Northern School of Contemporary Dance

Admissions Policy

Policy owner:	**Northern School of Contemporary Dance: Leadership Team**
Policy Tier:	1
Lead contact:	Admissions Manager & Head of Quality & Compliance
Audience:	Applicants, Students & staff for Northern School of Contemporary Dance courses of higher education and franchise Partner Providers
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Related Policies, Procedures and Guidance:	NSCD Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy; Terms and Conditions; Fees and Course Deposits Policy; Consumer Law Handbook; Student Protection Plan; Access and Participation Plan; Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) Policy; Criminal Records Policy; NSCD Privacy Notices.
UK Quality Code reference:	Advice and Guidance: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access; Concerns, Complaints and Appeals; Information.
OfS Conditions reference:	C Conditions (consumer protection law & Student Protection); B Conditions (Quality and standards, including admissions); E Conditions (Public interest governance, management and governance).
External sector references:	Universities UK / GuildHE Fair Admissions Code of Practice (October 2025); CMA guidance on consumer protection law for HE providers; OIA Good Practice Frameworks.
Equality and Diversity Considerations:	Policy is available in accessible format on request. Reasonable adjustments will be made to the application and admissions process for applicants who require them.
Further information: Queries should be directed to: admissions@nscd.ac.uk or quality.office@nscd.ac.uk *This document was produced with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools for drafting and editing purposes. All content has been reviewed, amended where necessary, and approved by NSCD.*	

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1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of Commitment

1.1.1 Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) is committed to a fair, transparent, and applicant-centred admissions process. We exist to train artists who will shape the future of the sector, and we recruit the most talented students regardless of background. Our admissions practices are designed to identify potential, support widening access and participation, and uphold the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, and consumer protection.

1.1.2 This policy reflects NSCD's alignment with the Universities UK and GuildHE Fair Admissions Code of Practice (October 2025), including the overarching guiding principle that admissions processes must protect and prioritise the interests of applicants, and incorporates the Consumer Markets Authority's (CMA) guidance on consumer protection for higher education providers.

1.1.3 NSCD recognises that, as a specialist conservatoire, an inclusive and contextual approach to admissions is essential. A framework for Contextual Admissions which sets out the values and principles that underpin how we identify and nurture talent from all backgrounds, is integrated into the principles of this policy (see Sections 2 and 9).

1.2 Purpose of the Policy

1.2.1 This policy sets out NSCD's approach to applicant recruitment, admission and enrolment for all higher education programmes, including those delivered in whole or in part by approved franchise partner providers where the student would be registered as an NSCD student.

1.2.2 It is intended to:

- ensure that admissions processes are fair, transparent, professional, and free from undue pressure on applicants;
- make clear how decisions are made and how applicants can expect to be treated at each stage;
- support NSCD's Access and Participation Plan and obligations under consumer protection law;
- set out the contextual admissions principles that inform how NSCD assesses applicants from a range of backgrounds; and
- provide a single point of reference for staff, applicants, partners, and external stakeholders.

2. Scope and Principles

2.1 This policy applies to all applicants to undergraduate (Cert HE, BA Hons) and postgraduate programmes offered by NSCD, including programmes delivered by an approved franchise partner provider where the applicant would, if successful, be registered as an NSCD student. It applies equally to home and overseas applicants and to applicants of any age (with specific provisions for applicants under 18 set out in Section 13).

2.2 This policy applies to all activities of NSCD that relate to admissions, including those carried out by franchise partner providers acting on NSCD's behalf or delivering NSCD-registered provision.

NSCD retains overall responsibility for the integrity of admissions decisions and the quality of information provided to applicants, irrespective of who delivers the programme.

2.3 In line with the UUK/GuildHE Fair Admissions Code of Practice, NSCD's overarching principle is that admissions processes must protect and prioritise the interests of applicants. NSCD will not use offer-making practices, deadlines, or incentives to place undue pressure on applicant decision-making.

