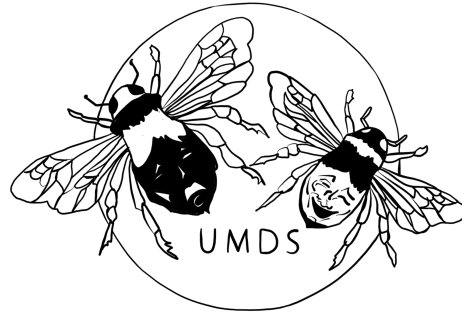




UMDS 2025/26

Joiners Pack

Hello!

Hello and welcome to UMDS (University of Manchester Drama Society)

We are the largest theatrical society at the University of Manchester and we are thrilled that you are interested in joining!

The main way we update members is via our [instagram](#), so follow it to stay updated as we progress through the year.

If you would like to get in touch with any questions about joining, or anything UMDS related, you can contact secretary.umds@gmail.com or DM our [instagram](#)

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Accessibility & Inclusion

We aim to make the society as accessible and inclusive as possible so that as many people can participate in our projects.

We are always looking for ways to improve, so please get in touch with **Zane** and/or **Niamh** if you have any questions, queries or suggestions.

Zane Marsland | Accessibility & Wellbeing | access.ums@gmail.com

Niamh Phipps-Brown | Diversity & Inclusion | inclusion.ums@gmail.com

How The UMS Year Runs

We will be holding our first social on 2nd October 2025, at [Gorilla](#), where both freshers and other UoM students looking to become involved in the society will have a chance to meet everyone, ask any questions, and have a bit of fun! Tickets will be made available via the [Student Union website](#), and publicised on our [instagram](#).

There will be two sober reps from the committee present on the night who will be making sure everyone is feeling comfortable!

These will be:

Zane - access.ums@gmail.com

Sophie - venues.ums@gmail.com

UMS produces a total of **three seasons** of theatre each **academic year**. These are:

The Autumn Fringe - **October to December 2025**

The MIFTAs - **January to March 2026**

The Shorts - **April to May 2026**

We also put on numerous other events that include:

Drama Socials - **throughout the year**

Script-in-hand workshops - **throughout the year**

Monobox - **date tbc**

Shake Your Speare (Shakespeare Festival) - date tbc
Masterclasses from external creatives - throughout the year
The Drama Ball - April 2026

Have a look at the UMDS calendar where all of our specific dates are laid out!

How a UMDS Season Runs

All of our seasons follow this same **5 step pattern**, as outlined below

1. Programming

Members are encouraged to propose new writing pieces, pre-published plays, or devising concepts for our season. All submissions should be sent to our Programming Secretary, Henry Pywell, who will anonymize them before they reach the Programming Officer, Kate O'Connor. Kate then leads the programming process with the committee to select the season's lineup. Anyone and everyone can propose something and we really encourage you to do so!

2. Creative Team Selection

Members are invited to apply to 'The Pool' to be part of a show's creative team, roles are then allocated by the committee and a creative team is assigned to each show.

3. Auditions

Members can audition for each show, there are first round auditions and recalls, these are run by the creative team of each show.

Please note you can only act in one show per season. You also cannot be on a creative team, and act in a show.

4. Rehearsals

The creative team and cast of each show rehearse and prepare the show.

5. Performances

Each show is performed across three nights in various venues in Manchester!

The Autumn Fringe

Our first season. One-hour plays that showcase the best of UMDS talent and creativity.

- There are **seven** one-hour long plays and **one freshers show**, performed in venues across Manchester, from **November** to **December**.
- These are pieces of new writing, pre-published plays or devised shows..
- Casts and team sizes vary, but Autumn Fringe shows are smaller scale and performed in more intimate venues.
- Each show gets a budget of £100.
- Previous shows have included [Wild Swimming](#) (2024) | [Oodles of Doodles](#) (2022) | [I Don't Feel Anything](#) (2021)

Key Dates - 2025

22nd September - 'Show Proposals' open (close on **29th September**)

22nd September - 'The Pool' opens (closes **29th September**)

3rd-4th October - Show Proposal Interviews (shows announced shortly after)

8th-12th October - Initial auditions and recalls take place.

13th October - Casting announced!

The Freshers' Show

Within the Autumn Fringe is the Freshers' Show. First year students can pitch shows, apply to the Pool and audition for any play, just like all other year groups, however the Freshers Show teams and casts are made up entirely of first year students, so offers a chance to meet new people and have an introduction to the world of UMDs!

