



FACTORY ACADEMY

IMPACT REPORT

2024–2025

factory
international



WHAT OUR STUDENTS SAID



Image: Lee Baxter

‘Factory Academy has really been the best educational experience of my life.’



Image: Catch22

‘I can say confidently that the methods Factory Academy use to teach skills and a healthy mindset on creativity is the most effective way I have seen.’



Image: Catch22

‘It’s completely flipped everything upside down. I was just gonna look around [for] 9 to 5 [jobs]. Now I have the confidence to work more creatively.’

FACTORY ACADEMY IMPACT REPORT
SEP 2024 – JUL 2025

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INTRODUCTION



Image: Catch22



STATEMENT

This year’s Impact Report marks another important milestone for Factory Academy. From September 2024 to July 2025, more than 1,000 Greater Manchester residents have accessed our programmes, a clear reflection of our commitment to making learning and training a central part of Factory International’s work at Aviva Studios.

Workforce development has always been a central pillar of Factory International’s vision. The opening of The Lab, our dedicated training space within Aviva Studios, has helped us to build on this commitment. The Lab is a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can unlock the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to access creative jobs.

Ultimately, it’s a space dedicated to improving life chances for people across Greater Manchester, no matter their background.

I am immensely proud of the unwavering focus of the Factory Academy team. Together, they have supported hundreds of Factory Academy graduates to take up positions across Greater Manchester’s vibrant ecosystem of creative and cultural organisations and businesses year-on-year. At Factory International alone, more than 200 paid roles have been secured by Factory Academy graduates, spanning Technical, Facilities, Skills and Training, Public Engagement, Ticketing, Front of House, and the Manchester International Festival teams.

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We now find ourselves at a pivotal moment. With renewed government focus on the creative industries, we have a real opportunity and responsibility to build deeper collaborations that will support the creative workforce of tomorrow. The relaunch of the Greater Manchester Cultural Skills Consortium, initiated back in 2019 by Manchester International Festival, is a timely and exciting step forwards. I’m genuinely looking forward to what can be achieved with the combined focus of a collection of Greater Manchester’s heavyweight creative and cultural organisations all united in a common cause.

Looking ahead, the next 12 months are all about momentum. The team and I remain determined that together, we can continue to deliver on our mission: to create opportunities for the widest possible range of people and to help build a creative workforce that truly reflects the diversity and talent of this region.

Looking ahead, the next 12 months are all about momentum.

Factory Academy’s real success is in the sense of community that the people who chose to learn and train with us have created – ensuring that course cohorts learn and grow together, often supporting each other beyond graduation.

None of this would be possible without the collaboration and generosity of our funders, partners and guest contributors, who share the same values as we do, and are committed to paying it forward.

If you share these values and are interested in getting involved, we’d love to hear from you.



Gary Briggs
Director of Training & Skills,
Factory Academy



Image: Catch22

STUDENT FOREWORD

When I joined Factory Academy, I was carrying a lot. As a Queer British South Asian woman, a mother of two, and a multidisciplinary artist working across theatre, film, movement and ritual, I was holding a big vision, but also the weight of survival. I've lived through grief, abuse, burnout and cultural disconnection. Creativity and intuition have been how I've alchemised all that into something meaningful.

Factory Academy arrived at exactly the right moment. From the very first session, I felt seen. Not as a box to tick or a project to shape – but as a whole human being. I wasn't asked to dilute my voice to fit in. I was encouraged to go deeper. To lead with truth. To honour the full story that brought me here.

Factory Academy arrived at exactly the right moment.

During the programme, I began shaping Brown Kuri Productions – a platform centering queer and female South Asian artists – and developed *Letters to Our Mothers*, a multidisciplinary exhibition exploring generational grief, identity and healing. For the first time in a long time, I gave myself permission to take up space, not just as an artist, but as a leader and visionary.

Factory Academy didn't just give me tools. It gave me back my confidence. It reminded me that what I've lived through is my expertise, and that I don't need to wait for permission to create change.

Factory Academy didn't just give me tools. It gave me back my confidence.

To anyone considering applying: do it. You don't need to have it all figured out. Just bring your truth and passion.

To the partners and funders: thank you. Your support is transforming lives – especially for those of us who've had to fight to be heard.

To my children: thank you. You are my daily inspiration. Factory Academy has impacted you too, because you see your mother returning home with fire in her heart, creating, believing, becoming.

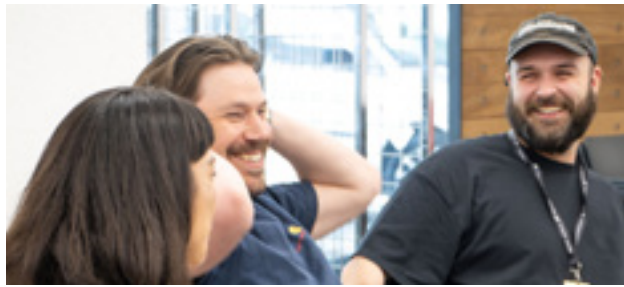
And to the gate openers – the team at Factory Academy: thank you for making space and holding it with such care.



Randeep Assi

Former Factory Academy student, Queer British South Asian theatre-maker, multidisciplinary artist, intuitive and Founder of Brown Kuri Productions

OVERVIEW



Based at Aviva Studios, Factory Academy is Factory International's free training programme provider. We offer routes into employment in the creative industries, addressing gaps between leaving education and workplace readiness. By teaching practical skills and personal grounding, we prepare our students to enter employment for the first time, to take the next step in their careers, or to succeed as entrepreneurs and freelancers.

Our goal is to diversify the workforce in the creative and cultural industries by providing opportunities for hidden talent in Greater Manchester. We are nurturing the technicians, entrepreneurs, content creators and arts professionals of the future.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Since launching in 2018, we have engaged with over **2,000 Greater Manchester residents**
- We achieved **Independent Training Provider** status in September 2020
- We won **Best Employer** at the Manchester Adult Education and Skills Awards 2021 and **Training Initiative of the Year** and **Large Organisation of the Year** at the British Training Awards 2024
- Every single place on every single Factory Academy course is **fully funded** (completely free for anyone who is eligible)
- Factory Academy alumni have accessed **over 200 paid roles at Factory International**
- **85% of our students** declared a characteristic underrepresented in the creative industries

WHO WE'RE FOR

Our courses are for the widest possible range of Manchester residents, with a particular focus on supporting people from diverse and working class backgrounds still underrepresented in the creative and cultural industries. There is no upper age limit for those looking to join.

Factory International is central to Greater Manchester's cultural economy, helping to create growth and jobs. Factory Academy was initiated as a way of ensuring that people from across Manchester's many and diverse communities would have opportunities to benefit from this – accessing opportunities, training for job openings and being supported into new roles at Factory International and beyond.

We believe it is essential that the broadest possible range of Manchester residents benefit from Factory International's creative offer and the wider economic growth for which it is a catalyst.

OUR OFFER

Developed with experts and creatives with insider knowledge of the industry, all of our courses are completely free, with expenses such as food and travel covered. The courses that make up Factory Academy's core offer unlock the technical skills and decode the knowledge people need to take their first steps into working in the creative and cultural industries.

