



THE ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020/21 – 2024/25

0. Introduction

- 0.1 The Arts University Bournemouth is a specialist higher education institution with a commitment to providing all-through provision in the creative, cultural and performing arts from Saturday Art School through further education (FE), undergraduate and postgraduate to doctoral level study. The University prides itself on providing a supportive and creative environment which places students and their work at the centre of its community.
- 0.2 The Arts University Bournemouth offers higher education awards in the fields of art, design, architecture, media and performance. These awards are characterised by an emphasis on advanced creative studio practice, delivered within a community of creative professionals. Courses have a strong focus on developing the technical and professional skills of students, which leads to highly employable graduates both within their specialist fields and beyond. Collaboration between courses, and between students, is designed to reflect the demands of professional practice; the ways in which courses work together to provide this professional environment is a key feature of the educational environment at the institution.
- 0.3 The University does not currently run any part-time Honours degrees or other qualifying courses, and so has no data in this category.
- 0.4 The University revised its strategic framework in 2018 and endorsed a key aim to be 'dedicated to access and success in creative education'.
- 0.5 Our primary source of data for the assessment of performance, and the subsequent establishment of strategic measures and targets, is the OfS access and participation data dashboard¹. This is supplemented by internal monitoring data on performance.
- 0.6 For some indicators of disadvantage, the small population size is small. While we undertake internal monitoring of these numbers, aggregating over time where appropriate, we are aware that a small number of students can have a disproportionate impact on outcomes; and even over a three-year period the total number is often less than 30. These data are insufficiently secure for publication.

1. Assessment of performance

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access

- 1.1.1 Recruitment from Quintiles 1 and 2 (based on POLAR data) has historically proved challenging for AUB. While there are many areas of low participation within the south-

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

west region (especially in areas of rural and coastal deprivation), few are within easy access of the Wallisdown campus. The proportion of entrants to Creative arts & design from low participation neighbourhoods was 12.9% in 2017/18²), which suggests that the problem is systemic rather than focused exclusively on AUB.

- 1.1.2 Given its geographical location and subject offering, AUB has acknowledged that it will be difficult to recruit significant numbers of additional Mature students (see paragraph 1.3.1 below). This would suggest that the University should focus its efforts on the 18-year old population. However, over 50% of entrants to AUB higher education courses are aged 19, having previously taken the Foundation Diploma in Art and Design. In consequence, we have based our assessment of performance on access proportions for all students.
- 1.1.3 2017/18 data (see table 1 below) show that 23% of new entrants were from Quintiles 1 and 2 combined. Against this, 34% were from Quintile 5, representing a significant gap in access. The access gap between Quintile 1 and 5 was 25% in 2017/18; and the gap between Quintiles 1 and 2 and Quintile 5 was 11%. The combined total from the first two quintiles should be in the region of 40%, or two-fifths of the entry cohort. Both the proportions, and the gap in access, have remained broadly stable over time; there have been minor fluctuations but this is to be expected with small absolute numbers. This has been an important measure for the University for many years, but it has proved difficult to make significant headway. This is a priority area of activity. There is a need both to increase the proportion of entrants from the first two quintiles, and to close the access gap between these quintiles and the most advantaged, represented by Quintile 5, and each of these is reflected in our aims and targets.

	Proportion from Q1	Proportion from Q2	Combined Q1&2	Proportion from Q5	Gap between Q1 and Q5	Gap between Q1&2 and Q5
2017/18	9%	14%	23%	34%	25%	11%
2016/17	9%	14%	23%	38%	29%	15%
2015/16	9%	15%	24%	32%	23%	8%

Table 1: Access proportions, taken from OfS data dashboard

- 1.1.4 Internal data shows that the proportion of offers made to those from Quintiles 1 and 2 is consistent with the proportions made to other Quintiles; the challenge for AUB is not therefore one of conversion per se, but of securing sufficient applicants from those from the first two quintiles, as demonstrated by applicant numbers over the last two years (table 2):

	2017	2018
Quintile 1	280	265
Quintile 2	395	385
Quintile 3	500	450
Quintile 4	590	500
Quintile 5	815	790

Table 2: numbers of applications by POLAR Quintile, internal data

² <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/07-02-2019/widening-participation-tables>, Table WP3

1.1.5 While AUB has historically used low participation neighbourhoods as its marker for deprivation, as it was able to access reliable national data on this through HESA, a similar pattern is evident when using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). 7% of AUB entrants were from Deprivation Quintile 1 in 2017/18, and 14% from Quintile 2, against 34% from Quintile 5. This represents an access gap of 27% between Deprivation Quintiles 1 and 5. The proportion from Quintile 1 has risen steadily but slowly from 5% in 2013/14, but it remains low, and the access gap between Quintiles 1 and 2, and Quintile 5, remains significant. As discussed in more detail at paragraph 2.2.4 below, we shall use the early years of the Plan to gain a better understanding of the IMD population, and how it overlaps with and differs from the population identified by POLAR. We expect to be in a position to set targets for IMD activity by the summer of 2023.

Success

Non-continuation

1.1.6 The retention of students from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 is strong, with retention from Quintile 1 standing at 96% in 2017/18; and from Quintiles 1 and 2 at 94%. Numbers are small and the gap has only been reported in three of the last five years, but the most recent report, in 2015/16, showed a non-continuation gap between Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 of 0%. There are no clear patterns of differential performance in relation to non-continuation across the various POLAR quintiles over a five-year period; from 91% in 2013/14, the rate rose for two years and has since fallen marginally, but it remains consistent with the retention rate of 96% for Quintiles 3-5. A similar performance is evident if using the IMD measure, which shows 93% retention from Deprivation Quintiles 1&2 in 2017/18, consistent with the 95% rate for Quintiles 3-5. There is a continuation gap of 7% between Deprivation Quintile 1 and Quintile 5. As noted in para 1.1.5 above, we shall be using the early years of the Plan to improve our understanding of our performance in relation to IMD students, with a view to setting targets by the summer of 2023 (see also paragraph 2.2.4 below).

Attainment

1.1.7 In 2017/18, 66% of students from Quintiles 1 and 2 secured at least an Upper Second Class honours degree at AUB, compared to 68% from Quintiles 3-5. The attainment gap between the higher and lower quintiles, while small, has been narrowing over the last five years (now at 2%), and there is sound evidence that students from all participation quintiles attain effectively. The attainment gap between Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 is 9%, but this is based on small numbers and very wide confidence intervals. The gap is not statistically significant, and we are not prioritising this in our Plan as other gaps are greater. The IMD Deprivation measure offers a more complex picture, with the attainment of at least an Upper Second Class degree from students from Deprivation Quintiles 1 and 2 standing at 59%, against 72% for students from Quintiles 3-5. Disregarding 2016/17, where the figures for Quintiles 1 and 2 students spiked to 67% (a gap of only 2%), the gap has remained stable at around 12-14%, although this gap is not statistically significant. The attainment gap between Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 was 20% in 2017/18, although as with POLAR 4 data, there are very wide confidence intervals, and the gap is not statistically significant. We have not prioritised this in our Plan, as we wish to focus on the biggest gaps, but we discuss possible intersections of disadvantage at paragraph 1.6.2 below.

Progression to employment or further study

1.1.8 Data on progression using POLAR show that the first two quintiles have a lower progression rate to highly skilled employment, at 68% compared to 81% for the upper three quintiles; this gap has grown steadily over the last five years, having actually been negative

in 2013/14, and the progression gap between Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 is now 10% (69% for Quintile 1 and 79% for Quintile 5). While this gap is not statistically significant, we plan to undertake desk-based research to understand the position, and whether this is a trend which AUB may be able to influence, as we would wish to build on our existing strong performance (although we are mindful that the data from the new Graduate Outcomes Survey may not be comparable with the results of the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, and we shall need to reflect on these new data once they are available). For example, it may be that graduates from areas of lower participation return to their parental home after graduation, where graduate level opportunities are less available. They are also less able to take up opportunities such as unpaid internships, which are prevalent within the creative arts and are likely to be more accessible to those from advantaged backgrounds³. We expect to have a clearer understanding of these data, and how any gap may be tackled, by summer 2022; and we would identify actions and targets at that time, if appropriate.

