too far away to visit us, and therefore we take the following steps to maximise access:

- Providing a rich online experience, through access to the Collections Catalogue, both Museum and Library, highlights of the collection, object of the month, and online exhibitions.
- Providing object loans to other museums or institutions nationally and internationally.

- Livestreaming and recorded performances via our website, YouTube and Vimeo where our playable instruments are used.
- Use of special loan collection of playing instruments in less accessible areas.

C) INTELLECTUAL

We recognise that people have different learning styles and we aim to be a resource for learning about music and the Academy for visitors of all ages and with many different background and abilities, both formally and informally. We follow best practice guidelines in the creation of interpretation and display materials, with regard to reading age, accessible font style and size and using a mix of visual, text and interactive displays. We welcome and encourage all users, regardless of musical knowledge or experience, and aim to play a part in democratising access to Western classical music.

D) SOCIAL, ATTITUDINAL AND EMOTIONAL

We aim to ensure students, staff and other user groups feel the Museum collections are of significance to them and that they are welcome in the space, regardless of age, gender, background, ethnicity or musical knowledge. We aim to review our collections through the lens of diversity and issues of historical inclusion and exclusion, as part of a drive to greater equity and diversity across the Academy as a whole, and to contribute to the broader discussion of this at a national level, where appropriate.

E) CULTURAL

We aim to develop routes for visitors whose first language is not English. The Museum is currently working on translating printed and digital accessible materials, including creating new digital labels in new languages, based on our visitors' needs. Whilst we are working towards this, the museum is employing gallery assistants and volunteers with language skills to support our visitors during their visit.

As an institution specialising in Western Classical music our ability to offer diverse forms of musical culture is limited, and so we aim to provide a thoughtful contextualisation of the social and economic factors that underlie our collections.

F) SENSORIAL

We aim in the period of this policy to consult and improve provision for users with sensory needs, to enable visitors with impaired vision or hearing to gain access to the Museum and the Academy collections. We also aim to provide for those living with dementia and those visitors with autism, through existing collaboration with Open Academy.

Details of our current provision and forward planning are available in the current Action Plan 2023-2026, this document can be requested from the Head of Collections.

G) FINANCIAL

We recognise the financial barriers that exist which may impede access. As a result, the Museum and all exhibitions are free to enter.

H) TECHNOLOGICAL

We make use of IT and digital communications technology to make information on collections available in as user-friendly a format as possible, for example via our accessible website and a touchscreen in the gallery. Audio recordings of some of the instruments on display are available on the website. We take into account intellectual property constraints regarding objects in our collection and surrogates.

6. USES OF THE COLLECTIONS

This section focuses on procedures and responsibilities on managing the use of collections. The Museum aims to follow the Spectrum 5.1 standards throughout; specific guidelines related with documentation and museum loans can be found in the Collections Information Policy, the Collections Care and Conservation Policy, the Collections Procedural Manual, and Instrument Loan Protocol.

Requests to use the collections can include, but are not limited to:

- Loans for display
- Loans for material study and research
- Loans of instruments for performances, classes, recordings, lectures and recitals.
- Ongoing loans of playing instruments to support the Academy students learning and development
- Loan of instruments for material study and research
- Use of instruments in the museum for lecture-recitals
- Use of instruments in the museum for informing performance practice
- Use of instruments in the museum for teaching
- Use of reproductions for research and publication

A) The responsibility to receiving, documenting and authorising requests for using objects of the collections and associated data falls on the Head of Collections, the Curator of Instruments, or the Librarian if the object is part of the Special Collections. Requests for using image reproductions and associated data are directed to the Digitisation Officer.

B) Documenting the use of objects, data, and reproductions is the responsibility of the person authorising the use, either by directly keeping a register of use, in the case of the playing instruments or by requesting users to submit the information. Information is recorded in the digital object folder, identified by the object number. Information regarding loans for display and object movements is recorded by the Collections Documentation and Care Officer. Information regarding location of instruments used for playing is recorded by Instrument Loans Coordinator.

- C) Insurance providers must be informed about using objects outside the Royal Academy of Music grounds.
- D) Request forms to use the objects will be sent to requesters, which need to be returned to the authoriser for appreciation before any use can be authorised. More information can be found in the Documentation Procedural Manual.
- E) Knowledge and contents arising from the use of the object are recorded in the digital object folder, and a reference is made in the object database entry.

7. ACCESS AUDIT

Access audits are a valuable source of information for the Museum to delineate areas of improvement and include them in our planning. They will inform specific objectives connected with our strategic aims.

The next formal Museum Access Audit is planned for the financial year 2023/24. Current objectives in our Action Plan reflecting access were informed by previous self-assessment audits. Formal Museum Access Audits shall take place every three years.

The most recent audit was undertaken informally, in July 2023; a self-assessment, using the South-east Museum Development 'Access Review Toolkit'¹. Informal audits shall take place yearly and reported to the Museum and Library Committee. Necessary actions required between each Museum Forward Plan will be discussed yearly with the relevant stakeholders during the financial planning period and updated in the Museum Action Plan.

¹ South East Museum Development (2023): Access Review Toolkit, <https://southeastmuseums.org/resource-library/access-review-toolkit/>. Last consulted on 3 August 2023