



Dukes
Drama



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What are drama schools?

Drama schools provide vocational training to prepare students for life as a working actor or for a role in the performing arts industry. There are different levels of studies students can pursue at drama school (undergraduate BA degrees, foundational diploma courses, or postgraduate courses). The BA in Acting, BA in Musical Theatre and MFA Acting tend to be the most competitive drama school courses – with an acceptance rate of only 1% in several cases.

There are over one hundred BA acting courses across seventy institutions in the UK: only twenty-five of these are drama schools (or ‘conservatoires’). The others are acting programmes delivered by universities, and there are large differences between studying at these types of institutions.

At a drama school, your study is vocation focused – and highly intense

Learning takes place almost solely in practical small-group workshops on acting, dancing, speech, movement. Students train in rehearsals and classes from 9am to 6pm daily and are given performance and showcase opportunities to industry professionals. To reflect this, the application revolves primarily around the auditions with minimal academic requirements (often merely EE at A-Level).

When studying drama at a university, your study is comprised of lectures, seminars, and workshops

Students receive lower contact time and fewer performance opportunities but more research opportunities. This study might offer broader career destinations in arts administration and management, similar to those of other humanities degrees. University drama courses usually have higher academic requirements – some more academic programmes might require AAA at A-Level.

Students generally pay comparable fees whether they study at drama school or university, and fees are covered by the same loan system. The value of drama school, however, is higher given the substantially higher level of contact time.

What do you do at drama school?

At drama school, students conduct little to no traditional academic work (essays, exams) but instead engage intellectually by grappling with difficult texts and ideas as they develop their capabilities as a performer.

Most BA Acting programmes last three years. Students build core skills in the first two years before stretching into greater specialism in the third year. Students are also exposed to the industry through events and showcases in this third and final year, so that they are ready to work as professional actors when they graduate.

Classes run Monday to Friday. Students usually take voice, movement, and speech classes daily: these often comprise one third of their BA Acting study. Studying the technique of acting comprises another one third of classes with the final portion of study time devoted to specific skills (singing, dance, combat). Furthermore, students will attend rehearsals in the evening for the programme's performances.

Here is a sample schedule for a first-year drama student.

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
Company		Group A	Voice & Speech	Pure Movement	Speech Through Voice	Expressive Movement	Exploring Text	Actors Dance	Voice & Speech
Voice & Speech	Pure Movement	Voice & Speech	Group A	Speech Through Voice	Pure Movement	Exploring Text	Expressive Movement		
Pure Movement	Voice & Speech	Lunch		Lunch		Lunch		Voice & Speech	Actors Dance
Lunch		Lead Tutors Meeting		Reflective Practice	Actors History	Student Experience Forum 2.00-3.45 Student Town Hall 4.00-5.00			
Workshop A		Impro	Singing Allocation	Actors History	Reflective Practice			Lunch	
Acting Technique		Singing Allocation	Impro	Development Ushering Training				Acting Technique	
						Speech Through Voice Tutorials		Film Provocation	

Comparing Drama Schools

If you have decided a drama degree is for you, the next step is to decide where to apply.

There are several drama schools which tend to come out on top each year:

- Guildhall School of Music and Drama,
- RADA (Royal Academy of Drama and Acting),
- LAMDA (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art),
- Royal Central School of Speech and Drama,
- Bristol Old Vic Theatre School,
- RSC (the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), and
- RWCMD (Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama).

Drama schools vary in philosophy and approach. Most utilise the Stanislavsky acting method, which prioritises finding the character's objectives when approaching a character. Some, such as RADA and Guildhall, are known for classical style training and emphasis on Shakespeare. Furthermore, drama schools vary in their facilities, structure, and size.

How then should you choose where to apply?

Some of the factors you might want to consider include location (inside or outside of London, for instance, and the costs associated), financial elements (financial assistance, scholarships etc), the alumni network (and the extent to which the drama school proactively connects you with them), and the specific course content (e.g. more classical, more modern, more practical, more academic, and so forth). These preferences you establish should take priority over any ranking table.



Different Drama School Programmes

As you are choosing drama schools, you should look at the different programmes they offer. Drama schools offer a variety of courses catering to different levels of experience and education. Understanding these options can help you choose the path that best suits your aspirations.

Foundation Courses

Foundation courses are typically one-year programmes designed for students who may not yet be ready for full-time degree study. These courses focus on developing basic skills in acting, voice, and movement, preparing students for further education. They often include workshops, practical assessments, and opportunities to perform.

