

**ROYAL CENTRAL**  
SCHOOL OF SPEECH & DRAMA  

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UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

**ACADEMIC STRATEGY 2016-2021**

**Introduction**

Placing students at the centre of its work, Central develops practitioners and researchers who shape the future of theatre and performance across the UK and beyond. We identify, inspire and equip cultural leaders to develop the future of our theatre industries. By creating new challenges in our training environments, and establishing ourselves as world-leading centre for performance research excellence, we aspire to foster a climate of creativity, artistry and innovation.

This Strategy sets out the ways in which we aim to do this over the next five years. It provides

- focus for developmental thinking and efforts,
- context for strategic resource planning,
- a compass for prioritisation in encountering opportunity and threat.

It comprises a Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Plan and a Research Plan, which set out aims and objectives. The convergence of research and teaching as interrelated activities within a single eco-system of specialist knowledge production, exchange, innovation and impact, is a feature of each of these plans and of the strategy as a whole. The Directors of Research and Learning, Teaching and the Student Experience will operationalise these plans by instigating and monitoring a set of actions for the next 12-24 months. The plans are a 'live' process and will be reviewed at Research and Ethics and Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committees. The strategy as a whole will be reviewed by Academic Board.

## **Learning, Teaching and Student Experience plan 2016-2021**

*Central aims to train and educate its students to high levels of ability, through specialist courses that prepare them to shape the theatre and performance of tomorrow.*

**Aim 1: We aim to develop practitioners and researchers who shape the future of theatre and performance across the UK and internationally, through delivering a world-leading, innovative and specialist curriculum**

Objective 1: Ensure the curriculum engages at the forefront of changing specialist disciplinary practices, needs, and cultural contexts

Objective 2: Identify and develop common skills, approaches and ethos at the intersections that connect Central's specialist courses (e.g. collaboration, technology enhanced learning, creative or social entrepreneurialism and Innovation).

Objective 3: Develop new assessment practices along with better understanding of criteria, processes and benefits of assessment as part of specialist training.

**Aim 2: We aim to ensure that our teaching and learning is recognised as world-leading by stakeholders and peers.**

Objective 1: Develop infrastructural systems and recognition practices for development of excellent teachers and for the dissemination of world-leading teaching practices (e.g. teaching sabbatical and award schemes to cultivate innovation).

Objective 2: Engage students in all aspects of development and enhancement.

Objective 3: Improve participation and success rates for underrepresented groups, as well as students in need of learning support

**Aim 3: We aim to cultivate Central's engagement with industry and distinctive identity as a conservatoire.**

Objective 1: Expand Central's agency as a enabler of innovation and development through placements, joint projects, apprenticeships and industry events.

Objective 2: Develop new models of collaborating with the arts sector including the range of ways that students and staff can engage with leading global figures.

**Aim 4: We aim to provide a technical and support environment fit for a world-leading institution.**

Objective 1: Develop a technical and learning resource strategy to support innovation and artistic experimentation across the curriculum.

Objective 2: Ensure high-quality organisation and management of curriculum delivery and learning support, developing and enhancing systems and approaches where necessary

Objective 3: Improve the student experience through better curriculum resource-planning and monitoring, and better coordination between departments in documented processes of validation and enhancement.

## **Research plan 2016-2021**

*Research@Central is characterised by diversity and internationalism, and informed by the industry connections of staff, bridging the creative sector and the academy, and producing a range of outputs relating to theatre and performance practices and practice research.*

**Aim 1: We aim to undertake and disseminate research of the highest quality, across a range of forms within academic contexts and with a reach to local, national and international communities.**

Objective: By 2021 to have increased the quantity and quality of our research outputs and collaborations with outside partners in order to promote and extend the reach of our work.

**Aim 2: We aim to unite creativity and intellectual enquiry with professional practices and radical innovation.**

Objective: By 2021 to have demonstrably promoted collaboration, knowledge exchange and greater critical enquiry for practitioner and researcher drawing on different resources and methodologies.

**Aim 3: We aim to investigate (through exploratory, innovative practice and scholarship) theatre and its ongoing relevance to, and impact on, culture and society.**

Objective: To have established Central as a focal point for national and international debate and the development of radical discourse promoting the arts through digital and live engagements.

**Aim 4: We aim to develop an ethos that combines theoretical pursuits with an understanding of the intellectual needs and aspirations of contemporary professional practice – through experiment, innovation and critical enquiry.**

Objective: To foster and promote a research culture in which all members of the Central community can exchange ideas in theory and practice in an open and supportive environment that draws on industry expertise and input as well as the wider scholarly field.

**Aim 5: We aim to provide ethical leadership to the discipline across areas of advocacy, legacy and innovation.**

Objective: To demonstrate the highest standard of ethical research and practice in our discipline upon which all members of our community can rely.

**Aim 6: We aim to promote research-led and research-informed teaching.**

Objective: To enrich curriculum development and the student experience with research-led teaching that disseminates innovation, critical thinking and creativity in line with the institution's mission statement.

**Aim 7: We aim to offer graduate training of the highest order, educating future generations of theatre researchers and innovative practitioners.**

Objective: To ensure that our PhD training is rigorous and professional, drawing on staff expertise and visiting speakers to guide and support postgraduate students in producing original, significant and robust doctoral work.