Beyond this, we deliver a year-round programme of workshops, college enrichment programmes, one-to-one mentoring and networking events.

This year, our core programmes included:

- Event Ready
- Business × Creativity
- Managing Creative Projects
- Factory Academy × HEADS: Content Creation

WHAT'S NEW THIS YEAR?



Our 2024-25 academic year has seen a real step change for Factory Academy.

'ALWAYS ON'

We've been able to maintain an 'always on' offer of courses, workshops, mentoring sessions, networking events and more – thanks to new and sustained funding from Aviva, AL Philanthropies, Arts Council England, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, The King's Trust via Elba Hope Foundation, Manchester City Council, Noël Coward Foundation and Salford City College Group.

This means that the quality of our programmes has never been higher, and we are better placed than ever to meet the needs of more students year-round.

THE LAB

Factory Academy now has a new, permanent home: The Lab, our creative learning space. Based on the ground floor of Aviva Studios, The Lab is more than just a place – it's our home within a home. Here, talent is nurtured, confidence is built and new, creative futures begin.

The quality of our programmes has never been higher, and we are better placed than ever to meet the needs of more students year-round.

EVENT SERIES

We've introduced a new series of free events at Aviva Studios, from networking opportunities to a Creative Careers Festival. Running throughout the year, our events offer chances to meet with members of Factory International's team, discover new training and employment opportunities and try profession-specific taster sessions.

Our 2024-25 events programme welcomed over 670 attendees across 12 events, made possible with the support of our friends, supporters, partners and engaged alumni community.

COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

To ensure that our industry-led training complements the wider education system and supports students directly, we've strengthened our relationships with colleges across Greater Manchester. In 2024-25, we worked with six local colleges to deliver enrichment activity beyond the curriculum.

We're committed to expanding this work – helping to bridge the gap between education and employment, offering meaningful CPD to educators and opening up access to the cultural and creative industries.

Images: Iqra Saied



Image: Iqin Saied

ALUMNI OFFER

We now have an Engagement and Participation Coordinator, Tanith Rhodes, with a focus on building a deeper and more structured support system for our alumni. Appropriately enough, they were a Factory Academy graduate, returned as our first apprentice and are now leading on this work.

As a result, we're offering our alumni further support with accessing paid work, peer networks and new opportunities – extending a sense of belonging beyond our courses and ensuring that Factory Academy is a lasting creative home. We also host workshops and sessions planned and delivered by alumni for alumni, through which they can share their experiences and insights, further strengthening the community-related benefits of Factory Academy through peer-to-peer learning.

We're delighted that in 2024-25, our highest ever number of graduates have gone on to paid work.

LOOKING AHEAD

We're proud of what we've built – but we know there's more to do.

We're ambitious about scale and committed to deepening our impact. We also know we can't do this alone. Our newly re-engaged Cultural Consortium reflects a renewed sector-wide commitment to collaboration, and in the year ahead, we look forward to working together to push boundaries, share power and open doors for even more creative talent.

We're delighted that in 2024-25, our highest ever number of graduates have gone on to paid work.



Image: HEADS Creative

THE BIG PICTURE



Since its launch in 2018, Factory Academy has engaged with **2,024 Greater Manchester residents** over a range of courses, workshops, college enrichment programmes, one-to-one mentoring, skills sharing and networking events.

And, since achieving independent training provider status in September 2020, we have delivered **56 courses** as part of our core programme, offering a total of **967 fully funded places**.

Year-on-year, the majority of our graduates are going on to paid work: we've hit a rolling average of 56%¹ over five years, with 2024-25 seeing our highest percentage of graduates to date going into paid work.

2,024

GREATER
MANCHESTER
RESIDENTS
REACHED

56

COURSES
DELIVERED

967

FULLY
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PLACES

56%

GRADUATES
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WORK

¹ Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer throughout this report.

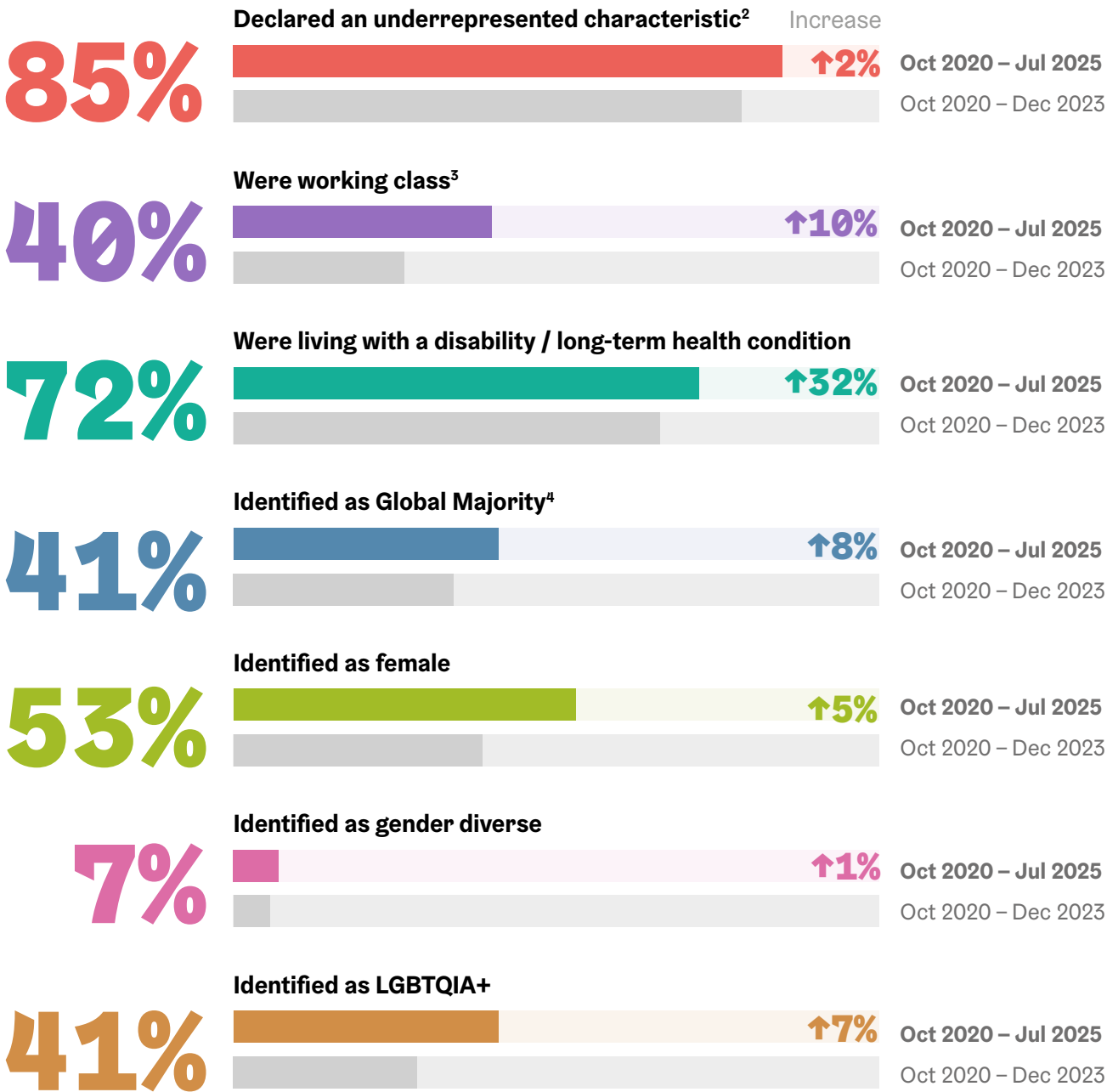


Image: HEADS Creative

DEMOGRAPHICS TO DATE

Factory Academy is working to improve diversity and inclusivity in the creative industries. We keep a close eye on how we're doing each year, and are deeply proud of every increase we achieve.