2.4 Fair Admissions Principles

NSCD's admissions practices are guided by the following principles, drawn from UUK and Guild HE's Fair Admissions Code of Practice, and adapted to the NSCD context. Applicants to NSCD can expect:

- **Transparency**: admissions information, processes, entry criteria and decision-making are published clearly and accessibly on the NSCD website, including how qualifications, audition or interview performance, personal statements, and contextual information are taken into consideration.
- **Selection on merit and potential**: applicants are selected on the basis of their talent, capability, and potential to succeed on the programme, judged by their achievements and potential rather than by background or personal circumstances.
- **Reliable, valid, and explainable methods**: assessment methods (including audition and interview) are appropriate, necessary, evidence-informed, and applied consistently.
- **Minimising barriers and addressing inequalities**: admissions processes are designed to minimise barriers to entry and to address inequalities, including by making reasonable adjustments and by applying contextual considerations (see Section 9).
- **Professional structures and processes**: admissions are professionally managed, with clear lines of responsibility across NSCD and any franchise partner provider, with appropriately trained staff at every stage.
- **Applicant-centred**: applicants are treated with respect, kept informed, and given useful feedback where possible, on request.

2.5 **NSCD Admissions Commitments**

Drawing on the UUK and Guild HE's Fair Admissions Code of Practice and NSCD's commitment to Contextual Admissions, NSCD makes the following commitments to applicants:

- We will put the interests of applicants first, including how we communicate with applicants, the timescales we set, and how we make decisions about the application.
- We will provide clear, accurate, and timely information about our programmes, fees, terms and conditions, and the admissions process.
- We will audition or interview all applicants who meet the basic criteria for the chosen programme, regardless of background.
- We will assess applicants on talent and potential, not personal circumstances, and apply contextual considerations to ensure fairness.
- We will make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 wherever required, and welcome early disclosure of support needs.

- We will not use offer-making practices, deadlines, or incentives to apply undue pressure on your decision-making.
- We will be clear about who is responsible for admissions decisions, including where programmes are delivered by a franchise partner provider.
- We will respect your data and process it in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and our Privacy Notice.
- We will provide a clear route for complaints and appeals about admissions, and signpost to external bodies where appropriate.

2.6 **NSCD Contextual Admissions Values**

The NSCD Framework for Contextual Admissions is underpinned by five values which inform every stage of recruitment, selection, and programme delivery. These values are integral to the operation of this policy and are summarised below; further detail can be found in Section 9.

Value	What it means
Understanding	Creating a partnership of understanding between NSCD, applicants, and partner institutions from the outset of the recruitment process.
Fairness	Taking a holistic, multi-faceted approach to entry requirements across all programmes.
Equality	Identifying barriers to entry and working actively to mitigate them.
Specialism-informed	Ensuring that developments within the subject specialism explicitly inform admissions, programme design, and progression to graduation.
Individuality	Making admissions decisions that consider both the suitability of an applicant for NSCD and the suitability of NSCD for the applicant.

3. Definitions

Applicant: Any individual who has submitted an application, attended an audition or interview, or received an offer (conditional or unconditional) from NSCD or an NSCD franchise partner provider.

Admissions decision: Any formal decision in the admissions process, including rejection of an application, the making, amendment or withdrawal of an offer, a decision on fee status, or a decision following review of relevant criminal convictions.

Contextual admissions: The practice of using information and data about an applicant's individual circumstances and educational context to assess their potential.

Conditional offer: An offer of a place dependent on the applicant meeting certain stated requirements, such as achieving specified grades or providing required documentation.

Unconditional offer: An offer of a place where the applicant has already met all entry requirements, including through a successful audition/interview.

Franchise partner provider: An organisation with which NSCD has a current and approved franchise or partnership agreement under which the partner delivers all or part of a programme leading to an NSCD award, and where the student would be registered as an NSCD student.

Reasonable adjustment: An adjustment made under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that an applicant with a disability is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in the admissions process.

