

## Opening AUB

### **1] When will students be able to return to campus? Who will be prioritised for access?**

In line with Government advice, Arts University Bournemouth is currently closed for on-campus teaching. Universities Minister Michelle Donelan MP has issued direction for universities to remain teaching online until further notice and she has also written to students with more information.

The Minister has emphasised that creative-based subjects will be prioritised among the first to return to on campus teaching and learning. We await a government announcement about when that might be. AUB is proactively planning for a return to campus in order to ensure the safety of our staff and students while ensuring that our students are able to return to on campus teaching as soon as possible.

The Minister has emphasised that creative-based subjects will be prioritised among the first to return to on-campus teaching and learning. Although the Prime Minister mentioned 8<sup>th</sup> March as a possible return for English schools, **no** decision has been made about universities. We await a government announcement about when that date will be.

However, AUB is drawing up plans that we can rapidly put in place the moment we hear from government. We are working on getting ready for a safe return to campus once we are given the green light from government.

Once we have that date, we'll prioritise those who have major final assessments, graduation events, and professional deadlines. In consultation with academic tutors, we've identified those groups of students who will have initial priority access to resources based on the curriculum need, campus facilities and resources. Course teams will be able to provide you with greater detail once the government has confirmed that we are permitted to re-open the campus. Our websites and FAQs are being updated all the time so please keep checking them.

### **2] Will term be paused if lockdown does continue?**

Since the start of the Pandemic, AUB has implemented a blended approach for all university teaching and learning, which has seen significant investment and development put into our online teaching environments. This approach has enabled us to deliver the same learning, although it has been delivered in different ways.

However, we recognise that many students will have chosen to study at AUB in order to access our world class facilities, and our emphasis on workshop and practical making. We've developed our No Disadvantage Plan (*NDP*) to ensure that students are supported across the entire academic year, and that they are able to access our facilities as soon as we are able to reopen our campus.

At this stage, we're not planning to pause the term, but to provide greater access, we're considering options such as extended evening and weekend opening, and an extension of the academic year; and for continuing students, we'll also consider additional access weeks before the start of next academic year, according to need.

Last year, our *No Disadvantage Plan* ensured that students were able to use our facilities once lockdown restrictions were lifted, and you will read in the plan of our commitment to **make making possible** for all students as we continue into the year ahead.

### **3] Is there a possibility of AUB extending the academic year? If so, how would that work?**

See the answer above. The university will be guided by the latest Government guidance and advice and we're continually reviewing the situation and how this impacts our students, staff and university. Alongside all other planning, we've been looking at how we will be able to ensure that all of our students access the resources, facilities and on campus provisions necessary to complete their studies.

Decisions made to alter our existing academic year or term dates will take into consideration any impact on student accommodation and will be fully detailed ahead of any changes. The intention would be to provide additional access opportunities, especially so that students can make work for assessment, but also to enable work to be completed for a portfolio. We cannot make a final decision about this until we know when students are lawfully able to return to campus.

#### **4] How would an extended term affect graduation?**

Our Graduation event is incredibly important to us, and we continue to do all that we can to plan an in-person ceremony for our 2020 & 2021 graduating cohorts, regardless of our teaching and learning plans for this academic year.

The nature and course of the pandemic remains difficult to predict, and Government guidance continues to alter accordingly. This means that while we remain optimistic for an event in 2021, we must still be entirely flexible in our approach towards any large-scale in-person events.

The safety and wellbeing of our community is our top priority, and any decisions around AUB events will be made with this in mind. Up to date information can be found at [aub.ac.uk/graduation](http://aub.ac.uk/graduation).

#### **5] Will deadlines be changed to reflect the situation?**

If any university deadlines are altered, we'll communicate with all students to advise them on how these changes affect their studies. Any extension to the academic year, for instance, would include an assessment deadline extension.

Individual students are able to request extensions for their assessments via their Course Teams – we realise that the current situation affects each individual differently, and there are a range of academic and wellbeing services available to students to support them.

#### **6] Will students be given a chance to come back and use facilities to do portfolio work?**

See answers 2] and 3] above. Our *No Disadvantage Plan* has been designed to support all students and their learning. This may include additional access to university facilities, or access being permitted later on in the academic year.

