

## Performing arts

There are no formal entry requirements for working in many of the performing arts, but in a highly competitive industry it is sensible to give yourself an advantage. The United Kingdom (UK), with its rich culture and diversity in the arts, offers international students a huge variety of courses, from classical music to pop and club-based music, and from acting to costume design. There are also opportunities to study arts management and arts community and development work.

### Checklist: Why study Performing arts in the United Kingdom?

- the UK is the home of world-renowned colleges of music, drama and dance that benefit from exceptionally close relationships with both established and cutting-edge performers, employers and venues
- some major theatres have their own drama schools
- performance takes high priority and music students often get the chance to work with respected artists, coaches and directors
- mastery of spoken English could open up many parts of the world, particularly the United States, with its huge film and TV industry
- two national bodies (in drama and in dance) accredit many training courses and impose rigorous standards
- although competition is fierce, a significant number of places at UK colleges are offered to international students
- many people who have trained in the performing arts in the UK have returned to their own countries to pursue very successful careers
- UK universities are increasingly offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the performing arts which combine practical training with the opportunity for critical reflection.

# 1 What can I study?

You can study pure drama, dance or music, or one of the many supporting trades and professions. Below is a general guide.

Key facts	Starting off
<b>Acting</b>	
<p>Acting courses are usually three years. They may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an undergraduate degree (which attracts a grant towards fees for UK and European Union students)</li> <li>a diploma, towards which some education authorities will not pay.</li> </ul> <p>Most acting courses take between twenty and thirty students a year, and the minimum age is eighteen. National Council of Drama Training (NCDT) accredited courses have a large performance component and students receive graduate Equity Cards on graduation. They are intended for those who want to pursue a career in acting.</p> <p>Drama/theatre studies courses that have a lesser performance component are not accredited by the NCDT. They are suitable for those who are more interested in the academic study of the subject and who may want to do some acting but are not intending to pursue it as a career.</p>	<p>Twenty-one institutions have courses accredited by the National Council for Drama Training (NCDT). Go to <a href="http://www.ncdt.co.uk/index2.htm">www.ncdt.co.uk/index2.htm</a>. Expect to do an audition for a place at any drama school – talent is more important than academic ability.</p> <p>Some schools may be able to arrange an audition/interview in your country or accept a video tape or Video Conference audition. Check directly with the schools.</p> <p>If NCDT accreditation is not important to you, go to <a href="http://www.educationuk.org">www.educationuk.org</a> for a complete list of drama/theatre studies courses at all levels.</p>
<b>Stage management</b>	
<p>This is taught by stage schools, music and drama schools and more general colleges.</p>	<p>The Society of British Theatre Designers has compiled a list of courses in stage management although they do not accredit or recommend courses. Go to <a href="http://www.theatredesign.org.uk">www.theatredesign.org.uk</a> and click on 'training'. This list may not be exhaustive, so you should also look at <a href="http://www.educationuk.org">www.educationuk.org</a>.</p>
<b>Stage design</b>	
<p>Most designers train via full-time courses up to HND, degree or postgraduate level. Entry requirements vary; much depends on having a good portfolio.</p>	<p>The Society of British Theatre Designers has compiled a list of courses in stage design. Go to <a href="http://www.theatredesign.org.uk">www.theatredesign.org.uk</a> and click on 'training'. This list may not be exhaustive, so you should also look at <a href="http://www.educationuk.org">www.educationuk.org</a>.</p> <p>For three year degrees in England and Wales, you would need A-levels or Scottish Highers and to have take an art and design foundation course or equivalent. In Scotland, degrees are for four years, with the first year being a general 'foundation'. For HNDs, students need a National Diploma or an art and design foundation course.</p>
<b>Theatre directing</b>	
<p>Directors have often trained as writers or actors, and this is reflected in the training. Others, including some of the UK's best-known, have come from academic backgrounds in literature and drama. Directing is an</p>	<p>Search for 'theatre directing' on the website <a href="http://www.educationuk.org">www.educationuk.org</a>. There are numerous career-based courses at all levels; most of them (except one or two) have directing as a component only. You can</p>



