



## Access Agreement 2015/16

*This Agreement will apply to all students who enter the University in 2015/16 to commence their first year of study towards an undergraduate award. Students who are admitted with advanced standing will be covered by the terms applicable to their cohort.*

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### 1.0 Context

- 1.1 The Arts University Bournemouth is a specialist higher education institution with a commitment to providing all-through provision in the areas of art, design, media and performance from Saturday Art School through further education (FE) to higher education (HE). The University prides itself on providing a supportive and friendly environment which places students and their work at the centre of its community.
- 1.2 The Arts University Bournemouth offers undergraduate and postgraduate awards in the fields of art, design, media and performance. These awards are characterised by an emphasis on 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.
- 1.3 The high cost of specialist course delivery within the creative arts inevitably impacts on the fee which the University must charge to be able to maintain its current high quality of educational experience and equally to develop strong, targeted outreach work which raises aspiration and encourages application from all those who have the capacity to benefit from our awards, regardless of background.
- 1.4 The newly published National Strategy for Access and Student Success (NSASS) notes that “the introduction of higher fees and increasing competition between HE providers make it more important than ever to safeguard and promote access and student success”. While the early indications are that non-traditional students have not been deterred from applying to higher education, the continued turbulence within the sector, and the proposed changes to student number controls, mean that the importance of high quality advice, guidance and support is not diminished. Equally, the Arts University Bournemouth notes the importance not just of application, but of admission to the most suitable higher education experience; and the best possible preparation for progression either to further study, or to employment. It is these aims that we seek to meet through our Access Agreement.
- 1.5 The University has an excellent record in the retention of students from all backgrounds, and is proud of the level and nature of support we provide. We offer strong contact hours and tutorial support, as well as significant support

from qualified technicians; and access to specialist equipment and studios outside of taught time. On-course support is also used to provide study skills support for students with a disability; financial support for Educational Psychologist's reports; and a contribution to support the wider work of the Student Services team, which provides career education, information and guidance; disability support; counselling services; study skills workshops; and an accommodation service. Our HEFCE Student Opportunity funding is largely used to support this "mainstreamed" aspect of our delivery, although an element is set aside for outreach work. This fund now also incorporates the Access to Learning Fund, and a proportion of the funding will be set aside to meet the demands of this former funding stream.

- 1.6 Given the uncertainties about future funding arrangements, the University has developed an Access Agreement which is sufficiently flexible to enable funding to be reallocated as necessary to ensure that critical aspects of work to support student success are not jeopardised by changes to funding streams. We have not made any assumptions about future funding in our resource tables, but reserve the right to vire funding to other relevant activity if this becomes necessary through such changes, including any change to the arrangements for Student Opportunity Funding.
- 1.7 The University acknowledges that much of its outreach work will have medium-term impact, as it seeks to raise aspiration. Our initiatives within this Access Agreement build on these existing services and strategic priorities.
- 1.8 Historically, the University has been successful in attracting students with disabilities (where its performance has been significantly above the benchmark for many years). The local demographics, as well as the nature of the course offer, has posed particular difficulties with regard to the recruitment of students from ethnic minorities, and students from lower socio-economic groups or low participation neighbourhoods. Our priorities in recent years have been to address these key areas, as well as Our proposals also take account of emerging evidence of successful Access strategies deployed across the sector, in part building on annual reports from the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).
- 1.9 The Arts University Bournemouth Monitoring Report expenditure for 2012/13 was 16.3% as a proportion of higher fee income and, therefore, its financial commitment was met. As a proportion of students paying higher fees the total number of bursary and scholarship recipients at the Arts University Bournemouth was 34.8%.
- 1.10 Publication of performance against HESA benchmarks (2012/13) shows good performance against the following areas:
  - 34.4% from NS-SEC
  - 4.1% no longer in HE – all entrants
  - 11.1% receiving DSA
  - 96.5% from state schools/college
- 1.11 We are delighted to note steady progress which is now being made against our most challenging target, whilst acknowledging that more work has to be done:

