AllAccessAUB

2025-26 EVALUATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an evaluation of the 2025–2026 All Access AUB programme. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the programme has achieved the outcomes outlined in its progression framework and theory of change, identify areas for improvement, and inform future delivery.

All Access AUB is designed to support young people from underrepresented backgrounds to access creative higher education through a programme of sustained interventions, including a summer residential, one-to-one portfolio support, an exhibition of participants' work, a celebration event, and a Transition to Creative HE Day. The programme aims to increase confidence, creative skills, sense of belonging, and progression to higher education, particularly at Arts University Bournemouth (AUB).

A mixed-method approach was employed, drawing on participant and parent/carer interviews, pre- and post-event surveys, reflective journals, focus groups and feedback activities. 32 participants attended the summer residential and therefore formed the 2025–2026 cohort. All participants met at least one widening participation criterion, ensuring the programme continued to engage those underrepresented in higher education.

The findings provide strong evidence that the programme is meeting its intended outcomes. Participants reported significant growth in creative confidence, communication, collaboration, problem-solving and resilience, alongside increased willingness to experiment with new artistic techniques and media. The residential also strengthened participants' understanding of creative higher education, reduced anxieties about university study, and fostered a strong sense of belonging at AUB. Participants consistently described AUB as a welcoming and supportive environment where they felt comfortable, valued and able to connect with like-minded peers.

The programme also demonstrated positive progression outcomes. Applications to AUB reached their highest level to date, with 66% of participants applying to undergraduate AUB courses or Foundation study, all applicants receiving offers, and 44% firmly accepting an offer. One-to-one portfolio support was particularly effective in increasing confidence in portfolio development and understanding of application requirements among those who engaged. Parents, carers and supporters also reported increased knowledge of creative higher education, greater confidence in supporting applications, and pride in participants' achievements.

While engagement with portfolio support and celebration activities improved compared to previous years, participation in some follow-on interventions remained lower than desired, particularly the Transition to Creative HE Day. Increasing engagement across the full programme journey remains an important area for development. Participants

also identified opportunities for more course-specific information, careers guidance and ongoing support between programme stages.

Overall, the evaluation demonstrates that All Access AUB continues to have a meaningful and positive impact on participants' confidence, aspirations, creative development and progression to higher education. The programme is successfully supporting young people to see creative higher education, and study at AUB specifically, as realistic and achievable pathways, while continuing to build stronger relationships with participants, their families and the wider AUB community.

AUB enrolment data will be available in October 2026. As of 4 September 2026, nine of the 32 participants are expected to join AUB for undergraduate study and a further five for foundation study, totaling 14 (44%).

KEY FINDINGS

- **The All Access AUB programme continues to grow in reach and demand.** Applications increased from 32 in 2022–23 to 56 in 2025–26, demonstrating growing awareness of the programme among schools, colleges and prospective students.

- **Participant engagement beyond the residential improved.** Attendance at portfolio support sessions increased from 44% to 63%, while attendance at the exhibition and celebration event rose from 31% to 44%, indicating stronger sustained engagement across the programme.

- **Applications and progression to AUB reached their highest levels to date.** 66% of participants applied to AUB (including Foundation courses), all applicants received offers, and 44% firmly accepted an offer, representing the strongest progression outcomes since the programme began.

- **The residential significantly broadened participants' creative skills and artistic exploration.** Participants reported experimenting with new media, techniques and technologies, discovering new interests, and developing a greater willingness to take creative risks and embrace experimentation.

- **The programme strengthened key transferable skills.** Qualitative evidence showed improvements in communication, collaboration, confidence, problem-solving and resilience, particularly among participants who identified as shy or lacking confidence.

- **Participants developed a strong sense of belonging at AUB.** Survey data and participant feedback showed increased feelings of comfort, familiarity and belonging, with many describing AUB as a welcoming environment where they could be themselves and connect with like-minded peers.

- **The residential reduced anxiety about higher education and increased motivation to progress.** Participants reported feeling more confident about university life, better informed about studying a creative degree, and more motivated to research and pursue creative higher education opportunities.

- **One-to-one portfolio support had a substantial positive impact on confidence.** Participants who engaged with portfolio support reported increased confidence in the quality of their work, portfolio selection, and understanding of application requirements, although overall engagement with follow-up sessions remains an area for improvement.

