

AccessHE – UKADIA Creative HE

Apply Guide



Possibly more now than ever before in history, the creative arts have a fundamental part to play in our development and survival as human beings.

In an increasingly digital age, where AI and robotics have made life easier, in many respects we are in danger of becoming culturally poorer and disconnected from each other. We are challenged to ask ourselves 'what makes us human?' and what differentiates the human from the digital experience. We care, we play, we seek meaning and we are creative and we need to nurture our future creative talent because it is in this future that creativity will be the single most valuable commodity in both the arts and industry. One will no longer be separated from the other because the world needs creative solutions to the problems we all face.

At a time when the place of the creative arts in the English school curriculum is less than assured, it is essential that the future workforce has the chance to engage with these disciplines and understands the full breadth of available options when it comes to studying a creative subject at HE level.

With this guide, a joint resource developed by AccessHE and the UK Arts and Design Institutions Association, we hope to capture the richness and variety of creative courses on offer at HE providers in England, and give advice to prospective students considering further study in these areas.

Good luck!



Marianne Shillingford
Creative Director, AkzoNobel Dulux UK
Founder of the Colour in Design Awards



Creative HE Apply Guide

Welcome to the AccessHE-UKADIA Creative HE Apply Guide, the follow up to the AccessHE Creative HE Apply Guide released in July 2018. This resource is aimed at anybody considering a creative education or career, whether you are a student in school, college or a mature learner looking to retrain.

We hope you find it useful.



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The AccessHE-UKADIA Creative Apply Guide was produced collaboratively by the AccessHE Creative Forum and member institutions of UKADIA:

Arts University Bournemouth
Conservatoire for Dance & Drama
Leeds Arts University
Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts
Norwich University of the Arts
Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance
The Urdang Academy

We would also like to thank Marianne Shillingford for authoring our foreword.

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So, you want to study a creative subject?



Qasim Mahmood | Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance
BA (Hons) Acting

“I wanted to be an Actor because I constantly thought about being one. I knew I wanted to go to drama school to be better and train. What I found difficult was coming from a working-class background, I found that opportunities were very limiting. I didn't allow that to stop me though. It made me work harder. I was constantly chasing opportunities and doing lots of research. I learnt a lot through making mistakes and I think that's helped shape me to be who I am today. I've gained such valuable knowledge from studying Acting at Rose Bruford. I am now working as an actor and I don't think I could be working professionally today without the skills and knowledge I have learnt from my degree.”

Why study a creative course?

What are the benefits of studying a creative course?

Firstly, and most importantly, **your choices at higher education should be your own**. Higher education is a big commitment and you will spend a minimum of three years studying a subject in great depth. That's why it's important you choose something you are passionate about and that you enjoy doing.

What's the value of the arts at large?

Of course, there are also more practical reasons to study a creative subject: the creative sector is one of the **fastest growing sectors** of the UK economy – valued at a whopping £101.5billion! In fact, in terms of employability and workforce growth, the creative industries are leading the pack! For more information about this search the key facts and figures, courtesy of Creative Industries UK (thecreativeindustries.co.uk) and the Creative Industries Federation (creativeindustriesfederation.com).

The influence of the arts also has a positive impact on broader society. It brings culturally curious individuals together, fostering a sense of cohesion to reduce social exclusion or isolation in communities. Engaging with creative, performing arts and design subjects can lead to a vast range of health and wellbeing benefits, helping those with conditions such as dementia. The arts can also act as an outlet for releasing the pressures of studying, as well as those of everyday life.

Curious to know more? Why not read this short report on Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing (culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk).

There are plenty of other reasons why you should consider a creative education.

A creative education promotes self-starters, develops identity and emotional intelligence. Rather than follow a set curriculum of topics like in other subjects, creative students have a more free-flowing experience. The teaching methods in creative subjects encourage self-expression and collaboration between students, rather than having a tutor instruct what to do. This builds confidence as well as a sense of individual identity. Creative students achieve their own agendas set from within, make independent decisions and reflect on the self and the world around them.

? Did you know

The Creative sector is worth £101.5billion gross value added (GVA).

? Did you know

The creative industries saw a workforce increase four times higher than the overall increase in the wider UK workforce.

(Source: thecreativeindustries.co.uk/uk-creative-overview/facts-and-figures/employment-figures)

Why study a creative course?

Creative subjects ‘reach the parts other subjects can’t reach’.

Creative and cultural learning enriches the study experience at school and prepares students for life after school. It encourages awareness and empathy and develops the broader dimensions of a human being – mind, body and soul. This helps make sense of the complexities and diversity of modern society. Creative study can also encourage and motivate students from all backgrounds to go onto higher education.

? Did you know

Sales of creative services account for 10% of total UK exports – that’s £21bn each year.

Creative students are in demand by employers.

No matter your creative course, you will develop a broad range of transferable skills and experiences. You will become a team player, develop your communication skills, organisation skills, resilience and more. Such qualities are in high demand from employers and will be useful to any career. Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, often credited Apple’s success to his hiring of artists and musicians fascinated by technology, rather than computer geeks. To learn more, search ‘employability skills’ on the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance website (trinitylaban.ac.uk).

The Tate Gallery has produced a video asking leading artists, actors, filmmakers, architects and choreographers why creativity should be on the curriculum. To view it, search ‘Why study Art? TateShots’ on YouTube (youtube.co.uk).

What training opportunities are there for mature learners?

Retraining in creative, performing arts and design subjects can be a valuable career move for mature students. It can open up many doors and provide a sense of fulfilment that might have otherwise been lacking.

Mature students bring capacities that enrich the learning experience for everyone, such as organisational skills, resilience, resolve, wisdom, strategic thinking and being open to opportunities. In addition, people from different age groups bring diverse cultural references that enhance art and design practice.

Research conducted by Leeds Arts University has revealed that mature students choose to study a creative degree for various reasons. Some had not previously had a ‘first chance’ to explore the interests in creative subjects. Others had enjoyed creative subjects at school and regretted not pursuing a creative career. Some cited wanting to be role models for the children in their families. Often, mature students are looking to give something back to their communities and use their creative skills to improve the lives of others.

Where will a creative degree take you?

We know the creative economy is strong – but what does this mean for you?

The creative industry is large: it has grown by 53.1% in the past 9 years, according to the Creative Industries Federation (creativeindustriesfederation.com/statistics). It encompasses everything from advertising to IT; architecture to video games; crafts to the performing arts.

Students of creative subjects are essential to our future workforce and the global economy will need imagination and innovation. As society shifts towards the fourth industrial revolution (think artificial intelligence and 3D printing) we will need more designers, collaborators and creative thinkers than ever. Search 'what is the fourth industrial revolution' to view a video on the CNBC website (cnbc.com) and the 'Future Work Skills 2020' GIF found on the Institute for the Future website (iftf.org).

For example, more and more companies and businesses are recruiting designers – did you hear the one about the currency trader turned costume designer enrolled at RADA? Search 'career changers' on the Financial Times website – subscription required (ft.com/career-change).

But what if you are after a more focused career?

Highly specialist subjects can offer a wider set of careers than you might initially expect.

Dance careers

One Dance UK (onedanceuk.org) have produced a very helpful and informative guide for many dance careers – including teaching or in support services. Their guide lists no less than 26 potential career paths for dancers!

Opportunities for musicians

Musicians also have a wide set of opportunities at their fingertips. The Guardian ran a two part feature on careers in classical music covering everything from theatre, artist, orchestral, tour, project and communications management to music editorship. Check it out by searching 'classical music career advice' (theguardian.com).

Careers advice

The AccessHE Creative website (accesshecreative.co.uk) has plenty of resources for careers advice. We also highly recommend you check out the Discover Creative Careers website (discovercreative.careers). If videos are more your thing, check out the National Saturday Club (saturday-club.org/film/creative-journeys).

Why study a creative course?

What is a portfolio career?

Portfolio careers are rising in popularity.

A portfolio career is a great option for organised and self-motivated individuals looking for flexibility and the creative freedom to use a range of skills. A popular option among artists, journalists, photographers and others working in the creative and cultural industries, portfolio working combines different work styles and employment types: self-employment, contracts, part-time work, freelancing and project-based work. Discover the portfolio career experiences of three visual artists on the Creative and Cultural Skills website (ccskills.org.uk).

Creative pathways

Our infographic, in the style of a London Tube map, shows different creative routes (or pathways) and the careers they could lead to.

Taking public transport around your home town, you can get off early, interchange, go back or forward along the line. It's no different when it comes to creative careers! There is no defined pathway, nor final destination; you are free to explore and where you want to go is down to you, as the 'commuter'! Remember, the beauty is in the journey. So keep an open mind when exploring your options to see what could be right for you!

Why study a creative course?

Where could your study choice take you?



Image @MRZFrost

Earnings and success

? Did you know

The creative industries provide more than 3 million jobs in the UK.

? Did you know

1 in 11 jobs in the UK is in the creative industries.

(Source: creativeindustriesfederation.com/statistics)

Graduate earnings

When it comes to how much you could earn, the simplest answer we can give is 'it depends'.