- 9.2% from low participation neighbourhoods.
- 1.12 The Arts University Bournemouth is one of the top universities in the country for the employment of graduates, with 96.7 per cent of our graduating class of 2012 in work or further study six months after graduating (HESA – DLHE Survey).
  - 1.13 The provision of this Access Agreement applies to all full- and part-time undergraduate students who are domiciled in England. Where specific benefits are also applicable to other students, this is stated.
  - 1.14 The University acknowledges the challenge of being a specialist, selecting institution; many of our courses are over-subscribed. In addition, many potential students, especially within those groups historically under-represented in higher education, may not realise the opportunities which are available to study a higher education course in a creative subject. We accept that the most effective way of maintaining and improving our performance is to secure a higher number of strong applications from under-represented groups, and that is the key focus of this Access Agreement.
  - 1.15 The measures set out in this Access Agreement are designed to raise the aspiration of potential students from under-represented groups, and to support their progression into higher education, either at the Arts University Bournemouth or elsewhere. They equally seek to ensure that those students who benefit from our outreach activity are able to succeed in their course of study; this will be achieved both through a realistic presentation of the demands of higher education, to encourage applications from suitable candidates; and through the support which is provided to students after enrolment and beyond to employment.
  - 1.16 DfE data shows that students who have been in care continue to be significantly disadvantaged and under-represented in higher education<sup>1</sup>. The University will work towards making progress in breaking down the barriers to young people from looked-after backgrounds entering higher education. The University has secured the Buttle UK Quality Mark, demonstrating its commitment to supporting young people in and leaving care who progress into and through higher education.
  - 1.17 The University will continue to keep under review the implications of its Access Agreement to ensure that its provisions are effective in meeting its intentions of raising aspiration, and encouraging applications from those from under-represented groups. We note the planned development of the National Strategy for Access and Student Success, led by HEFCE and OFFA, and shall of course respond to this in future Access Agreements.

## **2.0 Fee limits, fee income and coverage**

- 2.1 The basic and maximum tuition fees for UK and European Union (EU) students undertaking their first degree are set by the Government. For 2014/15, the basic fee has been set at £6,000 and the maximum fee at £9,000. No fees are payable upfront. The cost of tuition is repaid through

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<sup>1</sup> National strategy for access and student success in higher education, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, April 2014

graduate contributions, which commence at least three years after the start of the course of study. Repayments are due only once a student/graduate is earning at least £21,000 (this figure will be reviewed annually). For full details of eligibility, and how graduate contributions are calculated and collected, see the Government website:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm>.

- 2.2 For 2014/15, the University set a tuition fee of **£9,000** for all full-time undergraduate courses for Home/EU students. This is reflective of the high quality of education provided, and the high cost of study within the art, design, media and performance subject areas. The University will again set the maximum fee for 2015/16 (which is yet to be confirmed). The full-time fee will be held at this level for the duration of the course of study for continuing students. Students who intermit, or who otherwise take a break from their studies, will be charged the fee applicable to the cohort which they join.
- 2.3 The fee for part-time undergraduate courses for 2014/15 was calculated pro rata, and was set at **£1,500** per 20-credit unit. Part-time students were required to pay no more than **£4,500** in a single academic year. The University will confirm its part-time fees alongside the full-time fees, and will again be set pro rata. The unit fee for part-time courses will be held at this level for the duration of the course of study for continuing students. Students who intermit, or who otherwise take a break from their studies, will be charged the fee applicable to the cohort which they join.
- 2.4 The arrangements described below apply to any student entering the Arts University in 2015/16, or returning from a period of intermission from their course having commenced after 1 August 2012. This includes any student who holds a deferred entry from 2014/15.
- 2.5 Any students who joined their course before 2012/13 but who are still progressing, for example following intermission, will be unaffected by this Access Agreement. The arrangements outlined in our Access Agreement for 2011/12 will apply to all such students, irrespective of their year of study. It should be noted that a student is only entitled to specific benefits once in each level of full-time study.
- 2.6 AUB students who are on an Erasmus or other international exchange are covered by the terms of this Access Agreement. During a year abroad the fee for 2014/15 entrants will be £1,000. Incoming students to AUB, who are enrolled for an award at another institution, are excluded from the terms of this Access Agreement.
- 2.7 Students who enrol on the MArch Architecture award (RIBA Part II) are eligible to make applications to the Hardship Fund, but are otherwise excluded from the terms of this Access Agreement.
- 2.8 The provisions of this Access Agreement are not applicable to students who are enrolled, but not registered for an AUB award.