- **The exhibition and celebration event successfully engaged families and supporters.** Parents and carers reported greater understanding of creative higher education, increased confidence in supporting applications, and pride in participants' achievements, reinforcing the programme's impact on both learners and their wider support networks.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthen targeted outreach and recruitment.** Continue building partnerships with schools and colleges while developing targeted approaches to engage underrepresented groups that remain less represented within the programme, such as care-experienced and estranged young people.

- **Increase engagement with progression support activities.** Strengthen participation in portfolio support sessions and the Transition to Creative HE Day through improved communication, flexible delivery options, and regular reminders.

- **Enhance course, careers and employability guidance.** Provide more course-specific information, career pathway insights, and examples of graduate outcomes to support informed decision-making and strengthen understanding of creative career opportunities.

- **Maintain and build on activities that foster confidence and belonging.** Continue prioritising opportunities for creative experimentation, peer connections, mentoring, and meaningful interactions with staff, as these are central to participants' confidence and progression.

- **Strengthen evaluation and impact measurement.** Improve feedback collection and survey response rates across all programme activities to provide more robust evidence of impact and inform future programme development.

BACKGROUND

All Access AUB began in 2022 and was developed as a programme of activity to support entry into creative Higher Education from underrepresented groups. This evaluation report is for the 2025-2026 cohort. As part of All Access AUB, participants:

- Take part in a fully funded summer residential, exploring and experimenting with different mediums to build a strong portfolio of work.
- Have their work included as part of an industry-standard art exhibition at AUB's TheGallery.
- Are invited, alongside friends, family and supporters, to attend a celebration event and view the exhibition of their work.
- Receive one-to-one support from expert artists and designers in the development of their portfolio.
- Attend a 'Transition to creative HE' event in their second year of Sixth Form or College.
- Are given extra consideration at the point of admission to AUB, which, if an offer is made, will be a reduced, contextual offer of up to two grades.
- Receive support from a dedicated Progression Mentor through the AUB application process and beyond.

The programme continues to grow as more schools, colleges, teachers and students become aware of it and its impact. Each year improvements are made to address the

needs of the young people and the desired outcomes of the programme, both short and long term.

In the first year (2022) there were 32 applications converting to 17 participants. This number has increased year on year, with there being 56 applications in 2025, converting to 32 participants.

Table 1: Numbers of applications converting to participants each year so far

Year of programme	Applications	Participants
2022-23	32	17
2023-24	39	32
2024-25	51	32
2025-26	56	32*

*40 applicants were offered places but 8 withdrew their place last minute.

PARTICIPANTS

32 participants attended the summer residential. This is taken as the total population participating in the All Access AUB programme as this was the most intensive element. All the participants met one or more of the targeting criteria. It should be noted though that no participants declared they were care experienced or estranged, however, one participant was from a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman or Boater background; the first year someone from this group has been part of All Access AUB.

Graph 1: Percentage of participants on the All Access AUB programme and their eligibility criteria. (Note: Many participants were eligible under more than one criteria.)

