



Higher Education

Access and Participation Statement 2026-27

A. Our Approach

ArtsEd is committed to the ongoing work of enabling people of all backgrounds and ages to access high quality performing arts training. This commitment is continually reviewed and adapted to meet the changing needs of our communities, delivered through barrier-free Higher Education learning and a wide range of outreach initiatives led by the ArtsEd Extra and Outreach Department.

This document forms our Access and Participation Statement for 2026-27 and is published on our website.

B. Our focus for 2026-27

In 2026-27:

- i. We will work to continue to increase our provisions for current students and applicants who identify as disabled. Particular focus remains on reasonable adjustments for applicants with physical disabilities with a focus on allowing wheelchair users to attend auditions in the context of the age and limitations of the Bath Road site.
- ii. We will seek to expand our Student Success Pathway to ensure that students from low participation backgrounds are supported to be able to continue and able to fully participate in their studies.
- iii. We will embed the newly established role of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Partner as a dedicated resource for our Higher Education students. The DEIB Partner will support student-led initiatives, deliver inclusive events, provide DEIB guidance and support for staff, and facilitate appropriately led external workshops and engagement with external specialists.
- iv. We will continue to review our applicants' and students' data at the end of each audition process, as a means of establishing new targets aimed at supporting and increasing the participation of underrepresented groups at ArtsEd. This data is of particular use to the school's Outreach programme in terms of geographical reach and pinpointing possible feeder schools for the next year.

C. Financial support to learners

Funding is secured from a wide range of sources to help gifted students and applicants access our training and see it through to completion. Most of our Higher Education students have access to an SLC student loan, whilst around one third of our current student body currently receive Dance and Drama Awards (DaDAs), a means-tested, government funded scholarship scheme. For 2026-27, we are introducing an internal scholarship to replace the DaDA scheme, enabling more students to access increased maintenance loan funding from the SLC. We support as many

students as we can through our own bursary scheme and in total nearly half of the students who study with us receive a form of financial support (not including student loans).

i. Student Loans

ArtsEd is in the 'Approved' category of the Office for Students Higher Education Register, which means that eligible undergraduate and full-time CertHE Foundation students can apply to Student Finance England for maintenance loans up to £14,135 and tuition fee loans up to £6,525. MA Acting students can apply for a maximum of £13,206 towards maintenance and/or tuition fees.

Students on a low income may be eligible for income support. Students are also eligible to apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (with assistance from our SpLD Study Skills Coordinator if required).

ii. ArtsEd Scholarship

The ArtsEd Scholarship is a new award being introduced for 2026-27 that will be funded and administered internally. The Scholarship is aimed at BA students with a household income of less than £70,000 per year and will work in conjunction with the SLC Student Loan, covering between 50%-60% of each year's course fees. As with the DaDA, the Scholarship will be means-tested and awarded on a sliding scale but will focus more on offering financial support to the students from the lowest income backgrounds.

iii. Dance and Drama Awards

Dance and Drama Awards (DaDAs) offer annual scholarships to exceptionally talented performing arts students. Funded by the government through the Department for Education (DfE), DaDAs offer reduced tuition fees and assistance with living costs for the duration of the course. DaDA funding is linked to Trinity College London Professional Diplomas in Acting and Musical Theatre. Currently students in receipt of a DaDA are means tested according to national scales and may receive support for their course fees and apply for income assessed maintenance of up to £5,346 a year. This support is in the form of a grant, not a loan. Although we have replaced the DaDA scheme with the ArtsEd scholarship for incoming students from 2026-27 onwards, we continue to offer Awards to existing students who were judged at their audition to have the most potential to succeed in the profession and are in the most financial need.

iv. Additional External Funding

Every year we are invited to nominate or invite students to apply for awards from external organisations. Students have recently been successful in securing awards through the following schemes: Equity Student Bursary, The Laurence Olivier Bursary, Lilian Baylis Awards, Spotlight Prize, Lionel Bart Foundation Award, Sir John Gielgud Charitable Trust Bursary, BAFTA UK Scholarship, and Ian Fleming Musical Theatre Awards.

