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# Discretionary Awards in Dance and Drama

A survey of local education authorities

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**Caroline Sharp  
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Lesley Kendall**

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# DISCRETIONARY AWARDS IN DANCE AND DRAMA

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## Foreword

In 1994, the Gulbenkian Foundation published the report of a wide-ranging study of discretionary award provision (Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 1994a and b). The serious concerns then expressed about the availability of financial support for students through the discretionary awards system have not lessened with the passing of time. Overall expenditure on discretionary awards by LEAs in England and Wales has continued to fall in real terms, and is now some 41 per cent below its 1990/1 level.

The evidence shows that the situation has deteriorated overall, but it is perceived to have worsened from an already vulnerable position for some students of performing arts. Whereas it is still the case that mandatory awards are available to music students, the support of post-school students of dance, drama and stage management depends almost entirely on the vagaries of discretionary award provision. The situation is so unsatisfactory that the sponsors of this study (under the leadership of the Gulbenkian Foundation) set out to establish the current position on a sound statistical basis, and to buttress their findings with relevant qualitative information. The National Foundation for Educational Research (which also conducted the previous study) was commissioned to undertake the necessary research. This report is the result of their work.

The situation is at least as bad as had been feared. Twenty-eight per cent of all LEAs have a declared policy of giving **no** support to students of dance and drama. Between 1994/5 and 1995/6, the two years covered by this study, the number of students receiving such awards fell by 12 per cent. Of those LEAs which did make awards in this field, less than half met the full cost of college fees and of maintenance at the standard (i.e. mandatory award) level. There is evidence that potential students are being discouraged from applying for support both because they perceive that they have little chance of success, and because of their concern that if they are successful they themselves will have to bear the cost of a substantial part of their fees.

It is as true in 1996 as it was two years ago that potential students' prospects of gaining discretionary awards support depend on where they happen to live: but those prospects are now worse than they then were. The disparities of provision continue: and for those wanting to follow careers in dance and drama the position is even worse than it is for such students as a whole.

There have been intermittent, if vague, indications that some attempt might be made to solve the particular problems of student support in the performing arts, or – just possibly – the problems of post-school student support as a whole: but there has been no action. Until these problems are addressed, and a serious attempt is made to resolve them, the future development of post-school education as a whole will be handicapped, and potential students of dance and drama in particular will become progressively more disadvantaged.

John Bevan  
*Chairman of Project Steering Group*



## 1. Introduction

Most students wishing to undertake professional training in art or music have access to mandatory grants, which cover the course fees and contribute towards the students' living expenses. But this is not the case for the majority of dance and drama students, who rely on the system of discretionary awards to support them in their professional training. Discretionary awards are, as the name suggests, given at the discretion of the local education authority (LEA). It has been suggested that funding constraints are affecting the ability of LEAs to make discretionary awards. The sponsors of this research were particularly concerned about the position of students applying for discretionary awards for dance and drama. The purpose of the research was to find out how far LEAs are able to make such awards; to establish the trends in funding over the past few years; and to discover what conditions are imposed on students applying for grants to pursue a professional course in drama, stage management and dance.

## 2. Main findings

This report is based on a survey of all English and Welsh LEAs in February 1996. Responses were received from 109 (93 per cent) authorities, although not all were able to provide complete information.

- Over a quarter of the 109 LEAs (28 per cent) had a policy of not granting any discretionary awards for drama, stage management or dance courses (although a few such awards had been granted on appeal).
- In authorities which did give awards for dance and drama, the number granted ranged from one to 40 per authority.
- Less than half of the LEAs which made dance and drama awards gave the full amount for course fees and paid student maintenance at the mandatory rate.
- Of the 85 LEAs providing full details on expenditure and student numbers, 15 gave no discretionary awards at all for dance and drama courses in either 1994/5 or 1995/6.
- Between 1994/5 and 1995/6, the number of students receiving dance and drama awards fell by 12 per cent. Total expenditure fell by 11 per cent in cash terms and 13 per cent in real terms (i.e. taking account of inflation) during this period.
- In 1995/6 the average value of each dance and drama award was £5,689 (for fees and maintenance combined). This represented an increase of one per cent in cash terms but a cut of one per cent in real terms, compared with the previous year.
- Information from the DFEE shows that expenditure on all discretionary awards has declined recently, following an increase in 1991/2. English and Welsh LEAs gave a total of around £132 million in discretionary awards in 1994/5, a decline of 41 per cent in real terms since 1990/1.
- The number of students receiving all types of discretionary awards rose steadily from 1990/1 until 1993/4, and then declined in 1994/5.

- Between 1990/1 and 1994/5, the number of discretionary awards granted increased while expenditure declined. This means that the average cash value of discretionary awards has reduced considerably (from £1,168 in 1990/1 to £702 in 1994/5), a drop of 48 per cent in real terms.
- Over a third of LEAs experienced a decrease in applications for dance and drama awards in the past five years. A number of Awards Officers believed that students were discouraged from applying because students perceived they had very little chance of obtaining an award.
- Most authorities granting dance and drama awards stipulated that courses must be accredited by the Council for Dance Education and Training or the National Council for Drama Training. Many LEAs also required applicants to attend an LEA audition/interview.
- Comments from Awards Officers highlighted the relatively high cost of dance and drama courses; and some identified the need for an alternative approach to the funding of dance and drama training in future.

These research findings confirm that a student's chance of gaining a discretionary award is highly dependent on where he or she happens to live, and suggest that the current funding system is unable to provide an adequate system of support to meet the training needs of young people wishing to pursue careers in dance and drama.