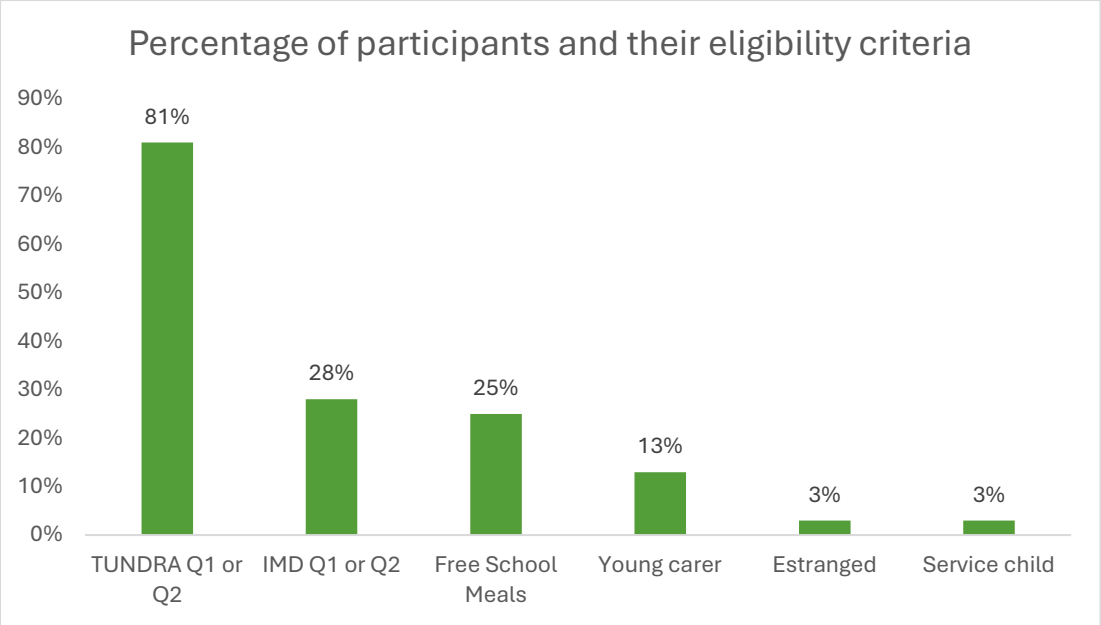


Table 2: Participants' attendance at all programme activities and interventions. Each row is one participant so attendance of each participant can be tracked.

Attended residential *(100%)*	**Attended portfolio support session/s** *(63%)*	**Attended celebration event** *(44%)*	**Attended transition to creative HE day** *(6%)*

It is worth noting that the percentage engagement with the portfolio sessions has increased by 19%, with last year's engagement being 44%. Percentage attendance at the exhibition and celebration event also increased by 13%, from 31% to 44%. However, attendance to the Transition to Creative HE Day fell by 3% from 9% to 6%.

APPLICATIONS AND ENROLMENTS TO AUB

Out of the 32 participants in the 2025-26 cohort, 18 (56%) made applications to at least one undergraduate degree at AUB, which increases to 21 (66%) when including applications to Foundation. All participants received at least one offer. Nine (28%) firmly accepted their offer to study an undergraduate degree at AUB, with five (16%) having firmly accepted an offer to study Foundation, totaling 14 (44%) participants, which provides a reliable indication of how many will enroll to AUB in September 2026.

Application and offer rates for the programme have generally increased over time, with the highest proportions recorded in this cohort, with 56% of participants applying to and receiving undergraduate offers from AUB. Rates of accepting AUB as a firm choice has also improved compared to earlier years, rising from 0% in 2022–23 to 28% accepting firm offers in 2025-26. While enrolment remains relatively low overall, the data suggests a positive upward trend in participants progressing from application through to acceptance and enrolment.

Table 3: All Access AUB undergraduate applications, offers and enrolments.

Year of programme	Applied (%)	Received offer (%)	Accepted offer as firm choice (%)	Enrolled (%)
2022-23	35%	29%	0%	0%
2023-24	50%	44%	16%	16%
2024-25	34%	34%	16%	13%
2025-26	56%	56%	28%	*TBC Oct 26*

Table 4: All Access AUB undergraduate and Foundation applications, offers and enrolments.

Year of programme	Applied (%)	Received offer (%)	Accepted offer as firm choice (%)	Enrolled (%)
2022-23	35%	29%	0%	0%
2023-24	59%	56%	28%	28%
2024-25	44%	44%	25%	22%
2025-26	66%	66%	44%	*TBC Oct 26*

In addition to the above data, it is noteworthy that of the three participants who enrolled onto Foundation in 2025, two (67%) have accepted an undergraduate offer at AUB for 2026 entry.

EVALUATIVE DATA

TOOLS MOBILISED

A mixed methodology approach was taken which included semi-structured interviews with participants and parents/carers, pre and post event surveys and reflective journals where participants were encouraged to respond to questions and prompts freely and creatively, as well as in a more structured manner. Feedback walls were also utilized, as well as a focus group.

SUMMER RESIDENTIAL

The primary purpose of the summer residential was to:

Increase the confidence of All Access AUB participants in their creative abilities and develop their expectations towards progression to Arts University Bournemouth.

