



Access Agreement 2012-13

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Conservatoire for Dance and Drama
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SUMMARY

- 1 The Conservatoire for Dance and Drama was established a decade ago to secure the future of the UK's leading dance, drama and circus arts schools ensuring that students attending these schools received parity of funding with their peers in music and art conservatoires as well as qualifications befitting the demanding training that they receive. The Conservatoire is composed of eight affiliate schools all of which have national and international reputations for the quality of artists they produce.

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School
Central School of Ballet
Circus Space
London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art
London Contemporary Dance School
Northern School of Contemporary Dance
Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance
Royal Academy of Dramatic Art

- 2 Professional education and training in dance, drama and circus arts requires high levels of inputs and these are not currently met by the combination of government grant and student fee. From 2012-13, the basic teaching grant received by the Conservatoire will be removed, leaving a bigger gap in the resource. The Conservatoire therefore finds it necessary from 2012-13 to charge £9,000 to new students on all its undergraduate programmes.
- 3 Providing access to the highest-level vocational training is one of the cornerstones of the Conservatoire's foundation. In order to ensure that students are not deterred by higher fees, it will put in place measures to maintain access to students from diverse backgrounds. These measures include the provision of fee waivers for students with family incomes of less than £42,600. Fee waivers will be offered on a scale rising to £3,000 for the lowest income students who receive a National Scholarship, co-funded by the government and the Conservatoire. The Conservatoire will allocate approximately one-fifth of its Access Agreement expenditure to outreach measures targeted at improving participation in higher education. The Conservatoire has excellent retention rates at present, but will continue to monitor these closely to ensure that students do not leave training before completion for financial reasons.
- 4 Approximately 25% of the additional fee income raised from new and existing students in 2012-13 will be spent on access measures. This translates to around 18% of the additional fee income from 2014-15 onwards. In total, the Conservatoire will spend a total of up to £1.1m by 2014-15 on access measures, principally fee waivers, to ensure that students from a variety of backgrounds can enter into training at its schools. The Conservatoire schools will continue to raise considerable funds for extra bursary support (currently totalling around £700,000 per year and in addition to the £1.1 million that the Conservatoire plans to spend).
- 5 The Conservatoire has set a number of milestones which will be used to measure its performance in maintaining a diverse student population and as a means of focusing attention on areas of further work. The Conservatoire will monitor progress against these goals and report these to its Board and to OFFA on an annual basis.

INTRODUCTION

- 6 The proper education and training of dance, drama and circus artists at a conservatoire level is an intensive and expensive matter. Students receive approximately 35 hours of practice-based teaching each week for a full 36 weeks. This requires extensive staff contact time. There are some 500 individuals involved in the teaching provided to the Conservatoire's 1,150 students. This includes day-to-day teaching in the specific discipline coupled with extensive experience of performance and underpinned by the physical support required for those students. It also extends to professional artists who teach, supervise, direct, choreograph and advise students throughout their training. In total, Conservatoire training costs around £17,000 per student per year of study. Funding for the training has been a partnership between government, the individual student and the Conservatoire school which undertakes to raise the shortfall for every student between the actual cost and the state and student contributions.
- 7 Removing the basic teaching grant means that the gap between the funding received and the true cost of training increases. The Conservatoire is assuming that the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) will be able to contribute a 'targeted allocation' of funding at a premium level commensurate with the resource requirements of the education and training outlined above.
- 8 The Conservatoire's Access Agreement for 2012-13 has, therefore, been prepared with as yet incomplete information. The Board of Governors has decided that to maintain the institution's necessary level of resource, it must charge the maximum fee of £9,000 to undergraduate students starting on Conservatoire programmes in 2012. Charging the maximum fee is a regrettable necessity to deliver world-class education and training. The Conservatoire's Access Agreement is based on the following principles:
 - a. to provide as sustainable a financial base as is possible within the uncertainties facing higher education institutions over the next two transitional years;
 - b. to maintain financial commitments to existing students who will be in the majority in 2012-13;
 - c. to establish a Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme to provide financial support (as fee waivers) to students to ensure that financial considerations do not deter the most talented students from applying to Conservatoire schools during 2011-12;
 - d. to invest in outreach activity which will provide a flow of talented individuals into the Conservatoire schools;
 - e. to allocate a sustainable level of resource for the Access Agreement and to review this during the two year period, 2012-14.