### 3. Research methods

The research findings are based on a questionnaire survey of Senior Awards Officers in English and Welsh LEAs. The questionnaires contained both 'closed' questions, where Officers were asked to insert a number or respond to a set of pre-determined statements; and 'open-ended' questions, where Officers were asked to write an appropriate comment.

In January 1996 the questionnaires were sent to Senior Awards Officers in 117 LEAs. The sample comprised all LEAs in England and Wales apart from three small island authorities (Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man). Officers were asked to respond by 19 February. Those who had not done so were contacted by telephone and encouraged to respond, even if they could only provide partial information.

Responses were eventually received from 109 LEAs (93 per cent). One additional response was received too late to be included. Officers in the remaining seven LEAs declined to take part because of the difficulty of accessing information and the competing demands on their time. The very high response rate was aided by a circular from the Council of Local Education Authorities (CLEA, 1996) which encouraged all LEAs to assist with the research. The researchers are most grateful to all the Awards Officers who gave their time to respond to the questionnaires, and to CLEA for its encouragement.

## 4. Terminology

The Education Act 1962 (GB. STATUTES, 1962) allows for two main types of award for students over the age of 16 who wish to study a course in further education (FE) or higher education (HE): mandatory and discretionary awards.

*Mandatory awards* are available to students attending designated courses which are mainly full-time and at public sector institutions leading to first degree, Higher National Diploma or initial teacher training qualifications. Students must also fulfil certain personal criteria to be eligible for an award. Essentially, these are that they must have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom for three years before the course begins, for purposes other than full-time education; and must not have already received public funding for a previous course of higher education. The mandatory system is administered by LEAs but all amounts paid are fully recoverable from central government.

*Discretionary awards* are subject to local decision-making. LEAs set their own policies regarding personal eligibility, types of course and subjects supported. However, following two court actions in 1994 from students who had unsuccessfully applied for discretionary awards, LEAs must be careful to avoid 'fettering their discretion' (e.g. by refusing to contemplate any exceptions to their stated policy). In practice, this means that LEAs should consider all applications eligible under the 1962 Act, and should have a functioning appeals procedure available to any students who are refused funding. Discretionary awards are paid entirely out of the LEAs' budgets, with no specific reimbursement from central government. There are two categories of discretionary awards.

*Section 1(6) awards* are available to students who are accepted on a designated course but who do not fulfil the criteria for personal eligibility for a mandatory award. Such awards must be made at full mandatory rates.

*Section 2 awards* are available to students who have a place on a non-designated course. There are a variety of non-designated courses available in both the further and higher education sectors. Examples include A-levels; National Vocational Qualifications (levels 1-3); City and Guilds courses; access or conversion courses; and most postgraduate courses; as well as professional dance and drama courses at private colleges. Section 2 awards may be given in full or at a partial rate, in support of tuition fees and/or maintenance. It was this category of awards that was the focus for the research.

Most courses aiming to prepare students for professional work in drama, stage management and dance are non-designated courses (therefore students attending these courses are not eligible for a mandatory grant), and most are provided by institutions which receive no financial support from a Funding Council. The Conference of Drama Schools comprises 18 institutions providing professional training for actors and stage managers. Eight of these institutions offer designated courses and the remaining ten provide non-designated courses. Very few designated courses are available for students wishing to study dance. The Council for Dance Education and Training is an umbrella body whose remit includes the accreditation of professional dance training courses at 22 institutions, only two of which offer designated courses.

Changes in expenditure in 'real terms'

Information provided by the Office of National Statistics has been used to calculate changes in expenditure, taking inflation into account. Calculations are based on



the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflators for the third quarter of each year. Real terms calculations have been made taking the deflator value for the third quarter of 1994 as the base from which to estimate changes (i.e. real terms figures are at 1994 values).

*Note: where the report refers to 'dance and drama', this includes stage management, unless otherwise stated.*

## 5. Expenditure on discretionary awards

The questionnaire sought information on discretionary awards for courses in drama, stage management and dance. This gave an indication of the number and value of such awards, and of changes between 1994/5 and 1995/6. Information published by the DFEE (GB. DFEE, 1996) was used to show recent trends in Section 2 awards and to indicate the proportion of Section 2 funding allocated to dance and drama students.

### 5.1 Discretionary awards for dance and drama

Awards Officers were asked to provide information on the amount spent on Section 2 discretionary awards for dance and drama. They were asked to include all full- and part-time courses but to exclude FE courses such as BTEC National Diploma and Foundation courses at FE colleges.

Officers in 85 authorities were able to provide information on expenditure and student numbers for drama, stage management and dance awards in the 1994/5 and 1995/6 academic years. (In some cases the figures provided were estimates.)

#### 5.1.1 Expenditure on dance and drama awards

Table 5.1.1 shows the expenditure on Section 2 awards for drama, stage management and dance (rounded to the nearest £100) and the percentage change between 1994/5 and 1995/6 in cash and real terms (i.e. taking account of inflation).

Table 5.1.1

<b>Expenditure on Section 2 discretionary awards for dance and drama in 85 LEAs</b>		
<b>Non-designated courses</b>	<b>Expenditure (rounded to the nearest £100)</b>	
	<b>1994-1995</b>	<b>1995-1996</b>
Drama	2,906,100	2,660,300
Stage management	405,100	404,200
Dance	3,391,900	2,870,100
Total	6,703,100	5,934,600
Change from 1994/5 to 1995/6 in cash terms		-11%
Change from 1994/5 to 1995/6 in real terms*		-13%
Total number of respondents		85

\* Adjusting for GDP deflator, using 1994/5 as the base year.