There are eight desired outcomes of the summer residential which, for the purposes of this evaluative report, have been divided into three areas:

- Skills and competencies
- Responses to being at AUB and in an HE setting
- Decision making and motivation to progress to HE

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Outcome 1: Participants have conducted a deeper exploration of their artistic passions and interests and wish to pursue those interests in creative higher education.

Outcome 2: Experimentation with new artistic resources, methods and techniques and motivation to continue doing so in creative HE.

Outcome 6: Participants have developed and demonstrated skills such as problem-solving, staying positive and communication through reflecting on their work with peers and academic staff.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Participants described how they were encouraged to try new artistic mediums and techniques that they had not previously explored, e.g. editing with professional grade software, zine creation and life drawing. This often led to the discovery of new interests which was valuable for their personal and artistic growth. For some, they particularly enjoyed the freedom to have fun with art without the pressures of their school environment, which led to a deeper level of exploration, cultivating genuine passion and curiosity. One participant explained that they learned the skill of “experimentation” and not to be “afraid to experiment”.

Others reflected:

> *"I’ve never done life drawing before. It’s something I would have never thought to have done if I hadn’t done it here. So it was actually a really great opportunity and I loved it."*

> *"I’ve done collage before, but the one we did was like a very different style of collage…it’s like shown us ideas of what you can use."*

> *"...what this has shown me is that I'm not actually, like, good at everything, so there's new things I can still try out other than the one thing I'm good at...so there's new things I can try, new ways to explore."*

> *"I'm more interested in photography, but it's really interesting to know about how cameras work and learning how to use Premier Pro while I'm editing."*

Many participants noted significant improvements in their communication skills. Whether it was directing others in a project or simply engaging in conversations with peers and staff, the experience forced them out of their comfort zones. Participants also developed better time management skills, especially in a structured environment with set deadlines. Problem-solving was another area where participants felt they had grown, often in creative or artistic contexts. For those who identified as shy or introverted, the residential was particularly beneficial in helping them engage more confidently with others. For many participants, the residential challenged them to engage more openly with others, which was a significant step outside their comfort zones. Particularly for those who identified as shy or introverted, this experience was transformative in helping them build confidence in social settings.

Furthermore, participants explained that they enjoyed the collaborative nature of the projects, particularly as this often differed to their school and college work. One participant shared that the experience of working with other people, rather than alone, was a very positive and different experience to what they were used to.

Further data from the interviews suggests that the residential was instrumental in developing essential skills among participants, particularly communication and problem-solving. It also reinforced the importance of collaboration and teamwork in the creative arts.

For example, participants shared:

> *"Definitely problem solving. I think when we're making a film, it's a lot of trial an error, like doing a shot and watching it back, and be like – no, that's a problem, readjusting everything, doing it again and again."*

> *"Communicating, definitely, because filming is very exhausting, so having to, like, keep our morale high and like, keep communicating with each other about what we want to do and how we're gonna like, keep going, I guess..."*

PRE AND POST EVENT SURVEYS

When participants were asked on the pre-event survey, on a scale of one to five, to rate how confident they are in four skills, the mode for three out of the four skills (problem solving, communication with others, and staying positive in challenging situations) was four, with presenting your ideas and work being bimodal at three and four. This indicates that, overall, most participants felt confident in all four areas prior to the residential. When asked the same question on the post-event survey, the skills with a mode of four in the pre-event survey, remained at four. The mode for presenting your ideas and work remained bimodal, this time at four and five for the post-event survey. These results indicate that the residential didn't have a significant impact on the development and improvement in skills as most participants were already confident in these areas. Indeed, it may be that participants did develop their skills but weren't aware of the development or were unable to demonstrate it. However, conversely, when asked further questions about their skill development, many participants added in their journals that they thought they had improved their communication skills the most because they felt more confident talking to new people and making friends. Others explained they had improved on their problem solving skills and ability to stay positive as they had overcome frustration in the workshops when learning new practical skills, as well as overcoming anxieties about meeting new people and being in an unfamiliar environment.

Interestingly, some participants reported lower levels of confidence in certain skills at the end of the residential. This may simply be how they were feeling at the time they completed the survey, or it may indicate that participants have truly reflected on their soft skills and have identified areas for development that they weren't previously aware of.

