

AccessHE Creative HE

# Apply Guide



National Collaborative  
Outreach Programme



AccessHE  
Creative



Photography  
Cover: Simon O'Connor  
Inside cover: Belinda Lawley



# The value of the creative arts cannot be understated.

The arts support our mental and physical wellbeing, foster our sense of community, and are one of the fastest growing sectors of our economy. A career in the creative arts is inspirational, highly rewarding, sometimes challenging, and there's always something new to learn.

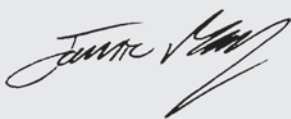
The arts tell our stories, and it's vital that those stories are told by people from all kinds of backgrounds, reflecting the diverse society we live in today.

A higher education course will give you the time and space to develop your craft as an artist and your identity. The training may be tough at times, but it's worth it. You'll cultivate skills that are prized in many different areas of the working world — and not only in the creative industries, but across STEM and business too.

If your school has limited options for taking arts subjects, don't be discouraged — look for other outlets such as summer schools, youth theatre, or taster days. Creativity is a skill you can nurture, individually and with others. Some higher education arts courses don't require formal qualifications — your passion and commitment is key.

Whether it's games design, performing arts, crafts or VFX, there's a course that will be right for you. This guide will help you in thinking about some of the decisions along the way.

**Good luck!**



**Dr Jamie Mackay**  
Deputy Head of AccessHE



**Vanessa Baptista**  
AccessHE London Innovation  
Programmes Officer



# Creative HE Apply Guide

There is a large amount of misinformation out there about creative courses, creative careers and the creative industries as a whole. Our job here is to help you wade through all the noise so you can come to an informed, independent decision as to whether or not a creative arts and design degree is right for you.

This Guide was produced collaboratively by AccessHE and the member institutions of the AccessHE Creative Network:

Conservatoire for Dance & Drama  
Ravensbourne University London  
Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance  
St Mary's University Twickenham  
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance  
University for the Creative Arts  
University of Sussex  
University of Westminster

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# So, you want to study a creative subject?



**Amber Chawner | University for the Creative Arts**  
Studying BA (Hons) Journalism

“The world we live in inspires creativity everyday, and I chose to study a creative subject because I love the opportunity created by having the freedom to take an idea and create something amazing with it. As a journalism student, I can take someone’s story, give that person a voice who wouldn’t otherwise and make other people listen and learn from it. I have harnessed my creativity within my course at UCA and as a result I am a better writer, listener and story teller, and I love the possibilities that this skillset has opened up to me.”

# 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. It's important you choose something you are passionate about and that you enjoy doing.



The creative sector is worth £91.8 billion Gross added value (GVA).

## 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 which is reflected in its workforce growth. In terms of employability, the creative industries are leading the pack! For more information about this have a look at the Creative Industries UK facts and figures section at [thecreativeindustries.co.uk](http://thecreativeindustries.co.uk).

## Why should you study a creative subject?

Staying on the topic of work, let's also not forget that for most graduate positions, some estimate as many as 70%, employers merely ask that you have a degree – they **rarely specify what type of degree**.

A creative arts and design degree could also be a valuable career move for mature learners. A creative subject could open up many doors or even provide a bit of fulfilment that might have been lacking. The Financial Times ran an article profiling career changers, featuring a Forex trader turned costume designer enrolled at RADA which you can find here, but you will need to subscribe: [ft.com/career-change](http://ft.com/career-change). More and more companies in a variety of sectors are also finding themselves in need of designers.

In broader societal terms, the arts and culture encourage greater community cohesion and reductions in social exclusion or isolation. The arts also benefit health and wellbeing including a positive impact on conditions such as dementia. You can find out more about this on the Arts Council website: [artscouncil.org.uk](http://artscouncil.org.uk).



In 2016 the creative industries saw a workforce increase four times higher than the overall increase in the wider UK workforce.

# Why study a creative course?



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

## 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, encompassing everything from advertising to IT; architecture to video games; crafts to the performing arts. There is also a wealth of opportunities to work in a creative role outside the sector.

### But what if you are after a more focused career?

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



Sales of creative services account for 10% of total UK exports — that's £21bn each year!

#### Dance careers

One Dance UK ([onedanceuk.org](http://onedanceuk.org)) have produced a very helpful and informative guide for many dance careers. They state that while only a small number of dancers perform — there are many careers in teaching or in support services. Their guide lists no less than 26 potential career paths for dancers!

#### Opportunities for musicians

Musicians also have a wider set of opportunities open to them. The Guardian ran a two part feature on careers in classical music covering everything from theatre, artist, orchestral, tour, and project and communications management to music editorship. Search 'careers in classical music' on The Guardian website: [theguardian.com/uk](http://theguardian.com/uk) to read the articles.

#### Careers advice

The AccessHE Creative website ([accesshecreative.co.uk](http://accesshecreative.co.uk)) has plenty of resources for careers advice. You should also have a look at the Creative and Cultural Skills website for their industry insights section: [ccskills.org.uk/careers/advice](http://ccskills.org.uk/careers/advice). If videos are more your thing then The National Saturday Club have put together some interesting careers videos: [saturday-club.org/film/creative-journeys](http://saturday-club.org/film/creative-journeys) or search 'national saturday club' on [vimeo.com](http://vimeo.com).