option on some degree courses and there are very few postgraduate diploma courses. Typically, there are in theatre directing or performance practice.	specify postgraduate courses on the above website. Again, only a handful offer directing on its own.
<b>Theatre lighting and sound</b>	
Theatre lighting design can be studied at City & Guilds, Higher National Certificate/Diploma level (career-based qualifications) and degree level; it is offered by theatre and stage schools and universities.  Theatre sound can be studied at stage schools or a handful of general colleges.	The Society of British Theatre Designers has compiled a list of courses in both lighting and sound. Go to <a href="http://www.theatredesign.org.uk">www.theatredesign.org.uk</a> and click on 'training'. This list may not be exhaustive so you should also look at <a href="http://www.educationuk.org">www.educationuk.org</a> . Most courses have lighting as a component. There are only one or two courses for lighting or sound alone.
<b>Dance</b>	
The Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET) accredits courses in dance (including courses for children). These cover all abilities from beginners to undergraduate and postgraduate level and a range of fields including dance practice, dance therapy and dance management.	CDET has a detailed website with accredited courses, a teacher database and much more information – go to <a href="http://www.cdet.org.uk">www.cdet.org.uk</a> . It is also worth consulting the National Dance Teachers Association website ( <a href="http://www.ndta.org.uk">www.ndta.org.uk</a> ). Other useful sites to look at are the National Resource Centre for Dance <a href="http://www.survey.ac.uk/NRCD">www.survey.ac.uk/NRCD</a> and Dance UK <a href="http://www.danceuk.org">www.danceuk.org</a> .
<b>Music management</b>	
This is often combined with another subject, such as music technology, commercial music production, live production, marketing or pop music. There are Higher National Certificates courses, Foundation Degree and Degree courses in this subject.	Look on <a href="http://www.educationuk.org">www.educationuk.org</a> under 'music industry management'. The Music Managers Forum (MMF) runs two-day master classes for managers and employees in the music business, see <a href="http://www.ukmmf.net">www.ukmmf.net</a> .
<b>Music</b>	
The UK has world-class colleges of music, and you can take degrees, national diplomas and postgraduate diplomas in all types, periods and styles of music. Courses will either be academic or performance-based. Choose a performance course if you want to train as a professional musician. Examples include Scottish music, electronic music or a BA in Music (Performance). You can also study composition or music therapy.	Search for courses on <a href="http://www.educationuk.org">www.educationuk.org</a>
<b>Pop music</b>	
You can do a BTEC National Diploma in pop music – these career-based courses are intended for people who want to enter the commercial music business.	Search the website <a href="http://www.educationuk.org">www.educationuk.org</a> for 'popular music'.
<b>Arts management/administration</b>	
This is taught on its own or, frequently, combined with another subject (e.g. media studies) or a language. You can take a degree, diploma, or career-based courses such as Higher National Certificate/Diploma or NVQ/SVQ.	Search for 'arts management' as well as 'arts administration' on <a href="http://www.educationuk.org">www.educationuk.org</a>



## ***Postgraduate courses***

UK universities offers a huge range of post-graduate courses in the performing arts, both taught courses and research degrees. Subjects available include:

- dance therapy
- drama therapy
- music therapy
- television drama
- music management
- musical composition
- ethnomusicology
- music technology and sound recording techniques
- music and sound design
- audio production
- dance in the community
- dance and culture
- theatre and drama practice
- interventionist and applied theatre
- cultural policy
- scriptwriting
- radio and film
- directing
- dance choreography
- music theatre.

Visit [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org) for a complete listing.

## ***Teacher-training courses***

If you want to train as a teacher of dance, music or drama, Postgraduate Certificate Education (PGCE) courses are available in these areas. As a music graduate, for example, you could do a Music PGCE in order to qualify as a music teacher. There are also postgraduate courses designed for qualified teachers with some experience who want to further their knowledge of education in their subject. Both types of courses are listed on [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org). For more information on teacher training refer to *Teaching and education* in this series.

The Place dance centre ([www.theplace.org.uk](http://www.theplace.org.uk)) has an artist development department. This is aimed at people in dance education or dance careers. There is a membership scheme available to join that entitles you to get general dance information and information about courses, and to receive a copy of *Juice* (which contains information about courses, summer schools, etc.). *Juice* is also available online for members.

### Checklist: Choosing the right course

- you need to be aware of the distinction between a 'performance' course where you train as an actor, a dancer or a musician, and an 'academic' course where you study theatre, dance or music from an academic viewpoint (although these courses often include a performance element as well)
- performance courses are generally at drama schools, music colleges and dance colleges; academic courses are generally at universities
- think about where you would live as well as work – the UK has cities rich in culture and history, but other places also have thriving arts scenes
- look at the institution's list of past pupils to see who has been there
- bear in mind the fact that there is fierce competition for the best-known colleges.