- 1.1.9 When using the IMD measure, graduates from Quintiles 1 and 2 achieve equally well as those from Quintiles 3-5, with 77% of each group progressing to highly skilled employment or higher level study in 2017/18, and no significant gap between the groups year on year. This is an exceptional achievement for Quintiles 1 and 2, consistent with the overall strong performance of the University in preparing graduates for employment, but significantly higher than the sector average for this group. The progression gap between Deprivation Quintiles 1 and 5 is 0%. . The work we are undertaking to understand IMD data, as described above, may suggest some additional initiatives in relation to progression, but as this is not currently an area of differential performance, we do not intend to set any targets at this time.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access

- 1.2.1 The Arts University Bournemouth is located in a geographical region which is less ethnically diverse than the nation as a whole. Figures from the most recent census show a BAME population in our four local boroughs of 8.1% in Bournemouth; 4.2% in Poole; 2.5% in Christchurch and 1.8% in East Dorset; with a Black population of below 1%. The highest BAME proportion is from those with Asian backgrounds, which is the group least likely to engage with arts subjects⁴). Consequently, the University is proud of its achievement in recruiting 12% from BAME backgrounds in 2017/18, noting in particular that 15% of its 18-year old entrants were BAME.
- 1.2.2 The proportion of 18-year olds from Mixed race backgrounds stands at 6%, having risen from 4% in 2013/14, and is now significantly above the 3.2% in the 18-year old population. The proportion of Black entrants has ranged from 3-5% over a five year period, against a national proportion of 3.6%, and there is no particular pattern in terms of the equality gap. The proportion of entrants from Other backgrounds is small, having reached 1% on two occasions during the last five years against a national proportion of 1.1%.
- 1.2.3 As noted above, there are particular challenges in recruiting students from Asian backgrounds to subjects in the creative arts. The proportion at AUB stands at 3% in 2017/18, having ranged between 3% and 5% over the last five years, against a national proportion of 8.2%; there was a material participation gap of 5.2% in 2017/18. We are not able to prioritise this access gap in our first five-year plan, as are focusing on those groups with the biggest gaps, but we shall ensure that all our outreach work is fully inclusive, with the intention of encouraging greater participation in creative arts higher

³ See, for example, <https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/internships-pay-as-you-go/>

⁴ See *Entries to arts subjects at Key Stage 4*, Education Policy Institute, 2017; and *National strategy for access and student success in higher education*, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, April 2014.

education of students from an Asian background, leading to a greater proportion of enrolments from this group (see paragraph 3.1.10 below).

- 1.2.4 There are two years in the last five where the OfS data dashboard shows a statistically significant over-representation of White students. These naturally correlate to years in which there were fewer BAME enrolments, and addressing the issue of BAME enrolment would similarly ensure that White students were not over-represented. Internal data shows that AUB makes offers to about 56% of White applicants and to about 60% of BAME applicants. In consequence, the University is confident that its admissions processes are sound and do not foster disadvantage.

Success

Non-continuation

- 1.2.5 The retention rate of BAME students at AUB was 96% in 2016/17, and has been consistently around this level for a five-year period. During this time, retention of White students has remained constant at 95%; and there are no statistically significant non-continuation gaps. The number of students in each category is very small, with only the Mixed group regularly reaching reportable levels. However, even in this group, the numbers are too small to compare rates year on year. The University monitors these groups internally each year, and aggregated data do not identify any unusual patterns of retention across the various BAME groups.

Attainment

- 1.2.6 The University has identified that there is a gap in attainment between White students and BAME students. While there has been an improvement in outcomes over the last five years, and the gap in attainment rates between White and BAME students has narrowed, progress has been slow, and the numbers in the BAME group are comparatively small which makes it more likely that results will fluctuate year on year.
- 1.2.7 In 2018, 73% of White students achieved a first or upper second class degree, whereas only 57% of BAME students did so (see table 3 below), an attainment gap of 15%. Results are only reportable for the White and Mixed groups, and it is pleasing to note that the attainment gap between White students and Mixed race students has fallen from 15% in 2013/14 to 5% in 2017/18, but the overall results are disappointing, despite the fact that these results fall comfortably inside the confidence intervals because of the comparatively small numbers. Initial efforts to address the gap have thus proved inadequate, and the University has identified actions within its Creative Learning Plan which seek to respond to this challenge. This is a priority action for the University.

	White %	BAME %	Gap % White to BAME	Mixed %	Gap % White to Mixed
2017/18	73	57	15	70	5
2016/17	71	65	6	65	5
2015/16	70	52	18	55	15
2014/15	65	51	13	60	5
2013/14	70	46	24	55	15

Table 3: student attainment, taken from OfS data dashboard. Success proportions are rounded to the nearest whole number. Success gap is taken from the data dashboard “explore gaps between student groups” which uses absolute values.

Progression to employment or further study

1.2.8 74% of graduates from BAME backgrounds progressed to highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level from the 2017 graduating cohort; this figure has been on an upward trajectory from 66% in 2013, but the University is mindful that this group contains less than 100 students in each year, with corresponding large confidence intervals, and that this strong performance must be considered in this light. There is some evidence that outcomes for students from BAME backgrounds may be marginally less successful than outcomes for White students; this is indicated by the national datasets which show progression of 79% for White students, a figure which has also risen steadily; the gap in progression between White and BAME students has been no greater than 6% in the last four years, and currently there is a progression gap of 5%. The University is aware that graduates from BAME backgrounds may face additional disadvantage in securing employment⁵, which will in part depend on the region of the country where they seek work; and this is of particular significance within the creative industries⁶. This may be a feature of an intersection of disadvantage; in the first instance, we shall undertake desk-based research to identify possible intersections, prior to working with students and graduates to understand their experience, and the actions we may be able to take to reduce and eliminate this gap. We expect to be able to set targets and identify relevant actions, if appropriate, by the summer of 2022.

1.3 Mature students

Access

1.3.1 The University has not made particular efforts to recruit Mature students (aged 21+) over recent years. It formerly offered a number of part-time routes on Honours degree and Foundation degree courses, but recruitment to these courses was extremely poor and the final such course was closed to new entrants from 2014. As a large proportion of businesses within the creative and performing arts are SMEs or microbusinesses, it is challenging to set up courses with employers, especially given the lack of loan funding available for those who wish to re-train. The proportion of Mature entrants has remained constant at around 10% over a five-year period, compared to a national proportion of about 28%, although we note that the University does not offer courses in those disciplines which tend to have higher proportions of mature students (such as professions allied to medicine). The gap in participation has thus been stable over the five-year period.

Success

Non-continuation

1.3.2 Retention rates for Mature students have fallen to 88%, and are now stable at this level. This is slightly lower than the rate for Young students, which stands at about 95%; there is a continuation gap of 7%, although this is not statistically significant. The numbers in most of the disaggregated age groups (26-30; 31-40; 41-50; and 51 and over) are too small to be reported reliably on an annual cycle. Further investigation is required to determine whether there are particular patterns of non-continuation for Mature students, considering qualitative data alongside any shared features (such as the course of study undertaken), and we shall undertake this research during the early years of the plan to understand the position and what actions, if any, may be appropriate. We expect to be in a position to set targets in relation to Mature students, if appropriate, by the summer of

⁵ See, for example, the House of Commons briefing paper researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06385/SN06385.pdf

⁶ See for instance, *Creative Diversity*, published by the Creative Industries Federation, available from [https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-06/30183-CIF%20Access%20&%20Diversity%20Booklet_A4_Web%20\(1\)\(1\).pdf](https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-06/30183-CIF%20Access%20&%20Diversity%20Booklet_A4_Web%20(1)(1).pdf), pp.13-14.

2023.

Attainment

- 1.3.3 In 2018, Mature students showed slightly better attainment rates than Young students, although the gaps have been small over the last five years, and well within the natural confidence intervals. The available data do not suggest that students from any particular age groups perform significantly better or worse than average, over time.

Progression to employment or further study

- 1.3.4 The proportion of Mature students securing highly skilled employment or further higher level study has risen from 66% to 80%, although the wide confidence intervals show that this trend is not statistically significant. At the same time, the proportion of Young students achieving this has risen from 74% to 78%. There is no evidence that Mature graduates, from any age group, are disadvantaged in securing good employment outcomes.

1.4 Disabled students

Access

- 1.4.1 22.6% of students enrolled at AUB in 2017/18 were recorded as disabled. This figure has risen steadily from 15% in 2013/14, and demonstrates that there are no barriers to entry for students with disabilities.
- 1.4.2 The proportion of entrants with a cognitive or learning disability has remained consistent at about 10% over a five-year period since 2013/14, well ahead of the general population where the proportion stands at 5.5%; and the proportion of entrants with a mental health condition has risen steadily to 6.7%, again well ahead of the national figure of 3.5%, although it is well-attested that this proportion is rising⁷.
- 1.4.3 The University is proud to welcome and support disabled students, and has consistently performed ahead of the HESA performance indicator benchmark for many years⁸. In each of the other categories of disability (multiple; sensory, medical or physical; and social or communication) AUB has a slightly higher proportion of entrants than is found in the general population.