# Can I afford it?

## Student Finance, bursaries and support

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

In many ways, this is identical to other degrees: if you are aged under 25 and embarking on your first undergraduate degree, the majority of your financial help will come from the Student Loans Company ([slc.co.uk](http://slc.co.uk)) through the regular student finance routes. However, many institutions will also offer bursaries and scholarships. 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

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

#### Turn2Us

Turn2Us 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: [turn2us.org.uk](http://turn2us.org.uk).

## Cost of applications and auditions

So far we've covered why you might pursue a creative 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?

Many, if not most, institutions, will only charge the basic UCAS application fee. This can fluctuate and so it is best to check on the UCAS website at: [ucas.com](http://ucas.com), before applying. In 2018 UCAS charged £13 for applications to a single course and £25 for applications to more. However, conservatoires and drama schools may charge for auditions. This can fluctuate from school to school so **check before you apply!**

Don't let the audition fees put you off! Many institutions have fee waivers, and some offer auditions outside of London for those unable to travel. For more advice, search 'Don't let a fee stop you auditioning' on The Stage website: [thestage.co.uk](http://thestage.co.uk).



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?

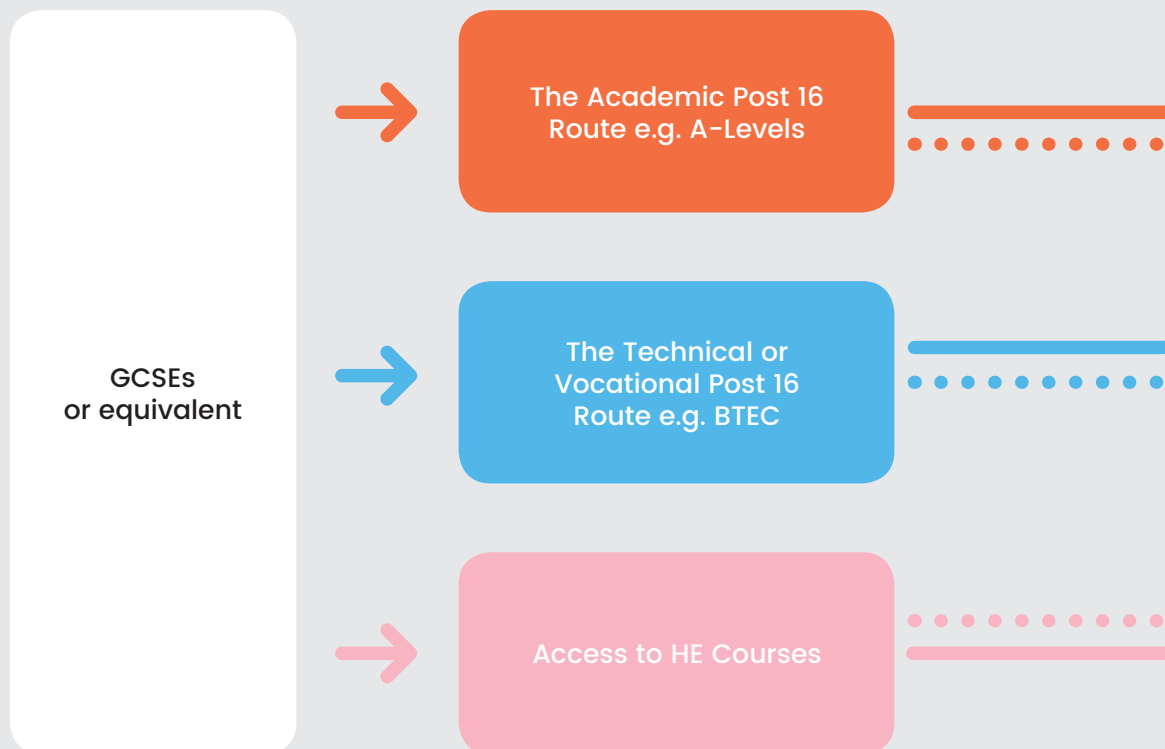


1 in 11 jobs in the UK is in the creative industries.