Of the students who took part in our core programmes between October 2020 and July 2025¹:



1 Not all students opted to provide data so the percentages are based on those who responded to the questions. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

2 Declared a characteristic underrepresented in the industry, consistent with the Arts Council's definition of underrepresented characteristics in the arts, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2021 – 2022. This applies throughout this report. For more information, see artsandculture.org.uk/research-and-data/diversity-data/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-data-report-2021-2022

3 The definition of working class is based on the Jerwood Arts metric throughout this report.

4 Black, Asian or other ethnically diverse diasporic backgrounds.

SUCCESSES IN OUR 2024-25 ACADEMIC YEAR

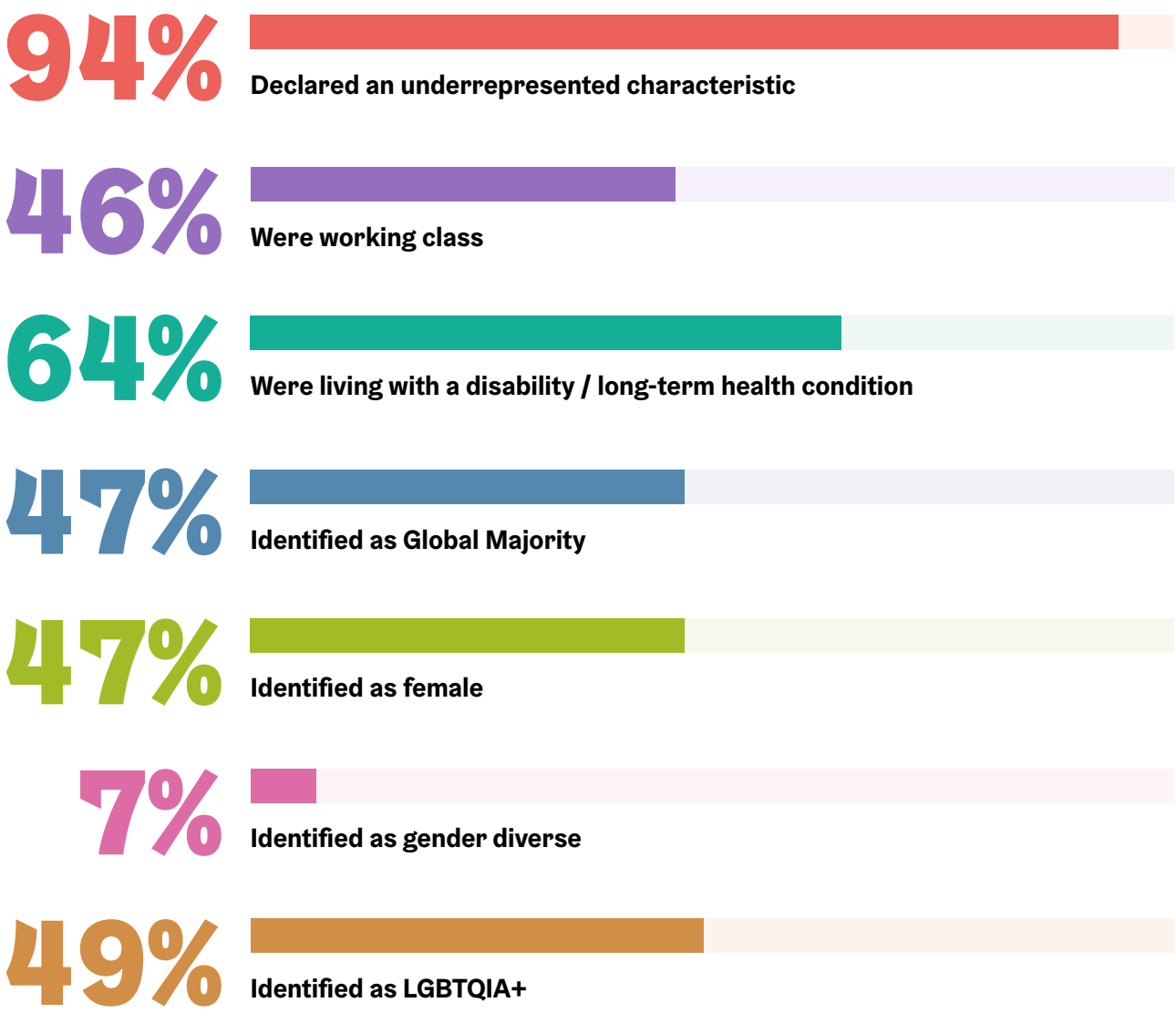


From September 2024 to July 2025, Factory Academy has engaged with **1,024 Greater Manchester residents** over a range of courses, workshops, college enrichment programmes, one-to-one mentoring, skills sharing and networking events.

We've delivered **16 courses** as part of our core programme, offering a total of **247 fully-funded places**.

2024-25 DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the students who took part in our core programmes between September 2024 and July 2025¹:

