

RADA

Royal Academy of Dramatic Art

Contextual Admissions Policy

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1. Introduction

Contextual admissions is the practice of considering the broader context of an applicant's background and circumstances when making admissions decisions. This approach aims to create a more equitable and inclusive process by allowing the admissions panels to identify and encourage students from underrepresented groups.

2. Purpose

RADA is committed to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within our student body. We recognise that students come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and we aim to provide opportunities that reflect this diversity. Our Contextual Admissions process provides guidance for the admissions panels, to enable them to create a more diverse student body and provide opportunities for students who may have faced additional challenges in their academic journey.

3. Scope

3.1. This policy applies to contextual admissions for those applying to RADA who are:

- Resident in the UK (holding UK student status)
- New to Higher Education (do not already hold a degree)
- Applying to an undergraduate programme

3.2. This Contextual Admissions policy is considered to be in-line with the [RADA Admissions Policy](#) and [RADA Connect Policy](#)

4. Criteria

4.1. While audition and interview performances are important, we are also looking for applications to demonstrate an intellectual, creative and practical abilities to undertake degree level training.

4.2. We consider the following contextual factors:

- Ethnic background (applicants who are Black and Global Majority)
- Socioeconomic background (low household income)
- Educational background (type of school attended – state/independent)
- Personal circumstances (care responsibilities, disability, refugee status)
- Geographic location (live in an area with higher levels of deprivation – IMD deciles 1 and 2)

5. Process

5.1. All applicants are offered an audition and/or interview for their chosen programme of study, regardless of their academic background.

5.2. Applicants are invited to provide information about their personal, educational, and socioeconomic background:

5.2.1. At the workshop/interview for the FdA in Technical Theatre and Stage Management programme

5.2.2. For the BA in Acting, a moderation panel will review the marks at the preliminary and recall stages, focusing on applicants who meet the criteria listed in 4.2. At the 3rd (short workshop) and 4th (full workshop) rounds, this information will be shared directly with the panel.

5.3. At the end of each admissions process, the Contextual Admissions Group for each programme evaluates final marks and applications, taking into account academic and artistic potential as well as contextual factors listed in 4.2.

5.4. The Contextual Admissions Group comprises: the Panel Chair (or their nominee) and/or the Course Leader (if different), Deputy Registrar and the Access & Participation Lead.

5.5. Admission decisions are made based on a combination of audition/interview performance and contextual information.

6. Support for Applicants

6.1. We take a whole institution approach to supporting students admitted through contextual admissions, our interventions include:

- a. Access and Participation: Our outreach work focuses on targeted primary and secondary schools as well as further education colleges, and schools that have a high proportion of students from under-represented groups.
- b. RADA Connect: RADA Connect is a free admissions support scheme for applications to our undergraduate programmes. Through this programme we aim to support applicants currently underrepresented at RADA, in higher education and in the industry. Support is offered throughout the admissions process and beyond, including free applications to our undergraduate programmes, workshops on audition/interview preparation and guidance on completing the application form.
- c. Financial Assistance: We offer scholarships and travel bursaries to support students from low-income backgrounds.
- d. Transition to university: We run a series of targeted webinars/workshops to incoming students including finance and budgeting, accommodation, disability and learning support, international students, student safety (hosted by the Met Police), coping with change and career support during and after graduation.

7. Monitoring and Review

7.1. The Contextual Admissions Policy is reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and fairness. Feedback from applicants, students, and staff is considered in the review process.

7.2. We will also track students, using the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) who have entered through the contextual route to determine if/how the interventions have impacted their continuation and attainment.

8. Contact Information

For more information or assistance with the admissions process, applicants can contact our Admissions team at admissions@rada.ac.uk

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Eligibility Criteria Definitions

Definitions have been informed by the Office for Students (1).

Criteria	Definition	Evidence Required
New to Higher Education	In the context of the UK, "new to higher education" typically refers to individuals who are entering the higher education system for the first time. Higher Education qualifications are outlined in Appendix 2	Self-certifying (confirmation of highest qualification on entry – evidence is required at offer stage)
Ethnicity	Applicants who are from a Black and Global Majority background (search BAME on the OfS access and participation glossary)	Self-certifying
Socioeconomic background	Applicants from a Low higher education participation, household income and socio-economic status	Self-certifying but we require evidence of household income for our RADA Connect programme
Educational background	Applicants should have attended a UK publicly funded (State) school/college between the ages of 5 and 18	Self-certifying but we require evidence of a state school education for our RADA Connect programme
Care experienced (Care Leavers)	Applicants will be considered care experienced if they are currently, or have previously been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • living with foster carers • living in a residential children's home • being looked after at home under a supervision order • living with friends or relatives in kinship care – either through a formal arrangement (e.g. a Special Guardianship order) or an informal arrangement without local authority support 	Self-certifying but we require evidence of care arrangements for our RADA Connect programme
Disability	Applicants who have a formal diagnosis of a physical or mental impairment	Self-certifying but we require evidence of a disability (letter from GP or psychologist) for our RADA Connect programme
Refugees and Asylum Seekers	A refugee is someone whose claim for asylum has been recognised and they have been granted official 'refugee' status. They are usually eligible for 'home' tuition fees and student finance. An asylum seeker is someone who has applied for refugee status and is waiting to find out if it has been granted.	Applicants will be required to provide evidence of either their UKVI letter confirming refugee status or confirmation of their current pending application for refugee status
Live in an area with higher levels of deprivation (IMD)	We measure this using the Government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Applicants must live in a decile 1 or 2 area (quintile 1). In other words, they must be in an area that is classified in the bottom 20% of the country in terms of perceived deprivation.	This will be checked by the admissions team

Appendix 2 – Definition of Higher Education Qualifications

The table below highlights the hierarchy of HE qualifications and relevant levels (2).

Level in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales	Level in Scotland	Qualification examples
4	7	Certificates of Higher Education
5	8	Diplomas of Higher Education Higher National Diplomas Foundation Degrees (N/A in Scotland)
6	9	Bachelor's Degrees Graduate Diplomas Graduate Certificates
	10	Bachelor's Degrees with Honours
7	11	Master's Degrees Postgraduate Diplomas Postgraduate Certificates
8	12	Doctoral Degrees

- (1) <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/access-and-participation-glossary/#D>
- (2) Quality Assurance Agency (2014) The Frameworks for HE Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies. Available at: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks>; Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (2017) The SCQF Interactive Framework. Available at: <https://scqf.org.uk/about-the-framework/interactive-framework/>