

# **Rose Bruford College**

## **Access Agreement 2012**

### **Executive Summary**

Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance can make a legitimate claim to be the leading specialist drama school regarding access. 8.28% of its recurrent Hefce funding currently comes as a result of its achievements in the Widening Participation and Student Success category, higher than all other UK drama schools. Against a range of measures, the College recruits strongly from under-represented groups, and supports those students during their time at College. Many have gone on to be leading practitioners in theatre, television and in other areas of performance, and many College graduates are in the forefront of diverse aspects of training, and as outreach practitioners.

The College places WP at the heart of its activities, across curriculum development and staff training, research and knowledge transfer, learning and teaching, and support for graduates. It maintains strong links locally, regionally and nationally with schools, further education, youth theatres and the creative industries. Access is seen as far more than compliance with national policy, and is the main reason why many staff and students wish to be associated with the College. The college is scoring above benchmarks in the number of students from state schools; disabled students; students from ethnic minority backgrounds; and mature students. HESA's projection of student outcomes is an 87.6% success rate, far exceeding our sector benchmark.

The philosophy of the College is to create an inclusive community, dedicated to achieving the highest standards of performance in all senses of the word. In order to achieve this aim we need to commit investment in training, while maintaining access. We therefore intend to charge £9000 fee from 2012, while continuing our work to engage under-represented groups in society. We are planning to commit 22.5% of the higher fee element to outreach measures, including the development of scholarships aimed at the hardest to reach groups, as part of the National Scholarship Programme.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Rose Bruford College is a specialist college engaged in training for theatre and performance, including their technical and management aspects. In its 60-year history it has a long tradition of encouraging candidates and students from under-represented groups, whether through Commonwealth bursaries, through courses aimed at community performance, or, more recently, through a vibrant programme of targeted outreach activity. Working as a public sector institution, the College has committed itself to both excellence and to access, wherever possible working within national qualifications structures. The College piloted combined actor/teacher training, and the development of practice-based degree accreditation for performers and technicians. As a result, the College and its graduates have been responsible for the development of several innovative theatre companies working with particular communities: Talawa, Clean Break, and Yellow Earth among many others.
- 1.2. With around 600 students on campus, and another 250 part-time, distance learning students, the College maintains a small specialist environment, nurturing the creativity of its students, and encourages a diverse and inclusive environment. Research by both the Conference of Drama Schools and by GuildHE suggests that specialist environments encourage engagement because of this scale factor, and because of the vocational nature of the study: 35% of the College's students currently are in receipt of bursaries, awarded to those from a family with income below £25,000. The average per capita cost of teaching undergraduate programmes, some of which have high contact hours, ranges up to £12,500.
- 1.3. Progress against retention benchmarks demonstrates that the college has not only recruited students from under-represented groups, but also supported their progress through the college. Many have gone on to take leading roles in theatre, television and training.
- 1.4. Our current strategy has been to form an extensive set of partnerships: locally, regionally and nationally, with schools, colleges, third-sector organisations and the theatre industry. We have sought to achieve maximum benefit by integrating the widening participation agenda with our learning and teaching development strategy, with research and knowledge transfer, with curriculum development and staff training. As a result widening participation has become increasingly embedded in everything done at the College.
- 1.5. Widening participation within the field of professional theatre training has always been a challenge, one that the College and its staff have always taken seriously. There are challenges around perception of the arts as elitist and narrow, which the College strives to combat. While recognising the traditions of drama performance as allied to a certain cultural capital, the College remains open to other influences, and continues to explore 'other' cultural traditions, and engages internationally with its training.
- 1.6. As a small specialist institution in the HE sector, Rose Bruford College is in receipt of annual institution-specific target allocations (£900k in 2010-11) from HEFCE in recognition for additional cost for training for its students through very high contact hours. It is important to note that the Additional Fee Income calculation as prescribed by OFFA is based on a general model and the assumption that the institution-specific target allocation will be protected and continued.

## 2. Existing activity level

- 2.1. As demonstrated in our most recent Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, the College currently commits just over £200,000 to bursary and outreach activity from additional fee income; and estimates a further £350,000 of expenditure related to broadening the base of its student population. This represents above 10% of the annual non-pay expenditure budget; a substantial commitment for a small institution.
- 2.2. We aim to create a community that is broadly representative of contemporary British society, in the belief that it is important for all students to be able to mix with people from a wide range of different backgrounds. Current records show that participation rates across a range of indicators are relatively healthy: in both ethnicity and disability we have a higher proportion than the population as a whole, while in lower economic groups we recruit at the sector average. It is our intention to maintain the broad direction of widening participation that we have established over the last five years, with some augmentation, into areas that we will target more explicitly.
- 2.3. Our current activity targets people within the following areas, and the table indicates the indicators we use to evaluate progress:

	Target groups	Ref	Monitoring Indicator	2009-10	HESA benchmark
1	Students from lower income households (residual income of £25,000 or less)	LIH	Bursary take-up	35.0%	[60% nationally]
2	State schools	SS	HESA Table 1a	96.2%	95.6%
3	National Statistics – Socio-Economic Class 4-7	SEC	HESA Table T1ai	32.7%	32.3% (average)
4	Low Participation neighbourhoods	LPN	HESA Table 1b	10.1%	12.4%
5	Disabled, dyslexic	D	HESA Table 7	13.7%	8.2%
6	Ethnic minorities	EM	AMS	12.6%	[11% of workforce]
7	Mature students new to HE, LPN (lower grade theatre work)	LG	HESA Table 2b	15.2%	12.5%
8	Student Retention		HESA Table 5	87.6%	78.3%

- 2.4. In addition to actions which have been aimed at promoting the College to under-represented groups, we were engaged with two lifelong learning networks: the National Arts Learning Network (NALN) and Creative Way, and a thematic Aimhigher partnership. Through these links we have active links with 17 FEI's, 18 schools and 9 community-based

theatre companies. We continue to work with NALN in its continuation guise with Ukadia, and will explore other Aimhigher legacy groupings as they emerge to give us local linkages. This will include our continued support for Arts Award projects.

- 2.5. In the past we have used some access funding to support activity that is designed to develop the inclusive culture of the institution. These include funding student projects that address minority issues, and working with the Research, Teaching and Learning, and Knowledge Transfer agendas on areas such as the annual symposium, on reviewing audition processes for disabled candidates, and using graduate start-up companies as outreach ambassadors. We have also been developing our Student Ambassador programme. Our findings match those of other institutions that students are the most convincing advocates of higher education, demonstrating that 'people like me' can thrive in a higher education environment. We expect to continue these activities.

### **3. Proposed fee levels and justification**

- 3.1. We propose to charge a fee of £9000 for all full-time undergraduate courses at the College, recognising the cost of providing high quality specialist training with high contact hours. The College is widely regarded as one of the top British drama schools; and we would wish to maintain that excellence while offering it to students from all backgrounds.
- 3.2. The College has run a number of BA (Hons) programmes by distance learning and is exploring a range of mixed-mode and flexible delivery options. Most of these courses run on a part-time modular basis. The College intends to make a substantial additional investment in this area. We believe distributed learning, incorporating the use of our new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), is a particularly effective way to contribute to the up-skilling of a range of prospective learners including those already in theatre and performance work, mature students, and those who are socially excluded for a range of reasons.
- 3.3. Additional fee income will provide a welcome supplement to outreach costs, though we anticipate shifting some expenditure (at present provided through the recurrent teaching grant) to be funded from this activity. In comparisons with the broader HE sector, the College takes just above average proportion of under-represented students (see item 3 in the table at 2.3 above). We have based our expenditure calculations on OFFA's guidelines.

### **4. Targeted financial support – scholarships and bursaries**

- 4.1. We are committed to supporting the National Scholarship Programme, as a condition of the access agreement. Our provisional allocation for 2012 is for ten places, rising to 30 in 2014.
  - 4.1.1. We aim to set up scholarships targeted at specific groups. Half of these will target candidates who have been part of youth and community theatre groups with whom we have partnerships. These companies are targeting NEETs, and those in care, the criminal justice and asylum systems. At the moment we have partnerships with Half Moon YPT, Clean Break, National Youth Theatre Outreach, Oval House and Unicorn Theatre, and intend to continue to work closely with companies such as these. This is in line with our policy to develop training provision for theatre for young audiences and our new MA in this subject area.
  - 4.1.2. We actively wish to recruit more students with sensory or physical impairment, and we will therefore target scholarships towards deaf and disabled students. Again we will be

looking at theatre companies and groups who are active in this field to help us identify potential applicants, such as Graeae and Face Front with whom we work already. We are planning MA development in this area as a way of spearheading engagement.

4.1.3. The scholarship will consist of a fee discount, and a tailored package of equipment and expenses support. How support is allocated will be negotiated on the basis of need with each recipient. Any financial payment will be limited to a maximum of £1000, payable in November of the first year. We will be matching the NSP contribution for each of the two following years, to ensure the successful scholars complete three-year programme on the same basis. Our match-funding will therefore be double the requirement by the third year of the scheme and subsequently, but will be phased in over that period. The effect of our strategy will be to 'backload' our financial commitment, which has been taken into account for outreach activity planning.