Any additional access provision will be made available at course level, and students will be notified by Course Teams once this is finalised.

#### **7] What about students who cannot get back to the UK due to travel restrictions? How will they be supported?**

We realise that a number of our students are studying and/or living abroad during this time, and some may be unable to travel due to measures in place here in the UK or abroad.

Additional access weeks, which we're planning for continuing students at the start of next academic year, will give students the opportunity to access the campus before progressing to the next level of study.

Our International Team are here to help, and we'd like to hear more about your individual circumstances so that we can make sure you're being supported by the right people at AUB. Please get in touch via email at [international@aub.ac.uk](mailto:international@aub.ac.uk).

## **8] Accommodation**

### **How will AUB be supporting those in private rented accommodation?**

Private rentals and tenancy agreements are legal contracts between individuals and landlords that the university is unfortunately unable to intervene in.

We recommend that all students who have signed Tenancy Agreements with landlords look into the [Government's Covid-19 advice](#) regarding landlords and tenants and seek independent impartial advice with regards to securing rent discounts and legal advice.

Our Student Services Advisers may also be able to offer impartial support and guidance to those looking for advice relating to privately rented accommodation.

### **9] Will AUB be supporting students (particularly those in private rented) in seeking rent rebates/reductions?**

While universities cannot intervene in discussions between individuals, AUB welcomes positive outcomes between tenants and landlords, and is fully supportive of students who are seeking to discuss their tenancies with landlords in the light of the pandemic.

AUB Students' Union, [AUBSU](#), has also worked with partners to co-author a template letter that students can issue to landlords in order to begin discussions.

### **10] What support will be provided for students who have been unable to access their accommodation, either this term or for the whole year?**

Due to the changing nature of the pandemic, AUB regularly reviews its policy on university-managed accommodation and will be putting in place measures to ensure that students are not paying for accommodation that they aren't using.

We'll be keeping all students updated on how university-managed rent is charged, and how, if applicable, rebates or discounts are introduced.

### **11] If the term is extended, will accommodation or other support be provided for students who want to access facilities but whose contracts run out before this time?**

If the university decides to extend the term, we'll be looking at how we support all students who'll have additional requirement as a result.

It is, however, unlikely that any university term extension will continue beyond the length of ordinary tenancy periods agreed between students and landlords, but we will work to ensure that all students are able to take advantage of this additional learning time.

## **Tuition**

### **12] Can we see a full cost breakdown of where our tuition fees go?**

A full breakdown of how university fees are apportioned can be seen [here](#), and you can read more about our fees on AUB's website at [aub.ac.uk/fees](http://aub.ac.uk/fees).

### **13] How does AUB guarantee value throughout its teaching and student experience?**

In line with Government guidance, AUB's moved its teaching and support services to online environments until further notice. Students are able to continue their learning and assessment online, and we anticipate that all students will be able to complete their academic year as originally planned.

We're confident that we're providing the same learning, and that all students are developing the same graduate skills, as in previous years. It's of paramount importance to us that your degree maintains its value, and that it will hold this value over time – that your learning, and the knowledge and skills you develop, are those required by employers, and will equip you for your future career, whatever that may be. We continue to work with key partners across the sector to ensure that we are at the forefront of good practice in digital learning.

We know, of course, that the teaching is different, and that many students will have chosen to come to AUB because of our outstanding facilities, and that the current lockdown means that access to our facilities has been restricted, in line with Government guidance. We've been assured that arts-based subjects will be among the first to recommence on-campus teaching, and we'll maximise your access as soon as it is legally possible to do so.

AUB has always made all students aware of the option to intermit their studies, and this option is available at any point during the course of their studies at AUB should students wish to consider it.

**14] Will AUB be supporting students in seeking refunds/ reductions? Will they be lobbying the government for this on behalf of students?**

Our Vice Chancellor has addressed Universities Minister Michelle Donelan MP directly regarding the situation facing arts-based universities, and we are working with key partners including Guild HE and UKADIA to outline these concerns and represent the views of our student and staff bodies.

**15] For those who pay AUB directly, including international students, will AUB be providing refunds or discounts?**

AUB has put a number of measures in place in order to support all students impacted by recent national guidance and the closure of university campuses, in line with Government guidance. Our Professional Services, International and Course Teams are working hard to support all of our students, and we continue to review the situation according to FCDO advice and guidance.

