Dance and Drama Awards Evaluation

Research report

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CooperGibson Research

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Executive summary

The Dance and Drama Awards[1] (DaDA) offers income assessed financial support for tuition fees and living costs for Trinity College London (TCL) Level 5 and 6 Diplomas at several high quality private dance and drama institutions in England, supporting talented young people to enter and succeed in performing arts.

This research sought to investigate the extent to which the DaDA scheme is meeting the following aims:

- Helping talented but less well-off young people to access high quality training in dance, drama, and musical theatre; and

- Helping UK performing arts remain competitive and productive by enabling this wider pool of talented young people to access elite training.

Additionally, the research aimed to understand the outcomes for the students that have accessed the DaDA scheme, in terms of career prospects. The previous evaluation of DaDA in 2006[2] was generally positive about how the programme was managed. However, it highlighted that the Awards might be more effectively targeted on under-represented groups, in particular ethnic minority, low income and disabled students.

Methodology

A mixed methodology approach was undertaken, incorporating:

- Qualitative telephone or virtual online interviews with:
  - Representatives of 15 out of 16 providers of performing arts courses eligible for DaDA funding.
  - 22 current students in receipt of DaDA funding from 14 of the 16 providers.
- Quantitative online surveys with:
  - 274 current students across 12 providers, of which 184 had received DaDA funding and 89 had not received DaDA funding.[3]
  - 302 alumni across 10 providers, of which 224 had received DaDA funding and 78 had not received DaDA funding.

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[1] Education and Skills Funding Agency (2023) *Dance and Drama Awards guide 2023 to 2024 academic year*

[2] Neelands, J. et al. (2006) *Dance and Drama Awards Scheme Evaluation Project: Phase 2*. Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research.

[3] N=1 respondent did not provide an answer to the question about whether they had received DaDA funding.

Key findings

The providers and DaDA students interviewed universally welcomed DaDA funding for the benefits it offered and that it succeeded in enabling talented students with the greatest need to receive funding. Without this, students (in receipt of DaDA funding) would most likely not be able to gain a place on a relevant course and achieve their career goals. Almost all the DaDA students interviewed, 89% of the current DaDA students surveyed and 85% of the DaDA alumni surveyed, stated they would not have been able to afford their training without the funding. Many interviewees expressed gratitude for the opportunity to receive high quality training through the scheme. Student benefits also included being able to commence training at 16, pursue a non-academic pathway and gain early access to employment.

Student awareness of DaDA

DaDA students interviewed were able to find out about the DaDA scheme through a range of sources, such as providers' websites, open days and at audition. However, awareness might be improved as it can be reliant on word-of-mouth sources, such as dance teachers of potential applicants. Around half of DaDA students interviewed considered awareness could be better, for example through government communications and secondary school careers advice and guidance.

Diversity and representation

Providers acknowledged a lack of diversity and under-representation of students who were: disabled, male, and/or from disadvantaged or ethnic minority backgrounds. Factors affecting this included student perceptions of careers in the performing arts being for the middle classes and not seeing oneself represented, for example on stage or screen.

Overall, providers were endeavouring to widen representation, largely through outreach work, such as workshops in schools and colleges. This included strategically targeting schools and colleges in deprived areas or those with high numbers of students from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Applying the eligibility criteria

Providers stated they applied the eligibility criteria so that students were selected firstly according to talent and then financial need if two auditionees achieved the same ranking. Students interviewed generally had no concerns about their application, although a few mentioned there could be clearer communication of why they were or were not able to receive the funding in terms of talent ranking and income assessment.

The allocation funding model offered challenges for some providers in applying the eligibility criteria. For example, capped funding could mean they were not able to offer funding to all eligible students or that they might not recruit sufficient eligible students of the high calibre required to use the full allocation.

Application and audition

Overall, providers considered the application process did not put applicants off as the forms were generally straightforward to complete. However, DaDA students interviewed and providers stated that parents/carers did express uncertainty about, or experience difficulty in, gathering the relevant documentation, such as written benefit notifications for a tax year.

Some DaDA students interviewed referred to how audition fees and travel and accommodation costs created affordability challenges. Affordability of attending the audition was the most common barrier cited by the current students surveyed (DaDA 20%, non-DaDA 19%). Providers endeavoured to support attendance and affordability through a range of measures, including: online audition use and fee waivers.

Administration

The five per cent funding for administration was appreciated by providers, as was earlier publication of forms in the current academic year compared to previous years by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Providers also reported positives in terms of ESFA's support in responding to enquiries and, for example, its pre-populating spreadsheets which reduced workload. However, administering provisional offers and income assessment was seen as too protracted by some, with delays experienced in parents'/carers' submission of documentation. Recommendations were also made by providers for ESFA, such as moving to online rather than paper-based systems.

Financial challenges

The majority of providers stated that DaDA supported course stability, although several stated that current DaDA funding levels were not covering costs and this compromised stability. Several spontaneously stated that without the DaDA scheme they would not survive, would struggle financially or would not be able to offer the diploma[4].
This included providers that were small, medium or large[5], indicating that size was not

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[4] Providers were asked about receiving DaDA and course stability, but not specifically about their organisation's sustainability.
[5] Small: fewer than a total of 50 DaDA students in the three academic years from 2020-23; medium: fewer than 100 DaDA students and large: more than 100 DaDA students over the same period.

necessarily a factor in maintaining sustainability. A few also expressed concerns of losing students to universities where they could access loan schemes.

Providers additionally referred to financial challenges, such as:

- Per student DaDA funding being insufficient to cover course delivery costs.

- Different funding allocations were based on historical data.

- Reduction in funding occurred in the subsequent year if a provider's allocation was not fully used.

- Current parent/carer income bands being unrealistic for them to afford maintenance payments and fee contributions.

- Maintenance rates not having kept pace with inflation/ cost-of-living increases.

Employment support and progression

All the DaDA students interviewed stated they aimed to stay in the performing arts sector with career aspirations or secured roles including: musical theatre, ballet, film, television, radio and entertainment such as on cruise ships. Several were considering teaching in the performing arts as a supplementary or future career and taking qualifications to achieve this. Similarly, the vast majority of current students surveyed planned to stay in the performing arts (DaDA 97%, non-DaDA 92%).

Providers and DaDA students interviewed referred to an extensive range of support so that students were well-prepared to progress into employment. Being on a DaDA funded diploma provided DaDA students interviewed with exposure to individuals and organisations that could help them secure employment, for example, casting directors and agents seeing students perform. These students also gained awareness of industry demands, such as through visitor talks, and to promote themselves, for example through provider support for producing showreels and creating a professional portfolio.

Alumni employment

Students who had completed their training within the previous 10 years were asked about their employment history in the online survey:

- Most of the alumni surveyed were in work at the time of responding to the online survey (DaDA 88%, non-DaDA 82%) and around two-thirds of those were employed in the performing arts sector (DaDA 67%, non-DaDA 70%).

- The number of hours worked and pay received amongst alumni was very similar, although DaDA alumni were more likely to be self-employed compared to non-DaDA alumni.

- DaDA alumni had, on average, held more jobs within the performing arts (DaDA 5.48, non-DaDA 2.93) and had been unemployed for a shorter period of time compared to non-DaDA alumni.

- DaDA alumni were particularly satisfied with their continual skills development (77%), opportunity for progression (71%) and quality of professional performance (70%).

Impact

DaDA's impact was identified by the providers and DaDA students interviewed in several areas, including:

- Sector skills development and diversification of these.

- Positive employment outcomes, including gaining 'top quality jobs' such as in the West End.

- Increasing the sector talent pool.

- Increased diversity and representation with financial background not being a limiting factor to achievement.

- Contribution to the economy through the performing arts and associated hospitality sectors.

- Contribution to the United Kingdom's international status for performing arts.

The online surveys supported these findings:

- Around two-thirds (69%) of DaDA alumni said that their qualification had given them an advantage in seeking work due to their continual skills development.

- A similar proportion of current students (67%) said that the funding for their course had supported their ambitions by helping them to develop additional skills.

- The vast majority of DaDA alumni surveyed said that their qualification had supported them in gaining employment (93%). Furthermore, 88% of DaDA alumni said that their qualification had given them an advantage in seeking work, and of those, 81% said it had given them greater opportunity for career progression (81%).

- Almost three-quarters (73%) of current DaDA students said that the funding for their course had supported their ambitions by helping them prepare for employment.

Conclusions

The findings suggest that overall, the DaDA scheme achieves its two stated aims. Students supported by the scheme greatly appreciated the opportunity to access high quality training it afforded them. In turn, providers valued the contribution it makes to the sector in enabling less well-off students access this training and pursue and achieve their career goals. However, these findings are based on perceptual data gathered through the interviews and a relatively small sample of survey respondents. Monitoring and tracking data which captures the profile, characteristics and outcomes of students, would be valuable to fully inform the Theory of Change for this initiative.

Both providers and DaDA students interviewed identified many positives with respect to these stated aims but there were some evident challenges faced and improvements that might be made. These largely centred on financial considerations and reflected providers' perceived need for a review of funding arrangements, as well as the current climate in which the cost of living was a significant concern for providers, students and parents/carers.

Recommendations for DfE are consequently to consider improvements to the scheme's operation through a review of the specific concerns raised in the findings, chiefly with respect to:

- Affordability for students, parents/carers, particularly income band and maintenance suitability.

- How funding supports course stability and sustainability for providers.

- Building on positive features of the administrative arrangements to secure further improvements, such as, the timing of funding notification to better align with provider recruitment schedules.

- The extent to which the DaDA scheme is well known, well publicised and is clear in how it operates for the target audience of students and parents/carers.

- Communications with organisations, including schools, so that performing arts teachers and careers advisors are sufficiently aware of the scheme to signpost students appropriately.

- How widening participation might be further supported to increase diversity and representation.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a Department for Education (DfE) commissioned evaluation of the Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA) scheme. The research comprised a process evaluation which also explored perceptions of impact.

The Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA) offer income assessed financial support for tuition fees and living costs at several high quality private dance and drama institutions in England. The qualifications (Trinity College London (TCL) Level 5 and 6 Diplomas)[6] covered by DaDA aim to support talented young people to enter and succeed in performing arts. DaDA support is designed to ensure that those, who could not otherwise afford to participate in the training, are not disadvantaged or lost to the sector. About 400 new students access DaDA support each year.

Students enrolled on the TCL Level 5 and 6 qualifications in acting, dance, or musical theatre, are not eligible for Higher Education student loans, they are eligible for Advanced Learner Loans (where the provider has this facility), though not in combination with a DaDA grant. Depending on their household income, students on these courses are eligible for DaDA support to help with fees and living costs on a sliding scale. Students contribute to fees when their household income is over £33,000 and the DaDA support towards living costs is £0 when household income is over £30,000.

The previous evaluation of DaDA in 2006 was generally positive about how the programme was managed. It noted that the Awards encouraged a commitment to both excellence and equity in the independent performing arts market, providers were successful in preparing graduates for careers in the industry and that students were generally satisfied with their careers. However, the evaluation highlighted that the Awards might be more effectively targeted on under-represented groups, in particular ethnic minority, low income and disabled students. [7]

1.1 Aims and objectives

The evaluation sought to understand the extent to which DaDA enables students to train for performing arts qualifications who otherwise would not have been able to. To achieve this, the research investigated the extent to which the DaDA scheme is meeting the following aims:

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[6] Level 6 Diploma in Professional Acting (3 years), Level 5 Diploma in Professional Acting (1 year), Level 5 Diploma in Professional Dance (Classical Ballet or Contemporary Dance) (2 years), Level 6 Diploma in Professional Dance (3 years), Level 6 Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre (3 years).

[7] Neelands, J. et al. (2006) *Dance and Drama Awards Scheme Evaluation Project: Phase 2*. Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research.

- Helping talented but less well-off young people to access high quality training in dance, drama, and musical theatre.

- Helping the UK performing arts sector to remain competitive and productive by enabling this wider pool of talented young people to access elite training.

Additionally, the research aimed to understand the outcomes for the students that have accessed the DaDA scheme, in terms of career prospects.

1.2 Methodology

A mixed methodology approach was undertaken, incorporating:

- Qualitative telephone or virtual online interviews with representatives of 15 out of 16 providers of diplomas eligible for DaDA funding and a sample of students in receipt of DaDA funding from 14 of the 16 providers (22 students in total).

- Quantitative online surveys with current students training on courses which are eligible for DaDA funding and alumni who had completed their training within the previous 10 years.

1.2.1 Qualitative interviews

Interviews were carried with providers and students between March and May 2023. In some cases, interviews with providers were with a sole representative and, in others, with an additional representative, for example, a director and person responsible for DaDA administration. Providers were the first point of contact for recruiting students using an email invitation provided by CooperGibson Research (CGR). Students who volunteered were then selected to achieve as representative a sample as practicable, as shown in the table below. This included current students across three cohorts (2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23) and with varying levels of DaDA funding (fully-funded to partial funding).[8]

All interviews were audio recorded and typically lasted up to 45 minutes. Thematic analysis was carried out according to the pre-determined foci identified by DfE.

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[8] Designation of full/partial funding was based on provider perceptions. In most cases partial funding included full tuition fees, however, the level of maintenance of those partially-funded varied.

Table 1: Student interviewee profile

Course	Number of students
Cohort	
2020-21	8
2021-22	10
2022-23	4
Course	
Level 6 Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre	11
Level 6 Diploma in Professional Dance	8
Level 6 Diploma in Professional Acting	1
Level 5 Diploma in Professional Dance	2
Level of funding	
Full DaDA	9
Partial DaDA	13
Age	
17	2
18	5
19+	15
Gender	
Female	15
Male	7
Ethnicity	
White	16
Ethnic minority backgrounds	6
Disability	
Yes	2
No	20

Students entered their performing arts training with a range of qualifications and experiences. Students' prior qualifications and training included:

- GCSEs in related subjects such as drama and dance.

- Level 3 BTEC National Diploma.

- Foundation courses.

- Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diploma.

- Teaching diploma.

- Dance grade exams, such as in ballet and tap, or dance courses.

- Conservatoire classes.

Students' prior work experience included paid and unpaid roles in:

- Performing arts festival.

- Stage shows, such as musical theatre.

- Dance school shows.

- Film shoots.

- Teaching younger students at dance school.

1.2.2 Online surveys

DfE developed and conducted two online surveys which were completed by current students and alumni of DaDA eligible courses. Surveys were distributed through training providers via a range of channels, including email, provider newsletters, social media and other communications.

The surveys ran from 30th March to 15th May 2023.

Responses to the online surveys were processed and cleaned by DfE and data was provided to CGR in the format of data tabulations. The final sample comprised:

- 274 current students across 12 providers, 184 of which had received DaDA funding and 89 had not received DaDA funding.[9]

- 302 alumni across 10 providers, of which 224 had received DaDA funding and 78 had not received DaDA funding.

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[9] N=1 respondent did not answer the question about whether they had received DaDA funding.

Survey respondent profile

The profile of responders to the online surveys with current students and alumni are detailed in the appendix (Tables 7 to 13). In summary:

- Respondents were primarily female across both surveys (current students 79%, n=216, alumni 71%, n=213), which reflects the profile seen in the performing arts industry. No significant differences were seen between DaDA and non-DaDA current students, however DaDA alumni were significantly more likely to be male (31%, n=69) compared to non-DaDA alumni (17%, n=13).[10]

- The majority of current students were aged between 17-20 years old, with no significant differences between DaDA students (77%, n=141) and non-DaDA students (82%, n=73).

- The majority of alumni had graduated between 2018 and 2022 (DaDA 69%, n=155, non-DaDA 74%, n=58).

- The Level 6 Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre or the Level 6 Diploma in Professional Dance were the most common qualifications being studied for or achieved, with some significant differences noted:

    o DaDA alumni were significantly more likely to have studied for an acting qualification (24%, n=53) compared to non-DaDA alumni (13%, n=10).

    o Non-DaDA alumni were significantly more likely to have studied for a dance qualification (55%, n=43) compared to DaDA alumni (37%, n=82).

- Around one-sixth of current students (16%, n=43) and alumni (17%, n=51) considered themselves to have any long-standing physical or mental health condition, illness, impairment or disability, with no significant differences between DaDA and non-DaDA respondents.

- The majority of current students (DaDA 90%, n=165 non-DaDA 79%, n=70) and alumni (DaDA 88%, n=197, non-DaDA 95%, n=74) were of white ethnicity. The proportion of respondents from any mixed, Asian or Black African/Caribbean ethnic groups was highest amongst current non-DaDA students (21%, n=19) and lowest amongst non-DaDA alumni (5%, n=4).

Data on school type, qualifications, eligibility for free school meals (FSM) and perceptions of socio-economic background are also detailed in the appendix (Tables 14 to 20).

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[10] Almost all current students (98%, n=268) and alumni (97%, n=292) indicated that their gender was the same as the sex they were assigned at birth (see appendix Table 8).

Almost all (DaDA 97%, n=179, non-DaDA 99%, n=88) current students had performing arts experience prior to applying for their course (Figure 1). The most commonly mentioned were school-based experience:

- School/college performances (DaDA 74%, n=136, non-DaDA 63%, n=56).

- School/college courses (DaDA 57%, n=105, non-DaDA 55%, n=49).

- Summer schools (DaDA 56%, n=103, non-DaDA 61%, n=54).

Just under one-fifth said they had previously had employment in the performing arts (DaDA 18%, n=34, non-DaDA 19%, n=17).