The table shows that the 85 authorities gave well over £6 million in awards for drama, stage management and dance in 1994/5. Overall spending on dance and drama awards declined by 11 per cent in cash terms and by 13 per cent in real terms in 1995/6. Spending declined in all three areas, but the biggest decline in expenditure was in dance awards, which fell by 15 per cent in cash terms (compared with a drop of eight per cent in expenditure on drama awards). Stage management awards represented only six per cent of the total expenditure in this area and the outlay on students following stage management courses was virtually unchanged in the two years.

So far, information on dance and drama awards has been presented in terms of the aggregated expenditure across all the 85 authorities which provided full information. However, this disguises the considerable variations between LEAs. In fact, 15 of the 85 LEAs gave no awards for these courses in either year. On the other hand, 17 authorities (15 counties and two metropolitan districts) gave over £100,000 in dance and drama awards in both 1994/5 and 1995/6.

Responses from 54 metropolitan districts (including London authorities) were analysed separately from those of 31 English and Welsh counties, to see if there were different trends in the two types of authority. This showed that the county authorities had experienced the greater reduction in expenditure on drama and dance awards in the period covered by the survey. Spending was reduced by 13 per cent in counties between 1994/5 and 1995/6, compared with a reduction of five per cent in metropolitan districts. Rather than indicating a large difference between county and metropolitan authorities, this may be a reflection of changes occurring in the different types of authority at slightly different times.

### 5.1.2 Number of dance and drama awards

Table 5.1.2 shows the number of students receiving Section 2 awards for drama, stage management and dance and the percentage change in student numbers between 1994/5 and 1995/6.

Table 5.1.2

<b>Number of Section 2 discretionary awards granted for dance and drama in 85 LEAs</b>		
<b>Non-designated courses</b>	<b>Student numbers</b>	
	<b>1994-1995</b>	<b>1995-1996</b>
Drama	548	473
Stage management	63	64
Dance	578	504
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,189</b>	<b>1,041</b>
Change from 1994/5 to 1995/6	-12%	
Total number of respondents	85	

The table shows that 1,189 students received discretionary awards for drama and dance courses in 1994/5. The number of students receiving awards in these authorities fell by 148 to 1,041 in 1995/6, a reduction of 12 per cent.

As with expenditure, reductions in student numbers were greater in county authorities, which funded 16 per cent fewer awards in 1995/6. The number of drama, stage management and dance awards given by metropolitan districts fell by three per cent during this period.

*The number of discretionary awards offered for dance and drama has severely declined as a direct result of expenditure pressures.*

*Response from an English county.*

### 5.1.3 Expenditure per student for dance and drama awards

By bringing together the information on expenditure and student numbers, it is possible to calculate the average expenditure per student in each year. The average expenditure (fees and maintenance) on each dance and drama student was £5,638 in 1994/5 and £5,698 in the following year. In cash terms, expenditure per student rose by one per cent in 1995/6, but this becomes a decline of one per cent when inflation is taken into account. In 1995/6, expenditure per student was highest for stage management (around £6,300) compared with around £5,700 for dance, and £5,600 per student for drama.

### 5.1.4 New and continuing awards for dance and drama

Authorities may give awards for courses of one or more years in duration. Each year, therefore, some expenditure is taken up by students who are continuing their studies, and some is given to students embarking on new courses of study. Awards Officers were asked to give a breakdown of their expenditure on dance and drama awards into *new* and *continuing* awards. Eighty-three Officers were able to provide this information.

In 1994/95, new awards represented 37 per cent of all expenditure on Section 2 dance and drama awards. In 1995/6, the proportion of new awards rose slightly to 39 per cent of the total expenditure. Analysis by type of LEA showed that new awards represented a higher proportion of expenditure in metropolitan authorities than in counties. In 1995/6, new awards made up 42 per cent of expenditure on all dance and drama awards in metropolitan authorities, compared with 37 per cent of the total in counties.

In terms of student numbers, 39 per cent of students receiving drama, stage management and dance awards were embarking on new courses in 1994/95. In 1995/6, students beginning new courses made up 37 per cent of all students receiving dance and drama awards. Again, there was a higher proportion of new awards in metropolitan authorities. In 1995/6, students on new dance and drama courses made up 43 per cent of the total, compared with 35 per cent of new awards in county authorities.

For the purposes of this report, these figures are sufficiently nearly constant as to suggest no significant differences at the aggregate level between the approach to new and continuing awards, although this overall impression disguises a range of variation.