Material information: Information which a prospective student would need in order to make an informed decision about whether to apply for or accept a place at NSCD, as defined in CMA and OfS guidance.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 All members of NSCD have a responsibility to abide by and promote the principles in this policy in relation to their work and duties at NSCD:

- the policy is known, understood, and consistently implemented across the admissions cycle;
- individual behaviours take account of the impact they may have upon applicants and prospective students;
- applicants and prospective students are treated with respect, dignity, and fairness;
- where any member of staff has concerns about admissions practice, they should raise them with their line manager, the Access & Admissions Manager, or the Head of Quality & Compliance.

4.2 The Leadership Team will be responsible for:

- providing strategic oversight of admissions, ensuring alignment with NSCD's mission, the Fair Admissions Code of Practice, and the Access and Participation Plan;
- approving annual recruitment targets and overall admissions strategy;
- approval of exceptional decisions (for example, late application acceptance, deferral, or fee waiver decisions that fall outside published criteria);

4.3 The Access & Admissions Manager will be responsible for:

- the operational management of the NSCD admissions process from enquiry to enrolment;
- ensuring published admissions information is accurate, complete, and timely (material information);
- ensuring that audition and interview panels are appropriately trained, briefed on the contextual admissions framework, and apply consistent criteria;
- logging complaints and appeals about admissions in line with the Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy;
- monitoring admissions data and reporting to Senate and the Board of Governors.

4.4 The Head of Quality & Compliance will be responsible for:

- ensuring that admissions practice complies with consumer protection law, the OfS Conditions of Registration, the Equality Act 2010, and data protection legislation;
- ensuring that the policy is reviewed and kept current.
- maintaining the policy and associated documentation under NSCD's policy governance arrangements;

- Managing complaints or appeals in line with the Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy.

4.5 Franchise partner providers will be responsible for:

- operating admissions activities in accordance with this policy, the Fair Admissions Code of Practice, and the terms of the partnership agreement;
- ensuring that staff involved in admissions are appropriately trained and briefed;
- cooperating with NSCD on the handling of any complaints, appeals, or quality assurance reviews relating to admissions.

5. Communication of Policy

- This policy will be published on the NSCD public website, in staff and student handbooks
- NSCD will endeavour to provide the policy in alternative accessible formats on request from applicants, staff, or students.
- Where applicants apply to programmes delivered by a franchise partner provider, the policy and associated information will also be made available via the partner's admissions channels, with clear signposting that the awarding body is NSCD.

6. Legal Framework

This policy operates within the following legal and regulatory framework:

- The Office for Students Conditions of Registration
- Consumer Rights Act 2015 and the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024
- Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance for HE providers on consumer protection law
- Equality Act 2010 (including the public sector equality duty)
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- UUK/GuildHE Fair Admissions Code of Practice (October 2025)
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- NSCD Annex A.1 Academic Regulations & Credit Framework

7. Recruitment, Marketing and Outreach

7.1 Target recruitment numbers

7.1.1 Target recruitment numbers are agreed annually by NSCD and the Board of Governors and vary across programmes. Targets are published on the relevant course pages of the NSCD website as a guide, they are not a guarantee of numbers as this can vary dependent on admissions cycles.

7.2 Marketing and material information

7.2.1 NSCD ensures that information provided to prospective students is complete, accurate, and timely, in accordance with CMA and OfS guidance on 'material information'. This includes

information about the course content, award, fees and funding, entry requirements, the audition or interview process, terms and conditions, and the Student Protection Plan.

7.2.2 Marketing and recruitment activity may include the NSCD website and social media channels, open days and guided tours, open evening and weekend classes, summer schools, student performances, and experience days. NSCD ensures that any material produced or distributed on its behalf by third parties, including franchise partner providers, complies with the same standards of accuracy and consumer protection.

7.3 Participation and outreach

7.3.1 NSCD is committed to widening participation, underpinned by its Access and Participation Plan. We engage in a range of outreach activities to widen access to training in the arts, including work with schools, community organisations, and other partners. Details of the NSCD Admissions Support Package are available at https://www.nscd.ac.uk/study/application-support-package/ .