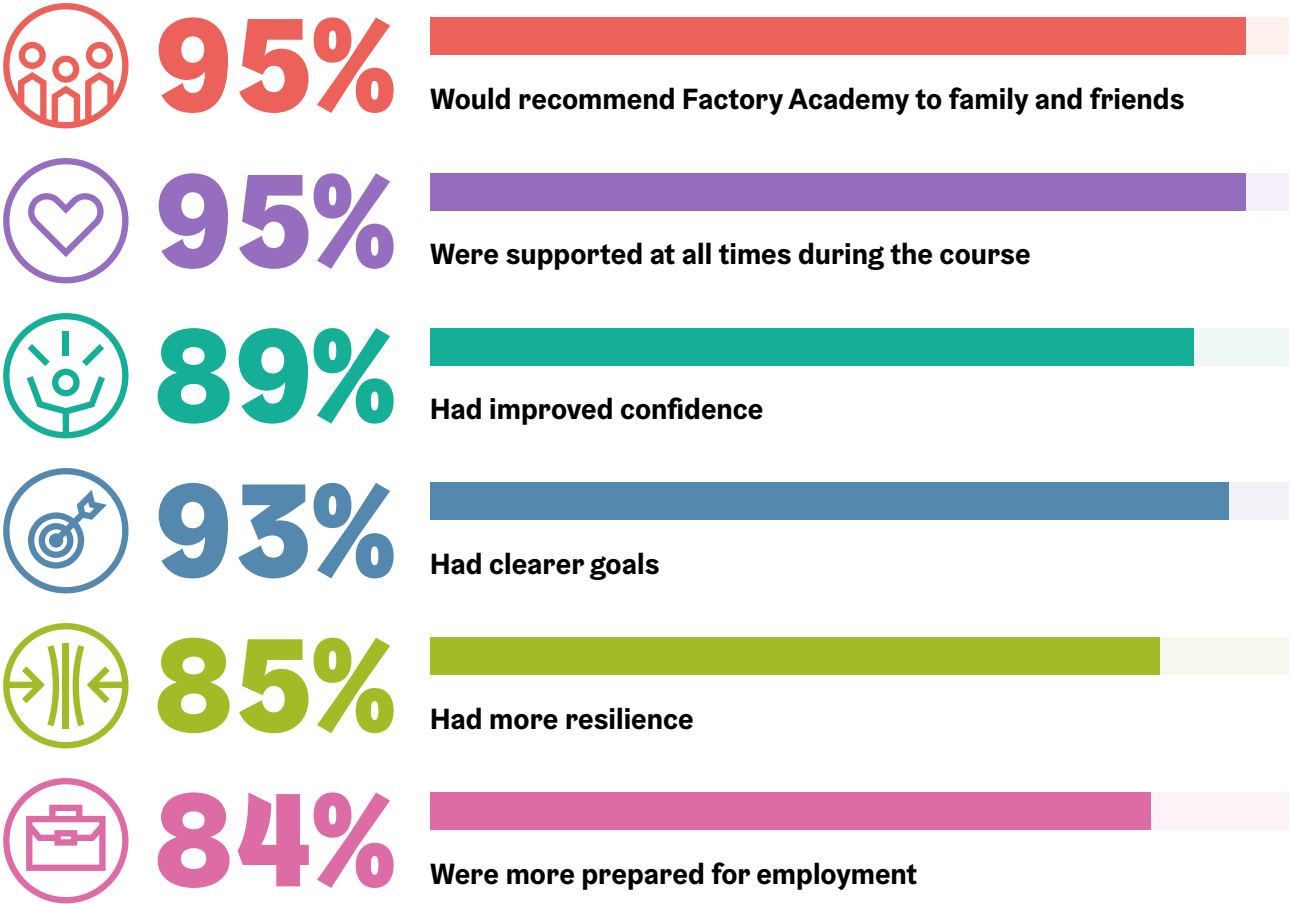


¹ Not all students opted to provide data so the percentages are based on those who responded to the questions. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

STUDENT OUTCOMES IN 2024-25

We go beyond offering practical skills and training, believing that wellbeing and self-belief are key to a successful career.

The figures below show the percentage of students who **strongly agreed** or **agreed** with each statement when surveyed on their outcomes as a result of their course:



With:

63%

of graduates going into paid work.

Making learning accessible and meeting the needs of all individuals is a top priority for Factory Academy. We're really proud that:

100%

of the students who notified Factory Academy of an access need **strongly agreed or agreed** that they would recommend Factory Academy to family and friends.

‘I would wholeheartedly recommend the Academy to anyone seeking to enhance their creative abilities and cultural understanding. By actively engaging with the programme, participants can receive invaluable mentorship and support from top-tier professionals in the North.’

BUSINESS x CREATIVITY STUDENT

Image: Catch22

MEET THE TEAM



GARY BRIGGS DIRECTOR OF TRAINING & SKILLS

Hi, I'm Gary, Director of Training & Skills at Factory International. I lead the brilliant Factory Academy team, and together we're on a mission to make creative and cultural careers something everyone can access. My job is to make sure that the experience at Factory Academy is a positive one, whether you're a student, a partner, or a stakeholder.

I'm especially passionate about supporting people who didn't get traditional qualifications, who don't yet realise how brilliant they are, or who are still figuring out what they want to do. At Factory Academy, you'll be listened to, challenged, encouraged and valued. You'll be part of something we truly believe in: opportunity for all.



KIRAN SETHI PROGRAMME MANAGER

Hi, I'm Kiran. I joined Factory Academy back in January 2020, when we were a two-person team driven by a big ambition: to open up the cultural and creative industries to more people, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds.

As Programme Manager, I design and deliver training by collaborating with employers across the sector. I also manage the day-to-day running of our courses, making sure each one reflects the Factory Academy standard. I'm always on the lookout for ways to scale our impact and ensure our mission reaches more people across Greater Manchester and beyond.



KATY EGAN-DAYNES PROGRAMME MANAGER

Hi, I'm Katy. I'm a Programme Manager for Factory Academy and a proud Mancunian who believes everyone deserves to love what they do. I was part of the two-woman team that launched Factory Academy for Manchester International Festival in 2018. In my current role, I develop and manage a range of courses, working alongside world class creatives to ensure that each course is inspiring, engaging, and gives students the skills that employers seek.

My goal is to keep growing Factory Academy's offer and reach across Greater Manchester and beyond.



TANITH RHODES ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION COORDINATOR

Hello, I'm Tanith. I'm from Hulme and I am Factory Academy's Engagement and Participation Coordinator! I support our alumni into finding employment, opportunities and confidence by organising workshops, socials and one-to-ones.

I really care about what Factory Academy does as I've seen the difference it has made to my own life when I took part in a course over two years ago. I went from being isolated to finding my love of people.



AARON THOMAS

LEARNING CONTENT PRODUCER

Hi, I'm Aaron. I'm from Northwich and I'm a Learning Content Producer for Factory Academy. In my role, I create online content for our students to access and enjoy.

My role has helped me to experience the great work Factory Academy does and how it helps working class people get a foot in the industry. As someone who has come from a working class background, this makes my job more meaningful and I get to play a part in shaping the next generation of creatives.



MIRANDA PARKER

TECHNICAL TRAINER

Hi, I'm Miranda. As a Technical Trainer with Factory Academy, I lead and deliver Event Ready, an accelerated training programme designed to upskill and diversify the live events crew industry across Greater Manchester. The work we do at the Academy is incredibly close to my heart – we break down barriers to access and create opportunities for people from all backgrounds to thrive in the live events sector.

I believe every individual has unique potential and I work hard to ensure all students – regardless of their background or needs – are given the tools and support they need to succeed. My approach is creative, student-centred, and grounded in the belief that access to the arts and creative industries should be available to everyone.



ARDY NAGUIB

FACTORY ACADEMY COORDINATOR

Hi, I'm Ardy. I work as a Factory Academy Coordinator, where I help run courses designed to support people from underrepresented backgrounds into careers in the creative industries. I first got involved through the Inside the Music Industry course – and soon after, I joined the team as a Coordinator.

I'm a big believer in making creative careers more accessible and as a Factory Academy alumni I know first-hand how valuable spaces like Factory Academy can be.