FREE RESPONSES IN THE REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

It was clear from the responses in the reflective journals that students were able to explore their passions and interests and develop a clearer idea of what they enjoy the most and what they don't find as enjoyable. Many students reported that lots of the techniques, such as lino printing and cutting, were new to them, and that they wanted to continue to develop these skills after the residential. All activities delivered in the workshops were mentioned in the reflective journals as skills and techniques that were new to the students and that they enjoyed learning, meaning there was something new and exciting for everyone. This is development from a previous residential where feedback suggested that the workshop activities were too similar to what is studied in college.

Participants on the Film stream also noted they had learnt about a variety of skills and techniques including camera work, editing and editing software, directing and cinematography. Many also mentioned they developed their acting and performance skills.

Participants shared:

> *"Although I don't usually create portraits, I found seeing the development of my portrait and other people's portraits fascinating and awe inspiring."*

> *"Today I experimented with collage and portraiture. I found it interesting as it is a media that I typically haven't worked with before – and I think that the results still turned out great."*

> *"I never thought to use tracing paper to put a design on lino before cutting it out. When I have previously done lino cutting I struggled to get the design right first time when drawing onto it directly with Biro, so the tracing method really helped me."*

There were a few activities some participants reported not enjoying as much, such as life drawing and finding the lino printing and cutting challenging, but those who felt this did appreciate how it had made them stay positive and persevere with a task. This was true for many participants who reflected that they had to stay positive when they found a task challenging or weren't happy with their outcome.

Students commented:

> *"...problem solving and staying positive since my lino print design was hard/detailed and still needs some cutting ... since I had to simplify it a bit in terms of time frame and also the slight mistakes of not cutting it smoothly."*

> *"...staying positive because editing was tiring and a bit boring and repetitive at times."*

Many participants reflected that they would like to continue to develop these skills at university, and understood how they could be applied to their area of interest, for example:

> *"The methods and techniques I would like to continue with are lino printing and collage which I can transfer into Fashion to create my own fabrics and prints.*

An improvement in communication skills and confidence when interacting with new people was frequently mentioned in the journals and many participants were proud of themselves for being out of their comfort zone and meeting new people. For example, one participant wrote:

> *"I am proud with how far I have come with my goals in my first day here alone. I have pushed myself out of my comfort zone to meet new people and become friends with them when I have always found that challenging. This makes me feel very proud of myself."*

Another student explained:

> *"Today I am proud of myself for meeting new people....I enjoyed the socialising time today more than I thought I would....and talking with like-minded people is a great part of this experience that I will never forget."*

RESPONSES TO BEING AT AUB AND IN AN HE SETTING

Outcome 3: A deeper understanding of the experience participants may have studying at AUB.

Outcome 4: Familiarity with AUB and seeing it as a space that participants belong to and feel comfortable in.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Participants were able to gather a tangible sense of what it would be like to study at university, in particular, at AUB. For example, they noted the benefit of AUB's small campus which they found easy to navigate. They also learned about the different lengths of workshops at university, and how studio time could last for three hours, opposed to school or college lessons which tend to be one hour. How AUB supports its students was also mentioned as an area they had learned about, in terms of finances and student services.

However, a consistent theme in the interviews was the desire for more course-specific information, not just the general university experience.

Participants gave feedback such as:

> *"I don't think I learned much about courses."*

> *"I would like to know what career opportunities come from certain courses or just like in general, because I have no idea what I want to do as a job as well."*

Participants consistently expressed feeling comfortable and made to feel welcome at AUB. The fact that the group was small was particularly valued by one participant who had experienced larger residentials with over 100 people and found this to be much more personal and less chaotic. The atmosphere created on the residential facilitated genuine social connections and many participants were pleased to explain that they had made new friends who they would stay in touch with. By fostering this sense of community, the residential was successful in addressing common anxieties felt by students when transitioning to a new environment, making the idea of going to university less intimidating.

Participants shared:

> *"It's cool to be around people that have the same passion, but everyone's different in their own way."*

> *"Meeting other people who are like, similar and are also really passionate about art is really nice, like taking inspiration from everyone and hearing everyone's opinions."*

> *"I surprisingly made, like, loads of friends here!"*

Feedback from the students during the interviews suggests that participants had a positive experience of what it's like to study at AUB and, in making valuable connections with staff and friendships with like-minded peers, see it as a space they belong to and feel comfortable in.