## How do you get onto a creative course?

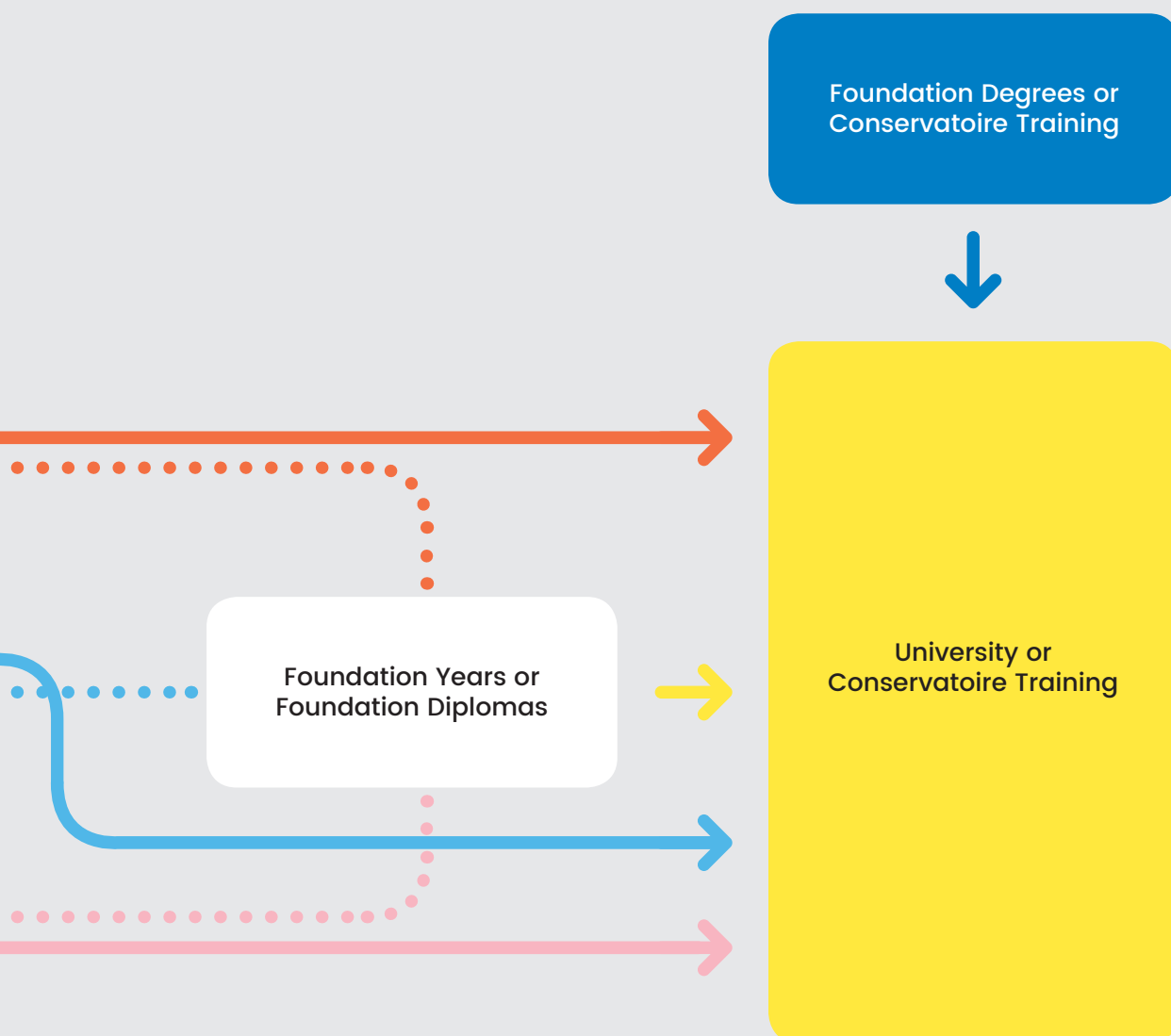
Largely, through the regular routes. Creative arts and design courses at larger, less-specialised institutions are more likely to depend on your prior education and experience be this A-Levels, BTECs, Apprenticeships or Access to HE Diplomas. It is best to check information for the course you wish to pursue at each institution. Some institutions also offer Foundation Diplomas with more flexible entry criteria. More specialised institutions are more likely to rely on auditions, interviews and portfolios for their selections.

## Pathways to Creative HE



## Choosing your path to a creative course

The pathway diagram below illustrates a few of the most common progression routes, but remember this is not conclusive! 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! **Don't let your options choices at GCSE level or after limit you!**



# What should I keep in mind?



**Adam Davies | RADA**

MA Theatre Lab – Now an artistic director and theatremaker

“Joining the MA Theatre Lab was a chance to find for myself untapped areas of study in theatre and the processes of acting. Having been taught thoroughly in the practices of Stanislavski in my undergraduate degree, I felt deeply after three years in the industry that I needed to be pushed in a new way – an exciting way. This push came in the form of ensemble-based training that pursues an autonomy in the actor that gives them the tools and craft to shape their own fate and carve their own creative pathways within the industry.”

# 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.

However, 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 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.

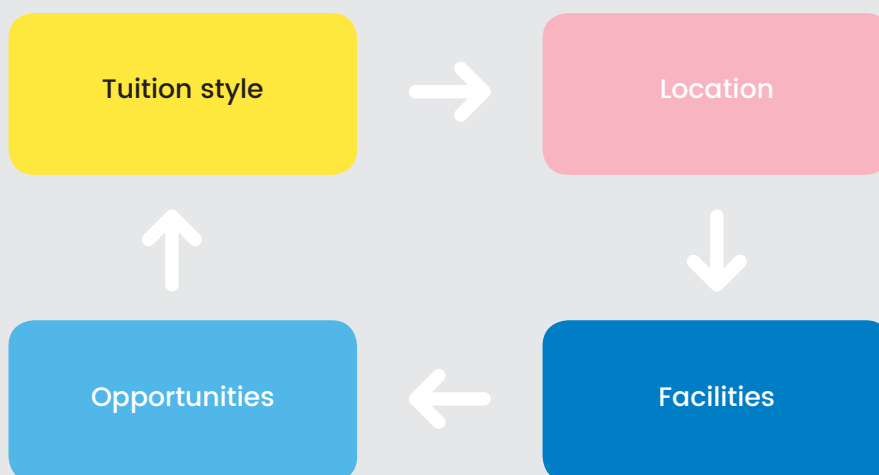
We have put together a brief summary of some of the things you could think of doing on the AccessHE Creative website: [accesshecreative.co.uk](https://accesshecreative.co.uk).



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

## What to think about when applying?

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





# Where to study?

## What is important to me?

It is important to think about what you would like to get out of your time in higher education as this will directly affect where and what you will want to study. It is best to have a good look at the courses and institutions before applying so you can get a feel for both the learning and living side.



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

**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 pubs 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 but without an obvious community; in a campus your community is all around you but you may find yourself in a bit of a bubble.

