

Access Policy

Name of museum:	The Royal Academy of Arts
Name of governing body:	The Council of the Royal Academy of Arts
Date of first approval:	29 April 2014
Date of review:	3 December 2019
Date of next review:	30 November 2021 (or as required)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Royal Academy of Arts (RA) is committed to ensuring and encouraging access for everyone, regardless of ability, age, gender, cultural or social background, sexual orientation, faith, location or wealth. This is achieved by minimising or removing the barriers that can prevent people from engaging with the building, collections, exhibitions, website, social media channels, programmes and staff.
- 1.2 This is accomplished within the limitations of the building and other resources, to offer the broadest, richest and most engaging access for all users. The RA recognises that access is a complex issue that must be addressed through the actions of the organisation as a whole, and that accessible provisions have much wider benefit to people generally, not just those with specific access requirements. Access to the Collection is improved by addressing issues identified in audience reports and visitor surveys.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy is to set out the RA's commitment to maximising access and to identify the ways in which we achieve this across the organisation.

2. Visitor Services and User Needs

- 2.1 This policy covers provision at the RA, through our website and other online activities, and in other venues where we deliver outreach programmes, eg. educational institutions and community venues. This policy relates to access by users and does not cover access in relation to staff, volunteers, freelancers or contractors.

3. Definition of terms

- 3.1 When we refer to access we mean the opportunity to engage with our buildings, collection, exhibitions, interpretive resources and activities. There are a number of key barriers to access:
 - **Physical/sensory** – e.g. people with physical, hearing or visual impairments and neurodiverse people may not be able to access the RA, website, social media channels or learning programmes
 - **Intellectual** – e.g. some may find the RA too specialist in its approach to subjects and how they are presented; have learning disabilities or have neurodiverse conditions which affect their ability to engage with the RA
 - **Attitudinal** – e.g. some people may lack awareness of the RA or lack interest or confidence in the RA, its displays/exhibitions, programmes and facilities
 - **Cultural** – e.g. some people may feel that the RA is not relevant to them and does not reflect their cultural or social heritage, or their interests

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- **Economic** – e.g. some people may not be able to afford to visit the RA or take part in its programmes
- **Geographic** – e.g. some people will live too far away to visit the RA or have access requirements that prohibit them from physically visiting the RA.

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1 The Secretary & Chief Executive and members of the Executive Team are responsible for ensuring that the RA meets its obligations under the Equality Act (2010) by doing everything reasonably possible to make the RA accessible to the widest range of people.
- 4.2 Heads of department are responsible for ensuring that the work of their colleagues takes account of the need to maximise access by addressing the barriers outlined above.
- 4.3 Every member of staff involved in developing, delivering or maintaining spaces, activities, resources and other services for our users is responsible for making them as accessible as possible.

5. Policy

- 5.1 The RA is committed to maximising access by upholding the statutory requirements of the Equality Act (2010) by taking reasonable steps to ensure that policies, practices and procedures do not discriminate against disabled people; by providing appropriate facilities and services which enable disabled people to use the RA. The RA is committed to maximising access by, for example:

Physical access

- ensuring that level access is provided to all public spaces
- providing parking spaces for blue badge holders
- ensuring that all galleries, exhibitions (including individual exhibits), learning spaces, cafés/restaurants, shops, cloakrooms, toilets and information desks are accessible to wheelchair users
- providing manual wheelchairs for use on-site
- providing permanent and portable seating throughout the building and in Collection displays and exhibition spaces
- providing wheelchair accessible spaces in our Lecture Theatre
- offering on request volunteer assistance for wheelchair users

