

RADA

Student submission for TEF 2023

Provider name: Royal Academy of Dramatic Art
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1. Approach to evidence-gathering

- As student representatives, our role is to help facilitate discussion between the students and the administration at RADA. We attend council and town hall meetings. We're in the room when discussions are happening and also represent students at meetings so that we can make sure the student's voices are core to the decisions that are being made.
- In terms of collecting evidence, RADA undergraduate students from 2019 until now contributed verbally in small group discussion to the information in this submission. These Focus groups were conducted with students to try and gain a clearer understanding of the student experience at RADA. All undergraduate TTA (Technical Theatre Arts) students and all first, second and third year undergraduate acting students were invited to participate in the focus groups. A majority of students from each class group attended and contributed with the exception of the third year acting students who had a smaller pool of focus group volunteers. The format consisted of open group discussion about their student experience at RADA with an invitation to contribute any additional feedback via email.
- Additional sources include surveys of students. TTA students complete a survey after each learning rotation and Acting students complete assessment surveys several times throughout the year. This submission incorporates feedback from these surveys and also includes responses from the NSS (National Student Survey).
- RADA Student and Academic Services assisted in connecting with students from the 2018/19 year who have already graduated and also provided administrative support for booking meeting rooms and times for focus group interviews. They also assisted in creating the transcript for the audio files, however, as you will hear, all evidence presented in this submission is true to source content and RADA did not unduly influence any of it for this submission.

2. Student experience

Focus group meetings were conducted during the Autumn 2022 term. The purpose of these meetings was to get a snapshot of the student experience at RADA from the viewpoint of all of the undergraduate students. We did examine the 2021/2022 NSS results as a reference and were curious about focusing our questions to obtain a more thorough look into the places that RADA fell below benchmark. Since RADA is quite a small institution with only two main undergraduate programs, it was possible to canvas the undergraduate student body from the acting and TTA programs in just four meetings. The interviews were recorded and edited into this student submission. Although we could not include all of the feedback due to the time limit of the Student Submission guidelines, we included the main points that were raised and kept the full interviews on file to share with Student and Academic Services. Please listen to the audio file and see the accompanying transcript below:

1. How do you feel the student voice is heard at RADA? So, like, do you think the staff value student's voice and opinions, do you feel that the school takes student feedback into account? Do you feel like your voice is heard?
 - I do.
 - Yeah.
 - And it's done quite quickly isn't it?
 - I actually think that the students are given a voice and the way that as it stands the faculty are so willing to hear the voice of the students goes above and beyond what could, what a lot of places are like and how far they need to be. Like I think they make a big effort to make sure we feel that we're able to have a voice and communication with us. And I think that if there were something to improve it would just be, making sure it's always a two way

dialogue that's like a continuous conversation rather than just a one off opportunity to say something. But I think it's kind of amazing how much they care.