## 2 Entrance

You may be asked:

- to prove your natural ability by performing (for a performance course)
- to show a minimum standard of English (music schools and universities specifically ask for this)
- for proof of real interest in the subject (for university academic courses)
- for high grades for popular academic courses (one drama and theatre arts course has 600 applicants for twenty-seven places, and asks for minimum grades of BBC at A-level or BBB for Scottish Highers)
- for an art and design foundation course or a BTEC National Diploma course, plus A-level or Scottish Higher art, plus a portfolio of work (for design courses).

## 3 How can I register as a professional?

There is no professional registration for the performing arts. However, there are unions and other trade bodies, membership of which could affect your ability to work. Some of the technical and trade bodies are listed below.

### Equity

Equity, the actors' union, covers all aspects of the entertainments industry, including actors, designers, directors, dancers, singers and stage managers. Casting agreements between employers debar newcomers without previous professional experience from being considered for work in several fields. These include London West End theatre, television, radio and television commercials.

Graduates from NCDT-accredited courses are treated as though they have had this experience and are given a graduate card, enabling them to work for many employers. They can stay on the register for two years, then have to meet the full requirements. See [www.equity.org.uk](http://www.equity.org.uk).

### The Musicians' Union

You do not have to join the Musicians' Union, but it provides a wide range of services, including innovative educational schemes. See [www.musiciansunion.org.uk](http://www.musiciansunion.org.uk).

## 4 Next steps

### Checklist: Your next steps

- 1 If you want to become a professional actor, musician or dancer, make sure you choose a course that offers training in performance and not just academic study – many courses with ‘drama’, ‘theatre’ or ‘music’ in their title may not involve any training to perform.
- 2 Do not rush your research – although there are many courses in every aspect of the performing arts and their support trades, they can differ widely.
- 3 Always get prospectuses and read them carefully – do you have the qualifications they ask for?
- 4 Design courses will not accept you without a portfolio, so ensure that you have examples of your artwork.
- 5 Be prepared to attend an interview for any course that involves performing.

## 5 Where can I find more information?

### British Council Education information

Website [www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org)

For further information, you can find details of your nearest office at [www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm) which includes links to all our country web pages and a worldwide address book giving contact details for all offices.

### Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT)

55 Farrington Road  
London EC1M 3JB

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7242 8100  
Fax +44 (0) 20 7242 9303  
Email [careers@abtt.org.uk](mailto:careers@abtt.org.uk)  
Website [www.abtt.org.uk](http://www.abtt.org.uk)

### National Council for Drama Training

1-4 Woburn Walk  
London WC1H 0JJ

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7387 3650  
Fax +44 (0) 20 7681 3860  
Email [info@ncdt.co.uk](mailto:info@ncdt.co.uk)  
Website [www.ncdt.co.uk](http://www.ncdt.co.uk)

### Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD)

The Secretary  
University College  
Northampton NN2 7AL

Website <http://art.ntu.ac.uk/scudd>  
(lists PG courses in drama)

### The Society of British Theatre Designers (SBTD)

Top Floor

55 Farrington Road  
London EC1M 3JB

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7242 9200  
Fax +44 (0) 20 2742 9303  
Website [www.theatredesign.org.uk](http://www.theatredesign.org.uk)

### The Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET)

Toynbee Hall  
28 Commercial Street  
London E1 6LS

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7247 4030  
Fax +44 (0) 20 7247 3404  
Email [info@cdet.org.uk](mailto:info@cdet.org.uk)  
Website [www.cdet.org.uk](http://www.cdet.org.uk)

### Association of National Dance Agencies (ANDA)

Website [www.anda.org.uk](http://www.anda.org.uk) (provides contact details for regional dance agencies across England)

### Dance UK

Battersea Arts Centre  
Lavender Hill  
London SW11 5TN

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7228 4990  
Fax +44 (0) 20 7223 0074  
Email [info@danceuk.org](mailto:info@danceuk.org)  
Website [www.danceuk.org](http://www.danceuk.org)

### Equity

Guild House  
Upper St Martins Lane  
London WC2H 9EG

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7379 6000  
Fax +44 (0) 20 7379 7001  
Website [www.equity.org.uk](http://www.equity.org.uk)

### **Foundation for Community Dance**

Cathedral Chambers  
2 Peacock Lane  
Leicester LE1 5PX

Telephone +44 (0) 116 251 0516

Fax +44 (0) 116 251 0517

Email [info@communitydance.org.uk](mailto:info@communitydance.org.uk)

