national centre
for circus arts

Admissions Policy and Complaints

1. Context and Principles

i. The National Centre for Circus Arts exists to train artists who will match the world's best and, on entering their professions, will shape the future of circus. We operate a reliable, fair and inclusive approach to admission into our BA (Hons) Circus Arts degree programme, aligning with good practice in the UK Higher Education sector.

ii. The principles of our policy are as follows:

- Through audition and interview, we will select applicants who have the greatest potential for circus training at a Higher Education level and who also have the potential to successfully complete the rigour of the programme.
- We will assess each application on an individual basis.
- We are committed to widening access to our degree programme and doing all that we can to address potential barriers.
- We will comply with the Equality Act 2010 to support applicants regardless of ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or other protected characteristics.
- We will aim to provide clear and accurate information about our Higher Education training, including the entry requirements.
- We will communicate with you clearly about all aspects of the admissions process.
- We will provide a process for you to appeal an admissions decision, as well as the opportunity to make a complaint about any aspect of the admissions process.

iii. The National Centre for Circus Arts is registered with the Office for Students, the Higher Education regulator for England. The BA (Hons) Circus Arts degree programme is validated by the University of Kent.

2. Widening access and addressing potential barriers

i. The Centre has a Framework for Contextual Admissions which sets out the values and principles that we apply during the admissions process to identify and mitigate barriers and disadvantages that applicants may face. We subsequently continue to provide individual support to applicants who become students so that they can reach their fullest potential.

ii. We are committed to supporting applicants and students who have **one or more disabilities**. Applicants are encouraged to disclose any support requirements during the application process so that we can endeavour to provide any reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010 during the audition or interview process. We will also assess how we can endeavour to provide reasonable adjustments should you become a registered student.

Please contact the National Centre if you wish to discuss any matters relating to a disability before making an application.

iii. If you a home student and are in care, have left care recently or are estranged from your parents, we recognise that you may have some extra practical considerations to consider, and that you may have concerns about accommodation, financing your studies, and pastoral support.

iv. If you choose to let us know (which we encourage you to do so) that you are a care leaver or estranged from your parents, we will be able to offer you additional support, and you may be eligible to receive a non-repayable bursary of £750 per year of study. You will have a chance to disclose your circumstances at application stage, and again on your enrolment form.

v. The National Centre also offers cash bursaries to home students of £750 per year of study to those students who can demonstrate that their household income falls below £25,000.

vi. There is no fee for any individual to make an application for the BA (Hons) Circus Arts.

3. Entry requirements

i. You will need to meet the published entry requirements to be admitted to the BA (Hons) Circus Arts degree programme. These are:

- Being over the age of 18 or over by the start of the programme.
- Demonstrating your intent to pursue professional employment in circus arts.
- Successful completion of the requirements of audition and interview that will assess your ability and capacity to study at Higher Education level at the National Centre.
- Demonstrating a proficiency in both written and verbal English language. This would normally be GCSE English or equivalent qualification in the International English Language Testing System. Non-UK students who require a study visa may be required to take a Secure English Language Test (SELT) and achieve a result of at least 'B2 Level' prior to being admitted to the programme to meet UK Home Office study visa requirements.

ii. We allow direct entry to Year 2 of the BA (Hons) Circus Arts degree programme. Applicants must either:

- Have successfully completed a Certificate of Higher Education from the National Centre or from another school which is a full member of FEDEC

  Or

- Have successfully completed another relevant Level 4 qualification

  Or

- Have relevant prior experience determined through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process.

iii. We will assess the prior learning or experience to consider if direct entry to Year 2 is possible. Where your prior experience comes from a previous qualification, we will review the module and programme learning outcomes and how they map onto the BA (Hon) Circus Arts degree programme. We will also request the formal transcript from your previous studies.

iv. All direct entry applicants will be required to successfully complete an audition and interview, be over the age of 18 and meet necessary English language requirements set out above.

v. There is no option for direct entry to Year 3 of the BA (Hon) Circus Arts degree programme.

4. Applications

i. The National Centre is not a member of UCAS and manages its own application and admissions procedures.

ii. Deadlines for applications will be published on our website.

iii. Applications submitted after the final published application deadline will not normally be considered for that academic year. The National Centre reserves the right to extend an application deadline where it deems this to be appropriate.

iv. You must inform the National Centre as soon as possible if you decide to withdraw your application and do not intend to attend audition or interview. Any applicant who wishes to be considered for the next round of admissions must reapply the following year.

v. Information about audition and interview procedures, including dates, will be published on the National Centre website. We hold auditions in London. We may also offer online auditions in specific circumstances.

vi. All communications regarding an application and audition/interview outcome will normally be conducted directly with the applicant and not with a third party, including relatives.