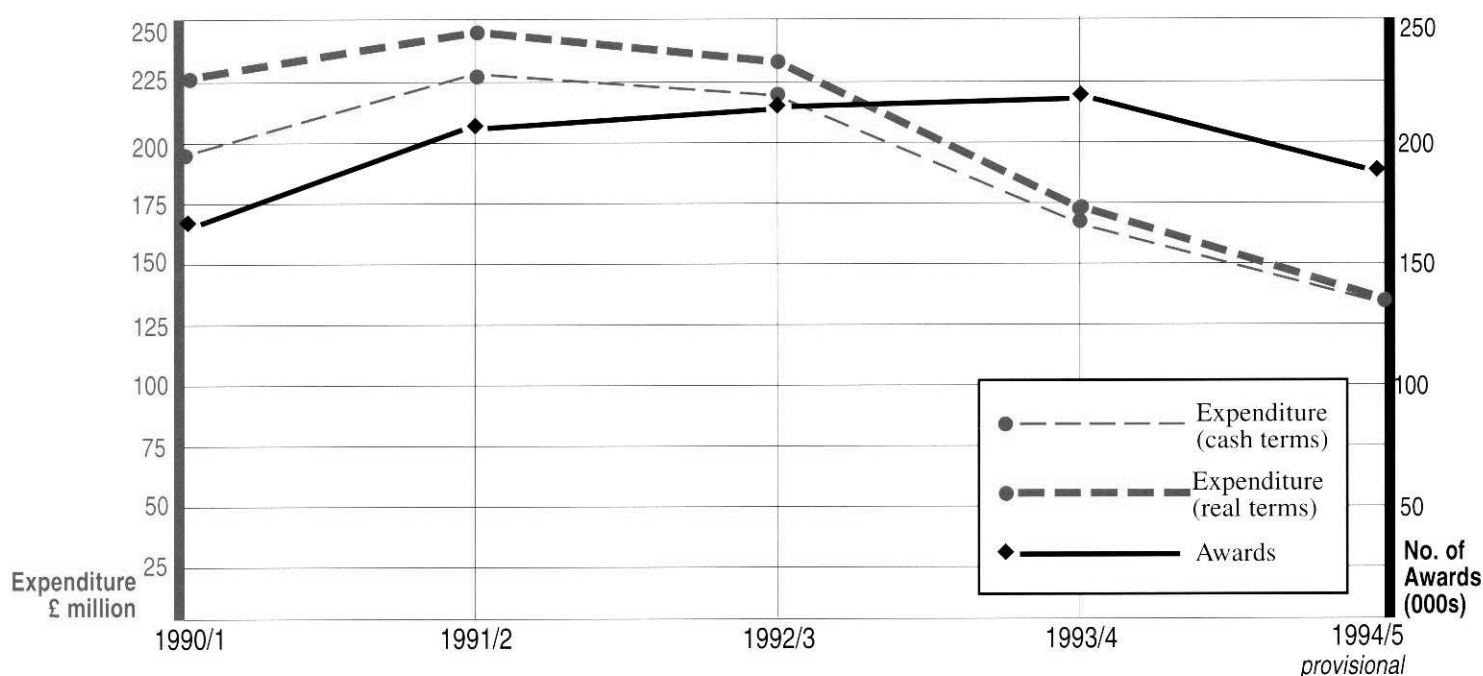
*The influence of the cost of continuing awards on LEAs' ability to make new awards is discussed in Section 6.2.*

## 5.2 Trends in Section 2 awards since 1990

In order to provide a context for the information on dance and drama awards and to look at recent trends, this part of the report presents information on Section 2 funding as a whole (i.e. all non-designated courses) between 1990/1 and 1994/5.

The information is taken from figures compiled by the Department for Education and Employment (GB, DFEE, 1996) and represents all English and Welsh LEAs. The trends in student numbers and expenditure (in cash and real terms) derived from the DFEE information are represented in graph form in Figure 5.2. The figures used as a basis for the graph are given in Appendix 1.

Figure 5.2 Trends in Section 2 discretionary awards 1990/1 to 1994/5



The DFEE figures show that expenditure on Section 2 awards has declined recently, following an initial increase at the beginning of the four-year period. In 1990/1, English and Welsh LEAs gave a total of £195 million in Section 2 awards. Expenditure rose to £224 million in 1991/2 and then declined each year, with a large drop between 1992/3 and 1993/4, and again in 1994/5. Expenditure on Section 2 awards in 1994/5 was £132 million (figures reported for 1994/5 are provisional). Between 1990/1 and 1994/5, expenditure on all Section 2 awards declined by 32 per cent in cash terms.

The 'real terms' expenditure was calculated using the GDP deflator figures provided by the Office of National Statistics and taking 1994/5 as the base year (which is why the graph shows real and cash expenditure converging in that year). In 1990/1, expenditure on all Section 2 discretionary awards represented £225 million at 1994/5 prices. Total real terms expenditure peaked in 1991/2 at £245 million, then declined in each subsequent year (a decline of 41 per cent in real terms between 1990/1 and 1994/5).

The number of students receiving Section 2 awards rose steadily from 1990/1 until 1993/4, and then declined (again, the figures for 1994/5 are provisional). In 1990/1, 167,000 students received Section 2 awards. The total rose each subsequent year, reaching a peak of 220,000 in 1993/4, but fell back by 32,000 to 188,000 in 1994/5.

Between 1990/1 and 1994/5, the number of Section 2 awards granted has increased while expenditure has declined. This means that the average cash value of Section 2 awards has reduced considerably (from £1,168 in 1990/1 to £702 in 1994/5). In real terms, the average value of Section 2 awards declined from £1,350 in 1990/1 to £702 in 1994/5, a reduction of 48 per cent.

### 5.3 Dance and drama awards as a proportion of all Section 2 awards

By combining information on awards from the DFEE (GB. DFEE, 1996) and the NFER survey, it is possible to provide an estimate of the proportion of Section 2 funding devoted to dance and drama. In order to do this, the figures from the 85 LEAs which provided full information for the NFER survey were 'grossed up' to give an estimate for the 117 English and Welsh authorities. The resulting estimate was then calculated as a proportion of all Section 2 awards, using the data published by the DFEE.

Assuming that the 85 LEAs which responded to the relevant section of the NFER questionnaire were typical of all authorities in England and Wales, their responses were 'grossed up' by a factor of 117/85. Using this method, it is estimated that about one per cent of all Section 2 awards in 1994/5 supported students on dance and drama courses, and that this represented about seven per cent of the expenditure on all Section 2 awards in that year.