The data out there shows low graduate earnings for some jobs in the creative sector, which is partly due to the nature of contract and self-employed working (and portfolio careers, which we talked about above). At the same time, creative jobs are future-proof. A very low proportion of creative jobs are at risk of automation relative to other sectors – which we have also explored.

Ultimately, earnings data does not always tell the complete story of the value of a creative career – for instance, how fulfilling it is, or the quality of life it provides. Nonetheless, it is good to be aware of the information out there. Our best advice is to do your research and ask questions.

To help you with this, we list a few useful resources below.

Job vs salary search

A handy tool where you can simply type in the occupation/job you are interested in to get an idea of the salary you could be earning (imiforall.org.uk).

2016–17 government data on graduate earnings by university/subject

Provided by the Department for Education (DfE), employment and earnings outcomes data of graduates for each HE provider, broken down by subject studied (e.g. Creative arts and design) and gender (gov.uk/government/statistics).

2016–17 government data on graduate earnings by region

DfE-provided data on employment and earnings outcomes of graduates, broken down by their geographical location in the 2016 to 2017 tax year (gov.uk/government/statistics).

Myth busters

There are some common myths out there about creative study. Check them out below – some may surprise you!

→ Myth 1: There are no jobs available in the creative industries.

This is our favourite myth to dispel! All the research shows this is completely wrong. And, what's more, these industries are growing: they are the most resistant to automation (we touched on the 'fourth industrial revolution' earlier in this Guide), with cultural capital also becoming increasingly important.

→ Myth 2: Creative educational institutions aren't 'for people like me'.

Whoever you are, your skills and talents are valuable, regardless of background. Use open days to visit the institutions you are interested in. They may have free courses or opportunities for you to help build up your portfolio and get a feel for the institution. If you have specific needs, there will be a student support team you can contact to ask about any queries you have.

→ Myth 3: You can't teach someone to be creative.

Some people will say 'you either have it or you don't'. While it's true that talent or an aptitude for certain creative skills can help, like many things in life, study and practice can make you better. For example, some say you have to be good at drawing to be a creative. Drawing is a useful skill for some courses and will help you build your body of work. However, other courses such as Creative Advertising or Photography call for a range of 'multi-disciplinary' skills. This is the case for many other creative subjects too. So put these myths aside and do your own research before deciding if something is right for you (or not).

✓ Top Tip

The National Centre for Circus Arts offers a wide range of pre-entry training. Why not have a look: nationalcircus.org.uk/courses/youth-courses

Can I afford it?

✓ Top Tip

For general funding advice, check out the Student Finance England website.

Student Finance, bursaries and support

How much does it cost to pursue a creative, performing arts and design degree and how will you fund it?

In many ways, this is identical to other degrees. If you are embarking on your first undergraduate degree, the majority of your financial help will come from the Student Loans Company (slc.co.uk) through the regular student finance routes. However, many institutions will also offer bursaries and scholarships. Contrary to popular belief, scholarships are NOT just available to the elite few. It is always best to check the website of the institutions themselves for the most up to date information.

There are also organisations committed to providing access to the arts for young people from less privileged backgrounds.

National Youth Arts Trust (nationalyouthartstrust.org.uk) is one of these. They offer a lot more than just assistance with tuition fees! They offer bursaries for music and dances lessons, and audition support.

GrantFairy (grantfairy.com) is a handy mobile app which matches students with thousands of scholarships, bursaries and grants to help with paying their tuition fees and reduce their student loans.

Turn2Us (turn2us.org.uk/Find-Benefits-Grants) is another brilliant resource for finding funding and grants. This is a database search tool which will allow you to browse through all the possible funding available to you. These aren't often large sums and there are often quite a few criteria to meet, but it's always worth a look.

Cost of applications and auditions

So far we've covered why you might pursue a creative, performing arts and design subject at higher education, where this might take you, how you might arrive at studying there and how you can finance your studies.

But what about the cost of applications?

The UCAS application has a fee attached to it: £20 for applications to a single course, or £25 for multiple courses and late applications sent after 30 June 2020. These figures can change, so it is best to check the UCAS website before applying.

Some conservatoires and drama schools may also charge for audition... **but don't let the audition fees put you off!**

Fee waiver schemes

Many institutions have fee waiver schemes (charging less than usual) and some offer travel grant schemes, or even auditions outside of London for those unable to travel flexibly. This can fluctuate from institution to institution, so do your research to see what different institutions can offer to support you with such cost. More often than not, there will be support out there. For more advice, search 'Don't let a fee stop you auditioning' on The Stage website (thestage.co.uk).

? Did you know

Audition fees can vary by course within a single institution. Be sure to check carefully so you know what to expect.

How do I get there?

Worksheet

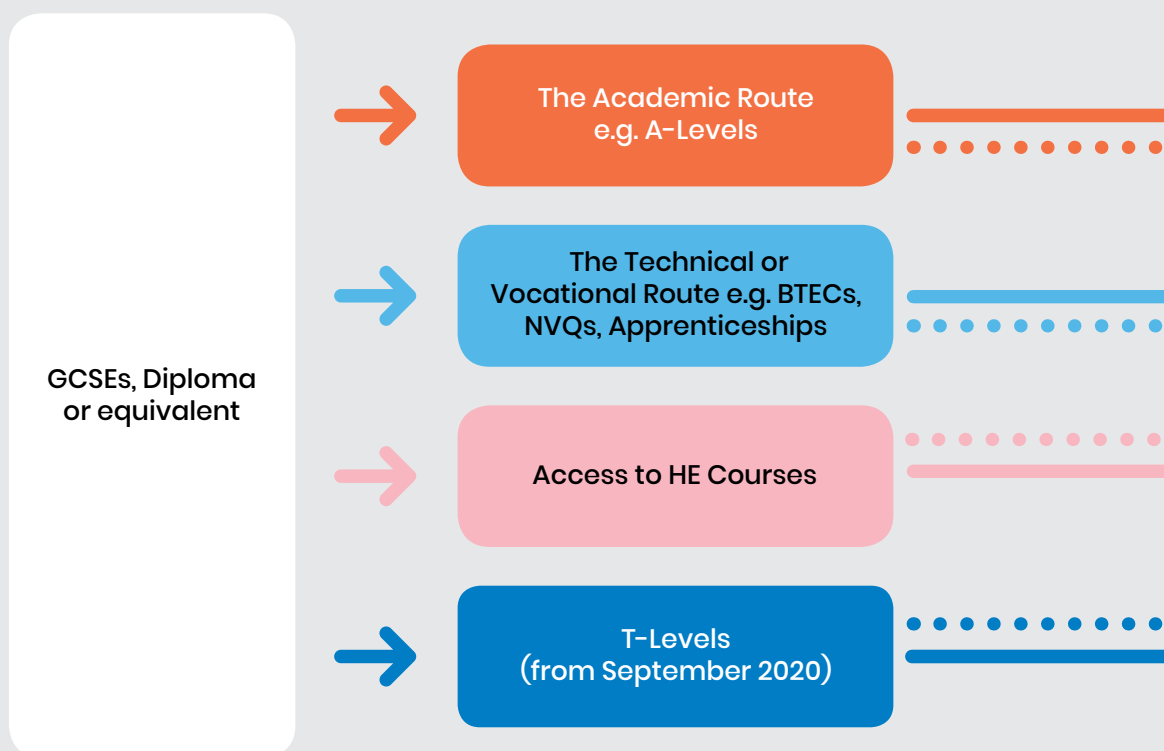
We've created a worksheet activity to help you think actively about this – available to download in the 'Practitioner Resources' area of our website accessHE.ac.uk/resources

How do you get onto a creative course?

There are a number of routes that can lead you onto a creative course. No matter the institution you choose to study at, you can expect that getting in will require a mix of qualifications and experience. Smaller, specialist institutions will place greater emphasis on your passion for the subject, performance skills and practical experience. Larger, less-specialised institutions will look at your experience too and more closely at your academic qualifications, be this A-Levels, BTECs, Apprenticeships or Access Diplomas.

T-Levels are a new qualification, launching in September 2020, ideal for those who prefer to blend classroom learning with 'on-the-job' experience. However, there are currently not many creative subjects that will be offered at T-Level. You can find out more about T-Levels on the Department of Education website ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)).

Some institutions offer classes, short courses, summer schools and Centres for Advanced Training (CAT) which can provide useful experience, training and skills to prepare you for creative study in higher education. The Open Door (opendoor.org.uk) offer free part-time pre-vocational acting and production arts preparatory courses for those aged 18-25 – a bit like a Foundation course.