Success

Non-continuation

- 1.4.4 The University has excellent retention levels for all students; and retention rates for both disabled students and students with no known disability are consistent at around 95% over a five-year period. Non-continuation for students with a cognitive or learning disability shows a negative gap compared to students with no disability in each of the three years with reportable data, although this gap has never been greater than 2%. Students with a mental health condition have reportable data in only one year, 2015/16, when there was a small positive gap compared to students with no disability, but given the small numbers none of these are significant. There is no evidence, either from national or internal datasets, that those with a specific category of disability are less likely to be retained at AUB, and we are proud of our record in the retention of all students.

⁷ HEPI, 2018. *The Student Academic Experience Survey*. Available from: <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/STRICTLY-EMBARGOED-UNTIL-THURSDAY-7-JUNE-2018-Student-Academic-Experience-Survey-report-2018.pdf> [accessed 20 May 2019], p.51.

⁸ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/07-02-2019/widening-participation-tables>, T7

Attainment

- 1.4.5 Student levels of attainment are consistent across all student groups, including those with no known disability. About 67% of students, including those with a disability, achieve at least an Upper Second Class degree. There was a small attainment gap of 7% in 2014/15 but this has steadily reduced, and in 2017/18 this was a negative gap of 1%. We are aware that numbers in specific disability categories are small, which may result in data being unreliable; but where data are available, for students with a cognitive or learning disability, attainment rates are remarkably similar to those of students with no disability, with no gap over a five-year period. On the one occasion when students with a mental health condition had reportable data, the attainment gap was 2%. Internal data also confirm that there are no consistent patterns of lower achievement in specific disability groups.

Progression to employment or further study

- 1.4.6 Among 2017 graduates, 83% of disabled AUB graduates were in highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level at the time of the DLHE survey. This compares to 77% of graduates with no known disability. Employment rates have risen for all students over a five-year period, but have risen most sharply for students with disabilities, such that there was a negative gap of 6% in for 2017 graduates. There was also a negative gap of 4% for students with a cognitive or learning disability, and this gap has been negative for four years. No other categories of disability have reported data in the national datasets, as numbers in these groups are too small to be reportable, but the excellent overall performance provides evidence that no specific category of disability is disadvantaged when progressing to highly skilled employment or further study.

1.5 Care leavers

Access

- 1.5.1 Since 2012, the University has offered an annual bursary of £2,000 to any student from a looked-after background. This is in addition to any other entitlements under previous Access Agreements. However, it has had limited success in recruiting these students. Internal data show that around half of applicants who indicate that they are care leavers in fact fall into other categories of disadvantage (such as carers, or estranged children); but the conversion rate from this group is lower than for other applicants, and this is an area where further work may be beneficial. The SUN network, of which AUB is a part, has agreed to focus on access and achievement of care leavers, and we are committed to building on this collaborative work to improve our performance, which we shall monitor and report on using internal data. As there are no national datasets, we have not set a formal target for this work.

Success

Non-continuation

- 1.5.2 Internal evidence suggests that care leavers are less likely to be retained than other students; and that this is more usually the result of academic failure, rather than student withdrawal. As the total number of enrolments within each academic year is in single figures, no data are presented within this Plan. AUB recognises that students from a looked-after background may require additional support, both academically and in respect of their wellbeing, to enable them to fulfil their potential. We aim to build on our success in student retention to ensure that non-continuation rates for care leavers are consistent with those for other groups.

Attainment

- 1.5.3 The numbers of graduates in each academic year are too low to permit a rigorous analysis of attainment, but internal evidence indicates that attainment levels are consistent with qualifications at entry, but lower than the University average. We anticipate that the work the University is undertaking through its Creative Learning Plan to deliver a fully inclusive curriculum and associated assessment will also benefit care leavers, but given the small numbers we have not set a target for this.

Progression to employment or further study

- 1.5.4 AUB has not historically considered issues of progression for care leavers, as the numbers in the group are too small to provide reliable data, even when aggregated over three years. However, we recognise that care leavers may require additional support to access progression opportunities, and this is an area where further work may be useful, for example by ensuring that the excellent progression evidenced by other graduate groups is fully extended to care leavers (by identifying the barriers and addressing these where possible).

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

- 1.6.1 AUB is cautious about intersections as, even when data are aggregated over three years, the numbers remain small. However, it is evident that the recruitment of BAME students from deprivation quintiles 1-3 is lower than might have been expected, despite the fact that offer rates are broadly consistent across all quintiles and ethnicities (internal data).
- 1.6.2 The University further notes that the attainment of BAME students from POLAR and IMD quintiles 1 and 2 is less strong than the attainment of other BAME groups, and also than White students from POLAR 1 and 2 areas. Both these features require further investigation and action, and may indicate that the major gap in attainment is more prevalent in this intersection of BAME and household background. In the first instance, this will be desk-based research to understand the prevalence and impact of intersection; but this will be followed by qualitative interviews, alongside the research already identified to support our understanding of the IMD student data. By 2023 we expect to have a more comprehensive understanding of intersections of disadvantage as they apply to the AUB student cohort, and we shall set targets at this time if appropriate.
- 1.6.3 AUB has consistently recruited a high proportion of female students, which can be attributed in large part to the courses which it offers, some of which have almost exclusively female cohorts despite considerable efforts to attract male applicants. Courses in Costume and Performance Design; Fashion; Make-up for Media and Performance; and Textiles all have predominantly female student groups. In consequence, the University does not consider that the apparent disparities of recruitment by gender are surprising.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

- 1.7.1 The University has not historically monitored the enrolment of other groups who may experience barriers to higher education, such as carers, those estranged from their families, refugees, those from gypsy and Roma families, or children from military families. The numbers of students from these groups currently on course are very small, as these have not been priority target groups, but the University acknowledges the barriers which these groups may face.
- 1.7.2 Given the total student enrolment at AUB, it is not realistic to set individual targets for other groups who may experience barriers to higher education, as the totals would be very

small and in many cases unreportable (given the risk of identification). However, we wish to improve on our current performance, and to provide improved outreach, advice and guidance to potentially disadvantaged groups, which will in turn enable us to monitor success and progression.

1.8 Summary of performance

1.8.1 Table 4 below sets out AUB's assessment of performance using a simple RAG tool, highlighting priority areas. The grey areas signify that there are insufficient data to make an assessment, which itself recommends further work.

	Access	Continuation	Achievement	Progression
Deprivation (POLAR / IMD)				
BAME students				
Mature students				
Disabled students				
Care leavers				
Others who experience barriers				

Table 4: AUB assessment of performance (RAG)

2. Strategic aims and objectives

2.1 Target groups

2.1.1 Based on its assessment of current performance, AUB's focus over the five-year period of the plan is therefore:

- Recruitment from Quintiles 1 and 2
- Recruitment from other groups which may face barriers to entry
- Eliminating the BAME attainment gap
- Building on success in non-continuation, achievement and progression.

2.1.2 In addition, the University will enhance its evaluation practice such that it is better able to target its work over the period of the plan.

2.2 Aims and objectives

2.2.1 Our strategic aims for access and participation are as follows:

- i) We aim to identify and eliminate barriers to entry for all student groups, enabling access for all those with the potential to benefit from higher education study at AUB
- ii) We aim to create an inclusive learning and teaching environment in which all students, whatever their background, are able to achieve their full potential.
- iii) We currently have strong performance across most under-represented groups in relation to non-continuation, attainment and progression, and we aim to maintain and where possible to build on this
- iv) We aim to enhance our approach to evaluation such that it exemplifies best

practice nationally.

2.2.2 Our objectives are as follows:

- i) To ensure equality of access across all population quintiles (POLAR4). The proportion from Quintiles 1 and 2 should be in the region of 40%, and hence we should expect a 'negative gap' between the proportion from Quintiles 1 and 2, and Quintile 5. We plan to move from the current position of +11% to 0% by 2025, and to close inequality between all population quintiles to within 8% by 2030;
- ii) To raise the proportion of entrants from Q1 and 2 to 30% by 2025, and 35% by 2030;
- iii) To double the number of care leavers studying at AUB by 2025. This is not specified as a target, as there are no national datasets which can be used to indicate current performance or gaps; and as numbers in this group are very small, percentages are not meaningful. This is the focus of the SUN network, and we are committed to building on this collaborative work to improve our performance, which we shall monitor and report on using internal data;
- iv) To improve recruitment from other groups which may face barriers to entry, increasing these numbers by a third over five years;
- v) To eliminate the BAME attainment gap by 2027;
- vi) To maintain and build on our excellent performance in most areas of non-continuation, attainment and progression, maintaining existing levels of achievement and with a target for improvement in employment rates from Quintiles 1 and 2 over five years, to reach 75% in highly skilled employment or higher level study by 2026.

2.2.3 We have not set an objective in relation to evaluation practice, but the achievement of this aim will further the delivery of the six objectives.