BA Courses

Bachelor of Arts (BA) courses usually last three years and provide in-depth training in acting, directing, or theatre studies. These programmes often include performance opportunities, collaborations with industry professionals, and exposure to various theatrical styles. Students are usually required to complete projects that culminate in performances, showcasing their skills to potential industry contacts.

Specialisations Within BA Courses - Many BA programmes offer specialisations, allowing students to focus on specific areas such as:

- **Acting:** Training in various techniques, including classical and contemporary performance.
 - **Directing:** Focus on the art of directing plays and understanding script analysis.
 - **Stage Management:** Training in the organisation and logistics of theatrical productions.
 - **Theatre Studies:** A more academic approach that involves studying the history and theory of drama and performance.
-

Master's Courses

Master's programmes are designed for students seeking advanced training and specialisation in a particular area. They typically last one to two years, emphasise personal artistry and professional practice, and are ideal for those looking to refine their skills. Some master's programmes require students to engage in academic research, contributing to their understanding of theatre.

The drama school application process

Application Process Overview

Most drama schools begin their application process in the autumn for courses starting the following September. We advise that you start researching and preparing your application materials well in advance to give yourself the best chance of success – particularly so that you can receive enough feedback on your monologues.

For some drama schools (notably LAMDA, Royal Scottish, Royal Central and Royal Welsh) you will apply via UCAS and then complete their school-specific application process separately – including auditions.

Other drama schools (including RADA, Guildhall, Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, Oxford School of Drama, and Mountview) have an entirely separate application process, which requires extra research and preparation.

First round drama school applications generally require the following:

- 1 Registration on UCAS and/or Drama school website:** Be sure you know which of your drama schools require you to apply directly. Take the time to fill out each application portal carefully.
- 2 Personal Statement:** A compelling personal statement is crucial. This is your opportunity to express your passion for drama and outline your experiences. Focus on why you want to study drama, what inspires you, and how your past experiences have prepared you for this journey.
- 3 Self-Tapes:** This is the MOST important aspect of your application. RADA, LAMDA, Guildhall, Royal Scottish, Royal Welsh, Oxford School of Drama and Bristol Old Vic all require you to submit a self-tape (usually of two contrasting monologues) to represent your first-round audition. (Central School and Mountview continue to hold first-round auditions in-person). This means you need to be comfortable performing on camera and understand how to do it: the panel are looking for a theatrical performance delivered to tape, NOT a film performance. Knowing how to deliver such a performance is critical. Ensure your filming setup is professional, with good lighting and sound quality.
- 4 References:** Most applications require at least one reference, often from a teacher or mentor who can vouch for your suitability for drama school.

Drama School Auditions

Auditions are a critical part of the application process. They can vary in format but generally involve performing monologues and participating in group activities.

Here are some important points to consider:

Types of Auditions

- **First Round:** Depending on the institution you apply to, this will either be a self-tape or live audition. For the self-tape, as we state above, the panel seek a theatrical performance as you would deliver on a traditional theatre stage in the self-tapes they receive – not for applicants to act as if they are being filmed for television/film.
- **In-Person Auditions:** If successful in the first round, you will be invited to an in-person audition. This often includes cold readings, improvisation, and group work. You will also likely be asked to present your monologues again and will receive direction on them. You may be asked for different monologues here! Be prepared for the question “What else do you have?”!
- **Workshops:** Some schools incorporate workshops into their audition process, allowing candidates to demonstrate their teamwork and creativity.

What Should Applicants Prepare for Auditions?

Choosing monologues is a key decision.

Select a diverse range of monologues that showcase your versatility and that demonstrate who you are as an actor. Generally, schools ask for:

- **Two contrasting contemporary monologues:** These should highlight your understanding of modern characters and themes.
- **Two classical monologues:** Choose pieces that demonstrate your grasp of traditional text and character work.

Firstly, make sure that your pieces show some sense of variety. This might mean one serious piece and one more comedic one, or it might mean one piece where the character moves between a variety of emotions. This shows your range as a performer in a way that is difficult to convey otherwise. Do not aim to show off with an esoteric monologue: choosing one with an objective you can understand and portray will be more effective than one of more meandering reflection

Secondly, you should choose pieces which you feel you can personally connect with. This does not mean you need to have direct lived experience – but it does mean you should ‘feel’ something and try to find material that you can connect with in some way (whatever that means for you). Steer clear of monologues requiring different accents or highly erratic emotional states (psychosis or drunkenness, for example): choose pieces which allow you to demonstrate your capacity across a range of tones and emotions.