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

- 9 As 2012-13 is a transitional year, the Conservatoire will have students paying different fees and on different support arrangements. For ease of reference these groups of students are referred to as 'old system' students for those who commenced their studies before September 2012 and 'new system' students for those embarking on training in or after September 2012. These terms will be used throughout this Access Agreement. An Appendix explaining the Conservatoire's use of higher education Performance Indicators is included at the end of the Agreement.

FEES FOR 2012 ONWARDS

- 10 In 2012-13 the Conservatoire will have two undergraduate fee rates which will apply to all programmes in all disciplines:

Old system students: £3,459 (estimate of what this will be in 2012)

New system students: £9,000

Type of student and course	Anticipated number of UK/EU students in each year (planning figures)			
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Old system FdA and BA(Hons) combined in all subjects	556	234	0	0
New system FdA and BA (Hons) combined in all subjects	323	645	879	879

- 11 For its own planning purposes the Conservatoire has assumed that fees will be increased year on year either with or just below current inflation rates (planning figure is 2.5%, lower than current inflation but as used in previous planning documents). This assumption is based on similar cost of living increases being applied to grant, loan support and maintenance grants but, on HEFCE's advice, not National Scholarship Programme places. However, at the Office for Fair Access's request, this document does not include any inflation in any of the financial information shown.
- 12 The current fee regime will be phased out by 2014-15, except for any students who have intermitted prior to 2014-15 and are completing their studies (likely to be in single figures).

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- 13 The Conservatoire will provide financial support for students on the old and new systems. The details of the different types of financial support available are outlined below.
- 14 For all Conservatoire students, the financial support offered through the Access Agreement is one part of the package of measures offered. Conservatoire schools fundraise first to bridge the gap between the cost of the training, the government grant and the regulated student fee. Schools then raise funds to provide additional financial support, usually in the form of bursaries to students to assist those in need during their studies. Some Conservatoire students manage a part-time job alongside their training, but it is challenging given the high number of contact hours required of their courses and the evening work in rehearsals and performances that is all part of the preparation for their professional lives. Together, the Conservatoire schools raise some £700,000 of dedicated student financial support funds each year.

Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme

- 15 From 2012 onwards, in addition to affiliate schools' fundraising for financial support, the Conservatoire will launch a Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme (CSS). This will provide students from a variety of backgrounds with fee waivers to reduce the cost of loans. The Conservatoire will include its Access Agreement provision within this scheme (details are outlined below). As well as students from low-income backgrounds embarking on higher education for the first time, the CSS will make provision for students who are not eligible for Access Agreement regulated funds such as those with previous HE qualifications taking a Foundation Degree. The Conservatoire is still planning the CSS but anticipates that the expenditure might reach around £1.1 million by 2014-15.

It believes that this fund is absolutely essential to maintaining its approach to recruitment on the basis of talent. The use of fee waivers will reduce the cost of loans to both students and the government.

Old system students (commenced studies before September 2012)

- 16 For old system students the provisions of two earlier Access Agreements will apply as outlined in the table below until they complete their undergraduate studies. This includes moving from a Foundation Degree to a BA Honours degree at any Conservatoire school. Students must be from the UK and new to higher education.

Year of Entry	Access Agreement	Bursary provision
2010-11 (3 rd year students)	2007	Family income <£25,000: a bursary of £1,700 for each year of study plus a final year payment of £400. Family income £25,001 - £39,990, a bursary on sliding scale with a minimum of £100 for each year of study plus final year payment of £400.
2011-12 (2 nd year students)	2010	Family income <£25,000: a bursary of £1,000 for each year of study. Family income £25,001 - £39,990, a bursary on sliding scale with a minimum of £100 for each year of study.