4.1.4. Scholarship students will be drawn from the pool of those entitled to bursaries, but not entitled to both awards. As the number of bursaries available increases, we intend to broaden the range of organisations with which we will be partnering.

4.1.5. Recipients will be selected having been nominated by recognised partner organisations, on a points basis against the following criteria:

- Not in education, employment or training
- Looked-after background
- Registered disabled
- Refugee status or with discretionary leave to remain
- Other contribution to the diversity of the institution

4.1.6. As a threshold, recipients will need to have demonstrated ability within their chosen field, be likely to complete their studies, and come from a household with income below £25000.

#### 4.2. Other types of support available

4.2.1. We intend to continue to offer cash bursaries at the same level, and on the same basis as currently. (Bursary recipients get £450, £900, £450 respectively for the three years of the FT programmes, for all students whose residual family income is below £25,000. The scheme is operated by the Student Loans Company.) Research among our students suggests that the bursary has been a factor in their choice of institution; the fact that they exist at all is taken as sign of intent. A total of 35% of current students are in receipt of bursary support.

4.2.2. Learning support funding. A substantial number of our students are dyslexic, attracted to us by the emphasis on kinaesthetic learning modes. Often diagnosis happens at a very late stage, even after arrival, and we support students through that process. We will continue to support this area financially, including funding for additional tuition.

4.2.3. In the past we have operated partial fee waivers for international students, as a way of maintaining retention. We would reserve the right to apply this policy to home students in extreme hardship, and will offset the loss of revenue against our access spending. This provision is precautionary, given the number of unknown factors in the new system.

## 5. Proposed outreach activity

5.1. The table below shows the planned additional expenditure on outreach activity. Broadly the activity aims to build on the strength of existing work, but with the addition of the development of distance learning work, as referred to in Section 3 above. For comparison, current access agreement budget is shown.

	<b>Outreach activity</b>	<b>Current Milestone</b>	<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Current budget</b>	<b>2012-3</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-5</b>
1	Regional partnerships	8 FEIs, 15% auditions	SS; LPN; SEC	24,500	8,000	10,000	10,000
2	Audition fee remission		LIH	12,000	12,000	15,000	15,000
3	Development of flexible learning		CPD; Mature; Socially excluded		20,000	20,000	25,000
4	Urban YPT and community-based companies,	7 partnerships	EM; LPN; LIH	7,500	7,500	10,000	12,000
5	Targeted schools and colleges in Thames Gateway and local region; arts awards projects etc	20 workshops; 1200 contacts	SS; LPN; SEC	12,000	6,500	8,500	11,500
6	Staffing and administration			21,000	40,000	50,000	60,000
7	Information and guidance – web and target mail			9,000	16,000	16,500	16,500
	<b>SUB TOTAL</b>			<b>86,000</b>	<b>110,000</b>	<b>130,000</b>	<b>150,000</b>

5.2. The figures in the table do not distinguish between direct recruitment activity and aspiration-raising, though the activities provided do, and will be reported on separately as part of the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA). Working within a small specialist sector it is appropriate to draw attention to processes, and to make individuals from target groups aware of options for their continued development.

5.3. Collaborative outreach: we have been very active partners in the development of approaches to theatre and performance training, through NALN/Ukadia; the Conference of Drama Schools; and the National Skills Academy for Creative and Cultural. Through these agencies we intend to help develop a sustained and integrated approach to promoting the value of specialist training and education, especially to under-represented groups.

5.4. We will be looking to increase our level of advanced training offered to the creative industries workforce, by extending both the numbers of partner FEI colleges, and the levels at which progression is available. We anticipate developing a flexible level 6 provision, to act as a freestanding 'top-up' to HND, FdA and Advanced apprenticeships, and for suitably experienced professionals. Activity will also include the development of targeted short courses and summer schools aimed at specific under-represented groups.

5.5. A major cost to drama schools is in interviewing and portfolio viewing or auditioning each candidate against coherent and inclusive criteria, hence providing essential contextual data for admissions. Traditionally, among accredited institutions, auditions have been subject to a fee. Rose Bruford College introduced a fee waiver two years ago for those who could demonstrate evidence of financial hardship, or who were part of a progression agreement, as we believe that cost should not be a barrier. We also intend to provide enhanced generic information, advice and guidance to unsuccessful candidates through a reorganised Access, Outreach and Widening Participation Office (AOWP).

- 5.6. The College will continue to contribute awareness-raising of creative careers with schools which have chosen to develop an arts specialism, and that have a catchment in low participation areas, and/or have a significant BME intake. The latter criterion is important because of under-representation in creative careers, and the nature of family aspirations in those communities. We will be seeking to make young people's careers advice accessible to their parents or guardians, recognising the importance of the family group in making career choices through AOWP.
- 5.7. In addition to these measures, the College intends to increase its investment in IAG materials, supplementing our existing move to online prospectus, to include initiatives such as online diagnostic tools for lower income groups. We also wish to invest in direct marketing, such as mailshots to schools and colleges from lower participation neighbourhoods; and work to encourage WP candidates into technical subjects. Initial research indicates that these are the areas which attract interest from a more debt-averse, lower income demographic.

