



# National Centre for Circus Arts Admissions Policy & Procedures

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Photo: Bertil Nilsson

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# 1. Admissions Policy Statement

As an affiliate of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD), the National Centre for Circus Arts is one of eight small specialist schools with international reputations for high quality delivery and excellent success rates in the number of students gaining sustained employment in the dance, drama and circus professions. Affiliates select students with the greatest talent and aptitude for training underpinned by a commitment to widening participation and to promoting programmes to young people who are unlikely to participate in higher education.

The National Centre for Circus Arts offers:

- a two year Foundation Degree in Circus Arts
- a one year 'top-up' BA Hons in Circus Arts

The policy details below relate to all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered at the National Centre for Circus Arts, unless otherwise specified.

The National Centre for Circus Arts' admissions policy coheres with that of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama:

## 1.1 Conservatoire for Dance and Drama Admissions Policy Statement

The Conservatoire for Dance and Drama exists to train artists who will match the world's best and, on entering their professions, shape the future of dance, drama and circus arts. Established in 2001, the Conservatoire is a Higher Education Institution with a unique structure, comprising eight schools. All of these are small, specialist institutions with international reputations for high quality delivery in their respective fields.

Conservatoire students are registered jointly with the affiliate school and the Conservatoire. The affiliate school determines its own approach to admissions within the following guidelines.

Affiliate schools of the Conservatoire will:

- audition all applicants that meet the basic criteria for the discipline and programme as outlined by the affiliate school;
- accept individuals based on talent and potential for training alone (i.e. not discriminating on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, economic background or otherwise); and
- consider each particular applicant's suitability for the programme of study.

Applicants must demonstrate:

- the ability and capacity to study at the higher education level within a conservatoire setting;
- the facility to receive and potential to benefit from vocational training;
- evidence of suitable preparatory training and/or experience;
- an awareness of the rigours of the training and its vocational nature;
- an understanding of the nature of the industry; and
- an understanding of the aims and objectives of the programme.

## 1.2 Equality and Diversity

Celebrating diversity and working to achieve the creative potential in all our students, is at the heart of the work of the National Centre for Circus Arts.

As part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, the School is committed to selecting, training and supporting students, regardless of ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion. Applicants to Conservatoire schools are chosen solely on the basis of their talent and potential to develop the skills required for their chosen profession. The School does, however, judge applicants on their suitability for a programme and their potential to successfully complete the training, as the work is rigorous and requires high levels of energy and commitment.

In our admissions process, we are committed to supporting students with disabilities. Disabled students are encouraged to disclose their support requirements so that we can endeavour to meet them during the audition process and subsequent training.

We recognise that everyone is an individual and we will work with students to identify potential barriers to training and do what we can to remove those barriers. We will also make any necessary reasonable adjustments, to ensure that disabled students can train at the National Centre for Circus Arts.

## 2. Entry Requirements

The entry requirements below are detailed on the National Centre for Circus Arts' website.

### 2.1 Age

The minimum age to study a degree programme at the National Centre for Circus Arts is normally at least 18 years of age at the start of the programme. There is no upper age limit.

### 2.2 Qualifications and previous experience

Applicants must hold a BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts at level 3, or 5 GCSE's at grade C or above, including English, or 3 GCSE's and 2 A Level passes, or equivalent. Candidates who are able to demonstrate their potential to successfully complete a degree programme will also be considered on the basis of previous professional experience. Applicants will be able to demonstrate their intent to pursue professional employment in circus arts.

### 2.3 English language

Applicants will be required to demonstrate a proficiency in both written and verbal English language. This will normally be at GCSE English or equivalent International English Language Testing System (IELTS) at 6.5 pass level or higher.

### 2.4 Overseas applicants

The School has Highly Trusted Status from the UK Border Agency for Tier 4, which allows us to recruit a specified number of overseas students over all programmes. Overseas applicants who have been offered a place will need to apply for a tier 4 visa as soon as they accept their offer, and should request further information about this process from the Higher Education Admissions & Student Support Manager.