Students commencing their studies in September 2012

- 17 For new system students, the arrangements will be as outlined below. Students must be from the UK and new to higher education. Comparable financial support arrangements will be made for other EU students who are new to higher education. The Conservatoire will participate in the National Scholarship Programme (see paragraph 18 below).

Year of Entry	Family income	Financial support: fee waivers
2012-13 entry (1 st years)	<£25,000	All eligible students receive a basic fee waiver of £1,000 for each year of study, to rise with inflation (assuming that inflation is applied). Students will be eligible for additional fee waivers (up to a maximum of £2,000) from the Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme. The criteria for the Conservatoire's Scholarship Scheme are based on talent as determined at audition but this lies outside the scope of the Access Agreement.
	£25,001 - £42,600	Fee waiver up to £1,000 on a sliding scale. Students will be able to apply for additional fee waivers from the Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme. The criteria for the Conservatoire's Scholarship Scheme are based on talent as determined at audition but this lies outside the scope of the Access Agreement.

National Scholarship Programme

- 18 The Conservatoire will participate in the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) funded by the government. It has been given a provisional allocation of 15 awards in 2012-13 which will be used for fee waivers and it will match the funding associated with those awards 100% in each year of the scheme (see paragraph 37). The Conservatoire's plans for the NSP, summarised below, are subject to confirmation of funding for 2012-13 and in future years.

Criteria	Year of Entry	Financial support: fee waivers
<p>Family income of <£25,000.</p> <p>Preference will be given to students with the greatest need within HEFCE's priority categories.¹</p> <p>As the Conservatoire has fewer Scholarships than it does eligible students, it will assess students at auditions on talent and potential based measure using the regular audition criteria determined by its schools. This does not generally take account of performance at A level or other equivalent qualifications.</p>	2012-13 entry	<p>30 students will receive a fee waiver of £3,000 a year for the first two years of their programmes.</p> <p>NSP recipients will be eligible for a £1,000 fee waiver in the third year and able to apply to the Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme for additional fee waivers.</p>
	2013-14 entry	<p>30 students will receive a fee waiver of £3,000 a year for the first two years of their programmes.</p> <p>NSP recipients will be eligible for a £1,000 fee waiver in the third year and able to apply to the Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme for additional fee waivers.</p>
	2014-15 entry	<p>45 students will receive a fee waiver of £3,000 a year for the first two years of their programmes.</p> <p>NSP recipients will be eligible for a £1,000 fee waiver in the third year and able to apply to the Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme for additional fee waivers.</p>

Explanation of planning figures

- 19 The plans above are based on the Conservatoire's current figures for students in receipt of bursaries. This divides up as 112 first years, 104 second years and 84 third years or 300 students in total in receipt of fee waivers by 2014-15. Based on the planning figures above and including the additional students the Conservatoire recruits to be within the HEFCE control numbers for recruitment, there are approximately 900 undergraduate UK/EU students, which means that one-third will be in receipt of a fee waiver secured by this Access Agreement.
- 20 The Conservatoire has approximately 110 students taking professional vocational qualifications as second degree students (on Foundation Degrees) and a further 140 EU students. These students are not included in the Access Agreement provision. This makes an average UK student population eligible for fee waivers under the Access Agreement of 650 students in total by 2014-15. On

¹¹ The Conservatoire will prioritise the student groups listed in HEFCE's circular 2007/12, namely lower socio-economic groups, disabled students, looked after children/care leavers, travellers, refugees and those in certain ethnic minority groups. Talent-based criteria will still apply.

current income figures around 45% of these students would receive some form of financial assistance.

- 21 Financial support for EU and second degree students will be made through means-tested fee waivers from the Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme.
- 22 The Conservatoire will measure the success of these measures through its milestones in relation to ensuring that students from low income backgrounds continue to pursue vocational training.