- We certainly have a lot of opportunities to speak if we needed to or if we wanted to feed back. Um it doesn't feel like that is shut off. If you have something to say there is plenty of opportunity, even in a short period of time, there is plenty of opportunity for us to say how we feel about things or yeah.
- I also feel like what adds to that is the student to teacher ratio. And how I feel seen and known by almost every member of staff because it's probably like, two to one. And I don't think you get that anywhere else.
- I think on a student to teacher connection it is very... I feel like I can talk to teachers quite well personally. And tell them how you're feeling about something and they'll take that into account with um with how they progress even if it's not specifically stated which is quite nice. In terms of on a larger scale, communication with the rest of RADA sometimes things are a bit tricky especially with the Town Hall that was mentioned there was a time where a few things were pointed out that kind of should have been workshopped early on like very simple things in some situations. But I think there are improvements and I just, it's nice to see that there are improvements happening rather than it just being said "oh yeah we'll deal with that" and then nothing happens.
- I would say that there's, not only are they listening to the student voice as a collective but they're really taking into account the individual as they hear that. It's like that student's voice that they're engaging with and responding to. And like, and committed to. Especially like you said, it could be these one off conversations, but I've also had experiences of those conversations lasting and being followed up on and... yeah. It's above and beyond any other education I've had in the past.
- I also think the student rep system is very good. It's nice to have two people in your year that you can talk to and you feel comfortable to say "oh, this" and to know that they will take you seriously and will be able to pass anything that you feel like, I think that's a good system.
- Especially for things that are, like, training related, I think they are, in my experience, they're easy to speak to. Sometimes those changes or the reception of those take time. I feel like they are willing to listen and things that are quick or like easy to change, they will act on a lot of the time.
- I think that in the past, if something required going up the chain from like the direct department that you work in to something that's more of a RADA wide issue or more of a kind of systemic thing, like last year there would be a lot of like try to go up the chain for something that really, really mattered and being maybe like heard and validated in the moment but not seeing it actioned and not seeing it actioned etc. etc. and so I think that there's like definitely an effort and I think it's improving and I think we're on a really good track right now and I think is setting us up really well to kind of open that up and make it so that like the things that need to change can change. But I think it's really strong at a department level in some departments at least, I can only really speak for mine. Um, but like on an academy wide basis I think it's been a bit tough in the past and is I think hopefully slowly getting better. I'm not sure if other people agree with that.
- There's definitely, it feels like there are all those things in place. I don't think they're always given the time that they should. Um, and I think there should be more encouragement for people to engage with that system rather than, I think sometimes people have certain issues that they immediately go straight somebody higher up, when actually if there was more structure and more time given to the student reps I think that things could be passed up and discussed in a kind of more hierarchical way and actually be more successful than just one individual student saying "this is a problem for me" when actually it's quite often a problem that everyone has.
- I think as first years, we kind of obviously have this contrast between the two years 'cause we've only been here this year. But in my perspective from what we've had, we've already had loads of opportunities to speak up. And we're constantly being told "go to the student

reps if you have anything to say” or, always says his door’s always open if we want to have a conversation. So it’s always there if we actually have anything to say. ‘Cause also we’re not in departments and such, so we don’t have that with our tutors yet. So it’s just kind of very wide for us but the opportunities always there.

2. What do you think about the resources and support services that you have access to as a student at RADA?
 - I feel like it’s nice that there’s support systems in place but I think especially with the new wellbeing head being put into place I think it’s important that what RADA plans to do that we’re included in that journey and we’re – they communicate with us and where that goes next because at the moment since it’s kind of being rebuilt in a sense it’s difficult to know what it means and what it stands for so just being more included in how it will help us and how we can be a part of that would be nice.
 - I think all the equipment and stuff like, like there’s no problem with it, like everything, there seems to be just a lot of everything everywhere. So yeah, I don’t think there’s much else to say on that.
 - Yeah, I think the access to different types of equipment and stuff that we have as students in a small institution is kind of bonkers. There’s so much and that’s great. And that shouldn’t change.
 - I think as well on resources the first week of term we got given so much information and we were all like deer stuck in headlights that weekend. I still think a lot of information has been lost with what we’ve got access to, who we need to email, who this this this person. We’re trying to get a list together of certain people who you need to contact if there’s things happen. But I think it might be nice to have like another workshop on how to use things around the school, like the computers some of them don’t work which is really frustrating sometimes. So it might be useful to have a refresh of information what we’ve got given the first week, ‘cause I think there’s things that we’re not being told about like we can use King’s Cross Library [King’s College], I don’t know if anybody knows that. Like we’ve got access to all these things but we’ve forgotten about it because it was first day
 - Personally I would say that the online resources are – I’m very impressed that we have access to Digital Theatre. And I have to say that’s brilliant. But, um, I’m a little bit not very impressed with, like, the printing or the computers, or let’s say the canteen, like certain things in the canteen, but I’m very impressed with the online resources that we have. That I think is fantastic.
 - I think we just need to be honest, like we just need, like, millions of pounds in renovations and like investment in like the infrastructure of like our computers. We have like maybe, what, six? Six in total? Three? And like, they’re incredibly slow. Even like the new ones are still slow, just like having up to date technology, um really fast wifi, we don’t have any of these things. Also like we, it would be great to have, like either projectors, or like the plasma screen TVs to like show things on it, but they actually work. Cause the majority of the time you’re spending half an hour simply starting the computer up. And we’re all creatives and we all work, like, visually, and it would be really nice to like, you know how the speed of a MacBook is, like “oh, I’m googling it now, oh look here’s a photo of it” versus like... we have to sign in... and then we have to wait... it’s just incredibly long.
 - From a different side of support, uh disability allowance, uh, I came in not really thinking I would go for it and then I’ve been approached multiple times and it then was a really easy process to do which I didn’t realize. They were really supportive for that.
 - I like the teachers a lot.
 - Yeah, I like the people. It’s really nice being in a small environment like there’s no one at RADA who like, I mean, you know, some of the first year class we haven’t necessarily, the second years, haven’t met yet. But like, last term of last year for instance, there was no one in the academy who I don’t think that I could like go up and have a conversation with and it

