

Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Summary of 2020-21 to 2024-25 Access and Participation Plan

What is an Access and Participation Plan?

Access and Participation Plans set out how universities will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education.

You can see the full Access and Participation Plan for Guildhall School at <https://www.gsmd.ac.uk/about-guildhall/corporate-documents/policies>.

Key points

Guildhall School is small, recruiting under 160 new UK undergraduate students each year to courses with highly competitive application, audition, and interview processes. Most of our undergraduate students study Music, which has a very high standard of entry requiring years of pre-entry training – a challenge for many given the continuing decline in free access to music education in state-funded primary and secondary schools. While we have made some progress in Access and Participation in recent years, including targeted support activity for underrepresented students to ensure they succeed in their studies and beyond, we expect that improving access to our undergraduate courses will remain a priority for some time.

Fees we charge

Undergraduate course fees at the School are £9,250. Further information on tuition fees is available at <https://www.gsmd.ac.uk/study-with-guildhall/fees-and-funding>.

Financial help available

The School offers substantial financial support via Guildhall Financial Awards (over £2million awarded annually), which includes a range of bursaries and scholarships with varying eligibility criteria. We invite all students to apply for financial support via a single application form, and we distribute awards based on eligibility and financial need.

The Access Bursary is a separate award specifically for students who face additional financial pressures due to their circumstances. Recipients must be from a household with an income of under £33k and be a Care Leaver or an estranged or independent student, come from an area of the UK with low levels of progression to university or have a disability.

The School also operates a Hardship Fund for any student in urgent financial need.

You can find further information on financial support at <https://www.gsmd.ac.uk/study-with-guildhall/fees-and-funding/scholarships-bursaries-and-financial-awards>.

Information for students

Information on financial support for applicants is available on our webpages, in our prospectus, in offer letters, and during presentations and on information stands at Open Days. Applicants and current students have access to the Senior Student Funding Officer for all queries related to finance, including student loans, external funding and budgeting. The Student Life Officer is also available to offer advice on budgeting, accommodation and deposits, and financial hardship. Current students can access financial support information via the student portal.

What we are aiming to achieve

The table on the next page provides an overview of our targets, with a brief explanation and our ambitions for 2025. *You can find further detail and annual targets in the full Plan, p11-14.*

Stage of the student lifecycle	Target	Explanation
<p>Access</p> <p>These targets all relate to the number of new students from each group who enrol each September.</p>	To reduce the gap in new entrants in HE from low participation neighbourhoods	Young people from some areas of the UK are less likely to go to university. By 2025, we would like the gap between ‘most likely’ and ‘least likely’ students to reduce from 9.4:1 to 5:1 , and to recruit 26% of our new students from these areas.
	To increase the proportion of new entrants from low participation neighbourhoods	
	To increase the proportion of new entrants from UK Black & Minority Ethnic communities	Black, Asian and ethnically diverse students are underrepresented at the School. By 2025, we would like 23% of new students to be Black, Asian or ethnically diverse.
	To increase the proportion of new entrants declaring a disability	We want all students to be comfortable in declaring a disability. In recent years, more students have accessed disability support services in the School than the number of students who declare a disability. By 2025, we would like 25% of new students to have declared their disability, with 4% declaring Sensory, Medical or Physical disabilities.
	To increase the proportion of new entrants declaring a Sensory, Medical or Physical disability	
	To increase the proportion of new entrants from state schools and colleges and new entrants state-supported at independent schools.	
<p>Success</p> <p>These targets relate to the success of students when they are studying.</p>	To improve the continuation rate of mature undergraduate students (from year one to two).	Students aged 21 or over are more likely to have external priorities (e.g. children) and be financially independent. These factors can cause additional pressures that might prevent them continuing their course. By 2025, we expect that 94% of mature students will continue from year one to two.
	To improve the attainment rate for students declaring a disability	Students with disabilities may experience additional barriers to their learning experience, and we are committed to removing these barriers and supporting success. By 2025, we would like 92% of students with a disability to achieve a higher-level degree, and 84% to progress to positive employment or further study.
<p>Progression</p> <p>This target relates to post-graduation employment.</p>	To improve the progression outcomes of students declaring a disability	

In addition, the School has two targets for its Guildhall Young Artists bursary students. Guildhall Young Artists is our dedicated under-18 training, primarily in Music, which feeds into our achievement of the above targets by providing children with access to high quality music training, which could lead to undergraduate study. The targets for Guildhall Young Artists are set for students’ **continuation** from one year of study to the next, and **progression** to any university.

Finally, the School prioritises applicants and students from **low-income households** within most Access and Participation activity, mindful of the potential financial barriers associated with applying to the School and studying for a full-time degree in London. We also offer a range of support for **Care Leavers, care experienced** students, and students who are **estranged from their families**.

What we are doing to achieve our aims

The whole School is committed to Access and Participation, and it is a key consideration in all areas of the organisation. We spend a substantial amount each year on activity that includes:

- [Guildhall Young Artist Access Bursaries](#) – this is our main commitment to raising attainment for children; directly, as their music skills improve; and indirectly, as they develop other skills and creativity, which they can apply in other subject areas (see pages 15-16 of full Plan).
- [Supported Application Scheme](#) – this offers eligible applicants a free application, advice and guidance, audition and interview workshops and travel bursaries for on-site auditions, directly removing barriers that may prevent some applicants from receiving and accepting offers (see page 18).
- [Participation Bursaries](#) – these are available to low-income applicants for our short courses, held in the spring and summer holidays, offering a taster of our degree courses and the chance to develop new skills (see page 17).
- [Access Bursary](#) – this is available to some student groups to ensure they have the financial support needed to continue, and succeed, on their course (see page 22).

You can find out more about our work at www.gsmd.ac.uk/access.

How students can get involved

We invite students to join activities as ambassadors, and some students are members of the School's UniBuddy community. Access and Participation is a standing agenda item in the twice-termly Staff Student Liaison Committee, which connects student course representatives and the Students' Union with senior members of staff. The Students' Union President contributes to our annual reporting on Access and Participation, writing responses on behalf of students where required. The Access and Participation team meet annually with current students to evaluate and develop Access and Participation activity, and informally chat with students who previously participated in Access activity to discuss new ideas.

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

We want to know whether our activity works, and we are committed to building our understanding and evidence, within the limitations of being a small School. We gather participant data annually from all activity to understand who attends and whether they go on to apply to further activity and/or the School. We also run surveys before and after each activity so that participants can reflect on their experience and suggest improvements. We gather these findings in an annual report so that we can share our overall impact with stakeholders. Although data and surveys are useful for measuring the success of our activity, our most valuable evaluation comes from conversations with participants and students, which provide insight into the benefits for individuals and the real difference the work can make.

We are committed to sharing the findings of our evaluation work and recently presented on our findings of three years of running the Supported Application Scheme.

The Head of Access and Participation regularly attends training, meetings and conferences to discuss and share evaluation methods and works with colleagues in the Research department to strengthen the Access and Participation evaluation framework.

Contact details for further information

For further information on projects, please refer to our webpages at www.gsmd.ac.uk/access. For queries, please contact the **Head of Access and Participation** and/or the **Access and Participation Officer** on wp@gsmd.ac.uk.