Thirdly, you need to check the requirements/preferences of the institution you are applying to regarding genre of audition piece. Ensure you choose monologues that truly reflect the audition requirements.

The audition process can be rigorous and stressful, but thorough preparation can make a significant difference.

Mastering Self-Tapes

Self-tapes are often the first step in the audition process. Here are some tips to ensure your self-tape stands out:

- **Lighting:** Use natural light or soft lighting to create a flattering environment.
- **Background:** Choose a simple, uncluttered background that keeps the focus on you.
- **Sound:** Ensure clear audio quality. Record in a quiet space and consider using an external microphone if necessary.
- **Framing:** Frame your shot from the waist up to ensure your expressions and movements are visible.



Mock Auditions

Consider organising mock auditions with friends, mentors, or drama coaches. This can help you get comfortable with performing under pressure and receiving constructive feedback.

During the Audition

1. **Be Yourself:** Authenticity is key. Be true to your unique qualities as a performer.
2. **Engage with the Panel:** Make eye contact and engage with the panel members. This can create a connection and showcase your interpersonal skills.
3. **Embrace Feedback:** If given direction during the audition, be open to making adjustments. This demonstrates your ability to take direction—a vital skill in the performing arts.

How we help

Applying to drama school has never been more competitive, so the right support matters. Dukes Drama provides 1-1 personalised guidance on every aspect of the audition process, from brainstorming monologues, to producing a polished self-tape and honing audition performances. Our programmes are led by experienced education consultants and acting coaches trained at the top drama schools in the world, including RADA, LAMDA, Guildhall, Juilliard, and Yale.

With acceptance rates hovering between 1 & 5%, Dukes Drama tutors are here to ensure you put forward the most competitive and compelling application possible.

We have a variety of offerings to support you at any and every stage of your journey to drama school:

Preparing Your Audition Monologues



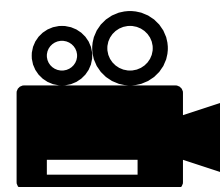
Audition Selection Consultation (90 minutes | £270 including VAT)

This focused consultation will guide students to select their monologue list for drama school auditions, ensuring the pieces align with the student's strengths, casting type, and unique voice. Students will also get expert advice and practical steps on how to start preparing their monologues with confidence and clarity. Suitable for students who seek initial support and feel confident in directing their ongoing preparation.

Audition Monologue Coaching Package (7 hours | £1260 including VAT)

In this personalised coaching package, students receive comprehensive support to select and prepare classical and contemporary monologues to produce the most competitive drama school audition. Students will receive monologue coaching and a mock audition session to elevate their performance before audition submission.

Preparing Your Self-Tapes



Self-Tape Consultation (90 minutes | £270 including VAT)

This consult will help students perfect their self-tape with expert guidance from a graduate of RADA, Guildhall, or other leading drama schools, crucial for the first round of drama school auditions with confidence. If a student already has a self-tape, they will receive detailed, constructive feedback to elevate their existing tape. If they are just starting out on the self-tape process, students will learn industry best practices on material selection, on-camera technique, and technical setup.

Build your Audition Reel (5 hours | £900 including VAT)

This one-to-one coaching package guides you through every step of creating a standout audition reel for top drama schools, from monologue selection to on-camera delivery. You'll work with trained actors from institutions like RADA, Guildhall, and LAMDA to choose the right material, refine your performance, and film with confidence.

Preparing for Audition Day

Mock Audition Feedback Consultation (90 minutes | £270 including VAT)

This coaching session simulates a drama school audition. Students will perform their monologues and complete a mock interview before receiving detailed feedback from professional actors trained at leading institutions such as RADA, Guildhall, and LAMDA.



Premier Service

The UK's first tailored drama school application service, our flagship offering provides one-on-one guidance throughout the entire application process.

From selecting drama schools that suit your unique ambitions, to drafting personal statements and researching audition pieces, we've got you covered.

Call us today to book in your Premier Service Consultation.



TOGETHER WE'RE EXTRAORDINARY



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Dukes House, 58 Buckingham Gate, London, SW1E 6AJ +44 (0) 203 696 5300