PRE AND POST EVENT SURVEYS

The first question of the pre-event survey was: *'Write down two or three words that describe how you're feeling now you've arrived at AUB'*. The results are summarised in the word cloud below:

Image 1: Word cloud representing responses to the pre-event survey question '*Write down two or three words that describe how you're feeling now you've arrived at AUB.'*

It is clear from this data that many students felt positive feelings of excitement when they arrived at AUB. Other positive emotions shared were '*happy*', '*curious*' and '*ready*'. This indicates that participants felt comfortable at AUB almost immediately. There were also many participants who felt nervous alongside the excitement, however, when compared with emotions reported in the post-event survey, these feelings had subsided and were replaced with feelings of positivity and excitement, for example, participants reported feeling '*fulfilled*', '*motivated*' and '*confident*'. The results of the first question of the post-event survey which was '*Write down two or three words that describe how you're feeling now you're about to go home'* are summarised in the word cloud below:

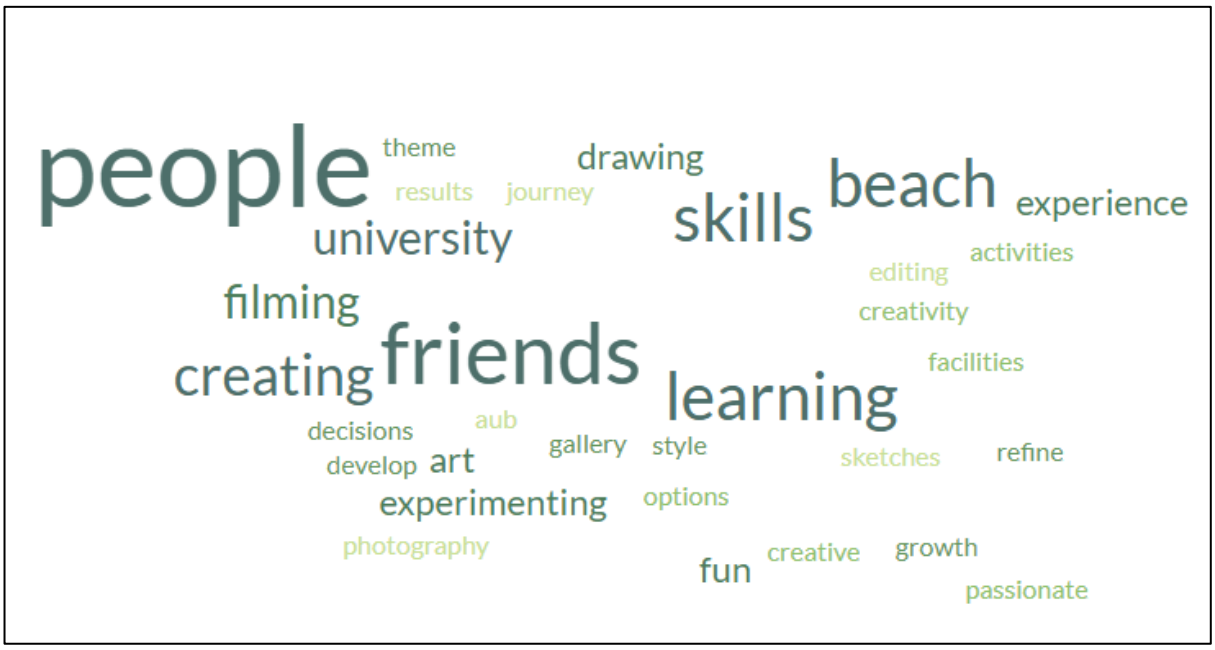
Image 2: Word cloud representing responses to the post-event survey question '*Write down two or three words that describe how you're feeling now you're about to go home.'*

The feelings of sadness reported by many participants are assumed to be due to the residential finishing and them not wanting to leave yet, as they were paired with more positive feelings such as '*excited*', '*happy*" and '*relaxed*'. This was also confirmed by the students themselves explaining this in the reflective journal, where some used the word '*bittersweet*'.

There were participants who reported that they will miss the friends they made suggesting that, not only did they feel comfortable in the space, but that they also felt like they belonged.