Website [www.communitydance.org.uk](http://www.communitydance.org.uk)

**Metier** (National Training Organisation for the arts and entertainment sector)

Suite E237

Dean Clough, Halifax  
West Yorkshire HX3 5AX

Telephone +44 (0) 14 2238 1618

Fax +44 (0) 14 2238 0719

Website [www.metier.org.uk](http://www.metier.org.uk)

### **Music Education Council**

#### **MEC Administrator**

54 Elm Road

Hale

Altrincham

Cheshire WA15 9QP

Telephone +44 (0) 161 928 3085

Fax +44 (0) 161 929 9648

Email [ahassan@easynet.co.uk](mailto:ahassan@easynet.co.uk)

Website [www.mec.org.uk](http://www.mec.org.uk)

### **Musicians' Union**

National Office

60-62 Clapham Road

London SW9 0JJ

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7582 5566

Fax +44 (0) 20 7582 9805

Email [webmaster@musiciansunion.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@musiciansunion.org.uk)

Website [www.musiciansunion.org.uk](http://www.musiciansunion.org.uk)

### **Standing Conference on Dance in Higher Education (SCODHE)**

The Secretary

School of Performance & Cultural Industries

University of Leeds

Bretton Campus, West Bretton

Wakefield WF4 4LG

Website [www.scodhe.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.scodhe.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)

(Lists degree and PG courses)

### **Music Managers Forum**

MMF Training

Ground Floor

Fourways House

57 Hilton Street

Manchester M1 2EJ

Telephone +44 (0) 161 228 3993

Fax +44 (0) 161 228 3773

Email [admin@mmf-training.com](mailto:admin@mmf-training.com)

Website [www.ukmmf.net](http://www.ukmmf.net)

### **National Dance Teachers Association (NDTA)**

29 Larkspur Avenue

Burntwood

Staffordshire WS7 4SR

Telephone/Fax +44 (0) 1543 685162

Email [office@ndta.org.uk](mailto:office@ndta.org.uk)

Website [www.ndta.org.uk](http://www.ndta.org.uk)

### **National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD)**

University of Surrey

Guildford

Surrey GU2 7XH

Telephone +44 (0) 1483 689316

Fax +44 (0) 1483 689500

Email [nrcd@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:nrcd@surrey.ac.uk)

Website [www.surrey.ac.uk/NRCD](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/NRCD)

### **The Place Dance Centre**

17 Dukes Road

London WC1H 9PY

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7383 4851

Email [info@theplace.org.uk](mailto:info@theplace.org.uk)

Website [www.theplace.org.uk](http://www.theplace.org.uk)

**Creative Future** (career portal website by the Design Council, Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Arts Council for England)

Website [www.yourcreativefuture.org](http://www.yourcreativefuture.org)



## **Other useful resources**

*British Qualifications* 34<sup>th</sup> ed. (Kogan Page, 2004, ISBN 0 7494 4138 0) – lists every recognised qualification on offer in the UK, by schools, colleges, universities, business schools, learned societies, trade and professional bodies and associations.

*Complete Guide to Performing Arts Courses 2004* (UCAS/Trotman 2003, ISBN 0 8556 0879 3) – as it contains a wealth of extra information including course characteristics, web addresses, employment prospects and case studies from former students..

*Music Education Yearbook: A Guide for Parents, Teachers, Students and Musicians* (Head, Louise Ed Rhinegold Publishing, 2003, ISBN 0 9468 9084 6) – the definitive directory of UK schools, colleges, conservatoires, courses, scholarships.

*Careers in the Arts* is a downloadable booklet available from the Arts Council of England website (<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>).

*CRAC DCG1: Music, Drama & Dance 2003/04* (Trotman 2003, ISBN 0 8566 0922 6) - *Degree Course Guides* series in association with CRAC. Popular among university applicants and their advisers alike, *Degree Course Guides* are unique because each degree presents a wide range of information on a specific degree discipline, laid out in tabular format enabling at-a-glance course comparisons.

*Occupations 2004* (DfES 2003, ISBN 0 86110864 7) Connexions compilation, an in-depth guide of over 600 career choices of all types from unskilled to professional work, also list prospects and qualification for each occupation.

**NB.** Please note these books may not be available at your local British Council office.

*While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct and up to date, the British Council accepts no legal liability for its accuracy, currency or completeness.*

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