

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:	7 December 2021
Date of next review:	30 November 2023 (or as required)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Royal Academy of Arts (RA) is committed to becoming a truly inclusive place for our visitors. We believe that everyone should be able share in and contribute to the RA experience, free from bias or discrimination based on personal characteristics such as age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, marital and civil partnership, or pregnancy. This is achieved by minimising or removing the barriers that can prevent people from engaging with our staff, building, Collection, exhibitions, digital platforms, and activities.
- 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 e-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 activities, eg. educational institutions and community venues. This policy relates to access by visitors 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’s exhibitions and displays, activities, website or social media channels
 - **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, activities and facilities
 - **Economic** – e.g. some people may not be able to afford to visit the RA or take part in its programmes

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- **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

Sensory access

- ensuring visitor experience staff have the awareness and confidence to successfully communicate with and provide appropriate information to neurodiverse visitors and visitors with sensory impairments
- 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 a sensory map of the building and, where possible, producing appropriate guides and resources for neurodiverse visitors
- where possible providing activities designed to welcome neurodiverse visitors and visitors with sensory impairments
- ensuring that our website meets the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) standard as far as possible

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Intellectual access

- providing effective wayfinding signage and maps
- ensuring that we offer a range of interpretation and ways that visitors can engage with our displays and exhibitions

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 activities are easily available on our website
- ensuring there is a dedicated email and phone line for people enquiring about our accessible facilities, resources, and activities

Economic access

- ensuring free access to our Collection Gallery and displays and ensuring we are open to the public six 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
- ensuring written and phone enquiries are answered for those who are unable to visit the Library in person
- 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
- where resources allow free access is given, through an appointment with the Curators, Librarian or Archivist, to objects not on display from the Collection (please see access procedure for the Collections Store)
- offering a range of free learning activities

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. providing a free to use, fully searchable database for works of art, books and archives via the RA Collections website
- 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 (2021) and Loans Out Policy (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

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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