2.2.4 We have not set an objective in relation to entrants from IMD Quintiles 1 and 2. We shall use the first years of the plan to develop a greater understanding of the data in relation to IMD, and how the relevant student population overlaps with and differs from the population identified by POLAR. We expect to be in a position to set a target for IMD activity by the summer of 2023, with a view to ensuring that any gaps in access, success or progression are eliminated; but we anticipate that our work with POLAR Quintiles 1 and 2 will also support us in making progress towards this goal. This work will also inform our understanding of the non-continuation gap for IMD Quintile 1 students.

2.2.5 Similarly, there are a range of areas where our initial objective is to enhance our understanding of the data, and the implications for AUB. In each case, this may lead to us identifying actions and setting targets in due course, where this is appropriate. These areas are as follows:

- i) Understanding progression rates and opportunities for those from POLAR Quintile 1 (see para 1.1.8): concluded by summer 2022
- ii) Understanding progression rates and opportunities for those from BAME backgrounds (see para 1.2.8): concluded by summer 2022
- iii) Understanding non-continuation rates for Mature students (see para 1.3.2): concluded by summer 2023.

3 Strategic measures

3.1 Whole Provider Strategic Approach

Overview

- 3.1.1 The Arts University Bournemouth recognises that to deliver transformational change requires a strategic vision with a range of complementary approaches, endorsed by university leadership and governance and embedded at all levels across the institution.
- 3.1.2 The University takes a strategic, whole-institution approach to widening participation and equality, and supporting and promoting diversity across the University lifecycle is embedded in the University's key strategies. The aims, as articulated in the University's Strategic Framework, include "To be dedicated to access and success in creative education", and this is detailed through its academic themes, which include All through provision; Innovative teaching and curriculum design; Outstanding student experience; and AUB Advantage (support for employability). The Strategic Framework further states that AUB partners can expect the "Development of academic and professional practice and ways of seeing and knowing". There is a clear commitment to providing opportunities for access, success and progression to all students, irrespective of background, and to ensuring that any barriers are eliminated where possible.

Alignment with Other Strategies

- 3.1.3 All internal plans are developed in response to the aims and objectives of the Strategic Framework, including the Creative Learning Plan (supporting teaching and learning activity), and the Equalities Plan. Similarly, the work of all professional services and academic teams are aligned to the strategic objectives; the annual objectives for senior staff are based explicitly on the University objectives, and these are reinforced through operational objectives for middle managers and in turn for their staff. The University uses an online system to record the outcomes of the annual performance review process which explicitly requires reference to the strategic objectives. The measures outlined in this Access and Participation Plan are aligned to, and in many cases also feature in, those internal plans.
- 3.1.4 The Arts University Bournemouth executes its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, confident in the knowledge that it has taken equality issues into account in designing this Plan. The University aims to advance its moral, social and legal obligations to put equalities at the heart of every area of activity.
- 3.1.5 The University is in the process of developing its next five-year Equalities Plan, aligned to the objectives of the Strategic Framework; this is due to come into operation from the 2020/21 academic year, and will therefore be a direct mechanism through which the objectives in this Access and Participation Plan will be delivered.
- 3.1.6 A sub-group of the Equalities Committee leads on matters of compliance, providing advice to the Chair. The Compliance sub-group has conducted an Equality Impact Assessment of our Access and Participation Plan, and has confirmed that there is a very low risk of negative equality implications.

Strategic measures

Improving recruitment from POLAR Quintiles 1 and 2: overview

- 3.1.7 The main cause of the lower proportion of entrants from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 is the

number of applications from this group. Only 12.9% of entrants to the creative arts and design are from low participation neighbourhoods⁹; the imperative is therefore to increase the applicant pool, rather than to encourage applications from those who may otherwise apply to other providers.

- 3.1.8 The pressure on the numbers of applicants is exacerbated by the fact that entries to arts subjects by KS4 cohorts have declined in recent years, with 20,000 fewer pupils accessing an art subject at KS4 in 2016 compared to 2014¹⁰. The changes to the school curriculum, which has seen a reduction in arts curriculum in many schools, represent a particular challenge for AUB. Increasing the numbers of students taking an art subject at KS4, and subsequently making an application to study creative arts disciplines at higher education level, is thus a key area of focus for the University over the forthcoming period. We have divided our measures into those focused on pre-16s and post-16s.
- 3.1.9 The size of the University, and the specialist nature of the courses we provide, mean that direct sponsorship of a school or the establishment of an academy would be extremely challenging, and we consider this to be outside the scope of our work. Instead, we have prioritised working closely with schools and colleges to ensure that high quality delivery within the creative arts is still available and supported.
- 3.1.10 AUB acknowledges the importance of structured, targeted work with schools and community groups to support student engagement, aspiration and attainment within creative disciplines. This can only be achieved through effective collaborative partnerships with schools and colleges, local authorities, third sector and charitable organisations and sector bodies and industry bodies. Without this wider engagement, we should be unable to reach many of the groups who are currently under-represented both at AUB, and within the wider higher education population. We shall ensure that our outreach work is fully inclusive, and engages with students from all ethnic backgrounds, including those of Asian heritage who are significantly under-represented in the creative and performing arts (see para 1.2.3 above).

Raising the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups

- 3.1.11 AUB has a strong record of working with schools within the region and has built effective links with providers within the conurbation. We target schools which have a low proportion of underrepresented students progressing to higher education, and high percentage of the students facing challenges related to their socio-economic background, especially where the school has a strong portfolio within the creative and / or performing arts. Partner organisations are targeted using a basket of measures including POLAR4, Indices of Multiple Deprivation and percentage of students on Free School Meals. The more strategic approach to targeting of activity during 2020/21, has been used to develop and implement a comprehensive program of activity with relevant schools, alternative education providers, community groups and third sector organisations, deploying resource where its impact on students from underrepresented groups can be maximized. The approach includes providing funded opportunities for young people from underrepresented backgrounds on the University's long-running Saturday Arts School, offering creative opportunities for those aged 10- 16; and specialist summer schools which provide a pathway to higher education for those who may not have had the opportunity to study creative arts disciplines in depth as part of their compulsory education.
- 3.1.12 Inevitably, as outreach work targets those who are still some years from entering higher education, we anticipate that progress will be steady rather than immediate, and that reliable results may not be evident for a minimum of 3-5 years. However, we are confident

⁹ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/07-02-2019/widening-participation-tables>, Table WP3

¹⁰ *Entries to arts subjects at KS4*, Education Policy Institute, September 2017

that, alongside the benefits that this may provide in supporting attainment in digital and creative disciplines, our approach will result in a greater uptake of creative subjects, leading to significant progression to creative awards and careers. This is of particular importance in a region where digital and creative is a major growth area, but potentially hampered by the semi-rurality of the region. We also anticipate that through this involvement, we can counter some of the gender stereotyping which can otherwise take place through the school system.

- 3.1.13 Alongside targeted pre-16 activity with regional schools, in October 2021 the University appointed a new Senior Access and Participation Officer (Pre-16) to enhance the institution's ability to develop new attainment-focused activity with educational partners across the region. An example of such activity is the Being a Boy project. Set to launch in the Summer of 2022, the Being a Boy project combines a number of elements. Firstly, in partnership with the universities of Portsmouth and Winchester, a series of online teacher CPD sessions have been curated, bringing to together leading experts to explore key contributory elements to disparities in the educational attainment of working-class boys. Sessions include content on teacher expectations, classroom behaviour, mental health, and the impact of socio-economic inequality. Secondly the institution plans to run a series of student-facing workshops, mobilising the subjects of Dance, Creative Writing and Photography as tools for participants to explore issues related to identity, masculinity and educational success in their particular educational, geographic, and socio-economic contexts. Ethical approval has been granted to conduct qualitative research analysing the on the artefacts produced within the workshops, with a view to submitting the findings to peer reviewed journals in 2023 for publication.
- 3.1.14 There is a need to celebrate and promote the success of the creative industries, and of individual career paths within those industries, to ensure that the excellent career opportunities available to creative graduates are well publicised and understood, especially because we know from our own discussions with students from underrepresented backgrounds that among these groups, there can be greater pressure from parents and advisers to study a more traditional discipline.
- 3.1.15 We acknowledge the weaknesses which have been identified with the evaluation of pre-16 outreach activity¹¹, and will base our plans for future work on the academic research which shows that there has been an over-reliance on self-reporting by pre-16 students. In November 2020, a new Senior Research and Evaluation Officer role was created at the institution. The new post afforded the opportunity to implement an outcome driven approach to the evaluation of pre-16 activity. Such an approach provides a means by which to strategically develop activity in alignment with set objectives linked to increases in student attainment, informing future practice and driving improvement where needed. Further detail on the evaluative approach, design and implementation can be found in sections 3.3.1-3.3.15.
- 3.1.16 It is likely that we shall need to work with third sector organisations to conduct thorough evaluation of the value of each strand of work, in order to create logic chains which are robust and reliable which will inform future practice to drive improvement where needed We shall undertake this evaluation during 2020/21, and shall use this evaluation in subsequent years to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to engage with relevant schools and community groups, including opportunities to provide teacher CPD. This plan will also include reference to our very successful Saturday Arts School, which offers creative opportunities for those aged 10- 16; and the specialist summer schools which provide a pathway to higher education for those who may not have had the opportunity to study creative arts disciplines in depth as part of their compulsory

¹¹ https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/a8ad5c94-7a33-4b53-8f09-824d0705f073/ofs2018_apevaluation.pdf

education.