### In the city vs not in the city

It is very important to think about where you want to live when applying for higher education. One of the biggest choices here will be between an institution in a city and one outside of a city. This is a deeply personal choice, so think hard. Generally speaking, institutions outside of the city are far more likely to be more traditional campuses with nearby halls of residence. Those in the city are more likely to be a little more scattered. But remember, that this may not always be the case.

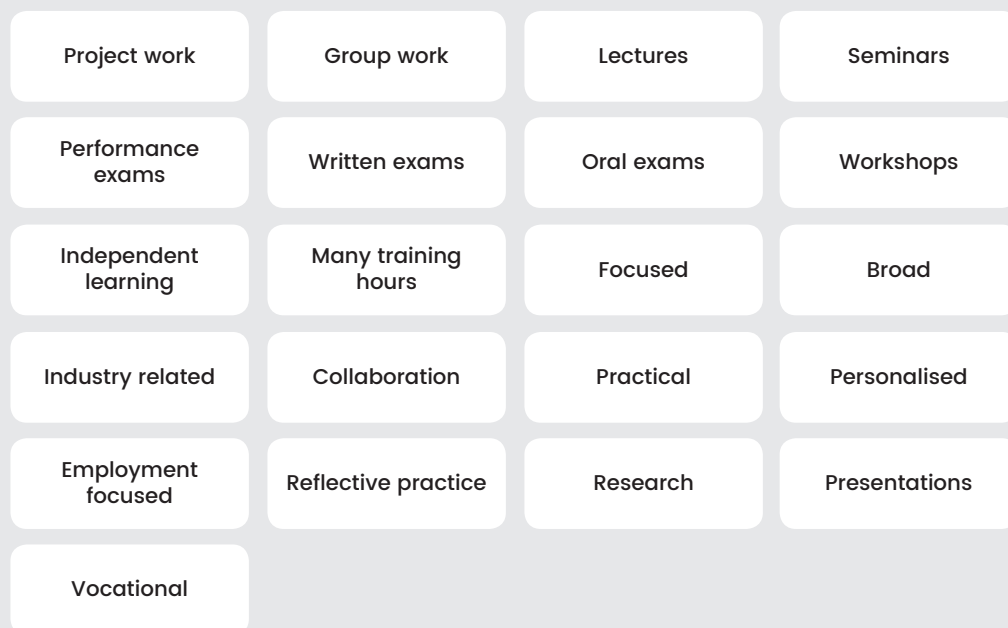
### Style of learning

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

# Choosing what and where to study

## How do you want to be taught?

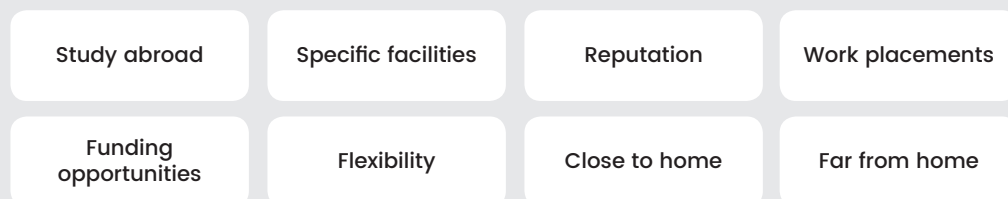
**Exercise:** Have a look at the diagram below and think about what is most attractive to you. What are your top three?



## Choosing an institution

**Exercise:** Now have a look at our institution profiles that follow and think about whether they are suitable for you. Spend some time researching those that appear most attractive.

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



# Institutional profiles



Craig Fuller

Non-campus | City based  
[oldvic.ac.uk](http://oldvic.ac.uk)

## Bristol Old Vic Theatre School

Part of the Conservatoire for Dance & Drama

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School 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), film production, 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 equal balance of acting and production student places and an exceptional graduate employment record from all courses.



Nicole Guarino

Non-campus | City based  
[rambertschool.org.uk](http://rambertschool.org.uk)

## Rambert School of Ballet & Contemporary Dance

Part of the Conservatoire for Dance & Drama

Rambert School 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.



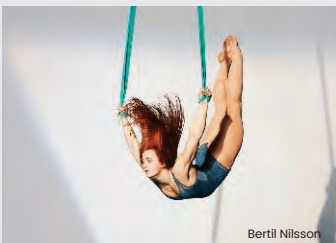
Camilla Greenwell

Non-campus | City based  
[lcds.ac.uk](http://lcds.ac.uk)

## London Contemporary Dance School

Part of the Conservatoire for Dance & Drama

London Contemporary Dance School 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.



Bertil Nilsson

Campus | City based  
[nationalcircus.org.uk](http://nationalcircus.org.uk)

## National Centre for Circus Arts

Part of the Conservatoire for Dance & Drama

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.



Non-campus | City based  
[rada.ac.uk](http://rada.ac.uk)

## RADA

### Part of the Conservatoire for Dance & Drama

RADA is dedicated to world-leading training in the dramatic arts. Founded in 1904, RADA offers vocational training for actors, stage managers, designers and technical stage craft specialists. Our community is diverse, united by a shared passion for theatre-making and the transformative power of stories and how they are told. We pride ourselves on the exceptional standard of our facilities, teaching and productions, and the personalisation of our training, tailored to the needs of each individual student.