KAYLEIGH MCGANN

FACTORY ACADEMY COORDINATOR

Hi, I'm Kayleigh. I'm from Manchester and I work as a Coordinator at Factory Academy. I first got involved through one of the Academy's courses, which massively built my confidence as a budding creative and opened my eyes to the fantastic work being done at this organisation.

I'm passionate about making creative careers more accessible, especially for working class people like myself, who don't always have a clear route in. I help support the smooth running of our courses, from recruitment and student support to making sure everything is in place behind-the-scenes.



RAWAN YOUSIF

PROGRAMME DELIVERY LEAD

Hi! I'm Rawan, and I'm the Factory Academy Programme Delivery Lead. My role involves engaging with community organisations, colleges, employability charities and more to get people engaged in what we do!

Seeing our alumni bring to life festivals, magazines, events, exhibitions and more is a huge testament to the creative power of this city.

CORE PROGRAMMES



Image: Catch22

EVENT READY 2024-25



Providing an introduction to lighting, staging and sound equipment, this course is a hands-on foundation in becoming a crew member working in technical production.

Designed for people looking to work behind the scenes of the live event industry, this accelerated training programme delivers hands-on, practical training in key areas of technical production and core industry practices – building confidence and ensuring students are ready for further training, volunteering or employment.

‘I was kind of on the fence about doing it, because it’s something that’s completely new to me, but as soon as I started the class I felt very welcomed. Everyone’s been so lovely.’

Starting with classroom-based sessions before going on to a practical build, the course covers:

- An introduction to sound, lighting and stage management
- Essential knowledge around a wide range of health and safety issues, including protective equipment and working at height
- Risk assessments, ground plans and working to scale
- Roles within the industry and how to find work

...and much more.

Images: Lee Baxter

Sessions take place at Aviva Studios, with students shadowing Factory International’s in-house technical team, as well as gaining experience at other cultural venues across Manchester. Better still, students have had the opportunity to work on gigs by major artists such as Bastille, Ella Henderson and Mumford & Sons at Aviva Studios, thanks to Amazon Music’s City Sessions, powered by Aviva.

‘This course has made me feel a lot more confident with being a technician, and I feel a lot more confident now to go out there and try new things, and gain even more experience from working with bigger venues as well.’

WHAT’S THE IDEA BEHIND IT?

As well as giving students practical experience of real backstage environments, the course is aimed at promoting technical production as a viable career and in turn helping to meet the demand for technical crew within the industry.



CASE STUDY ADNAN ALI

Having previously found a job in IT creatively stifling, Adnan Ali joined Factory Academy’s Event Ready course after taking a break from employment. After graduating from the course, he went on to become a Casual Technician for Factory International, before landing a permanent role as Venue Porter at Aviva Studios. A passionate musician, he had long hoped to work in the arts, but had faced pressure from his family to follow a traditional career – here, he describes how Factory Academy was a turning point for him:

‘I feel like my decision to do the course was really the moment where I started doing things for myself. Obviously, the creative path, there isn’t really a guide for it, and I think that can lead people who care about you to think you’re not going anywhere. But I believed in it and I’m so glad I did, because it’s really changed a lot for me. I pat myself on the back sometimes and I’m like, ‘yeah, you know what, all that work and constant effort that I was putting in has got me somewhere’.

I believed in it and I’m so glad I did, because it’s really changed a lot for me.

I think obviously being in technical stuff, you’ve got to be reliable and I feel like it was sort of a boot camp for that. It taught me about adaptability because in live events, things don’t always go to plan. I really just loved being at Aviva Studios, I think it’s such a cool building. And I remember when I was first here, I was just saying, ‘I really, really want to work here’.

There are so many amazing, talented people in places that you might not know.

I’m from Oldham and that’s a place where we need people coming into colleges and telling young people that this is something that’s a viable option. There are so many amazing, talented people in places that you might not know, in corners of towns that you may not go to. And I feel like they need to be brought forward. We definitely need to normalise starting over again, because what we spend our time doing, it matters – as obvious as that sounds.

I’m thankful for Factory Academy and the experience it gave me.’



Image: Lee Baxter

Of the students who took part in our event ready courses in the 2024-25 academic year¹:

56%

Went on to gain employment

94%

Declared an underrepresented characteristic

45%

Identified as Global Majority

41%

Identified as female

35%

Were working class

62%

Were living with a disability / long term health condition

7%

Identified as gender diverse

53%

Identified as LGBTQIA+

¹ Not all students opted to provide data so these percentages are based on those who responded to the questions. Job entry is tracked three to six months post-programme completion. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

BUSINESS × CREATIVITY 2024-25



How do you combine creativity with business savvy? This course was all about applying entrepreneurial skills to creative projects.

Imagine you're a creative or an artist with a business plan up your sleeve. You're full of ideas – but not all that sure about how to put them into action... In short, you're missing the crucial guidance that turns a creative into an entrepreneur.

'I'm taking away a deeper understanding of how to combine creativity with business strategies, along with valuable industry insights and practical tools to support my career. The experience also helped me grow my confidence and connect with like-minded individuals who share similar ambitions.'

That's where Business × Creativity comes in. For this new, part-time course, Factory Academy partnered with One Giant Leap to teach students a range of fundamental entrepreneurial skills, such as:

- Defining and connecting with your audience
- Diversifying income streams
- Brand activation
- Pitching
- Intellectual Property
- Managing your finances and tax



Images: Iqra Saleed

The sessions combined expert advice, real-world examples and practical exercises. Students then applied their skills by developing a blueprint for a business plan, delivered to the rest of their cohort in a final pitching session.

'Go for it! It's the best inspiration / motivation I've ever experienced in my whole life.'

HEARING FROM THOSE IN THE KNOW

Designed to empower creatives and artists from a range of disciplines, Business × Creativity saw students receiving expert advice from industry leaders on a wide range of topics.

Guest speakers during the course included:

- **Ivan Michael Blackstock** – multi-disciplinary creative, artist, mentor and cultural innovator whose work has been seen on TV and at iconic venues around the world
- **Shaminder Nahal** – Head of Specialist Factual at Channel 4, whose department commissions TV programmes covering history, science, arts and topical issues
- **Laura Jordan Bambach** – award-winning Chief Creative Officer, named one of Britain's most influential people and as a 'digital icon' by the Guardian
- **Alison Surtees** – creative producer across film, theatre and music, also the Co-Founder of the Manchester Digital Music Archive

Together, our speakers represented organisations including the BBC, Thirty Pound Gentleman, Green Island Festival, HEADS Creative and Proud Otter Creative.

CASE STUDY
REN ROBERTS

After graduating from university, Ren Roberts trained as an Assistant Facilitator with Z-Arts, discovering a love for working with children – but also learning that she preferred to apply her skills outside of a formal school setting. Deciding to become a freelance facilitator whilst working as a Visitor Experience Assistant at the Royal Exchange Theatre, she joined Factory Academy’s Business x Creativity course in order to get a grounding in marketing and managing herself as a freelance facilitator. Here’s her take on the impact the course had:

‘Going into it, I didn’t really know anything about being freelance. In my initial interview [for the course], I was saying it would be really helpful to know how to pitch myself, to learn about the money side of things, when to file invoices and that kind of thing – and a lot of the information I got from Factory Academy has really helped me with that.