### **3.0 Expenditure on additional access measures**

- 3.1 The University notes that it has been successful in attracting and retaining students from under-represented groups over the last five years. It is a specialist, selecting institution, and its catchment area comprises regions where the proportion of non-traditional learners is lower than the national average (primarily, the south-west and south-east).
- 3.2 According to our monitoring return in 2013, over 34% of AUB students are from groups which are historically under-represented in higher education. We perform well against challenging benchmarks, especially in relation to overall student retention, and the enrolment of students in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance; internal monitoring confirms the success of this work. We aim to maintain our current strong performance, and to secure improvements in those areas where achievement has been less strong.
- 3.3 In 2015/16, the new fees regime will have reached "steady state", ie all full-time students on a three-year course will be on the 2012 fees regime. We acknowledge that there will be some part-time students, and some students progressing from entry in 2011/12 who have intermitted their studies. However, the vast majority of students will be paying the higher "variable" fees. The Arts University Bournemouth will commit a proportion of additional fee income to additional access measures in the following areas: investment in outreach, student success and progression and expenditure on financial support (inclusive of any expenditure allocated in the circumstances outlined in paragraph 1.6 above).

### **4.0 Additional access measures**

#### **4.1 Outreach activity**

- 4.1.1 There is considerable evidence which suggests that sustained and targeted outreach work<sup>2</sup> with under-represented groups is the most effective way of encouraging participation in higher education<sup>3</sup>. The finding is echoed in the interim HEFCE and OFFA report which identifies its effectiveness when it is a progressive, sustained programme of activity and engagement over time.<sup>4</sup>
- 4.1.2 The University is committed to developing and extending its existing outreach provision, both locally, sub-regionally, and more broadly across the creative arts sector, with activities that aim to widen the pool of young people able to progress to HE who also aspire to do so.
- 4.1.3 The Arts University Bournemouth reviews its work with target schools and colleges both through individual project evaluation which measures output but

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<sup>2</sup> How to produce an access agreement for 2014-15, *Office for Fair Access January 2013/01*

**Guidance**

<sup>3</sup> [Access agreement and widening participation strategic assessment monitoring: outcomes for 2010-11](#), (HEFCE 2012/13) 2012/05

<sup>4</sup> HEFCE and OFFA "National strategy for access and student success: Interim report to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills" (2013).

also annually to maximise the impact of activity delivered through the Access Agreement in order to expand successful initiatives or refine current delivery.

4.1.4 Evaluation of activity may be based upon quantitative or qualitative evidence, e.g.

- Case studies
- Bursary recipients
- GCSE results
- Applications/enrolments
- Testament of feeder schools/colleges

4.1.5 The Arts University Bournemouth uses this evaluation to build upon its range of creative initiatives, e.g. Specialist Spring/Summer Schools have provided excellent platforms for students, parents and teachers from specialist art schools and colleges: “actually working in uni rather than visiting”, “getting a feel for the atmosphere/ teaching working on the course”, “an idea of what an arts course would be like”, “how uni is run some new techniques”, “better understanding of university work ethic learnt more about the course talking to students/ tutors gained a feel of what it was like to attend university”, “Confidence - I used to put myself down about to going to uni,” “I gained some new friends an experience of what Uni is”, “idea of uni life open mind skills”, “Information, confidence better idea of the industry”, “knowledge of the university environment and general experience more knowledge of subject”, “experience as working as part of a design team, knowledge of university (finance etc.) friends, confidence”, “made up my mind on future more”, “ made me enjoy subject and appreciate it”, “valuable information in depth idea of course a much better idea of university life”..... “you need passion for good grades there are good unis outside of .....” “what I need to do in order to get an interview how to prepare for a place at uni”, “the type of work we will be doing where you could end up after university”

4.1.6 Our basic monitoring of outreach initiatives includes progress against targets and milestones and is reported annually. The elementary evidence base is provided through Management Information Service reporting which identifies volumes and outputs of outreach activity. Proportions of target groups benefiting from WP activities are analysed through this data capture. The regular statistical analysis offers the opportunity to assess the nature and delivery of activity and informs evaluation and future planning.

4.1.7 Most recent measurement of outcomes has shown that objectives have been delivered, exceeding expectation of engagement/applications/enrolments to the University from participants, and it is pleasing to note that the work has shown consistent improvement in participant application to Preparation for Higher Education/Higher Education programmes, which have resulted in enrolments.

4.1.8 Data from an annual demographics report, which considers the retention, progression and achievement of all minority target groups, Annual Course Reviews and Student Perception Surveys results, is also used to analyse satisfaction of non-traditional students.