## 6. Retention measures

- 6.1. Although the College exceeded its retention benchmark this year, we wish to continue to develop support for students at risk. This is particularly important during times of uncertainty, and we will be looking to offer reassurance and support to our students, many of whom come from particularly debt-averse social groups. Our analysis shows that there are three areas which lead to drop-out on undergraduate programmes: change of ambition as a result of further study; mental health issues; and lack of preparation in study skills. While the first of these factors should be regarded as a necessary side effect of the educative process and probably unavoidable, the second is predictable and can be ameliorated. There is some evidence that study skills is a particular problem for those who are first in family to HE study, and there is a need for additional informal mentoring and support to compensate for what is taken for granted in middle-class households. The College has noted a slightly poorer retention rate among disabled students, and will be using some funds to augment support and work with partner organisations to improve recruitment and retention in this area.
- 6.2. Our plans therefore include the following expenditure:

	Retention activity			Current budget	2012-3	2013-14	2014-5
1	Support for disabled students				14000	20000	23000
2	Financial advice services				2000	5000	10000
3	Mental health support				4000	6000	7000
4	Transitional support on study skills				10000	19000	30000
	<b>SUB TOTAL</b>			<b>12000</b>	<b>30000</b>	<b>50000</b>	<b>70000</b>

- 6.3. Curriculum development. In addition to the work on developing distance /flexible learning provision mentioned above (see para.3.3), the College continues to develop both its existing and new provision at undergraduate and postgraduate level to reflect the changing needs of learners and of the creative industries. As part of that development we are mindful of the needs of under-represented groups, and of the potential of arts education to develop

the individual and to enhance employability in one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy (entertainment and creative industries).

#### 6.4. Information to students and candidates is critical to good retention.

6.4.1. Figures would seem to suggest that measures already taken to provide accurate information to candidates, through better training of student ambassadors, is having an effect. We will continue to develop the ambassador training, which recruits volunteers early on, develops some into programme ambassadors, and results in selecting outreach leaders from experienced students and recent graduates.

6.4.2. We will be looking to extend the outreach sections of the College website and VLE, to enhance links with industry advice and guidance; provision of financial information in the form of ready-reckoners and FAQ section; backed up with free direct financial planning advice..

### 7. Targets and milestones

As listed in tables 5a and 5b as provided by OFFA, these figures show our modelling of benchmarks for the next five years. We anticipate that, as in 2006, there will be an initial negative reaction to the rise in fees, despite all efforts to mitigate this effect. The modelling is based on a one-year drop, followed by increasing acceptance and steady progress.

Target groups	Monitoring Indicator	2009-10	09-10 Benchmark	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Students from lower income households (residual income of £25,000 or less)	Bursary take-up	35.0%	[60% of pop]	35.5%	36.0%	32.5%	33.0%	35.0%	37.0%
State schools	HESA Table 1a	<b>96.2%</b>	95.6%	96.3%	96.5%	89.2%	91.0%	93.0%	95.0%
National Statistics – Socio-Economic Class 4-7	HESA Table T1ai	32.7%	<b>32.3% (average)</b>	33.5%	34.0%	30.3%	31.5%	33.0%	34.0%
Low Participation neighbourhoods	HESA Table 1b	10.1%	<b>12.4%</b>	10.5%	11.0%	9.4%	10.0%	11.0%	12.0%
Disabled, dyslexic	HESA Table 7	<b>13.7%</b>	8.2%	13.8%	14.0%	12.7%	13.5%	14.0%	15.0%
Ethnic minorities	AMS	<b>12.6%</b>	[11% of workforce]	13.0%	13.5%	11.7%	13.0%	15.0%	17.0%
Mature students new to HE, LPN (lower grade theatre work)	HESA Table 2b	<b>15.2%</b>	12.5%	15.0%	15.0%	12.0%	13.0%	14.0%	15.0%
Student Retention	HESA Table 5	<b>87.6%</b>	78.3%	88.0%	88.0%	88.0%	81.0%	83.0%	86.0%

### 8. Undertakings

This agreement looks at outreach for the next five year period, and seeks to set realistic targets and milestones. The College is fully committed to monitoring compliance: the agreement will be subject to review by the College's Equality and Diversity Committee, and reported to senior management; Academic Board and Board of Governors. The agreement



will be updated annually, in line with findings from the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment.



