

WaterBear Access and Participation Statement

Last Reviewed: October 2025

Next Review Date: October 2026

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Approved by: COO & CEO

Oversight: SMT / Access & Participation Committee

1. Purpose

This statement sets out how WaterBear widens access to, supports success on, and enables progression from higher education in music.

2. Background & Commitment

WaterBear is a specialist music college, created for musicians by musicians. As a partner of Falmouth University, we deliver BA (Hons) and Master's degrees designed to prepare students for sustainable careers in today's music industry.

Our ethos drives our commitment to widening participation. We aim to remove barriers to study, nurture diverse voices, and ensure that music education is accessible, inspiring, and industry-connected for all.

A core part of this commitment is our **Online Department**, developed to expand choice and access for students who cannot relocate. This provision particularly supports mature learners with family or work commitments, and students with neurodiverse needs who prefer to study outside traditional environments. It is a strategic strand of our widening participation work and continues to receive ongoing investment.

3. Our Activity

Who We Work With

We work with grassroots music organisations including, but not limited to, **AudioActive** and **SupaJam**. We are continually expanding this network, reaching out to new partners each year to broaden access and opportunity for under-represented groups. Our

partnerships extend to schools, colleges, community groups, employers, and wider industry networks.

Access & Outreach

We:

- Deliver targeted outreach with partners to widen participation.
- Encourage applications from under-represented groups.
- Provide flexible entry routes, including recognition of prior experience.
- Offer bursaries and scholarships to help reduce financial barriers.

Admissions & Transition

From first contact, we aim to support students effectively:

- **Pre-enrolment interviews** help applicants understand course expectations and support available.
- A **structured induction** introduces academic skills, wellbeing services, and financial guidance.
- Ongoing **study skills support** helps students adapt to higher education.

Student Success

We are committed to ensuring all students can thrive:

- **Blended learning** (live and recorded sessions) enables flexible engagement and review of content.
- **Inclusive curriculum design** embeds diverse voices and decolonisation in teaching and assessment.
- **Support services** include personal tutors, mentoring, and wellbeing provision.
- **Student voice** is embedded through course representatives, forums, surveys, and “You Said, We Did.” Alumni are also consulted as part of course validation and review processes.

Progression

Our courses are designed with the industry, for the industry. Degrees are validated to promote employability and prepare students for careers in the music sector. We provide:

- A dedicated **Careers and Industry department** supporting students from day one.
- **Live projects, masterclasses, internships, and placements** with industry partners.
- An **alumni mentoring network** connecting graduates with current students.
- Employability embedded across all modules, ensuring students develop transferable skills alongside their creative practice.

4. Continuous Review

This statement is reviewed annually through WaterBear's quality assurance cycle, overseen by the Director of University Partnership and reviewed by the Senior Management Team and Access & Participation Committee.

The review considers:

- Differential outcomes between student groups.
- Student feedback and representation at governance level.
- The impact of access and participation interventions.

Quality and standards are externally assured through:

- Validation and annual monitoring with Falmouth University.
- Oversight from at least six external examiners across our programmes.
- Engagement with national quality assurance processes, including external review and moderation.

This Access and Participation Statement is published on the policies section of the WaterBear website (<https://waterbear.org.uk/policies/>). The direct link to the policy is here: <https://waterbear.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/WaterBear-Access-and-Participation-Statement-2025.pdf>