- 4.1.9 Analysis is not confined to participant/enrolment data but also includes reflection on targets which support attainment in target schools. Sustained interventions have continued with schools offering Level 2 qualifications, and our arts activities have made a contribution to some outstanding success. "It has allowed them to meet the criteria for P2 and P3 of their BTEC unit Drawing Concept Art for Video Games. Without the support of AUB we would not have been able to offer the students such an important opportunity to create the evidence needed. I also feel that having a new tutor, whilst attempting a new skill in a new environment, has allowed the students to work in a more open and free style. An excellent opportunity, well structured and supportive of all learning styles..."
- 4.1.10 We shall continue to undertake, and will extend, our existing activity in those areas which we know to have been successful in raising aspiration, attainment, confidence and self-esteem; and have resulted in enquiries and subsequent enrolments to Arts University awards.
- 4.1.11 We shall build on the successful HE Progression Framework and engage with schools, colleges and agencies in a sustained way at the key transition phases of a learner's journey by offering programmes directed towards people at different stages of their education, starting at primary level. We will deliver activities that support learning outcomes for introductory, developmental and consolidation phases across KS2 & KS3; KS4 and post-compulsory education. This will be a combination of measures including long-term outreach work with younger age groups, for example students in Year 6 working with the University staff and students both on campus and in school, e.g. 'Transforming the Subway'; designing new school uniform, designing a mural for a community project. It will also include offering dedicated workshops in creative subjects such as photography and film; the delivery of targeted specialist summer schools; offering Taster Days and campus visits; and undertaking curriculum projects with schools. We also deliver mentoring support for students progressing from the Extended Diploma onto higher education courses to secure this critical transition period.
- 4.1.12 We have also identified specific schools and colleges with whom we undertake collaborative work. The University has a policy of targeting schools and colleges which have a high proportion of non-traditional students, a low conversion to higher education, and a strong portfolio within the creative arts. Target schools and colleges are reviewed annually, based on indices of disadvantage which may include: POLAR 3 (LPN 1), percentage receiving free school meals; percentage achieving 5+ A\*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and Maths. It is intended to increase the number of linked schools and colleges over the coming years, but no specific target is set for this work as the intention remains only to link with those institutions which are local, or where there is a realistic prospect of conversion to higher education at the University. The University engages with schools through offering a wide range of activities. This includes Portfolio Advice Days, where groups of non-traditional learners from selected schools and colleges attend the institution to meet with academic staff and to discuss their portfolio, and how best to present themselves and their work as part of a future application for higher education. In addition, they have a campus tour, visiting studios where current students are making work, and have the chance to learn more about

the higher education experience. The success of these activities is well established, with a positive trend in applications from attendees.

- 4.1.13 Among both students and our own staff practitioners, the University has a strong history of artists taking up residencies, for example in schools or galleries. We intend to build on this well established initiative and the success of school residencies, where our students work with non-traditional groups and support the creative curriculum. The scheme is intended to support the residency of a University graduate from a non-traditional background to foster a creative collaboration between the artist and the staff and students, and thus raise aspiration to higher education. A typical residency might be for a full academic year (ten months), and an award would cover a stipend for the resident artist, plus costs associated with the artist's activity, including consumables or materials, studio, exhibition and other associated costs.
- 4.1.14 Schools/Colleges and other stakeholders provide a vital link in mapping of enhanced curriculum, improved provision, attainment, raising the profile of art, design media and performance, information and guidance and professional development. This involves work around exploring initiatives which have developed and informed curriculum, such as ongoing professional development and increased school/HE dialogue, 14-19 Strategic Partnership Board; working with Local Authorities and partners to work towards Raising the Participation Age beyond the age of 16; and specific work with schools and colleges with Specialist Art Status. Further, this explores those opportunities which have engaged teachers in a real and meaningful way offering clarification and enrichment of curriculum.
- 4.1.15 Additional activity has been developed through strong links with the Borough, Looked After Children practitioners, employers, community groups and education providers to encourage participation from under-represented groups and in accordance with HEFCE good practice. Activity includes engagement with work-based and adult learners; the development of courses, and smaller blocks of learning which are targeted at employer groups; and formerly participation in Extended Services initiatives where the University's specialist resources were available for Summer School activity.
- 4.1.16 We have established a central fund of £50,000 to support faculty initiatives in support of application and recruitment from under-represented groups. Staff are invited to put together projects, and to bid for the funding to deliver these. Successful bids will include measures to monitor and evaluate the success and impact of completed initiatives, and the sustainability of such developments. This activity will be extended into 2015/16.
- 4.1.17 We shall continue to provide a small subsidy to our Saturday Arts School programme, which offers the opportunity for 9-18 year-olds to participate in a programme of creative activity throughout the autumn and spring terms. This subsidy permits the allocation of free or subsidised places to those from target groups (nominated by schools with low progression to higher education, and/or based within low participation neighbourhoods, low household incomes or young people in care). Approximately 20% of enrolments fall into this category, and there is some evidence of improved attainment at GCSE.
- 4.1.18 The importance of information, advice and guidance within a coherent programme that targets appropriately, starts early and intensifies during