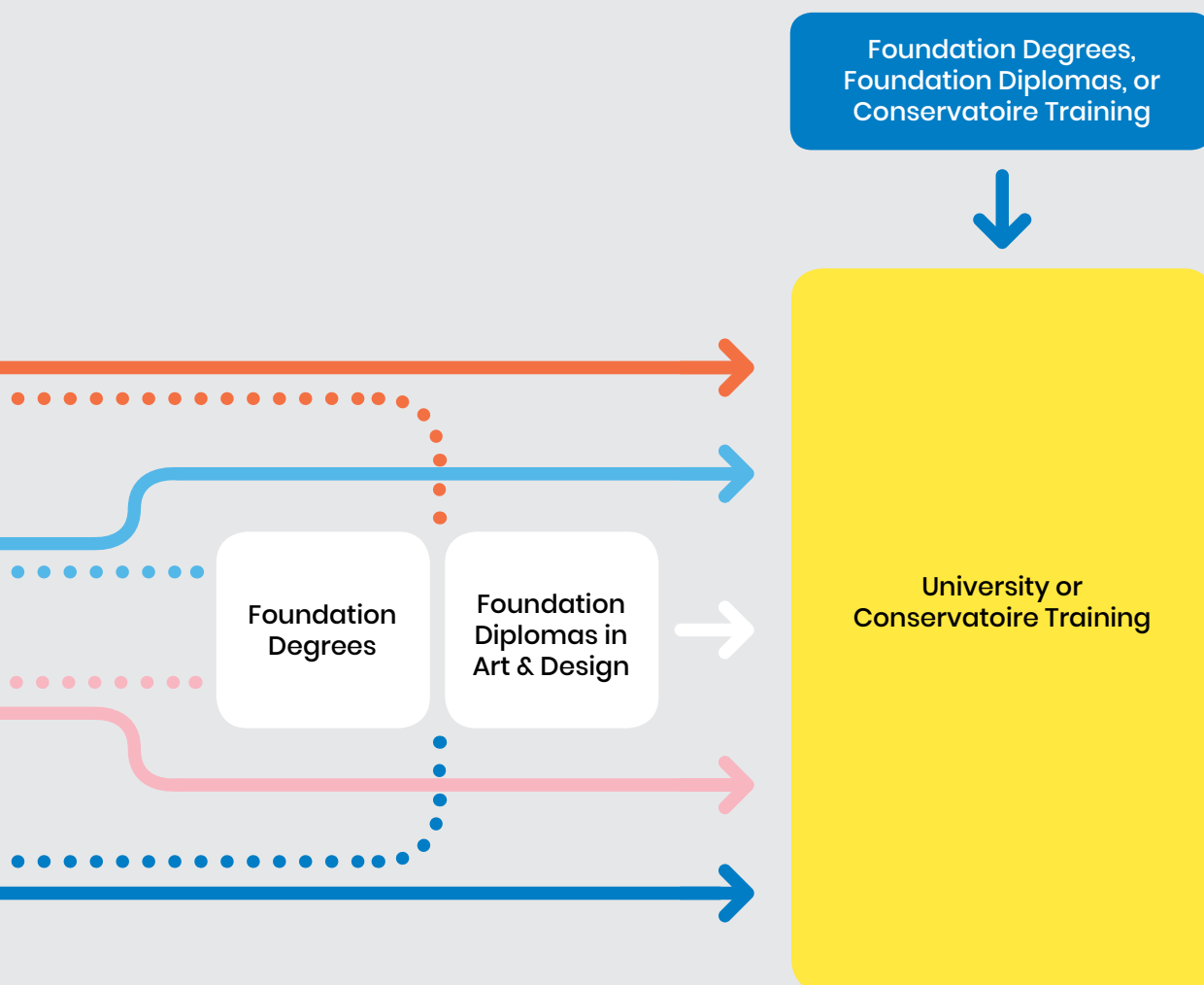


Many institutions also offer Foundation Degrees and/or Foundation Diplomas in Art and Design, some of which may rely on previous attainment and others which are open to everyone. As ever, it is best to check for information on the course you wish to pursue at each institution.

Choosing your path to a creative course

All in all, it is best to start preparing for your chosen path as early as possible. But don't forget – it is never too late to change your mind! Check out our handy pathways diagram for a few of the most common progression routes, but remember this is not exhaustive.

Don't let your options choices at GCSE level or after limit you!



What should I keep in mind?



Theo TJ Lowe | Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance

– Movement Artist, Creative Director

“Whilst training at Trinity Laban, I learnt a lot about shaping myself as an open-minded artist rather than just a dancer. This led to different opportunities throughout my career, and gave me a more mindful approach towards my artistic choices.”

What can or should I do before applying?

Just like when applying to any other course, **it is best to start preparing as soon as possible**. If you know what subject you would like to study, it is wise to take complementary subjects at GCSE and continue to build on these skills during further study.

There are also many extracurricular activities out there which will help you to both develop your skills and to decide whether a creative subject is right for you. These can be particularly useful if your school lacks an art, drama, dance, media or music department, if you need some extra practice before an audition, or if you need to put together a portfolio.

These activities could take the form of classes, summer schools or other tuition, attending performances and visiting galleries. We have put together a brief summary of some of the things you could think of doing on the AccessHE Creative website: accesshecreative.co.uk.

There are loads of opportunities for young creatives out there and most institutions will run their own versions of similar schemes – so do your research!

Worksheet

We've created a worksheet activity to help you think actively about this – available to download in the 'Practitioner Resources' area of our website [accessHE.ac.uk/resources](https://accesshe.ac.uk/resources)

Did you know

LookUp, a tool from A New Direction (anewdirection.org.uk), can help those at school/college in London find opportunities to engage arts & cultural organisations and opportunities.

What to think about when applying

So, what do you need to think about when deciding where to study? For creative, performing arts and design subjects, there are two very important factors: the style of tuition and location. In addition to these there are more general factors to bear in mind such as facilities and opportunities to study abroad.



Where to study

✓ Top Tip

Remember to ask about how the classes are taught – make sure it fits your learning style.

What is important to me?

It is important to research what you would like to get out of your time in higher education. Doing this will directly affect where and what to study and help you get a feel for both the learning and living side.

Here are some of the factors that might influence your decision making:

Campus vs non-campus

Campus institutions tend to promote a bit more of a community feeling – often halls of residence, teaching and a variety of shops and services are clustered on campus. Non-campus universities are often situated away from their halls of residence and students can expect to be more scattered. In the non-campus option, you may find yourself a little more independent, whereas the campus option provides a community at your doorstep.

City vs not in the city

Studying at an institution can mean living in a big city or outside a big city (perhaps in a regional or small coastal town, for example). This is a deeply personal choice, so think hard. Generally speaking, if you prefer nature over concrete, a more traditional campus experience could be your best bet. Those in the city are more likely to be a little more scattered, with more going on. This may not always be the case and will depend on the area and institution itself. To gain an insight into what London living might be like as a student, search 'living in London' on the Urdang Academy website (theurdang.london).

“Urdang is special because it is full on: it is intense and it requires drive. It shapes you into a whole new diamond... and London is a ride.”

Winny, 2017 graduate of the Diploma Track A, Urdang Academy

Style of learning

How you want to learn is also central to this decision-making process. Some institutions structure their courses to be more practical and vocational in both training and assessment. Others are likely to be more seminar and lecture focused. Some institutions may combine elements of both!

Choosing what and where to study

How do you want to be taught?

Exercise: Have a look at the word cloud below and think about what is most attractive to you. What are your top three? If you think of more, add them in!

Project work	Group work	Lectures	Seminars
Performance-based assessments	Written exams	Oral exams	Workshops
Independent learning	Many training hours	Focused	Broad
Industry related	Collaboration	Practical	Personalised
Employment focused	Reflective practice	Research	Presentations
Vocational	Creative		

Worksheet

We've created a worksheet activity to help you think actively about this – available to download in the 'Practitioner Resources' area of our website accessHE.ac.uk/resources

Choosing an institution

Exercise: Look at the institution profiles at the end of the next section. Research them and think about whether they are suitable for you.

There may be other factors that influence your choice. We have placed some into a word cloud below, but be sure to add your own too. Choosing an institution is a personal decision – **there are no 'wrong' priorities.**

Study abroad	Specific facilities	Reputation	Work placements
Funding opportunities	Flexibility	Close to home	Far from home

Subjects & courses



Chantel | Bristol Old Vic Theatre School
2nd Year Production Arts (BA)

“I had previously studied a degree in an entirely different field a decade ago and worked in related jobs throughout my twenties. I’m returning to education now to change career paths. I had always been interested in theatre but felt my background and lack of formal training in performing arts meant that I’d missed my chance. However, the tutors here are all so encouraging and I’ve discovered that you’re never too old to develop a life passion! The course (BA Production Arts) is a great way to gain real theatre and media experience whilst representing a world class institute. To have access to such highly esteemed tutors and guest speakers is really motivating and insightful.”

What to study: Creative HE Courses

Think broadly about what you would like to pursue.

We have listed a diverse range of creative subjects for you to explore, grouped broadly under the categories of 'performing arts' and 'non-performing arts'. Subjects and categories can overlap; for example animation sits comfortably in both art and film. Generally speaking, we have mapped these subjects against the course offerings of our partner institutions. However, every institution will offer slightly different versions of courses, with different modules and technical details – it would be impossible to list them all! So as always, it is best to research the specific institution before you apply. Hopefully, this will be a useful starting point for your research!

Worksheet

We've created a worksheet activity to help you think actively about this – available to download in the 'Practitioner Resources' area of our website accessHE.ac.uk/resources

Performing Arts courses



Acting, Drama and Theatre

Inc. stage/events management and technical theatre.