Figure 1: Prior performing arts experience (current students)
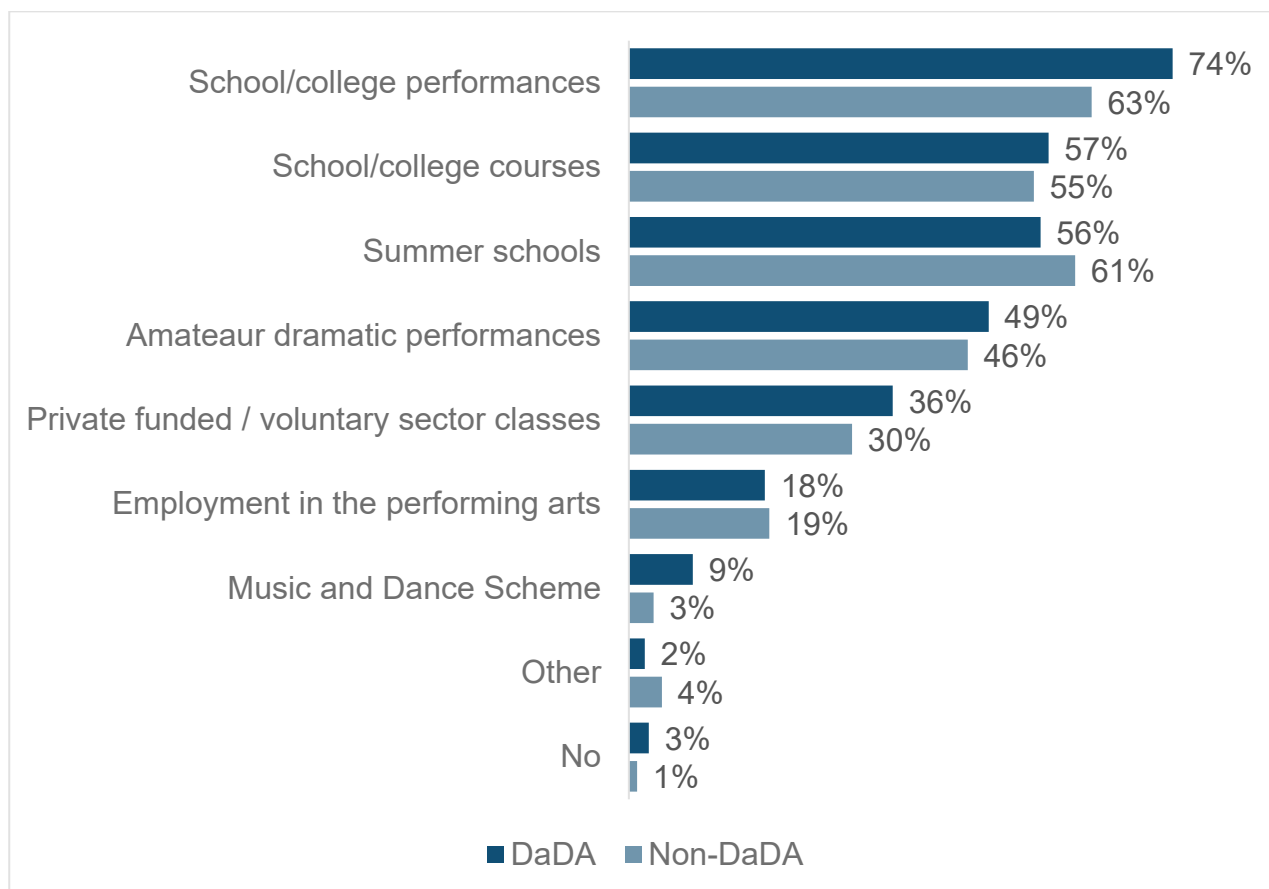
Base: Current DaDA students (184), current non-DaDA students (89)

Source: Current students survey

1.3 Considerations when reading this report

- Where reference is made to students' views, these are the views of DaDA funded students interviewed unless otherwise stated.

- The quantitative online surveys were administered to current students and alumni via providers and it was not possible to identify whether all current students and alumni received the invitation to take part in the surveys. Furthermore, response to the surveys was self-selecting, in that students and alumni decided whether to respond. Together with the relatively low number of responses received, this means the survey data is likely to have been impacted by sampling and/or non-response bias. The majority of this report is therefore based on findings from the qualitative interviews and where statements are made about providers' and students' views, these are generally presented qualitatively. Where the source of the data is from the quantitative surveys, this has been made clear in the report. Survey findings are presented in the main body of the report if they provide additional insights or detail. Survey findings are presented in footnotes if they provide supporting evidence to the qualitative interviews. Any findings presented based on the quantitative survey data should be treated with caution.

- The interview sample consisted of 15 providers and 22 current students. As such, analysis was based on small numbers, particularly in relation to current students. Statements based on the qualitative interview evidence cannot therefore, be considered to be representative of the wider student population.

- Furthermore, this research does not include employer views.

- Online survey questions were not compulsory throughout the surveys. A small number of respondents did not answer some questions. Analysis is based on the number of respondents who were asked each question and where respondents have not answered a question this is indicated in the report.

- Where online survey response codes have been combined (netted) in the report, there may be small differences compared to the data presented in the figures or tables due to rounding.

- Inferential statistics such as Z-tests and T-tests have been utilised to identify any statistically significant differences at the 95% level of confidence between sub-groups, e.g. DaDA versus Non DaDA responses for the current student and alumni online surveys. A minimum base of n=30 was set for conducting any inferential statistics. Differences between sub-groups are only significant where stated.

2. Awareness and promotion of DaDA

The providers interviewed marketed the DaDA scheme through a range of strategies, including:

- Their websites and social media.

- Pop-up banners and flyers at exhibitions/events attended, such as a national dance festival.

- Presentations and conversations at open days and outreach events.

> Once you have that conversation [with a student], you recognise what a difference that's going to make to them as an individual. They're not going to walk away from three years' training with an enormous loan…there's lots of positives about being able to go out and talk to people about what the DaDA can do for them. – *Provider*

In addition to provider marketing, students interviewed also mentioned finding out about the scheme directly from providers, including:

- Through staff at the institution they were already studying at.

- Prior to, or at the audition, and when making enquiries about courses.

- From the application form or from details included in an offer letter.

Students who were previously on the Music and Dance Scheme[11] (MDS)[12] gained awareness of the DaDA scheme and the diplomas it funded from their institution.

Word of mouth was also important, for example, learning about the scheme from other students in receipt of the funding, or former students. Some providers considered that raising DaDA awareness was a challenge, and at times being reliant on whether students' dance teachers had knowledge of it.

In the online surveys, three quarters (75%, n=138) of current DaDA students and 6 out of 10 (62%, n=138) of DaDA alumni were aware of the DaDA scheme before they decided to apply for their diploma.

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[11] The Music and Dance Scheme provides grants and help with fees at 8 independent schools and 21 centres for advanced training. Financial help is available for those aged 8-19 for music schools and 11-19 for dance schools. https://www.gov.uk/music-dance-scheme.

[12] In the online surveys, 13% (n=23) of current DaDA students and 7% (n=6) of current non-DaDA students were part of the MDS scheme between the ages of 8 and 19. A further 4% (n=8) of DaDA alumni were part of the MDS scheme between the ages of 8 and 19. No non-DaDA alumni were part of the MDS scheme.

Around half of students interviewed thought that awareness of the scheme could be improved so that potential applicants could be informed about DaDA funding (and providers who offer it) prior to selecting courses.

> Because I heard through other people, I then knew about it, but if I didn't have that network, then it might have been harder to find out about it because it was only really if you dug into the websites of the colleges that you found about it. When you get accepted for a place, they send through [information] about the DaDAs but that's after you've already accepted. *- Student*

Students suggested awareness-raising strategies including:

- Better advertising and promotion, including use of the government website to clearly explain the funding and give it parity with higher education student loans, and advice and guidance at secondary school for those studying performing arts qualifications.

- Communications that were more student-friendly, such as explaining the income bands and that the level of DaDA funding was subject to income assessment.

2.1 Alternative destinations

Most of the students interviewed considered and/or applied to other institutions offering performing arts qualifications before deciding on the one they attended[13]. These included:

- Other providers offering diplomas.

- Providers, including universities, offering degree courses.

- Further Education colleges offering BTEC National Diplomas.

Some of these other options would have provided DaDA funding. Others, did not, for example because a BTEC National Diploma was non fee-paying or a degree would be supported by student finance. In some instances, students were unsure whether courses were eligible for DaDA funding.

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[13] Over 9 out of 10 (93%, n=172) of the current DaDA students surveyed had also applied to other courses or institutions, although less than half (45%, n=83) said that the alternative courses would have provided DaDA funding. The majority of current non-DaDA students had also applied elsewhere (85%, n=76), although the figure was significantly lower compared to DaDA students.

2.2 Factors affecting provider and course selection

Students interviewed identified a range of factors that determined their selection of their current provider and course, including:

- Financial considerations such as DaDA being offered, and location (enabling them to live at home or in a more affordable area).

- Quality of provision, relating to recommendation, reputation, breadth of offer and facilities.

- Positive experiences, such as through engagement with staff and students during open days and outreach.

- The diploma was more practical and less academic than a degree.

- The audition process was also a determining factor (explored further in section 3.2.2).

Many students emphasised the importance of the 'right fit' for them which might combine factors such as the practical emphasis of the course, quality of provision and experience.

Reasons for choosing their course provided by current students who responded to the online survey mirror the findings from the interviews. The top reason was the course reputation or quality, which was mentioned by around three-quarters of students (DaDA 75%, n=138, non-DaDA 78%, n=69). Just over half (53%, n=98) of DaDA students said that the funding was a reason for choosing their course or institution, making it the second most frequent reason mentioned and significantly higher than for non-DaDA students (6%, n=5). Course type, location and recommendation were reasons for around one-third of DaDA students and one-quarter to one-third of non-DaDA students.[14]

2.3 Widening participation

In their 2006 report, Neelands et al.[15] noted that whilst there had been real achievements related to widening participation, a complex mix of social, economic, cultural and other factors inhibited access for certain under-represented groups. Providers interviewed for this research acknowledged a lack of diversity and under-representation of students who were: disabled, male, and/or from disadvantaged or ethnic minority backgrounds. Factors

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[14] Course type (DaDA 35%, n=64, non-DaDA 33%, n=29), location (DaDA 34%, n=62, non-DaDA 24%, n=21), recommendation (DaDA 34%, n=62, non-DaDA 27%, n=24). Other responses provided by current students comprised: A-Levels were also offered (n=3), it was the only offer they received (n=2), the feel of the school (n=2) or individual responses of: the DaDA funding available, did not get a better offer, better boarding houses and facilities, favourite choice, to have a change of teachers, other college had financial issues.

[15] Neelands, J. et al. (2006) *Dance and Drama Awards Scheme Evaluation Project: Phase 2*. Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research (p.5).

perceived to affect this and which might mean students would be less likely to apply included:

- Student perceptions of careers in the performing arts being for the middle classes and/or those who are relatively wealthy.

- Performing arts not being promoted as a potential or 'proper' career at school.

- A reduction in drama studies in school and/or not having studied for a performing arts BTEC National Diploma.

- Not seeing oneself represented, for example on stage or screen.

- Lack of prior opportunities to engage in performing arts activities, such as classes, potentially due to lack of local provision in more deprived areas or their affordability.

Some providers considered that wider representation of students from ethnic minority backgrounds was limited due to the demographic representation of their local area (largely white British), which could be different to representation in institutions located in London or the Midlands. In addition, some students prefer to stay in the area in which they lived with peers from the same backgrounds.

Providers which offered the MDS stated that it led to some progression onto the DaDA scheme. However, this varied according to factors such as:

- Students might wish to move to another provider having studied for the MDS for several years in the same institution.

- Financial barriers for parents due to the DaDA funding being less than for the MDS.

Overall, providers were endeavouring to widen representation, largely through outreach work, such as strategically targeting schools and colleges in deprived areas or, those with high numbers of students from ethnic minority backgrounds.

> We have ploughed a lot of money into outreach this year. We reap the benefits really from doing it. We have had a lot of applications from outreach work. …I know that the outreach coordinator will target underprivileged colleges…. She does a lot of outreach out there and we have had quite a few students come from there because of it. So, we do try and target underprivileged students. - *Provider*

Strategies to widen participation included:

- Attending school and college careers fairs, trade fairs and exhibitions.

- Workshops in schools and colleges locally or more widely across the region or United Kingdom.

- Putting on shows, for example in schools or local theatres.

- Working with youth groups.

- Summer schools, taster days and open days.

- Providing audition support days.

- Partnering with arts organisations and theatres, for example those that work with people from ethnic minority background or disabilities.

- Running boys' only events, for example, in dance, and open days.

- Fostering relationships with dance teachers, for example, for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

> **Case example: Outreach work**
>
> A provider was invited to work in a primary school in a very deprived area as part of its diversity and equality week. The provider's students put on dance classes with the aim of generating enthusiasm for dance and giving the message that the children can achieve anything if they really want to. This was perceived to be a good opportunity for the students involved as well as being a positive message to make which might impact on these children's perceptions of what they might achieve.

Providers noted some success in attracting students to auditions, offering places and consequently achieving greater diversity. However, efforts were not always successful, for example there being insufficient interest in a provider's Boys' Day to host it. A few considered the withdrawal of previous DfE widening participation funding as detrimental to efforts to achieve this aim[16]:

> Now that has stopped…anything we do in terms of widening participation, whilst it is great, isn't as intense or to that level, because we don't have that level of funding. You find that when they audition, they are not the standard that they could be, that they would have been when there was meaningful DaDA funding for widening participation. - *Provider*

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[16] Widening participation funding formed a historic part of the DaDA scheme, but ceased in 2007 with the funding included in the main scheme.

3. DaDA selection and eligibility, application and administration

Providers' and students' views on these aspects of the scheme broadly fell into three categories:

- Application process.

- Selection and eligibility criteria.

- DaDA administration.

3.1 The application process

In the online surveys, the majority (86%, n=159) of current DaDA students said that their parents/carers were involved in their application process. Three-fifths (61%, n=113) said that they themselves were involved in the application process and two-fifths (41%, n=75) that the performing arts institution was involved.

Overall, providers considered that the application forms were generally straightforward for students and their parents/carers to complete. Students largely agreed with this although a few felt it was lengthy and that an online application would be preferable, primarily because it might reduce the time spent completing it. However, providers stated that parents/carers expressed uncertainty about, or experienced difficulty in, gathering the relevant documentation, such as tenancy agreements, written benefit notifications for a tax year and the Section C unemployment office stamp[17]. Such difficulties were also confirmed by some students. Lack of clarity of language or explanation of terms also led to requests for support, such as around what a SA302[18] was and what independent status meant. The following issue was also identified both by a provider and a student.

> There's three boxes: which lodgings will you be in: 'with your parents', 'student lodgings' or 'own home, including rented'. So, a lot of people tick 'own home' because it says, 'including rented' and they're renting their property, a student house. Therefore, I have to ask them to re-fill in the form as it's not their own home but student lodgings. – *Provider*

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[17] A provider stated that Section C of the DaDA application form required confirmation of a parent/carer's unemployment status. This meant that a member of the unemployment office needed to stamp the form in this section.

[18] SA302 is a His Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) document providing evidence of income: https://www.gov.uk/sa302-tax-calculation.

3.1.1 Support for applications

Providers offered support for application completion through a range of approaches, including:

- Telephone, email or in-person meetings (either online or face-to-face).

- Support events, where parents/carers can attend in person with the forms, or an online presentation with question and answer session.

- Creating a spreadsheet with triggers to send reminder alerts to parents/carers via email, particularly in relation to reassessments.

- Issuing guidance alongside the forms, including for example, links to the government website and additional information about income bands.

Students confirmed in the interviews that providers were helpful in supporting the completion of DaDA applications, providing guidance on the application stages and responding to parental queries. However, several students stated no support was required, with a few considering it relatively straightforward compared to other student finance applications.

3.2 Selection and eligibility criteria

Providers used an equitable audition process which ranked students on talent first but also their potential, in line with government guidance.

> Sometimes you see the raw talent in the room, so they might not have as much experience, but that potential box is key to giving them a better score because with further training, you know that you can take them on that journey. *- Provider*

They mentioned use of the Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre (CDMT) code of conduct to support a fair process. Students referred to separate DaDA scheme auditions in a few cases. Provisional offers were subsequently based on this audition information. Financial circumstances were the next determiner of offers so that if two auditionees had the same marks, those with the greatest financial need would be offered a provisional place. Subsequent completion of the DaDA application form, with evidence of income, determined funding eligibility. Final offers were then dependent on the provider having sufficient funding from their overall DaDA allocation.

A few providers however, commented on the impact of the DaDA income bands in terms of attracting the best talent:

It is getting harder and harder to find talented people who qualify for the funding. Students who are at the right standard for the profession. So, what it has done, whilst it might have increased widening participation, because you are picking up lower income people, you are not picking up more talented people, you have actually lost those people in the mid-salary bands. - *Provider*

Most students did not mention any concerns with the eligibility criteria, but a few considered these could be communicated better.

We are told that not everybody will get DaDA. I think it should be clearer if you do fit into the category of being able to get it, or why you don't. - *Student*

3.2.1 Support for the audition process

Providers stated that students were supported to audition through a range of means to aid accessibility and affordability:

- Online auditions for those with difficulty in attending.