How the Freshers' Show Works

- **4 short performances.** 15-20 minutes each. Following the same method as with other shows, these can be new writing pieces, devising concepts or from pre-published plays. Only first year students will be eligible to propose a show.
- **4 separate creative teams.** We will select 4 teams of applicants to lead each show, the size of these teams will vary based on the number of applicants. These teams will then run their own auditions that will be run separately to other Autumn Fringe Shows. Only first year students will be eligible to apply or audition for the Freshers' Show.
- Each show will then perform across three nights, one after the other. So whilst each show will be rehearsed and developed separately, they will be presented all together as one big Freshers' Show.

The show proposal form and Pool for the Freshers Show will be released on **30th September 2025.**

The Freshers' Show is a great place to start with UMDS, it will be less of an extensive rehearsal process but will be a great showcase of talent. It is also the perfect opportunity to get to know your fellow first years!

For more info on the Freshers' Show please get in touch with **Fraser**, the UMDS **Secretary** | secretary.ums@gmail.com

The MIFTAs

(Manchester in Fringe Theatre Awards) our second and **main season**. This is a season for larger scale plays with more budget allowance. More specific dates will be circulated nearer the time on our [instagram](#), but script submissions will be open from **3rd to 24th November**, and auditions will take place from **10th to 14th December**.

Key Details

Number of Plays - 7

Performance Dates - from February to March 2026

Previous venues include - Contact Theatre, The John Thaw Studio, Antwerp Mansions, Student Union Theatre.

Show Length - 1 hour to 2 hours (max)

Number of Performances Per Show - 3

Budget (per show) - £150

Previous Shows: [Pavel Kushnir in Concert](#) (2025) | [Stench](#) (2024) | [Sit With It](#) (2023)

The Shorts

The Shorts run a little differently to the other two seasons. They are evenings of short plays performed across 4 nights (each show will get to perform on 2 of these nights) varying in length and genre. It's a great way to give writing a try without the pressure of writing a full length play.

Key Details

Number of Plays - Varies every year!

Performance Dates - May 2025

Venue - Previously in Bar Pop (Gay Village) and SU Theatre

Show Length - 1 to 20 minutes each

Number of Performances Per Show - 2

Budget (per show) - £0

Previous Season Link: [The Shorts](#)

How to Propose a Show

The show proposal process can be tricky so here is a step by step breakdown on how you submit it to us and what we do once we've got your submission!

1. What is your show?

Are you submitting: a new writing piece / a pre-published play / a devising concept ? It's important that you understand your vision in as much detail as possible for the show before commencing the proposal process.

If your play is a new writing piece it must be at least 85% complete upon submission.

If you are submitting a pre-published play, please research the price of securing the rights to perform the play, this information can be found online.

If you are proposing a devised piece, provide as much detail on the structure you plan on using to develop the show so it is performance ready.

2. Complete the form

In each season there will be a proposal form. It is fairly self explanatory but make sure you read it all first. The form will be circulated on Instagram when applications open.

3. Apply to the Pool

If you would like to direct / work on the creative team for your show, you must also complete a Pool application.

4. Reading

Once we have your proposal, the Programming Secretary will anonymise your script before it is read by the Programming Officer and some members of the committee. We read all scripts in full, assess each application individually and offer feedback to all applicants, regardless of the outcome.

5. Interviews

After the reading process all applicants are then invited to an interview with the Programming Officer, the Co-Presidents and other members of the committee to discuss your submission further. This may seem daunting, but it's really just a chat!

6. Programming

You will then be contacted by the committee regarding the outcome of your submission.

Our advice on proposing a show

- Shows with fully realised and diverse roles are more likely to be successful. UMDS strives to champion every aspect of society and wants to amplify every marginalised voice there is.
- Be aware of limitations. Your show is not going to be put on in a massive venue with an unlimited budget. Proposals that consider and work around the limitations are more likely to be successful.
- In your interview, be as clear as possible on why your show would work well in an UMDS season.
- UMDS is often people's first time putting on their own work, so don't hold back, be bold with your proposal!

We receive a high number of submissions so can't programme everything, as much as we would love to. Please do not be discouraged if your first application is not picked, it's often not a reflection of the quality of your work as there are many factors we consider when deciding which shows to programme.

Kate is our **Programming Officer**, who leads the programming process and **Henry** is our **Programming Secretary**, who you will submit your show proposals to. Please drop either of them an email if you have any questions about proposing a show and they will readily provide some advice on the process.

Kate | Programming Officer | programming.ums@gmail.com

Henry | Programming Secretary | writing.ums@gmail.com

The Pool

Here are the roles you can apply for in the Pool:

Director

You are the captain of the ship. You're in charge of bringing the piece to life. You will need good communication, a clear creative vision and strong leadership.

Producer

You are responsible for the smooth running of the show. You create the rehearsal schedule, liaise with the venue, book rehearsal rooms, manage the budget and work with the designer to publicise the show.

Assistant Director

You are the second-in-command of the show and responsible for supporting the director with their role and the skills mentioned.