periods of transition is clearly identified in the literature<sup>5</sup>. We acknowledge that effective careers guidance is vital to help students understand which post-18 options will help them achieve their career aspirations, and a major factor affecting the social mobility of young people is the information, advice and guidance received in school. It is recognised that these learners need personalised and time-relevant support to bring together advice and guidance, in order to make information relevant to them. This is particularly applicable to those from under-represented groups, for whom detailed advice or guidance is less likely to be accessible. As expressed in the Government's Strategy for Social Mobility<sup>6</sup>, "good careers advice helps young people to progress in learning, and helps to increase confidence, motivation and the desire to succeed". Students need to choose courses which will help them to progress into their chosen career and, therefore, a dedicated careers professional was appointed from 2012/13 to work with students in schools and colleges, providing high quality information, face-to-face careers guidance and advice about options, higher education progression and career opportunities. There is an opportunity to build on existing good practice across the sector, and we are now engaged in the local Careers Education/Information Advice and Guidance Network, which supports legislative and guidance changes from September 2012.

4.1.19 This has been a new area of work for the Arts University, and offers an opportunity to provide clear and targeted advice to prospective students parents, carers and other key influencers in timely fashion. A range of career activities delivered in schools include career talks, individual support, small group sessions, targeted support and assemblies. There is an opportunity to discover more about creative careers, 'have a go' sessions, advice on higher and further education options and application advice.

4.1.20 The University has a strong collaborative culture of students in specialist courses working alongside their peers on other courses, reflecting the reality of working in the creative industries. We have set funds aside in 2013/14 to support the creation of a short film which explored the benefits of higher education. The film is to feature the application process, the actual experience of higher education, and the potential career pathways which a graduate may follow. The intention is to encourage aspiration and application from under-represented groups, and the film is to be made available through events, workshops and potentially through a new widening participation portal. If this activity proves successful, we may offer future opportunities of this type.

## 4.2 Partnerships and collaboration

4.2.1 The University is keen to build on its existing strong networks to deliver a coherent outreach programme for the creative arts. Locally, our engagement with wave Arts Education Agency, Cultural Hub, and Dorset Loves Art, will further support our work to create inspirational learning opportunities for young people, and so too will links with the 14-19 Strategic Partnership and the Bournemouth and Poole Post 16 Forum.

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<sup>5</sup> National strategy for access and student success in higher education, ,Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, April 2014

<sup>6</sup> Issued May 2012

- 4.2.2 We have also established links with the Wessex Group of Sixth Form Colleges which is a partnership of 11 Sixth Form Colleges in Hampshire, Southampton and Portsmouth who, amongst other collaborative schemes, facilitate Curriculum Support Groups (CSGs) for teachers across different subject areas.
- 4.2.3 We envisage continued activity with the National Arts Learning Network/ukadia and collaborative partnership approaches to the widening participation agenda in the south west region through Universities South West. (Universities South West is the membership organisation for the 13 HEIs in the south west region.)
- 4.2.4 This work includes:
- Sharing and building upon best practice in WP throughout the student life cycle. This will include practice with HE in FE providers where appropriate
  - Consideration of provision in the region and identification of future areas for collaboration
  - The provision of a regional WP practitioner support network specialising in work with Looked after Young People / Care Leavers
  - The provision of a regional practitioner support network specialising in work with disabled learners
  - Delivery of annual collaborative south west regional events with key influencers of target WP groups e.g. for Virtual Head Teachers, Sencos
  - Developing coherence and consistency in data collection and data protocols with external partners
  - Identification of best practice in knowledge sharing to support collaborative measurement of impact , regionally/nationally
  - Identification and promotion of future opportunities for promoting further collaborative delivery mechanisms.
- 4.2.5 The establishment of formal partnerships has been progressed over recent years, for example with the University of Southampton to work together on the identification and promotion of future opportunities for promoting further collaborative delivery mechanisms such as Taster Days and Summer Schools; continued professional development opportunities; the dissemination of good practice; and the sharing and building upon best practice in supporting non-traditional learners throughout the student life cycle.
- 4.2.6 The University is seeking to establish a unique and comprehensive collaboration of specialist arts institutions delivering both undergraduate and postgraduate awards. Working together to promote fair access and social mobility of students from under-represented groups students will be supported through a coherent programme of activities designed to raise their aspirations to progress to study creative awards at university. We believe that the National Arts Learning Network (NALN) provides a natural home for this work, and will be discussing with colleagues across this network how to raise the profile of creative arts education, especially among under-represented groups, and to broaden the opportunities available to encourage and support progression into higher education. We anticipate that this activity will continue into 2015/16.
- 4.3 Student retention and success