Work with post-16s

3.1.17 Alongside our work with the pre-16 age group, we shall continue our work with those who are studying for Level 3 qualifications but may not be confident about progressing to higher education. We do not aspire to boost our performance at the expense of other providers, but genuinely to extend the range of young people who decide to pursue higher education in the creative arts. We currently support this group through activities such as our new multi-intervention post-16 access programme, *All Access AUB* to provide opportunities to develop artistic skill, have work exhibited in a professional gallery space, and run portfolio development workshops to enable potential applicants to understand how their application will be assessed. We plan to continue with this activity, which will be subject to formal evaluation during 2022/23 and will be developed, extended or indeed amended as required.

Improving recruitment from other groups which may face barriers

3.1.18 Historically, AUB has not focused its attention on other groups which may face barriers to entry, but we acknowledge that more work could be done in this area to support, for example, carers, those estranged from their families, refugees, those from gypsy and Roma families, or children from military families. Data on these groups is often difficult to access, and we shall rely on our own reporting systems in most cases, although we shall work with relevant authorities where possible.

3.1.19 We plan collaborative targets with the Southern Universities Network partners (Universities of Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth, Bournemouth University, Arts University Bournemouth and Solent University). All six partners have committed to the SUN partnership activities alongside the NCOP (Phase 2) and will work together to:

- Develop an approach to supporting narrowing the attainment gap in the SUN region between looked after children and non-looked after children, in collaboration with virtual school strategic priorities;
- Continue to embed best practice in staff development, through sharing opportunities for networking and involvement of specialists in the field of widening participation;
- Share good practice in evaluation, both in terms of each partner's activity and in collaborative projects.

3.1.20 In terms of our own work, we do not wish to pre-determine which communities will be targeted, but we shall undertake research to identify where outreach or promotional activity may be most effective, especially considering those who do not currently make applications to higher education. Once the groups have been identified, we shall initiate specific, targeted projects; and we anticipate that results will be evident within three years, although they are likely to be relatively modest in the first instance given the low base. Activities will support attainment raising and education choices at post-16 and post-18, with a focus on subject specific areas and supporting schools meeting Gatsby Benchmarks 7, 2 and 5. In addition to collaboration with local authorities, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), EBPs and the Careers Enterprise Company, collaboration will expand to include local sports clubs, arts venues, and charities, with a clear intention to encourage applications from those who might not otherwise have considered higher education, thereby expanding the 'applicant pool', as well as ensuring that opportunities for study within the creative arts are well understood.

Eliminating the BAME attainment gap:

3.1.21 The University's Creative Learning Plan has identified the need to eliminate the BAME attainment gap, and research already conducted internally has demonstrated the

importance of ‘habitus’ for students from different ethnic backgrounds, including the promotion of relevant role models, the availability and promotion of relevant clubs and societies, and a need to decolonise the curriculum. In considering our data in detail in the preparation of this Plan, we have further identified that BAME attainment is lowest for those from Quintiles 1 and 2, which provides a further imperative to this work.

3.1.22 It is acknowledged that this strand of work requires continuing engagement with the student reference group, and also targeted staff development, especially for academic staff. However, we are mindful that “Decolonisation is about bringing the question of empire back on the table and saying: what are the multifarious ways in which it has affected how we think, what we teach and who we regard as great”¹², and thus recognise that this is likely to be work which is likely to be challenging, and may result in significant changes either to the curriculum, or to approaches to teaching and learning. We anticipate that staff development on implicit bias, and a deeper appreciation of the assumptions which are made by those from particular cultural backgrounds, will in turn generate the environment in which BAME students are able to fulfil their full potential (see fig. 1 below).

3.1.23 Our own internal research, as well as the recent UUK / NUS report¹³, suggest that this is a sound logic chain, which we look forward to implementing as part of an overarching theory of change (using online resources such as those at <https://diytoolkit.org/tools/theory-of-change/>).

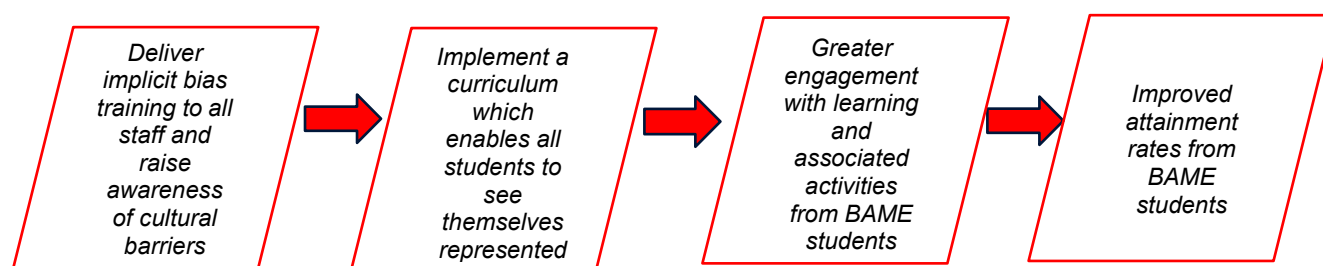


Fig 1: logic chain for improving BAME student attainment

3.1.24 We recognise, however, that it is likely that the impact on overall degree classification – based heavily on performance at Level 6 – will not be evident until changes have been identified, agreed, implemented and then worked through all three years of the course. We shall deliver implicit bias training during 2019/20, prior to the formal commencement of this Plan, with the expectation that curriculum changes are implemented during the years 2020/21 and 2021/22, which allows time for due reflection and discussion with student groups while not overly extending the implementation period. We also anticipate that, following initial changes, some further development is likely which may have additional positive impacts. Thus our objective is to eliminate the BAME attainment gap, with a likely trajectory of 5-7 years (ie to be eliminated by 2026/27).

Building on success: student support

3.1.25 The University’s performance in terms of student success and progression is generally excellent, with the exception of BAME attainment. We have a comprehensive package of support available to all students, including an academic support team, disability and wellbeing team, and an employability team. Strong retention rates provide sound evidence that students at the University are well supported through their studies. We shall maintain this effective, tailored support, and shall evaluate the different

¹² Priyamvada Gopal, quoted in the THE, 23 May 2019, p.16.

¹³ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>

components of support over the next two years to identify which are having the greatest impact on our strong results. Following feedback from students, we shall consider how best to provide support post-graduation. We expect our performance to be maintained, and aim for some improved scores in relation to the performance in attainment and progression from Quintiles 1 and 2.

- 3.1.26 Student Services are pro-active in design and delivery of initiatives, such as consideration of: the Penn Resiliency Programme; student 'buddies'; advance transition day for students with disabilities; and transitional support for students with vocational qualifications. These initiatives are funded through additional fee income.
- 3.1.27 The Widening Participation Team conducts an annual survey of students who have withdrawn; this takes place some weeks after the actual withdrawal. This has the advantage that a student can reflect on their experience from a different perspective, and may be in a better position to comment on the reasons for their withdrawal. The evidence from these surveys has consistently shown that there is no pattern to the reasons for student withdrawal; while some do provide additional information which they did not give at the point of withdrawal, the reasons are often personal and do not suggest issues that the University should address.

Building on success: supporting progression for under-represented groups

- 3.1.28 The University secures accreditation for its courses where appropriate and relevant. Alongside ARB and RIBA accreditation of our BA (Hons) Architecture, ten courses were accredited by Creative Skillset, the industry-led skills charity for the creative industries, although this kitemark has lost its relevance following the decision to rebrand as ScreenSkills and focus exclusively on the screen industries.
- 3.1.29 Government statistics show that the Creative Industries are growing at twice the rate of the rest of the economy, with over 3.1 million creative roles in the UK economy in 2017 (an increase of more than 50% compared to 2010)¹⁴. However, while many graduates will go into full time jobs, 47% of creative roles are freelancers within the creative industries¹⁵. This emphasises the importance of the AUB Advantage, a programme of events and training targeted at final year students to enhance their preparation for a creative career. This includes workshop on a range of employability-related topics, and a chance to fine-tune a CV.
- 3.1.30 We also acknowledge that the creative industries are not representative of the diversity of the UK population¹⁶, and wish to build on our success by ensuring that we enable those from under-represented groups to progress successfully to highly skilled employment or higher level study, both through strengthening and consolidating opportunities which can benefit these learners both during their studies, through the AUB Advantage, and within the first few months after the completion of their course. We shall work with students from those groups who show lower progression rates (specifically those from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2, and BAME students) to understand the particular issues which they face, and develop a plan in response. We shall initiate these discussions during 2020/21, but acknowledge that our plans are likely to be more effective with the data from two or more years of graduating students. We note that our plan may include some additional financial support, if this would enable graduates to access opportunities which are otherwise not available to them.

