

## Performing Arts Applications

Performing Arts courses are available in music, dance, acting and theatre/screen production to name but a few and unlike other subjects, applicants can apply to study through UCAS, UCAS Conservatoires or through direct applications to independent institutions.

University, conservatoire and independent school courses can all lead to a Bachelor's degree. As a general rule:

**Conservatoire/Independent courses** place more emphasis on practical development with individual tuition and performance opportunities to help you towards a career in the creative arts.

**University courses** focus more on academic study, for example, history, analysis, criticism, harmony and counterpoint, and the philosophy and psychology of the performing arts. This study can also be combined with other subjects to give a broad critical and theoretical education.

Due to the multiple application opportunities it is essential that you research course content on individual institution websites and streamline applications to target those institutions you believe are most likely to offer you a place. Things to consider include:

- Who are the tutors and are they experts in areas you want to gain experience in?
- What's the balance between practical training, lectures, seminars and performances?
- What performance opportunities and masterclasses are available?
- What professional and industry links does the institution have
- What creative arts does the institution specialise in?
- Can you get experience in or payment for public performances?
- Check with the institution if you are not sure which courses you are qualified for. If there is uncertainty, apply for the highest-level course you are interested in and a final decision will be made at audition/interview

### Studying at a Conservatoire/Independent

All courses have a strong vocational, performance orientation, and course structures are reflective of the industry. This means graduates will be accustomed to the ways of working, hours, and expectations of the industry they are going to work in.

Instead of a limited number of contact hours per week at a university, students often work a 9-5, Monday to Friday routine with additional performances and workshops in the evenings and at weekends. On top of this, students are expected to practise extensively in their own time.

As study is performance-centred, the year may be broken down into a block of academic weeks, followed by a block of performance weeks.

All teaching staff are usually working professionals or ex-performers. There is a strong emphasis on one-to-one tuition, alongside group work and performances. Professional musicians teach at conservatoires as part of their portfolios, and many teach at more than one conservatoire.

If you are considering applying for more than one course at a particular institution, unlike the UCAS system there is usually no need to apply for more than one course at a conservatoire or independent:

- For music courses you can choose either a joint course (50/50), a major/minor course (75/25) or you can provide two options, either of which you would be happy to study as your one main instrument. You can study two instruments equally at most conservatoires
- If you want to apply for several courses for the same instrument or discipline you would usually just mention one on your application form and then contact the institution to mention your interest in other courses

## Writing your Personal Statement

A well-written personal statement will not, in isolation, secure an offer as it will form part of the overall entry requirement criteria for the course. However, together with your references it is likely to form the basis for an invitation to audition.

As for all undergraduate courses, your personal statement should refer to your **Motivation** for studying the course and your **Other Interests**. However, the main focus needs to be on the critical evaluation of what you have done to learn about the course/career through study, performance and work experience – your **Career Exploration and Suitability**.

Before you begin writing, a top tip is to list the key skills and attributes of a performing arts professional to ensure that you address these in your draft:

- Confidence
- Self-promotion
- Resilience, self-discipline, energy and stamina
- A flexible, quick learner
- Analytical self-reflection and the ability to respond positively to criticism
- Creativity, initiative, and enthusiasm
- Time management, problem-solving and organisational skills
- Working collaboratively

**Your Motivation:** You may have had a revelatory moment in your past or a lifelong desire to study the course but honesty and a degree of introspection can make for a powerful opening for a personal statement. Your enthusiasm for the course must also 'sing out'; you are not just applying for a course, you are applying for a **vocation** and a **commitment to life-long, self-directed learning**.

**Your Career Exploration and Suitability:** Often, more than high academic achievement, performing arts institutions look for applicants that can demonstrate an understanding of what a career in their chosen area involves and their suitability for a **high-pressured and demanding profession**. Applicants usually draw on their performance experience to demonstrate this understanding.

**Remember...** more important than the experience itself is the ability to demonstrate an understanding of the relevant skills and attributes the profession requires by **reflecting** upon and the experience you may have had and the insights they have afforded you. **Be selective and analytical** - record your key learning outcomes from each activity and rank them in order of importance to help you structure your personal statement effectively.

**Your Other Interests:** Although the bulk of your personal statement should be focused on the critical evaluation of your performance experience it is important to evidence a life outside of study. Part-time employment and hobbies/interests demonstrates wider interests and can be used to further reinforce your team work and communication skills together with your capacity for sustained, intense work. These can also highlight your appreciation of a **good work/life balance** and an ability to manage your time effectively.

**Remember...** quality is more important than quantity and further examples can be included in the reference written by your Senior Tutor if necessary.

**Please note...** if you are applying through UCAS Conservatoires, each institution will be able to see where else you have applied.