Non-campus | City based  
[centralschoolofballet.co.uk](http://centralschoolofballet.co.uk)

## Central School of Ballet

### Part of the Conservatoire for Dance & Drama

Established in 1982, Central School of Ballet 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.



Non-campus | City based  
[lamda.ac.uk](http://lamda.ac.uk)

## LAMDA

### Part of the Conservatoire for Dance & Drama

At LAMDA, our mission is to seek out and train the exceptional dramatic artists and technicians of every generation. A world-leading conservatoire, we are proud to have a faculty of experienced teachers and practitioners; all experts in their respective fields and dedicated to the progress and well-being of our students. Our long-established relationships with industry colleagues mean we work closely with agencies, production companies and technical partners, as well as professional writers, designers, directors and actors. This combined expertise ensures our teaching reflects the latest developments and opportunities in the industry, and gives our students exposure to the most comprehensive and rigorous training possible.

# Institutional profiles



Non-campus | City based  
[nscd.ac.uk](http://nscd.ac.uk)

## Northern School of Contemporary Dance

### Part of the Conservatoire for Dance & Drama

Northern School of Contemporary Dance, based in Leeds, is a world-leading centre for contemporary dance and part of the national Conservatoire for Dance and Drama. Since 1985 it has been enabling aspiring dance artists to enter and shape the industry. Professional training and education are offered at Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels, focussing on the development of versatile and enterprising dance artists with highly-tuned technical, creative and performance skills.



Campus | Best of both, suburban  
[stmarys.ac.uk](http://stmarys.ac.uk)

## St Mary's University, Twickenham

Based in leafy Strawberry Hill, St Mary's University, Twickenham is a thriving academic environment where every student is valued, encouraged and supported. Rated Silver in TEF, St Mary's is proud to be a teaching led institution. With over 95% of graduates employed in six months (HESA 2017), the campus offers students the best of both worlds, based on London's safest campus but only a short journey from Central London.



Non-campus | City based  
[ravensbourne.ac.uk](http://ravensbourne.ac.uk)

## Ravensbourne University London

Ravensbourne University London is an innovative industry-focused higher education institution located in heart of London's newest creative hub. We are champions of creativity and collaboration and offer practical digital media and design courses from pre-degree, undergraduate and postgraduate to professional short course level. We support students to work on briefs for high profile organisations such as BBC, Royal Shakespeare Company and Ford. We are ranked in the top 10 in the UK for art and design by the QS World University Rankings and have recently been given a Silver award for teaching and learning excellence from the government's Teaching Excellence Framework.





Campus | City based  
[bruford.ac.uk](http://bruford.ac.uk)

### Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance

Rose Bruford College is an exciting and vibrant place to study and students from all programmes work closely together, replicating the processes of a professional theatre company to make ensembles and to produce fully mounted productions. Good staff/student ratios and small class sizes (plus frequent one-on-one tutorials) mean that students get to know their tutors and peers and benefit from regular support and guidance in academic and personal matters. The College and its teaching staff foster the imagination, talents and creativity of our students, preparing them for rewarding and satisfying careers.



Non-campus | City based  
[trinitylaban.ac.uk](http://trinitylaban.ac.uk)

### Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

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. Within our world-class buildings, through our supportive atmosphere and innovative approach to learning and teaching, our outstanding staff instil both creativity and technical excellence. 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.



Campus (4 in total) | Non-city  
[uca.ac.uk](http://uca.ac.uk)

### University for the Creative Arts

At the University for the Creative Arts, we offer pre-degree, undergraduate and postgraduate courses spanning creative arts, business and technology. With four campuses in the south east of England, our community of exceptional people will prepare you for a career in the creative industries — 96.9% of our graduates are employed or in further study within six months of graduating. We pride ourselves on being 100% creative and have over 5,500 students on over 120 courses. Our welcoming campuses offer a unique learning environment for our students through a winning combination of industry-focused courses, specialist creative facilities and inspirational tutors.



Primarily non-campus but Arts in campus | City & NW London  
[westminster.ac.uk](http://westminster.ac.uk)

### University of Westminster

With one of the most varied portfolios in Europe, Westminster School of Media, Arts and Design prepares students not just to enter the creative industries, but to shape and lead them. Our strong reputation for professional and practice-based education is matched by a distinguished record in academic teaching and research, encouraging the development of reflective critical practitioners. In our industry standard studios, workshops and laboratories we can provide you with an experience that matches as closely as possible the workplaces you will be entering. Surrounded by artists, producers, journalists, designers and musicians, all intent on producing their work to the highest possible standards, you will have the chance to collaborate with colleagues in group projects and team work.

# What to study: Creative HE Courses

## What is a creative course?

Using UCAS and the expertise of our members, we have drawn together nine broad categories of creative course that you might wish to explore. Clearly, however, some courses will not fit a category exactly or will fit into more than one. For example, Animation sits comfortably in both art and film.

**Think broadly about what you would like to pursue.**



Bertil Nilsson



### Art

This category incorporates courses such as fine art and illustration. Some institutions may offer more focused courses such as painting. 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.

### 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 who train at higher education level 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).

### Crafts

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

There are some institutions that offer creative writing as a degree in and of itself. 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-Level results.

### Dance

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

## Design Studies

Design studies is nearly as broad a category as art. This can include graphic and game design, alongside more object-focused design subjects such as fashion, product design, architecture and interior design. As well as the regular route into design courses, students can also opt for a foundation year.

Much like art courses, design has a 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.

## Drama

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 an acting career. Many universities and conservatoires also offer courses in theatre and stage management and production.