Milestone 1: To maintain a figure of 45% of UK students who are new to higher education coming from families with incomes of £42,600 or less.

- 23 The Conservatoire has hovered around this milestone for the lifetime of the current Access Agreements. Given the harder challenge of ensuring that low-income students are not deterred from entering training with the prospect of increased fees, the Conservatoire believes that this milestone is appropriately challenging to achieve. If the milestone is met within the first two years of the Access Agreement, the Conservatoire will review it and raise it by up to a further three percentage points.

OUTREACH

- 24 As the Conservatoire schools are looking for talent across the UK and internationally, they devote considerable energy and financial support to preparatory training in dance, drama and circus arts. In many cases this training might complement the national curriculum and is offered in collaboration with other arts organisations. The Conservatoire schools house three Centres for Advanced Training in Dance and Circus Arts as well as an Associate programme for classical ballet students. The Conservatoire drama schools support youth companies for students aged 10 and upwards. All Conservatoire schools create and maintain links to local and 'feeder' schools nationally and internationally.
- 25 These are long-term and sustainable measures which provide a route for young talented performers to acquire both technique and performance skills to make it possible to progress into higher education training at 16 or 18. Collectively, the Conservatoire schools spend £1.5 million each year on access measures in addition to the expenditure noted above on financial support for existing students.
- 26 The Conservatoire will allocate £50,000 to outreach activity from its Access Agreement fund during 2012-13. This will rise to around £100,000 in 2014-15. The Access Agreement allocation will be used specifically to fund activities focused on widening participation for higher education rather than the full outreach work which enables people of all ages to engage with the arts. The Conservatoire anticipates that these funds will be allocated to the following priorities:
 - providing support to affiliate schools to extend and develop outreach programmes (and to be assisted in this by the affiliate schools with the greatest experience).
 - providing fee waivers for some of the Conservatoire's pre-vocational training courses such as foundation courses in acting or short courses run during school holidays for technical theatre, dance and circus arts.
 - supporting a co-ordinated approach across the Conservatoire to building relationships with schools and colleges, in particular to raise awareness of higher education courses and careers in technical theatre, stage management and circus arts.

- to sustain the extensive widening participation activities currently run in conjunction with local authorities and other government agencies outlined by the Conservatoire in its Widening Participation Strategic Assessment.
- 27 The Conservatoire is particularly interested in reaching:
- talented young people from low income backgrounds, including students from under-represented ethnic minorities, who will benefit from preparatory training and might go on to study dance, drama or circus arts at the Conservatoire or a similar institution.
 - young people from schools which have not previously had a significant history of sending students into professional arts training.
- 28 The Conservatoire has reviewed the HESA Performance Indicators (PIs), especially those relating to the entry of students from state schools.² Compared with similar types of institution, the Conservatoire believes that a 15% participation from privately-educated students is not excessive given the level of preparatory training required for many courses, especially dance and circus arts, and that co-ordinated pre-vocational training is still in development across the UK. This figure also includes students who have been to private preparatory training schools (especially in dance) but paid for by the state (such as the Music and Dance Scheme).
- Milestone 2:** *A minimum of 85% of UK students coming from state schools or from pre-vocational training paid for by the state by 2015-16, or a 0.5% increase each year.*
- 29 The Conservatoire has built up experience of supporting disabled students over the past decade. The HESA PI (Table T7) does not always reflect the actual disabled student population as it counts them by receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance. For this reason, the Conservatoire intends to rely on both the PI benchmark and its own figures in setting a milestone.
- Milestone 3:** *To maintain the significant support for disabled students and aim to meet an internal target of 10% based on all UK/EU undergraduate disabled students, not just those in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance.*
- 30 In addition to these statistical milestones, the Conservatoire will set objectives to work with the arts industry to ensure that its work meets industry needs and expectations. The Conservatoire has not as yet built any specific partnerships for the purposes of delivering its commitments under the Access Agreement, but it is interested in doing so in coming years and will liaise with colleagues within other conservatoires and the wider dance, drama and circus arts communities.
- Milestone 4:** *To work with arts organisations with links to the black and minority ethnic community to increase participation of these students where under-represented across programmes within the Conservatoire.*
- Milestone 5:** *To work with industry and similar institutions to identify which groups are under-represented and take action to enhance participation, including the provision of careers days and access to preparatory training programmes.*
- 31 Reporting on Milestones 4 and 5 will be evaluative and qualitative rather than quantitative. The Widening Participation Group is developing specific targets which will be reflected in the new Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA) required by HEFCE in 2012. The