v. ArtsEd Bursary Scheme

ArtsEd also has a Bursary Scheme, which is intended to provide additional support to three-year BA and MA students who are struggling to fund their full tuition fees. The scheme provides smaller awards in the region of £1,000-£2,000 and is means tested, with awards varying year-on-year depending on individual circumstances and funds available. Larger bursaries in the region of £5,000 are also available and awarded to students who have demonstrated exceptional talent and commitment to their studies. Students must re-apply each year, as bursaries are awarded annually and are not guaranteed for the full three years of study.

vi. Total Funding for Students

We work hard each year to secure continued external funding for our students, including Trust scholarships (Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, Leverhulme Arts Scholarships) and corporate support, and to provide a generous bursary scheme. Over the past three years, we have been able to offer around £300,000 of funding per year (excluding student loans and DaDAs), a significant increase since 2022-23 and before.

vii. ArtsEd Student Hardship Fund

Our Student Hardship Fund allows us to provide emergency support to students who find themselves facing unexpected financial constraints. The Hardship Fund is funded and administered internally and provided directly to students, generally to cover items such as living costs, medical fees or transport costs.

viii. Audition Fee Waivers

Since January 2019 we have offered our own audition waiver scheme. In the academic year 2024/25, we offered 511 free auditions for entry to our courses in September 2025.

D. Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB)

We are committed to creating and sustaining an excellent teaching and learning experience for our students, and a positive and mutually supportive working environment for our staff, where individuals are equally valued and respected.

In contrast to the common perception of drama schools as elitist institutions that predominantly favour privately educated students from affluent backgrounds, we actively seek to attract students from a diverse range of backgrounds. We are also committed to ensuring that once students from under-represented backgrounds are enrolled, their educational journey is inclusive, supportive and equitable – both within the institution and as part of the wider community.

This includes involvement in the Pride in London Parade, the delivery of a monthly DEIB newsletter, student resources such as Black Inclusion Week, student-led events (for example, an LGBTQ+ Open Mic Night), focused listening groups with students, a dedicated DEIB inbox for students, and a partnership with Page One (a diversity and inclusion organisation that delivers training and workshops for students).

As well as working to encourage applicants from under-represented groups and those with no family history of Higher Education, we are committed to maintaining high representation of students who identify as 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic' (BAME) on our courses. Over the last five years, the average proportion of our new intake to BA courses who identify as BAME was approximately 27%.

E. Outreach Activities

ArtsEd's outreach programme lies at the heart of our commitment to access and inclusion. We strive to forge strong connections and enduring relationships with our local communities and youth groups by providing resources, mentorship, and practical programmes that inspire individuals from all backgrounds to explore the rich diversity of the arts.

ArtsEd offers our local community tickets to see open dresses of BA Musical Theatre and Acting productions. We have welcomed young people from primary and secondary schools and local care homes to experience our full-scale professional productions in the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation Theatre. We are also proud to offer a number of bursaries to our partners for fee-

paying short courses over the Easter and summer period.

In January 2026, ArtsEd announced a partnership with Arts North Studios, a Sunderland based performing arts school. This collaboration aims to support progression routes for talented performers regardless of geographical or socio-economic background in the Northeast of England. Through this partnership ArtsEd will offer a Regional Audition Hub for North East applicants, and deliver specialised workshops led by experienced ArtsEd tutors.

F. Auditions

We recognise that auditioning is expensive and that the cost of travelling to London can be prohibitive for prospective students. We offer online auditions for international applicants and, in 2025-26, we introduced regional audition hubs within the UK to reduce the need to travel to London. We have kept the audition fee low by charging only £25, and we provide audition fee waivers to students based on need.

G. Widening Participation: Part-time Foundation Courses

ArtsEd is mindful of the high costs of further training in the arts that can exclude students from developing their skills to a point where they are at the level to excel in the arts as a profession. To address this issue, we developed our part-time Foundation Courses: low cost, part-time intensive versions of our Acting and Musical Theatre CertHE courses.

Classes run three evenings a week over 23 weeks, allowing students to work during the day to help fund themselves and we offer flexible payment options. Participants have full access to all ArtsEd facilities including library resources and out of hours rehearsal space to help support their learning.

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