¹⁴ See the report of the Creative Industries Council at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/creative-industries-record-contribution-to-uk-economy>

¹⁵ See the report from the Creative Industries Federation at <https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-07/Creative%20Freelancers%201.0.pdf>

¹⁶ See for example [https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-06/30183-CIF%20Access%20&%20Diversity%20Booklet_A4_Web%20\(1\)\(1\).pdf](https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-06/30183-CIF%20Access%20&%20Diversity%20Booklet_A4_Web%20(1)(1).pdf)

- 3.1.31 As noted above (para 1.1.8), we are aware that the data provided through the new Graduate Outcomes Survey may not be directly comparable with that provided through the DLHE, and will review this area of our Plan once the first results are made available to ensure that our objectives and the associated workstream is targeted at the areas of greatest need. Similarly, we recognise the limitations with the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data identified in research undertaken by GuildHE and the HEAD Trust¹⁷, and especially as it relates to creative graduates¹⁸.
- 3.1.32 In November 2021, the University recruited a new post created with the specific remit of supporting current AUB students from underrepresented backgrounds to succeed in their course and progress to good graduate jobs. The Progression Officer works with internal departments such as student advice, academic support and careers across the institution to deliver and evaluate a range of activities to support successful progression of students from underrepresented groups. The Progression Officer works to ensure that progression routes through the University to graduate employment are well understood, promoted, and that students from underrepresented backgrounds have a clear point of contact for advice and guidance. In 2023/24 the Progression Officer will launch an outreach student ambassador initiative, offering targeted training and employment opportunities to students from underrepresented groups, run live-brief employer projects targeted toward students from underrepresented groups, and continue to provide one to one support for students who are care experienced/estranged.

Building on success: Financial support for students

- 3.1.33 The University acknowledges the cost of undergraduate study in art, design, architecture, media and performance. The University provides a range of course materials or equipment free of charge, and does not charge for guest lecture programmes or similar masterclasses. Some courses require students to provide essential equipment, which will usually be offered at a subsidised rate; this is equipment which will also be required in a subsequent graduate career. We offer a small bursary which can be used against printing and copying costs, or expenditure in the campus materials shop. More importantly, we know from the evidence of the last five years that that non-traditional students regularly seek grants from our Hardship Fund to support their work on their final year project work. Those from the lowest income households who enrol in 2020/21 and progress successfully to Level 6 study in 2022/23, and who are in receipt of a full maintenance loan, will receive a progression scholarship of £300 on enrolment for Level 6 study. This scholarship is in the form of a grant and will not affect student entitlement to any other financial support. Following feedback from students, the bursary will be paid in two instalments, in December and January of each academic year. The University reserves the right to claim back a proportion of this grant if the student fails to complete the year, but will consider each case on its merits. This award is subject to annual review, and may not be increased in line with inflation.
- 3.1.34 We provide support which enables students with a household income of £25,000 or below to access the curriculum. This is of particular importance in an institution which includes collaboration as one of its core values, and where all students become members of a creative community which provides an advanced studio culture. Research shows that students who do not engage with the community are more likely to withdraw from their studies, and hence we provide both travel support to enable students to reach the campus (either bus or bicycle vouchers), and vouchers for our Refectory, to enable these students to join their peers in using this central facility. Feedback on each of these measures has been very positive. We also support these students by offering a grant towards the cost of educational visits, to enable them to participate fully in the course.

¹⁷ <https://guildhe.ac.uk/new-research-highlights-limitations-of-leo-data>

¹⁸ <https://guildhe.ac.uk/not-about-the-money>

- 3.1.35 In addition, we provide support for the cost of Educational Psychologist reports where these are required, and we also set aside a fund to support applications from students with a disability to meet the £200 contribution for a laptop which is in response to the move away from DSA-funded support towards HEI-funded support.
- 3.1.36 There is a further discretionary fund which can be used to make awards to any students from under-represented groups who find themselves in a position of unexpected hardship, especially if this relates to costs associated with responsibilities as a carer. A student who wishes to make an application to this fund needs to explain and evidence their circumstances, and allocations may be conditional (for example, on making an appointment with a money doctor), or may respond directly to personal circumstances (for instance, by providing Refectory credit for a student who has insufficient money for food). Based on expenditure in the last three years, this fund will contain a minimum of £25,000 each year.
- 3.1.37 Students who are under local authority care when they enrol at the University are automatically eligible to receive a bursary of £2,000 for each academic year of their undergraduate course. We offer this bursary to students up to the age of 25 on entry to higher education who have been in care for 3 or more months up to and including the period of GCSE/A level or equivalent study (evidence will normally be required). This bursary is in the form of a grant, is not means tested and will not affect student entitlement to any other financial support. This award is in addition to the other bursaries and benefits to which a student may be entitled. The bursary will be paid in February of each year. The University reserves the right to claim back a proportion of this grant if the student fails to complete the year, but will consider each case on its merits. The bursary for care-leavers is subject to annual review, and may not be increased in line with inflation.
- 3.1.38 The University's experience is that this financial support is welcome to students. We conduct an annual survey of those eligible for financial support; and also monitor the retention and achievement of these students, and internal data confirm that their rates of retention and attainment are consistent with other students. However, we acknowledge that there is no natural control group; and recent research conducted by AUB has suggested that students from low income families do not correlate well with students from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2. AUB thus plans to investigate further how it can target its financial support effectively to support those from under-represented groups, and we shall investigate the value of the *Financial support evaluation toolkit* for our needs. Given the strong success of these students in terms of both retention and achievement, we plan to conduct this evaluation during 2021/22, acknowledging that in a relatively small institution with a correspondingly small team, it is important to set clear priorities.

3.2 Student consultation

- 3.2.1 This Access and Participation Plan has been developed through an iterative process, which commenced with a workshop at Equalities Committee, attended by student representatives. All members, including students, were provided with the assessment of performance and asked to agree the priority areas for action, and the objectives which should be set. Students were strongly supportive of extending our work with community groups, alongside schools and colleges (see paras 3.1.9-13 above), feeling that this would provide better outreach to "hard to reach" groups.
- 3.2.2 The Students' Union has also formed a reference group for BAME students and for students with disabilities. University staff liaise with the students who convene these groups, but we are aware that more useful feedback is likely to be provided directly to

other BAME students¹⁹. Feedback from these reference groups informed our approach to addressing the BAME attainment gap (see paras 3.1.18-21 above).

- 3.2.3 The University routinely gathers feedback from students who have benefited from its on-course support mechanisms, including those in receipt of financial support. This feedback helps to inform the package which is offered in subsequent years. Based on feedback from this group in 2019, we have staggered the payment of the Level 6 progression bursary, which was previously paid as one lump sum and is now to be paid in two instalments as requested by the student groups (see para 3.1.29 above); and have also introduced more face-to-face consultation with eligible students, who commented that email communication did not help them to understand sufficiently the awards to which they were entitled.
- 3.2.4 Overall, feedback from students on the areas of this Plan for students on course was very positive. Given the University's strong performance in student success and progression, with the exception of the BAME attainment gap, this reflects the success of AUB's current approaches to these areas.
- 3.2.5 We shall continue to work with the Students' Union, and the student reference groups, to gain feedback as we implement our workplan; and also to provide opportunities for wider student feedback through surveys or drop-in sessions. This will ensure that the student voice is central to our work, and our approach can be refined in response to their comments.
- 3.2.6 The Equalities Committee, which oversees the development of the Access and Participation Plan and the associated workplan, and which will monitor the implementation, evaluation and progress, includes student representatives. The Widening Participation Manager ensures that the Students' Union sabbatical officers are kept aware of activities, and seeks advice from them on a regular basis. There is also student representation on Academic Board, the senior academic committee which confirms the Plan and an annual report; and on the Board of Governors.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

- 3.3.1 More than, ever, the University is very conscious of the need to both evaluate, and the importance of embedding an outcomes-led approach to its programme of activity. In the past it has used both qualitative and quantitative evidence (for example, case studies and feedback from target schools and colleges alongside actual GCSE results or indeed enrolments and subsequent success and progression), and continues to do so. This evaluation has informed the range of creative and innovative initiatives which have been developed.
- 3.3.2 However, the University acknowledges that this evaluation has not always followed best practice as articulated in OfS Regulatory Notice 1. Assessment of performance using the OfS Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool has confirmed some commended practice, but also some areas where practice is emerging. This has informed the design and development of our Evaluation Strategy.
- 3.3.3 Concurrently, the appointment of a new Access and Participation manager in the May of 2021, and subsequent development of, and appointment to, a variety of new roles in the department has resulted in a review of the evaluative approach taken institutionally, and its further development for 2023/24 in alignment with the new regulatory approach taken by the Office for Students.