### 2.5 Direct entry applicants

Applicants to the BA (Hons) Degree programme should hold an appropriate qualification from one of the recognised circus schools listed below:

- National Centre for Circus Arts, (London, UK)
- Académie Fratellini (St. Denis, France)
- Centre National des Arts du Cirque (Châlons-en-Champagne, France)
- Circomedia (Bristol, UK)
- Codarts Rotterdam – Circus Arts (Rotterdam, The Netherlands)
- Dans och Cirkushögskolan (DOCH, Stockholm, Sweden)
- Ecole Nationale de Cirque (Montreal, Canada)
- École Supérieure des Arts du Cirque (ESAC, Brussels, Belgium)
- Fontys academy for circus and performance art- ACaPA (Tilburg, The Netherlands)
- National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA, Melbourne, Australia)
- Université de Sciences Appliquées de Turku – Département Cirque (Turku, Finland)

Any candidate applying for direct entry to the BA (Hons) Programme from any of these institutions must provide evidence that they have successfully completed two years training on a relevant programme, along with details of their previous study (for example a student handbook or module guide). Direct entry applicants will be interviewed at audition, and will be expected to provide an additional reference, a sample of written work and their transcript to date in order to ensure that they are being assessed for entry on the same basis as internal applicants from the National Centre Foundation Degree (see section 4.11)

## 3. Recruitment

Target recruitment numbers are agreed annually between the National Centre for Circus Arts and the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama. The School will normally accept between 22 and 28 new students each year, dependant on the number of continuing students. This includes direct entry BA and Postgraduate students.

### 3.1 Marketing

Marketing and promotional activities include:

- information available on the School website: [www.nationalcircus.org.uk](http://www.nationalcircus.org.uk)
- open days and guided tours, with invitations sent out via a marketing database
- Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter
- student performances

## 3.2 Participation and outreach

The school has a strong commitment to widening participation and engages in a range of activities which seek to widen access to circus and target identified under-represented groups through the Participation and Outreach department, including:

- a BTEC programme run in conjunction with Hackney Community College
- London Youth Circus
- Centre for Advanced Training
- outreach work in East London - workshops at primary schools, organising school visits to the National Centre, and project work with organisations such as Toynbee Hall and the National Deaf Children's Society
- grants to cover the cost of training and bursaries for youth programme participants
- application and audition toolkit workshops to support the transition from training towards a career in the performing arts

## 4. Selection

The National Centre for Circus Arts will seek to ensure that selection policies and procedures are transparent, effective, consistent and fair in accordance with the School's Equal Opportunities Statement. Information concerning applicants will be subject to the School's Data Protection Policy & Procedures.

Selection for all programmes will normally be through audition and to ensure equality of opportunity the School will:

- audition all applicants
- ensure that all applicants are informed of the audition procedures
- ensure that staff involved in the audition process clearly understand the entry policy and selection criteria
- ensure that staff are suitably trained to make fair and sound judgements having regard to the specified selection criteria
- monitor selection policies and procedures particularly with regard to equal opportunities
- ensure reasonable adjustments are made wherever necessary to improve accessibility and support disabled applicants

Auditions are designed to ensure that places are offered to those candidates who have the greatest talent and potential to develop and succeed in the circus profession regardless of previous experience, cultural or socio/economic background.

The School is committed to removing unnecessary barriers and increasing accessibility. Applicants are encouraged to disclose any impairment or condition (for example dyslexia or a physical, sensory or mental health condition) so that the school can endeavour to make any adjustments at audition and during the programme to enable participation. The School encourages disclosure in advance wherever possible but applicants can also disclose a disability or condition at any stage of the audition process.

The School also encourages applicants to disclose any previous or current injuries to ensure that they can be supported during the audition process and potential further training.

### 4.1 Application Procedure

To apply for the Foundation Degree in Circus Arts applicants need to:

- download an application form and Equality & Diversity form from the National Centre for Circus Arts website
- send the completed forms to [degree.admissions@nationalcircus.org.uk](mailto:degree.admissions@nationalcircus.org.uk), along with a reference and photograph. These documents can also be sent by post
- pay the one off, non-refundable, application fee of £40 via the website, by telephone or by post with cheque or postal order

The Equality and Diversity Information Form is considered as confidential and information is used for statistical purposes only.

Applicants can also email [degree.admissions@nationalcircus.org.uk](mailto:degree.admissions@nationalcircus.org.uk) should they require these documents in an alternative format.

Direct entry BA applicants must contact [degree.admissions@nationalcircus.co.uk](mailto:degree.admissions@nationalcircus.co.uk) to request an application form and relevant documents, and must then submit them in the same way as Foundation Degree applicants. They must also pay the application fee.

The deadline for applications each year is usually at least one month prior to the first audition to ensure that all applications can be given equal consideration, that all required supporting documents can be collected in time, and that all applicants will have a reasonable amount of time to prepare for the audition. Applications submitted after the deadline will be considered at the discretion of the Director of Higher Education. The School reserves the right to extend the deadline via the National Centre for Circus Arts website at short notice.