## Film, TV & Photography

At undergraduate level, film, TV and photography can be studied in larger institutions as well as smaller specialists such as Ravensbourne University London. 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.

## 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. 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.



# Open days



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?

## 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, and you must book a space directly with the institution – you can't just turn up. Also remember, some departments, particularly those that are more specialised, might have separate and more focused open days.

### **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.

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

# How do I apply?



**Aliyah Coreana | Ravensbourne University London**

BA (Hons) Animation – went on to complete an internship at Entertainment One Ltd in product development for children's toys

“Ravensbourne is known for its amazing state of the art technology and facilities. I felt the course offered a large number of opportunities for students with a high success rate for graduates. I learnt many skills whilst studying at Ravensbourne, above all I was able to enhance the skills set that I was really passionate about whilst on my course which were game design, 2D and 3D animation, digital painting and life drawing. When I look back at when I was first taught these skills at Ravensbourne, I realise it was the guidance and the push that I received from my tutor and fellow students that really helped me achieve my goals.”



# The application process



Remember to book early for open days:  
[opendays.com](https://www.opendays.com)

## How to apply

So, you know which subject you would like to take and you have an idea of the sort of institution you would like to study at — what next? **There are three main application routes for creative art and design courses:** UCAS, UCAS Conservatoires and direct conservatoire application.

### UCAS route

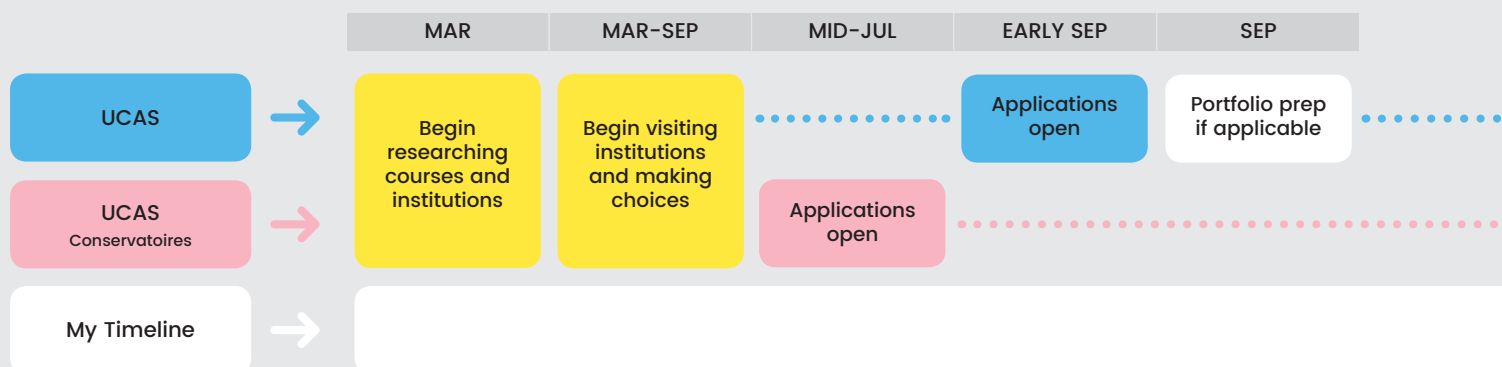
The UCAS process covers most larger institutions and most non-conservatoire specialists. Most people will apply through UCAS and your teachers/advisers will discuss it at length.

#### 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](https://ucas.com).

## Application timeline

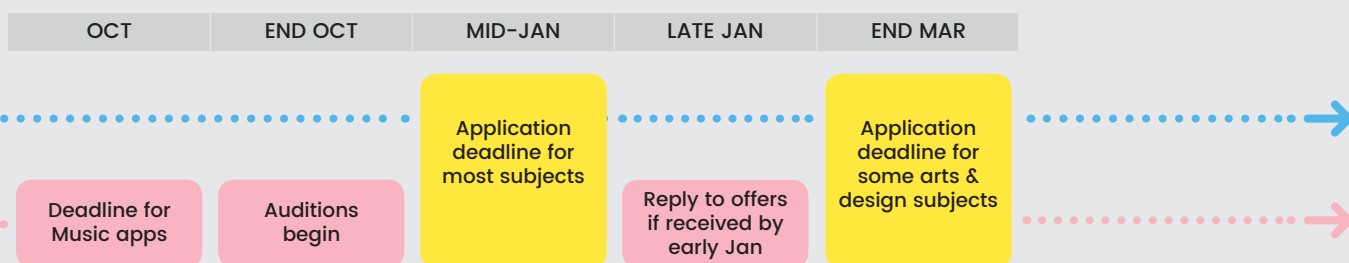


## UCAS Conservatoires route

Currently eight conservatoires accept applications through UCAS Conservatoires including Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and Bristol Old Vic Theatre School.

**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 will 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.



# The application process

## Direct route

All other conservatoires accept only direct applications and their systems will vary widely. It is best to check each institution's website carefully before applying – some may have a paper application and others an online system. However, no matter where you apply you will have to attend an interview and/or an audition depending on the course you have selected.