Some of the best drama schools in the world are based in and around large cities. If you are after very focused and specialised acting training, smaller institutions and conservatoires may be best for you. If your interest is more related to drama and dramatic criticism, you may wish to explore drama and acting at larger institutions. Often, at larger institutions, drama can be taken alongside another subject such as English, film studies and languages.

However, an interest in drama or the theatre does not necessarily have to translate to a career in front of the camera! Many universities and conservatoires also offer courses in technical theatre, stage and events management and production.



Bertil Nilsson



Circus Arts

A specialised vocational subject covering a range of skills across three key disciplines areas; equilibristics (e.g. juggling, tightrope), acrobatics and aerial. Students will usually be expected to demonstrate movement and performance abilities that correspond with the audition and entry requirements of the major training institutions worldwide including National Centre for Circus Arts (UK), Centre National des Arts du Cirque (France), École Supérieure des Arts du Cirque (Belgium) and École Nationale du Cirque (Montreal).



Dance

Many universities offer dance at undergraduate level with differing emphasis on aspects of dance study, performance, choreography, critical and historical studies. Dance conservatoires can offer highly specialist and intensive training, with very strong links to the dance industry.

What to study: Creative HE Courses

Music

Music is not just music performance. Music composition and technology are related but distinct disciplines that might attract someone interested in pursuing a career in music. Students interested in pursuing more traditional instrumental or vocal training may wish to explore conservatoire training: conservatoiresuk.ac.uk. Others, who perhaps have a broader interest in music or who wish to specialise in music for film and television, or in sound design, may wish to explore larger institutions alongside specialists. For those interested in dance, drama and music some institutions also offer musical theatre training.

Musical Theatre

Musical theatre is an art form in its own right. It comprises an integration of three skills: singing, acting and dance/movement. Stories are told using text, song and dance to create emotive theatrical productions or films. Students studying the art form develop the ability to be multi-skilled, all-rounders and deliver impactful, integrated performances across many styles of classical and contemporary musical theatre.

Non-Performing Arts courses

Art Including prop making

This category incorporates courses such as fine art, illustration, and animation. Some institutions may offer more focused courses such as painting, concept art or comic art. Students wishing to study art may also wish to explore technical theatre courses such as scenic art, craft or design courses. If you are unsure about which type of art you would like to pursue, there is also the option of taking a foundation diploma in art and design as a way of testing the water. If your interest in art is more critical and academic, it is also worth having a look at history of art courses.

Crafts & Textiles Including prop making

Craft courses can often overlap with product design but crafts are more focused on the making of the physical item and the craftsmanship behind this. A craft degree could focus on jewellery, metal work and textile design as well as other types of product or material. Crafts can also be found on stage in scenic art, prop making and technical theatre. If you have an interest in making, a crafts course might well be for you.





Creative Writing & Literature

Writing is valuable social currency and opens up doors. You will expand your critical vocabulary, develop technical skills and work with peers. Some institutions listed in this Guide, such as Arts University Bournemouth and Leeds Arts University, offer Creative Writing as a degree in and of itself (at the time of publication). Those that do not may offer literature and English courses with creative writing modules. The route into creative writing is likely to rely more on your previous academic attainment than other creative courses. You will most likely need at least a couple of A-Levels.



Design Studies

Including digital content and design

Nearly as broad a category as art. This ranges from theatre and costume design to graphic and game design, as well as more object-focused design subjects such as fashion, model making and product design, architecture and interior design. Technological advancements in modern society have also given rise to digital content and design courses. As well as the regular route into design courses, students can opt for a foundation year. Much like art courses, design has strong overlap with technical theatre and crafts. Depending on the type of design you wish to pursue, you might wish to also explore these avenues.



TV/Film, Photography & Media

Including animation and creative advertising

At undergraduate level, film, TV and photography can be studied in larger institutions as well as smaller specialists. Specialist institutions will, inevitably, be more practically focused with more time being dedicated to the creation of film, TV, and photography. Conservatoires may also offer training for screen as an aspect of their technical theatre courses. Larger institutions are more likely to integrate criticism and academic writing into their course structure. Some institutions may not offer film or TV production courses outright, but many will offer film studies which often includes optional filmmaking modules, or as short modules on acting courses.

As a creative advertiser, you can learn about how creatives develop campaigns across art direction, copywriting and digital media using videos, online banner advertising and other media.











Some institutions may offer related courses or modules in animation. As an animator, you will work alongside other students to develop your skills as a professional animator, working across film, TV and related industries. You'll build your own portfolio of specialisms and learn about industry-standard animation techniques and technologies, including 2D, 3D and stop frame, often in specialist workshops. Studying animation can lead to careers in (but not limited to) concept artistry, character design, production, storyboarding, art directing, puppet making and 3D, CG and visual effects design.



Where to study what

Find out what courses institutions offer

Here's a handy chart which maps the course offerings, broadly speaking (represented by the little subject icons) against the HE institutions mentioned in this Guide. You can read more about each institution and their course offerings in the next section.

	Arts University Bournemouth	Bristol Old Vic Theatre School	Central School of Ballet	Leeds Arts University
Performing Arts courses				
 Acting, Drama and Theatre	•	•		
 Circus Arts				
 Dance	•		•	
 Music				•
 Music Theatre		•		
Non-performing Arts courses				
 Art	•	•		•
 Crafts & Textiles	•			•
 Creative Writing & Literature	•			•
 Design Studies	•	•		•
 TV/Film, Photography & Media	•	•		•

Liverpool
Institute for
Performing
Arts

London
Contemporary
Dance School

National
Centre for
Circus Arts

Northern
School of
Contemporary
Dance

Norwich
University
of the Arts

Rambert
School
of Ballet &
Contemporary
Dance

Rose Bruford
College of
Theatre &
Performance

Trinity
Laban
Conservatoire
of Music &
Dance

Urdang
Academy

•				•		•		
•	•	•	•		•		•	•
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Creative institutions →



Dan Franklin | Norwich University of the Arts
Studying BA (Hons) Film & Moving Image Production

“I’ve always had the innate desire to create, make and produce. While studying an arts, media or design based subject is incredibly insightful and expressive, it doesn’t mean it doesn’t have challenges. You constantly have to wrestle your own thoughts on an idea to see which is the best form to present an idea in; or feel the need to justify your passion to those that think differently. Although these challenges aren’t necessarily unique to the arts, the beauty is that we’re able to turn them to our advantage and explore them as another avenue of expression. I couldn’t imagine not being a creative, but equally I couldn’t imagine myself being a mathematician.”

Institutional profiles



Non-campus | Non-City
aub.ac.uk

Arts University Bournemouth

Arts University Bournemouth is a leading arts university for the creative industries, turning creativity into successful careers. Based in the coastal town of Bournemouth, the university provides over 30 creative courses and encourages curiosity, risk-taking and collaboration. AUB offers high quality, specialist education in art, design, media and performance through its foundation, undergraduate and post-graduate courses. Its stunning state-of-the-art campus is a creative hub designed for specialists. It's where you will make amazing things happen.

Courses offered:

Bristol Old Vic
Theatre School



Non-campus | City
oldvic.ac.uk

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, provides conservatoire-level training, preparing exceptionally talented individuals for top-level careers in theatre, film, TV, radio drama and related industries within a professional environment. Full-time courses, validated by the University of the West of England, include acting, production arts (stage and screen), costume, design, drama directing, drama writing, scenic art, production management and voice studies. It operates on three sites; the main teaching premises at Downside Road; Christchurch recording studios; and Sheene Road workshops for scenic construction and painting. There is an exceptional graduate employment record from all courses.

Courses offered:

Central
School
of Ballet



Non-campus | City
centralschoolofballett.co.uk

Central School of Ballet

Central School of Ballet, part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, was established in 1982 and offers a two year Foundation Degree in Professional Dance and Performance and a further year that completes a BA (Hons) Degree, both validated by the University of Kent. Students follow a comprehensive programme of Ballet, Contemporary Dance and Choreography. Final year students join the touring company Ballet Central providing first-hand experience of professional performance. Central's graduates join leading international dance companies and musical theatre productions. Heidi Hall, Director, and Christopher Marney, Artistic Director, now lead Central. Both are Central alumni; Chris was one of the first students to complete the school's MA Choreography degree programme.

Courses offered:

Institutional profiles



Campus | City
leeds-art.ac.uk

Leeds Arts University

Leeds Arts University has contributed significantly to the development of art education in Britain and across the world. In 2016 the University was granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers, and in 2017 was awarded full university status, making it the only specialist arts university in the North of England. Leeds Arts University invests heavily in industry-standard facilities, and has been recognised at the WhatUni awards (winner of Best Facilities in 2014, 2016 and 2019). We have recently opened £22m state-of-the-art building expansion which includes a 230-seat performance auditorium, industry standard film and photography studios, a specialist arts research and reference library, new postgraduate study suite and public facing gallery. Based just a short walk from the city centre, our students enjoy a close-knit community in a creative atmosphere where anything feels possible.