- Online audition or video file submission as a first stage before face-to-face recalls.

- Auditions all on one day eliminating the potential additional cost of recalls.

- Regional/outreach auditions to reduce attendance costs and in one case, travel cost support for those from low-income households.

- No additional audition specifically for DaDA funding, although as stated above, this varied.

- Audition fee waivers for those from low-income households, or, more generally for any auditionee: no fee or a reduced fee from what was previously charged.

3.2.2 Student views on auditions

Several of the students interviewed referred to the value of being able to visit the institution, speak to staff and current students and see classes in action. For some, the audition process helped confirm high standards, for example in being challenged or given honest, developmental feedback.

Several of the students interviewed considered auditions could create affordability issues in terms of fees, and/or travel and accommodation costs, with students potentially making multiple trips to audition. During the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, providers helped with clear guidance, for example on submitting video audition recordings. However, a few students experienced additional challenges or concerns around these.

> We hired a hall near where we live because my living room wasn't
> big enough and we didn't want that to hinder my chances. – *Student*

The vast majority of current DaDA students who responded to the online survey were satisfied with their experience of the audition process (91% very satisfied/satisfied, n=167) (see appendix Figure 9). Most non-DaDA students were also satisfied (75% very satisfied/satisfied, n=67) although the proportion was significantly lower than seen for DaDA students.

Survey respondents were also asked whether they experienced any barriers in relation to the audition process and responses were similar amongst current DaDA and non-DaDA students (see appendix Figure 10). The most common barrier was affordability, mentioned by around 1 out of 5 current students (DaDA 20%, n=36, non-DaDA 19%, n=17).

3.2.3 Challenges in selection and applying the eligibility criteria

A few providers considered the definition of independent status was insufficiently clear or inclusive of students' individual circumstances, such as student-parent/carer relationship breakdown or part-time student status.

> The principle is absolutely correct that if you're having to give up
> earning to come and train that this [DaDA] gives you access to
> enable you to do that. But is it absolutely necessary to have three
> whole years of earnings to prove independence from your parents or
> carers? – *Provider*

Aside from this, providers mostly expressed issues with the funding allocation model as:

- They were not necessarily able to offer funding to all eligible students due to being limited by their allocation.

- Annual variation in parents/carers' financial means created unpredictable student numbers as one year a minority of applicants could be eligible for full maintenance and another year all could be.

- There was potential for students who were more talented than those already offered places to be auditioned late on in the academic year, but for the allocation to have already been used.

> I don't want to ever be in a situation where I say to a student, "Yes
> you can [have a DaDA]. Oh sorry, no you can't." – *Provider*

- It created uncertainty while financial eligibility was assessed.

> **Case example: Potential application scenario**
>
> Should the parents/carers of a student who was offered a provisional place not be able to afford their contribution, a place could then be offered to the next most talented eligible student. However, in the meantime, the next eligible student may have accepted an offer at another institution. This scenario also created uncertainty for students.

3.3 DaDA administration

Providers identified positive and negative features of administering DaDA.

3.3.1 Positive features

- Provision of five per cent administration funding.

- ESFA support, in terms of high quality and helpful responses to provider queries.

- ESFA provision of documents which were consistent over time, set clear expectations and, for example in the case of pre-populated budget spreadsheets, supported provider workload.

> It's just a matter of you changing anything that's been amended and that's made a huge difference, because before I felt there was so much room for human error. - *Provider*

3.3.2 Negative features

Key challenges that providers experienced in administering DaDA included managing its protracted system, financial planning and dealing with ESFA forms.

Workload demands

Several providers perceived the system to be too protracted as it includes financial evidence checks, provisional offers and potential delays and difficulties due primarily to self-employed parent/carer tax years, which could also adversely impact students' timelines in organising accommodation for the start of the academic year.

> With the MDS, and it would be great if we could do this with the DaDA as well, is that I can do a provisional assessment for funding. So, if people haven't got their tax returns ready, they can estimate their income and once the tax return has been processed, they then send me that in and I can do a reassessment...I think that would really speed up the process for DaDA and getting everything submitted on time. - *Provider*

Financial planning challenges

Not knowing final student numbers and associated funding allocations until offers have been accepted, which could be late in the academic year, impacted on providers' ability to plan effectively, for example, for staff costs.

ESFA form issues

Concerns and areas for improvement were raised including:

- Application, self-declaration and budget monitoring forms issued by ESFA in April were considered out of step with being able to make offers to students from the beginning of March.

- Paper-based ESFA systems could be more efficient if they changed to online formats as, for example, providers could then search spreadsheets for student data.

- ESFA might provide standardised forms which could be used from the audition stage so that it would be easier to extract information requested by ESFA later in the year, such as on student ethnicity.

- Earlier publication of funding for the next academic year being desirable.

- Difficulties encountered in managing cases where false declaration of income arises.

    Something that a lot of people complain about is some people misuse the application process, so some people who are slightly more well-off find ways around it so they get more money than they are entitled to. – *Student*

4. Perceptions of the DaDA scheme

The providers interviewed universally welcomed DaDA funding for the benefits it offered students and consequently considered it met its main aim - it enabled talented students with the greatest need to receive funding without which they would most likely not be able to achieve a place and their career goals. Those in the lowest income band, below £21,000, were considered to be those who benefited most by receiving full funding (fees and maintenance payments with no parent/carer contributions).[19]

> I don't want DaDA to die because these students can leave and have a highly regarded qualification and they've not got a massive student loan around their neck that they've got to pay off. And I know their parents have had to make a lot of sacrifices along the way because of the contribution they make and they can't get a student loan for accommodation. – *Provider*

Most students interviewed had their fees paid through the scheme and several received maintenance support also, either the full amount possible or partial funding. A few were unsure of the extent of their funding. Almost all of the students interviewed stated they would not have been able to afford their training without the funding. Only one stated 'yes' without some form of caveat, such as it would be a struggle.

The importance of the scheme was also noted amongst survey respondents. The vast majority (89%, n=164) of current DaDA students said that they would not have been able to study for their diploma without receiving the DaDA. Similarly, 85% (n=190) of DaDA alumni said they would not have been able to study their course without the funding. Only 2 current students and 7 alumni said that they would have been able to study without their DaDA. The remaining respondents were unsure (current students 10%, n=18, alumni 12%, n=27).[20]

Students interviewed considered that if they had not received the funding and been able to train, their alternative options included:

- Attending a sixth form or further education college, for example to study a BTEC National Diploma.

- Applying for a degree course due to student loan access.

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[19] Dance and Drama Awards: income scales. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dance-and-drama-awards-income-scales.

[20] Further feedback about DaDA provided in the online surveys included: 'would not have been able to attend course without award' (current students n=19, alumni n=42), 'grateful for award' (current students n=13, alumni n=10), 'it makes performing arts school more accessible/inclusive' (current students n=24, alumni n=9), 'maintain the scheme' (alumni n=4). See appendix Tables 23 and 24.

- Self-studying their discipline.

- Attending other training.

> I would have probably stayed at home and gone to a local dance school. I would have tried to be happy but it isn't what I would have wanted to do. - *Student*

A few considered that studying for a BTEC National Diploma or a degree might mean compromising the fit of course to their talent and/or a reduction in training quality.

Students' views on the positives of the DaDA scheme reflected provider views:

- Access to training that would otherwise be unaffordable, creating an opportunity to pursue their passion, dreams and career of choice.

- Enabling students to train from aged 16 and gain early employment access to the sector.

- Offering a non-academic pathway compared to a degree.

- Not needing to repay the funding and not having the associated financial worries.

- Financial support for parents/carers.

Many of the students interviewed considered there were no negatives to the scheme and all but one DaDA respondent who completed the current student survey said that if they were given the opportunity again, they would do the same or a similar course at a dance and drama school (see appendix Figure 12).

> It's hard to say. I will forever be grateful for it because I am in this wonderful building having all of this wonderful training. I can't think of any negatives for it. – *Student*

The vast majority of alumni also said that they would do the same or a similar course at a dance and drama school if given the opportunity again (see appendix Figure 13).[21] However, alumni were significantly less likely to say that they would do the same course (DaDA 50%, n=112, non-DaDA 45%, n=35) compared to current students (DaDA 76%, n=139, non-DaDA 66%, n=59). Furthermore, alumni who had not received DaDA funding were significantly more likely to say that they were unsatisfied and they would not have attended a dance or drama school if they were given the opportunity again (DaDA 6%, n=13, non-DaDA 13%, n=10).[22]

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[21] Further feedback about the course provided in the online surveys included: 'positive/good experience/ grateful' (current students n=25, alumni n=34). See appendix Tables 25 and 26.
[22] Further feedback about the course provided in the online surveys included: 'negative experience' (current students n=5, alumni n=12). See appendix Tables 25 and 26.

4.1 Key concerns

Concerns expressed by providers and students mainly related to funding issues.

4.1.1 Course stability

The Neelands et al.[23] report also stated that one of the DaDA scheme aims at the time was 'to bring some financial stability…to the independent market.' The majority of providers interviewed in our research stated that DaDA supported course stability, although several stated that current DaDA funding levels were not covering costs and this compromised stability (see section 4.1.2 below). Several stated that without the DaDA scheme they would not survive, would struggle financially or would not be able to offer the diploma.[24] This included providers that were small, medium or large[25], indicating that size was not necessarily a factor in maintaining sustainability. A few also expressed concerns of losing students to universities where they could access loan schemes.

> You'd lose those young, talented students if that funding route went because they'd stay on at school, not really enjoying what they're doing. They can come at 16 and do what they love to do and get a high-level qualification. So, I'm a real advocate for the DaDA funding to remain. – *Provider*

4.1.2 Funding levels and course subsidisation

Providers of all sizes said that per student funding levels have not been regularly reviewed and have not therefore kept pace with provider costs for delivering courses. This has led to increased subsidisation (of around 50% mentioned by a few providers) from non-DaDA funds with associated concerns expressed around business sustainability.

Subsidisation affected providers' ability to utilise their income elsewhere, for example in providing enhanced training opportunities. It was also seen as unfair as it meant fee paying students were effectively subsiding DaDA students and/or that fundraising was needed. One provider reported employing professionals to fundraise but they had found it had become more challenging to find funding sources.

> We are very committed and passionate for all the right reasons, but the finances to support what we do just don't really work. Part of the

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[23] Neelands, J. et al. (2006) *Dance and Drama Awards Scheme Evaluation Project: Phase 2*. Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research (p.2).
[24] Providers were asked about receiving DaDA and course stability, but not specifically about their organisation's sustainability.
[25] Small = fewer than a total of 50 DaDA students in the three academic years from 2020-23; medium = fewer than 100 DaDA students; large = more than 100 DaDA students over the same period.

problem is that the actual DaDA funding rate per student hasn't ever increased, not for decades. That doesn't make any sense to anybody to give the same amount of money to schools 20 years later and expect the same or better outcomes. - *Provider*

4.1.3 Allocation variance

Several small- or medium-sized providers considered that different funding allocations were received by different institutions and were based on historical data. This was perceived to be inequitable. For example, one provider referred to having to provide the same training hours and qualifications and that they had the same expenditure categories such as staff and utilities.

4.1.4 Unused allocations

Reduction in funding occurred in the subsequent year if a provider's allocation was not fully used in the current year. A few small[26] providers saw this as akin to penalising them when they may not have had sufficient eligible applicants for one year but may the next.

4.1.5 Parent/carer income bands

Most providers viewed parent/carer income bands as unrealistic for affordability of maintenance payments and fee contributions. This had been compounded in recent years by cost-of-living increases.

> Just before everything started going up, my family were just about getting by…I think the bands reflecting the cost-of-living crisis would be an improvement for a lot of families. – *Student*

There was acknowledgement that there needed to be an upper income threshold, but some viewed £90,000 as too low, as for example, it does not take account of those with several children.

Providers referred to a range of income bands (from the lowest £21,000 to the highest, £90,000) to illustrate the point that parents/carers were not in a position to afford maintenance contributions, including some on the MDS scheme. For example, it was cited that a parent with a gross income of between £30,000 and £33,000 would have tuition fees paid but £5,000 for maintenance costs which could prove unaffordable. Such unaffordability led to student drop out or not accepting places offered. Similarly, those

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[26] Providers with fewer than a total of 50 DaDA students in the three academic years from 2020-23.

whose income was between £30,000 and £60,000, referred to as middle income, were also viewed as those who may experience affordability challenges.

> **Case example: Affordability challenges**
>
> A student stated how, one year, their mother received an unforeseen £60 bonus at work. Declaring this meant that it placed them into a higher income band for the subsequent year, resulting in needing to make a higher maintenance contribution in the region of a few hundred pounds. While considered 'tiny in the grand scheme of things', this was nonetheless seen as unfair by the student as the additional income was substantially below the additional expenditure incurred.

Students gave examples of moving courses (to receive associated loan funding) due to parents needing to support another family member financially, and parents losing their jobs which created difficulties. They considered more flexibility might be afforded in such extenuating circumstances.

4.1.6 Maintenance rates

The maintenance rates were said to have not been reviewed for several years and so these too have not kept pace with inflation/cost-of-living increases. This had resulted in a shortfall between what students receive and their accommodation and living costs. Students also raised this as an issue, for example in the context of rent rises. There was also reference to DaDA maintenance funding being lower than the amount that degree students could apply for. Some of the students interviewed also identified maintenance challenges in terms of:[27]

- The level of maintenance not being equitable with that found on degree courses.

- Not being able to afford to live away from home.[28]

- Needing additional finance, such as contributions from wider family members, using an overdraft (for those over 18), and taking a loan.

Providers and students stated that those trained in dance had additional costs also, such as for shoes and costumes.

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[27] Further feedback about DaDA provided in the online surveys included: 'improvements to funding/means testing' current students n=19, alumni n=11. See appendix Tables 23 and 24.
[28] In the online surveys, 86% (n=234) of current students (DaDA 83%, n=152, non-DaDA 92%, n=82) and 82% (n=247) of alumni (DaDA 86%, n=189, non-DaDA 74%, n=58) had to move to study for their course. N=5 DaDA alumni did not answer the question.

> I tend to budget my grant. I'm sure that when it gets to showtime, I
> can allocate a bit my grant for make-up et cetera, or I recycle from
> previous shows or borrow my grandma or aunt's. – *Student*

Both sets of interviewees referred to students needing to work to make up the financial gap, whether for living expenses more broadly or additional costs specifically. For example, one student stated they worked at a theatre for six nights a week. This resulted in what one provider termed, 'burning the candle at both ends' for students on a full-time course, with potential adverse effects.

These themes also emerged in the online surveys with 9 current students referencing the financial impact of the course, such as the affordability of training and the cost of costumes. Furthermore, 11 current DaDA students referenced financial issues, such as not having enough money to cover the cost of travel, rent or food.[29]

> We don't get nearly enough money in maintenance. The money
> doesn't even cover my rent and as I am in the lowest possible
> income band, I have to work until 4am to pay my rent and feed
> myself. – *Current DaDA student*

In the online surveys, the majority of current students and alumni said they had other income sources whilst they were studying, primarily from family or employment.[30] Amongst current students and alumni, DaDA recipients were significantly more likely to be working and less likely to be receiving income from family compared to those who did not receive DaDA funding. This likely reflects the lower familial income status of those receiving DaDA.

In the qualitative interviews, reference was made to parent/carers seeking provider advice on how to raise additional funding, with the provider signposting them to businesses, organisations and charities in their local area. Suggestions for scheme improvements included access to student loans and wider access to maintenance.[31]

> I don't think the Dance and Drama Awards are as attractive now
> because they are means tested. I think it's putting people off because
> they can go and get a different course and get funding automatically

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[29] See appendix Table 23 and 25.

[30] Current students: Family (DaDA 72%, n=132, non-DaDA 84%, n=75), Job (DaDA 53%, n=97, non-DaDA 37%, n=33). Alumni: Family (DaDA 65%, n=146, non-DaDA 79%, n=62), Job (DaDA 62%, n=138, non-DaDA 27%, n=21) (see appendix Figure 15 and 16).

[31] Further feedback about how DaDA funding could be improved provided by current students in the online surveys included: 'maintenance loans/grants' (n=17), 'taking other factors into account' such as family composition and changes in income during the course (n=15), 'increased money/funding towards other costs' such as taking into account cost of living increases (n=15). See appendix Table 27.

for mid- to higher-incomes who may [otherwise] have to contribute
towards the fees. – *Provider*

Providers cited additional costs for which no provision was made from DaDA, such as for travelling to auditions for employment in the third year of the course. This point was echoed by students, alongside travel to competitions, success at which might lead to employment opportunities. It was suggested there might also be funding for top-up conversion of a diploma to a degree or to gain dance teacher qualifications, both of which could open up additional employment avenues.

A lot of people in my year wanted to start the dance teaching diploma
at the same time as they started the DaDA diploma, but because of
the prices I think only about five people could afford it. – *Student*

4.1.7 MDS comparisons

The parent/carer income band for the MDS was stated to be more generous than for DaDA (alongside offering additional support, such as for travel home, uniform and dance exam attendance). This resulted in some students not being able to progress from the former to the latter. It also funded health and wellbeing support which DaDA does not, resulting in providers having to fund this internally for DaDA students for them to achieve course completion.