Designer

You are the artistic lead of the show - the way it looks is down to you! You work closely with the director to devise the set, costume and prop design. You will also create the publicity material including the poster and social media posts.

You can also apply to be a **movement director**, **dramaturg**, or **sound designer** but these roles may not always be required as it depends on the shows that are programmed and their requirements.

When applications open, information will be given out via our instagram. This year, we have decided to redesign the application process so that it should hopefully represent you better, and allow you to show off who you are! The central idea works like a cover letter, with the mandatory google form that's sent out consisting of only one question and more space to write your answer, with suggestions of what to include. You can also create an **optional portfolio** on top of this. The portfolio is not as valued as the google form, as we want to make sure everyone has the same opportunities to be involved, no matter your level of experience!

Some things you may wish to include in your 'cover letter' answer (within the google form):

- Why you think you would enjoy the role

- What your understanding of the role is
- An alignment with the society's ethos (striving for diversity and inclusion)
- Why you believe you would be a good fit for the role
- ... and anything else you think would be fitting!

Be clear on what your skills are as this will help us determine what show would best suit your skill set. Use as much detail as you can, your **skills** and **theatrical interests** is what we focus on when reviewing Pool applications.

Another thing to consider is that the cover letter can also be replaced with a video with the same information included. **If this is the case, on the google form please explain that you have emailed your video to secretary.ums@gmail.com.**

Portfolio (optional):

This part of the application is not mandatory, and it should be noted that **the cover letter question will always be favoured more when considering applicants**. This will help us to have a look at any experience you have that may have taught you the skills needed for the role you are applying to. However, this will only be given a small amount of attention compared to the Cover Letter it is paired with. This part of the application acts more as something for you to build on for the future!

Suggestions for things you may wish to include:

- Previous acting/directing/producing experience
- Examples of amateur experience (e.g. making a short film on Imovie with some friends!)

Do not be discouraged if you don't have much or any experience, UMDS is your opportunity to gain some!

If you do decide to create a portfolio for your application, please send it directly to secretary.ums@gmail.com

We receive a high number of Pool Applications and there are only so many roles available, but there are so many opportunities outside of the seasons that utilise creative leadership, so once again, please do not be disheartened if you are not successful the first time.

If you have any questions at all about this process please get in touch with **Fraser** our **Secretary** who manages the Pool and can tell you more about the different roles.

Fraser Crook | Secretary | secretary.ums@gmail.com

Auditions

The audition process is quite linear and similar to most auditions. Here is a breakdown of how it works.

1. Sign Up

Audition sign up sheets will be circulated via our instagram ahead of audition days. Slots tend to go quickly so make sure to be quick when they are circulated.

You must also complete the form that requests your contact details - otherwise we cannot let you know the outcome of your audition!

You can audition for as many shows as you like but will ultimately only be able to act in one show per season. You cannot be on a creative team and act in a show.

2. First round auditions

In each audition you will meet the creative team of the respective show. Each show will have provided an audition extract or something to prepare ahead of the audition. **Please note the use of phones for a script is strongly discouraged, as it is not only distracting for the auditioning team, but also does not allow you to do yourself justice!** These extracts will also be circulated via instagram.

Auditions last five minutes.

3. Recalls

You may be recalled after the first round and will probably be asked to perform a new extract / something different.

4. Casting

Once recalls have been completed, you will be contacted by the creative teams with the outcome of your recalls. However, if you have been requested by multiple shows you will be called by a member of the committee who will talk you through each show and ask you which one you would like to pick.

Tips on Auditioning

- **Stay calm.** Easier said than done but just remember that everyone wants you to succeed. It is most likely the team's first time auditioning people, you're not auditioning for Spielberg or Scorsese, everyone is in the same boat!
- Read the audition material a couple of times, maybe practice with a friend, but try not to over rehearse.
- Try and ask the team questions about the show so that you get a better idea of what it would be like to be part of the production. You're auditioning them as much as they're auditioning you.
- If you prefer, you can often **self-tape** for a show. However, recalls will nearly always require you to be there in person
- Resilience! Never give up and remember that if it's a no then there are always other seasons and opportunities. So many UMDS members have not been cast on their first go, it's all relative and don't forget "it's just a play babes"!
- And the golden piece of advice: just because there is a chair in the audition room, does not mean you HAVE to use it!!! Feel free to be creative!

The committee oversees the audition process and will be present in the building on all audition venues, so if you need anything, please do not hesitate to ask!

If you have concerns about your ability to participate in auditions please contact

Zane | access.ums@gmail.com

Nitheeshan and **Mili** our **Co-Presidents** can also always be contacted about concerns regarding auditions, or about any of the aforementioned above. | president.ums@gmail.com

UMDS at The Edinburgh Fringe

The Edinburgh Fringe is a festival that happens in the Scottish capital every year, providing performance spaces for comedy, theatre, dance and every other creative discipline you can think of! As well as our seasons, every year we sponsor at least one show to go up to the Fringe to represent the society under the name of our Fringe Production Company, **Hive MCR**.