Courses offered:



Non-Campus | City
lipa.ac.uk

Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts

The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA) is a specialist higher education level provider of learning for performers and those who make performance possible, co-founded by Paul McCartney and our CEO and Principal Mark Featherstone-Witty. LIPA offers courses in Acting, Dance, Applied Theatre & Community Drama, Creative Technologies & Performance (Filmmaking, Scriptwriting & Emerging Technology), Music, Sound Technology, Theatre & Performance Design and Theatre and Performance Technology. LIPA trains students for a future of sustained work. Most recent figures have shown that over the most recent four year period, 89% of LIPA's graduates are in work three years after leaving, while 78% work in the performing arts

Courses offered:



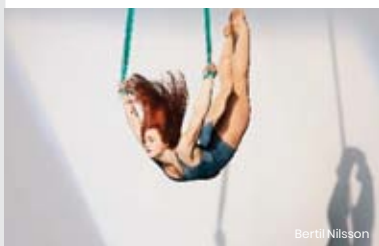
Non-campus | City
lcds.ac.uk

London Contemporary Dance School

London Contemporary Dance School, part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, has been preparing artists for a physically rigorous and highly creative profession since 1969. Part of The Place, a creative powerhouse for dance development, the school ensures that its students are versed in the skills and knowledge that will enable them to achieve success within the professional dance industry. An education at London Contemporary Dance School is grounded in a culture that celebrates the emergent artistic voice, which gives it space, acknowledgment and above all works to develop its uniqueness.

Courses offered:

**national centre
for circus arts**




Berth Nilsson

Campus | City
nationalcircus.org.uk

National Centre for Circus Arts

The National Centre for Circus Arts is one of Europe's leading providers of circus education. Based in a magnificent Victorian power station in East London, we involve thousands of people in the creation and performance of circus arts every year. Our further and higher education programmes range from a BTEC qualification to a Post Graduate Certificate and a BA (Hons) Degree in Circus Arts. We are part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, a group of prestigious institutions that are leaders in performing arts training.

Courses offered: 






Nicola Guarino

Non-campus | City
nscd.ac.uk

Northern School of Contemporary Dance

Based in the vibrant and student-friendly city of Leeds and part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, Northern School of Contemporary Dance are a world-leading centre for dance, and currently the only provider of conservatoire-level dance training in the North of England. Their programmes at CertHE, Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels focus on the development of versatile and independent dance artists with highly-tuned technical, creative and performance skills; ready for entry into the profession. They are committed to widening access and recruit the most talented students, regardless of personal circumstance.

Courses offered: 








Non-campus | City
nua.ac.uk

Norwich University of the Arts (NUA)

NUA is a dynamic and creative community providing arts, design, architecture and media education. While our history can be traced back to 1845, our outlook is forward-thinking. From a city centre campus that boasts cutting-edge facilities, to an approach to teaching which saw us awarded Gold under the Teaching Excellence Framework, our reputation for excellence is well-earned. NUA was ranked 10th in the UK for teaching quality by The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2018 and best overall for student retention in 2020. The university has developed a national reputation as an innovative and creative academic community, with a firm commitment to offering vocational, practice-based courses that give students space to develop their skills and pursue their passion.

Courses offered:     

Institutional profiles

RAMBERT
SCHOOL




Non-campus | City
rambertschool.ac.uk

Rambert School of Ballet & Contemporary Dance

Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, provides world-leading training and education in ballet and contemporary dance. In studios you will find creativity and excellence; our life blood. We believe in the tradition of our School, and in the innovation that comes from being forward thinking and embracing the new.

Our vocation is to realise the potential of every single student. Each member of staff here at Rambert School welcomes individuality, and this is at the heart of our teaching.

Courses offered: 

Rose Bruford College
UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHAMPTON



Campus | City
rosebruford.ac.uk

Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance

Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance specialises in performance and production arts degrees for theatre and live events. Located 30 minutes from London's West End, it is an exciting and vibrant place to study with students collaborating together on productions, events and installations. The College and its teaching staff foster the imagination, talents and creativity of our students in a supportive and creative environment, preparing them for rewarding and satisfying careers. Good staff/student ratios and small class sizes mean that students get to know their tutors and peers, benefiting from regular support.

Courses offered:     




TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE OF MUSIC & DANCE



Non-campus | City
trinitylabanac.uk

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance is London's Creative Conservatoire: an internationally celebrated centre of excellence, offering world class training in dance, music and musical theatre. We identify, support and develop a diverse intake of talented and innovative performers and creators, wherever they may be found and throughout their creative lives. Through our supportive atmosphere, outstanding landmark buildings and innovative curriculum, we instil technical excellence and enable creativity to flourish. We transform those with potential into resourceful, enterprising and adaptable artistic leaders who are able to succeed in the profession and make a positive change to society.

Courses offered:   




URDANG ACADEMY



Non-Campus | City
theurdang.london

Urdang Academy

The Urdang Academy offers conservatoire-style training in Dance and Musical Theatre in the vibrant heart of London. Urdang educates and trains young performers from 16 years and over in Musical Theatre and Dance to become strong, disciplined and confident performers. Urdang boasts a modern outlook, dynamic atmosphere and inspiring backdrop, making the academy an energising and contemporary place to study. Students are admitted based on their raw talent, believing that this raw talent supersedes size, race, height, socio-economic status and ethnicity. It is this mentality that has made Urdang the most diverse dance and musical theatre academy in the UK, and has also inspired us to run a selection of short and evening courses giving everyone the opportunity to train and perform at their best.

Courses offered:   

Open days

Worksheet

We've created a worksheet activity to help you think actively about this – available to download in the 'Practitioner Resources' area of our website accessHE.ac.uk/resources

Top Tip

Remember to book early for open days.

Before you apply

Before applying, we recommend you visit each institution you are interested in.

This is essential for many reasons:

- You will be able to ask more direct and specific questions about the course.
- You will be able to speak to current students.
- You will be able to see where you will be studying and living.
- You will be able to inspect the facilities at each institution.

All of this will help you decide if this is really where you want to be.

When to go

Open days are largely held throughout June, July and September, with some running right through until January. You must book a space directly with the institution – you can't just turn up. Some departments, particularly those that are more specialised, might have separate and more focused open days, or applicant days for those holding offers.

Have a good look at all options before signing up

Open days usually run a programme of talks, tours, departmental introductions and occasionally workshops. Make sure to have a good look at these and attend as many of the relevant talks or tours as possible. It's a good idea to plan what aspects of the event to attend in advance but be prepared to be flexible when you arrive. This is just in case you realise there are some extra activities that you could undertake on the day, which you may have overlooked in the pre-event information.

While they are no replacement for a physical visit, some institutions do also offer virtual open days which may help with initial decision making.

Tips for getting the most out of your day

- **Prepare a checklist of the key questions you want answered**

Doing this will reassure you that you are going to get the most out of the day. A few to get you started could be around how the course is taught and assessed, what support services are available and what the social community is like.

- **Speak to current students and graduates**

Make the most of all the chances you get to interact with current students and graduates. They are the best people to quiz about exactly what the student experience is like.

- **But save your entry requirements and student finance questions for staff**

If you have entry requirements and student finance questions – it's better to ask staff. Current students will only be able to speak from their own experiences and individual circumstances which might be different from yours.

- **Attend a campus tour**

These are usually delivered on open days by student ambassadors and you will get to see facilities, practice rooms, performance venues and student accommodation.

- **Reflect on your journey home**

Think about how everyone treated you while you were visiting the institution. Did you feel welcome? How comfortable and inspired you were while you were there? The “vibe” of a place is the one thing you can't truly experience through research alone – you have to feel it for yourself!

✓ Top Tip

During an open day, keep the following in mind: what's your reason for choosing the particular course or uni? If it's employment at the end, ask about the statistics. If it's the social life, ask about the student union. If it's the cost of living, find out about the accommodation. Above all, talk to current students about their experiences.

How do I apply?



Anya Winful | Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts

2nd Year, BA (Hons) Management of Music, Entertainment, Theatre & Events

“I didn’t enjoy academic studies; I had no passion for it. For me it’s about what kind of life do I want, not just what kind of job do I want. I love the theatre and hope to get into producing. By studying BA (Hons) Management of Music, Entertainment, Theatre & Events at LIPA I hope I’ll be able to have a career where I can take on different roles and meet and work with a variety of people in a creative environment, not stuck in just one job forever. That’s the kind of life I want.”

How to apply

So by now, you'll have an idea of which subject you would like to study and the type of institution you would like to study at. But what's next? There are three main application routes for creative, performing arts and design courses: **UCAS, UCAS Conservatoires and direct applications to Conservatoires.**

UCAS route

The UCAS process covers most larger institutions and most non-conservatoire specialists. Most people will apply through UCAS and your teachers/advisers will discuss it at length.

The UCAS application process itself is straightforward:

- You will need to submit your predicted grades, personal statement and a teacher reference.
- You will be able to apply for five institutions and these institutions will NOT be able to see who else you have applied to.
- You may be asked to attend an interview.

The UCAS website has a great deal of information and support for this: ucas.com

UCAS Conservatoires route

Conservatoires are specialist institutions, with a strong vocational, performance orientation – ideal if you prefer practical group work over academic learning. Currently ten conservatoires across the United Kingdom accept applications through UCAS Conservatoires, including Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance and Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Courses offered at conservatoires include subjects such as music and drama. They are taught by staff who are working professionals in the industry and structured in a way to get you used to the ways of working, hours, and expectations of the industry.