8. Application and Selection

8.1 General principles

8.1.1 Selection practices are designed to be transparent, effective, consistent and fair. Information about applicants is processed in accordance with NSCD's data protection policies and privacy notices.

8.2 Entry requirements

8.2.1 Entry requirements and selection criteria for each NSCD programme are published on the relevant course pages at https://www.nscd.ac.uk/study/courses/ . Franchise partner providers will publish this information on their own website.

8.3 How applicants are selected

8.3.1 Selection for all programmes is normally by audition and/or interview, with consideration of other evidence (such as personal statements, references, or where appropriate showreels and portfolios) as set out in the relevant course summary document. Audition and interview are substantive parts of the assessment process, designed to identify candidates with the greatest potential to develop and succeed regardless of previous experience or cultural or socio-economic background.

8.4 Reasonable adjustments and the sharing of support needs

8.4.1 NSCD is committed to removing unnecessary barriers and increasing accessibility. Applicants are encouraged to share information about any support need or disability (including learning, physical, sensory, or mental health conditions) so that NSCD can make appropriate reasonable adjustments at audition or interview and during subsequent training. Information may be shared in advance of audition, but applicants can share information at any stage of the admissions process.

8.4.2 Applicants are also encouraged to share information on any previous or current injuries so that appropriate support can be put in place during audition or interview and any subsequent training.

8.5 Application fees and fee waiver

8.5.1 An application fee is payable for all higher education programmes at NSCD. Exemptions are available, details are available on the How To Apply page for the relevant programmes.

8.6 Application procedures and deadlines

8.6.1 NSCD arranges its own application procedures, including audition and interview dates (online and in-person). Deadlines are published on the NSCD website at www.nscd.ac.uk . Franchise partner providers will advertise and manage their own auditions.

8.6.2 Applications submitted after the published deadline may be considered at the discretion of NSCD, where capacity allows and where it is in the applicant's interest to do so. NSCD reserves the right to extend deadlines where appropriate.

8.7 Withdrawals prior to audition or interview

8.7.1 Applicants should inform NSCD as soon as possible if they decide to withdraw their application and not attend audition or interview. Application fees are non-refundable except where the applicant is subsequently found to be ineligible for their chosen programme.

8.8 Audition / interview procedures

8.8.1 Details of audition and interview procedures, together with entry requirements, are published at www.nscd.ac.uk . Where circumstances prevent NSCD from holding an audition in-person as previously advertised, alternative arrangements (which may include online audition, interview, or other information-gathering methods) will be put in place to enable a fair admissions decision.

8.9 Feedback to unsuccessful applicants

8.9.1 Where possible, NSCD will provide feedback on request to unsuccessful applicants. Due to the volume of applications, detailed individual feedback from an audition or interview is not possible.

9. Contextual Admissions

9.1 Contextual admissions at NSCD means using information about an applicant's educational and personal context to assess their potential fairly, in addition to (rather than instead of) the assessment of potential through audition and/or interview.

9.2 In line with the Fair Admissions Code of Practice, NSCD applies the following operating principles:

- an industry-informed approach to recruitment, balancing industry needs and art form development;
- a focus on successful outcomes for the sector and wider society, taking into account an applicant's holistic potential to contribute beyond their artistic discipline;
- a 'partnership of understanding' between NSCD and the applicant.

9.3 Practical applications of these principles may include:

- single rather than multiple auditions;
- remote video auditions and interviews where appropriate;
- a variety of information-gathering methods, such as showreels, targeted-question interviews;
- audition material and structures designed to remove barriers and to give every individual the best possible starting point;
- advance guidance to applicants on the format and purpose of audition, interview, and personal statement;
- entry requirements deliberately designed to remove barriers and encourage applicants from all backgrounds;
- an additional discretionary system linked to Access and Participation Plan targets for borderline cases;
- regular review of programme entry requirements to identify and remove potential barriers.

9.4 NSCD will be transparent with applicants about the use of contextual considerations. Data used to inform contextual admissions will be applied consistently and in line with data sources recommended by the Fair Admissions Review (including, where available, free school meal status, index of multiple deprivation, and care-experienced status).