Strategic Context

¹⁹ Eddo-Lodge, R., 2017. *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race*. London: Bloomsbury

- 3.3.4 The Access and Participation team is responsible for designing and implementing activity, working in cross-institutional collaboration as part of the AUB Open Campus Directorate, and in consultation with the Equalities Committee, Admissions team and other relevant stakeholders. The team demonstrates an evaluation culture which is well-developed in several areas of work. However, the institution notes that the challenges faced by a relatively small, specialist provider are consistent with findings of Harrison and Walker (2017)²⁰ and Crawford et al²¹ whereby the scale and strength of evaluation practice within HEPs tends to be positively correlated with the scale of activity, its resources, data availability and staff skills. In particular, the challenges of conducting evaluation while working with small sample sizes. However, an auditing process of the teams of activity and its monitoring and evaluation practices in 2021 has resulted in the development of an institutional evaluation intensity matrix. Subsequently, resources are more efficiently and effectively utilized, and the team are able to ensure that the most appropriate methods are used to monitor and evaluate activity.
- 3.3.5 As a specialist provider of creative arts we acknowledge that our academic staff do not necessarily include specialist social science researchers who may be engaged in generalist HEPs; this places greater responsibility on the WP team to ensure that evaluation expertise is used when considering practice. Therefore, the appointment of a Senior Research and Evaluation Officer holding a PhD in a related topic has provided this much needed expertise to the monitoring and evaluation of projects and activities across access and the student lifecycle. The role's expertise is mobilised in both a hands-on capacity, in the conducting of research and the design and implementation of evaluative methods; as well as in a consultative manner across departments in the institution, contributing to the development of a culture of an evidence-led approach and embedding evaluation as a part of initiative design and delivery.
- 3.3.6 The University accepts that its sound culture of evaluation for access, success and progression projects would benefit from the development of a theory of change (TOC), leading back from the anticipated outcome to the action. Taking the lead, the Access and Participation team are working collaboratively with other departments to establish an overarching progression framework and TOC which would embed both an outcomes-led approach and robust evaluative practice across the institution. Historically, there have been areas of work, especially in relation to on-course support, which have not been subject to critical evaluation beyond noting the strong results achieved. However, the appointment of the Senior Research and Evaluation Officer, alongside the newly appointed Progression Officer to the Access and Participation team has provided the capacity to gather information about such support with the view to identifying gaps in provision and developing support focused activity in collaboration with course leaders. Furthermore, in 2021/22 the Access and Participation team held four cross-institutional Community of Practice events for staff in academic and professional services to explore themes such as Equitable Admissions and Building Meaningful Connections with the Community. Across the events over 100 staff members engaged in one or more of the occurrences.

Programme design

- 3.3.7 The Access and Participation team has been developing and embedding a theoretical framework that underpins the assumptions we hold about how young people navigate a tightrope of expectation and risk when considering their educational and career choices.

²⁰ Harrison, N. and Waller, R., 2017. Success and impact in widening participation policy: what works and how do we know? *Higher Education Policy*, 30(2), 141-160.

²¹ Crawford, C., Dytham, S. and Naylor, R., 2017. *Improving the Evaluation of Outreach: Interview Report*, Bristol: Office for Fair Access.

The theoretical framework draws on Hodkinson and Sparks' theory on Careership²² and career decision making, as well as mobilising theories of risk²³ alongside Ball, Reay and David's²⁴ analytical framework of embedded and contingent choosing.

- 3.3.8 The University has confidence in the rationale for the design of the majority of its outreach activity; an integral element of which is the evaluation and monitoring required to assess impact and measure outcomes. Indicators and measures are identified at the planning stage though the Evaluation Strategy seeks to further identify and employ most relevant 'Standards of Evidence for the Impact of Outreach'²⁵ to inform continuous improvement in outcomes.
- 3.3.9 By 2023/24, good progress will have been made toward a well-developed and overarching TOC, overlaid with a comprehensive progression framework will be applied across access and participation delivery. This will facilitate a mechanism whereby programmes are designed strategically, considering the best data/measures to effectively evaluate interventions constituting a significant investment of resource. Evaluation plans will set out short, medium and long-term outcomes, together with the aims and objectives of each initiative/activity. It will be clear where those plans fit within the overarching TOC. These tools will embed robust evaluation across the access and participation delivery from pre-entry access to progression. Colleagues across the University (representing each stage of the student lifecycle) will work to develop and implement the TOC and progression framework.

Evaluation design

- 3.3.10 Evaluation plans will be appropriately aligned for the type of activity, and stage of development. Practice has been strengthened by using development tools provided by the OfS to ensure an evidence-based approach. Mapping historical activity has enabled the University to identify areas of good practice in the types of evaluation and evidence base using both narrative and empirical evaluation methods, as well as employing robust qualitative research methods and adhering to rigorous academic processes, such as obtaining ethical approval, with the view to submitting findings to high quality, peer-reviewed journals.
- 3.3.11 An example which demonstrates the more recent development of our institutional approach to evaluation would be the creation of our multi-intervention post-16 access initiative at AUB – *All Access AUB* (AAAUB) in 2022. This flagship scheme includes multiple interventions with a single cohort of learners at different touch points throughout their time studying BTEC/A Levels. The initiative includes four separate interventions, a residential summer school undertaken in the summer of year 12; an exhibition of created work in December that year hosted by our internationally recognised gallery; one-to-one portfolio tutorials with AUB staff; and a day-long transition event at Easter in year 13. A progression framework and TOC has been devised, deploying a variety of measures to evaluate each component which feeds into the overarching progression framework. Evaluation methods include content analysis of summer school journals, semi-structured in-depth interviews and interactive pre and post activity surveys. Alongside this scheme are several new initiatives in development for 2023/24, providing students with unique

²² Hodkinson, P. and Sparkes, A.C., 1997. Careership: a sociological theory of career decision making. *British journal of sociology of education*, 18(1), pp.29-44.

²³ Archer, L. and Hutchings, M., 2000. 'Bettering Yourself'? Discourses of risk, cost and benefit in ethnically diverse, young working-class non-participants' constructions of higher education. *British journal of sociology of education*, 21(4), pp.555-574.

²⁴ Ball, S.J., Reay, D. and David, M., 2002. 'Ethnic Choosing': minority ethnic students, social class and higher education choice. *Race ethnicity and education*, 5(4), pp.333-357.

²⁵ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluating-impact-of-outreach/>

opportunities to explore the creative arts. All new activity will be embedded within an outcomes-led approach, allowing for the effective design and implementation of appropriate evaluative tools.

- 3.3.12 A further example of evaluation is demonstrated through our annual evaluation of financial support. Our own survey of student experience among beneficiaries strongly suggests that it has been a positive feature in their lifestyle, engagement with the course, or academic achievement, which is inevitably likely to support retention and progression. Students value the University's financial support arrangements and the choices offered and express equal, or above equal, satisfaction rates to all other students. Again, we would consider this evaluation satisfies Types 1 and 2 criteria, yet Type 3 criteria remain challenging to apply.
- 3.3.13 Due to the complexity of our financial support, the nature of which reflects annual change made following evaluation, the University has not utilised the OfS financial support evaluation toolkit to date. Nevertheless, we will be drawing upon the survey element of the toolkit, and will consider taking the opportunity to explore existing student data as a means of modelling students' academic experience and engagement, with a view to developing a set of metrics that can be used in future evaluation, including those focusing on differential outcomes and success.

Evaluation Implementation

- 3.3.14 Notwithstanding the extent to which significant data collection, tracking, monitoring, qualitative and quantitative data analysis and evaluation is evidenced, the University concurs with the macro- challenges, both logistical and epistemological, across the sector reported in Harrison (ibid.).
- 3.3.15 Historical practice has incorporated; basic monitoring; targeting, measurements of outcomes and cost effectiveness; progress against targets and milestones, outputs and volumes. From 2023/24 the Evaluation Strategy will address areas such as data collection. In partnership with the institution's Directorate of Operations, the Access and Participation team have been a driving force behind the development and creation of a new CRM system, allowing the institution to better identify and target communication toward students from underrepresented groups. In 2021/2022 the human resource within the Access and Participation team increased significantly through the recruitment of team members to newly created posts. This increased resource has afforded a greater capacity for activity related to the monitoring and evaluation of access and participation work to take place.