The application process

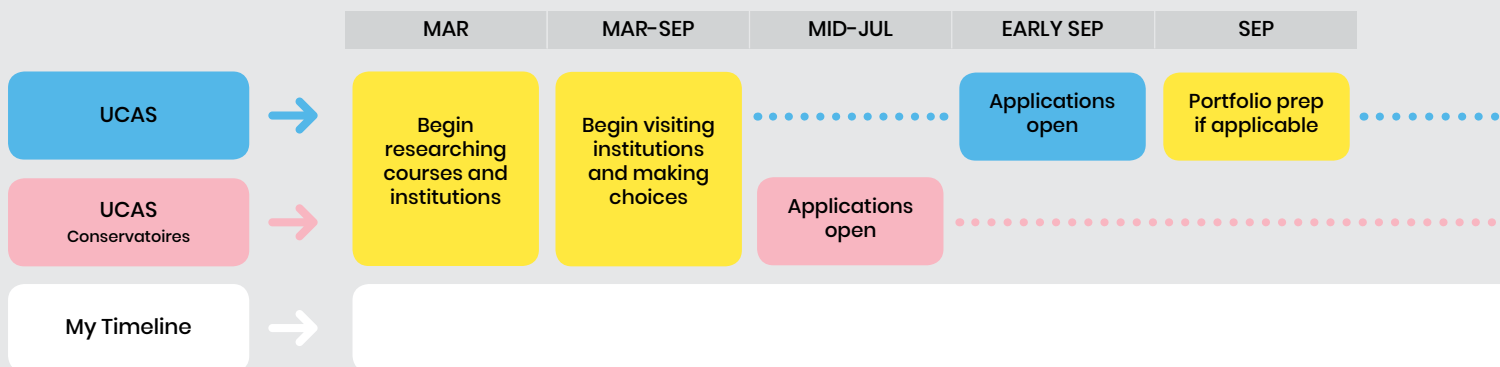
Worksheet

We've created a worksheet activity to help you think actively about this – available to download in the 'Practitioner Resources' area of our website accessHE.ac.uk/resources

The process itself is very similar to the regular UCAS application process but with some key differences:

- There may be some exam results that UCAS cannot process for you – you'll need to send these on to your chosen conservatoires yourself when you receive them.
- You can apply for six conservatoires and they CAN see where else you've applied but NOT your order of preference.
- Music courses may ask for a 'study type':
 - Main Specialism is just one instrument.
 - Joint main specialism is equal training across two instruments.
 - Secondary specialism is two instruments – one main and one secondary.
 - Alternative main specialism is two options of instruments, either of which you are happy to study as your main(s).
 - After you have made your selections, you will be able to select audition locations.
 - You will need to provide two references – one academic and one practical.

Application timeline

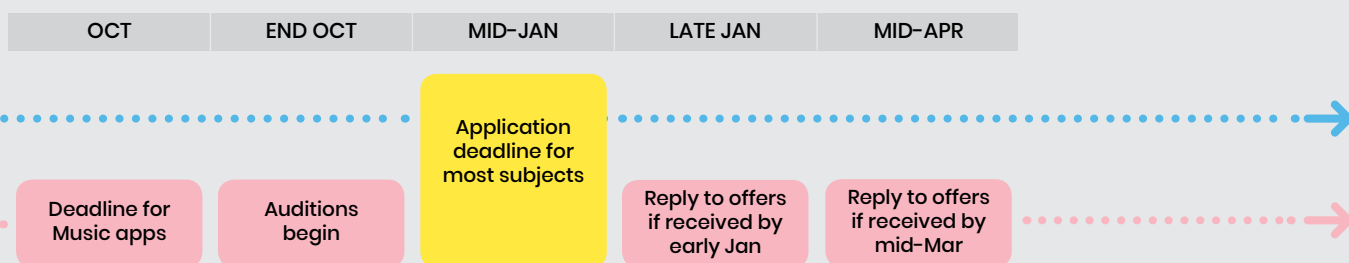


To learn how conservatoire study differs from regular study and to discover more about the student experience, Conservatoires UK have recently published a 'Studying at a UK conservatoire' brochure on their website (conservatoiresuk.ac.uk). The UCAS website also has plenty of advice and guidance on this process - search 'how to apply to UCAS Conservatoires in five steps' on the UCAS website (ucas.com).

Direct route

Other conservatoires not on the UCAS Conservatoires list may accept direct applications only or be validated by an external university. This could therefore require you to make two applications for your chosen course: one directly to the institution (which may be paper-based or online) and one via the regular UCAS route (see earlier in this section). It is best to check the website of each institution before applying for more details. However, no matter where you apply you will have to attend an interview and/or audition depending on the course you have selected.

Most importantly you can apply for all three simultaneously! There is nothing stopping you from applying to a course through the regular UCAS route, through the UCAS Conservatoires route and then directly to other institutions. It will be time consuming and more expensive but it is possible.



The application process

When to apply and how much it will cost

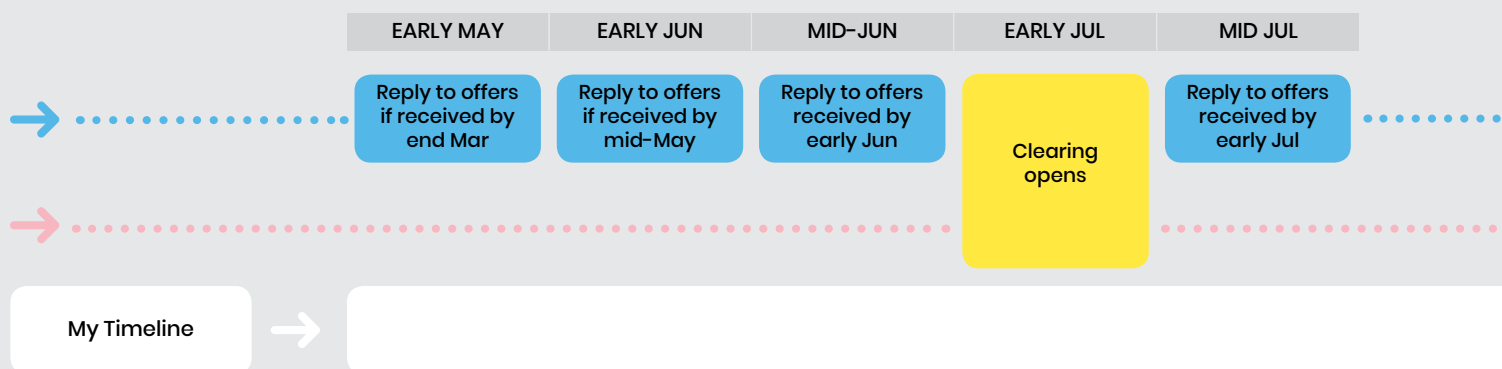
Application deadlines

Deadlines and costs for creative courses can vary quite a bit. **Generally speaking, from March of the academic year before you apply, you might want to start researching courses and institutions.** This is also a good time to visit the towns you will potentially be living in and to organise opens day visits to various institutions.

UCAS

Regular UCAS applications generally open in early September. The deadline for most applications is in early/mid-January. However, be sure to check with specific institutions – this could be quite a bit earlier! The UCAS application has a fee attached to it: £20 for applications to a single course, or £25 for multiple courses and late applications sent after 30 June 2020. Once you start to receive replies, you can begin to make your 'Firm' and 'Insurance' choices. Your 'Firm' choice is your first choice; the 'Insurance' choice your safety. All other offers will be removed after you make these choices – so think carefully.

Application timeline



UCAS Conservatoires

UCAS Conservatoires works to a slightly different timetable. Applications open in mid-July of the previous academic year, so if you were looking to start your course in September 2021 you could begin applying as early as July 2020. Music applications will close around early October, with others closing in mid-January. Should you miss these dates, you can always check with the institutions themselves for vacancies – you may still be able to apply through UCAS Conservatoires up until the end of August. Auditions begin around October and will run throughout the autumn and spring. Applying through UCAS Conservatoires costs £25 in 2020 and you can make a maximum of six choices. This £25 fee does not include audition fees, which can be waived – see earlier in the Guide for more information.

Direct to conservatoires

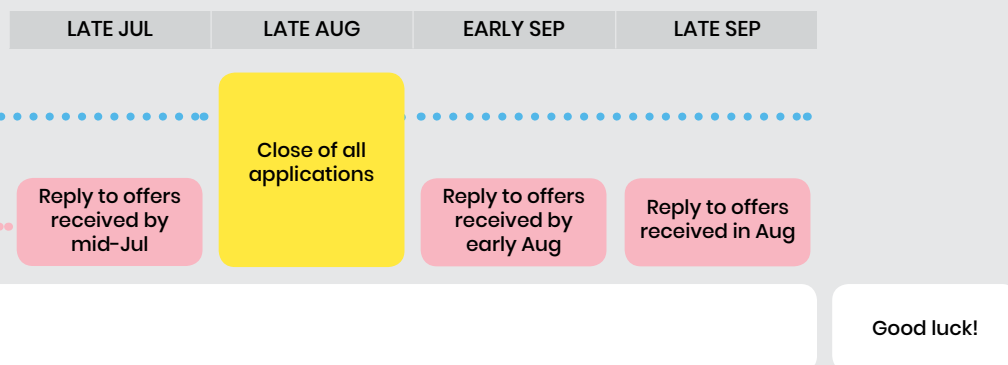
Application deadlines and fees can vary even more and as ever, it is best to research individual institutions and also individual courses. Most application deadlines will be in the spring term (normally March –May), however, some may be as early as December or even earlier – dance and music in particular. There can be a few rounds of auditions involved – some starting as early as December and running as late as May.

