

Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Summary of Access and Participation Plan 2025/26-2028/29

What is an Access and Participation Plan?

An Access and Participation Plan sets out the provisions that will be meaningful and effective in promoting equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups, as determined by the Office for Students, the regulator for Higher Education in England.

[See Guildhall School's Policies webpage](#) for the full version of the Access and Participation Plan 2025/26-2028/29, and our previous Access and Participation Plan 2020/21-2024/25, which applies to students who commenced their studies in September 2024 or earlier, and to Access and Participation activity delivered up to August 2025.

Key points

Guildhall School of Music & Drama is a small and specialist provider of vocational degree programmes in music, drama and production arts, based in Central London. Our Strategic Plan demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning, equity, diversity and inclusion, and being “inclusive of all people regardless of their background”, and advocates for the “continuing importance of the performing arts, in a context where equity and sustainability matter”.

Access and Participation is integral to these strategic commitments, and annual monitoring in recent years shows that our approach to Access and Participation activity is supporting progress towards improved access, though, given declining music and performing arts access in the state-education system, there is still much to do. Our Access and Participation Plan reaffirms our commitment to ensuring gifted musicians, actors and production artists UK-wide can reach their creative potential.

Fees we charge

Our full-time, home student, undergraduate tuition fee is £9,250, in line with the maximum fee limits set out in Higher Education regulation; this fee may increase each year as stipulated by regulation.

[See our Fees and Funding webpage](#) for further information on tuition fees.

Financial help available

We offer substantial financial support via Guildhall Financial Awards, available to all students, which collates a range of scholarships with varying eligibility criteria. We invite all offer-holders and students to apply for Guildhall Financial Awards via a single application form, and distribute awards based on eligibility and financial need.

The Access Bursary is a separate award specifically for students from low-income households, funded by our Access and Participation Plan. All students with a household income of below £33k, who commenced their studies after September 2025, may apply, and be eligible, for the Access Bursary. Priority for the award is given to care experienced students, those who are estranged from their family, those who have independent student status, those who have significant caring responsibilities and those that have a disability that limits their ability to work part-time. Following this prioritisation, awards will be distributed to other low-income applicants. From September 2025, the annual Access Bursary is valued at £3,075 or £4,100 for final year students or £5,000 for care-experienced students.

Students who commenced their studies in September 2024 or earlier are eligible for the Access Bursary funded by the Access and Participation Plan 2020/21-2024/25, which has alternative eligibility criteria and conditions.

Students are expected to apply for all financial support annually, and awards are not guaranteed in any year.

The Access Start-up Fund is a one-off award of £400, paid in the first term of the first year of study. This award is exclusive to new entrants who participated in the Supported Application Scheme in their year of entry.

We also operate an Emergency Support Fund for students who experience unexpected financial hardship, which is open to applications year-round.

Information for students

Our financial support webpages are the most up to date source of information for applicants and offer-holders. [See Guildhall School's Financial Support webpages](#) for further information.

Current students can access financial support information on our intranet, MyGuildhall. Relevant information, including application processes, is communicated to all offer-holders and students via email.

We have also recently subscribed to [Blackbullion](#), and all students are able to access financial education resources through this service.

What we are aiming to achieve

When developing Guildhall School's Access and Participation Plan, we identified two key Risks to Equality of Opportunity, by undertaking a thorough analysis of internal application and student data, and significant external research.

Risk One: There is inequitable access to the performing arts provision that supports the attainment and skill development required for access to the School.

We have established three objectives relevant to this risk, to ensure that our Access and Participation work is targeted to those most likely to experience this inequality.

- 1) The School will increase the proportion of **new entrants whose last place of education was a state-funded school or college** by 2028/29.
- 2) The School will increase the proportion of **new entrants with home postcodes that are IMD¹ Quintile 1 and Quintile 2** by 2028/29.
- 3) The School will increase the proportion of **Black, Asian and ethnically diverse new entrants** by 2028/29, and will monitor closely the proportion of Asian new entrants.

These objectives have associated numerical targets, with annual milestones, to support measuring impact, which can be found on pages 8 and 51 of the full Access and Participation Plan.

Though these targets are specific, we understand that others will experience inequality in accessing arts provision, and pre-entry activity will continue to be available to a wider group of participants including, but not limited to, those from low-income households, those with disabilities, those who are care-experienced or estranged from their family, mature students and young carers.

Risk Two: Cost pressures and associated impact on student mental health, wellbeing and engagement.

We have established two objectives relevant to this risk, to ensure accessibility of support for students, and our growing understanding of the learning experience.

- 4) The School will ensure that appropriate support and guidance (including financial, pastoral, academic and professional) is available and accessible to all Access Bursary recipients, and the wider Access Student Community.
- 5) The School will monitor the awards outcomes of Black, Asian and ethnically diverse, and mature, students and seek to better understand the learning experience of these two groups by 2028/29. Should ongoing monitoring and/or qualitative findings denote no

¹ Indices of Multiple Deprivation, the official measure of relative deprivation for small geographical areas. Quintile 1 refers to the most deprived 20%; Quintile 2 refers to the next most deprived 20% (combined, the most deprived 40%).

improvement in degree outcomes for either group, the School will review its Access and Participation Plan specific activity and targets.

What we are doing to address keys risks to equality of opportunity

Our broad-ranging pre-entry activity is designed to combat Risk to Equality of Opportunity 1, and enable creative and talented young people from all backgrounds to access performing arts education and confidently apply to our undergraduate programmes.

