

Foundation Degree in Circus Arts – Course Information

The Foundation Degree in Circus Arts aims to develop a broad range of the skills required as a professional circus artist, with a strong focus on artistic creativity and collaboration, as well as the development of reflective and analytical skills. A specialisation process enables each student to find a circus discipline which will be suited to them and to develop a technical and creative vocabulary in that discipline.

The training is intensive, weeks are 35 hours long with a mix of taught sessions and scheduled independent learning. As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic we have adopted some of the blended learning practices and some modules will be delivered online. Each year is up to 35 weeks in length in order to sustain physical progression. Class sizes vary depending on the subject being taught. As well as physical skill development there is a strong focus on artistic exploration and creativity, contextual studies and business planning.

The course is divided into modules for assessment purposes, details of which can be found by clicking on the programme content links below. The course will focus on continuous assessment of each student's individual progress, as well as performance related assessment both as an individual and as part of an ensemble. Students' analytical and critical skills are also assessed through research presentations, essays and other assignment projects. There are no formal written examinations.

The degree is delivered at the National Centre for Circus Arts and is awarded by the University of Kent. Students must complete and pass all modules in both years of the course in order to obtain the qualification. Students may register their interest to join the BA (Hons) Degree course during the spring term of the 2nd year of the foundation degree, Students who successfully complete the foundation degree programme and meet the entry Criteria for the BA (Hons) programme will be offered a place. (https://www.nationalcircus.org.uk/docs/AppendixBEntryonoth_1504264993.pdf)

Course Review and Independent Registration

As part of our Quality Assurance Processes this course undergoes a periodic review. The next review is scheduled during the 22/23 Academic Year and any developments or changes to the course will be implemented in the 23/24 Academic year. We will inform all applicants about changes to the course when applicable.

After many years as a member of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD) we have recently been granted independent registration as a Higher Education Provider (HEP). Students currently enrolled in the 2nd year of the foundation degree and students on the BA Top-up course will complete their studies under registration with CDD. Students enrolling from 2022/23 will complete their studies registered with National Centre for Circus Arts. Students enrolling in 2022/23 should be aware that their course may be registered independently with the National Centre. The courses will continue to be validated by the University of Kent.

Course Fees

Whether an applicant is classed as having 'Home fee' or 'Overseas fee' status will be governed by the UK Government's rules on residence.

Students classed as 'Home Fee' status: £9000*

Students classed as 'Overseas' Fee status: £17,930*

*Subject to further increase in subsequent years in line with Government policy.

Application Fee: £25

Additional Costs

In addition to your tuition fees you will be expected to incur the following costs while studying on the Foundation Degree:

- You will be expected to bear the cost of attending at least one circus performance during your period at the National Centre. Tickets can range from £5-£20 for London shows. Also, whilst not mandatory, you will be strongly advised to see as many other performances as possible because this is a circus arts programme with a strong focus on performance
- Tuition fees do not include some personal materials, such as practice clothes/kit and books

Equipment

The specialist equipment used in some circus specialisms can be expensive, but it is normally possible for the National Centre to supply you with access to the equipment you will need for your course. There are some exceptions, notably any apparatus which has to be custom made or made to fit the student's size. One example of this would be a Cyr wheel. Most students opt to purchase their own equipment, and the National Centre has a loan scheme to assist you in the purchase of circus equipment, provided this is essential for your circus discipline.

Entry Requirements

- Applicants must be 18 or over on entry.
- Applicants will be able to demonstrate their intent to pursue professional employment in circus arts.
- Applicants will be required to demonstrate a proficiency in both written and verbal English language. For the Foundation Degree in Circus Arts this would normally be GCSE English or equivalent International English Language Testing System. Overseas students may be required to take a Secure English Language Test (SELT) prior to entry in order to meet VISA requirements.
- Applicants must fulfil parts 1 and 2 of the admissions process. If the applicant is from outside the UK or they are unable to attend an audition day they may request to submit a full video audition (instead of attending part 2), however, we recommend attending the live audition.

Locations

The National Centre is an organisation that is situated in Old Street in Central London. As well as delivering our Higher Education Courses, the building is used at various times by professionals who are members of 'Open Training', as well as children and adults who attend our many classes and courses. The building is also a popular events venue and available to hire. Some income that is generated from venue hire supports the delivery of our Higher Education courses. Whilst the majority of modules are delivered onsite in the NCCA building, there may be a need to relocate some modules to external venues during event hires and sometimes Higher Education production periods. These will always be London based venues and we will always endeavour to make them as close to the NCCA building as possible. You will be informed as soon as possible by the Higher Education Team about where your classes will take place if not at the NCCA and be supported in traveling to those venues.

Foundation Degree in Circus Arts – Year 1 Programme Content

Overview

During the first year of the Foundation Degree in Circus Arts students can expect to spend an important amount of their autumn term being inducted into the workings of the National Centre for Circus Arts, preparing for your time as a student here and getting to know their year group. Students will gradually be inducted into the use of spaces and equipment, and students will access these resources when we are sure that they are safe and secure in their use.