5. Employment support and progression

All the students interviewed aimed to stay in the performing arts sector and identified their short-term and further career aspirations. Two in their third year had already secured a role or agent. Their aspirations or secured roles in which they would use their discipline/skills included:

- Musical theatre, including the West End and tours.

- Film, television, radio.

- Ballet companies.

- Entertainment, such as on cruise ships.

Several were considering teaching in the performing arts as a supplementary or future career and taking qualifications to achieve this, such as top-ups to gain a degree. Some had already studied for, or planned to study for, a teacher training course, for example the level 4 Diploma in Dance Education.

Similarly, the vast majority of current students responding to the online survey said they planned to stay in the performing arts gaining employment directly related to their qualification (Figure 2). No significant differences were noted between DaDA funded students and non-DaDA students.

Figure 2: Future plans after finishing course (current students)
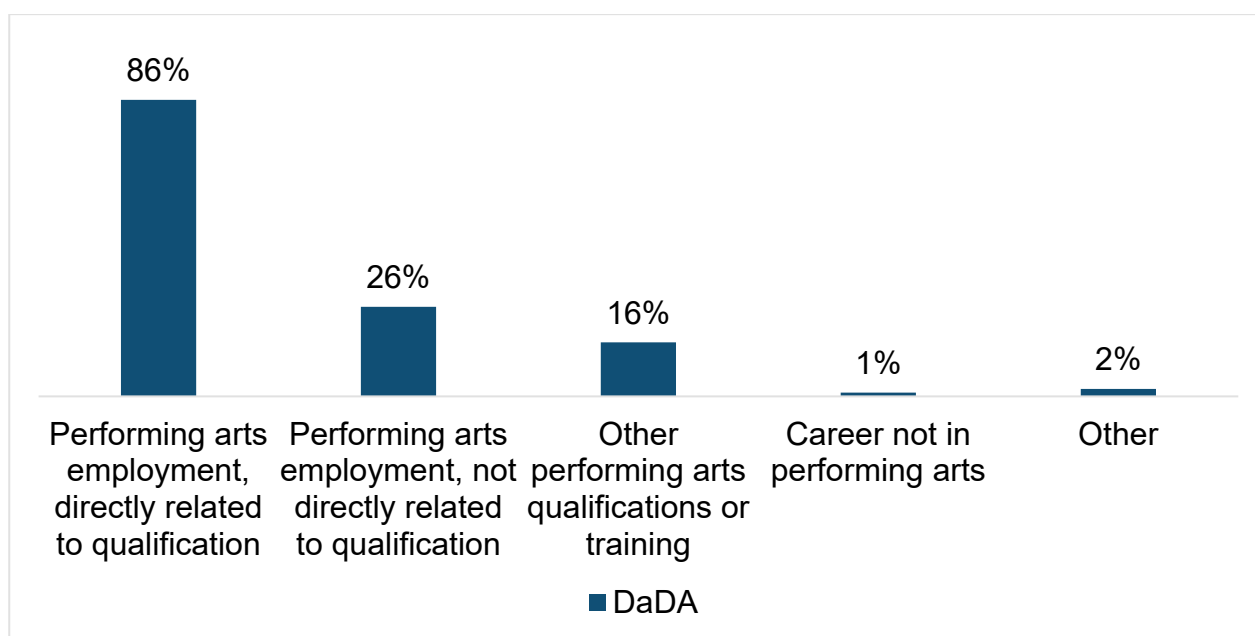
Base: Current DaDA students (184), current non-DaDA students (89)

The providers and students interviewed identified a range of means through which progression to employment was supported. Examples cited have been categorised under two headings:

- Exposure to the sector.

- Ensuring students are employment-ready.

5.1 Exposure to the sector

Providers and students identified how the performing arts was a competitive sector and that being on a DaDA funded diploma provided them with exposure to both individuals and organisations that could help them secure employment.

> There are no job listings. You can't apply to be in [specific London West End show] you need industry exposure, getting an agent and being recommended and DaDA allows you to do that so you get into the room. – *Student*

Providers and students referred to a range of ways in which connections were created between students and employers, either directly through performance and audition opportunities, or indirectly through agents, organisations and intermediaries. Examples provided include:

- Access to agents, for example a member of staff assigning graduates to agents.

- Inviting artistic and casting directors and agents to see the students, for example in shows produced in the third year.

- Enabling students to be auditioned by companies either at the institution or, for example, at conventions.

- Contact with alumni who may know of opportunities, for example if they are now casting directors.

- Signposting to and supporting registration with organisations that offer advice and help access to employment.

> There's a lot of industry interaction. I think it's extraordinary the way in which students are supported in that transition into the business. It's unlike a university…radically different. – *Provider*

Students were appreciative of the efforts made to secure such connections. Some referred to specific staff roles to support gaining employment, such as an industry coordinator and/or access to staff who were working, or had worked in the sector. Those

in the latter case were able to draw on their own experience and networks to offer advice and guidance, either informally or more formally through mentoring provision.

> You don't leave, the door is always open. If you don't know what to do next, you come back and you ask. – *Provider*

Case example: Internal agency provision

One provider has created an internal agency with three full-time agents that work with students to ensure that they have the necessary employment skills, the right profile and that they understand the industry they are going into. They put students in touch with casting agencies and various bodies that will help support them. This reflects a third year that is employment-driven so that agents are invited to performances that students produce in this year. The impact of this provision was that it actively helped students get in the room for auditions.

5.2 Ensuring students are employment-ready

Interviewees also referred to an extensive range of ways in which students were helped to be employment-ready. These largely centred on being aware of industry demands and expectations and how to meet them, including through self-promotion, such as:

- Helping with production and filming of showreels/audition videos and use of an industry app for these.

- Supporting Curriculum Vitae writing and portfolio/professional profile development, including taking headshots.

- Offering practice auditions.

- Arranging visits from leading figures in the sector as well as former graduates from the institution to talk about the industry and how to gain employment.

Providers and students referred to opportunities in the final year of training to apply their skills in practical opportunities and events that offered a bridge into the sector. These included learning from and working alongside industry professionals as well as creating shows.

> They give us the opportunity to choreograph our own pieces which then includes designing the costume, cutting music, lighting. They give us a lot of experience for the industry that isn't just teaching us how to dance, they also give us skills that will give us long careers. – *Student*

Case example: Transition opportunities

The third year of the course is a transition year between being a student and working in the sector, providing lots of opportunities to work with various professional organisations. All third-year students have the opportunity to work in a proper production with a national company, experiencing professional training and preparing them for life in a company. Students in this year also put on their own shows in two cities. The impact is exposure to working with elite performers who help develop students' range of skills and support them to be employment-ready.

Students additionally referred to opportunities such as taught sessions focused on how to:

- Liaise with agents, write to companies and make contacts in the sector.
- Present oneself at an audition or interview, as well as on social media.
- Manage employment-related administration, such as contracts, tax and invoices.

6. Alumni employment

Alumni survey respondents were asked a number of questions about their current employment, employment history and satisfaction with their career. This section focuses on alumni survey responses to explore longer term outcomes of DaDA and non-DaDA students. It does not include feedback from current students or interview data. It should be noted that due to the relatively small and self-selecting nature of the online survey sample, findings may not be representative of all alumni and should be treated with caution.

6.1 Current employment

Figure 3 shows the employment status of alumni at the time of completing the online surveys. The majority of DaDA alumni were in work (88%, n=196), typically paid employment (48%, n=108) or self-employed (35%, n=78). Six percent (n=14) of DaDA alumni were unemployed and looking for work and the same proportion were in further study or training (6%, n=13). A minority were in other employment situations.

Figure 3: Current employment situation (alumni)[32]
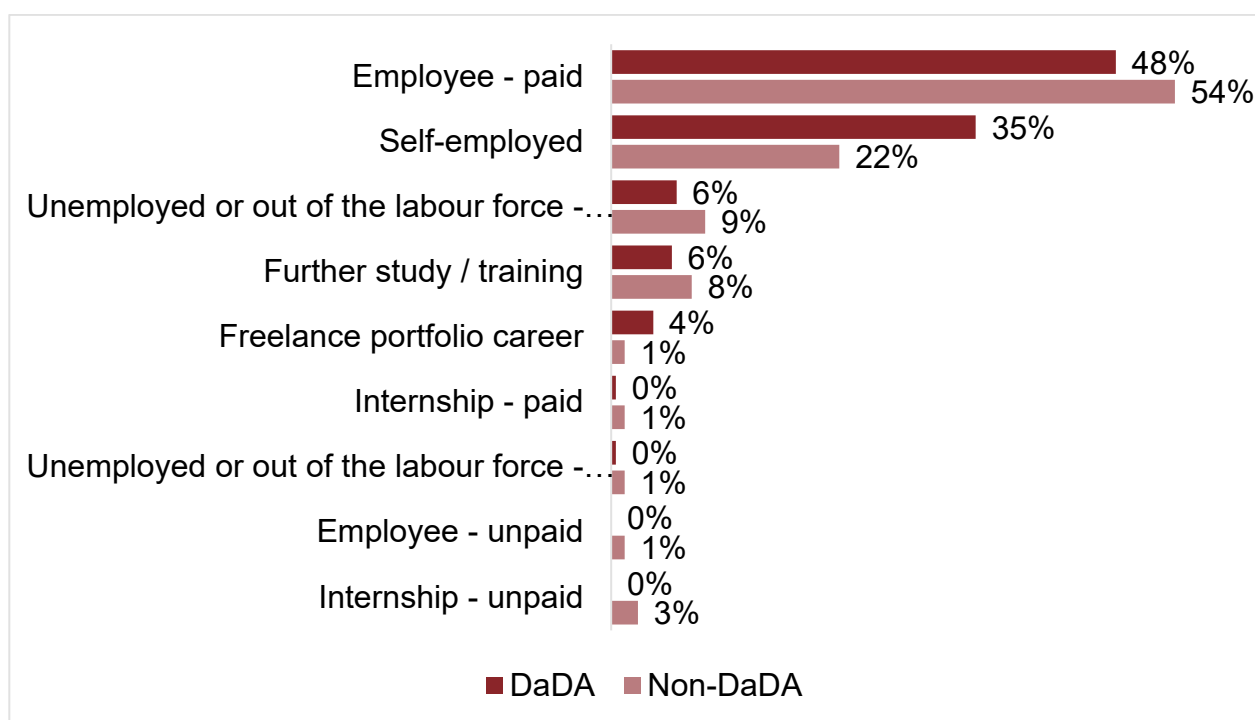
Base: DaDA alumni (224), non-DaDA alumni (78)

Source: Alumni survey

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[32] Nine DaDA alumni stated they had a freelance portfolio career, which comprised self-employment (n=9), paid employment (n=8), further study/training (n=1) and unpaid internships (n=1). One non-DaDA alumni had a freelance portfolio career, comprising self-employment (n=1).

Responses from non-DaDA alumni were very similar, however DaDA alumni were significantly more likely to be self-employed (35%, n=78), compared to non-DaDA alumni (22%, n=17).[33]

Amongst DaDa alumni who were in some form of employment (paid or unpaid):

- The vast majority (87%, n=170 said that they considered this to be their main employment.

- Around two-thirds (67%, n=131) said this employment was in the performing arts.

- Just over half (55%, n=107) said that it was in the same area as their qualification.

The response was similar amongst employed non-DaDA alumni:

- Main employment (80%, n=51)

- Within the performing arts (70%, n=45)

- Within the same area as their qualification (48%, n=31).

A mix of contract types were noted, primarily permanent or open-ended contracts, fixed term contracts or self-employment, with no significant differences between DaDA and non-DaDA alumni (see appendix Figure 17).[34]

6.1.1 Hours worked

Just over half (54%, n=105) of DaDA alumni worked 30 or more hours per week in this employment. Almost one-fifth (18%, n=35) worked between 20-29 hours per week and almost one-third (29%, n=56) worked less than 20 hours per week. Responses amongst non-DaDA alumni were similar, with no significant differences seen between DaDA and non-DaDA alumni.[35]

6.1.2 Pay

Almost three-fifths (59%, n=133) of working DaDA alumni earned less than £30,000 per year for this employment, 15% (n=30), earned £30,000-£40,000, and almost one-tenth (9%, n=17) earned more than £40,000 per year (Figure 4).

No significant differences were found between DaDA and non-DaDA alumni for their gross pay for this employment, except that non-DaDA alumni were significantly more likely to say they were not sure (9%, n=6) compared to DaDA funded alumni (3%, n=5).

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[33] DaDA alumni were significantly more likely to say that they had an agent (50%, n=111) compared to non-DaDA alumni (27%, n=21).
[34] Not answered n=1 DaDA alumni.
[35] Non-DaDA: less than 20 hours (20%, n=13), 20-29 hours (20%, n=13), 30 or more hours (59%, n=38).

Figure 4: Gross pay (alumni)

	DaDA	Non-DaDA
Less than £15,000	33%	31%
£15,000 - £19,999	11%	9%
£20,000 - £24,999	14%	14%
£25,000 - £29,999	10%	8%
£30,000 - £34,999	9%	8%
£35,000 - £39,999	7%	3%
£40,000 - £44,999	2%	3%
£45,000 - £49,999	2%	2%
£50,000 - £54,999	2%	2%
£55,000 - £59,999	1%	0%
More than £60,000	3%	3%
Don't know	3%	9%
Prefer not to say	6%	8%
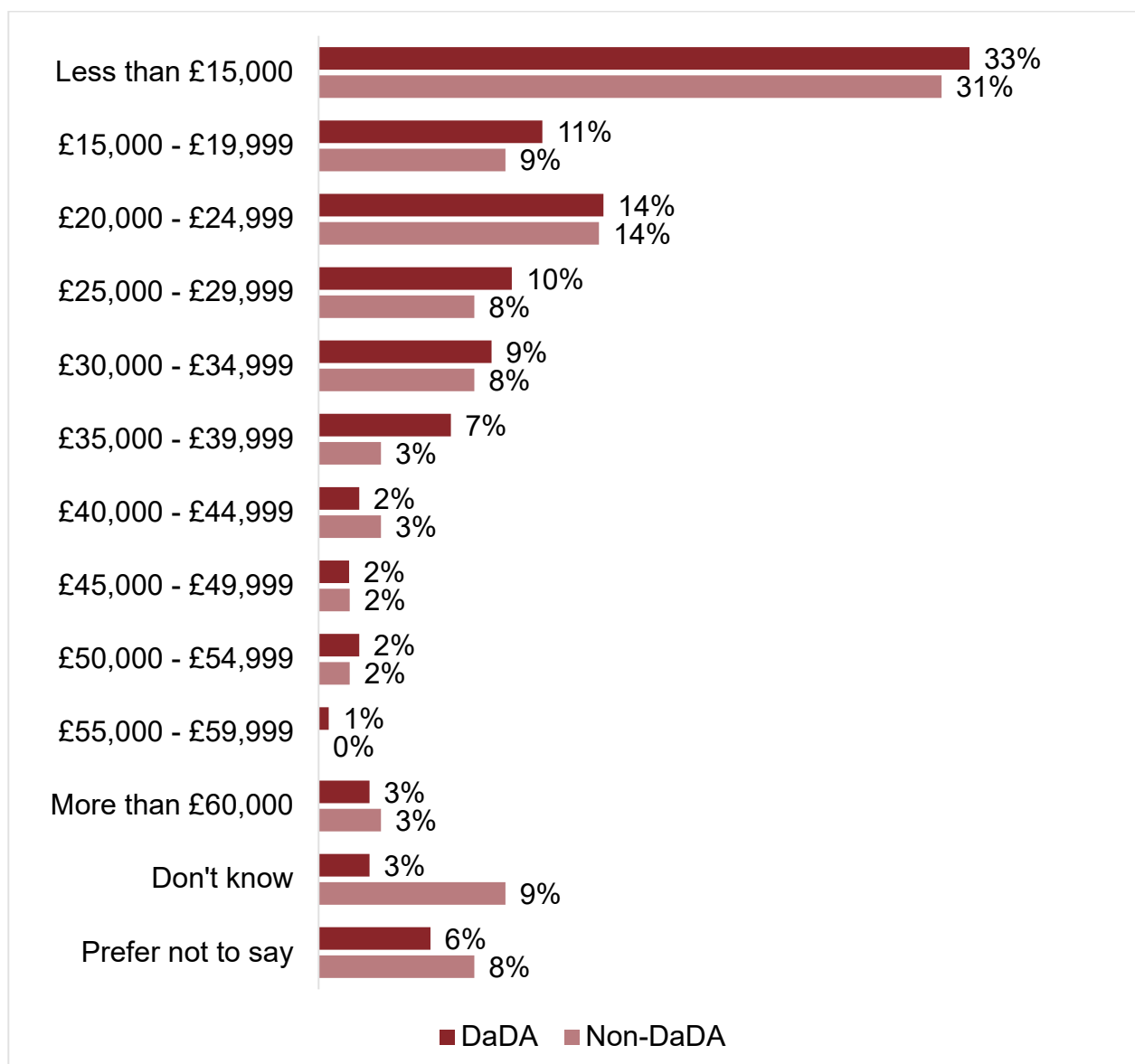
Base: Employed DaDA alumni (196), employed non-DaDA alumni (64)

Source: Alumni survey

6.1.3 Reasons for taking this employment

Figure 5 details the reasons for taking this employment cited by DaDA alumni. The most commonly mentioned reasons were focused around the job itself, namely;

- It was the type of work that they wanted (48%, n=95).

- It involved interesting work (45%, n=88).