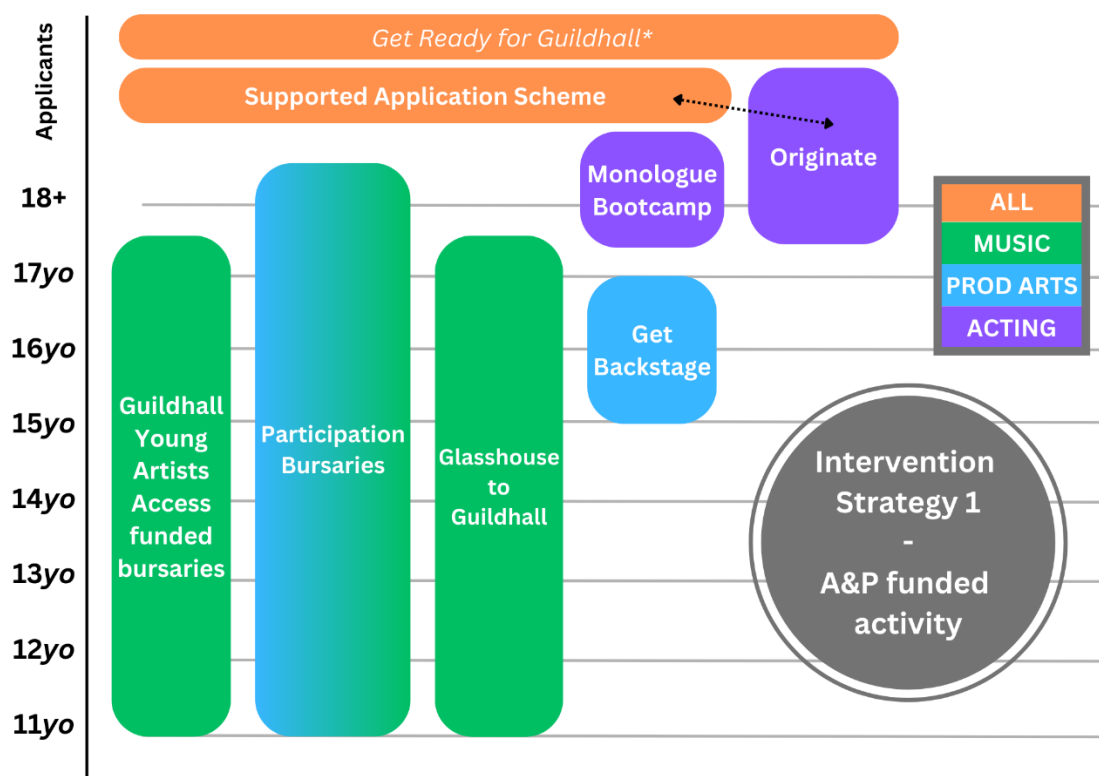


Figure 1: pre-entry activity for young people, delivered through Intervention Strategy 1

**Get Ready for Guildhall is delivered for offer holders only, as part of Intervention Strategy 2, but detailed here as the final stage of pre-entry support to show the possible journey of a young person receiving Access support.*

Support designed for our Access Student Community will address Risk to Equality of Opportunity 2. The Access Bursary and Access Start-up Fund will minimise financial pressures that students face, and the Access and Participation team's activity for offer-holders and current students provides an additional, exclusive, source of support and guidance.

Further information on the Intervention Strategies we designed to address identified Risks to Equality of Opportunity can be found on pages 7-21 of the Access and Participation Plan. More detailed, up to date, information on all our activity can be found at www.gsmd.ac.uk/access.

How students can get involved

The Access Student Community are encouraged to get involved in Access and Participation work through completion of surveys, contribution to activity development and as student ambassadors on events. Students and recent alumni were involved in the development of the Access and Participation Plan in a consultancy role, and the Students' Union President represented the views of students by providing feedback on a first draft, and in a supporting Student Submission to the Office for Students.

Further information on how students are involved, and how they contributed to the development of this Plan, can be found on pages 25-26 of the Access and Participation Plan.

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

All activity delivered as part of our Access and Participation Plan commitments is informed by evidence, making use of internal evaluation reports, data, feedback from students, expertise of the Access and Participation team, and a range of external reports and research about what works. Further information on the evidence base and rationale for each of our Intervention Strategies can be found on pages 14-15 and 20-21 of the Access and Participation Plan.

We are committed to contributing to the Higher Education sector's knowledge of what works in Access and Participation, and our Access and Participation Plan outlines several time-bound evaluation commitments to ensure that this happens. Our pre-entry activity will be evaluated through a combination of monitoring participants' engagement with activity, their characteristics, application outcomes and higher education progression; participant and student surveys; qualitative feedback; staff observations; and case studies. We will track the Higher Education destinations of activity participants using the [Higher Education Access Tracker](#) service.

Our Access Bursary will be evaluated using the Office for Students' Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit, and its impact on student success will be measured through close monitoring of student engagement with support services, continuation of studies and degree award outcomes.

Further information on our evaluation commitments can be found on pages 15-16, 21 and 26-29 of the Access and Participation Plan.

Evaluation reports will be published on our Access and Participation webpages, and shared with colleagues in the Higher Education sector via blogs, articles and conferences.

Contact details for further information

The Access and Participation team can be contacted via email: access@gsmd.ac.uk.

Further information on all Access and Participation Plan funded activity can be found at www.gsmd.ac.uk/access.