

ITALIA CONTI

Access and Widening Participation Statement

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Italia Conti is committed to enabling people from all backgrounds and ages to access high quality performing arts training through a broad range of outreach activities, admission strategies and on-course support strategies.

Italia Conti are fully committed to providing equality of opportunity for all across and within every aspect of our activity. We recognise that the arts are integral to the lives of all people and essential to healthy, vibrant and equitable communities.

We welcome applications for admission from all sections of society, and are non-discriminatory, in line with the Equality Act (2010) and Equal Opportunities Policy. Italia Conti is fully committed to developing initiatives that reduce barriers to specialist performing arts training.

Diversity at Italia Conti

Italia Conti considers diversity and inclusion to be central to performing arts training and we are fully committed to celebrating diversity and working to enrich and fulfil the creative potential in all our students.

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that everyone is unique and recognizing and celebrating our individual differences regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, disability, pregnancy or maternity, religion, beliefs or ideology. It is the exploration and celebration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment.

The terms equality, inclusion and diversity are at the heart of this statement.

'Equality' means ensuring everyone has the same opportunities to fulfil their potential free from discrimination, and that the curriculum does not disadvantage any student or group of students because of their background or characteristics.

'Inclusion' means ensuring everyone feels comfortable to be themselves and feels the worth of their contribution.

'Diversity' means the celebration of individual differences amongst the student cohort and workforce, and the facilitation of an environment in which all students and employees feel welcome in the Italia Conti community.

Italia Conti will actively support diversity and inclusion and ensure that all our students and employees are valued and treated with dignity and respect. We want to encourage everyone in our organisation to reach their potential and seek to provide a positive working and learning environment free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

Widening Access and Participation strategies:

Italia Conti is fully committed to developing initiatives that reduce barriers to training and encourage greater access and wider participation, including from underrepresented groups in Higher Education and specialist performing arts training.

Initiatives include

- Increased outreach to low participation groups, including BAME;
- Introduced audition fee waivers for those facing socio-economic barriers;
- Formed Equality and Diversity committees across the college consisting of staff and students, which report to Programme and Academy boards, influencing curriculum, delivery and environment;
- Reviewing content and delivery of training to enhance opportunities for BAME / PoC students;
- Engaging with early educators and early career advisors to ensure that future students from all backgrounds feel that training and a career in the performing arts is an option.

Specific examples of targeted widening participation initiatives to areas with historic low engagement with Higher Education:

Regional auditions with reduced fees (Federation of Drama Schools initiative)

Italia Conti recognises that the cost of auditioning for drama schools, dance and musical theatre colleges can be prohibitive, involving audition fees, travel and accommodation. We have been instrumental in pioneering an initiative in conjunction with the Federation of Drama Schools (FDS) targeting applicants from areas with historically low levels of HE participation, and low socio-economic demographic. Applicants from designated postcodes can audition for three drama schools for the reduced fee of £30 for all three auditions. For Italia Conti, this means that applicants can audition for three courses at the same time and for the same reduced cost.

Regional auditions and fee waivers

Italia Conti also hold regional outreach for auditions and interviews, for example, in Manchester, in order to mitigate the costs of auditioning for potential applicants. Further outreach events, for example, in Cardiff and Northern Ireland, include the opportunity for support through a pre-audition workshop on audition techniques, and in some cases, audition fee waivers, as well as the opportunity to audition regionally, and so reduce costs to applicants.

Educational and community outreach events

Italia Conti participate in range of educational and community outreach events to support participation.

Examples of events include:

- 'Challenge and Inspire' outreach to learners on college and foundation courses, linked to audition preparation and tickets to student performances;
- Community performance events including community carol concerts, VIAM (Voice in a Million) and Can You Dance, Children in Need, participation in Children in need and Comic Relief Performances, Go Fest performances;
- Theatre in Education tours, including touring a show to the Edinburgh Festival and dance and drama TIE shows to London colleges and schools;
- Performance fee waivers for the local school children and FE students to attend performances to encourage recruitment and access;

Italia Conti also participate in a range of national events targeted at providing information, guidance and advice to prospective students who are interested in pursuing a career in the performing arts.

Such events may include

- free workshops and performances;
- careers guidance;
- talks on financing study in the performing arts sector;
- Q&A.

Examples of such activities include the Move It! Exhibition and the annual careers conference for CDMT (Conference for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre Schools).

Admissions

Italia Conti has a range of strategies in place to support widening access and increase participation and operates equality within the admissions process.

Equality in the admissions process

Italia Conti will audition every applicant who meets, or is predicted to meet, the prior educational achievement criteria for their chosen course; there is no pre-selection in the admissions process. To ensure fairness and objectivity, auditions are conducted through a panel system, and all audition scores are moderated. Applicants are selected on the basis of their talent and potential to develop the skills required for their chosen profession. Audition procedures are reviewed and moderated annually.

Regional auditions and reduced audition fees

Italia Conti recognises that the cost of auditioning for drama schools, dance and musical theatre colleges can be prohibitive, involving audition fees, travel and accommodation. Italia

Conti operates a number of regional audition initiatives, some of which may include reduced audition fees or fee waivers.

Bursaries and Scholarships

Bursaries are awarded at the discretion of the management, but may include the following:

Stage scholarship (Academy of Theatre Arts)

Italia Conti participates in The Stage national scholarship scheme, which enables applicants to access fully funded training at the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts (Junior School).

DaDa awards (Musical Theatre / Dance Diplomas)

Italia Conti participates in the DaDa government means tested DaDa scheme, which supports students in Dance and Drama training with living costs and tuition fees.

Strategies for Access and Widening participation are reviewed on an annual basis across the organisation, and in conjunction with Italia Conti's degree awarding collaborative partner, the University of East London.