Throughout the year they will undertake intensive physical classes in a range of circus-related activities, as well as sessions in performance, movement, and contextual studies which allow you to gain an understanding of circus in a wider performance context.

All students undergo a process to determine their circus discipline specialisation. This is a collaborative process between the student and staff, leading to a decision about which circus discipline is suited both physically and creatively to that person. Our goal is to help the young circus performer to establish the foundation for a long and fruitful career. We aim for all students in this first year to have completed this process by the end of the spring term. In the final term we create a timetable that prepares students for continued development in the 2nd Year of the Foundation Degree in Circus Arts.

The year is comprised of 6 core modules:

Preparing for Circus

This module focuses on essential aspects of your training. It will be the core physical activity of your first year, moving from general circus skills through to the development of the basic and fundamental technical skills appropriate for your future development in your chosen specialist discipline. Students are assessed on their technical progress and understanding, as well as the early stages of developing their professional practice. The module also introduces students to movement and performance work in the first term.

Movement

This module aims to develop foundational elements of physical performance. Sessions will encompass a range of techniques and explore approaches to improvisation, and students will be assessed on the quality of their movement work, as well as a reflective essay.

Play and Performance

This module allows students to engage with the essential conventions and techniques involved in different forms of performance. Sessions will involve continuous exercises and presentations, and students will be assessed on the quality of their work in these sessions.

Specialisation Assessments

This module provides students with the opportunity to research and experience a various range of appropriate circus disciplines. At the end of the module, students will have gained insight and knowledge that will allow them to make a more informed and positive choice of their area of circus specialisation. Students will work in strict collaboration with the teaching staff to choose the most appropriate specialist discipline and will be assessed on this process.

Performance in Theory & Practice

This module explores the theoretical and practical application of historically significant performance practices to contemporary circus. Students are assessed through performance work and an essay submission.

Introduction to Ensemble

This module introduces students to the specific creative and technical demands of creating an ensemble performance. Students are assessed on their engagement with the devising and rehearsal process.

Foundation Degree in Circus Arts – Year 2 Programme Content

Overview

The second year of the course is devoted to the development of a student's technical abilities in their circus discipline and other technical skills as well as increasing their understanding of creating, devising and performance contexts. Students will have a tailor made timetable that is specifically designed to support them in the development of their circus discipline, as well as scheduled independent learning sessions to allow students to work towards becoming an autonomous learner.

A typical week during year two will include classes in your specific discipline, other physical complementary classes, acrobatics, performance, movement and contextual studies, as well as time for research and independent practice.

Year 2 is comprised of 7 core modules:

Circus Discipline Level 1

In this module students will begin to work on sequencing and the creation of their own material in their circus discipline, developing their own artistic ideas, and the implementation of their own training regime. The module will be delivered as a combination of tutor led sessions/workshops and task driven independent learning. Some tutor led sessions will be specifically focused on the circus discipline itself, whilst other scheduled sessions will cover practices designed to complement discipline training – (e.g. acrobatics, handstands, ballet, Pilates). Scheduled independent and peer led learning sessions are a central element of this module, allowing students the space to bring learning from across the programme into their practice, and to self-select areas of their training they wish to develop. Alongside progression with technical skills in their discipline, students will be expected to develop the habits required for professional practice as circus artists, and will be assessed on both of these aspects.

Action, Reaction and Creation

This module investigates methods of creating work for performance. Students will be assessed on the process of developing and performing work created during the module.

Movement & Composition 1

This module addresses both movement technique and composition of material. Students are assessed on their work in both areas.

Theory, Practice and Analysis of Performance

This module will help you to understand epistemologies of performance criticism and forge deeper connections between your ideas and artistic practice. Students will be assessed on a presentation to their peers, as well as an assignment submission and their engagement with research and discussion.

Circus Producing and Production Management

This module includes a series of lectures on the variety of employment contexts open to a contemporary circus performer, as well as lectures in a range of topics such as employability skills,

funding opportunities, health & safety regulations and international circus companies. It addresses the emerging need for students to have a broad understanding of the skill set it takes to mount a production with public funding. The assessment of the module involves the writing of a funding application in accordance with the Arts Council application process.

The Student Devised Piece

In this module students will be able to demonstrate the development of their own artistic approach and create a performance piece, applying the technical and devising skills they have acquired during the programme. The presentations in this module are performed individually or in small groups to National Centre staff, students and some invited guests. Students will be assessed on both the process they undertake to create the piece and on their final performance.

The Ensemble

This is an ensemble production project emulating the experience of working as a member of a professional company. Students will work intensively over a number of weeks with a creative director or choreographer. As a member of this ensemble cast the objective will be to understand the needs of the creator and propose solutions and content that respond to those needs. Students will be assessed on both their engagement in the process and on their final performance.