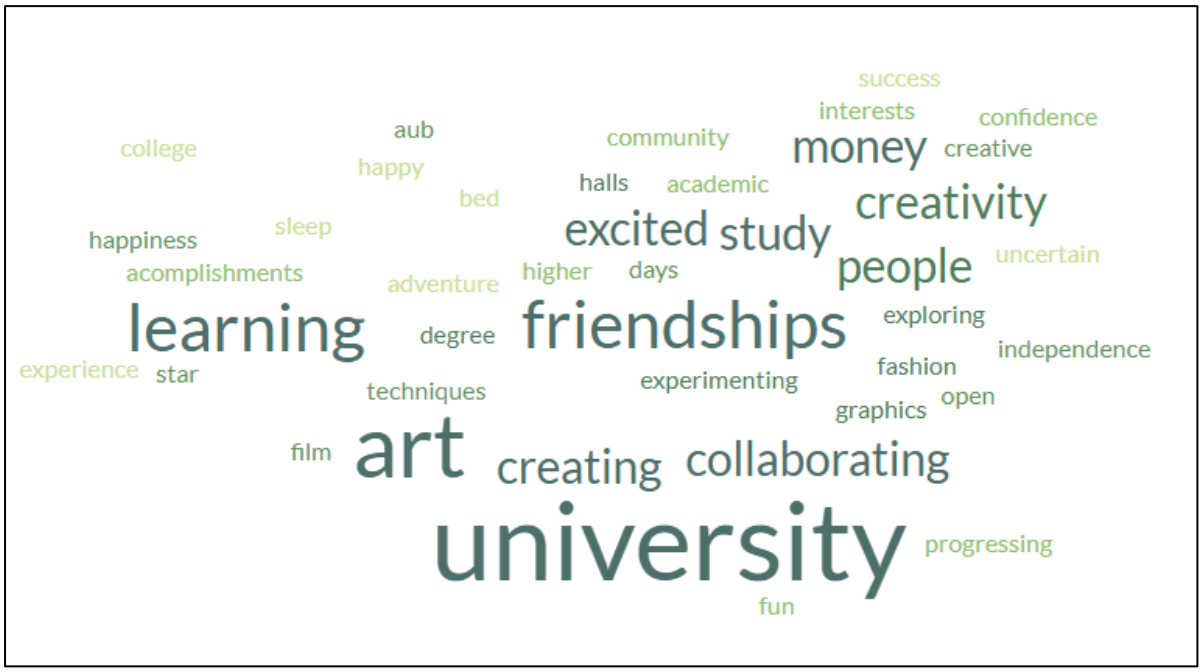
When participants were asked to give two or three words on what they were looking forward to on the residential, responses varied from '*experimenting*', to '*growth, and 'fun'*. The most common responses were related to meeting new people and making new friends, as well as developing and learning new skills. There were also quite a few responses relating specifically to the beach and to making a film. These responses, and many others, such as 'drawing' and 'facilities' indicate that participants know what to expect from the residential and feel prepared and excited for what's to come. A summary of the responses can be found in the word cloud below:

Image 3: Word cloud representing responses to the pre-event survey question '*Write down two or three words that describe what you're looking forward to on the residential.'*



The corresponding question on the post-event survey was: *'Write down two or three words that describe what you're looking forward to now and in the future'*. Responses were varied and generally positive, with most of them relating to university, creating art and learning. There were also many responses relating to people and friendships, indicating that participants have made friends with like-minded people that they intend to stay in touch with. It could also indicate that they feel confident that they will make friends at university, and that they feel like university is 'for them' and 'people like them'.

Image 4: Word cloud representing responses to the post-event survey question '*Write down two or three words that describe what you're looking forward to now and in the future.*



When participants were asked on the pre-event survey, on a scale of one to five, what extent to which they agreed with the statement '*I know what to expect if I study a creative degree at AUB'*, the most common response was three. This increased to four on the post event survey. For the statement, '*I know a lot about AUB already'* the most common response was three on the pre-event survey, rising to four on the post event survey. Both questions indicate that participants' understanding of the experience they may have of studying at AUB was good and had improved over the course of the residential.