5. Our approach to selection

i. To ensure equality of opportunity in the selection process the National Centre will:

- Audition or interview all applicants who meet the overall entry requirements set out above and on our website.
- Have the option to contact applicants to discuss their application prior to audition or interview where further information is required.
- Ensure that all applicants are informed of the audition and interview procedures.
- Ensure that staff involved in the audition or interview process understand and apply the entry requirements, as well as our approach to contextual admissions.
- Monitor selection procedures in relation to equal opportunities.
- Ensure reasonable adjustments are made wherever necessary to improve accessibility and to support applicants with a disability.

ii. The National Centre will select candidates based on:

- Talent and potential for training alone, not discriminating based on any protected characteristics.
- The ability and capacity to study at a higher education level;
- Evidence of suitable preparatory training and/or experience;
- Awareness of the rigours of the training and its vocational nature

6. Making an offer to a successful applicant

i. The National Centre will make you an **unconditional** offer where you meet all entry requirements. We will make a **conditional** offer where you have the potential to meet the entry requirements, but where specific matters need to be addressed before starting the programme. Conditions of an offer can include but are not limited to:

- Obtaining necessary English Language requirements
- Providing the National Centre with relevant documentation
- Having documentation translated into the English Language
- Meeting UK Home Office requirements if planning to study on a student visa
- Further consideration of any Reasonable Adjustments relating to a disability
- Any other matters that the National Centre can reasonably make as a condition

ii. We will normally only make an offer for you to study at the next available start date. Any decision to allow you to defer the offer to a later date (e.g. the following academic year) is at the discretion of the National Centre.

7. Confirming an offer and next steps

i. We will confirm an offer in writing and will set out any conditions that needs to be met. The offer will comprise:

- The offer letter
- Terms and Conditions, including rights to cancel
- Fees policy
- Relevant course summary document

ii. We will require you to provide written acceptance of the offer. Where you provide us with that confirmation, the National Centre will then confirm your place.

8. Rejecting an application

i. We will be unable to make you an offer if you do not meet the entry requirements. You may appeal a rejection decision. More information of how to appeal is set out in Section 11.

9. Providing false or misleading information

i. We expect you to provide honest and accurate information and all applicants will be required to make that declaration when making an application. We also reserve the right to check and verify information, including with external organisations.

ii. If we suspect that your application may include false or misleading information, we will provide you with the opportunity to comment on our view. Where we retain the view that

false or misleading information exists, the case will be escalated to the Head of Higher Education to decide if your application should be rejected. We will also take similar action where you are holding an offer and where we discover that you have provided false, fraudulent or misleading information. You may appeal our decision using the process set out in Section 11.

iii. If we discover that a registered student may have provided false, fraudulent or misleading information in their application, we will use the Student Misconduct and Disciplinary procedure to investigate a manage this process.

10. Criminal convictions

i. The National Centre does not normally require an applicant to disclose a criminal record unless we require you to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check for any part of the programme. We may also require you to complete a DBS check if you engage in wider activities at the National Centre such as our work with young people or vulnerable adults.

11. Appealing an admissions decision

i. You may appeal a decision we have made about your application (e.g. rejection for audition, where an offer is not made or the content of the offer) on the following grounds:

- You have additional relevant information that, for good reason, was unavailable at the original time you submitted the application or during the selection process.
- Your application was affected by the circumstances beyond your control (e.g. illness) that, for good reason, you could not share during the selection process.
- An administrative error made by the National Centre in the way which your application has been considered.

ii. You may submit an appeal within 20 working days of receiving our decision about your application.

iii. We will not accept appeals or complaints made under the following grounds:

- Decisions that are based on the academic judgement of School staff
- Failure on the applicant's part to fulfil academic or non-academic requirements for admission
- Disagreement with the admissions decision
- Appeals and complaints which are frivolous or vexatious, or made in bad faith

iv. Your appeal should be sent to the Head of Higher Education who will decide if your case should be reconsidered or if the original decision will stand.

v. We will provide you with a reason for our decision with ten workings days.

vi. If you consider that your appeal has not been considered fairly, you can request a review of the process within ten working days. Your appeal should be sent to the CEO and Principal who will decide if your case should be reconsidered or if the original decision will stand.

12. Complaint about the admissions process

i. You may submit a complaint about the admissions process where you are dissatisfied about any aspect of its administration and management. We will normally consider a complaint within 20 working days of you completing your engagement with the admissions process.

ii. In the first instance, we advise you to contact the Head of Higher Education to set out the nature of the complaint and to resolve the matter.

iii. A response will be considered and communicated to you within 10 working days.

iv. If you consider that your complaint has not been addressed fairly, you can request a review of the process by contacting the CEO and Principal. They will decide if your complaint should be reconsidered or if the original decision will stand.

13. Data Protection

Details about our Privacy Policy can be found here - https://www.nationalcircus.org.uk/privacy-policy/

14. Monitoring and Review of this policy

(a) This policy will be reviewed periodically by the National Centre Academic Board. We will make adjustments in response to any changes in our practice, in sector practice, in regulatory requirements, or requirements of the validating university (University of Kent).

(b) We will also monitor all data relating to admissions applications, selection, offers and individual circumstances and will make enhancements to our practices where necessary.

Last Reviewed: September 2026
Next Review: September 2027