² HESA Performance Indicator Table 1b: number of young full-time undergraduates, % from state schools.

Conservatoire is very close to its PI for recruiting students from low participation neighbourhoods³ (a performance of 9.8% against a benchmark of 10.1%). Rather than use this as a milestone, the Conservatoire plans to improve its data collection and information about students from low participation neighbourhoods. This will help Conservatoire schools in targeting widening participation activity at specific areas and setting targets for the WPSA.

***Milestone 6:** To determine appropriate targets around the recruitment of students from low participation neighbourhoods.*

STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS

32 The Conservatoire has one of the best retention rates within the higher education sector as affirmed by the National Audit Office in its 2007 review of retention within universities. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the Conservatoire auditions or interviews almost every candidate who applies (some applications do not meet initial screening criteria) and undertakes extremely rigorous selection procedures. Second, students are well supported once they embark on training, with dedicated counselling, body conditioning, medical and academic support to ensure that they can achieve the very best outcome. Third, the Conservatoire schools are small and student year cohorts do not exceed 60 in any school. This is a deliberate policy to maintain the quality and individual attention required of good professional preparation and to meet market demand. Within Conservatoire affiliates, the school principal knows individually every student.

33 For this reason, at present, the Conservatoire does not intend to make any additional provision through its Access Agreement for retention measures. That said, in the new financial climate, it remains concerned that the higher level of fees does not have a negative impact on the ability of students to complete their training. This is especially true for performers where students might receive the offer of an exciting or lucrative theatre or film contract before completing their studies. For that reason, it is including monitoring performance against the benchmark within its milestones.

***Milestone 7:** To maintain a retention rate that is consistently better than the allocated benchmark.⁴*

TOTAL OFFA COUNTABLE EXPENDITURE

34 As outlined in paragraph 8 above, the Conservatoire's financial commitment to its Access Agreement is based on an approach it believes to be sustainable. This includes the information currently available about future funding and the Conservatoire's plans to create a Scholarship Scheme to provide fee waivers for a variety of students, including those from low-income backgrounds and those currently under-represented in higher education.

35 The Conservatoire proposes to spend approximately 18% of the additional income it raises through fees on Access Agreement measures. Existing commitments to old system students in 2012-13 means that in this year it will spend approximately 25% of all the additional income raised on access measures.

36 The Conservatoire has seen a steady increase in the number of students from low-income backgrounds embarking on training from 2006 onwards. This figure now stands at approximately 30% of the total EU/UK undergraduate student population and 44% of UK undergraduates who are new to higher education. Based on OFFA's 2008-09 monitoring report⁵, this figure is average for

³ HESA Performance Indicator Table 1b: number of young full-time undergraduates, % from low participation neighbourhoods.

⁴ HESA PI Table 3a, Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time first degree entrants.

⁵ *Access Agreement Monitoring: Outcomes for 2008-09* (OFFA, August 2010/04).

the sector as a whole and considerably higher than the average of the most selective institutions (18.9%, based on Russell Group universities). Whilst the impact of £9,000 fees remains untested, the Conservatoire is confident that the measures it has outlined above in paragraphs 16-22, together with additional fee waivers from the Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme and bursaries from individual schools will provide a tailored package of support for students from low-income backgrounds.