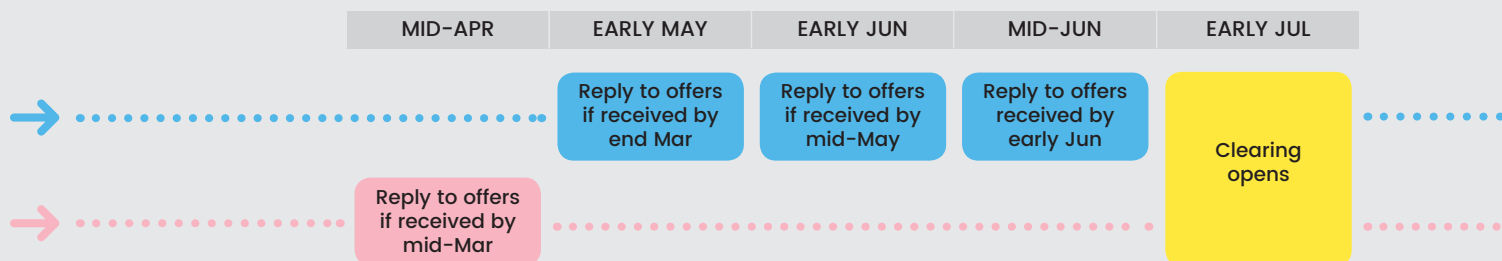
**Most importantly you can apply for all three simultaneously!** There is nothing stopping you from applying to an acting course through the regular UCAS route, through the UCAS Conservatoires route and then directly to other institutions. It will be time consuming and more expensive but it is possible.

## When to apply and how much will it cost

### Application deadlines

Unfortunately, deadlines and costs for creative courses can vary quite a bit. Generally speaking, from about 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 days to various universities.

## Application timeline



## UCAS

Applications open in early September with the deadline around 15 January, – however be sure to check – some arts and design courses will give you until the end of March to apply but others such as music may close in October.

UCAS applications have a fee, in 2018 this was £13 for a single course and £25 if you were looking at different courses. 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 your safety. All other offers will be removed after you make these choices – so think carefully.

## UCAS Conservatoires

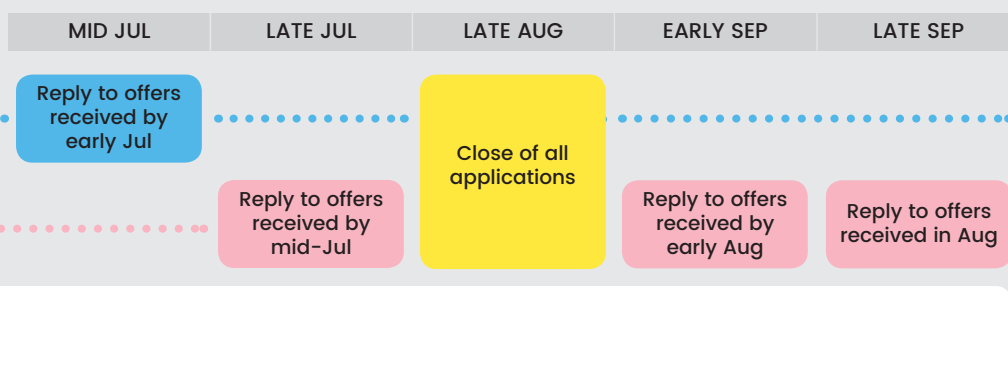
UCAS Conservatoires works to a slightly different timetable. Applications open in mid-July of the previous academic year (i.e. if you were looking to start your course in September 2019 you could begin applying as early as July 2018). Music applications will close around early October, with others closing 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 before the course commences. Auditions begin in October and will run through autumn and spring. Applying through UCAS Conservatoires cost £25 in 2018.

## Direct to conservatoires

Deadlines and fees for direct applications vary and 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 may even be many rounds of auditions – some starting as early as December and running as late as May.



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



# What happens next?



**Elly Braund | Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance**

BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance — now a professional dancer

“ Studying at Trinity Laban gave me a huge range of skills, as well as strong technical training that helped me get a job with RADC. I draw on my training at Trinity Laban also for the teaching work I do as this can be to a variety of age groups, I teach both ballet, Cunningham based and creative sessions. Now a professional dancer I have danced in many roles and have performed at many international dance festivals including Fall for Dance, New York City, Context Vishneva Festival, Moscow and Scrihnmacher Festival, Germany. ”



# Portfolios, interviews and auditions

After you have completed your application, you can expect to be called in for an audition and/or interview. Some arts and design subjects may also ask that you produce a portfolio. It is best to **check before you apply** what the next steps might entail so that you are available and prepared.

Each institution and each subject will expect something different from their portfolio, interview or audition procedure — be sure to check this out. That said, below we have put together some more general advice to help you prepare.

## Portfolios

Art and design courses will often ask to see a portfolio of your work. The aim of this is to show your skill, enthusiasm and also your ability to carry out a project from concept to finished piece.

### How do you put together a good portfolio?

The most important initial step is to thoroughly research the advice for each course at each institution you are applying for — they will all have different advice and guidance and they will all be looking for different things. You must tailor each portfolio to the each course.

However there is some standard advice. You should expect to show a range of work, each accompanied by a sketch book or similar workbook to show the progression of your work. This should include roughs, sketches, prototypes, proof of experimentation, research, photography of works in progress etc. Your portfolio should also show your enthusiasm — there should be evidence of attending exhibitions or shows.

It is good to show a range of skills in a portfolio. Many courses will be looking to make sure a candidate can draw in a variety of ways: rough, line drawings, pen drawing, pencil drawings, big and small drawings etc. They will also be looking at your use of media and method so it is best to be varied. That said, be selective and only show your best work.

