

NEON Awards 2024 Nominations

Category

NEON Widening Access Initiative (Outreach) Award

Name of project and institution

The Supported Application Scheme, Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Brief Description

The Supported Application Scheme addresses barriers that exist for underrepresented applicants to Guildhall School of Music & Drama. It offers free applications, workshops, travel bursaries, free tickets to shows, and an enrolment start-up fund. In the first four years, 8.9% of participants enrolled at the School, and it had a tangible impact on offer and acceptance rates, particularly for Black, Asian and ethnically diverse applicants who were 13.7% more likely to accept an offer if on the Scheme. It has recently been a source of inspiration for other small and specialist institutions, with two launching similar support in Autumn 2023.

Why has this project been nominated

The Supported Application Scheme (SAS) has had demonstrable impact on the demographic of Guildhall School's new entrants, and on the wider HE sector. SAS directly addresses barriers that exist for underrepresented applicants. Financial barriers are removed through application fee waivers, audition travel bursaries, funded consultation lessons, free tickets to shows, student finance and budgeting support and a £350 start-up fund on enrolment. Audition barriers are eased through a range of online and in-person workshops that build confidence, support preparation and develop performance technique. Common misconceptions are addressed through Q&A opportunities with teaching staff, current students, alumni and support services. Belonging is fostered by the supportive SAS community and dedication and encouragement of the Access and Participation team. From 2019-2023 SAS supported 528 individuals with 608 undergraduate applications to the School. 51.3% of participants were Black, Asian or ethnically diverse and 55.5% had an IMD Q1-2 postcode. SAS has notable geographical reach, a key objective for the team, with 41.7% of participants based outside of Greater London. Significantly, our success has influenced fellow small and specialist providers RADA and Central School of Ballet, with both launching similar provision in autumn 2023, and crediting SAS as their inspiration: "I was really inspired by your Supported Application Scheme and have used it as a model to create a modified version for supporting the application process" - CSB "We are particularly grateful for Guildhall School [...] Access and Participation team for their guidance and support as we have developed our programme" - <https://www.rada.ac.uk/access-participation/connect/>

How long has the project been running

We are in year five of the Supported Application Scheme

Number of participants for each year of the project's operation

Year one – 123 Year two – 183 Year three – 127 Year four – 175 Current year (not included in stats elsewhere in nomination) - 179

More details

<https://www.gsmd.ac.uk/study-with-guildhall/access-participation/supported-application-scheme>