We're confident that the quality of learning opportunities available to all students remains unaffected, and that you're gaining the same graduate skills as in any other year, although these are being delivered by other means. We've also taken steps to ensure that our academic standards are maintained and are secure.

Significant financial and resourcing investments have been made to ensure that digital and virtual online teaching environments are entirely effective to maintain the university's high standards, and our Course Teams are working tirelessly to support and underpin this temporary teaching pedagogy.

As soon as we're able, we look forward to welcoming students back to our campus, and our No Disadvantage Plan will ensure Maximum Fairness: Maximum Flexibility in order to provide ample access to AUB workshops, equipment and facilities as soon as we're legally able to do so.

**Learning & Employability**

**16] Students do not feel employers will be lenient towards them due to the current circumstances: what support will AUB be providing to ensure students feel properly equipped to seek employment post-graduation?**

AUB has always been recognised as an institution that recognises, encourages and promotes entrepreneurial skill and talent, and aside from the pandemic, we have always proactively developed university events and teaching aligned to these principles.

Research consistently reports that the skills employers value most highly are advanced problem-solving, excellent communication, collaborative skills, and innovation and creativity. As with previous cohorts, AUB graduates in 2021 will have all of these skills and will be well-placed in the jobs and careers market.

This year, the university's planned several employability events featuring high quality professional speakers drawn from across the creative industries. Full detail on our upcoming employability events, planned by our university marketing and employability teams, will be available on the [AUB website](#) and through the [AUB Advantage Career Hub](#).

**17] What support will AUB be giving to students to ensure they have all the relevant practical skills needed in industry when they graduate?**

Practical making skills underpin many of our courses, and the university is entirely aware of how national lockdowns have affected access to these important resources, whilst also recognising that many creative industries have also changed the way they operate in response to the pandemic.

We'll be prioritising access to these facilities as soon as we are legally able to do so. We'll also be looking at how we can continue to provide access around our existing teaching in order to maximise the amount of time our students will be able to spend regaining this valuable upskilling.

**18] How will the current situation be considered when our work is being marked?**

Our No Disadvantage Plan has been designed to ensure that the assessment of your work is fair and aligned to national standards. Our key principles are Maximum Fairness: Maximum Flexibility, and this extends to coursework and assessments.

We'll be flexible in the work you are required to submit for assessment; and we'll be fair to all students in considering possible extensions based on access, or any particular personal circumstances.

If they have particular issues, students should speak to either their Course Team or Student Services as soon as they can. Course Teams are able to grant extensions and explore more options with students requiring additional support.

**19] How will AUB support students who have been unable to access campus resources (e.g. the library, specialist equipment, studios, etc) to complete work?**

AUB has been operating in full accordance with Government advice to suspend on campus activities until further notice, in response to the national lockdown. COVID-19 rates are currently high nationally, including the BCP area, so we are unable to open any additional university resources at this time.

Access to e-books and journals remains available via the Library website, and your Subject Librarian can offer advice on how to find the Library resources you need.

However, we remain confident that arts-based institutions and courses will be among the first to reopen to on-campus teaching, and our Vice Chancellor has raised with Universities Minister Michelle Donelan MP the increased requirement for practical-based teaching to be conducted in on campus environments.

**20] How will AUB be supporting students who do not have the ability to complete work at home to the standard of other students, e.g. due to living situation, finances, work commitments, caring responsibilities?**

Requests for additional teaching or learning support are currently being facilitated and managed by our Course Teams, who have access to a range of resources to help students who are experiencing particular difficulties or circumstances that may affect their learning.

Students are also able to apply for Hardship Funding via MyAUB in order to help manage unexpected living expenses, and access to essential equipment, like laptops, can be arranged via our Digital Hardship fund. There is no restriction on who can apply for hardship funding.

Coursework submission extensions and mitigating circumstances can also be taken into consideration, whatever the reason for them, and these should be discussed directly with Course Teams.

### **21] How will international students, disabled students, and those shielding be supported to complete their work if they cannot return to campus as soon as others?**

Our Senior Disability Officer, based within our Student Services Team, is able to offer support, and will consider how reasonable adjustments can be made on an individual basis, tailored to each student's specific circumstances.