Sensory access

- providing front-of-house staff who have the awareness and confidence to successfully communicate with and provide appropriate information to people with visual or hearing impairments or neurodiverse visitors
- ensuring visitors can contact us via phone or email
- ensuring that our Collection displays and exhibition spaces have large print guides that include all informational and interpretive text throughout and ensuring these are available to download from our website
- ensuring that exhibition audio guides contain audio described content and that printed transcripts are available
- where possible ensuring that video-based exhibits have subtitles if they use the spoken word
- providing where possible sensory maps of the building and producing sensory maps and visual stories for key exhibitions
- providing regular audio described and BSL Collection and exhibition tours

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- offering on request audio described tours
- providing relaxed openings of key exhibitions for neuro-diverse visitors and those on the autistic spectrum ensuring that our website meets the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) standard as far as possible

Intellectual access

- providing effective wayfinding signage and maps
- ensuring that we interpret displays and exhibitions through gallery guides, extended labels, large print labels, audio guides, catalogues and live interpretation
- ensuring that the content and delivery of our Learning programmes are tailored to the learning needs of their audiences
- providing a tailored programme for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- providing a tailored programme for young people with SEND and their families
- providing relaxed exhibition openings of our exhibitions for neuro-diverse visitors and those on the autistic spectrum
- providing sensory maps of our building and for key Collection displays and exhibitions
- providing regular sessions for people experiencing dementia

Attitudinal access

- ensuring that we promote and present the RA as a welcoming and inclusive destination
- ensuring comprehensive information about our access facilities, resources and programmes is easily available on our website
- ensuring that visitors are made to feel welcome on arrival and are put at their ease
- ensuring there is a dedicated email and phone line for people enquiring about our accessible facilities, resources and programmes
creating environments and activities in which people can feel comfortable, valued and able to learn at their own pace and level e.g. free creative workshops for adults experiencing homelessness

Cultural access

- making the RA and its programmes as relevant as possible to our culturally and socially diverse society

Economic access

- ensuring free access to our Collection Gallery and displays and ensuring we are open to the public seven days a week
- offering free access by appointment, the Library is open to researchers and provides physical access to the Modern, Historic and Special Book Collections, Archive, Works on Paper, Photographs and Audio-Visual Collections
- where charges apply, offering concessions where possible (while ensuring the museum's financial sustainability) e.g. for jobseekers, those receiving income support, disabled visitors and students offering regular free volunteer-led talks and tours of the Collection Gallery and displays
- frequent free taster talks and Curator's talks are given by Learning and Collection staff. Where resources allow free access is given, through an appointment with the Collections Managers, Librarian or Archivist, to objects not on display from the Collection (please see access procedure for the Collections Store).
- offering a range of free facilitated learning activities for different key audience groups, e.g. families, young people, students, teachers, disabled visitors and community groups

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Geographic access

- providing a rich online experience that ensures variety and choice
- providing online resources that ensure opportunities for a range of people to engage with the RA's art, artists and heritage e.g. student, teacher and family focused interpretive resources providing a free to use, fully searchable database for works of art, books and archives via the RA Collections Website (compliant with WAI accessibility standards)
- the RA is committed to lending works from the Collection to museums and galleries both nationally and internationally. This is subject to the RA Collections Care and Conservation Policy (2019) and Loans Policies (2019). Where resources allow the RA aims to tour exhibitions from the Collection in order to engage new audiences.

6. Related policies, legislation and guidance

- 6.1 The Equality Act (2010) prohibits unfair treatment and promotes equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. The Act replaced previous anti-discrimination laws and covers nine protected characteristics which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity/paternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Act prohibits unfair treatment when providing goods, facilities and services, when holding public functions, in the management of premises, and in education.
- 6.2 The Arts Council's 'Building Access: A Good practice guide for arts and cultural organisations' provides a useful overview of the statutory context for access and guidelines of how to plan and implement an access strategy – see artscouncil.org.uk/publication/building-access.
- 6.3 The Museums Association's access guidelines provide a useful overview of museums' responsibilities to maximise access in the broadest sense – see museumsassociation.org/policy/guidelines.

7. Queries

- 7.1 Enquiries about this policy should be directed to the Head of Families, Access and Schools.