Managing your applications

The UCAS Hub is a brand new tool to get you organised: search your ‘favourite’ courses, track open days and UCAS events, calculate what your predicted grades equate to in UCAS Tariff points, build your personal statement and more. Search the ‘UCAS Hub’ online (ucas.com).

? Did you know

The student loan actually consists of two loans. These are a tuition fee loan that is paid directly to the institutions you are studying with and a maintenance loan which is means-tested and paid directly into your bank account each term.



What happens next?



Daisy Twells | Urdang Academy

Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre and Dance

“When I first walked into Urdang I thought ‘yeah, this is the place’, it just felt right. I felt like I was in Fame, the movie, it immediately made up my mind. Within my first year, my interest in dance and ballet quickly evolved into a universal interest for all three of the performing arts: singing, acting and dancing. My background in ballet prepared me to excel across all three by preparing me with the core knowledge and strength to be a ‘performer’. But it’s the range of training and Urdang’s dedication toward its students that developed the whole performer in me.”

Portfolios, interviews and auditions

After you have completed your application, you can expect to be called in for an audition and/or interview. Some creative, performing arts and design subjects may also ask that you produce a portfolio, or a showreel – which is a short video or montage of clips showcasing your work. Each institution and each subject will expect something different from you, so it is best to **check before you apply so that you are available and prepared**. That said, below we have put together some more general advice to help you prepare.

✓ Top Tip

Your portfolio should show evidence that you can develop an original idea.

Portfolios

Getting started: how do you put together a good portfolio?

Creative, performing arts and design courses will often ask to see a portfolio, or showreel, of your work. The aim is to showcase your skill, enthusiasm and also your ability to carry out a project from concept to finished piece.

Do your research

Your first step is to thoroughly research the advice for each course at each institution you are applying for. You can expect each institution to provide different advice and guidance as they will all be looking for different things. You must tailor each portfolio to the course in question.

Include a range of work

You should expect to show a range of skills and only your best work (so be selective). This should be demonstrated through a sketchbook or similar workbook to show progression. Many courses will be looking to make sure a candidate can draw in a variety of ways: life drawings, observation drawings, rough sketches, line drawings, pen drawings, pencil drawings and more. They will also be looking at your use of media and method so it is best to be varied. Show your passion for the subject; there should be evidence of attending exhibitions or shows.

✓ Top Tip

Think about your portfolio as a piece of music: impact pieces at beginning and end, quieter pieces in the middle.

Showreels

For some subjects you may need to present a showreel – and occasionally you will also need to present your paperwork for these. A showreel should show only your best work, either through short films or a montage of clips. Largely the same advice applies: show off a variety of skills and your passion.

Portfolios, interviews and auditions

✓ Top Tip

When discussing your portfolio, be prepared to relate your work to the course you wish to study.

✓ Top Tip

Bring sketchbooks / storyboards - show how you developed your ideas through the process.

Assembling and presenting your portfolio

Some top tips for preparing a portfolio are listed below, courtesy of Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts:

- **Express your passion**

We want to see that you are engaged with, and passionate about, the area that you want to study. Show us your inspiration, influences and references.

- **Think big**

Show that you can think creatively about the world around you. We want to see evidence of your process: mind-maps, sketches, storyboards, plot outlines or blueprints.

- **Structure and tell a story**

Carefully choose a few stand-out pieces that are coherent and well planned, rather than a huge hodgepodge of random work!

- **Know what's coming next!**

We want your portfolio to depict your progress so that we can see how your interests and skills have expanded and developed.

- **Be practical**

You might want to bring sketchbooks, notepads, models or films. What best reflects the area that you want to work in? Can you organise and transport it effectively?

Remember – each course at each institution will vary, so do your research!

Be sure to also check out a guide to putting together your portfolio on Which University (university.which.co.uk).

So what do you do once you have an ace portfolio or showreel?

Again, this will vary by institution but you can expect to present your portfolio and be interviewed. Sometimes these will happen simultaneously, sometimes one after the other.

Largely speaking, there are three main steps in the process:

- 1** You may be asked to send in your portfolio – this is often now done online. The institution will then have a look, without you present, and decide whether or not to interview you.
- 2** You may be invited to an interview but asked to leave your portfolio with the interviewers while you take part in other activities. Your interviewers will then feedback on your portfolio and ask you questions about your work.
- 3** You may be asked to bring your portfolio with you to the interview where you will present to the interviewers, while also being prepared to respond to any questions and comments they may have. To help you practice presenting your work, check out Young Creatives – a programme offering portfolio development courses, run by Leeds Arts University (leeds-art.ac.uk/study/young-creatives).

✓ Top Tip

Be prepared to talk about other practitioners you admire or dislike and why. For example, if you really like a particular animator or filmmaker or design studio, what is it about their approach that you like (or dislike?).

There are some important things to bear in mind:

- **Many institutions will be more interested in your work in progress than your finished pieces**
They will want to see how you develop work from concept to finished piece. Be ready to talk about this, as well as the work itself. Also be ready to justify decisions and respond to criticism.
- **Remember – institutions are not looking for perfection but will want to see how you develop your work from concept to reality**
Be ready to explain how you interpret and explain images, text and sound, and to talk about your interpretations, as well as the work itself. Spark a connection and make the institution want to know more!
- **Tell them about your inspiration, what you think works well and whether you would change anything**
This helps them to see that you are able to apply critical reflection to your work, justify your decisions and that you can accept and apply constructive feedback – we will learn more about the importance of reflection later in the Guide.
- **Finally – and it may seem minor – but do not forget to take the time to properly mount, label and annotate your work**
Masses of explanation aren't needed; just enough to help follow the development of an idea. This will leave a great impression on the institution. Think about the hundreds, if not thousands of unstructured portfolios they will have to assess – you want to stand out!

Portfolios, interviews and auditions

✓ Top Tip

Remember it's a two-way interview. Be prepared to ask questions as well as answer them. All the questions you might ask at an open day – ask here!

✓ Top Tip

Remember these wise words: 'To be early is to be on time, to be on time is to be late, to be late is to be forgotten.'

Interviews

Interviews are a great time to shine. As ever, keep in mind the **'five P's'** – **p**rior **p**reparation **p**revents **p**oor **p**erformance!

Get the basics right:

- Confirm with the institution you will be attending the interview.
- Ensure sure you know exactly what is expected from you for the interview by researching the institution and the course.
- Journey plan so you know when and where you will be going. Some universities have multiple campuses – you don't want to go to the wrong one!
- Note down exactly how long it will take you to get there and check if you need accommodation.
- Factor buffer time into your journey to accommodate for unexpected travel delays. Arriving late won't create a good first impression.
- Read your personal statement thoroughly – you may be asked questions.
- Look through the institution's prospectus, social media posts and browse their website. This will help you understand their ethos and be sure that it fits with your own.
- Some institutions list attributes that help determine whether a student is the right fit. Write down examples demonstrating how you are a good fit against those attributes.
- Anticipate questions you think might come up and prepare answers, as well as preparing a response to the classic interview question: 'Why this institution and/or course?'
- Back up your answers with examples – this is key.
- Practice your answers with relatives, friends, in the mirror... check how you come across in your body language.

- If you are presenting a portfolio, be sure to know your pieces back-to-front and be prepared to talk about them in detail. Think about your pieces in terms of what, why and how (and who if you were inspired by a particular person).
- Stay on top current affairs and developments affecting the industry/sector you want to go into. Some interviewers will be industry professionals so there's a good chance you might be asked your opinion on topical issues.
- Lastly – organise some practice interviews with your teachers/advisers.

There's a few core question areas that are very likely to come up in your interview:

- Why are you passionate about your subject?
- What makes you different?
- Where do you get inspiration from?
- What are your strengths and areas for improvement?
- What would you like to do upon graduating? – i.e. jobs, further study etc.

For more top interview preparation tips, check out this handy article from Norwich University of the Arts (nua.ac.uk/study-at-nua/undergraduate-apply/interview-tips).

Approaching the big day, there are a few final things to consider:

- The night before, ready your interview clothing (dress smartly – first impressions count), get a good night's sleep and double check your journey.
- Get there 15 minutes early. This will give you enough time to sign in at reception, use the bathroom, get settled and take a quick moment to mentally prepare.
- Inevitably, problems do occur – that is life! Just make sure you're not caught out note down the contact details of someone at the institution in case of an emergency or severe delay.

Above all, always remember that a positive attitude will get you far. If you plan and prepare all the steps above, the interview itself will be a great experience for you – dare we say you might even enjoy it!

✓ Top Tip

Before attending an audition or an interview, advise staff of any additional requirements or disabilities you may have in advance.

