

## Access and Participation Statement

URL: <https://www.raindance.org/film-school/access-and-participation-statement/>

### 1. Introduction to Raindance Film School

Raindance is an internationally recognised festival and film school that specialises in delivering exceptional, industry focused vocational courses. Established in 1992, Raindance has been training independent filmmakers from all backgrounds, and has helped launch the careers of many A-list celebrities to date.

Raindance is widely considered to be the voice of British independent filmmaking and is listed amongst the world's top 10 film festivals in the world by various publications. From inception, our focus has always been to help underrepresented film artists produce, make and distribute original content. This is evident in our entire marketing campaign for the 2018 film festival, where we wanted to represent characters that are very rarely represented in the medium of film, and with a strong female lead. Our festival trailer can be seen here:

<https://youtu.be/YiSJThpQDcs>

Our campaign for the 2020 focuses on bringing communities together through film, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's festival was extra special as the majority of cast and crew were our very own HND students from the HND film and acting pathways, under the direction of Simon Hunter. This gave our students first-hand experience on a commercial production that will be viewed throughout the festival and beyond.

Every year, the festival hosts a range of panels and industry forums to focus on identified minority groups and UK specific issues in the film and media sector. Last year, some of the forums we hosted were as follows:

- The other 16% - Why is disability still so absent from our screens?
- The British Gold Standard: Why People buy British and What they're buying
- An Open Letter to the Industry: Filmmaking after #TimesUp
- Beyond Brexit: Exploring Distribution and Collaboration Outside of Europe
- BAME Casting Surgery by Mandy
- Emerging filmmakers Day



There is a lack of representation in the UK film industry. According to the BFI, out of the UK directors listed in the Top 200 films at the worldwide box office between 2001-2016, only two were female and none were people of colour. A Hollywood study showed that women only represent 6.9% of all directors and just 13.8% of screenwriters.

The cinema is a vital component to our national cultural output. It is a unique place where we can tell stories as a nation and communicate who we are to the world. However, with a lack of

representation in key production roles, there is a limit to the kinds of stories that will be told, and whose life experience will be included in them. Raindance has been working with various organisations to address this imbalance. Through various mentoring and support programmes, we are dedicated to giving access to all aspiring filmmakers and content creators.

Raindance Educational Services Ltd. Was established because we identified a fundamental gap in the vocational education sector for the creative industries. Media graduates regularly attend our short courses because their university courses do not adequately prepare them to succeed in the independent film sector. Many students are not taught core fundamental skills such as understanding intellectual property law or how to raise finance using government tax incentives for example. In this competitive industry, it is not enough to simply know how to operate technical equipment; students must learn how the business works, how to market themselves and how to secure contracts. Above all, they need to develop networking skills and have access to other filmmakers with whom they can collaborate with.

Although the BTEC Level 5 HND Diploma is at the heart of our undergraduate provision, we offer so much more than just a qualification. We include over £5,000 worth of industry-led open classes as well as access to exclusive events, online forums, networking events and full access to the annual Raindance Film Festival. At the end of each year, we showcase our student work at the Film festival, hosted in West End of London. Our students have lifetime access to thousands of filmmakers and Raindance members from around the world, through our Alumni programme, where they can collaborate and share ideas.

## **2. Assessment of current performance**

As we are currently undergoing the registration process with the OfS, our students are not eligible for student finance at this time. This restricts access to many applicants who are not financially able to fund their fees privately.

Our admissions process reflects our commitment to opening up educational opportunities to applicants from non-traditional backgrounds, in particular, those who have potential but may not have achieved academic success previously. We do not use UCAS, and therefore do not rely on UCAS tariff points. Each applicant is assessed individually, taking into consideration aptitude, commitment and potential to succeed. All students are required to meet the minimum requirements to study at level 4 and above.

Because our students are self-funding, our application process does not currently take into account identifying students of low HE participation, income or lower socioeconomic status. We ask for financial information to determine how the fees will be paid, and this is also discussed in detail during the interview process.

Our HND programmes do reasonably well against national statistics in recruiting students from BAME groups; these tend to be students from black minorities in particular. We need to do more work to attract students from Asian minority groups. This could be partly due to cultural barriers. South

Asian minority groups generally tend to apply less to creative media and performing arts subjects at HE level.

36 out of 44 (82%) of our current students are mature, and we have a much higher conversion rate of mature applicants to enrolled students compared to younger learners (under 21 at time of entry). We believe this is largely due to financial reasons. Mature students tend to be able to secure funds and personal loans more easily than younger learners. As we are unable to offer student finance, this becomes a key deciding factor for many of our younger applicants who can otherwise apply for student finance at other institutes.

18% of our learners identify themselves as having a learning disability. Our facilities are fully equipped to support students of all disabilities, and we have lift access to all areas, should the need arise.