- 4.3.1 Significant support for student retention is funded through the current widening participation allocation, and we do not plan for a major investment from the additional access funding during its first year of operation. However, the University has evidence that students from lowest income households benefit from direct financial support for their major project at Level 6 which is addressed in a package of financial support for this group, as described at paragraph 4.3.4 below.
- 4.3.2 The University employs a Senior Progression Officer whose role includes monitoring student retention, attainment and progression, and identifying potential areas for improvement for non-traditional groups. This work will continue and may give particular consideration to 'differences in attainment for different groups of students (particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds and students with disabilities), and how they engage with the full opportunities that their programme of study might offer'<sup>7</sup>.
- 4.3.3. Alongside ARB and RIBA accreditation of our BA (Hons) Architecture, the University has secured accreditation for eight undergraduate courses by Creative Skillset and the Drama UK. This is the highest number of accreditations secured by any institution, confirming our offer as distinctive and setting it apart as high quality, industry approved courses. We consider this recognition further supports employment opportunities for students from underrepresented groups and follows the Government encouragement to engage with employers to kitemark certain courses.
- 4.3.4 The University is proud of its alumni, and the role they play in the flourishing creative industries. The professional orientation of our courses, and the strong focus on employability, provides a sound platform for supporting access to employment in creative professions.
- 4.3.5 The creative industries are expected to grow much faster than the rest of the UK economy and employ around 1.3 million people by 2013 many of whom would be in new professional roles. This suggests that graduates from across the broadest range of institutions and subject areas will be seeking to enter professional careers upon graduation<sup>8</sup>. We are mindful of the importance of progression into the creative industries post-graduation for non-traditional students We shall investigate ways of strengthening and consolidating opportunities which can benefit these learners both during their studies, and within the first few months after the completion of their course. We shall also consider practical support such as financial or other support for students on full state support which may enable them to take up short-term opportunities in the creative industries which may be unpaid, or for a modest honorarium, which would otherwise be impractical.
- 4.3.6 The University acknowledges that curriculum design can prove a barrier to some non-traditional students, either because study skills development is not integrated within the learning experience, or because of assumptions made by staff about the knowledge and learning styles of students. We are considering a new appointment to support the development of an accessible curriculum, by working on one-off sessions for individual courses or contributing to integrating learning development in curriculum design. Through

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<sup>7</sup> National strategy for access and student success in higher education, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, April 2014

<sup>8</sup> Unleashing Aspiration: The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, July 2009

this work, undertaken with academic colleagues, or through the development of dedicated materials which can be accessed by learners as required, we aim to support the student experience, attainment and success of those from under-represented groups; as stated in our targets for the Access Agreement.

#### 4.4 Financial support for students

4.4.1 We acknowledge that unexpected expenditure can be a major impediment to study; and that courses in the creative arts can impose particular demands because of the cost of materials.

4.4.2 Historically, in common with most providers of undergraduate courses within the creative disciplines, the University charged a “course materials fee” to contribute towards the cost of materials provided by the University free of charge. This fee was suspended from 2006/07, and we shall continue to meet this cost from the income derived from tuition fees. (It remains the case that some courses require students to provide key equipment, which will usually be offered at a subsidised rate.) This expenditure is not, however, deemed “countable” and hence has not been included.

4.4.3 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.

4.4.4 The University acknowledges the cost of undergraduate study in art, design, media and performance, and those students from lowest income households will benefit from direct financial support for their major project at Level 6. Our evidence from the last four years shows that non-traditional students regularly seek grants from our Hardship Fund to support their work on their final year project work. In consequence, students who enrol in 2015/16 and progress successfully to Level 6 study in 2017/18, and who are in receipt of a full maintenance grant, will receive a progression scholarship of £200 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. The bursary will be paid in December 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. This award is subject to annual review, and may not be increased in line with inflation.

