

Strengthening skills and musicianship

The RCO introduces the 'RCO Certificate of Accredited Membership' (CAM)

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Organists come in many guises, from renowned recitalists to talented teens; from the part-time stalwarts of parish worship to cathedral directors of music. It is the mission of the Royal College of Organists to support them all, regardless of age, experience or level of attainment.

Of course the familiar College diplomas of ARCO and FRCO have for many years played a distinct role in promoting high standards and expertise, but it would be wrong to conclude from this that the College is somehow just a body for a relatively small, qualified or professional fraternity. RCO membership is, and always has been, open to all who are interested in, or have a connection to, organ and choral music.

Our approach to learning and accreditation strives to be equally inclusive. We believe that many if not all organists can find personal challenge and fulfilment in pursuing appropriate accreditation and taking part in educational activities. That organ and choral music should be highly regarded and central to cultural and spiritual life is a core RCO belief: it is only through the achievements of our members, working in all walks of musical life, that we can truly fulfil this goal.

In recent years the College's examination and educational programmes have been gradually broadening in scope and deepening in commitment in response to the challenges that organists, and their employers, now face. The CertRCO (from July 2017 renamed the Colleague diploma) was introduced as a helping hand towards ARCO, and now a newly implemented scheme means that, for the first time, the RCO will be able to accredit organists at every level, from the early stages to the equivalent of postgraduate level.

The **RCO Certificate of Accredited Membership (CAM)** is an early-level scheme designed to establish and strengthen fundamental skills and musicianship at the organ. CAM offers the organist a developmental route from the foundation stage (equivalent to around ABRSM/TCL Grade 2) via the intermediate stage (around Grade 4) to the advanced stage (around Grade 6).

Each stage of the CAM scheme requests the performance of solo pieces and asks the player to demonstrate, through supporting notes, knowledge and understanding of the repertoire performed. A range of genres and idioms may be explored. Stages 2 and 3 also request the performance of an accompaniment. The assessors will be looking for the ability to play fluently, co-ordinate manuals and pedals convincingly, select appropriate registrations, and manage manual, registration, and dynamic changes during performance.

Candidates may commence the scheme at any stage and there are no prerequisites at any of the three stages. Candidates are free to choose their own repertoire (though repertoire ideas are suggested) and their own accompaniment exercise at Stages 2 and 3; advice about a proposed programme may be requested in advance.

Excitingly, there are several options for being assessed in the practical section, including the submission of audio-visual material. Both pipe and digital organs may be used for AV submissions,

and at a venue of the candidate's choosing (this assessment option is subject to discussion). The RCO will also be able to recognise (at Stages 1 and 2) candidates with formal evidence of prior training and endorsement (e.g., through a diocesan organists' training scheme).

CAM is part of the RCO's growing Personal and Professional Development (PPD) programme. It may be viewed as either an end in itself or as a series of stepping stones towards RCO diplomas, and entry to the scheme is not dependent on RCO membership – though membership will ensure the formal recognition of success and is on offer to CAM applicants who are not yet members at a discounted rate for one year

Many find benchmarking attractive, and the pursuit of accreditation both challenging and stimulating. Success in securing an RCO award is perhaps more likely when not done in isolation, or outside of a notion of continuing development. The RCO has also been considering how to broaden the scope of its educational services so it can encourage, support, and enable practitioners during the accreditation process and in their daily musical and pedagogical activities. Various types of support suitable for CAM, and RCO diplomas, may now be found through the RCO: online learning resources at all levels through our virtual campus iRCO; individual tuition through an RCO accredited teacher; our library collections; and the programme of classes and courses organised through the RCO's regional network.

You can read more about CAM and all RCO accreditation at www.rco.org.uk/examinations_qualifications.php

Notes to Editors

1. The Royal College of Organists (RCO) has supported and represented organists and choral directors for more than 150 years. With members in nearly 40 countries around the world, we work together to promote the best in organ playing and choral directing, to encourage anyone who is interested to learn more about this fascinating and versatile musical instrument, and to explore its history and repertoire.
2. Our vision is for a world in which organ and choral music are widely valued as being central to cultural and spiritual life. We support organists and choral directors of every age and all levels of attainment with:
 - effective advocacy;
 - readily accessible support, advice and subject materials;
 - an educational programme that develops and maintains high standards of competence and artistry; and
 - relevant professional and vocational qualifications of high integrity.
3. For more information on the Royal College of Organists, please visit www.rco.org.uk