Learning to Shape Improvements

- 3.3.16 Interpreting results of our evaluation findings informs practice and programme design which targets our identified under-represented groups. Reflection of our results and improved internal dissemination and reporting through Committee structure, for example, a working group of Equalities Committee, enables adaptation or innovation across Access and Participation delivery.
- 3.3.17 Central to this is the University's commitment to enhance its evaluation efforts across the WP lifecycle, including access, student success (retention and attainment), financial support and progression. This includes analysis to support TEF metrics and evaluation work to inform impact/what works.
- 3.3.18 Monitoring of progress against this Plan will be undertaken throughout the year. The University's commitments will feature in the institution's corporate risk register (which is monitored on an ongoing basis).

3.3.19 Moreover, the institution has pivoted its gaze in 2022/23, positioning itself to engage with learning and development in evaluative activity taking place across the sector. The Senior Research and Evaluation officer has joined the local Uni Connect (Southern Universities Network) monitoring and evaluation working group. Alongside the sharing of best practice, facilitating more cross institutional collaborations, and provided a space for peer-to-peer critique and feedback of methods and practice, the group also provides the opportunity to explore independent peer review of evaluative activity taking place in 2023/24. The University will also consider joining further networks for sharing of information on effective access and participation evaluation practices in 2023/24. Within this period AUB will also actively seek to contribute to, and learn from, the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) when appropriate.

3.3.20 In 2023/24 we are determined that resources should be effective and deliver continuous improvements to achieve most benefit by:

- Building Capacity and Evaluation Expertise
- Enhancing Programme Design
- Improving Evaluation Practice
- Increasing Dissemination

Evaluation Action Plan

Build capacity and evaluation expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify expertise within and outside of University, and resource external expertise if appropriate • Training and support for colleagues across Access & Participation Delivery • Explore benefits of consortia wide evaluation networks, locally and regionally
Enhance Programme Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop evaluation protocols across Access & Participation Delivery, to strengthen the evidence base • Establish a theory of change and progression framework which support short/medium and long term impact
Improve Evaluation Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and allocate resource costs which are built into programme budgets across Access & Participation delivery • Assess and explore mitigating risk factors, including data collection • Membership of the monitoring and evaluation service for subscribing Higher Education Institutions, the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) Service has been explored, with consensus being that it is not cost effective for the institution at this time. At present the institution is implementing a CRM system and updating GDPR agreements to facilitate better tracking from access work, and to provide earlier, more target interventions with potential applicants from underrepresented backgrounds.

Increase Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to share evaluation findings internally through Governance and Committee structure • Fostering an evaluation and research exchange which facilitates practitioner and academic expertise across the University to deliver evidence on 'what works' and build an internal knowledge bank of data to inform strategic priorities and performance. Toward this aim, the Access and Participation team has held 4 Community of Practice events in 2021/22 for staff at the university to explore themes such as Equitable Admissions and Building Meaningful Connections with the Community. • Take advantage of sharing externally through networks such as HELOA, FACE and NEON, and seek opportunities to contribute to TASO's agenda as a centre for independent evaluation.
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3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

- 3.4.1 The Widening Participation Manager is directly responsible for delivery of the Access and Participation Plan, including the aims, objectives and targets. She will monitor progress, overseen by her line manager and, superior to that, the University's Chief Operating Officer.
- 3.4.2 The University's Equalities Committee receives regular reports on work in support of the Access and Participation Plan. The Committee includes members from relevant central professional services, and also representatives from the academic community and the student body, including the Vice-President of the Students' Union. The Committee was involved as a key reference group in the creation of this Access and Participation Plan.
- 3.4.3 While progress will be reported at each meeting, and any significant items will be presented to the Committee for discussion, the key focus for monitoring is the annual report on activity, which notes progress against aims, objectives and targets. This report, once approved, is shared with Academic Board; the University Leadership Team; and the Board of Governors. The University Secretary attends each of these meetings and is able to provide any further explanation or commentary, and to note any concerns.
- 3.4.4 If progress is not being made as expected, consideration will be given to any particular circumstances which may have affected performance, and whether there is a need to amend the parameters of the work being undertaken. The Widening Participation Manager would recommend any change to the Equalities Committee, which holds operational responsibility for overseeing the Plan (or if matters were more urgent, ask the Chair to take action to approve a change). Any agreed changes will be reported to Academic Board, the University Leadership Team, and the Board of Governors.
- 3.4.5 The Arts University Bournemouth is a relatively small institution, and its Widening Participation team, actions and records are centralised, as is record-keeping about individual students. A member of the team will be involved in all projects. As such, the importance of monitoring is well understood by each activity team.

4. Provision of information to students

- 4.1 We publish our Access and Participation Plan on our website, but we also describe the package of measures in detail on dedicated pages on our website related to funding, at <https://aub.ac.uk/apply/finance/fees-financial-support-undergraduate-uk-eu/ba-funding/additional-support-funding/>

- 4.2 The provisions of this Access and Participation Plan apply to all full-time students who are domiciled in England. The eligibility criterion for most of our offer is based on household income information provided by Student Finance England, and eligibility is verified annually. Students in receipt of a full maintenance loan, with a residual household income of £25,000 or below, qualify for some discretionary support, as described below. In addition, care leavers and students with a disability separately qualify for other elements of support, which may be in addition to the provisions based on household income. (The benefits are described at paras 3.1.29-33 above.)
- 4.3 Receipt of any support is subject to the Arts University Bournemouth successfully confirming enrolment and attendance. Providing the student remains enrolled, this benefit will be paid across the academic year. If a student ceases to be in full-time study during the year (either through withdrawal, or because they take a break from their studies), the award will be suspended from the final date of study.
- 4.4 We have a dedicated webpage which sets out the terms and conditions of our offer, as required by the Competition and Markets Authority, and this page also includes a link to the fees and financial support measures. Following enrolment, we write to all new students who meet our criteria for additional support to confirm their entitlement; and we follow this up if they do not claim within the first month. Continuing students are reminded annually of the additional support to which they are entitled.
- 4.5 The package available to each student will depend on their precise circumstances. While the exact amounts may vary year on year, for example to respond to rises in inflation, the package remains the same. We have provided a summary of the offer below.

Students with a residual household income of below £25,000: a one-off £250 travel voucher (for either a bicycle from a local retailer, or a bus season ticket, at the student's choice). In addition, up to £400 per annum to support participation in Educational Visits; and a Progression Bursary of £300 in Level 6.

There is a further discretionary fund which can be used to make awards to any students from under-represented groups who find themselves in a position of unexpected hardship.

Students with a residual household income of below £16,000: as above, plus £750 of Refectory vouchers at Level 4.

Disabled Students: for students who are required to make a £200 contribution towards a laptop previously provided through DSA, the University will pay this £200. In addition, we provide support for the cost of Educational Psychologist reports where these are required. This is in addition to any other bursaries or benefits to which a student may be entitled.

Care leavers: all the relevant provisions from the above, and an automatic bursary of £2,000 per annum. This is not means-tested, and is in addition to any other bursaries and benefits to which a student may be entitled.

Thus the maximum entitlement, for a care leaver with a residual household income of under £16,000 and who qualifies as a Disabled student, would be £8,850 over three years.

- 4.6 The detail will be confirmed with each student once their details have been confirmed by Student Finance England.

5. Appendix

The OfS will append the following items from the fees and targets and investment documents when an access and participation plan is published:

1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)
2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)
3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

We intend to raise our fees each year in line with the maximum fee. However, this will not apply to continuing students, for whom the fee will be held at their entry level for the duration of the course of study. Students who intermit, or who otherwise take a break from their studies, will be charged the fee applicable to the cohort which they join.

Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	n/a	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Arts University Bournemouth, the

Provider UKPRN: 10000385

Investment summary

The OfS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£1,090,000.00	£1,090,000.00	£1,090,000.00	£1,090,000.00	£1,090,000.00
Access (pre-16)	£580,000.00	£580,000.00	£580,000.00	£580,000.00	£580,000.00
Access (post-16)	£475,000.00	£475,000.00	£475,000.00	£475,000.00	£475,000.00
Access (adults and the community)	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00
Access (other)	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00
Financial support (£)	£393,000.00	£393,000.00	£393,000.00	£393,000.00	£393,000.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£150,000.00	£150,000.00	£150,000.00	£150,000.00	£150,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HF1%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HF1)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HF1)	£9,116,175.00	£9,480,205.00	£9,489,460.00	£9,662,220.00	£9,804,130.00
Access investment	10.9%	10.4%	10.4%	10.2%	10.1%
Financial support	4.3%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.0%
Research and evaluation	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%	1.3%
Total investment (as %HF1)	16.6%	16.0%	15.9%	15.7%	15.4%

