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, experiences and individual circumstances when making admissions decisions. This approach is intended to promote fairness, equity and inclusivity within the admissions process by enabling admissions panels to recognise potential and achievement in the context of an applicant's opportunities and challenges.

2. Definitions

In the context of this Policy, 'we', 'us' and 'our' means RADA

3. 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. Through the use of contextual information, we seek to identify, support and encourage applications from individuals and groups that are underrepresented in higher education and the creative industries.

4. Scope

This policy applies to contextual admissions for those applying to an undergraduate programme at RADA

This Contextual Admissions policy is considered to be in-line with the RADA Admissions Policy and RADA Connect Policy

5. Criteria

4.1. We are looking for applicants to demonstrate intellectual, creative and practical abilities to undertake degree level training.

4.2. While audition/practical workshop and interview performances are important, we will also consider the following contextual factors:

- New to Higher Education
- 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 (living in an area with higher levels of deprivation – IMD deciles 1 and 2)

6. General 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

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

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

5.5. BA (Hons) in Acting

5.5.1. Given the number of applications, it is difficult to ensure contextual admissions processes will be applied without disclosing information to the panel

5.5.2. We will inform the panel, at the preliminary stages, of applicants applying through our RADA Connect programme and marks are moderated by the Panel Chair. No personal information will be shared without explicit consent from the applicant.

5.5.3. Contextual admissions criteria will be applied during rounds three and four and outcomes monitored.

5.5.4. The Contextual Admissions Group will meet to evaluate final marks and applications, taking into account academic and artistic potential as well as contextual factors listed in 4.2.

5.6. FdA and BA (Hons) in Technical Theatre and Stage Management

5.6.1. Information provided through RADA Connect will not be disclosed to the Technical Admissions panel beforehand. However, contextual admissions procedures will be applied during the evaluation of final marks and applications, considering both academic and artistic potential, along with the contextual factors outlined in section 4.2.

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 into Higher Education 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: • 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/