4.4.5 We shall also establish a discretionary support fund. Students from under-represented groups who are on full state support are permitted to make applications to this fund for specific purposes, which will be reviewed on an annual basis and published through our intranet. For 2015/16, support will be available in the form of bicycle vouchers, which have been very successful

and facilitate student travel to the campus; support for educational visits; and exceptionally, hardship loans. This fund will comprise the funding not otherwise allocated through this Access Agreement, and will contain no less than £100,000 to support unexpected or exceptional hardship.

#### 4.5 National Scholarship Programme

4.5.1 The National Scholarship Programme (NSP) has been withdrawn from the end of 2014/15. As the University match-funds NSP awards over all three years of the course, there is outstanding funding to be allocated to the NSP in 2015/16, but no new awards will be made. The terms and conditions of continuing awards were presented in previous Access Agreements, and remain unchanged.

4.6 To moderate the impact of the end of Aimhigher activities the appointment of a full-time staff member has enabled the coordination of a range of project work, as described under section 4.1 above. Specifically, this post will enable the continuation of existing activities with schools and colleges; the sustaining of networks; and the opportunity to continue with activities which are proven to be successful such as specialist summer schools.

4.7 The University is conscious of the need to develop and disseminate widening participation research which links to both policy and practice, and hence can inform future activity locally and nationally. Research forms a core basis of our activity, and this work will continue in 2015/16.

#### **5.0 Provision of information to prospective students**

5.1 Our Access Agreement will be published to our website. In addition, a summary of support available for students will be published; this will also be prepared as a separate information sheet which is available at Open Days and other recruitment events.

5.2 Financial arrangements are also included within a dedicated Financial Advice and Support talk at Open Day, through student portal updates and the student newsletter.

5.3 We also target fee and support information at under-represented groups through appropriate outreach activity, and ensure that enquirers from identified schools and colleges (including those who completed their compulsory education before publication of the Access Agreement) are provided with the relevant information.

5.4 Extensive staff briefings, HE tutor briefings and staff development workshops ensure that all those staff who come into contact with potential applicants are clear about the arrangements, and where further information can be found.

5.5 We also work closely with Student Services and the Students' Union to inform campaigns to reach the target audience and have a visible presence at induction to reinforce information about bursary support available to eligible students.

5.6 We shall also provide such timely information to UCAS and SLC as they reasonably require to populate their applicant-facing web services.

## **6. Targets and Milestones**

- 6.1 The University's Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, to which this Access Agreement is an appendix, notes the importance of monitoring success through achievements against the HESA Performance Indicators, supplemented by targets for the rates of application and offer to non-traditional learners, and overall student satisfaction ratings for those in receipt of support.
- 6.2 Whilst acknowledging the delay in publication of Performance Indicator data, we believe that it is preferable to monitor our performance through publicly available information where possible. We monitor these same indicators internally to ensure that we are well placed to understand the impact of our work. However, we are concerned that it is often difficult to identify a simple causal link between work which has been undertaken within the widening participation field, and achievement (whether improved or less strong). The fact that work to raise aspiration may well take place 3-4 years before prospective enrolment, which is then reported 18 months later, makes it extremely difficult to propose actions in direct response to performance. It is for this reason that some of our targets relate to activities, as well as achievement, although these activities are also strongly monitored for successful progression.
- 6.3 We were concerned that the new financial arrangements were poorly understood by many prospective students, and were likely to be a particular impediment to those from non-traditional backgrounds. However, we are reassured that the early signs indicate that there has been a less significant short-term impact on the recruitment of those from under-represented groups than had been anticipated, although we are not complacent and will continue to promote the value and benefits of higher education.
- 6.4 The targets set by the University reflect our current position, and our understanding of our own catchment area. Most applicants and enrolments are from those within 100 miles of the University, spread evenly across the south-east and south-west regions. This is not surprising, given our location on the boundary between these two regions, and the superior travel links to the south-east and London. In addition, we have not set targets in those areas where numbers are too small to be meaningful; or where our experience over the last ten years indicates that activity is unlikely to have significant impact (this applies, for instance, to mature learners from low participation neighbourhoods without previous experience of higher education).
- 6.5 Our targets are set over five years, with annual milestones. We routinely monitor performance against these criteria on an annual basis and have noted that because of the relatively small numbers involved, apparent performance can vary considerably year on year. Data to monitor progression and achievement will be most effectively looked at within the periodic review of courses, where trends can be reviewed over a number of years, although the recruitment and retention of non-traditional students is an important aspect of the Annual Course Review process, and is therefore considered by course teams on a yearly basis.