## 4.2 Audition fee waivers

In line with the National Centre for Circus Arts and CDD's commitment to widening participation, applicants who meet the following criteria are able to apply for an audition fee waiver:

- UK Resident
- applying to an undergraduate programme (Foundation and BA Hons Degree)
- new to higher education (no previous degree-level qualification)
- annual household income of less than £25,000

The fee waiver system is administered by CDD, and applicants are asked to visit the CDD website for further information and how to apply: <http://www.cdd.ac.uk/student-info/auditions/>.

## 4.3 Withdrawals prior to audition

Applicants must inform the School if they decide to withdraw their application and do not intend to attend audition. Applications cannot be deferred and application fees cannot be refunded. Any applicant who wishes to be considered for the next round of admissions must reapply the following year.

## 4.4 Information to Applicants Pre-Audition

Details of the audition procedure are available on the National Centre for Circus Arts website and can be viewed at any time. These details are also emailed to applicants who have applied by the published deadline normally more than 3 weeks prior to audition, along with the following documents/information as part of an audition pack:

- an injury & medical disclosure form to be returned prior to audition
- a rigging request form to be returned prior to audition
- directions to the National Centre for Circus Arts
- information about support for disabled students and encouragement to disclose if support is required at audition
- information about fees and funding

## 4.5 Audition and Selection Procedure

All applicants must be at least 18 years of age on the date they would commence the programme for which they are applying. Applicants are auditioned by the School's degree selection panel, which will comprise of at least two members of staff with relevant expertise as determined by the Director of Higher Education. Please refer to the National Centre Website ([here](#)) for details of the audition procedure.

The degree physiotherapist or performance medicine specialist may wish to meet with any applicants who have disclosed a current or previous injury to ensure their needs can be supported during the programme if they are offered a place.

The degree selection panel will be provided with a brief summary of each candidate's previous experience taken from their application form. The degree selection panel will judge and score applicants against the audition selection criteria (appendix B). A final judgement on which applicants will be offered a place is made by the panel at a deliberation meeting following the final audition. Judgement will be made based on the level required for the programme the applicant is auditioning for (Foundation Degree or BA).

## 4.6 Juggling Strand

The juggling strand allows for a direct path on the Foundation Degree to specialisation in the area of juggling and its related manipulation disciplines. To gain access to this strand, applicants would be expected to show a passion for juggling and a level of technical expertise or potential to suggest that you have a professional future in this area. This would be demonstrated through an audition piece as well as showing an aptitude for performance throughout the

audition process. Applicants who are offered a place on the juggling strand may not be expected to show the same level of aptitude in relation to some other areas of the audition criteria. Their offer will be conditional on juggling being their specialist discipline whilst on the degree programme.

#### **4.7 Video Audition Procedure**

Applicants who are based outside of the EU may request to submit a video recording to demonstrate their ability to meet the practical requirements which will be viewed on pre-arranged dates by the selection panel and followed by a post-audition deliberation as with all other auditions.

Please refer to appendix A for full details of the video audition procedure.

#### **4.8 Confirmation of outcome**

Confirmation of audition outcome will be emailed to all applicants within 10 working days of the last audition date. Those students who are offered a place will also be sent full terms and conditions they must agree to on acceptance of an offer. These applicants will be asked to confirm by a given deadline whether they would like to take up their place. Once an acceptance of an offer is received, the applicant will receive confirmation of receipt.

The degree administration team will contact all waiting list applicants within 5 working days of this deadline to confirm whether or not they will be offered a place, determined by how many places are not accepted by those candidates originally holding an offer.

Applicants who are not offered a place can request feedback from their audition by contacting [degree.admissions@nationalcircus.co.uk](mailto:degree.admissions@nationalcircus.co.uk). A member of the degree team will respond with a summary of feedback based on the notes provided by the audition panel, but not with copies of the notes themselves.

#### **4.9 Circus Discipline Specialisation**

An applicant who performs a specific circus discipline at audition and then gains entry to the programme, is not being offered a place to specialise in that discipline.

Exceptions to this are admissions to the Juggling strand (see section 4.6 above) or applicants to whom a conditional offer is made which restricts their discipline choice.

For other students, specialisation in a discipline is determined after the programme has commenced through the 'specialisation module' – this process is outlined in [appendix I of the student handbook](#).