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. As before **each course at each institution will vary so make sure to do your research!** Largely the same advice applies: show off a variety of skills and your passion. If you are still after some more advice about portfolios, Which? University ([university.which.co.uk](http://university.which.co.uk)) and Ravensbourne University London ([ravensbourne.ac.uk](http://ravensbourne.ac.uk)) both have some great advice articles.



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



Think about it as a piece of music: impact pieces at beginning & end, quieter pieces in the middle.

# Portfolios, interviews and auditions



When discussing your portfolio, be prepared to relate your work to the course you wish to study. But don't forget to demonstrate your passion as well as your technical skills.



Bring sketchbooks / storyboards — show how you developed your ideas through the process. Remember to label anything you leave with the institution with your name.

## Putting together your portfolio

So what do you do once you have an ace portfolio or showreel? Again, this will vary by institution but generally speaking 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 procedures:

- 1 You may be asked to send in your portfolio — this is often now done online. The institution will then have a look at your work, 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, ask you questions and ask you to talk 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.

We will talk a little more about what is expected in the interview in the next section. But bear in mind: many institutions will be looking at your work in progress more 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.

## Interviews

Interviews are a great time to shine — particularly for creative arts and design students — so it is best to be prepared.

### Initially, you should make sure your house is in order:

- Make sure you know exactly what is needed for the interview by researching the institution and the course.
- Be sure to know when and where you will be going.
- Make sure you know exactly how long it will take you to get there and check if you need accommodation.
- Plan travel time and to arrive at least 15 minutes early.
- Organise some practice interviews with your teachers/advisers.

After you have a firm grasp of the logistics of your interview, it's best to start thinking about the content of the interview. You should be sure to read over your personal statement. If you are presenting a portfolio, be sure to know your pieces back-to-front and to 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). Try to anticipate any questions that might arise from these and prepare answers, as well as preparing a response to the classics: Why this institution and/or course?

**Try to also think about the below:**

- 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.
- What makes you different?
- Why are you passionate about your subject?

**On the day**

Once you have everything prepared the interview itself should be straightforward.

**There are some things you should probably bear in mind:**

- Plan to be there early but be sure to also have a contact number in case of delays.
- Dress smartly — first impressions matter.
- Be sure to sit up and look engaged in the discussion.
- Don't be frightened to ask questions or for clarification.
- 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.

Most importantly, give yourself a break and a treat after your interview. It can be a stressful process — you should reward yourself.



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



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.

# Portfolios, interviews and auditions



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



Remember the wise words of Elin Hilderbrand "To be early is to be on time, to be on time is to be late, to be late is to be forgotten."

## Auditions

Most practice-based performing arts courses have auditions. Like just about everything else, auditions vary massively by both course and institution

- **so make sure you research well**. Some institutions will charge for auditions
- but there are **fee waiver schemes in place for those that need them**.

Auditions can take many forms: you may be asked to present a piece, participate in a group activity, a workshop or even some on the spot tests. Some institutions or courses may also have several rounds: the initial audition and recalls for successful candidates. Once again, however, **each course and each institution is different so be sure to check carefully and prepare yourself accordingly**.

Regardless of your subject, 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 video auditions.

### What happens next

First and foremost, **don't forget to treat yourself!** Portfolio preparation, auditions and interviews are daunting, time consuming and tiring. Take some time to give yourself a pat on the back for giving it your best!

After presenting your portfolio, interviewing or auditioning, it's a good idea to reflect on the experience critically. 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 blindsided by some unexpected questions, you may also want to think about preparing responses to these – if they came up once, they may come up again.

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. Institutions with direct applications can and do vary widely so it is best to check. Some institutions may wish you to interview or audition again.

# How do I choose?



**Richard Holmes | University of Westminster**

Journalism BA (Hons) — now an investigative reporter

“The most valuable thing about studying at Westminster University was the 24/7 support from the lecturers who were always keen to help with issues. Offering career advice, life advice and good companionship, they really helped shape a positive experience at Westminster for me. I worked for The Independent, Vice News, Shout-Out UK, The Daily Mail and The Express during my time at university which all contributed to my skills. I started my career freelancing for VICE and The Independent before joining the investigations team at BuzzFeed.”

# How do I choose?

## Making a decision

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

If you are going down the UCAS route you will 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.

But how do you choose which? The advice is very similar to that for selecting your institution in the first place — you should be thinking about things like location, environment, teaching style alongside reputation and ranking. It is also an idea to look at the course structure and opportunities that might be open to you.

You should think about what is important to you. No matter how highly rated the institution, if it is a campus institution and you can only imagine living in the city, you won't have a good time. You should definitely revisit your top choices before making your decision — perhaps on second glance you might decide that somewhere is or isn't the place for you. Make sure to also speak to current students — they will be in the know and able to answer specific questions.

If you have any specific needs this is also the time to research the support the institutions might have. If you can't find your answers online, you can always email admissions tutors. At this stage of the process, the most important thing is for you to decide if the institution is right for you.

In section 2, 'What should I keep in mind?', we asked you to have a 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 an institution or a course. You will be the one spending a substantial amount of your time studying a subject at an institution — not anyone else.**

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

**Good Luck!**





#### **Disclaimer**

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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](mailto:AccessHE@londonhigher.ac.uk).



TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE  
OF MUSIC & DANCE

UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTMINSTER

**Rose Bruford College**  
of Theatre  
& Performance

**UIC**  
University  
for the  
Creative Arts

 Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

 St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

**US**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF SUSSEX

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