

LIPA

THE LIVERPOOL INSTITUTE
FOR PERFORMING ARTS

Frequently Asked Questions

LIPA's audition fee waivers and travel grants for 2021 entry

Q. Why does LIPA offer audition fee waivers and travel grants?

A. This is one of our initiatives to help widen access to LIPA as described in our five year access and participation plan. We hold up to 60 audition/interview events per year at LIPA and usually invite over 3,000 people to attend. In keeping with many other UK Performing Arts institutions, we charge an audition fee for our Acting and Dance courses. There is no fee for attending a Music audition or interview event for one of our other courses. However, there are travel costs associated with attending either an audition or interview event here. As part of our access and participation plan, we aim to encourage more UK applicants who come from areas where participation in Higher Education is traditionally low to attend our auditions and interview events. Often these applicants will come from lower income backgrounds and the audition fee and cost of travelling to LIPA could be putting them off doing so. Our system means we can automatically offer an audition fee waiver and/or travel grant to UK applicants from low participation neighbourhoods in Higher Education.

Q. How does LIPA decide who to offer the audition fee waivers and travel grants to?

A. We interrogate an independent, external database (known as POLAR4) to identify to whom we should offer the audition fee waivers and travel grants. Essentially, this database identifies applicants from areas by postcode where there is low participation in Higher Education. It includes postcodes for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Any applicant, who we wish to invite to an audition or interview, whose home postcode on their UCAS form falls within the designated postcode areas will be automatically identified to us on our internal student records system. This means we can offer those applicants invited to an audition (for which we usually charge a fee) a fee waiver and travel grant, and to those invited to an interview or a music audition (for which we don't usually charge a fee) a travel grant.

Q. How are the travel grants calculated?

A. We offer six travel grants based on the shortest road distance between your UK home postcode and LIPA's postcode.

People who live up to five miles distance from LIPA are offered a £4 travel grant.

People who live at a distance from LIPA of between 5 miles and 15 miles are offered £5.

People who live at a distance from LIPA of between 16 miles and 50 miles are offered £10.

People who live at a distance from LIPA of between 51 miles and 100 miles are offered £20.

People who live at a distance from LIPA of between 101 miles and 199 miles are offered £40.

People who live at a distance from LIPA of 200 miles or over are offered £60.

To calculate distances, we use the miles given by Google Maps that represent the shortest road distance as the distance to calculate the travel grant. The grants may not cover your total costs for travelling to and from LIPA but we hope that our contribution towards your costs will be of some help.

Q. How do I claim my travel grant?

A. Because we are able to identify the people that should be entitled to the travel grants through our student records system, we tell students when we are inviting them to the

audition or interview how much they are entitled to and ask them to complete a “travel grant reimbursement form”. Students must bring the form with them to the audition/interview event and we will make the reimbursement by BACS directly to the student’s bank account. We are unable to make payment to applicants who fail to return to us the completed “travel grant reimbursement form” at registration for the audition/interview event. There is no need for you to provide train, bus or petrol receipts.

Q. What if my travel costs me more than the amount LIPA is providing me for the travel grant?

A. We are only able to reimburse you with the amounts set out above. We cannot pay you more than the travel grant, so you may still need to find the remaining travel costs. We hope that our contribution towards your costs will be of some help.

Q. If I come from a low income household but my house isn’t located in a qualifying postcode, will I be able to claim an audition fee waiver or travel grant?

A. Unfortunately, we won’t be able to provide audition fee waivers or travel grants to applicants in these circumstances during 2020/21. This is because we are not using means-testing as the basis of providing the audition fee waivers or travel grants. We decided not to use means-testing to calculate entitlements for audition fee waivers and travel grants because our experience has taught us that we need to ask numerous detailed questions about an applicant’s financial circumstances and the financial circumstances of their parents/guardians. This then needs to be supported by evidence to ensure we have a fair means-testing process.

This creates two issues:

- For applicants, the task of filling in this paperwork and supplying the evidence can be time-consuming. This would be at the time that you are preparing yourself for the actual audition or interview. Some people may also go through the exercise only to find that they are not eligible.
- Administering a means-tested process would be time-consuming for us, which results in us spending more on administration and reducing the funds that we have available to give to applicants.

This was not a decision that we took lightly but as we hope you appreciate that this has been a question of balancing a number of factors:

- What is fair? We think our methodology using POLAR, although not perfect, is fair. It’s independent of us and is an automated process, so less liable to human error and does not require us to make complex judgements about an individual’s financial circumstances.
- Is this a straightforward process for the applicant? We think yes it is because we are not asking you to take on extra work. The last thing we want is to have a process in place for applying for the audition fee or travel grant that requires a lot of time from the applicant. We think that would give people another reason for deciding not to attend. In trying to remove a barrier, we might be creating a new one. To ensure transparency and fairness when using means-testing, we have to ask a lot of questions about financial circumstances and to gain supporting evidence.
- Is this an efficient system for us? We think yes it is because there is less time needed in administering this system so we can put more of the actual resources available to us towards fee waivers and travel grants.

Finally, HESA (the Higher Education Statistics Agency) uses POLAR as a key performance indicator to evaluate widening access to Higher Education in general.

Q. I'd like to give LIPA feedback on the audition fee waivers and travel grants, how do I do that?

A. All feedback is welcome as it may help us to refine or even rethink our process for the following year. So please send any comments about the system to feeandtravelgrants@lipa.ac.uk.

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