9.5 Staff making admissions decisions are required to be fully conversant with the values and principles of Contextual Admissions, and NSCD reviews its published information regularly to ensure maximum accessibility, in consultation with students and other stakeholders.

10. Offers, Acceptance and Pre-Contract Information

10.1 Offer-making practices

10.1.1 Unconditional offers will only be used where the applicant: (a) already holds the required grades or qualifications; (b) has been substantively assessed through audition, interview, or additional application procedures; or (c) requires special consideration due to mitigating circumstances, such as illness or disability.

10.2 Confirmation of offer process

10.2.1 Where NSCD makes an offer of a place, the following three-step process applies:

- Offer of a place is made to the applicant, including the pre-contract information set out below;
- Applicant confirms acceptance of the offer using the NSCD Admissions portal;
- NSCD confirms the offer in writing.

10.2.2 An offer remains provisional until NSCD has confirmed the offer in writing. The pre-contract information issued with the offer comprises:

- the Offer Letter;
- the NSCD Terms and Conditions;
- the NSCD Fees and Course Deposits Policy;

- the relevant Course Summary Document;
- signposting to the Student Protection Plan and the Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy.

10.3 Right to cancel

10.3.1 In accordance with the NSCD Terms and Conditions, applicants have a right to cancel within 14 calendar days of formally accepting an offer of a place. Further detail is set out in the Terms and Conditions.

10.4 Deferred admissions

10.4.1 Offers of a place will normally apply only to the next available course start date. Places will not normally be deferred to a subsequent start date; deferral is at the discretion of NSCD.

10.5 Communications with third parties

10.5.1 All communications about an application, audition, or interview outcome will normally be conducted directly with the applicant. Where the applicant is under 18 at the time the course commences, communication will, where necessary and appropriate, be shared with the applicant's parent, guardian, or a named responsible adult.

11. Enrolment

11.1 'Enrolment' is the annual process by which the student formally confirms that they are commencing each year of their programme. Enrolment must be fully completed in order to receive full access to School and course facilities. Students must re-enrol at the start of each academic year. This process is managed by the Quality Office.

11.2 An offer of a place is conditional on the applicant complying with the admissions and enrolment requirements, including any conditions relating to fees.

11. 3 Prior to enrolment, applicants holding an offer will be contacted by NSCD with pre-enrolment information. Applicants should refer to the relevant Course Summary Document for further detail.

11.5 Registration and enrolment information requested

11.5.1 As part of accepting an offer and enrolment, students will be asked to provide a range of information, this includes:

- a current email address;
- a working telephone number;
- a term-time address;
- emergency & Trusted contact details;
- a copy of certificates for the highest qualification on entry;
- a current passport (a copy will be retained);
- a headshot/photograph;
- confirmation of loan payment from Student Finance England (or other funding body), where applicable;

- any other information reasonably required by NSCD.

11.5.2 All scanned documents are stored securely in accordance with NSCD's Data Protection Policy.

11.6 Withdrawals

11.6.1 Applicants who hold an offer and wish to withdraw prior to the start of their programme must inform the NSCD Admissions team as soon as possible, in writing or using the online Admissions portal. Students who withdraw after the start of the programme will be subject to the NSCD Fees Policy. Information about intermission/interruption of studies is available at https://www.nscd.ac.uk/policies-and-procedures/ .

12. Scholarships, Bursaries and Financial Support

12.1 NSCD offers a range of financial assistance. To be considered for financial assistance, students should complete an application to Student Finance England (or equivalent) as early as possible after accepting an offer, and complete the NSCD Financial Assistance application form.

12.2 NSCD operates a Care Leaver, Estranged Students and Refugee Bursary, allocated in addition to any other financial support. Applicants should indicate their status on their application or enrolment forms, or contact NSCD's support staff.