- 37 The table below summarises the main elements of the Conservatoire's proposed OFFA-regulated expenditure under its Access Agreement:

	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £	2015-16 £	2016-17 £	Notes
Existing bursary commitments	228,000	70,000	3,000	-	-	a
Nat Schol Prog contribution	45,000	90,000	135,000	135,000	135,000	b
Fee waiver scheme	94,730	208,300	239,660	239,660	239,660	c
Outreach	50,000	90,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	d
Total cost	£417,730	£458,300	£477,660	£474,660	£474,660	e
As a % of additional income raised from new and existing students	25%	19%	18%	18%	18%	f

Notes

Inflation is not applied to the figures above.

- a. A small provision (£3,000) is made in 2014-15 in case of students on existing bursaries intermitting during the previous two years.
- b. These figures are the Conservatoire's contribution to the National Scholarship Programme. The Government's contribution is not included in this summary.
- c. This is the Conservatoire's commitment to financial support under the Access Agreement. It will form part of a considerably larger Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme, estimated to be around £500,000 in 2012-13 rising to £1.1 million by 2014-15. The Conservatoire schools will continue to fundraise separately for bursary support (around £700k per year).
- d. Outreach commitments are 12% of the total Access Agreement expenditure in 2012-13 rising to 21% from 2014-15 onwards.
- e. The total cost of the Access Agreement arrangements will rise to approximately half of the Conservatoire's proposed expenditure under the Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme.
- f. Justification for the allocated percentage spend is included above in paragraphs 24-26 and 36.

MILESTONES

- 38 The Conservatoire's milestones are integrated into the Access Agreement. In summary the six milestones are:

Milestone 1: To maintain a figure of 45% of UK students who are new to higher education coming from families with incomes of £42,600 or less.

- Milestone 2:** A minimum of 85% of UK students coming from state schools or from pre-vocational training paid for by the state by 2015-16, or a 0.5% increase each year.
- Milestone 3:** To maintain the significant support for disabled students and aim to meet an internal target of 10% based on all UK/EU undergraduate disabled students, not just those in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance.
- Milestone 4:** To work with arts organisations with links to the black and minority ethnic community to increase participation of these students where under-represented across programmes within the Conservatoire.
- Milestone 5:** To work with industry to identify which groups are under-represented and take action to enhance participation, including the provision of careers days and access to preparatory training programmes.
- Milestone 6:** To determine appropriate targets around the recruitment of students from low participation neighbourhoods.
- Milestone 7:** To maintain a retention rate that is consistently better than the allocated benchmark.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 39 The Conservatoire will undertake quantitative and qualitative monitoring of data and progress against the milestones. It will also, as outlined at paragraph 15, monitor its OFFA-countable expenditure in relation to the Conservatoire Scholarship Scheme and its own resources.
- 40 The Conservatoire will maintain equality and diversity data about recipients of fee waivers, provide an annual analysis and report on this to the Principals' Management Group.
- 41 The Widening Participation Group will be responsible for tracking performance against the milestones and reporting this to relevant boards and committees within the Conservatoire and affiliate schools;
- 42 Academic year 2012-13 and 2013-14 will be transitional years for the funding of higher education. The Conservatoire will therefore monitor carefully the student population and impact of higher fees on its demographic and will adjust the scheme accordingly. Annual submission to OFFA will assist in fine-tuning arrangements so that they are effective.
- 43 Report to OFFA and HEFCE through the annual monitoring of the Access Agreement and Widening Participation Strategic Assessment process.

PROVIDING INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

- 44 The Conservatoire will continue to publish on its website (linked to affiliate school websites and elsewhere within the HE system) an annual *Guide to Fees and Financial Support* leaflet. This will set out clearly the fees students are charged, the loan repayment requirements and the fee waiver and other forms of support available from the Conservatoire. As in past leaflets, it will include examples to enable students to understand what support they will receive whilst studying and when this will be received. It will also include examples of relevant careers and likely repayments to assist students and parents in understanding the financial commitment they are making and their cash flow for the future.