There were a few guest facilitators that I really appreciated having heard speak; fle sessay, her talk in particular really helped. The notes I’ve made about pitching off the back of her talk, I can refer back to now – and using her techniques I have pitched to Contact theatre and am now running a collective for adults to do drama... So, feeling quite good about that!

I feel more confident on business terms and how to ask for what I need and how to present myself.

Another thing I found helpful was just being able to dedicate the time to thinking about this stuff. For me, going from the full working day and then having my other job after that, it felt quite hard to suddenly know how to manage my own time –

‘The opportunity to connect with and learn from industry and business leaders was a highlight of my Factory Academy experience. Their expertise and real-world advice will be instrumental in shaping my entrepreneurial journey.’

so it was really helpful having two days a week to sit and go, ‘right, this is what my business is going to look like’.

It really helped me to know the differences between fees and payments, and asking for spaces in kind – what it means and what expectations there are. Is this the kind of place that wants you to shout them out on social media, or is this the kind of place where they get the funding and it’s more important that they get the artist in? I feel more confident on business terms and how to ask for what I need and how to present myself.

If you join a course with the right ideas of what you want from it, it can be so, so, so valuable.

Now I’m running adults’ drama-based workshops at Contact, which I don’t think I would have been able to message and pitch about if I hadn’t had the know-how from Factory Academy. I was also able to join a facilitation agency called Tactile Arts, so I’m going to be running art clubs with them as well come September. It’s quite exciting because at the start of the Factory Academy process, it was like ‘I would like to facilitate, but I don’t really know where to start’. And now I’ve got two actual facilitation roles and one where I’m using my facilitation skills as a director.

I feel more sure of what the actual working world looks like now that I have done this course. It’s open to everyone, the skills are there to be built, you don’t have to pay for it – I think it’s such a fantastic opportunity. There’s nothing to lose by coming, and if you join a course with the right ideas of what you want from it, it can be so, so, so valuable.’



Of the students who took part in our Business x Creativity courses in the 2024-25 academic year¹:



¹ Not all students opted to provide data so these percentages are based on those who responded to the questions. Job entry is tracked three to six months post-programme completion. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

MANAGING CREATIVE PROJECTS 2024-25



What's critical to the success of any creative endeavour? Project management skills. Led by expert tutors, this course teaches you how to plan and execute projects – on time, on budget and on point.

Managing Creative Projects is all about translating ideas into reality. Students arrive with a brand-new project; led by expert tutors, they're guided through the process of planning and execution, learning key tools and skills along the way. These include:

- How to define, develop and deliver a brief
- Identifying the major components of any project
- Defining a vision and what you're setting out to achieve
- Learning how to make a business case and what funders look for in successful applications
- Creating documents and tools for project management
- Recognising risk and how to manage it

Better still, students see the process illustrated with real-life examples by guest speakers from across the creative industries – and have the opportunity to pitch their idea to an industry leader on completion of the course.

'I've gained practical skills, expanded my creative thinking, and built valuable connections. The supportive environment has encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone and approach challenges with more confidence and resilience.'

'I have learnt so much during this course, life skills that will stay with me forever. I feel I have grown as a creative as well as a person and I'm really grateful for the opportunity.'



CASE STUDY SONNY

Feeling unfulfilled by his undergraduate degree, Sonny joined Factory Academy's Managing Creative Projects course – returning to Aviva Studios after having worked on Free Your Mind during his studies.

Sonny brought his idea for a music-based youth club that connects its members with industry professionals to the course. He has since gone on to develop other creative projects, and has puppeteered for The Herds at Manchester International Festival 2025. Here, he shares his experience of Managing Creative Projects:

'I loved every single day of it. It's a good feeling to be a part of a little community. We would talk about the assignments and give each other feedback. My enjoyment came from a sense of genuine equality. We were defined by our aspirations and connected by the intensity of the course. It's almost because it was something none of us had done before, we couldn't help but be ourselves.'

I'm from a ghost town called Whitefield in Greater Manchester. I call it that, but I don't think even the ghosts bother to hang about. From being a young child to going to college in Bury, everything felt too far away and there was just nothing to do for free.

It's a good feeling to be a part of a little community.

My concept for Beat Urchins is a club where teenagers can gather after lessons. It's an accessible place where someone who's 16 or 17 years old can come and have access to instruments, they can play what they like. The added element is there would be the support of facilitators: planning out the road map for an emerging group or musician. The programme is designed for people to outgrow it, because young people thrive when they're given the tools they need.

I used to be a bit of a perfectionist. I thought it was part of the creative process, but it's a disease really. I was writing songs, listening to them too much and then deleting them without sharing them with anyone. It was Jyothi [Kuna, Course Tutor] who gave me the power to be proud of my creations. It made me feel like an artist. Since graduating Managing Creative Projects, I've approached every new idea with confidence. They don't always follow through, but exploring them leads to something exciting to share with somebody else.

Since graduating Managing Creative Projects, I've approached every new idea with confidence.

I think Factory Academy is for secret innovators. For people with a hundred-million ideas in their head but time is passing them by. Managing Creative Projects is a crash-course in shaking those bad habits and becoming a responsible thinker. They will change your mindset forever. Even the fact we're talking now shows how much they care. I find it very inspiring.'



CASE STUDY ROSIE CALLAGHAN

After graduating from a Filmmaking degree, Rosie Callaghan was working in hospitality and struggling to break into the creative industries. Looking for meaningful opportunities, she joined Factory Academy x HEADS: Content Creation, where she had an idea for a business called Gone Norf – a magazine supporting creative talent from the North, an independent platform and a social club. Supported by the team, she took her idea forward onto Managing Creative Projects. Here, she talks about her experience with Factory Academy:

'Not to toot my own trumpet, but I really feel like I'm a good example of what Factory Academy can nurture. The first course is when I really got inspired, thinking that I want to create something for myself. The tutors at HEADS were really encouraging, and it gave me the groundwork to then pursue that. So I went away, and I did that on my own, and then I thought I actually want to come back to Factory and pursue that further. On the Managing Creative Projects course, I highlighted my project and my business, and really that was what accelerated it to be more monetised.'

The tutors at HEADS were really encouraging.

From then, I've been working with a bunch of brands; I'm doing a campaign next week with Foot Locker, Factory Academy is supporting me at the minute on the print coming out, then other places like Northern Design Festival, Sunderland Shorts Film Festival, NOTE skate shop, Clints Inc... And also in work outside of my own business, I'm now in the creative industry – I'm an artist assistant for two different artists, I've been getting experience with ITV. The courses gave me the stepping stones for how to get into the industry and how to push forward my own business.

I found Factory Academy so welcoming, really open to my ideas.

I found Factory Academy so welcoming, really open to my ideas, and they really kept in touch with me afterwards. Even just the people who are on the course, you really do build a network. A moment that stood out to me was being chatted to [by a tutor] after a session – just that one-to-one time with someone who was really excited and wanting me to just go for something. I hadn't had that for quite a while. It made me feel really heard and really valued.'