✓ Top Tip

Remember to label anything you leave with the institution with your name.

Portfolios, interviews and auditions

✓ Top Tip

Don't forget to demonstrate your passion as well as your technical skills.

During the interview

- Show the institution you really want to be there. Sit up and look engaged. If you come across disinterested, the interviewers will be too!
- Ask for clarification or for questions to be repeated if you need to – don't be frightened!
- Use examples. Don't just tell the interviewer you are great at creating docudramas: what happened when you made one? A handy framework to help structure your answers is Situation, Task, Action, Result (STAR). To find out more, search 'STAR method' online (leeds.ac.uk).
- Teamwork makes the dream work. Many institutions will be looking for competencies, or skills, that demonstrate your ability to work with others. Ensure you have examples which describe a situation or task where YOU worked in a team, how YOU worked in that team, the actions YOU took and outcomes YOU helped to achieve.
- Try to stay calm. If you find yourself rambling, just stop to take a breath and continue!
- Remember, it's not the end of the world if you trip over your words or go blank for a moment – try to move on and focus on the next question.
- Ask questions – it shows your curiosity and enthusiasm, helping you to stand out. Think of the interview as more of a two-way conversation: you'll want to determine if an institution is right for you, as well as the institution checking if you are right for them.
- Be yourself – not the person you think they want you to be. The institution is interested in you as an individual so don't be afraid to show off your personality!

Auditions

Most practice-based performing arts courses have auditions. Like just about everything else, auditions will vary by both course and institution. Again, make sure you research well and prepare properly. Some institutions will charge for auditions but there are fee waiver schemes in place for those who need them.

Auditions can take many forms. As well as presenting a piece, you may be asked to participate in a group activity, a workshop or even some 'on the spot' tests. Some institutions or courses may also have more than one round: the initial audition and recalls for successful candidates. Once again, each course and each institution is different so be sure to check carefully and prepare yourself accordingly.

It is important that you arrive to your audition with time to spare. This is, in the first instance, to ensure you are on time and composed but also to provide you with enough time to warm up. It is also best to wear comfortable clothes that you can move in easily. The possible exception is music, where you might be expected to dress smartly – although you will not be expected to wear concert dress.

Many of these institutions recruit nationally and internationally so there may be a choice of audition venue. In exceptional circumstances, and particularly for international candidates, there may be the possibility of video auditions.

For more top tips and guidance on auditions, search for the below:

- Making the most of your audition' slideshow (ucas.com)
- Interview & Auditions (bruford.ac.uk)
- Audition Process Guidance for BMus(Hons) Popular Music Performance (leeds-arts.ac.uk)
- Top 5 Audition Tips by 2nd Year Degree Student Lucy Stewart Adams (theurdang.london)
- Dance Audition Preparation Tips (trinitylaban.ac.uk)
- Music Audition Preparation Tips (trinitylaban.ac.uk)
- Musical Theatre Audition Preparation Tips (trinitylaban.ac.uk)

✓ Top Tip

Try to have a couple of extra pieces prepared, so on the day you can deliver what you feel most comfortable with – don't rely on just one or two stock pieces.

Portfolios, interviews and auditions

Worksheet

We've created a worksheet activity to help you think actively about this – available to download in the 'Practitioner Resources' area of our website accessHE.ac.uk/resources

What happens next?

Portfolio preparation, auditions and interviews are daunting, time consuming and tiring. **Remember to give yourself a break and a treat afterwards.** It's not an easy process for anyone and you've already done very well to get this far!

Whether you have presented a portfolio, participated in an interview or an audition, it's a good idea to think back on the experience critically. Thinking about what went well and what you may want to work on in a future interview is a useful exercise, known as 'reflection'.

Some key reflective questions to ask yourself are:

- What areas were you best prepared for?
- Did you forget to mention something important or interesting in your interview or presentation?
- What areas did you struggle with? What were you least prepared for?
- What criticism or feedback were you given?

If you were caught out by some unexpected questions, think about preparing responses to these for next time. If they came up once, they may come up again.

How do I choose?



Patricia (Tricia) Merca-David | Norwich University of the Arts
Studying Illustration BA (Hons)

“Creativity has and will always be present in human societies, whether it takes the form of posters, gallery exhibits or book illustrations. Design always fascinated me as a means of communication so it was no surprise that I applied for an illustration course after college. More of a personal reason for studying design is that I want to see and contribute to a more diverse art industry as opposed to the more Eurocentric, elite world of the past. Through means such as social media, online platforming and promotion, and workshop facilitation within communities it is becoming more accessible to minority groups to showcase work, and so encouraging art that is more reflective of the diverse world we live in.”

How do I choose?

Worksheet

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Making a decision

Now that all your offers are in, what do you do?

Whether you have gone down the UCAS route or direct entry route, you will have some choices to make. Institutions using UCAS will either let you know directly or through UCAS Track if they are willing to make you an offer. This should happen relatively quickly after your interview – within the month. You will then need to choose your 'Firm' and 'Insurance' choices. UCAS Conservatoire is a little bit different – depending on the type of offers you receive, you may be able to select one or two choices. Institutions that accept direct applications can and do vary widely so it is best to check what their processes are – some may wish you to interview or audition again.

But how do I choose?

This is by no means an easy decision with lots of different things to think about. Always bring it back to the question of 'what is important to me?' which usually involves things like location, environment, teaching style, alongside reputation and ranking.

Research the course

If you haven't already, now is the time to get answers to those burning questions by researching the courses you have chosen to apply for.

Try to find solid answers to the following questions:

- What do I want from a course – something practical or more theoretical/academic?
- Do I like the look of the course content and the modules I will learn?
- How is the course structured and assessed? Does that suit me?
- What is the proportion of written work?
- Is there a dissertation?
- Is there a possibility of a work or study abroad placement? Do I want this?

Speak to current (and former) students

There is no better way to learn about what an institution is really like. Don't be shy – there is no such thing as a stupid question! Attend open days, speak to student ambassadors, browse Student Room, watch vlogs and read student/alumni case studies (in this Guide and beyond).

Consult university league tables – but with caution

We advise against basing your decision on university league tables alone. They can certainly help to inform a decision but should be consulted with caution. Why is that? Well, a highly ranked institution doesn't necessarily mean it's the best one for you. Secondly, there are countless league tables out there so it's difficult to know which ones are reliable. Ultimately, this is YOUR decision to make – not a league table's!

Visit the campus in person

Before making any decision, we **strongly** recommend visiting your top choice(s). Why is that? Well, you can read in glossy prospectuses all about the appeal of the institution's campus, its facilities, student accommodation and societies.

However, the only way you can really visualise yourself there is through your own eyes. Book onto an open day, visit the nearby town and get a feel for the local area. This can help you determine if somewhere is (or isn't) the place for you. The reality is, if it is a campus institution and you are more of a city person, you won't have a good time.

Consider your specific needs

If you have specific needs, now is also the time to research the support services offered at different institutions. This can range from disability and wellbeing support to counselling services and hardship funding. Nowadays, you can find all this information online – but if not, you can always email admissions tutors and other members of staff. It's important to be aware of the different support services available in higher education and what you could get a little extra help with.

The Disabled Students Allowance is one such example of extra support not all prospective (and indeed, current) students are aware of. It is a non-means tested allowance, given on top of Student Finance (which doesn't have to be paid back), providing assistive equipment for those in higher education with a learning difficulty, health problem or disability. This includes those with hidden conditions and challenges to their mental health. Many eligible students are unaware they can apply for DSA without having 'confirmed' their choices. To find out more, search 'Disabled Students' Allowances' on UCAS (ucas.com) or check eligibility by searching 'disabled students' allowance' on the gov.uk website (gov.uk).

? Top tip

Ask about support for students outside of the curriculum. If you have any problems while at uni – and life does throw a curve ball sometimes, how much support will you get?

How do I choose?

Making a decision

Earlier we asked you to think about what is important to you before applying to university. Now that you have your offers, please go back to this and see if anything has changed.

Remember, the most important thing is how you feel about the institution or course. You will be the one spending the next three years or so studying this subject at the institution – not anyone else. Ultimately, ask yourself the following: 'A few years from now, when I have graduated from this institution, can I confidently say I am glad I chose to study here?'

Once you have made your selections, you just need to get through the remaining academic year, complete your assessments, await your results and then you're off!

Good Luck!



Disclaimer

This document is meant to serve as information, advice and guidance (IAG) for those considering a journey into the creative sector through higher education. We at AccessHE have done all we can to ensure that the information in this Guide is accurate at the time of print. We accept no liability for inaccuracies, nor for any use of the information or representations made either in this Guide or in any written or verbal communication from AccessHE to a third party. That said, we hope that you will find the information in this Guide useful in directing you to institutions and courses where you can find out more specific and up-to-date information to inform your decision-making. We wish you all the best in your journey and if you have any feedback about this Guide, please get in touch: AccessHE@londonhigher.ac.uk.



Bristol Old Vic
Theatre School



LIPA

THE LONDON
CONTEMPORARY
DANCE SCHOOL

national centre
for circus arts



RAMBERT
SCHOOL



TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE
OF MUSIC & DANCE



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