## References

Applications for all courses require an academic reference which is usually written by your Senior Tutor. For UCAS Conservatoires and independent applications you are usually asked to provide details of a second referee, such as your music, dance, drama, performing arts teacher, who can comment on you:

- ability, experience and potential in your specialist field
- general academic ability in music, dance, drama, production or screen
- practical skills
- attitude to work and reliability
- commitment to music, dance, drama, production or screen as a profession
- ability to communicate
- relevant experience

Enter the following details onto each reference form, as relevant:

- name and personal ID number
- your main specialism/discipline
- the course applied for
- your choice of institution

Keep a copy of each reference as these may form the basis for discussion at interview/audition.

**Remember...** it is your responsibility to ensure that each conservatoire/independent receives the requested references by the deadline – if your referee is emailing your reference, they must send it from their own email address.

## Auditions

Most Music auditions take place between October and December. Dance and Drama are usually held at different times of the year. Auditions generally last between 10 and 30 minutes and the fees vary depending on the institution and the number of auditions required:

- **Main specialism** - one audition
- **Joint main specialism** - two auditions, one for each specialism
- **Secondary specialism** – one or two auditions depending on the institution
- **Alternative main specialism** - two auditions, one for each specialism
- **Music performers** normally play two or more contrasting pieces in a live audition
- **Musicians** may be asked to play or sing scales, read or sing at sight, take an aural test or have an interview
- **Composers** are often asked to submit a portfolio or some other evidence of practical ability, or to have an interview
- **Dance and Drama applicants** may be asked to prepare monologues, a performance piece, participate in a dance class, sing, sight-read text or improvise

## Decisions

Decisions for UCAS courses are updated on UCAS Track and independents will contact you directly. Decisions for applications through UCAS Conservatoires are:

- **Audition pending (AP)** – an invitation to audition, including the date, time and payment
- **Guaranteed unconditional (GU)** – a binding offer that confirms you have met the entry requirements
- **Guaranteed conditional (GC)** – an offer that is guaranteed if you meet certain conditions, usually examination results
- **Reserve unconditional (VU)** – you have met the entry requirements and been placed on the reserve list – for a guaranteed place, you need to accept the offer and wait to see if a place becomes available
- **Reserve conditional (VC)** – you will be placed on the reserve list if you meet certain conditions – for a guaranteed place you need to accept the offer, meet the conditions set and wait to see if a place becomes available
- **Unsuccessful (R)** – you have not been offered a place

A guaranteed offer can replace your reserve offer at any time during the application cycle. Reserve offers remain active until after A Level results have been issued in August.

## Essential Reading

[Conservatoires UK](#): an explanation of how conservatoires differ from other HE institutions

[UCAS Conservatoires](#): application and audition advice

[The Stage](#): hyperlinks to 37 performing arts institutions and the courses they offer.

[Dance and Drama Awards](#): DaDA's offer annual scholarships to talented students.

[Federation of Drama Schools](#): group of institutions with a shared vision of offering conservatoire style vocational training.

[CDMT](#): details accredited training providers of dance, drama and musical theatre together with funding opportunities.

[Acting in London](#): a free online resource covering creative fields such as acting, filmmaking and screenwriting.

[National Youth Arts Trust](#): bursary provider to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

[Spotlight](#): News and Advice on the performing arts industry, including audition top tips

[Films on a Shoestring](#): News and information for aspiring actors and film makers

[ACTORhub](#): Top tips and blogs and careers advice for actors

[Musicians' Union](#): Career development advice, blogs and articles on the music industry

**Conservatoires UK** is the voice of conservatoire education in the UK. They represent the collective views of eleven UK conservatoires. Their role is to develop best practice for training and education in the performing arts and to promote the sector's excellence nationally and globally.

### The 11 conservatoires in the Conservatoires UK scheme are:

Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

Guildhall School of Music and Drama

Leeds Conservatoire

Royal Academy of Music

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Royal College of Music

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Royal Northern College of Music

Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance



ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

ROYAL CENTRAL  
SCHOOL OF SPEECH & DRAMA  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE  
OF MUSIC & DANCE

Bristol Old Vic  
Theatre School



Bird College  
dance and theatre performance

GUILD  
HALL  
SCHOOL

RNCM  
ROYAL NORTHERN  
COLLEGE OF MUSIC

Laine | Theatre  
Arts



RSAMD  
The ROYAL SCOTTISH ACADEMY  
of MUSIC & DRAMA



Royal Conservatoire  
of Scotland



LIPA  
THE LIVERPOOL INSTITUTE  
FOR PERFORMING ARTS

Rose  
Bruford  
College

RADA  
ROYAL  
ACADEMY OF  
DRAMATIC ART

MOUNTVIEW  
ACADEMY OF THEATRE ARTS



ROYAL WELSH COLLEGE  
OF MUSIC & DRAMA  
COLEG BRENHINOL  
CERDD A DRAMA CYMRU

Millennium  
Performing Arts

LAMDA

DRAMA  
STUDIO  
LONDON

**Please contact the Careers Department at [careersstaff@staidans.co.uk](mailto:careersstaff@staidans.co.uk) if you would like individual information, advice and guidance on drafting your personal statement – we are happy to help**

**Careers Department, St. Aidan's and St John Fisher Associated Sixth Form**



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