- It offered job security (37%, n=72).

Figure 5: Reasons for taking this employment (alumni) [36]
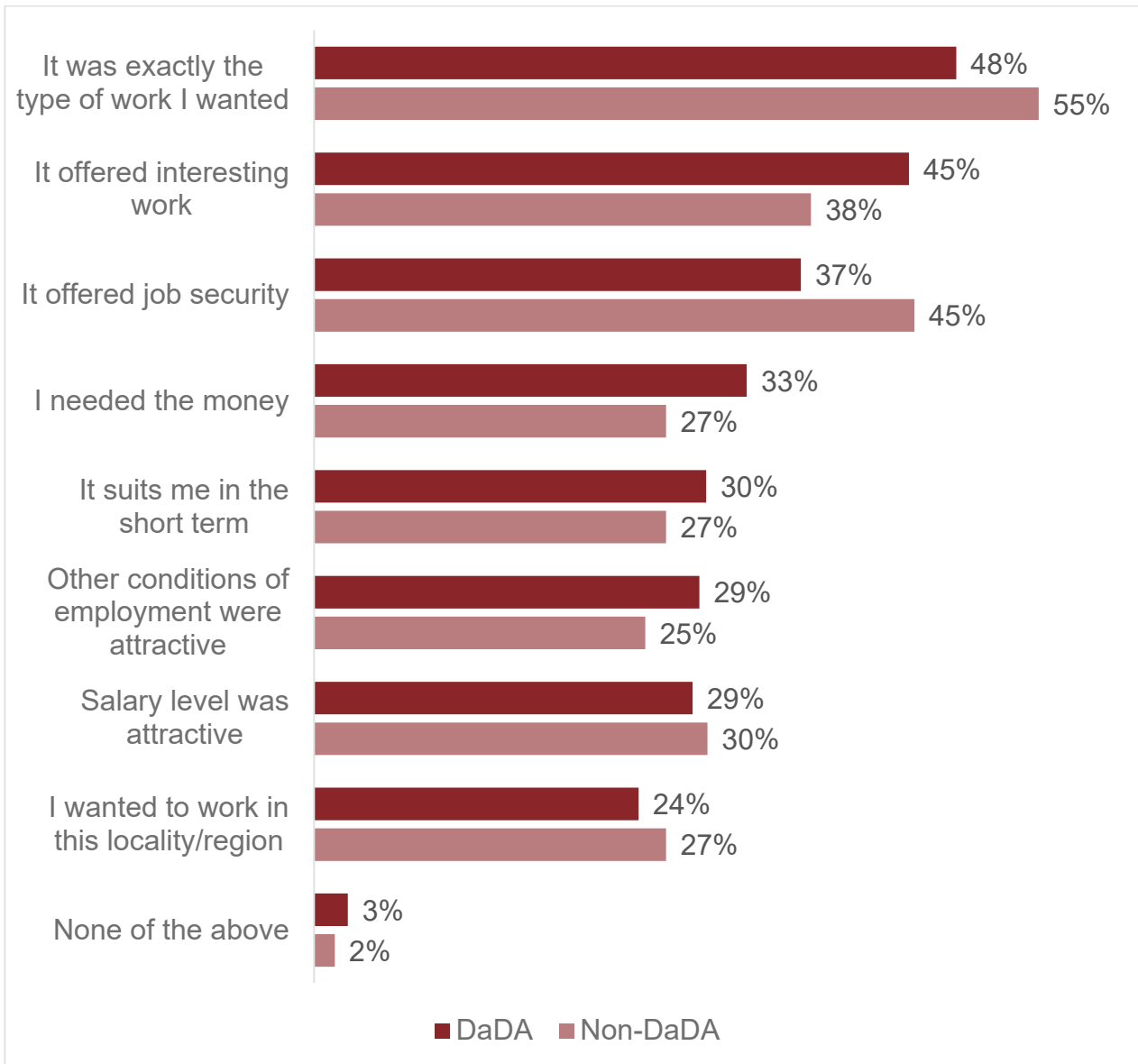
Base: Employed DaDA alumni (196), employed non-DaDA alumni (64)

Source: Alumni survey

Financial reasons were also cited, with one-third (33%, n=64) stating that they needed the money and just under one-third (29%, n=56) that the salary was attractive. A similar proportion said that other conditions of employment were attractive (29%, n=57).

There were indications that some DaDA alumni expected this employment to be temporary, as almost one-third (30%, n=58) stated that the job suited them in the short-term.

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[36] Not answered n=1 DaDA alumni.

The reasons for taking this employment cited by non-DaDA alumni were similar, with no significant differences seen between DaDA and non-DaDA alumni.

6.1.4 Impact of qualification on this employment

Alumni who stated that their job was in the performing arts were asked whether having their qualification had improved their working situation on a range of factors. DaDA alumni were most likely to say that having their qualification had improved the quality of their professional performance activity (71%, n=93) and opportunity for progression (54%, n=71). Around two-fifths (43%, n=56) of DaDA alumni felt that the quantity of professional performance activity was improved and over one-quarter (29%, n=38) that their earnings had been improved as a result of having their qualification.

Mentions amongst non-DaDA alumni were similar, although somewhat lower compared to DaDA alumni. In particular, non-DaDA alumni were significantly less likely to say that having their qualification had improved the quality of their professional performance activity (non-DaDA 51%, n=23, DaDA 71%, n=93), although it was still the top mention.

6.1.5 Other income sources

Just under half (46%, n=90) of employed DaDA alumni had other sources of income, primarily other employment either within (22%, n=43) or outside (18%, n=35) of the performing arts (Figure 6). A minority received income from other sources, including their parents, partner or other friends or family, or benefits.[37]

Non-DaDA alumni were significantly more likely to say that they received income from other sources (64%, n=41) compared to DaDA funded alumni (46%, n=90). In particular, non-DaDA alumni were significantly more likely to receive income from parents (15%, n=12) compared to DaDA alumni (4%, n=8). This likely reflects the better financial position of the parents of alumni who were ineligible to receive a DaDA award when they studied their course. No other significant differences were found between the other income sources of DaDA and non-DaDA alumni.

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[37] All of the 8 respondents who said they received benefits were DaDA alumni: n=7 were receiving Universal Credit and n=1 preferred not to answer the question.

Figure 6: Other sources of income (alumni) [38]
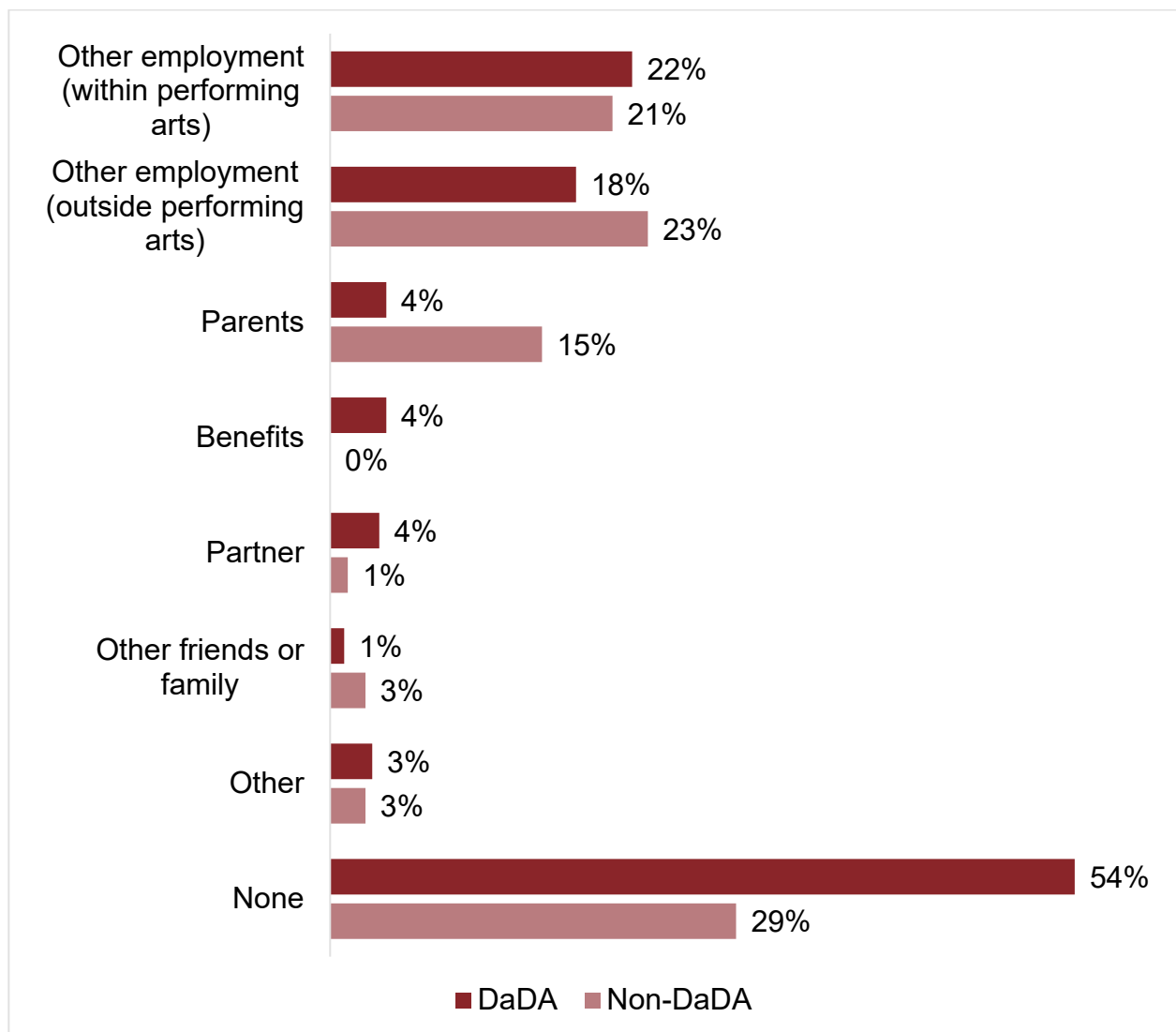
Base: Employed DaDA alumni (196), employed non-DaDA alumni (64)

Source: Alumni survey

6.1.6 Total hours worked – all employment

Around three-fifths (61%, n=119) of DaDA alumni worked 30 hours or more, around one-fifth (19%, n=38) worked 20-29 hours and the same proportion (19%, n=38) worked less than 20 hours per week. Total working hours were similar amongst non-DaDA alumni,[39] with no significant differences seen between DaDA and non-DaDA alumni.

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[38] Not answered n=3 DaDA alumni.
[39] Less than 20 hours 20%, n=13, 20-29 hours 14%, n=9, 30 hours or more 66%, n=42).

6.2 Employment history since completing course

Most DaDA alumni (70%, n=156) stated that they had held between 1-10 jobs (appendix Table 21). Just over one-tenth (11%, n=25) had more than 10 jobs. A small minority (1%, n=3) had been unemployed since completing their course. Almost one-fifth (18%, n=40) were not sure how many jobs they had held.

On average, DaDA alumni had held 7.24 jobs since they had completed their course (including their current employment), of which 5.48 were in the performing arts and 4.93 were directly related to their course (Table 2). The mean number of unpaid performing arts jobs was significantly lower at 0.56.

When looking at year of graduation and employment history, DaDA alumni who graduated in 2022 had an average of 2.12 jobs (1.49 in the performing arts) and DaDA alumni who graduated in 2021 had an average of 3.80 jobs (2.96 in the performing arts). DaDA alumni who graduated over five years ago (2012-2018) had an average of 12.56 jobs (9.56 in the performing arts).

Table 2: Employment since completing training (DaDA alumni)[40]

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Mode
Number of jobs (total)	7.24	0	100	3
Number of jobs within the performing arts	5.48	0	100	1
Number of performing arts jobs directly related to training course	4.93	0	100	1
Number of unpaid performing arts jobs	0.56	0	12	0

Base: DaDA alumni (224)

Source: Alumni survey

The number of jobs held by non-DaDA alumni since completing their course was relatively similar to DaDA alumni (see appendix Tables 21 and 22). However, the mean for non-DaDA alumni for the total number of jobs held, number within the performing arts and number directly related to their course were somewhat lower than seen for DaDA alumni (Tables 2 and 3). In particular, the mean number of jobs held within the performing arts is significantly lower amongst non-DaDA alumni compared to DaDA alumni (DaDA 4.93, non-DaDA 2.93). This may suggest that DaDA alumni have been

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[40] There are a small number of outliers within the DaDA alumni data for the number of jobs held: total number of jobs held 80 n=1, 100 n=2; number of jobs in the performing arts 60 (n=1), 80 (n=1), 100 (n=1); number of performing arts jobs directly related to training 100 (n=1).

more successful in securing performing arts related jobs compared to non-DaDA alumni, although it is difficult to draw conclusions without more detail on the roles, such as length of contract.

Table 3: Employment since completing training (Non-DaDA alumni)[41]

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Mode
Number of jobs (total)	5.02	0	60	4
Number of jobs within the performing arts	2.93	0	14	1
Number of performing arts jobs directly related to training course	2.53	0	14	0
Number of unpaid performing arts jobs	0.44	0	6	0

Base: non-DaDA alumni (78)

Source: Alumni survey

Overall, just over half (52%, n=117) of DaDA alumni said they had been unemployed at some point after the first 6 months of finishing their course.[42] No significant difference in the proportion who had been unemployed was seen compared to non-DaDA alumni (46%, n=36).[43]

However, the online survey data suggests that DaDA alumni who had experienced unemployment may have been unemployed for a shorter period of time compared to non-DaDA alumni (Figure 7). DaDA alumni were significantly *more* likely to say that they had been unemployed for 1-3 months (39%, n=46) compared to non-DaDA alumni (19%, n=7). Furthermore, DaDA alumni were significantly *less* likely to say that they had been unemployed for 1 or more years (6%, n=7), compared to non-DaDA alumni (17%, n=6), although it should be noted that the base for non-DaDA alumni is small for this question (n=36).

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[41] There is one outlier within the non-DaDA alumni data for the number of jobs held: total number of jobs held 60, n=1.
[42] 45% (n=101) said they had not been unemployed, 2% (n=5) preferred not to answer and n=1 respondent gave the response 'don't know'.
[43] 51% (n=40) said they had not been unemployed, n=1 respondent preferred not to answer and n=1 respondent gave the response 'don't know'.

Figure 7: Length of unemployment (alumni) [44]

Bar chart showing length of unemployment comparing DaDA and Non-DaDA alumni:

Length	DaDA	Non-DaDA
less than 1 month	11%	14%
1 - 3 months	39%	19%
3 - 6 months	26%	31%
6 - 12 months	17%	19%
1 - 2 years	3%	8%
2 - 3 years	1%	8%
3 years or more	2%	0%
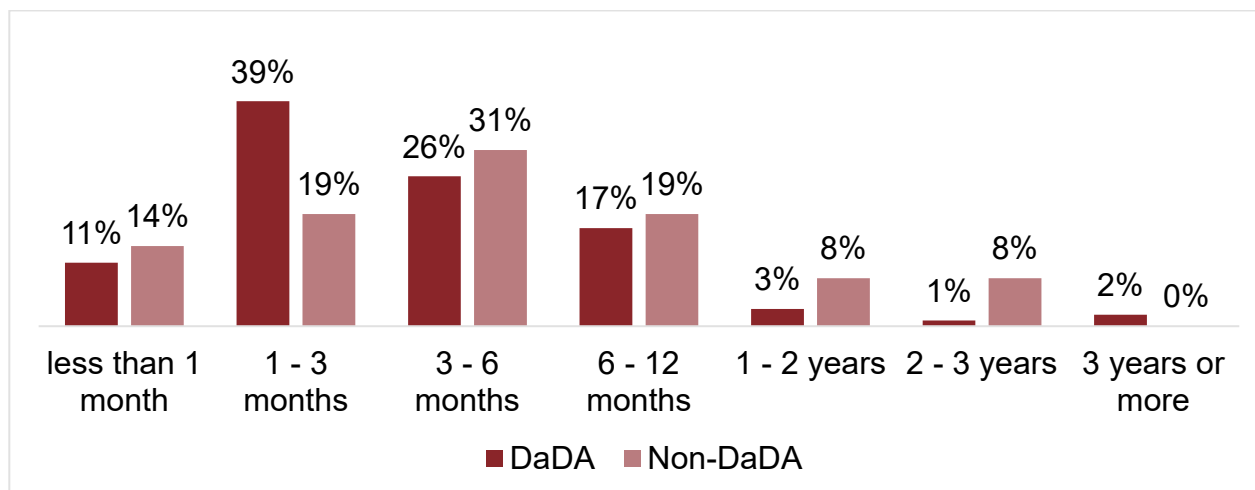
Base: Alumni who had experienced unemployment; DaDA (117), non-DaDA (36)

Source: Alumni survey

6.3 Impact of Covid-19[45]

Around two thirds of alumni (DaDA 67%, n=151, non-DaDA 65%, n=51) experienced some sort of impact on their employment due to the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Over two-fifths (42%, n=94) of DaDA alumni and over one-third (35%, n=27) of non-DaDA alumni experienced unemployment due to the pandemic.

- Just over one-quarter were furloughed (DaDA 26%, n=59, Non-DaDA 28%, n=22).