There are two main implications to be drawn from this analysis: first, dance and drama awards represent a very small proportion of all Section 2 awards; second, dance and drama awards represent a significantly higher proportion of expenditure than of students, and are therefore a relatively 'expensive' category of Section 2 awards.

### 5.4 Trends in applications for discretionary awards in dance and drama

Awards Officers were asked to indicate whether the number of *applications* for discretionary awards had decreased, stayed the same, or increased over the past five years. Most of the 109 responding Officers were able to answer this question. Their responses are shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4

Trends in applications for discretionary awards over the past five years

Applications	Drama	Stage Management	Dance
	%	%	%
Decreased	43	39	44
Stayed the same	30	37	33
Increased	12	8	7
Not sure	7	9	7
No response	8	7	8
Total number of respondents	109	109	109

The table shows that in most LEAs, applications for discretionary awards in dance, stage management and drama had either stayed the same or decreased. Over a third of LEAs had experienced a decrease in all such applications in the past five years.

Awards Officers were invited to give further information on the number of applications they had received, and the likely reasons for the trends they had identified. The main reason suggested by Awards Officers for decreased applications in all three art forms was that students had not thought it worthwhile to go through the application process (which often entailed an audition before an LEA panel) because of their perceived low chance of success in obtaining an award.

Some Officers said that potential applicants were deterred by their LEA's policy of giving only partial awards, which meant that the student would have to make a contribution to course fees and/or maintenance even if they were successful in their application for an award. A reason given by a small number of Officers for decreases in applications for drama and stage management (but not dance) awards was that more designated courses are now available in these two areas, and students preferred (or were encouraged) to apply for places on designated courses.

*There has been an overall reduction in the numbers of students applying for discretionary awards over the past three years. This is in part because certain courses have been designated for mandatory awards purposes, but mainly because the Authority's funding has become more restrictive and students have considered it not worth applying.*

*Response from a London borough.*

*The policy to make no awards becomes increasingly well known, therefore students cease to apply when chances are so small. Total discretionary applications in all subjects reduced from circa 350 to 50 in that time (between 1991 and 1995).*

*Response from a metropolitan district.*

*There were 31 dance/drama applications in 1994/5, 16 in 1995/6. Possible reasons (for decreased applications): wider knowledge of the council's audition procedure deterring all but the most committed? Successful candidates will only get maintenance and £5,000 maximum per annum for fees - don't apply if they know they cannot raise the balance?*

*Response from an English county.*

As Table 5.4 shows, a minority of Officers reported that applications had increased within the past five years. The reasons given for increases were: a growth in popularity of dance and drama (possibly due to media exposure); increased publicity for the awards in one LEA; and in another that more students were applying because the authority was known to have a relatively generous record of making such awards.

## 6. Policy and practice

This section gives further details of LEA policies regarding discretionary awards for drama, stage management and dance.

### 6.1 Funding policy for one- and two-year courses

Awards Officers were asked to indicate whether it was their authority's current policy to make discretionary awards for one- and two-year (or longer) courses. Responses are shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1

Policy towards funding one- and two-year (or longer) courses			
Funding policy	Drama	Stage Management	Dance
<b>One-year courses</b>	%	%	%
Will consider funding	51	44	51
Not funded*	40	42	31
No response	9	14	18
<b>Two-year or longer courses</b>			
Will consider funding	60	52	58
Not funded*	31	37	28
No response	9	11	14
Total number of respondents	109	109	109

*\*Although these LEAs have a general policy not to give such awards, some students may be granted awards on appeal.*

About half of the LEAs had a policy of granting at least some discretionary awards for one- and two-year (or longer) courses in drama, stage management and dance. What the table does not show is that 31 LEAs (28 per cent) had a policy of not granting any discretionary awards for drama, stage management or dance courses, other than on appeal.

Some authorities had different funding policies according to the subject area and/or the length of the course. Ten LEAs were prepared to fund courses of two years or more, but not one-year courses. This may be because most one-year courses are postgraduate, and postgraduate students would normally have already received public support for a previous course.

Eight LEAs had a policy of funding courses in dance and drama but not stage management. This may reflect the fact that there are fewer courses available in stage management (several Awards Officers commented that they had never had an application for such a course). Four LEAs had a policy of funding dance but not drama/stage management courses, on the basis that there were more designated courses available to drama than to dance students. However, most Officers indicated that their LEAs had the same policy for funding all the listed types of course, irrespective of art-form or duration of the course.

In an open-ended question, Officers were asked to provide further details of any limitations imposed on the number of awards granted. About a third of the LEAs giving awards for drama, stage management and/or dance operated a quota system, whereby a certain number of awards were available each year. In some cases, the quota covered all performing arts applications; in others there were separate quotas for drama/stage management and dance. Quotas (for drama/stage management and dance taken together) varied from one to three new awards per year in London and other metropolitan districts, and from five to 40 new awards in English and Welsh counties.

Three authorities set a cash limit on their total expenditure for dance and drama awards, rather than deciding a quota for the number of students who would be supported.

## 6.2 The influence of the cost of continuing awards on new awards

In an open-ended question, Officers were asked to what extent their authority's policy on *new* discretionary awards in drama, stage management and/or dance had been determined by the *cost of continuing awards*. Their answers to this question are summarised in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2

### Extent to which the cost of continuing awards for drama, stage management and/or dance affects new awards

Analysis of open-ended comments	%
To a great extent	11
To some extent	9
No effect	29
Is likely to influence new awards in future	2
The LEA is not currently funding any continuing and/or new awards	27
No response	24
Total number of respondents	109

*Percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could make more than one comment.*

Many of those responding to the question commented that the key issue was one of increasingly limited budgets, rather than the distribution of funding between new and continuing awards.