- 6.6 We wish to ensure that milestones are meaningful, and are based on the actual circumstances rather than speculation. Therefore, we shall not seek to revise any targets or associated milestones at this stage. In general, at institutional level, we note that whilst we aim to make progress against each objective in each year, the relatively small numbers involved and the unreliability of some datasets (such as the socio-economic classification of the main earner in a household, or the precise impact of a low participation neighbourhood) mean that this is unrealistic. We shall normally expect to have made progress against two-thirds of the statistical targets in each year, and will consider this to be successful performance.
- 6.7 The University considers each of its targets to be minima, and hence where targets have been exceeded, there will be no activity designed to reduce subsequent achievement. However, targets will not themselves necessarily be revised upwards.

## **7. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements**

- 7.1 Annually, the University reports to the Office for Fair Access, OFFA, in its Annual Monitoring Report. This includes all expenditure from additional fee income on financial support for lower income students and other under-represented groups and reports progress against objectives and milestones. We look forward to the development of the national evaluation framework to inform our evaluation of access and student success activities effectively.
- 7.2 An independent review of the Arts University Bournemouth Access Agreement by the Learning and Development Unit from Cardiff University was very positive. The reviewers found that the Agreement provided a good statement of the approaches to be taken, and a strong evaluation of the university's progress in promoting fair access and identified clear objectives, targets and milestones.
- 7.3 The University receives an annual report on its Widening Participation activity which reports on activity, and outcomes. The report is considered in detail by the Equalities Committee, which makes direct report to Academic Board. The milestones and targets outlined in this Access Agreement enable an evaluative consideration of progress, and a regular review of success.
- 7.4 The University further intends to build upon the current self-assessment process by developing an integrated Targeting, Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy that focuses both on the OFFA Agreements and the Widening Participation Strategic Assessments (WPSAs). The strategy, based on HEFCE guidance<sup>9</sup>, will have four levels:
- Level 1: Basic monitoring – progress against targets and milestones, outputs and volumes
  - Level 2: Targeting – proportions of the target groups benefitting from WP activities
  - Level 3: Measurement of outcomes – impacts and unintended consequences, short-, medium- and long-term
  - Level 4: Value for money – cost-effectiveness.

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<sup>9</sup> 'Access agreement and widening participation strategic assessment monitoring: Outcomes for 2009-10' (OFFA September 2011/04; HEFCE September 2011/29)

## **8. Consultation with Students**

- 8.1 The Student Charter sets out the Arts University Bournemouth's commitment to provide students with a service of the highest quality and is an example of consultation and collaboration to ensure that students' best interests are represented.
- 8.2 The continuous monitoring of performance against target, and of the success of the wide range of access measures, also enables these measures to be amended where appropriate to ensure that the identified groups are reached. In order to inform the efficacy of its arrangements, the University uses its Student Perception Survey to contribute to data collection, monitoring the satisfaction of different student groups.
- 8.3 The development of this Access Agreement was also informed by detailed discussions with the sabbatical officers of the Students' Union. Given the scale and the nature of the University, discussions with these representatives are the most effective means of securing student feedback and ensuring the student voice is heard.

## **9. Equality and Diversity**

- 9.1 The Arts University Bournemouth executes responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, confident in the knowledge that it has taken equality issues into account in designing this Agreement for 2015/16. The Arts University Bournemouth aims to advance its moral, social and legal obligations to put equalities at the heart of every area of activity. The strategy is intended to ensure that every member of the University's community is treated fairly and respectfully regardless of the characteristics that may define their identity. It seeks to do more than simply 'promote' equality and to be focused on outcomes and real progress.
- 9.2 Although the creative industries play a critical role in boosting future British economic growth, young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, for example, are currently under-represented in the creative sector. The University recognises the inherent educational value of diversity with different points of view rooted in different life experiences and the challenges presented for creative students. The Equality Act 2010 has provided an opportunity to further develop an inclusive culture and engage the community in adopting a comprehensive approach to widening participation in arts education and the creative industries.
- 9.3 Achieving the above means a confidence in the development of policies and procedures, ensuring that due regard is given and embedded into existing and future processes.