#### **4.10 Communications with a third party**

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

#### **4.11 Entry to the BA after the Foundation Degree**

The BA (Hons) in Circus Arts is a separate programme from the Foundation Degree in Circus Arts. Successful completion of the Foundation Degree in Circus Arts does not guarantee direct passage to the BA. Foundation Degree students are considered for selection for the BA based on their progress during the second year of their Foundation Degree programme and must formally apply to proceed onto the programme.

Current Foundation Degree students who wish to be considered for the BA (Hons) in Circus Arts will be asked to submit an application to the BA during the spring or summer term of the second year of their Foundation Degree.

Further details regarding entry onto the BA after the Foundation Degree can be found in [appendix B of the Student Handbook](#).

#### **4.12 Complaints and Appeals**

An applicant cannot appeal a decision reached by the audition panel.

For information about submitting a complaint regarding the admissions process, please refer to the National Centre for Circus Arts Admissions Complaints Procedures, available alongside this policy on the National Centre website.

## 5. Enrolment

Your place on a course at the National Centre will be conditional on you complying with enrolment conditions including any conditions relating to your fees, and enrolling at the start of your course and at the start of each subsequent academic year.

You must enrol at the designated session at the start of your course, as set out in your introductory information and induction pack. If you cannot or do not enrol at the designated session you must provide the National Centre with a reason for your non-enrolment which is acceptable to the National Centre in order to be permitted to enrol on another occasion, otherwise you will not be entitled to enrol for that year of study (or any future year of study) and your relationship with the National Centre and this contract shall be terminated.

See the National Centre for Circus Arts Terms and Conditions for further information about obligations and contracts.

### 5.1 Pre-enrolment information

Prior to enrolment applicants holding an offer of a place will be contacted and emailed an induction pack, normally in August. The induction pack will include:

- a welcome letter including information about:
  - student finance
  - registration procedures on the first day of term
  - classes and Term dates
  - National Centre for Circus Arts codes of conduct
  - private health insurance
  - accommodation
  - other information relevant to joining the programme
- a fee status questionnaire (as guidance for potential scholarships and bursaries)
- terms and conditions in relation to tuition fees and an invoice for fees payable
- a CDD registration form and accompanying notes, including CDD's Data Protection Statement
- instructions for joining Moodle, which enables access to the student information section and the Student Handbook prior to joining the programme

### 5.2 Enrolment

At enrolment students are asked to submit a completed CDD registration form, a copy of which is kept at the National Centre for Circus Arts and a copy sent to CDD, where they are formally registered as CDD students. They are also asked to provide:

- A working and current e-mail address and a working land-based or mobile telephone number
- A term time address
- Original examination certificates achieved from the age of 16 onwards to be copied and returned on the day
- £5.00 in cash as a deposit for a locker key for personal effects. This deposit will be returned at the end of the programme
- Their passport to be copied and returned on the day
- Confirmation of loan payment from the Student Loans Company, if applicable

All registration forms and photocopied documents are kept in secure files subject to the School's Data Protection Policy & Procedures.

Students who are self-payers will need to have paid 50% of their annual fees prior to starting the programme, and must sign a payment plan agreeing to pay the remaining 50% in two instalments at the start of the Spring and Summer terms.

### 5.3 Withdrawals

Applicants who hold an offer of a place and wish to withdraw prior to the start of their programme of study must inform the degree programme administrator as soon as possible. Any applicant who wishes to be considered for the next round of admissions must reapply the following year. Students who withdraw after the start of the programme will be subject to pay tuition fees in line with the National Centre tuition fee payment policy available alongside this policy on the National Centre website.

### 5.5 Intermission (interruption of studies)

Please refer to [appendix D of the Student Handbook](#) for information about interrupting periods of study at the National Centre.

## 6. Allocation of Scholarships and Bursaries

The National Centre for Circus Arts and the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama are able to offer fee discounts. To be considered for a fee discount, an applicant's household income must be assessed and the Conservatoire relies on the Student Loans Company's assessment of their household income to determine any fee waivers. They must, therefore, apply through the relevant agency (such as Student Finance England for English students) for their income to be assessed.

Applicants may also provide evidence of their household income using the Conservatoire's Interim Income Assessment form. An electronic version of the form can be found on the Conservatoire's website. The financial assessment based on this form will be used as guidance for likely fee waivers only, and applicants will still need to apply through the relevant Student Finance agency before any fee waivers can be confirmed.

Fee waivers are normally confirmed by the second term of study, but may very occasionally be confirmed prior to enrolment.

## 7. Monitoring and Review of Policies and Procedures

This policy is subject to periodic review by Academic Board.