- Two-thirds of DaDA alumni said they had experienced furlough for up to 6 months (66%, n=39), one-quarter were furloughed for 6-12 months (25%, n=15) and just under one-tenth were furloughed for more than a year (8%, n=5).[46]

From the 'other' free text responses, two main interlinked impacts were referenced by participants. These were limited work opportunities and the subsequent need to seek other types of work.

> I was employed but not in a job within performing arts because the whole industry was closed down so I had to work in a call centre answering calls instead of doing what I had trained to do (dance). – *Student*

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[44] Not answered n=1 DaDA alumni.
[45] Around one-half of DaDA alumni said that their study was impacted by Covid-19, primarily due to teaching being moved online (48%, n=108) or teaching being paused or rearranged (36%, n=81). One-fifth said that teaching was cancelled (21%, n=47). The experiences of non-DaDA alumni were similar (see appendix Figure 14).
[46] Base for non-DaDA alumni was too low for analysis (n=22).

Less frequent impacts of the pandemic were: accessing benefits, becoming unemployed, employment being terminated, contracts being suspended, and returning to studying.

6.4 Satisfaction with career

The majority of DaDA alumni were satisfied with their career (Table 4). Almost two-thirds (64%, n=144) of DaDA alumni said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the way their career had developed thus far, with over one-quarter saying they were 'very satisfied' (28%, n=62). This was significantly higher than the proportion of non-DaDA alumni who were satisfied or very satisfied (51%, n=40).

Overall, alumni who had studied for a dance qualification (67% satisfied/very satisfied, n=84) were significantly more likely to be satisfied than those who had studied for an acting qualification (49% satisfied/very satisfied, n=31). Three-fifths (61% satisfied/very satisfied, n=69) of alumni who had studied for a musical theatre qualification were satisfied, which was not significantly different compared to those who had studied for an acting or dance qualification.

Table 4: Overall satisfaction with how career has developed (alumni)

	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
Very satisfied	28%	19%
Satisfied	37%	32%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17%	27%
Dissatisfied	13%	17%
Very dissatisfied	5%	5%

Base: DaDA alumni (224), non-DaDA alumni (78)

Source: Alumni survey

However, almost one-fifth (19%, n=42) of DaDA alumni were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their career. A similar proportion of non-DaDA alumni (22%, n=17) were also dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their career.

Alumni were asked about their satisfaction with a range of aspects of their career so far, which may offer some insight as to the reasons for career dissatisfaction (Table 5).

Amongst DaDA alumni, satisfaction was highest for:

- Continual skills development (77%, n=173 satisfied/very satisfied).

- Opportunity for progression (71%, n=158 satisfied/very satisfied).

- Quality of professional performance activity (70%, n=156 satisfied/very satisfied).

However, satisfaction was significantly lower for the remaining aspects.

Table 5: Satisfaction with aspects of career (DaDA alumni)

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Continual skills development	1%	7%	14%	47%	30%
Opportunity for progression	5%	9%	15%	42%	28%
Quality of professional performance activity	2%	9%	19%	38%	32%
Quantity of professional performance activity	8%	17%	17%	34%	23%
Job security	7%	16%	23%	35%	19%
Hours worked	6%	19%	23%	34%	18%
Earnings	8%	22%	28%	32%	11%

Base: DaDA alumni (224)

Source: Alumni survey

A similar pattern was also noted in the satisfaction ratings of non-DaDA alumni (Table 6). However, satisfaction with opportunity for progression, quality of professional performance activity and quantity of professional performance activity was significantly higher amongst DaDA alumni compared to non-DaDA alumni, which may suggest that these aspects could also have contributed to the higher levels of career satisfaction amongst DaDA alumni.

Table 6: Satisfaction with aspects of career (non-DaDA alumni)

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Continual skills development	4%	8%	22%	49%	18%
Opportunity for progression	5%	13%	26%	37%	19%
Quality of professional performance activity	8%	9%	29%	33%	21%
Hours worked	8%	13%	31%	31%	18%
Job security	10%	18%	24%	24%	23%
Quantity of professional performance activity	12%	21%	26%	27%	14%
Earnings	10%	15%	37%	24%	13%

Base: Non-DaDA alumni (78)

Source: Alumni survey

7. Impact of DaDA

Providers and students considered the impact of the DaDA scheme within two themes: benefits to students and benefits to the sector.

7.1 Benefits to students

Providers saw the main benefit of the DaDA funding as supporting talented students, who would not normally be able afford it, to:

- Receive high quality, full-time training and a well-regarded industry qualification and to achieve their performing arts ambitions.

- Either receive full- or partial-funding without needing to repay this.

- Gain early entry into the sector as they can start training from age 16.

- Enjoy their study and progress to study in the performing arts field in which they excel, fulfilling their ambitions.

Students' responses mirrored these points. There were many expressions of gratitude for the opportunity they would not otherwise have had to receive high quality training and achieve their career aspirations.[47]

> Because dance is quite an elitist industry, it's really hard to break into if you're not really well off, so DaDA does allow people like me to follow their dreams that they've had since they were really young. - *Student*

Their responses also included reference to the motivation that being funded by DaDA brought:

> I always felt privileged to be on this funding scheme – someone's money is going into my training and I don't want to take that for granted. If I'm having a bad day, am tired, that's the one thing that always pushed me through. I always try and remember that. It gives me that extra 'grit my teeth and get on with it' – the money that is being funded into me to get this job. *- Student*

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[47] The vast majority of current students who responded to the online survey were satisfied with their course so far, irrespective of whether they were DaDA funded or not (satisfied/very satisfied DaDA 91%, n=168, non-DaDA 92%, n=82) (see appendix Figure 11).

7.1.1 Sector skills training

Both providers and students felt the training had a positive impact on sector skills. For example, students said the training had extended their skills within the performing arts disciplines studied, including through working with industry professionals. The training also diversified their skills within and across disciplines so that they were not 'pigeon-holed'.

> **Case example: Skills development**
>
> Before starting their training, student x said they would have seen their future career as a commercial backing dancer for artists. Since then, they said they have learnt 'so much' and have been put out of their comfort zone to the extent that they now feel a lot more confident to go for an audition in a West End show. Their acting and singing skills and passion for these have developed alongside dancing. The training has opened doors to the industry and widened opportunities.

7.1.2 Employment

Providers referred to strong track records in terms of student progress into sector employment and their subsequent retention. Tracking processes included formal email requests for updates on employment and informal approaches, such as updates on social media, word of mouth and via alumni networks. Identification of initial destinations and subsequent employment was reported in some instances to be mostly focused on the three-year period once students had graduated. After this, responses tended to reduce, although a few providers cited knowing about students' progression into more managerial roles several years later. Data collected also included employment contracts and whether students had agents. Analysis of DaDA versus non-DaDA employment outcomes was referred to in some cases.

> We just know through the world of communication where they are, but there's a lot of them telling us as well. - *Provider*

Providers referred to how DaDA had enabled students to gain high levels of skill in their chosen discipline and that this in turn was reflected in their employment destinations. These included roles in the West End and one stated how in the current year, 4 students had already secured 'top quality jobs.'

> We have had some really good success stories of students with DaDA in the industry. If it wasn't for DaDA they wouldn't have got there. – *Provider*

Responses from the online surveys also supported the qualitative findings that students' training had or would help them to gain employment. Overall, the vast majority of current DaDA students agreed that their qualification would give them an advantage in seeking work (a little/a lot 93%, n=172), although this was primarily 'a little' advantage (68%, n=125, rather than 'a lot' (26%, n=47). Responses amongst non-DaDA current students were very similar.
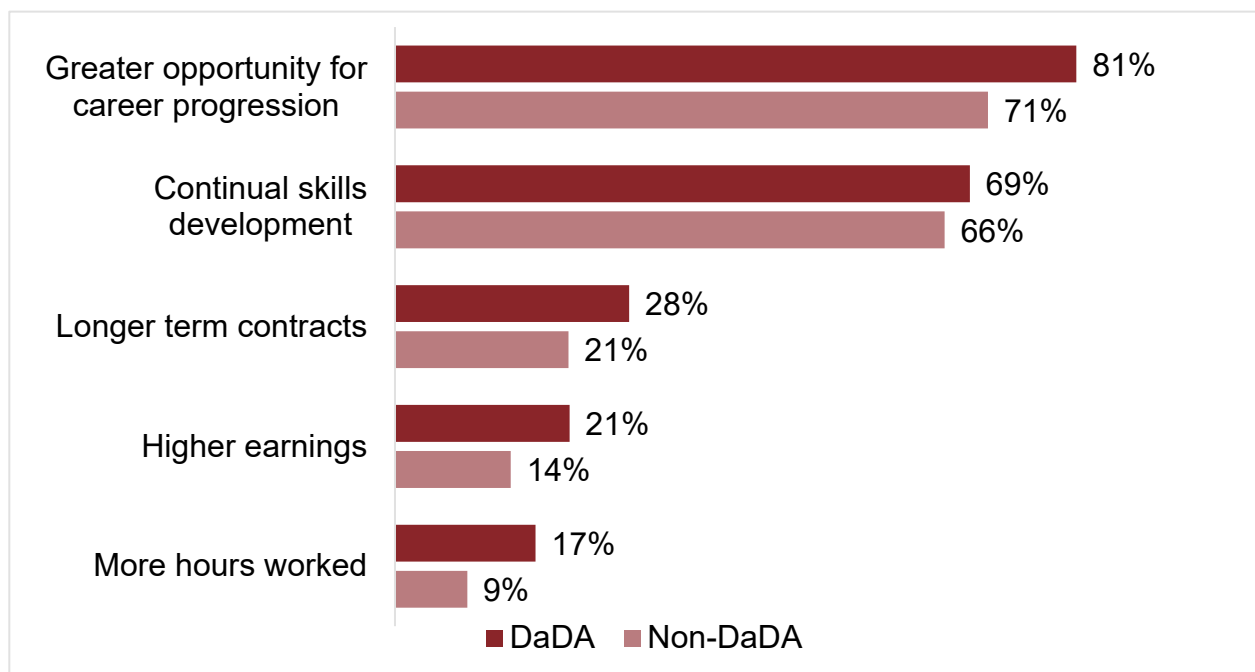
Agreement amongst DaDA alumni was even more positive:

- Almost two-thirds (65%, n=146) of DaDA alumni agreed 'a lot' that gaining their qualification had given them an advantage in seeking work, which was significantly higher than seen for non-DaDA alumni (40%, n=31). A further 23% (n=51) said it had helped them 'a little'.

- Furthermore, the proportion who felt that their qualification had not given them an advantage in seeking work was significantly higher amongst non-DaDA alumni (17%, n=13) compared to those receiving DaDA funding (8%, n=17).

The main ways that DaDA alumni felt that their qualification had given them an advantage when seeking work were, greater opportunity for progression (81%, n=160) and continual skills development (69%, n=135) (Figure 8). DaDA alumni were significantly less likely to mention longer-term contracts, higher earnings or more hours worked. Responses amongst non-DaDA alumni were very similar.

Furthermore, the vast majority (93%, n=208) of DaDA alumni agreed that their qualification had supported them in gaining employment, primarily as it gave them skills within the performing arts, such as helping with an audition (80%, n=180). Almost two-fifths (38%, n=86) said it was required for one or more of their jobs and over one-quarter (28%, n=63) that it gave them soft skills. Just 5% (n=12) of DaDA alumni said that their qualification had not been helpful for gaining employment and a further 2% (n=4) were not sure.

Figure 8: Ways in which qualification has provided an advantage when seeking work (alumni)[48]

Greater opportunity for career progression — DaDA 81%, Non-DaDA 71%
Continual skills development — DaDA 69%, Non-DaDA 66%
Longer term contracts — DaDA 28%, Non-DaDA 21%
Higher earnings — DaDA 21%, Non-DaDA 14%
More hours worked — DaDA 17%, Non-DaDA 9%

■ DaDA ■ Non-DaDA

Base: All who felt that their qualification had given them an advantage in seeking work; DaDA alumni (197), non-DaDA alumni (58)

Source: Alumni survey

Some significant differences were noted between DaDA and non-DaDA alumni on this measure, specifically:

- DaDA alumni (80%, n=180) were significantly more likely to say that their qualification had supported them as it gave them skills within the performing arts compared to non-DaDA alumni (64%, n=50).

- Non-DaDA alumni (15%, n=12) were significantly more likely to say that their qualification had not been helpful to them for gaining employment compared to DaDA alumni (5%, n=12).

Current DaDA students were also asked whether receiving the DaDA funding for their course would help them to achieve their ambitions. The majority (82%, n=151) agreed that it would help them 'a lot' and a further 12% (n=22) that it would help them 'a little'. Just 4 respondents (2%) said that it would not help them to achieve their ambitions.[49]

Current DaDA students who responded to the survey felt that the funding would help them to achieve their ambitions in a variety of ways. In particular, current DaDA students said that DaDA funding would help them to:

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[48] Not answered: DaDA alumni n=5, non-DaDA alumni n=2.
[49] The remaining responses were: 3% (n=5) 'not sure' and 1% (n=2) refused to answer.

- Prepare for employment (73%, n=126).

- Gain relevant qualifications (73%, n=125).

- Build a professional profile (68%, n=117).

Furthermore, around two-thirds of current DaDA students felt that their funding would:

- Help them to develop additional skills (67%, n=115).

- Provide experience of auditions (66%, n=113).

- Facilitate connections/networking (65%, n=112).

Over half said that their funding would help to improve their career prospects (55%, n=94), provide access to auditions (55%, n=94) and help them to develop contacts/connections with agents (53%, n=92). A minority gave other responses (2%, n=3) or said 'none of these' (3%, n=5).

7.1.3 Wider skills and attributes development

Providers saw that developing transferable skills was important so that, for example, students might later transition from performing roles to being a director or gain employment in lighting and makeup. Providers, like students, stated how the courses also developed life skills, such as communication and time-keeping.

Character attributes were also mentioned, such as resilience, self-discipline and confidence. Rigorous course demands aided the development of these by students being used to the challenge of working, which in turn supported both employment and retention. Students also referred to responsibility, commitment and, like providers, growth in confidence, not just in their discipline but more broadly.

7.2 Benefits to the sector

Providers praised the DaDA scheme for its contribution to the performing arts sector with benefits including:

- Increasing the sector talent pool - DaDA being a highly respected scheme within the industry which had helped less well-off students enter the sector.

- Increased diversity and representation - the DaDA scheme sending a valuable message about financial background not being a limiting factor to success, improving the sector's 'cultural ecology' and diversity.

- Support for the economy - the scale of the performing arts industry, its contribution to the wider hospitality industry and the economy.

- International status - DaDA students formed part of a wider contribution to the United Kingdom's status in the performing arts internationally.

    There's a really strong sector…with high skill levels and that's what this country is known for in terms of its creativity and its cultural life for which schemes such as the Dance and Drama Awards are absolutely perfect to enable access and to give that kind of ongoing stability to the individual institutions. – *Provider*

8. Conclusion

This research sought to investigate the extent to which the DaDA scheme meets its aims of:

- Helping talented but less well-off young people to access high quality training in dance, drama, and musical theatre; and

- Helping UK performing arts remain competitive and productive by enabling this wider pool of talented young people to access elite training.

Additionally, the research aimed to understand the outcomes and career experiences of students that have accessed the DaDA scheme.

The findings suggest that overall, the DaDA scheme achieves its aims. A number of key positives of the Award were highlighted:

- It affords lower-income, talented students the opportunity to access high quality training, which they could not have done without the Award. The absence of repayment of the Award was highly valued by interviewees.

- It supports students to take a non-degree route and the diploma was felt to be better suited to their needs and aspirations.

- It allowed students to access training which provided industry exposure and left them well prepared for entering the sector, levelling the playing field for entry to employment. The majority of students progress or intend to progress into employment in the performing arts sector once qualified.

- It enables the sector to benefit from greater diversity in what can otherwise be perceived as an industry that favours those who are more advantaged.

However, these findings are based on perceptual data gathered through the interviews and a relatively small sample of survey respondents. Monitoring and tracking data which captures the profile, characteristics and outcomes of students, were not available for this evaluation. Similar to recommendations made in the previous evaluation, more robust monitoring data would be valuable to fully inform the Theory of Change of the scheme, particularly in terms of assessing whether more diverse and high quality students participate, and to explore transition to employment.[50] There may also be opportunities to explore the use of existing national datasets to map DaDA and non-DaDA student progression and employment outcomes.

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[50] Neelands, J. et al. (2006) *Dance and Drama Awards Scheme Evaluation Project: Phase 2*. Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research (p.5).

There were some challenges evident and improvements that might be made. Recommendations for DfE are consequently to review the DaDA scheme to raise awareness, widen participation, and improve administration and funding arrangements.

8.1 Awareness and promotion

The extent to which the DaDA scheme is well known, well publicised and is clear in how it operates, were all raised as areas that could be improved. Consideration should be given to:

- The government website and how clearly the scheme is explained for the target audience of students and parents/carers with respect to:
    - How the selection criteria are applied by providers.
    - How income assessment is applied.
    - Which courses are supported.
    - Greater parity with other pathways (such as degree pathways).

- Communications with organisations, including schools, so that performing arts teachers and careers advisors are sufficiently aware of the scheme to signpost students appropriately.

8.2 Widening participation

In their 2006 report, Neelands et al.[51] noted that whilst there had been real achievements related to widening participation, a complex mix of social, economic, cultural and other factors inhibited access for certain under-represented groups, particularly some ethnic groups and those with a disability. Our research suggests that providers continue to face challenges in their efforts to target under-represented groups, some of which are acknowledged as being somewhat outside of their direct control. Consideration should be given as to how the following can be improved:

- Encouraging schools to place sufficient emphasis on performing arts studies.