12.3 Full information on financial assistance is available at https://www.nscd.ac.uk/bursaries-financial-assistance/ .

13. Applicants with Specific Circumstances

13.1 Applicants under 18 years of age

13.1.1 NSCD is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all students, including those under 18. Applicants who are under 18 should be aware that they are applying to study in an adult environment, with a small number of limitations during the period that they are under 18. Parental or guardian consent is required for any student under the age of 18 to enrol.

13.2 Care leavers, estranged students, and refugees

13.2.1 NSCD welcomes applications from care-experienced applicants, applicants estranged from their parents, and refugees. Additional pastoral support and non-repayable bursaries may be available; applicants are invited to share their status at application and again at enrolment. Further information is at https://www.nscd.ac.uk/bursaries-scholarships/ .

13.3 Applicants with a criminal record

13.3.1 NSCD does not require disclosure of a criminal record as part of the application process. All criminal records data, where collected, will be processed in accordance with NSCD's Criminal Records Policy and Privacy Notices.

13.3.2 Some programmes may include placements or other professional course-related experiences that involve 'regulated activity', which require an enhanced DBS check. Where this is a requirement of the programme, an enhanced DBS check will be required at the point of receipt of an offer, before the offer can be confirmed. Where the activity is optional, no DBS check is required at the admissions stage, and an enrolled student may elect not to undertake the optional activity.

13.4 Overseas applicants

13.4.1 Overseas applicants must demonstrate sufficient English language competency, as published on the NSCD website. International qualifications are benchmarked against UK equivalents using ENIC (the UK National Information Centre) as set out in admissions information.

13.4.2 NSCD does not use agents or other contracted partners to support international recruitment.

14. Franchise Partner Provision

14.1 Where a programme is delivered in whole or in part by an approved franchise partner provider, and the applicant would be registered as an NSCD student, the following principles apply:

- NSCD is the awarding body and retains overall responsibility for the integrity of admissions decisions and the accuracy of pre-contract information;
- applicants will be made aware, prior to applying, that NSCD is the awarding body, which institution is making the admissions decision, and which institution is responsible for delivery of specific services;
- the partner provider operates admissions activities in accordance with this policy, the Fair Admissions Code of Practice, and the terms of the partnership agreement;
- admissions data from partner-delivered provision will be reported alongside NSCD-delivered provision in annual monitoring, broken down by provider.

15. False, Fraudulent or Misleading Information

15.1 NSCD expects all information provided by applicants to be complete, true, and accurate, with no misleading omissions or inaccuracies. Submission of fraudulent, inaccurate, or misleading information, or the omission of relevant information, may result in the immediate cancellation of the application and (where applicable) the withdrawal of any offer made.

15.2 Where information comes to light, after enrolment, that an application contained false, fraudulent, or misleading information, NSCD may terminate registration or take action under the Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures.

16. Breach of the Policy

16.1 NSCD will take seriously any instance of breach of this policy by staff, students, applicants, partners or visitors.

16.2 Any breach will be investigated and, where appropriate, considered under the relevant complaints, grievance, or disciplinary policy for staff, students, or partners.

17. Complaints and Appeals

17.1 Applicants who wish to lodge a complaint about the admissions process, or to appeal an admissions decision, should refer to the NSCD Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy. Deadlines apply and are set out in that policy.

17.2 For questions about this policy and its procedures, please contact quality.office@nscd.ac.uk .

19. Related Documents

- NSCD Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy
- NSCD Access and Participation Plan
- NSCD Terms and Conditions
- NSCD Fees and Course Deposits Policy
- NSCD Student Protection Plan
- NSCD Consumer Law Handbook
- NSCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) Policy
- NSCD Criminal Records Policy
- NSCD Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices
- NSCD Non-Academic Misconduct Policy
- UUK/GuildHE Fair Admissions Code of Practice (October 2025)
- CMA guidance on consumer protection law for HE providers
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education — Advice and Guidance: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access

20. Key Contacts

Name / Office	Role	Email
Admissions Office	First point of contact for admissions enquiries	admissions@nscd.ac.uk
Quality Office	Policy oversight	quality.office@nscd.ac.uk
Student Services	Student support and pastoral enquiries	studentservices@nscd.ac.uk