Our applicants do not currently have access to Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) as we are not currently registered with the OfS. Our staff is experienced in providing additional support, and we have policies in place to fully support our SEN learners. Furthermore, our small class sizes mean we can provide more 1:1 support for our learners than many other HE institutes. The level of support required is assessed at interview stage. If it is felt the student would benefit from DSA, we recommended alternative providers who were eligible for funding. We hope that once we have OfS approval, we can accommodate students with all special educational needs and DSA eligibility.

The film and television industry is not gender balanced, and this is more evident at senior levels. According to a Skills audit carried out by the Work Foundation, only 20% key production personnel were women. Furthermore, according to the BBC, women still only account for 11% of top film directors. Our courses attract a healthy balance of male and female students; 47% of our enrolled students are women.

In our existing cohorts, the following groups of qualifying students are currently underrepresented:

- Students who are South Asian and minority ethnic who identify as BAME
- Students who identify as LGBTQ
- Disabled people – specifically those with physical or sensory impairments.

We recognise that our application process needs to be modified to identify students from areas of low HE participation, low household income and /or low socioeconomic status, as well as those who are care leavers once we have successfully registered with the OfS. We plan to subscribe to HESA and HEIDI Plus so that we can analyse our data with national HE data.

### **3. Ambition – Key Priorities for 2020-2021**

From the analysis above, upon successful OfS approval, Raindance intends to focus on the following priorities:

1) Promote the institute's HE provision to potential applicants from low income/ low participating groups that were previously unable to fund privately.

2) Widen participation to underrepresented groups in the industry such as BAME, LGBT and to female applicants, by addressing perceptions of certain communities and groups, and through our outreach programmes

3) Conduct research to identify employment opportunities for graduating and Alumni students, and to support students to enter the independent film industry through various networking events.

#### **4. Strategy**

- As part of our academic outreach strategy, The Raindance Academy Programme will offer free premium membership worth £50 to all full-time students on qualifying creative arts/performing arts courses at level 3 or higher. The programme will also offer the same level membership to academic staff of qualifying courses.
- Introduce a free 'Community membership' for aspiring filmmakers who are looking to enter the industry but are not currently on a qualifying full-time course. This will attract groups from low income/low participation areas.
- Introduce regular networking events where students can meet industry professionals
- Host annual screening events for alumni students to maximise employment opportunities for graduating students
- Continue to arrange industry events during our festival and throughout the year to promote underrepresented groups and encourage new talent.

#### **5. Consultation with Students**

The institute has a well-established and comprehensive 'Learner Voice' programme that includes the participation of students in regular meetings. Student Representatives meet regularly with the principal.

This Access and Participation Statement has been shared with our Student Representatives and the feedback has helped us to develop the statement.

#### **6. Partnerships and Relationships**

Partnership development at Raindance comprises of several strands; Employers, FE colleges, universities and industry professionals. Partnerships are developed to ensure that our HE provision meets the needs of our students and helps them progress onto further study and/or employment.

##### **1) Employers**

Having been active in the film and television industries since 1992, Raindance has established strong links with employers that relate to its HE provision. Employers play a key role in motivating and raising aspirations as well as ensuring our curriculum meets the needs of the industry.

We have established partnerships with employers to offer entry level jobs to suitable graduates. We have partnered with organisations such as Backstage and Mandy to offer our students complementary memberships that give access to tens of thousands of casting opportunities.

## 2) Schools and Colleges

Raindance works closely with the CIT department of Uxbridge College. The department is active in promoting IT to female applicants and to BAME groups, both of which are also underrepresented in the Creative Media industries as identified previously. Uxbridge College is an outstanding college with Beacon status.

We are currently working with the Star Academies Trust which runs a network of primary and secondary schools, with clusters in Lancashire, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and East London. The trust operates 27 schools, in some of the most challenging areas. 65% of all cohorts are in the top 30% deprived areas (drawn from the English Indices of Deprivation 2015 available at <http://imd-by-postcode.opendatacommunities.org/>). 60% of students are EAL learners and 12% require SEN Support.

The trust is a values-based organisation, committed to enhancing social mobility, which is why it is well aligned with our vision and aspirations. By partnering with Star Academies, we are able to focus our WP strategy and monitor progress more effectively. Some planned activities include developing workshops and master-classes, and supporting their media curriculum development to become more industry focused through CPD and consulting.

## 3) Industry Professionals

Raindance has been offering short courses delivered by industry professionals since its inception. We are now bringing the same speakers into our HE classes to offer focused workshops and seminars.

## **7. How the Access and Participation Statement will be evaluated and developed**

This statement will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it is still relevant and up to date. The institute will also assess the extent to which our key priorities are being met. Progress made will be evaluated and will form the further development of the statement. When reviewing this statement, we will make judgements on the following:

- Performance against aims set
- Effectiveness of actions taken and their impact
- Further data analysis, including changing demographics
- Agreed priorities and actions for 2020-21
- Revision of the Statement and updates on the website
- Students and relevant industry partners to be included in the evaluation processes