- Promotion of performing arts in schools, as an equitable career.

- Greater clarity in the funding available and the pathways to support talented individuals into the sector.

- Support for providers to manage the challenges of widening participation.

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[51] Neelands, J. et al. (2006) *Dance and Drama Awards Scheme Evaluation Project: Phase 2*. Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research (p.5).

8.3 Administration

Overall DaDA administration was viewed positively, with considerations for further improvement being:

- The use of online forms.

- Greater clarity of terminology and documentation requirements.

- Addressing protracted timescales for income assessment.

8.4 Funding arrangements and related issues

The Neelands et al.[52] report also stated that one of the DaDA scheme aims at the time was 'to bring some financial stability…to the independent market.' Whilst it is clear that the scheme continues to support performing arts provision, providers were concerned about course stability and sustainability. In particular, affordability was a key issue, including funding arrangements, and the current climate of significant increases in the cost-of-living. Consideration should be given to:

- Urgent review of parent/carer income bands for affordability of fee contributions and maintenance payments.

- Mechanisms to review maintenance funding levels to take into account the pace of inflation/cost-of-living.

- Ways to take into account individual circumstances, such as the size of households/numbers of dependents, existing financial obligations and the length of time required for independent status.

- Clarity in funding methodology and review of funding allocation across institutions.

- Flexibility in funding allocation to allow for variations in funding need from year to year.

- The timing of funding notification to better align with provider recruitment schedules.

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[52] Ibid. (p.2).

Appendix 1. Additional online survey data

The data in Appendix 1 is based on those who responded to the online surveys. As such, the data is not representative of all current students and alumni as a whole and should be treated with caution.

Table 7: Sex (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
Male	20%	24%	31%	17%
Female	80%	76%	67%	79%
Prefer not to say	-	-	2%	4%

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89); Alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

Table 8: Gender same as sex assigned at birth (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
Yes	98%	98%	98%	96%
No	2%	1%	1%	4%
Prefer not to say	-	1%	1%	-

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89); Alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

Table 9: Age (current students survey)

	DaDA	Non-DaDA
17	18%	21%
18	18%	28%
19	24%	24%
20	16%	9%
21	9%	9%
22	7%	0%
23	5%	3%
24	1%	0%
25	1%	1%
26 or older	2%	4%

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89)

Source: Current students survey

Table 10: Year graduated (alumni survey)

	DaDA	Non-DaDA
2012	<1%	-
2013	4%	3%
2014	5%	4%
2015	7%	4%
2016	7%	9%
2017	8%	6%
2018	10%	9%
2019	8%	17%
2020	18%	19%
2021	13%	10%
2022	20%	19%

Base: Alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Alumni survey

Table 11: Qualification being completed (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
Level 6 Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre (3 years)	45%	40%	40%	32%
Level 6 Diploma in Professional Dance (3 years)	42%	42%	36%	53%
Level 6 Diploma in Professional Acting	10%	7%	16%	5%
Level 5 Diploma in Professional Acting (1 year)	2%	3%	8%	8%
Level 5 Diploma in Professional Dance (Classical Ballet or Contemporary Dance) (2 years)	1%	8%	1%	3%

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89); alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

Table 12: Whether had any long-standing physical or mental health condition, illness, impairment or disability[53] (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
Yes	16%	15%	17%	15%
No	79%	81%	78%	81%
Prefer not to say	4%	4%	5%	4%

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89); Alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

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[53] Not answered n=1 current DaDA student.

Table 13: Ethnicity (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	83%	64%	75%	72%
White - Irish	3%	2%	1%	1%
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1%	-	<1%	-
Any other White background	3%	12%	11%	22%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean	2%	1%	3%	-
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African	-	-	1%	-
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian	3%	3%	<1%	-
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background	2%	4%	2%	-
Asian/Asian British - Indian	1%	1%	<1%	-
Asian/Asian British - Chinese	2%	4%	<1%	-
Any other Asian background	-	4%	<1%	3%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - African	1%	-	1%	-
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - Caribbean	1%	1%	1%	-
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background	-	-	<1%	-
Any other ethnic group	-	1%	<1%	3%
Prefer not to say	1%	-	1%	-

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89); Alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

Table 14: Type of school attended between ages of 11 and 16 (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
State-run or state-funded school - selective on academic, faith or other grounds	30%	11%	25%	17%
State-run or state-funded school - non-selective	43%	34%	46%	26%
Independent or fee-paying school - bursary	18%	7%	10%	8%
Independent or fee-paying school - no bursary	2%	13%	4%	21%
Attended school outside the UK	3%	30%	10%	26%
Don't know	2%	1%	<1%	3%
Prefer not to say	1%	1%	2%	1%
Other[54]	2%	2%	4%	-

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89); Alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

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[54] Other responses included online learning, home schooling, ballet school, arts school.

Table 15: Highest level of qualifications achieved by parent(s) or guardian(s) by the time respondent was 18[55] (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
At least one has a degree level qualification	36%	55%	44%	55%
Qualifications below degree level	36%	20%	37%	30%
No formal qualifications	9%	3%	6%	4%
Don't know	15%	11%	6%	8%
Not applicable	1%	2%	1%	-
Prefer not to say	1%	2%	4%	1%
Other	1%	6%	<1%	1%

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89); Alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

Table 16: Free school meals eligibility (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
Yes	19%	7%	20%	6%
No	67%	60%	64%	60%
Not applicable	3%	25%	9%	24%
Don't know	10%	9%	7%	8%
Prefer not to say	1%	-	<1%	1%

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89); Alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

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[55] Not answered n=2 DaDA alumni, n=1 non-DaDA alumni.

Table 17: Would you describe yourself as coming from a lower socio-economic background?[56] (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
Yes	28%	17%	31%	12%
No	33%	61%	50%	74%
Don't know	35%	19%	17%	14%
Prefer not to say	3%	3%	2%	-

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89); Alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

Table 18: Qualifications achieved before entering dance and drama school[57] (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
GCSEs	86%	60%	73%	54%
A Levels	32%	34%	43%	36%
Other (including performing arts qualifications)	30%	34%	37%	27%
No	2%	9%	3%	6%
Don't know	1%	9%	1%	8%
Prefer not to say	-	-	<1%	3%

Base: Current students DaDA (184), non-DaDA (89); Alumni DaDA (224), non-DaDA (78)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

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[56] Not answered n=1 DaDA current student.
[57] Not answered n=1 DaDA alumni.

Table 19: Whether achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades 9-4 (or A-C) (current students and alumni surveys)

	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
Yes	97%	100%	93%	95%
No	3%	-	6%	2%
Don't know	1%	-	1%	2%
Prefer not to say	-	-	1%	-

Base: Current students who achieved GCSEs DaDA (158), non-DaDA (53); Alumni who achieved GCSEs DaDA (164), non-DaDA (42)

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

Table 20: Whether achieved two or more A Levels at grades A*-C[58] (current students and alumni surveys)

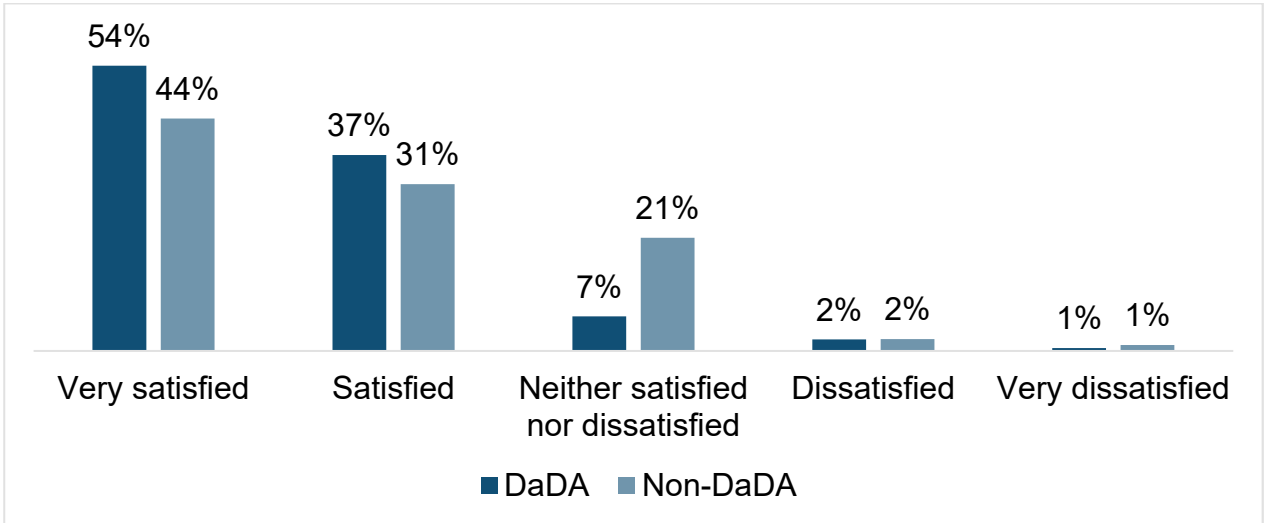|	Current students: DaDA	Current students: non-DaDA	Alumni: DaDA	Alumni: non-DaDA
Yes	90%	83%	81%	86%
No	3%	7%	11%	11%
Don't know	7%	7%	4%	4%
Prefer not to say	-	3%	2%	-

Base: Current students who achieved A Levels DaDA (58), non-DaDA (30); Alumni who achieved A Levels DaDA (97), non-DaDA (28)[59]

Source: Current students and alumni surveys

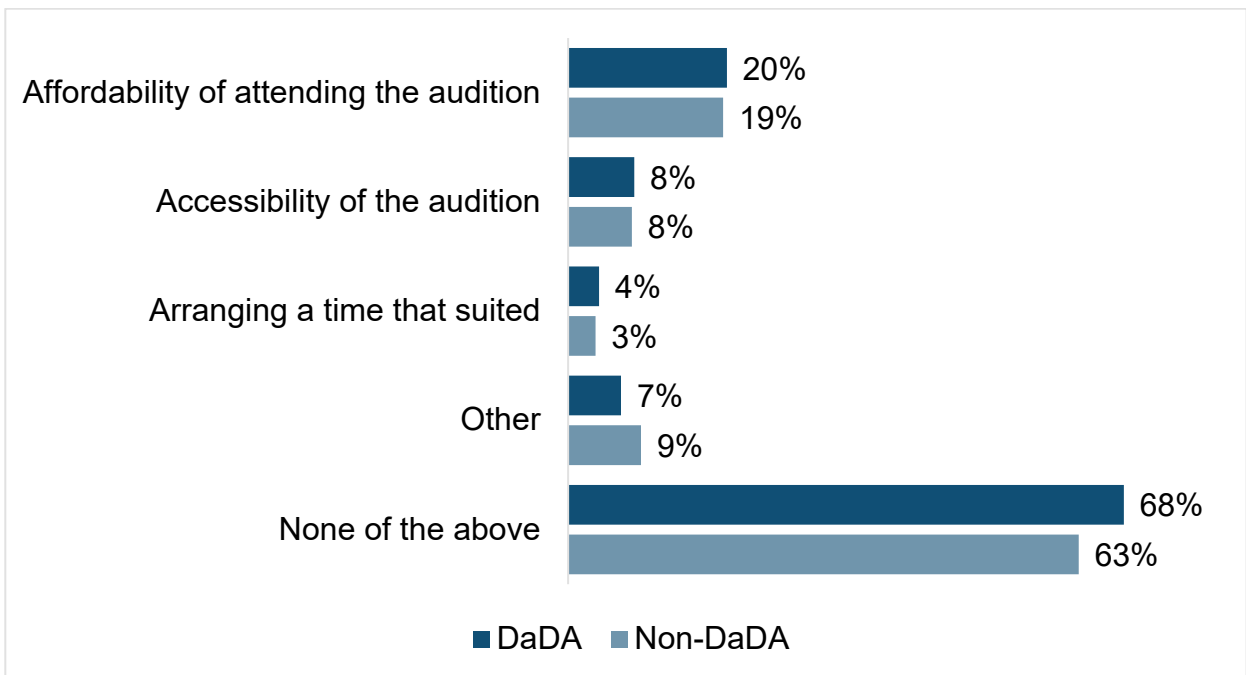---

[58] Not answered n=1 DaDA alumni.
[59] Low base >n=30.

Figure 9: Feelings about the audition process (current students survey)

Base: Current DaDA students (184), current non-DaDA students (89)
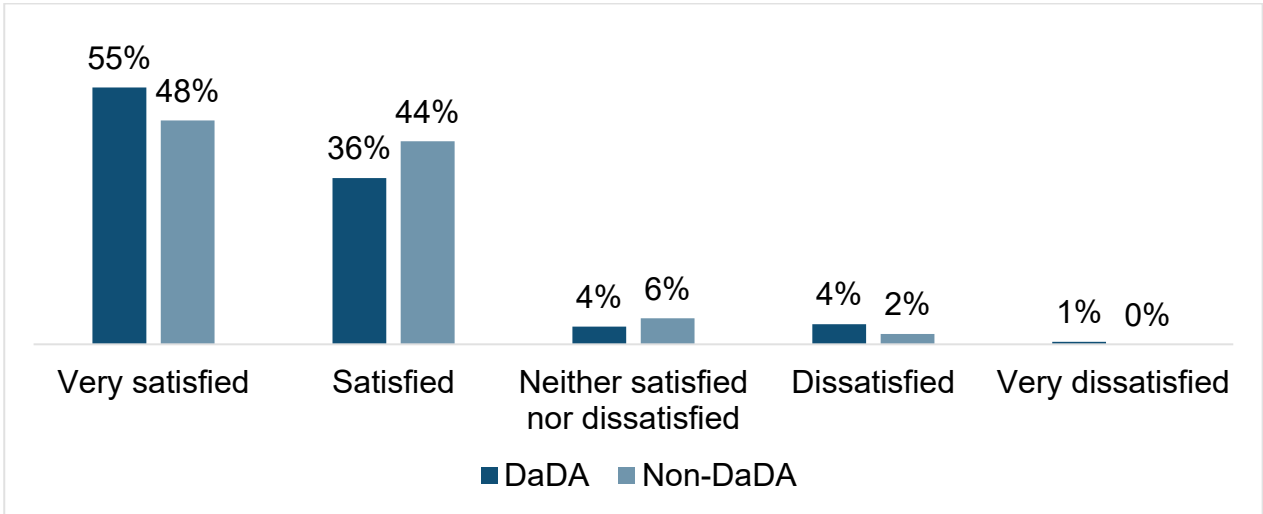
Figure 10: Barriers to the audition process (current students survey)[60]

Base: Current DaDA students (184), current non-DaDA students (89)

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[60] Other challenges mentioned by current students included that they had to have online or virtual auditions (n=10), they had to film their audition (n=3), Covid restrictions (n=3) and the cost (n=1). A small number of respondents did not answer the question (DaDA n=2, non-DaDA n=2).
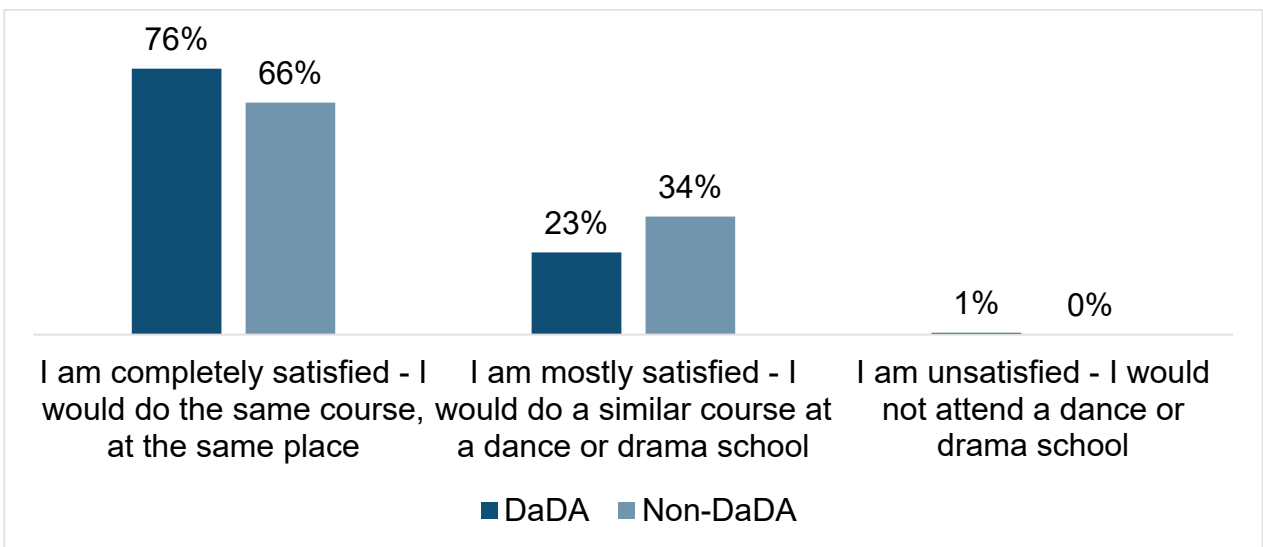
Figure 11: Satisfaction with course so far (current students survey)