Academic Board also monitors the following annually, all of which are relevant to admissions:

- recruitment, marketing and the prospectus/information on the National Centre website
- data related to admissions and the methods used to collect that data
- support for students and applicants with disabilities
- external requirements of CDD and the University of Kent, which validates National Centre for Circus Arts degrees

**In certain exceptional cases we reserve the right to vary these procedures. When we do so, the circumstances will be monitored and recorded through quality assurance measures.**

## Appendix A: Video Audition Requirements

If you live outside the EU, you may request an exemption from attending an audition in person. You should do this by contacting the Programme Administrator, Ben Wallace [ben@nationalcircus.org.uk](mailto:ben@nationalcircus.org.uk). Once it has been agreed that you do not need to attend an audition in person you **must** send an audition video in one of the following formats:

- DVD – Compatible with Region 2 machines
- CD-R – Compatible with either Quicktime or RealPlayer
- ONLINE – upload a video to YouTube or Vimeo and send us a link to view it online

Each of the following sections of the video must be presented in one continuous take. For example: one continuous take for all the acrobatic section and another for the flexibility section. Please do not edit your video to provide us with only the “best bits”.

If you cannot execute a particular figure or exercise, **please do not force it**. We should simply be able to evaluate your level.

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### The audition video must contain:

#### SECTION 1

In training kit, please show the following:

##### Acrobatics:

Demonstrate an acrobatic/movement sequence which includes a minimum of:

- Handstand viewed from the side
- Forward roll
- Backward roll
- Cartwheel

You are encouraged to demonstrate any more advanced acrobatics if you have the skills.

##### Flexibility

- Bridge viewed from the side (if you can: with feet together, with straight legs). We are looking for shoulders to be over the hands.
- Splits (both sides)
- Side Splits
- Straddle to Japana (sitting upright on floor in straddle, arms out to side, lowering chest to floor, arms forwards retaining turnout in legs)
- Stand (viewed from side) and fold forward, placing hands on floor, keeping legs straight, head tucked in.

#### SECTION 2

##### Presentation

Please present a 3 minute performance piece of your own devising (a 4 minute performance piece is required if you are applying to the BA (Hons) or Postgraduate Certificate programmes). This should be shown in a non-performance situation (i.e. without an audience, no lighting or other production features, no video edits). Music, necessary props, and costume may be included.

#### SECTION 3

##### Interview questions

Please answer the following questions **verbally** to the camera:

- Please tell us a bit about yourself and how you have arrived at this point?
- What is your motivation and reasons for applying to the National Centre for Circus Arts?

- Have you seen any circus shows recently that have inspired you?
- What do you aim/expect to gain from this programme?
- What kind of circus performer do you see yourself as in five years' time?
- If you were to be offered a place on the programme what circus disciplines might you want to explore?

## **SECTION 4 - OPTIONAL**

### **Juggling, Equilibratics and Manipulation**

Please demonstrate additional skills that you feel relevant and didn't include in your 3 minute performance. Skills may demonstrate mastery of club, ball and ring juggling, and other equilibratic and manipulation skills such as Diabolo, Devilstick, Cigarboxes, Staff, Rolabola, Hula Hoop, Unicycle, Object balancing, Yo-Yo, etc. (no more than 5 mins)

### **Relevant Additional Skills**

If you wish to demonstrate other skills (unicycling, martial arts, music etc...) which you feel are relevant to the programme, you may include a clip of up to 5 mins.

## Appendix B: Audition Selection Criteria

### National Centre for Circus Arts Audition Criteria and Scoring

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#### **CRITERIA**

Candidates at audition are assessed on:

##### **Technique:**

Co-ordination  
Flexibility  
Balance  
Control  
Strength  
Placement and line  
Fear  
Fitness  
Range of Movement

##### **Creativity**

Imaginative response  
Curiosity and risk taking  
Ability to collaborate  
Development of ideas through improvisation

##### **Solo / Performance**

Expressiveness  
Sense of style  
Quality of movement (if relevant to the performance)  
Stage presence  
Connection with the audience  
Innovation and originality

##### **Monologue**

Relevance of the programme to the candidate's aspirations and needs  
Understanding of the programme  
Motivation and commitment to the programme and profession

##### **General**

Ability and willingness to take instruction

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#### **SCORING**

Taking into account all of the above, panel members should assign a single score to each candidate to bring to audition deliberations. Panel members can use 'High' and 'Low' to determine between different candidates in each category:

**3 = Excellent**

**2 = Good**

**1 = Adequate**

**0 = Poor**