

Job Title: Director of Higher Education and Director of Creative Strategy
Location: Chiswick
Salary: £85,000 per annum
Reports to: Principal

Context

ArtsEd originated from two schools, one founded in 1919 by Grace Cone and one founded in 1922 by Olive Ripman. These two educational pioneers believed passionately in the value of combining a general academic education with specialised training in dance, drama, music and art. They were committed to preparing young people for professional careers in or related to the theatre. In 1939, Grace and Olive joined forces to create the Cone Ripman School, subsequently named the Arts Educational Schools.

Dame Alicia Markova and Sir Anton Dolin drew almost exclusively on ArtsEd students to help them create their revolutionary company London Festival Ballet, which eventually became the English National Ballet. Ballerina Dame Beryl Grey became Director of the Schools in the 1960s. ArtsEd continued to innovate, introducing both professional acting and musical theatre courses and in I986 moved to its present home in Chiswick. In 2007, Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber became President, heralding an auspicious new era for ArtsEd.

The School of Musical Theatre and School of Acting offer full-time BA and MA courses. Our Musical Theatre course is recognised as the best in the UK, while the Acting course is praised for its innovative 50:50 split between stage and screen acting. Our outstanding record of graduate success sees nearly every one of our Musical Theatre graduates and over three-quarters of our Acting graduates make their professional debuts within six months of graduating.

Overview

The Dean of Higher Education and Director of Creative Strategy provides academic and strategic leadership for the higher education provision at ArtsEd. This senior role ensures that the institution delivers an exceptional student experience that is artistically rigorous, industry-connected, and inclusive. The Dean leads the continuous development of courses, teaching, and creative initiatives that reflect the vibrancy and diversity of the contemporary performing arts sector.

The role is accountable for both the School of Acting and the School of Musical Theatre, the Production Team, and the Registry including Student Support and therefore the postholder will bring expertise regarding the development of vocational performing arts training, improving and safeguarding the student experience, regulation of higher education, and innovation in creative projects and productions. They will provide visible, values-led leadership to the Schools and Professional Services teams they are responsible for, building a high-performance culture and ensuring alignment of activity with institutional priorities. They will promote collaboration across their teams and across the institution. They will also engage regularly with external partners, prospective students, donors, and key stakeholders to enhance the institution's reputation, reach, and revenue.

Working closely with the Principal, and as part of the Executive Leadership Team, the postholder will foster a culture of creative excellence, academic integrity in a vocational context, and equitable opportunity for all staff and students to thrive as artists, practitioners, and collaborators. The Director will shape and deliver a long-term stability and visionary leadership for the higher education provision and the creative strategy. This in turn is expected to support its growth strategy that strengthens the institution's market position and supports its broader strategic goals.

Key Responsibilities

1. **Strategic Leadership**

- Serve as a member of the Executive Leadership Team, making a significant contribution to the overall strategic direction, decision-making, and governance of the institution.
- Deputise for the Principal in their absence in all matters relating to Higher Education.
- Provide educational and artistic insight and market intelligence to inform institutional priorities.

- Lead the creation and delivery of a comprehensive 3–5 year higher education strategy, working in close partnership with the Principal and senior leaders to ensure alignment with the organisation's mission, values, and long-term objectives including.
- Provide academic leadership and direction for the higher education provision and contribute to and chair boards and committees.
- Oversee and co-author operational plans for each department ensuring that they complement the overall vision of ArtsEd.
- Define, implement, and monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) to track student performance and outcomes, budgetary effectiveness, and regulatory compliance alongside success measures for creative activities, stakeholder engagement, and departmental effectiveness.
- Act as a visible ambassador for the institution, representing its higher education and creative interests externally with prospective students, alumni, donors, partners, and community stakeholders.
- Lead and manager the higher education teams to ensure excellence of process and output, including in relation to development of the educational portfolio.

2. Teaching, Learning, and the Student Experience

- Champion a practice-based, vocational approach to teaching and learning that integrates performance, and reflection.
- Lead course design, validation, and review to maintain training excellence, professional relevance and an excellent student experience.
- Oversee quality assurance, assessment, and academic governance processes.
- Lead and support academic teams in achieving excellence in teaching, creative practice, and student support.
- Ensure the learning environment is inclusive, student-centred, and conducive to creative experimentation.
- Promote staff development in pedagogic innovation, professional practice, and mentorship.
- Embed employability and creative enterprise throughout the curriculum to prepare students for diverse and sustainable careers in the performing arts.
- Lead initiatives that enhance student engagement, retention, satisfaction, and progression.

3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

- Lead and model an institutional commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion across all aspects of higher education and creative activity.
- Ensure that teaching, recruitment, and assessment practices actively reflect and celebrate diverse voices, perspectives, and cultural identities.

- Champion inclusive casting, representation, and curriculum design in the performing arts context.
- Support the recruitment, retention, and progression of diverse staff and student communities.
- Collaborate with colleagues, students, and external partners to address barriers to participation and belonging in higher education and the creative industries.

4. Industry Engagement and Creative Strategy

- Develop and deliver a creative strategy that positions the institution as a leader in professional performing arts education.
- Build and sustain meaningful partnerships with professional companies, creative organisations, and cultural bodies.
- Ensure courses remain connected to current and emerging industry practices, technologies, and artistic trends.
- Lead initiatives that promote collaboration between students, staff, and industry professionals.
- Represent the institution externally, contributing to the national and international profile of its creative work and graduates.
- Ensure that productions in the ALWF Theatre are well planned and executed to a professional level.

5. Regulatory Compliance and Quality Assurance

- Promote a culture of continuous improvement in educational and operational practice.
- Deputise for the Principal when required to ensure:
    - Compliance with all higher education regulatory and quality frameworks (OfS, QAA, validating universities, awarding bodies).
    - Oversee academic policies, procedures, and external reporting (including HESA, NSS, and graduate outcomes).
    - Manage validation, revalidation, and audit processes to maintain academic integrity and institutional reputation.

Person Specification

Essential

- Postgraduate Degree in a relevant creative subject area or equivalent professional experience.

- Significant leadership experience in higher education or a relevant part of the creative industries.
- Proven success in developing and enhancing vocational and creative higher education provision.
- Experience managing multiple functions, budgets, and high-performing teams.
- Strong commercial acumen with ability to interpret financial, operational, and market data.
- Proven experience in effectively managing large budgets.
- Expertise in artistic production processes and/or regulation in higher education.
- Excellent leadership, communication, negotiation, and project management skills.
- Entrepreneurial, innovative, collaborative, and student-focused approach.
- Resilient, adaptable, and solutions-focused with high levels of integrity.

Desirable

- National or international professional credibility for education and/or artistic achievements.
- Experience of working with boards, trustees, or governance bodies.
- Experience of delivering successful outcomes in Teaching Excellence Framework submissions, institutional partnership processes or other quality mechanisms.
- Experience of working collaboratively to develop commercial opportunities aligned with higher education portfolios.
- Understanding of recruitment markets, including international, and relevant regulatory frameworks.