The table shows that in most of the authorities which granted discretionary awards for these subjects, the cost of continuing awards was not an influence on new awards. On the other hand, it was felt to be a very influential factor in some (mainly metropolitan) LEAs. Two of the Officers who indicated that the cost of continuing awards was not currently an issue said that it was likely to become a factor in future.

*New awards are not affected by the cost of supporting continuing students.  
Response from a metropolitan district.*



*As budgets have been reduced each year, the cost of continuing awards must inevitably take a larger proportion of the existing budget. Numbers of new awards have been maintained but the amount has been reduced.*

*Response from a London authority.*

*The cost of continuing awards has not been a factor until now, but because of serious financial problems currently, the cost of these awards is an important factor in the 1996/7 financial year.*

*Response from a metropolitan district.*

### 6.3 Funding of fees and maintenance

Officers in LEAs which funded discretionary awards were asked to give further details of their funding policy.

*The following tables are based on responses from LEAs giving any discretionary awards for two-year (or longer) courses in drama (65 LEAs), stage management (57 LEAs) and dance (63 LEAs). Because of the smaller number involved, the tables give the number of people responding, rather than the percentage of respondents. As noted above, most LEAs had the same policy towards the funding of both one- and two-year courses.*

Table 6.3 shows LEA policies towards granting full or partial awards for fees and maintenance. The responses relate to two-year courses (there was a very similar pattern of responses for one-year courses).

Table 6.3

<b>Policy towards funding for fees and maintenance</b>			
<b>Funding policy</b>	<b>Drama</b>	<b>Stage Management</b>	<b>Dance</b>
	<i>number</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>number</i>
Full value fees and maintenance	27	23	24
Full value fees, partial value maintenance	4	5	4
Full value maintenance, partial value fees	8	3	5
Partial value fees and maintenance	16	15	18
No response	10	11	12
Total number of respondents	65	57	63

*Note* Full value fees = to the full value charged by the institution  
Full value maintenance = at or above the mandatory rate.

Around two-fifths of the LEAs which granted discretionary awards for drama, stage management and dance did so to the full value for both course fees and maintenance (subject to the same means testing as for mandatory awards). Around a quarter of the LEAs granted only part of the cost of fees and part of the maintenance allowance given to students on mandatory courses. In many cases, Officers said that they followed the guidelines on course fees issued by the Council for Local Education Authorities (CLEA, 1995), which recommended payments

of £825 towards the annual higher education course fees in the 1995/6 academic year. Separately from this, the Association of County Councils and Association of Metropolitan Authorities' *Voluntary Guidelines on Discretionary Awards* (ACC and AMA, 1995) recommended that for major discretionary awards (i.e. those of full value) LEAs make a contribution to fees at least at the appropriate level for public sector courses (if necessary, means-tested in accordance with local policy).

*In all cases, assistance is towards total fee but means-tested in accordance with mandatory awards. Maintenance costs are only given in exceptional circumstances.*

*Response from a London authority.*

*Tuition fees are now paid at CLEA rates only, maintenance is paid at a maximum of 49 per cent of mandatory rates.*

*Response from a metropolitan district.*

*There was a £8,500 limit on fees and maintenance for new students in 1994/5 and a £5,000 limit on fees and maintenance for new students in 1995/6.*

*Response from an English county.*

## 6.4 Period of time for which awards are made

All but two of the LEAs making discretionary awards for courses of two years (or more) in drama, stage management and/or dance granted the awards for the duration of a course, subject only to the student's satisfactory progress.

In one of the LEAs which did not give awards for the duration of the course, the period of funding was decided by a subcommittee which took into account the individual circumstances of the applicant. In the other such LEA, discretionary awards were made for one year only. If the course was longer than a year, the student had to reapply for an award to cover the remaining period. In this authority, there were effectively no continuing discretionary awards, only new ones.

## 6.5 Requirements affecting grant applications

LEAs may impose a number of requirements which have to be satisfied before a discretionary grant is considered. These can concern the course, the institution, or the applicant. The questionnaire listed a number of possible requirements and asked Officers to indicate whether these were taken into consideration when assessing applications for discretionary awards in drama, stage management and/or dance. The list of requirements and the Officers' responses are shown in Table 6.5. The responses relate to two-year (or longer) courses (there was a very similar pattern of responses for one-year courses).

Table 6.5

**Requirements affecting grant applications for discretionary awards**

Factors affecting eligibility for funding	Drama	Stage Management	Dance
	number	number	number
Accreditation/LEA approval of course	60	49	56
Selection (e.g. by LEA audition panel)	33	26	30
Availability of a similar designated course	26	23	26
Availability of public sector FE provision	22	20	22
No response	2	4	3
Total number of respondents	65	57	63

*Respondents could make more than one comment.*

#### Accreditation

The table shows that the majority of LEAs would not consider applications for courses unless they were accredited or on an 'approved' list. Most authorities would only consider applications for drama and stage management courses accredited by the National Council for Drama Training (NCDT). A few used a list of the member colleges of the Conference of Drama Schools or a list compiled by the authority's own advisers. Similarly, most LEAs would not consider applications for dance awards unless the course was accredited by the Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET), although a few Officers added that students would be considered for an award if they were offered a place at the Royal Ballet School (on courses not accredited by CDET). A few authorities used a list of dance courses approved by their own advisers, although this was a less common practice for dance than for drama or stage management.