wouldn't be weird. And that's like, kind of crazy thing to experience at any school and I think it's really nice.

- Yeah, also like, how many, like tutors there are compared to how many people is like, really good. 'Cause I guess it's probably different in like, lighting 'cause there's so many lighting people. But still, like, you'll be doing something and like, the amount of times I've spent in sound like, literally just alone with a tutor because there's that many people like, it's not like you're just kind of left on your own to do things until you know what to do.
- I think that the tutors. Cause I think ultimately what makes – you can have like a building, you can have like as much money in the world, you can have a reputation but like, I think what makes this place so special is the tutors and the work that they are so generous with. And I think their abilities and even like we've had quite a bit of turnover while we've been here. And I think early on there was a fear that like "Oh it all rests on this person. If this person isn't here" But I think their ability to get people who are exceptional at what they do. Cause I think to me that is – you know even if you had 7 billion dollars and every show had a hydraulic lift, if like the root of your training isn't there and like the training comes down to the individuals. You can have a document that outlines what you want to do but if you don't have the people who are generous and caring and know how to foster those spaces then you have nothing. And I think that's what RADA has.
- The access to, like, professional development, I think the people that RADA brings in are really amazing. And also being able to experience the tech course and like the production and, like, the scale of the productions and the scenes and the costumes and all of that, it's just so amazing.
- We're very lucky.

Additional input and data was collected via student survey and via email and compiled into a reference document. This came from both current students, and students that came to RADA in 2018/2019 but have since graduated. The main findings were:

- Overall, students feel that their voice is being heard, taken into account, and acted upon.
- Students were very satisfied with the quality of the courses, training and tutors.
- The main issues identified as needing support include:
 - The school's response to addressing certain feedback in a timely way.
 - More consistency within the available wellbeing support.
 - Better IT support and facilities (although students did acknowledge the financial burden necessary for renovation and implementation of these complaints.)

Also, following the focus group meetings, complaints around the available computers resulted in the addition of three refurbished computers and updated software for all units. Printer service was also improved, and students have had informal conversations about accessible these resources were and how quickly the school responded.

3. Student Outcomes

Focus groups were asked about their learning outcomes in terms of quality of training and employability post-graduation. Please listen to the audio file and see the transcript below:

How do think that your training here has helped your employability for post-graduation?

- Infinitely. Infinitely.
- 100 billion times, so yeah.
- I would say hugely. Personally.
- I agree.
- 100%
- Significantly

