

Our vision: Bristol Old Vic Theatre School will be an exemplar in modern international drama training, preparing exceptional young professionals to forge their careers in tomorrow's creative industries.

Our values

Belong: we are sincere, we accept uniqueness and we adapt to include everyone who is part of our diverse and welcoming cultural community.

Challenge with a safety net: we are always learning in a practical and dynamic way; creating and collaborating within a forward-looking, safe and caring environment.

Identify great talent: we look to all backgrounds and communities to find the creative potential who will join us in setting the tone for excellence in our industry.

Inner confidence: we are proud of our expertise and passionate about passing it on to the next generation of industry professionals, knowing they will make a difference.

Work productively & properly: we are efficient, respectful and collaborative and understand that everyone needs down-time.

1. Our Widening Participation Statement

1.1. At Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, we are driven by a belief in the transformative power of the performing arts. We recognise that socio-economic challenges, educational disparities, and disruptions in education should not be barriers to individuals achieving their artistic potential and pursuing impactful careers in the arts.

1.2. The statement is two-fold:

- To ensure that all students, regardless of their background or personal experiences, are inspired to pursue higher education in the performing arts as a viable option and find success and fulfilment at BOVTS and beyond.
- To see students from diverse backgrounds flourish at BOVTS, leveraging their unique skills and experiences to become the leading professionals and innovators in the performing arts industry.

1.3. This strategy aligns with our commitment to being a leading institution in performing arts education, underpinned by our dedication to creativity, innovation, and social responsibility.

1.4. Our Widening Participation Strategy has four main aims:

- Engage and Inspire: Develop outreach initiatives to schools and community groups, emphasising the accessibility of arts education.
- Attract and Recruit: Use targeted recruitment and contextual admissions to enrol students from diverse backgrounds.

- Transition and Success: Offer comprehensive support from pre-enrolment through to successful integration into the school environment and the wider arts community.
- Confident and Successful Futures: Provide career development, mentoring, and professional networking opportunities tailored to widening participation students.

2. Our Scope

2.1. 'Widening Participation' encompasses individuals from diverse societal and demographic backgrounds. We focus on groups identified as underrepresented in the performing arts, while recognising the broader spectrum of students who could benefit from our educational and support services.

2.2. Priority areas are established based on regulatory guidelines, data analysis, and existing policies, with annual reviews to refine our focus based on current data and broader societal contexts.

2.3. Target groups are detailed in Appendix 1.

2.4. BOVTS promotes an inclusive approach to arts education, with commitments embedded across our strategic initiatives, including specific outreach and support for the artistic community's diverse voices.

2.5 A commitment to not requiring exam grades for entry to ensure a wide demographic and ability of applicants.

3. Our Activities

3.1. BOVTS will maintain a clear pathway for support, from initial engagement through to graduation and beyond, ensuring all students can access and benefit from our programmes.

3.2. Our strategy includes detailed implementation plans, tracking outcomes and evaluating activities related to widening participation.

4. Strategy Aims and Objectives

- Engage and Inspire: Develop outreach initiatives to schools and community groups, emphasising the accessibility of arts education.

Intended outcome: Higher education is considered an accessible and achievable option for all members of society.

- **Attract and Recruit:** Use targeted recruitment and contextual admissions to enrol students from diverse backgrounds.

Intended Outcome: Our students will believe that the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School can support them to achieve their potential.

- **Transition and Success:** Offer comprehensive support from pre-enrolment through to successful integration into the school environment and the wider arts community.

Intended Outcome: All students at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School will be successfully supported in their transition to and through higher education.

- **Confident and Successful Futures:** Provide career development, mentoring, and professional networking opportunities tailored to widening participation students.

Intended Outcome: We want all our students to have an equal chance to succeed in their studies and future careers.

5. Our Partners

BOVTS collaborates with a variety of partners, including local arts organisations, educational institutions, and community groups, to support our widening participation activities. This network enriches our programming and enhances our outreach capabilities.

6. Creating a Supportive Community

6.1. Our strategy is developed collaboratively, incorporating feedback from students, staff, and partners to ensure it meets the diverse needs of our community.

6.2. We foster a network of support that includes academic leads, professional services staff, and students, all contributing to a dynamic and inclusive educational environment.

7. Enabling Our Strategy

Successful implementation relies on comprehensive planning, robust and diverse governance, effective communication, and ongoing evaluation, ensuring that BOVTS remains a leader in inclusive arts education.

8. Monitoring and Evaluating Our Activities

We continuously assess the impact of our widening participation activities, using data-driven approaches and feedback from our community to refine and enhance our strategies.

This revised vision and strategy underscores Bristol Old Vic Theatre School's commitment to accessibility, excellence, and diversity in the performing arts, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to thrive and succeed in their educational and professional endeavours.

Appendix 1: Scope of the Widening Participation Strategy

The concept of 'widening participation' is about broadening access to higher education for individuals from societal and demographic backgrounds which are underrepresented at Higher Education and are often associated with worse educational outcomes. While our efforts are inclusive of various under-represented groups, this appendix defines the specific cohorts that will receive focused attention under our strategy at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. This focus aligns with our commitment to diversify our student body, guided by regulations, data analysis, and existing policies. We continually assess and update our strategy annually based on new data, achievements, and broader societal developments.

Individual Experiences

- Care experienced: Young people who are leaving care or who have experienced care
- Refugee / Asylum seeker: Individuals officially recognised under these statuses.

Individual Characteristics

- Age: Specifically targeting mature students.
- Those with a declared disability: Includes specific provisions for individuals with disabilities, including those with autism.
- Ethnicity: Specifically recruiting students of colour

Family Characteristics

- Caring responsibilities: Individuals who are primary caregivers to dependents.
- Estranged students: Students who are estranged from their families.
- Household income: Targeting students from families with low annual gross earnings as defined by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
- Educational background of parents/guardians: Focusing on students whose parents/guardians have not attained higher education qualifications.

School Characteristics

- Performance and background data from schools and colleges
- Free School Meal (FSM) rates: Utilising data from schools to identify students from low-income families.

Geographic Characteristics

- Index of Multiple Deprivation: Focusing on students from areas classified within the lower quintiles of deprivation.
- POLAR4 classification: Identifying students from areas with low participation in higher education across England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

This focused scope is integral to our strategy's success and ensures that we meet our commitments to equality, diversity, and inclusion. We remain vigilant in our efforts to identify and support all students who could benefit from higher education, regardless of their background.

Author	Signed off by	Effective date	Review Date
Director of Studies	Executive Team	September 2024	September 2025