- 45 For 2012, the Conservatoire will create separate pages within its website to assist both potential and existing students in understanding the different fees and financial packages available to them (including the National Scholarship Programme) depending on the year in which they started studying. Every effort will be made to provide clear, concise and easily understandable information for students and to ensure that all students receive all financial support for which they are eligible.
- 46 The Conservatoire has an excellent track record in ensuring that students eligible for bursaries receive their bursaries and this experience will be translated to the new financial arrangements.

CONCLUSION

- 47 The Conservatoire schools have benefitted from sustained funding over the past decade. The new financial arrangements for funding higher education will continue to provide important public investment in vocational training, whilst making students responsible for paying for a greater proportion of their education and training.
- 48 Dance, drama and circus arts are not highly paid professions. Students entering training do so because they have a true vocation and a wish to contribute to the artistic success of the UK. The Conservatoire believes that, in partnership with government, it can continue to recruit talented students from all backgrounds nationally and internationally and provide them with the intensive and challenging but supportive training to achieve their ambitions.

Appendix: Note on basis for milestones and use of HESA Performance Indicators

Introduction

The Conservatoire has generally relied on the HESA Performance Indicators (PIs) to provide an evidence base for its Access Agreements. It continues to do so with the 2012-13 agreement, but with some caution in the case of certain milestones. This appendix seeks to clarify use of the PIs.

What are the HESA Performance Indicators?

According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), “Performance Indicators are a range of statistical indicators intended to offer an objective measure of how a higher education institution (HEI) is performing.” They are not intended to provide a league table of performance. The PIs themselves cover a range of different data from percentages about how many state school students are registered for undergraduate degrees to the number of students in receipt of Disabled Students’ Allowance. Within each PI is a benchmark for the institution. This is arrived at by looking at the subject, the age of the student on entry and the qualifications required for entry.

Conservatoire for Dance and Drama’s use of the HESA PIs

The Conservatoire has set six milestones in its Access Agreement, three of which are based on relevant HESA performance indicator data. The Conservatoire has chosen, for reasons outlined within the Access Agreement and below, to set its own milestone rather than adopting the HESA benchmark. The table below summarises the relevant benchmarks, the Conservatoire’s performance and its proposed milestones.

Performance Indicator	Benchmark	Performance	Access Agreement Milestone	Note
Table 1b: number of young full-time undergraduates, especially % from state schools;	94.3%	83.2%	85.0%	b
Table 3a: Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time first degree entrants 2008/09;	9.6%	4.1%	Remain below the benchmark figure	c
Table 7: Participation of students in higher education who are in receipt of Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA): all full-time undergraduates;	8.9%	9.8%	10% (all students, not just DSA)	d

The Conservatoire’s rationale for setting its own milestones is as follows:

- a. HESA Benchmarks are set by comparing the Conservatoire to a group of institutions based on the age of students entering higher education, their entry qualifications and the subjects studied. The Conservatoire, like similar institutions, has entry requirements which are not focused on the acquisition of particular UCAS tariff points or combinations of A level subjects, but rather on the talent and potential displayed by students at interview and audition. This criterion for setting benchmarks is, therefore, not something that the Conservatoire itself would rely on.
- b. A consequence of HESA’s methodology for establishing comparator groups means that in some cases like is not compared with like. Within other highly selective universities, such as the Russell Group, the actual benchmark for state school participation is set lower (at around 70%) than the Conservatoire’s achievement (83.2%). The Conservatoire’s proposed milestone for state school participation reflects a position within a group of similar conservatoires.

- c. The Conservatoire sets itself a higher target for student retention than the current HESA benchmark. This reflects the high cost of Conservatoire training and the considerable resources put into selection and training.
- d. The use of Disabled Students' Allowance is a useful measure of participation of disabled students in higher education. It is not, however, a full measure of the number of disabled students within an institution such as the Conservatoire where students often disclose during the course of their studies. The enhanced milestone reflects our strong commitment to supporting disabled students into professional practice-based training.