Of the students who took part in our Managing Creative Projects courses in the 2024-25 academic year¹:

68%

Went on to gain employment

87%

Declared an underrepresented characteristic

47%

Identified as Global Majority

57%

Identified as female

44%

Were working class

58%

Were living with a disability / long term health condition

6%

Identified as gender diverse

43%

Identified as LGBTQIA+

¹ Not all students opted to provide data so these percentages are based on those who responded to the questions. Job entry is tracked three to six months post-programme completion. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

FACTORY ACADEMY × HEADS: CONTENT CREATION 2024–25



Image: HEADS Creative

Creating compelling social content can feel a bit like alchemy. For this comprehensive, A to Z course, we teamed up with Manchester-based group HEADS to help unpick the mystery.

The Factory Academy × HEADS: Content Creation course offered in-depth grounding in social media, creative processes and project management – teaching students everything from communication and camera work to editing and event production. Exploring the importance of storytelling in developing engaging content, the course was also a spotlight for creatives based in Greater Manchester; students connected with artists who inspired them, created headshots for them and used social media to promote their work.

Workshops covered topics including:

- **Mastering time management** – creating personalised schedules for improved organisation
- **Exploring creative bartering** – learning how to exchange skills and services to build mutually beneficial collaborations
- **Editing like a pro with CapCut** – teaching confidence in video editing

‘This course is really, really special because you can tell that everybody cares about your growth. You’re not made to feel lesser or compared to anybody else due to their experience or their background. It was incredibly welcoming and supportive. If you are thinking this course might be for you, it completely is. I have been accommodated at every point with my autism and my sensory issues, so I feel very grateful.’

Our Content Creation course drew on HEADS’ expertise in brand activations and Factory Academy’s proven track record in creative education. It also gave students unparalleled access to our combined network of creative individuals and venues in Manchester.

‘Everyone has been so welcoming, so thoughtful and caring – especially the staff and the HEADS team.’

With excursions into the city alongside sessions at Aviva Studios, highlights included a morning spent learning from multi-disciplinary creative, artist, mentor and cultural innovator Ivan Michael Blackstock and the opportunity to create content promoting a waffle machine (waffles were included).

Students also had the opportunity to:

- Attend shows at Aviva Studios, such as *TRAPLORD* and a David Hockney exhibition
- Participate in networking events such as Working Class Creatives
- Engage with national charity Catch22 to explore further creative career pathways
- Have work displayed in The Lab at Aviva Studios at the end of course graduation

CASE STUDY IQRA SAIED

Before joining Factory Academy, Iqra Saied had struggled to find job opportunities as a photographer, having recently finished university. Since completing our Content Creation course, Saied has continued to access support and opportunities through Factory Academy – taking on paid work experience as a Stage Hand on Laurie Anderson’s show ARK: United States V and being employed as a freelance photographer at Factory Academy networking events.

Most recently, she’s worked as an extra for the award-winning studio Pulse Films and is now employed at Breaking Barriers in Rochdale. Here, she shares the impact that the course has had:

‘One particular area that I learned was contacting people and brands about work or collaboration. This was something I found quite daunting, however the team taught us interesting tactics – how to communicate professionally, complimenting the artist, brand or person you want to work with and planning successfully.

The thing that really shifted my thinking was the team building days. I was expecting a problem solving activity at Aviva Studios, but instead we had a fun day at Challenge Point. I got to know my peers really well through playing different games, and we worked great as a team. I didn’t expect to make friends at the course either, as I am usually shy!

This project is funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to help young people aged 16–25 who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) take their next steps towards learning or work.

Factory Academy is important for creatives who are struggling with finding their path.

The course has influenced my career in a positive way. It’s given me more insight and courage to try new things and do projects which I love – not for the sake of likes but for joy.

Factory Academy is important for creatives who are struggling with finding their path. I believe it’s different from other places, as the team genuinely cares about their students and supports them in the best way possible. These courses are vital as there continues to be a gap in the job market for people to get opportunities and learn skills.

I want to thank Factory International and HEADS for helping me to regain my confidence. I feel I can rely on the staff for advice and support. I don’t think I would have secured my current job without Factory Academy’s help. Your work matters to creatives and I am so grateful that you have given me opportunities to showcase my talent.’



Of the students who took part in our Factory Academy × HEADS:
Content Creation courses in the 2024-25 academic year¹:

54%

Went on to gain employment

96%

Declared an underrepresented characteristic

45%

Identified as Global Majority

53%

Identified as female

82%

Were working class

73%

Were living with a disability / long term
health condition

5%

Identified as gender diverse

57%

Identified as LGBTQIA+

¹ Not all students opted to provide data so these percentages are based on those who responded to the questions. Job entry is tracked three to six months post-programme completion. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.



COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS AND ENRICHMENT



This new strand of work saw us collaborating with colleges to provide an essential link between education and the cultural and creative industries.

Over the past year, we worked with six local colleges to deliver both long and short programmes of enrichment activity for students beyond the college curriculum. Our courses provided students with a direct inroad into leading arts organisations, offered work-based learning opportunities – and gave educators direct access to artists and curators, enriching their teaching in the classroom.

'[The sessions] have been fun and engaging, allowing me to learn about some of the opportunities that are available for me in the industry.'

OUR 2024-25 COLLEGES

- Salford City College
Salford
- Hopwood Hall College
Rochdale
- DISC (Digital Independent Specialist College)
Manchester city centre
- Access Creative College
Manchester city centre
- Tameside College
Ashton-under-Lyne
- The Manchester College
Manchester city centre

Images: Catch22



OUR COURSES

Tailored to the needs of each college, our courses ranged from work placements to mini study programmes. We developed an industry-approved offer, extending students' skills and knowledge beyond the curriculum through activities including:

- **Activity-focused sessions** – such as creating a mini-festival commission
- **Responding to live briefs** – set by professionals at the top of their game, and adapted to what students were studying
- **Masterclasses** – spotlighting specific departments at Factory International to give students a deeper understanding of sector demands
- **Tours of Aviva Studios** – a behind the scenes look at how a venue of this size and scale operates

'I explored new production roles and got to leave my comfort zone a little bit. I've gained more confidence with accepting that it's okay to not know everything.'



WHAT'S THE IDEA BEHIND IT?

We're working hard to cement Factory Academy within Greater Manchester's educational landscape – as well as continuing to bridge the gap between formal education and the working world.

As a major arts organisation, we recognise that we have a real opportunity to help nurture and develop future talent by giving students and educators alike inroads into the cultural and creative industries – and these partnership programmes are designed to do just that.

'Getting to work with the Factory International Artist Liaison team for my T-Level placement was an unbelievably beneficial experience. In addition to my development of both technical and social skills, I met a wonderful group of people. I was very lucky to not only experience working in the office with the team on administrative tasks but to also shadow on the ground throughout multiple days and projects during [Manchester International Festival]. These experiences strengthened my understanding of artist operations and working within the events industry'

– Student, The Manchester College

EVENTS



AT AVIVA STUDIOS

This year, we held 12 free events and workshops at Aviva Studios to complement our core programmes, welcoming 670 people to a programme that ranged from an archiving taster session to a Working Class Creative Exchange. Providing further opportunities for Factory Academy alumni as well as newcomers, here are some of the highlights.