Very satisfied: DaDA 55%, Non-DaDA 48%
Satisfied: DaDA 36%, Non-DaDA 44%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied: DaDA 4%, Non-DaDA 6%
Dissatisfied: DaDA 4%, Non-DaDA 2%
Very dissatisfied: DaDA 1%, Non-DaDA 0%

Base: Current DaDA students (184), current non-DaDA students (89)

Source: Current students survey

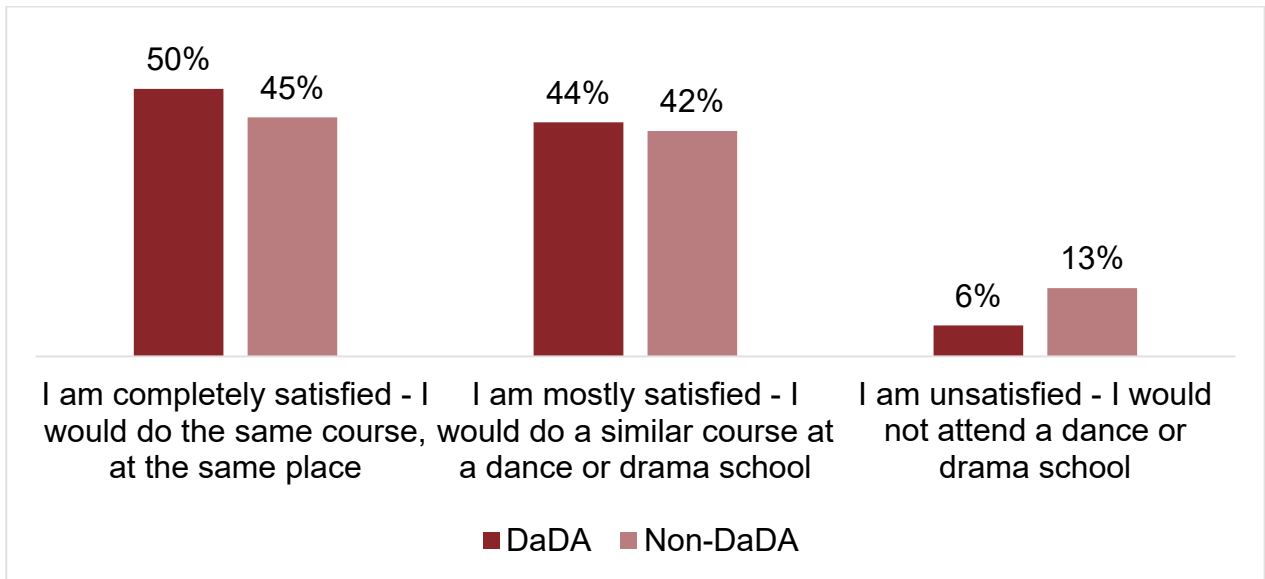**Figure 12: Actions if given the opportunity again (current students survey)[61]**

I am completely satisfied - I would do the same course, at the same place: DaDA 76%, Non-DaDA 66%
I am mostly satisfied - I would do a similar course at a dance or drama school: DaDA 23%, Non-DaDA 34%
I am unsatisfied - I would not attend a dance or drama school: DaDA 1%, Non-DaDA 0%

Base: Current DaDA students (184), current non-DaDA students (89)

Source: Current students survey

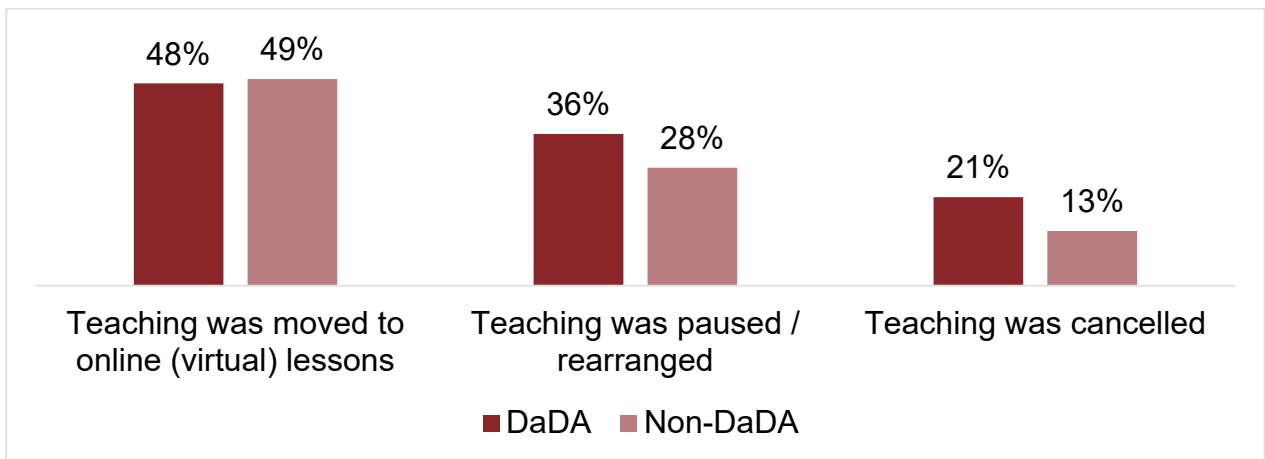[61] N=1 DaDA current student did not answer the question.

Figure 13: Actions if given the opportunity again (alumni survey)[62]

50% DaDA / 45% Non-DaDA — I am completely satisfied - I would do the same course, at the same place

44% DaDA / 42% Non-DaDA — I am mostly satisfied - I would do a similar course at a dance or drama school

6% DaDA / 13% Non-DaDA — I am unsatisfied - I would not attend a dance or drama school

■ DaDA   ■ Non-DaDA

Base: DaDA alumni (224), non-DaDA alumni (78)

Source: Alumni survey

Figure 14: Impact of covid whilst studying (alumni survey)[63]

48% DaDA / 49% Non-DaDA — Teaching was moved to online (virtual) lessons

36% DaDA / 28% Non-DaDA — Teaching was paused / rearranged

21% DaDA / 13% Non-DaDA — Teaching was cancelled
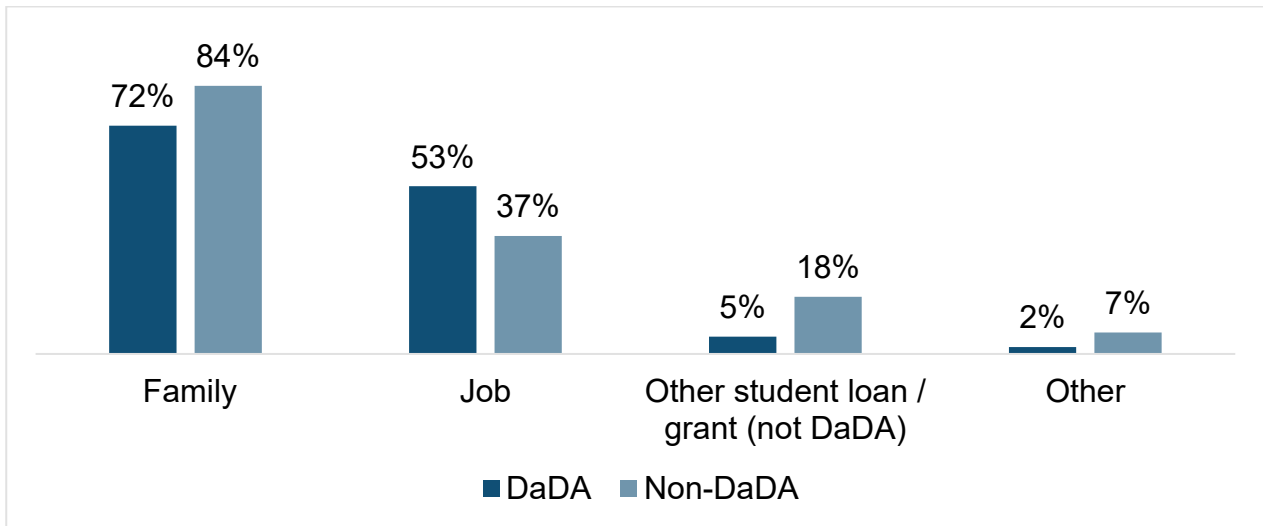
■ DaDA   ■ Non-DaDA

Base: DaDA alumni (224), non-DaDA alumni (78)

Source: Alumni survey

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[62] Not answered DaDA alumni 1%, n=2.
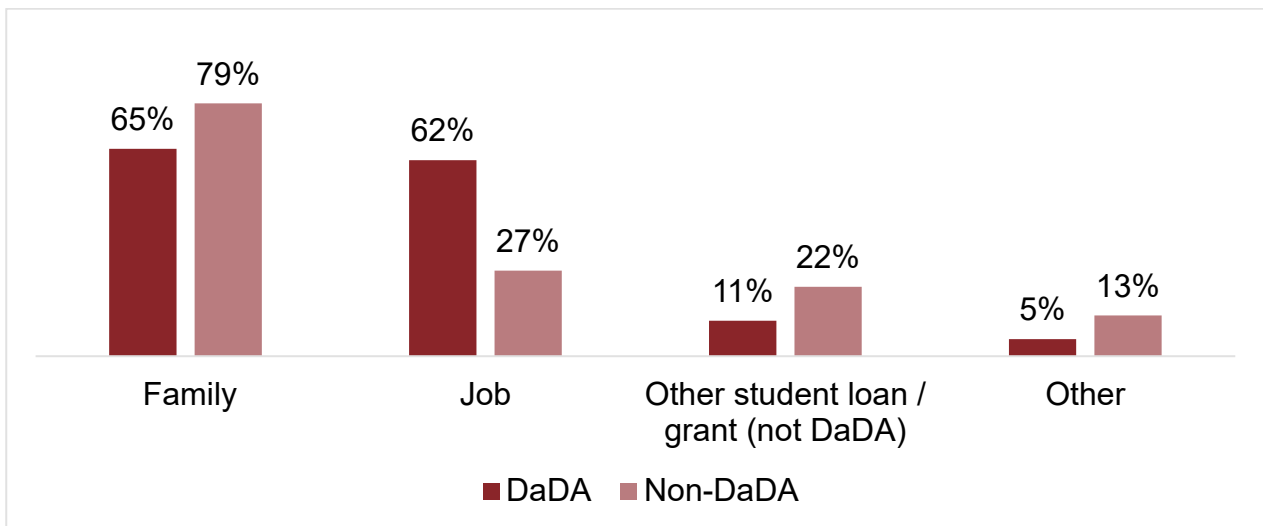[63] Other responses DaDA alumni 3%, n=6. Not answered DaDA alumni 49%, n=110, non-DaDA alumni 51%, n=40.

Figure 15: Other income sources whilst studying (current students survey)[64]

Base: Current DaDA students (184), current non-DaDA students (89)

Figure 16: Other income sources whilst studying (alumni survey)[65]
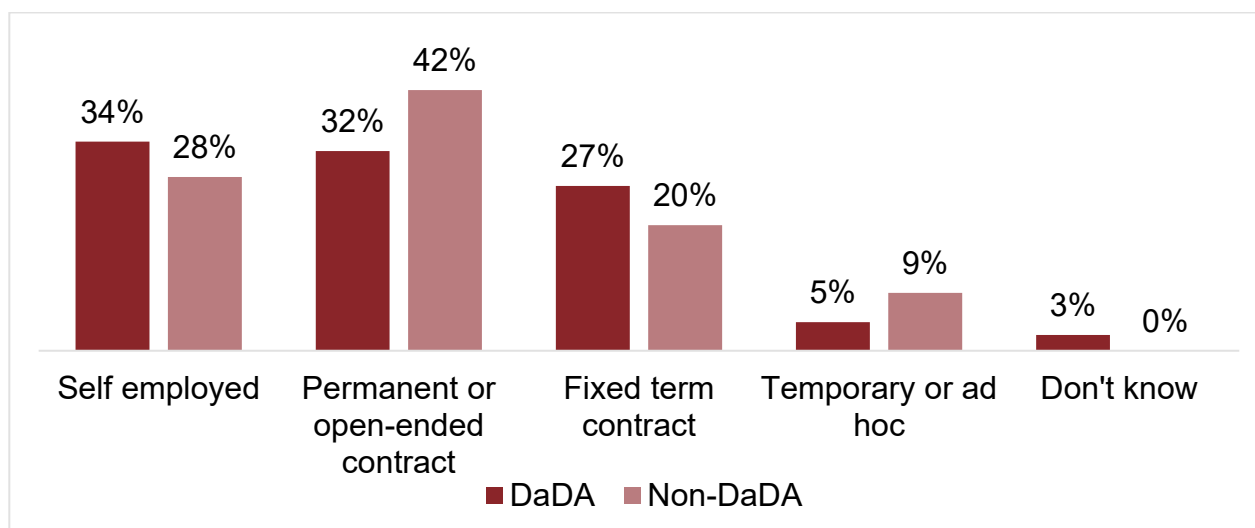

Base: DaDA alumni (224), non-DaDA alumni (78)

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[64] N=8 current students provided other responses: bursary (n=2) and the remining sources of funding were mentioned by 1 respondent each charity, disability fund, grandparents, fundraiser, hardship Fund, multiple jobs, private sponsorship, Universal Credit. Not answered the question: current DaDA students 7%, n=12, current non-DaDA students 2%, n=2.

[65] Not answered: DaDA 4%, n=8, non-DaDA 1%, n=1.

Figure 17: Contractual basis of employment (alumni survey)

Base: Employed DaDA alumni (196), employed non-DaDA alumni (64)

Table 21: Number of jobs since completing course (DaDA alumni, alumni survey)

	Total number of jobs	Number of performing arts jobs	Number of jobs directly related to training	Number of unpaid performing arts jobs
	(Base: 224)	**(Base: 221)**	**(Base: 206)**	**(Base: 206)**
0	1%	7%	2%	58%
1-2	22%	33%	33%	9%
3-5	29%	21%	21%	5%
6-10	19%	13%	9%	<1%
11-15	4%	3%	3%	<1%
16-20	3%	2%	1%	-
21+	4%	3%	2%	-
Don't know/Not answered	18%	18%	28%	27%

Base: DaDA alumni

Table 22: Number of jobs since completing training (non-DaDA alumni, alumni survey)

	Total number of jobs	Number of performing arts jobs	Number of jobs directly related to training	Number of unpaid performing arts jobs
	(Base: 78)	(Base: 74)	(Base: 67)	(Base: 67)
0	5%	9%	16%	54%
1-2	24%	36%	30%	16%
3-5	32%	20%	9%	-
6-10	14%	12%	10%	1%
11-15	6%	1%	1%	-
16-20	-	-	-	-
21+	1%	-	-	-
Don't know	17%	20%	33%	28%

Base: Non-DaDA alumni

Source: Alumni survey

Table 23: Further feedback about DaDA award (themes coded from open response) (current DaDA students, current students survey)

Theme	Current DaDA students (count)
Suggestions of improvements to funding process	19
Without award wouldn't have been able to attend	19
Grateful for the award	13
Financial issues	11
DaDA Award makes performing arts schools inclusive	2
Positive experience of the funding process	1
Total	65

Base: Current DaDA students (184)

Source: Current students survey

Table 24: Further feedback about DaDA award (themes coded from open response) (DaDA alumni, alumni survey)

Theme	DaDA Alumni (count)
Without award would not have been able to attend	42
Improvements to funding process / income assessment	11
Grateful for the award	10
DaDA makes drama school accessible	9
Keep DaDA scheme going	4
DaDA enabled them to give time and energy to training	1
Not sure if it's a good use of taxpayers money	1
Not relevant – specific course feedback	1
Total	79

Base: DaDA alumni (224)

Source: Alumni survey

Table 25: Further feedback about course (themes coded from open response) (current students survey)

Theme	Current students (count)
Positive experience	25
Financial impact of course	9
Suggestions for improvements	7
Negative experience	5
DaDA available to a higher age range	4
More support with careers	3
Covid-19 disruption	1
Total	54

Base: Current students (274)

Source: Current students survey

Table 26: Further feedback about course (themes coded from open response) (alumni survey)

Theme	Alumni (count)
Good experience / grateful	34
More graduate support	20
Negative experience	12
COVID-19 disruptions	10
More life skills / career training	5
Mixed experience	4
Diploma not valued by businesses	3
Age for DaDA funding eligibility should be increased	2
DaDA funding makes performing arts school inclusive	1
Did not receive a DaDA - money worries	1
Total	92

Base: Alumni (302)

Source: Alumni survey

Table 27: Further feedback about how DaDA funding could be improved (themes coded from open response) (current students survey)

Theme	Current DaDA students (count)
Maintenance loans / grants	17
Taking other factors into account	16
Increased funding	9
Money towards other course costs	6
Funding allocations unfair	4
Funding provided earlier	3
Increased age eligibility	2
More advertisement of DaDA funding	1
Positive experience	1
Total	59

Base: Current DaDA students (184)

Source: Current students survey

Appendix 2. Glossary of terms

BTEC – Business and Technology Education Council

CGR – CooperGibson Research

CDMT – Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre

DaDA – Dance and Drama Awards

DfE – Department for Education

ESFA – Education and Skills Funding Agency

HMRC – His Majesty's Revenues and Customs

MDS – Music and Dance Scheme

SA302 – a His Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) document providing evidence of income

SEND – Special educational needs and disabilities

TCL – Trinity College London

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