- I wasn't employed before this.
- And you're still not.
- And I'm still not. But I feel more confident!
- I mean, I came from Cork in Ireland and, like, to make it in the industry there is very, very difficult. And so to come here and go to one of the best drama schools and then go into the industry here is like, it's just been such a huge leap. And the training itself is like, it baffles me sometimes, like, how well-planned it is I think. Because you actually start with contemporary stuff and then you go back to Chekov and then you go back to Shakespeare and then you go back to Greek and then you're suddenly, like you're, like 2,000 years ago and then you build your way back up again to contemporary stuff and just, yeah, the way it's organized is excellent. The training itself is like, term on term I noticed a change in myself. Like physically mostly, 'cause I was, when I came in I was extremely held and tense and, like, I used to puff out my chest and now I just, like, as an actor and as a person I just feel so much more relaxed and at ease and ready for anything that can come at me, so, yeah. To be honest the training's been a dream really.
- I was just thinking about how at the moment we've been able to see the years ahead of us um do a few performances and how like that has really given us kind of perspective on where we're headed and I think in that sense I do feel, like, confident in terms of when I leave I'll be at the level that I'm seeing they're at at the moment and that the people I've seen do plays and stuff, yeah, I feel confident because I feel that that's where they're inevitably taking us so, and I feel that they're really good, so. Yeah, I feel confident in that.
- I guess I was thinking about in terms of preparation for the industry and as being a jobbing actor with jobbing actor friends I think that RADA's name does a lot of the heavy lifting. Obviously the industry is quite mercurial and all over the place but I think just the fact of being here and I suppose having that name is sort of nice. It is sort of a security blanket in a way, it's sort of a thing you can latch onto you know, forever going forward and I think that that's about the best prep, like in terms of something you can have that's like, keep you stable in the undulating waters of the industry I think that's about as good as it gets really.
- Speaking to graduates from here and comparing how they've worked in the industry since graduating in comparison to students who have graduated from other schools I feel like graduates from RADA have a far richer career in that they go into completely different varieties of work, it enables them to work as an actor without having to get a side job along the way. I was speaking to someone who has done theatre, short films, voice overs, video games, like I feel like the training here just encompasses everything so that what you have available to you to work as are far wider than people who I know who have graduated elsewhere. I feel like their opportunities are far more limited, so I feel very lucky to be here.
- I'm, like, getting more and more confident and appreciative for how first class the training is here. In terms of like, what we will experience and like, what the teachers offer us. And I can't really speak to where I'm going to be after RADA, but I'm confident that they'll give me what I need.
- Yeah, such small class sizes, I think that we're really lucky.
- And now we're experiencing like, external directors as well, I'm realizing what gifts these teachers are.
- Oh god, yeah.
- I feel like the opportunities to work on shows as early as we do, I think especially when compared to other drama schools, sort of in and around the London area, it's all theory based until third year when you work on one show and you graduate. Which I think for employability wise is great.
- I think the, and again, RADAs sort of a very student-led view, learn as much as you want to learn. I think in my department which is also lighting, I've learned so much this year already, and I think I already feel incredibly confident in my ability to go out into the world and get a job doing what I love. Which is kind of the point of RADA I guess. So yeah, it's good.
- I agree. And I'll also say, because we were in lighting first rotation, just the amount of like we were in doubt like the third week, and like second and third years would be trusting us to

do stuff which I think, not necessarily our employability rate, but like, just personally you feel more confident in what you're doing when someone else trusts you to do something which I think really helped because I'm like if these people trust me to do it than somebody else can. And I think just generally, because it's so student led you, you choose how much you put into it but also if you do want to do something, you can and you'll be trusted to do it and get help if you don't know how to do it. Which I like a lot.

- And I feel like in terms of employment, there is the training itself which will help us, but also, and this maybe ties into resources, but the ways that they help set you up and connect you with the industry in third year and, like, if you don't have an agent the way that they will support and represent you, the way that people graduate, and then like, shift paths in the industry in the way that like, even once you graduate and you decide that "Oh I want to be a movement teacher" then there's opportunities for graduates who are coming in to work with our movement teachers to study that, to continue working if they're interested in writing, who else, people who come in and be assistant directors on projects. So it feels like quite a continued investment in helping people find their path to employment in this industry both in the training they provide to get you there but also the resources. That they help facilitate that employment.
- I feel it's always really exciting to be here every day. I mean, it's hard to get up in the mornings period, but like I don't feel like, "oh my god, I actually hate coming in" but I feel like actually safer in general when I'm here. Than like, when I'm not here to be honest. Cause like, there's like a community here, there's like my friends here, there's what I've always loved, always ever wanted to do and I do it every single day. Versus like, outside, you have to deal with like, your accommodation and like, life. And like, here, I feel like magic really does like, happen like pretty much every day. And I'm very grateful for that.

In addition, practical research online into the employability of RADA acting graduates from 2019 to 2022 found that:

- 106 students have graduated from the undergraduate acting program
- 78% of these students have had professional work since graduating
- 81% of these students have agents

Technical students receive placements with professional companies throughout London and the UK as part of their education at RADA. This allows for professional, first-hand industry experience and connections at venues such as the English National Opera, Young Vic Theatre, the National Theatre, Royal Opera House, Netflix, and more.

This suggests very positive student outcomes upon graduation when going into a highly competitive industry, which is reflected in the student's beliefs about their future employment post-graduation.