*The establishment must be accredited by the (National) Council for Drama Training or the Council for Dance Education and Training.*

*Response from an English county*

*Over 20 years or so a list of colleges has been approved by the former Drama Adviser and staff, after a personal visit.*

*Response from an English county.*

#### Selection

An audition and/or interview process was used to select applicants by half of LEAs making drama awards and over two-fifths of those providing awards for stage management or dance. Some LEAs made arrangements for auditions to be carried out by an approved body, such as the CDET; others convened a panel of LEA subject advisers and/or local councillors. In one English county, applicants for drama and dance awards were asked to contribute half of the £80 cost of their audition.

*All drama students are auditioned by the County Drama Panel who rank the students in order of merit. The top ten students receive the awards on offer.*

*Response from an English county.*

*Any student applying for an award to follow a performing arts course will be expected to appear for an audition before a sub-committee of members of the education committee.*

*Response from a London borough.*

Availability of other courses

Between a third and two-fifths of LEAs providing discretionary awards for drama, stage management and/or dance would not make an award if either a similar designated course or local public sector provision were available. In one additional LEA, the Officer commented that applicants would be *advised* to take a designated course, if one were available.

## 6.6 Applications from students who had already attended a post-16 course

Officers were asked how a student's previous attendance on an FE or HE course, with or without an award, would affect their entitlement to a discretionary award for dance, stage management or drama. Their answers to this question are given in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6

<b>Eligibility for discretionary awards of students who had previously attended an FE/HE course</b>			
<b>Analysis of open-ended comments</b>	<b>Drama</b>	<b>Stage Management</b>	<b>Dance</b>
	<i>number</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>number</i>
Eligibility not affected	7	6	7
Application may be considered	15	13	11
Would normally exclude applicant	39	32	36
No response	4	6	9
Total number of respondents	65	57	63

In the majority of cases, attendance on a previous course would exclude a student from consideration for a discretionary award, unless the new course was at a higher level than the previous one. In some LEAs, attendance on a previous course would be taken into consideration, and the application might be given a lower priority because of it. A few authorities ruled that students could receive a grant for a total period of up to three years: students applying for a new grant which, added to their previous one, totalled more than three years would be expected to fund themselves for the additional period. In a minority of LEAs, a student's attendance on a previous course would not be taken into consideration when assessing their application for discretionary awards.

## 6.7 Other issues

The questionnaire gave Officers space to contribute further comments regarding discretionary awards for drama, stage management and dance. The comments given by Awards Officers highlighted two main issues: the relative cost of funding such courses; and future developments in funding for dance and drama students.

The high relative cost of drama and dance courses

Unlike public sector institutions, which receive substantial funding from the Further or Higher Education Funding Councils, private colleges providing dance and drama training need to charge fees which reflect the full cost of course provision.

Several Officers commented that the relatively high fees charged by dance and drama colleges placed severe limits on the ability (and willingness) of authorities to fund student applications for such courses. As noted earlier, many LEAs applied the CLEA rates (recommended for public sector HE courses) to the funding of dance and drama courses, many of which had fees well above CLEA rates. In two LEAs, councillors had excluded all such courses from their discretionary awards scheme on the grounds of cost. In other cases, limitations were imposed on the numbers of dance and drama awards that could be granted because of a desire to enable as many applicants for discretionary awards as possible to benefit from the limited amount of funding available.

*The increasing cost (above inflation) of these already very expensive courses has caused this authority to withdraw assistance for these courses in the 1992/3 academic year. The cost of assisting one drama/dance student could assist numerous FE students. At a time of budget reductions a value judgement had to be made on the type of student we wished to assist and where the most benefit for the city would be.*

*Response from a metropolitan district.*

*The cost of these courses relative to those in other subjects is a major determining factor because of the disproportionate share of the budget required to fund them. Prior to 1992/3 the authority was spending 11 per cent of the discretionary awards budget on drama/dance awards but the number of such awards was only two per cent of the total. This was the main reason for deciding to limit new awards to six per year from September 1992 onwards.*

*Response from an English county.*

Future developments

Several Officers commented that they would like to see discretionary awards for dance and drama made mandatory in future. In respect of HE courses, this approach is endorsed by the Council for Local Education Authorities (CLEA, 1996), which recommends that the mandatory awards system should be extended to cover all higher education courses that are a prerequisite for entry into a particular profession. However, such an approach is not relevant in the case of most dance courses, where training begins at a much younger age. (Because of the physical demands of the art-form, the preparation of professional dancers needs to begin no later than 16, and ideally at the age of 11).

It was evident from the comments of many Awards Officers that they were unlikely to be able to provide more funding for dance and drama students in the near future. In a few cases, Officers predicted a further reduction in funding for such courses in 1996/7.

*It seems likely that this Authority will have to reduce spending in the area of discretionary awards for the 1996/7 financial year. This could well affect new applicants for dance/drama awards seriously.*

*Response from a metropolitan district.*

From 1 April 1996, 12 existing authorities have been reorganised into 34 smaller, unitary authorities. The reorganisation affected all the existing eight Welsh authorities and four of the English counties.

The questionnaire was completed just before the reorganisation took place. There were no specific questions about the effects of reorganisation on provision for discretionary awards, but the issue was raised in a number of the authorities concerned. Four Officers considered it likely that the reorganisation would lead to a further diminution of the provision for discretionary awards.

