

Royal Northern College of Music

Physical Contact Between College Staff and Students

Policy & Procedure

Department: Human Resources

**Document owner: Head of Human
Resources**

**Approval Committee: Executive
Committee / Board of Governors**

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RNCM
**ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE of MUSIC**

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The Royal Northern College of Music is committed to seeking to provide the highest standards of education, research and training to prepare students for professional careers in music. As part of this education, research and training process there may be occasions where physical contact between a member of staff and a student is entirely professionally appropriate. This policy has the following principal functions:

- To ensure that staff and students recognise the circumstances in which staff may need to use physical contact, and understand what is, and what is not, appropriate physical contact;
- To outline the steps which staff should take in circumstances where physical contact is professionally appropriate;
- To ensure that staff have the confidence to give, and that students have the confidence to receive tuition, advice and guidance, without feeling vulnerable that their actions may be misconstrued, or that they may be subjected to vexatious or spurious claims;
- To assist in creating an appropriate and positive relationship of trust conducive to teaching and learning.

2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

2.1 This policy applies to all staff engaged by the College whether on an 'employed' or 'self-employed' basis (collectively referred to as staff in this policy), contractors (including those teaching, directing, coaching or mentoring students), and to all College students.

2.2 The policy applies to all tuition delivered and all research undertaken, wherever and whenever this occurs.

3. MANAGEMENT OF PHYSICAL CONTACT

3.1 Situations where physical contact may be professionally appropriate include (but are not limited to):

- Where a member of staff needs to give tuition, advice or guidance on posture or technique in relation to playing/singing;
- Where a member of staff needs to demonstrate breathing techniques;
- Where a member of staff or a student has a disability which requires adaptive teaching styles that may require physical demonstration;
- Where a member of staff needs to give tuition, advice or guidance to modify a style of performance so as not to put excessive strain on a particular part of the body.

3.2 Given the nature of the design and delivery of the tutorial programme many students have a significant part of their tuition delivered on a one-to-one basis. Whilst this is considered to be a very effective way of delivery, it may create a situation of greater sensitivity.

- 3.3 In order to assist in managing the relationship described above, if they feel it is appropriate to make physical contact with a student as part of the education or training process or the delivery of tuition, advice or guidance, staff should:
- Explain to the student beforehand why, how and where on the body they intend to make contact and the reason for doing so;
 - Ask for, and obtain, the student's consent before making the physical contact. If a student does not provide their consent, physical contact must not be made;
 - Where possible, engage in necessary physical contact where there is more than one student or member of staff present (for example, demonstrate correct posture to a small group of students rather than on a one-to-one basis) and/or where possible, take appropriate steps to increase visibility (for example, by opening doors and/or blinds);
 - Engage in any necessary physical contact on College premises wherever possible (rather than, for example, during tuition delivered elsewhere);
 - Consider carefully what is said shortly before, during or after any physical contact to ensure that a comment or action is not misconstrued or taken out of context.

3.4 If there is any doubt as to the application of this policy, and in particular if a member of staff believes that there may be any reason to suspect that a student might believe that the policy has not been adhered to, then the member of staff should immediately contact their Line Manager/Head of School/Head of Department, in order to clarify the position and/or address any such situation.

4. ALLEGATIONS OF INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT

4.1 Allegations of inappropriate physical contact will be taken seriously by the College and will be investigated initially in accordance with:

- the College's Student Complaints procedure or Student Bullying and Harassment procedure (as appropriate) [students];
- the College's Dignity at Work procedure or the grievance procedure [staff].

5. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY

5.1 If staff or students have any questions in relation to this policy, they should contact:

- Head of Human Resources – staff contact.
- Head of Registry – student contact.

5.2 The College's Executive Committee shall be responsible for reviewing this policy to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.