

RADA

Royal Academy of Dramatic Art

Ushering Policy

PLEASE NOTE: this policy is currently under review and this version applies until that review is completed during 2022-2023.

All first and second year BA Acting students will be called upon to act as Ushers for RADA productions throughout the year. We usually also have some technical students ushering matinee performances in the week, and often Foundation Students in Acting will volunteer to participate in ushering. We require that student actors participate in ushering for the following reasons.

- 1 We believe that including ushering in the student experience helps students to understand the workings of a professional theatre, the audience experience, and the work of Front of House in supporting a show.
- 2 In supporting the experience, students are also part of the wider RADA community. First and second years usher but will then themselves know that the first and second years behind them will be supporting their work as performers as they move through the course.
- 3 It gives students a rounded and practical experience of front of house work which many may not have undertaken before and thus means students are prepared to take on this kind of work at theatres across London on a freelance basis.
- 4 It supports the productions: student fees do not cover the cost of undergraduate training a RADA and this is one way that we can bring down the overheads for the significant number of productions RADA stages each year. We would otherwise have to pay for ushers, which means we would have to compromise on either the volume of productions, or the budgets for those productions.

What we expect

Student ushers are both supporting the productions but also acting as ambassadors for RADA and thus for their own futures. We expect you to behave professionally and courteously with members of the public, with the Customer Operations Teams Front of House and Box Office teams, and towards one another, including technical students. By the same token, we expect that you will be treated courteously and professionally by staff and other students working on RADA's shows. If this is not the case, please inform the Operations & Front of House Manager (Lorna O'Leary).

How it works

At the beginning of the year at your training session you will be given your weekend dates that you will be ushering for the year so that you note these in your diary. In addition to this

each term the Senior Duty Manager (Nick Smith) will email you all to see if you have any week dates that you are unable to work, and we will do our best to work around these. The SAS team inform us what nights during the week you are scheduled to usher and we select equally from this. At the end of the 1st year you should have all been given equal number of shifts. For each show cycle, you will be asked to notify Lorna O'Leary, the Front of House Manager of any dates that are difficult for you in the production cycle. Lorna will do her best not to schedule ushering duties on those dates. The FoH team will also receive timetable information from Student & Academic Services so that they are aware of any important assessment points to help make sure that you are not scheduled for ushering when you might have an important presentation with an early start the following day.

Having informed Lorna of availability, you will then be allocated a shift. Usually, once allocated, shifts may not be changed, unless in very exceptional circumstances such as particular timetable requirements, illness or serious personal issues such as bereavement. We always urge students to provide key dates to FOH in advance, with plenty of notice, as the team does its best to accommodate your particular circumstances.

Should you be invited to an event that would enhance your training here at RADA **a very** small number of swaps may be permitted in the year. You may be permitted to 'swap' shifts with someone else, provided you find the person to swap with and you guarantee their attendance and have a good reason for requesting the swap. The 'swappee' will have to fulfil your original shift, even if it means repeating the same activity. Swaps will only be considered if there is a swapper and swappee (we are making up these terms!) and information is provided to Lorna **one week** before the productions open to enable final shifts to be drawn up. If your swappee fails to turn up, you will both receive disciplinary points. Only when Lorna has agreed the swap by email may you change your shift, so please email Lorna with the details and reason for the swap **as soon as possible once you've received your shift details**. After this point, no further adjustments will be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances (by this we mean academic timetable requirements, illness or bereavement). We always urge students to provide key dates to FoH in advance rather than swapping as this is much more complicated to administer for the FoH team, so please be courteous and respond to all emails swiftly and provide your availability.

You will be trained in ushering duties at the start of your first year.

What happens if I cannot attend?

Ushering falls into the same attendance requirements as any other part of your course. If you are unwell, you must notify dutymanager@rada.ac.uk as soon as possible on the day of your absence, including weekends. Failure to notify them will result in a point on your attendance record. Failure to turn up will result in a point. If you fail to attend or notify more than once, this will be immediately escalated into a disciplinary matter and you may receive a written warning. Students in constant breach of RADA's attendance policy risk having their place on the course withdrawn, so please note that we do take non-attendance in ushering very seriously. Having too few ushers means risking that performances may not take place, as we have a public performance licence with which we must comply. **Please don't let your fellow students down by not taking these duties seriously.**

Second year shifts

At the end of your first year, we will calculate the average number of shifts taken by students and anyone with fewer shifts will be required to make up the difference in the second year, on top of their second-year shifts. Anyone who has done more than the average number of shifts will have fewer allocated in second year. This is to make sure that the process is fair.

How do I manage to see the shows and complete ushering duties?

The simple answer to this question is to do the shifts that you have been allocated, as the FoH team will always try to vary both shifts and to enable students to see the different productions. It is worth knowing how RADA's production cycle works in thinking about booking tickets for shows. We run on a six cycle programme: The Senior Duty Manager will email you in advance of the shows to inform you what show to book and see. You will all always see the Vanbrugh performance (except the Schools Shakespeare run) but may need to book for the GBS and or Gielgud.

Autumn i	3 productions – 3 rd year actors
Autumn ii	3 productions – 3 rd year actors
Spring i	2 productions – 3 rd year actors
Spring ii	2 productions – 3 rd year actors
Summer i	3 productions – 3 rd year actors
Summer ii	Shakespeare productions (2 nd year actors)/RADA Festival

Please check your ushering email so that you know what show to book for in advance. If a production is fully booked that you need to see ask the Box Office to go on the waiting list, if in any difficulty speak to Lorna. If you haven't managed to see a particular production, do make sure that you speak to Lorna so you have chance to book your ticket. Box Office is aware of the challenge for first year students in completing ushering duties and seeing productions, so should give you first refusal on a show.

Original Policy created	August 2016
Policy Updated	
Document Approved by	Acting Course Committee
Date Approved	August 2016
Version	
Review Date	ASAP