*Four new authorities will take on the authority's policy, but one of them has already raised this issue for review in 1997/8.*

*Response from an English county.*

*Future policy is undecided but changes due from April 1st, with new authorities, make it less likely that new awards will be made. The authority gives full awards so cost is the all important factor here.*

*Response from a Welsh authority.*

*For 1996/7 it is very unlikely that any new discretionary awards will be bestowed. Students currently on two- or three-year courses will continue to be grant-aided for the duration of the course.*

*Response from a Welsh authority.*

However, one LEA unaffected by reorganisation reported a regional initiative to reinstate awards for dance in 1996/7.

*The overall reduction in budget available for discretionary awards has resulted in policy changes to prioritise funding for FE rather than non-designated HE courses. However, a positive shift in policy for 1996/7 is planned to assist students wishing to attend dance training which is not available in the FEFC sector, particularly ballet. The change in policy is a direct result of a recent regional initiative to try and achieve a convergence of policy in the North West. This follows on from the findings in the last NFER survey.*

*Response from a metropolitan district.*

## 7. Conclusions

This research has demonstrated that Section 2 discretionary awards for dance and drama courses have declined in the last two years, in terms both of the total expenditure and of the number of awards granted. In the 85 authorities which provided full information, the number of dance and drama awards granted declined by 12 per cent between 1994/5 and 1995/6. Expenditure on such awards declined by 11 per cent in cash terms and by 13 per cent in real terms in the same period.

General restrictions in funding mean that many authorities have reduced the amount paid per student in order to grant as many applications as possible. This means

that many of the students who are successful in gaining an award still face the problem of raising at least part of their course fees and living expenses.

An analysis of trends since 1990/1 (GB, DFEE, 1996) showed that LEAs have been unable to maintain their level of support for students wishing to follow any non-designated courses (including dance and drama courses). Comments from Awards Officers suggested that this erosion in funding looks set to continue in future.

Several Awards Officers drew attention to the relative expense of supporting dance and drama students. These comments were confirmed by the finding that dance and drama awards represented about one per cent of the students receiving Section 2 awards, but took up an estimated seven per cent of the total expenditure on such awards. One of the reasons for this is that the private institutions providing most of the courses receive no core funding from a Funding Council, and therefore charge for the full cost of providing these practical courses. However, the fact that they are expensive means that some authorities are reluctant to give discretionary awards for dance and drama courses at private colleges.

Many of the findings in this report have been summarised in terms of the average situation across LEAs: this belies the amount of variation between authorities. Over a quarter of LEAs currently have a policy of giving no discretionary awards at all for dance and drama (apart from those granted on appeal); whereas others fund up to 40 new dance and drama awards each year. As noted in an earlier NFER survey report (Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 1994a and b), potential students' prospects of gaining an award depend largely on where they happen to live.

In a situation in which a substantial minority of authorities have a policy of giving no awards to dance and drama students, it is clear that discretionary awards are no longer an adequate system of support for many young people wishing to embark on professional training in drama, stage management and dance.

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## Appendix 1 Trends in Section 2 discretionary awards

Table A.1

**All Section 2 discretionary awards granted between 1990/1 and 1994/5**

	1990/1	1991/2	1992/3	1993/4	1994/5 <i>provisional</i>
<b>Expenditure £ million</b>					
Cash terms	195	224	220	170	132
Real terms*	225	245	230	173	132
<b>Number of awards thousands</b>					
	167	205	218	220	188

\* Adjusting for GDP deflator, using 1994/5 as the base year.

Source: GREAT BRITAIN. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (1996). *Student Awards in England and Wales: Academic Year 1994/5* (DFEE News 110/96). London: DFEE.

## Appendix 2 Steering Group Membership

John Bevan  
Chairman of Project Steering Group

Raphael Jago  
Chairman  
Conference of Drama Schools

Anna Leatherdale  
Project Coordinator  
Council for Dance Education and Training

David Line  
Applications Manager  
Surrey County Council Awards Service

Mark Pemberton  
Information Officer  
Conference of Drama Schools

Simon Richey  
Assistant Director (Education)  
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

Victoria Todd  
Director  
Council for Dance Education and Training

**Minute taker**  
Suzanne Rider

**NFER Team**

Wendy Keys  
Project Director

Caroline Sharp  
Project Leader

Lesley Kendall  
Project Statistician

Claudia Davis  
Assistant Research Officer

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## Discretionary Awards in Dance and Drama

A survey of local education authorities

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The majority of students wishing to undertake professional training in dance or drama, unlike students studying most other subjects, do not have access to mandatory grants. Dance and drama students rely on discretionary awards to contribute towards their course fees and living expenses. There have been reports that funding constraints are affecting the ability of local education authorities (LEAs) to make discretionary awards, and that some talented students are having to turn down places at colleges because they cannot get a grant.

This report is the result of a survey of English and Welsh LEAs. It presents up-to-date information on:

- the numbers of awards given for dance and drama courses
- the value of awards, including whether the grant covers the full cost of fees and whether dance and drama students can expect the same maintenance allowance as students on mandatory grants
- recent trends in LEA funding of awards for dance and drama courses
- funding for dance and drama awards in relation to discretionary awards for all non-designated courses
- trends in applications for awards for dance and drama courses
- conditions imposed on students applying for grants for dance and drama courses
- key issues raised by LEA Awards Officers.

The research findings confirm that a student's chance of gaining a discretionary award is highly dependent on where he or she happens to live, and suggest that the current funding system no longer provides an adequate system of support to meet the training needs of young people wishing to pursue careers in dance and drama.

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