

National Centre for Circus Arts

Summary of 2026/27 – 2029/30 access and participation plan

What is an access and participation plan?

An Access and Participation Plan outlines measures that are meaningful and impactful in promoting equal opportunities for underrepresented groups, as defined by the Office for Students, to access, succeed in, and progress through higher education.

The aims and actions set out in the plan are designed to make the National Centre for Circus Arts (the National Centre) more inclusive and accessible.

You can see the full Access and Participation Plan for National Centre on the [policies and procedures page](#) of our website.

Key points

The National Centre for Circus Arts is a registered charity and one of Europe's leading providers of circus education.

Our organisational objectives highlight our commitments to circus education including to:

- Deliver the very best training equipping our students to take their place in the sector and develop as professional artists.
- Nurture and advocate for the art form.
- Support and collaborate with circus artists and companies.
- Break down barriers to circus and circus arts training by developing wide-reaching recreational and preparatory programmes.

The focus of our 2026 – 2030 Access and Participation Plan is to continue the work started in our previous plan supporting access to our provision for students from underrepresented backgrounds. This new plan continues ethnic diversity as an area of focus, and we also aim to increase our representation of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and more disadvantaged areas.

As the vocational degree programme is highly specialised, the small number of students allows for more personalised learning journeys.

Fees we charge

At the National Centre we charge the maximum annual fees of £9,790 per year for our undergraduate degree course.

These fees may be subject to change, but any changes will be in line with inflation and/or government policy and the limits on higher education tuition fees.

See page 24 of the Access and Participation Plan for more information.

Financial help available

National Centre provides the following scholarships and bursaries to support students from low-income households, offering additional tailored support and help during moments of financial hardship.

- National Centre Bursary, available to those with household incomes of below £25,000
- Care Experienced and Estranged Student Bursary
- National Centre Hardship Fund
- Leverhulme Scholarship Fund

Scholarships and bursaries are subject to change. For up-to-date information (including criteria) please refer to the [Fees and Funding](#) page on our website. Our Leverhulme scholarships are subject to the continuation of Leverhulme support and are subject to change if funding is removed or altered.

See pages 26-27 of the Access and Participation Plan for more information on financial help.

Information for students

Information regarding our fees, entry requirements and support services are available to prospective students through our [website](#), prospectus and by contacting staff during Open Days or via email and telephone.

Current students can access information about financial and wider support through our internal student communication platform, our [website](#) or directly through our Higher Education team. This team proactively supports students at risk or in any way disadvantaged, with individualised information and guidance.

See page 24 of the Access and Participation Plan for more information.

What we are aiming to achieve

Our tailored approach to student support together with our Access and Participation activity helps students to access circus higher education that focuses on fostering a diverse and inclusive community and recognises how diverse cultural and life experiences enrich learning.

We utilise our small, specialist approach through offering a range of disciplines and emphasising individual creativity, and we celebrate each student's strengths and artistic vision, encouraging originality and personal expression.

With the aim of reducing risks to equality of opportunity for our students, we have determined the following priority areas will be our focus under our plan:

1. Enrolment of students from the Global Majority.
 - To support access and pathways into higher education and to the National Centre for students from Global Majority Backgrounds (Black, Asian, Mixed and Other ethnicities), **achieving 21.4% Global Majority enrolments by 2029-30.**
2. Enrolment of IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 2 students.
 - To support access and pathways into higher education and to the National Centre for students from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds (IMD Q1 and Q2), **achieving 40% IMDQ1 & Q2 enrolments by 2029-30.**

See pages 3-6 of the access and participation plan for more information.

What we are doing to address keys risks to equality of opportunity

We have developed two intervention strategies to address risks to equality of opportunity:

- **Intervention Strategy 1 – Supporting readiness for circus training at Higher Education level for students from the Global Majority and lower socioeconomic backgrounds**

We will deliver activities that promote working collaboratively within the circus sector to develop knowledge sharing opportunities for trainers, reduce financial barriers for students and go into circus communities to increase awareness and preparedness for Higher Education through outreach activities.

- **Intervention Strategy 2 – Pre-application support for students from the Global Majority and lower socioeconomic backgrounds**

We will deliver activities that support young people from our focus areas by helping them access tailored guidance during the application process and understand the financial support available throughout the degree programme.

See pages 7-15 of the Access and Participation Plan for more information on the Intervention Strategies.

How students can get involved

We will continue to value and include student engagement in the delivery of our plan through:

- Student-Staff Liaison meetings,
- Academic board meetings,
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee.

Students are informed of opportunities to engage through the Higher Education team, our internal student communication platform and through the year group representatives.

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

We take a whole-institution approach to access and participation, which means everyone at National Centre is involved. Our teaching staff, support teams, and leadership work together to track progress and understand what is working well. This helps us see the impact of our activities and use what we learn to improve future support for students.

We are also supported by an external partner, which helps us review and improve our Access and Participation Plan and related activities. Each activity has its own evaluation plan, and we use a range of methods to understand our progress, including data analysis, student surveys, and focus groups where appropriate.

See pages 22-24 of the access and participation plan for more information.

Contact details for further information

Please contact Alice Jackson, Head of Learning and Access, participation@nationalcircus.org.uk for more information.