These shows could be ones that have already appeared in one of our seasons or they could be a piece of new writing. Last year we sent [The Exterminator](#) to the Edinburgh Fringe. It was a huge success and a massive source of pride for the society at the biggest creative festival in the world!

Whilst Hive MCR is the route to Edinburgh through the society, various drama society shows decide to go up independently every year and it is always the most incredible experience for everyone involved. We encourage every member to pursue this whatever happens!

The Pitching Process, The Pool and The Auditions all work in the same way as our previous seasons and information will come out about this process in **early 2026**.

Other Projects

As well as all that, there are so many other ways to get involved... Here is a breakdown of the other events and opportunities we put on last year that you can expect to return, along with new events, this year!

Script in Hand Workshops - this year we will be running several workshops that will aim to provide members with insights into wide areas of the theatre and creative industries. Previous workshops have included 'how to use a tech desk', 'directing, producing, designing' and 'verbatim theatre'. This year we plan to have a **Script in Hand Showcase**, in which the learning acquired in these sessions will be demonstrated to an audience. More information on this will be provided later in the year.

The Fresher's Rep - shortly we will be recruiting for a 1st Year student to join us and act as the liaison between the committee and 1st year students, as well as support other committee members in the running of UMDS. More details on how to apply will be circulated shortly.

Shake Your Spear! (Shakespeare Festival) - For the first time, this year we plan to hold a festival celebrating the works of William Shakespeare, with monologues, duologues, and short scenes being performed after rehearsal, direction, production and design work from our members who are interested. More details on this will be provided on this soon!

Monobox - a monologue series that is both performed live and recorded and published on our Instagram. All members are invited to pitch and perform their work. More information on this will be provided later in the year. [Click here for an idea of last year's Monobox series!](#)

Cabaret Night - This year we aim to continue our popular Cabaret Night, where all sorts of camp performances take place! Think drag shows, fashion shows, and dancing, all of which you can be a part of! This normally takes place at the end of March/start of April to celebrate the end of the MIFTA's season!

Talks - last year we hosted a talk and workshop by Jonathon Kemp from Drama Studio London. We plan to hold other talks by industry professionals and charity organisations that inspire our members to aim high!

Creative Projects that take place outside of our seasons are led by **Hattie** our **Head of Outreach and Creative Projects** | creativeprojects.umds@gmail.com

Socials

Socials are a big part of UMDS as it's a chance for our member group to get together and meet new people.

Our first social of the year will be held on 2nd October in [Gorilla](#). All are welcome, so bring any friends, flatmates, housemates who are interested! The committee will all be there and will happily answer any questions about UMDS, but more importantly just want to get to know all new members!

There will also be a sober committee representative(s) in order to create a safe environment for everybody. This is implemented at every social we hold throughout the year.

Our main social of the year is the annual **Drama Ball** which always promises to be a fabulous evening and it is where we present the MIFTA Awards. This normally takes place in **April**.

More socials will happen throughout with a variety of themes and formats, for any queries please contact **Soha** our **Social Secretary** | social.umds@gmail.com

The Committee

Below are the contact details of each member of the committee, feel free to send us an email or DM our [instagram](#)

CO-PRESIDENTS

Nitheeshan Gunanantham (he/him) & **Mili Branston** (she/her)

president.umds@gmail.com

SECRETARY

Fraser Crook (he/him)

secretary.umds@gmail.com

PROGRAMMING SECRETARY

Henry Pywell (he/him)

writing.umds@gmail.com

TREASURER

Harry Petts (he/him)

treasurer.umds@gmail.com

SOCIAL SECRETARY

Soha Rangrej (she/her)

social.umds@gmail.com

PUBLICITY OFFICER

Christine Jiyun Seong (she/her)

publicity.umds@gmail.com

VENUE & TECH SECRETARY

Sophie Jerram (she/her)

venues.umds@gmail.com

PROGRAMMING OFFICER

Kate O'Connor (she/her)

programming.umds@gmail.com

HEAD OF OUTREACH AND CREATIVE PROJECTS

Hattie Wood (she/her)

creativeprojects.umds@gmail.com

ACCESSIBILITY AND WELLBEING OFFICER

Zane Marsland (they/them)

access.umds@gmail.com

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER

Niamh Phipps-Brown (she/her)

inclusion.umds@gmail.com

We hope that this gives an idea as to what UMDS entails and we hope to meet you soon! Once again, please do not hesitate to contact any of the above members, or DM us on our [instagram](#) with any questions, queries or concerns at all. We are so excited to get this 2025/26 season underway and we hope you are too!