Students who are not able to return to campus and wish to discuss how best to complete their work, should first talk to their Course Champion, who will do everything they can to support student work.

Our international team will also be able to help students with any specific concerns and will provide additional support.

### **22] How does AUB ensure that its standards around teaching and learning are maintained over virtual learning environments?**

Though the pandemic is beyond the control of universities who are operating in full compliance with Government guidance on campus access, AUB continues to offer a high-class teaching experience.

We've extensively invested in additional virtual and digital technologies in order to maintain these standards across online environments and we've launched our No Disadvantage Plan in order to ensure that all students are properly supported and enabled to learn during the pandemic; and that their degree maintains its value. Students who are struggling to access online teaching should let their course team know immediately.

We recognise the need for access to our specialist facilities, and we've approached the Government directly and via sector partners like Guild HE and UKADIA to highlight the challenging circumstances faced by arts-based institutions and courses. We endeavour to welcome students back to our campus and facilities as soon as it is legally possible to do. AUB will continue to monitor this situation as we acknowledge that practical making forms a central part of many of our courses, and we've made a commitment to enable this to take place.

AUB has also always made students aware of the option to intermit their studies, and this option is available at any point during the course of their studies at AUB should students wish to consider it.

### **23] How will AUB be supporting students with accessing learning resources and materials (e.g. cameras, specialist equipment, fabric, etc) while studying from home?**

Specialist resourcing is decided on a course-by-course basis depending on viability and unit-based needs. Several courses have, for example, reallocated units necessitating the use of specialist equipment and resources towards the latter part of the year, in line with our expectation that arts-based universities and courses will be among the first to return to campuses.

We've heavily invested in software like Citrix to enable remote access to specialist advanced technology, which is suitable for some courses. Other courses have sent out materials packs to students to enable them to undertake work remotely.

We do understand that some resources and equipment are only available via our campus. As described in our No Disadvantage Plan, we'll be working tirelessly to ensure that this provision is accessed for all students as soon as possible.

## **Support**

**How will AUB look to ensure further support for International Students, particularly for those not currently able to study in the UK?**

The university is constantly reviewing travel restrictions that may impact international students returning to the UK and has the most up-to-date information to share with students considering their travel options. The International Team will be able to help students with any advice.

We understand that students may be unable to return when the campus first opens, and students are asked to speak to their Course Champions once they know when they can return, so academic work can continue and be supported appropriately.

**24] What is AUB doing to support student wellbeing, both during term time and holidays?**

AUB has consistently and significantly invested in its wellbeing provision, with the highest proportion of university staff trained as Mental Health First Aiders in the country and has allocated additional resources to support student wellbeing in response to the pandemic.

Additional funding has enhanced our counselling and advice services, with a specialist team continuing to support students with a wide range of issues. Our team remains fully staffed and operational across virtual environments and will recommence an on-campus service as soon as it is possible to do so.

Counselling and wellbeing services are available Monday – Friday throughout the year, with the exception of bank holidays and university closure days. The teams can refer to a wide range of community services for additional support.

**Students have been very unfairly portrayed in the media: is AUB doing anything to help combat this perception?**

AUB prides itself on its outstanding student body, who demonstrate exemplary behaviour, commitment and citizenship throughout their studies and time with us.

In recent months, a number of news stories have sought to unfairly discriminate against members of student populations, who are to a large degree entirely compliant and understanding of national measures put in place to tackle COVID-19.

We believe that there should be no need to respond directly to this unjust representation, as our students' skills, talents and contributions to the local community entirely demonstrate the positive and responsible role that students play in shaping an environment rich with innovation, vibrancy and creativity.

We continue to express our overwhelming admiration for all students working in spite of the pandemic's challenging circumstances and we're committed to helping forge the next generation of creative minds, entrepreneurs and artists.

**What financial support can students access? This includes for extra equipment, increased costs of being at home, financial issues due to being unable to work, etc.**

All students are able to apply for Hardship Funding via MyAUB or through discussion with our Student Services Team. This provision is in place to ensure that necessities essential to support students in the event of unexpected hardship are available to all students, and applications are considered on a case-by-case basis.