BLACK & GLOBAL MAJORITY CAREER CONNECTOR

Creating an opportunity for Manchester's diasporic communities to come together, network and create connections in support of careers in the creative and cultural industries, this event was held in collaboration with Esther Lisk Carew's Black and Global Majority Opportunities WhatsApp group and Factory International's Diasporic Equalities and Equities working group.

Celebrating the contributions of these communities while providing opportunities for career advancement, the programme featured:

- **Guest speakers including leading figures from the creative and cultural sectors** – sharing insights and inspiration
- **Live performances** – showcasing the diverse talents within the diasporic community
- **An expert panel discussion** – exploring industry trends and opportunities

And, we offered a free pizza slice or drink for the first 100 people through the door.

When? 1 August 2024

Images: Catch22



WORKING CLASS CREATIVE EXCHANGE

Organised in partnership with Working Class Creatives and Factory International's Social Class and Mobility Working Group, this free event was an opportunity for working class creatives to meet, network and discover new opportunities. It included:

- **A panel discussion on working class experience in the creative industries** – featuring Chanelle Windas and Seren Metcalfe, Co-Directors of Working Class Creatives and Remus Thompson and Kofi Gyamf, a participant and youth worker from RECLAIM
- **A variety of stalls showcasing employment, training and creative opportunities** – hosted by the Working Class Movement Library, Odd Arts, PINK and more
- **Music and live performance** – from Manchester-based creative Tommy Rayoma and ballad singer Jennifer Reid

We also offered free chips and gravy for the first 100 attendees, as well as travel reimbursement for those who needed it.

Part of a new series focusing on supporting individuals underrepresented in the creative industries through quarterly meet-ups, this sold out event was the first of its kind for Factory Academy.

When? 27 November 2024



Images: Iqra Saied



Image: Catch22

CREATIVE CAREERS FESTIVAL

The first event of its kind at Aviva Studios, our Creative Careers Festival set out to break down the barriers that people face when trying to connect with employers – with all of our 300 free tickets selling out weeks in advance.

Delivered in partnership with Catch22's TikTok Creative Academy, the event included:

- **Stalls from leading organisations** – such as tech crew training and recruitment agency Crew Gal, outdoor arts specialists Walk the Plank and video and film production company The Gate Films
- **Speed mentoring** – offering one-to-one advice from industry experts across marketing, media, production and more

- **A Pitching Masterclass** – from British-Sierran Leonean interdisciplinary artist fle sessay, founder of the public tactics creative studio
- **Headshot photography and a CV clinic**
- **A panel discussion** – exploring career journeys, roles in the industry, advice for people looking to get into the sector and a wider conversation about the state of play

And, we offered a free soft drink to the first 100 attendees through the door.

When? 3 April 2025

GET INVOLVED



Image: Sam Corcoran



Image: Catch22

JOIN THE GREATER MANCHESTER CULTURAL SKILLS CONSORTIUM.

This collective of organisations is all about helping to make the cultural and creative industries more accessible.

From the very start, we promised to put opportunities for local people at the heart of Factory International. Opportunities for school and college leavers, those who are not in education or employment, and people on Universal Credit. If you share our commitment to:

- Offering more skills training in our region
- Ensuring our learning programme keeps pace with the industry
- Opening up the creative and cultural sectors to more underrepresented communities

...then please reach out to factory_academy@factoryinternational.org and get involved with our **Cultural Consortium** activity to make positive change happen.

OFFER SKILLS AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Calling all companies and agencies in the creative industries! Can you offer skills and training opportunities to our Factory Academy students? If the answer is yes, please contact factory_academy@factoryinternational.org

SUPPORT FACTORY ACADEMY

Here are several ways you can support Factory Academy in its mission to make the cultural and creative industries more accessible and diversify the workforce:

- **Tailored Programmes:** Speak to our team about designing a bespoke programme to meet your specific recruitment needs
- **Be a Guest Speaker:** Share your expertise and experiences by becoming a guest speaker on one of our courses, or at one of our events or workshops
- **Programme Sponsorship:** Sponsor one of our programmes to support the development of diverse talent in the creative and cultural industries

If you would like to speak to us about ways you can support Factory Academy's mission, please be in touch at supportus@factoryinternational.org

THANKS



Image: Catch22

WITH THANKS TO



Principal Partner **Aviva**

Patron **AL Philanthropies**

Funders **Arts Council England, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, The King's Trust via Elba Hope Foundation, Manchester City Council, Noël Coward Foundation, Salford City College Group**

Friends and Supporters **Access Creative College, Art with Heart, Bolton College, Blackpool School of Arts, Bradford Producing Hub, Buffalo Dragon, Catch22, Contact Theatre, DeLaval, Digital Advantage, Dig Media, DNG Production & Event Crew, dock10, Eight Engines, esea contemporary, Esther Lisk Carew's Black and Global Majority Opportunities Group, FUSE, Gorse Hill Studios, HEADS, Hey! Manchester, HOME, Hopwood Hall, ITV, Jist, John Rylands Research Institute and Library, Laing O'Rourke, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester Museum, Midpoints, Miners Community Arts and Music Centre, Near-Life, Northern Design Festival, One Dance UK, One Giant Leap, Opera House Manchester, Palace Theatre Manchester, Paramount/MTV, People's History Museum, Pulse Films, Rochdale Development Agency, Royal Exchange Theatre, Science and Industry Museum, SICK! Festival, 42nd Street, Submerge Festival, SXSW London, Tameside College, The Gate Films, The Horsfall, The Javaad Alipoor Company, The Lowry, The Pilkington Club, the Whitworth, Things That Go On Things, Thomas Carter Projects, Title Role, Toasted Productions, Tripledot Studios, Walk the Plank, We Are Invite, Working Class Creatives Database, Working Class Movement Library**

Thanks to **Stephan Agbogbe, Arber Binjaku, Gemma Blades, Millie Bottomley, Patrick Boyle, Matt Burgess, Brandina Chisambo, Jack Clarke, Amy Coney, Gemma Connell, Rob Croll, Lewis Doherty, Danny Fahey, Ceri Hand, Kieran Hawker, HEADS Creative, Emma Honeyford, Laura Jordan Bambach, Alisha Kadri, Basit Khan, Dan Kirby, Jyothi Kuna, Kirsty Latham, Karen Lockney, Latoya Luise, John Macauley, Krystle McGilvery, Sam McMillon, Katy Morrison, Shaminder Nahal, Simon Naylor, Paddy Nicholls, Nazma Noor, Lydia Odularu, Weng-U Pun, Camilla Reghenzi, Jenn Reid, Andrew Reith, Anna Riggs, flematu sessay, Rakhi Sinha Jones, Alison Surtees, Rebecca Swarray, Oskar Walin**

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