

Frequently Asked Questions: LIPA's travel grants for 2025 entry

LIPA is committed to widening access. We were the first Federation of Drama Schools (FDS)-accredited drama school to remove audition fees, and we have been supporting applicants by offering travel grants since 2011/2012. These grants aim to help with the travel costs associated with attending auditions and interviews on our campus. This document provides detailed information about the travel grants available.

Q. Why does LIPA offer travel grants?

A. This is one of our initiatives to help widen access to LIPA as described in our access and participation plan. We hold up to 80+ audition/interview events per year at LIPA and usually invite over 3,000 people to attend. We're committed to reducing the cost for attending auditions/interviews and do not have any audition/interview fees. However, there are travel costs associated with attending a selection event here. As part of our access and participation plan, we aim to encourage more applicants, who come from areas where participation in higher education is traditionally low, to attend our auditions and interview events. Often these applicants will come from lower income backgrounds and the audition fee and cost of travelling to LIPA could be putting them off. The system we use for travel grants ensures that we can automatically offer a travel grant to applicants from low participation neighbourhoods in higher education across the UK.

Q. How does LIPA decide who to offer the travel grants to?

A. We interrogate two independent, external databases (known as TUNDRA and POLAR4), to identify to whom we should offer the travel grants. Essentially, these databases identify applicants from areas by postcode across the UK where there is low participation in higher education. Any applicant who we wish to invite to an audition or interview, whose home postcode on their UCAS form falls within the designated postcode areas (quintile 1 on either database), will be automatically identified to us on our internal student records system. This means we can offer those applicants invited to an audition/interview a travel grant.

Q. How are the travel grants calculated?

A. We offer six travel grants based on the shortest road distance between your home postcode and LIPA's postcode.

- People who live up to five miles distance from LIPA are offered a £4 travel grant.
- People who live at a distance from LIPA of between 5 miles and 15 miles are offered £5.
- People who live at a distance from LIPA of between 16 miles and 50 miles are offered £10.
- People who live at a distance from LIPA of between 51 miles and 100 miles are offered £20.
- People who live at a distance from LIPA of between 101 miles and 199 miles are offered £40.
- People who live at a distance from LIPA of 200 miles or over are offered £60.

To calculate distances we use google maps and use the miles given by google maps that represent the shortest road distance as the distance to calculate the travel grant.

Q. How do I claim my travel grant?

A. Because we are able to identify the people that should be entitled to the travel grants through our student records system, we tell students when we are inviting them to the audition or interview how much they are entitled to and ask them to complete a "bank details form" prior to attending. Payment of your travel grant will be made directly into the bank account you provide shortly after you have attended your audition or interview. Travel grant payments are usually processed on a monthly basis.

We are unable to make payment to applicants who fail to complete the "bank details form" and will process any forms received up until 30 days after the audition/interview date. There is no need for you to provide train, bus or petrol receipts.

Q. What if my travel costs me more than the amount LIPA is providing me for the travel grant?

A. We are only able to reimburse you with the amounts set out above. We cannot pay you more than the travel grant, so you may still need to find the remaining travel costs. We hope that our contribution towards your costs will be of some help.

Q. What if I come from a low income household but my house isn't located in a qualifying postcode, will I be able to claim a travel grant?

A. Unfortunately, we won't be able to provide travel grants to applicants in these circumstances during 2024/25. This is because we are not using means-testing as the basis of providing the travel grants. We decided not to use means-testing to calculate entitlements for travel grants as previous experience has taught us that we need to ask

numerous detailed questions about an applicant's financial circumstances and the financial circumstances of their parents/guardians. This then needs to be supported by evidence to ensure we have a fair means-testing process. This creates two issues:

- For applicants, the task of filling in this paperwork and supplying the evidence can be time-consuming. This would be at the time that you are preparing yourself for the actual audition or interview. Some people may also go through the exercise only to find that they are not eligible.
- Administering a means-tested process would be time-consuming for us, which results in us spending more on administration and reducing the funds that we have available to give to applicants.

This was not a decision that we took lightly but as we hope you appreciate, this has been a question of balancing a number of factors:

- What is fair? We think our methodology using TUNDRA and POLAR4 although not perfect, is fair. It's independent of us and is an automated process, so less liable to human error and does not require us to make complex judgements about an individual's financial circumstances.
- Is this a straightforward process for the applicant? We think yes it is because we are not asking you to take on extra work. The last thing we want is to have a process in place for applying for a travel grant that requires a lot of time from the applicant. We think that would give people another reason for deciding not to attend. In trying to remove a barrier, we might be creating a new one. To ensure transparency and fairness when using means-testing, we have to ask a lot of questions about financial circumstances and to gain supporting evidence.
- Is this an efficient system for us? We think yes it is because there is less time needed in administering this system so we can put more of the actual resources available to us towards travel grants.

Finally, the Office for Students uses TUNDRA and POLAR4 as key performance indicators to evaluate widening access to higher education.

Q. I'd like to give LIPA feedback on travel grants, how do I do that?

A. All feedback is welcome as it may help us to refine or even rethink our process for the following year. So please send any comments about the system to feeandtravelgrants@lipa.ac.uk.