When participants were asked on the pre-event survey, on a scale of one to five, what extent to which they agreed with the statement '*I feel happy and comfortable at AUB'*, the most common response was four, increasing to five on the post-event survey. This positively reflects how comfortable participants felt at AUB from the start of the residential, and this only grew after spending more time there. For the statement, '*There are people here who are just like me'*, the most common response was three on the pre-event, increasing to five on the post-event survey. Interestingly, a few participants scored this question lower than their score of the question before ('*I feel happy and comfortable at AUB'*), suggesting that participants don't necessarily need to feel similar to their peers to feel happy and comfortable in an environment. Overall, both questions on the survey indicate that most participants had developed a sense of familiarity with AUB and did see it as a space they felt that they belonged to.

FREE RESPONSES IN THE REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

When participants were asked to respond to questions and prompts relating to how they feel being at AUB, there was overwhelmingly positive feedback with many participants reporting how welcoming, and accepting AUB is, including the staff and the overall environment. Many reported on the first day that they already felt comfortable already and were really pleased to have come. For many participants, this sense of belonging was further solidified by being on the programme with like-minded peers and creatives who all had something in common. Many were excited to have made new friends and also commented on how nice it was to see other people's work and be inspired by it as well.

Participant shared:

> *"I feel incredibly comfortable at AUB, the University helps me to feel safe while I'm here."*

> *"[I can be myself] a very big extent since the people here are always very open to listen and talk about anything and can generate different opinions and ideas."*

> *"They don't care how you look, where you're from or what status (how rich you are), they're all friendly and nice."*

There were many comments relating to developing a deeper understanding of what it would be like to study at AUB, with participants mentioning the facilities, workshops and overall supportive nature of the University. Some participants specifically explained that the residential had taught them lots about what it would actually be like to be a student at AUB.

Reflections included:

> *"AUB encourages experimenting, trying new ideas and being flexible."*

> *"I have learnt that AUB is a place that will help me grow, not only by experimenting with new techniques, but to build up my identity as an artist and individual amongst fellow like-minded students. The facilities that we can use around campus are very handy and useful."*

> *"AUB is a comfortable and cozy place with big opportunities and courses for artists and people that are planning to go down the route of a creative career."*

DECISION MAKING AND MOTIVATION TO PROGRESS TO HE

Outcome 5: Developing relationships between participants and AUB staff where participants feel supported and trusting of the adults they receive information and advice from.

Outcome 7: Confidence in making decisions about education choices.

Outcome 8: Participants feel HE is for them and are motivated to research creative HE further.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Relationships forged with AUB staff, including group leaders, tutors and ambassadors were spoken of very highly by many participants. The feedback given went beyond simple politeness, suggesting that the participants felt a deeper sense of trust due to the staff's approachability and willingness to help the participants and see them succeed.

For example:

> *"The staff were, like, amazing…They really looked after you, so you feel safe and supported."*
>
> *"They're all very welcoming. Very helpful as well. Always, like, to be happy to answer questions…they're interested in you as well. Like, when they make conversation. It's nice to feel like they want to talk to you."*
>
> *"The art teacher had lots of fun stories, and she was very encouraging with the different experiments we were doing. Like, she would come around…and say oh I love this that you're doing. Do you want to try this? So it's just…a nice environment."*

The presence of current AUB students was also highly valued as they provided very helpful insights to AUB and the courses.

The residential had a clear and positive impact on participants' confidence in making decisions about their educational futures and the process of exploration made the creative higher-education landscape feel more accessible.

One of the most important influences of the residential was its ability to replace anxieties about creative HE with a concrete sense of possibility. By offering real

experiences rather than abstract ideas, the residential shifted how participants viewed university life.

Participants reflected:

> *"I think it's helped since we did a lot of different techniques throughout this week. It helps us to, like, figure out what we like and what we don't like and what we want to focus on."*

> *"[I'm] looking forward to going onto university rather than being nervous because I didn't know what to expect. So, it's kind of given me a little slight taste of what it's going to be like, less nerve-wracking."*

The residential also played a part in inspiring participants to take the next steps in their educational journeys. A student who had previously seen a creative career as merely a "dream" described gaining a new sense of purpose and the motivation to "try to pursue it." This growing clarity led them to conclude, "I'd have to do more research," showing a move from passive interest to active exploration. The residential "opened [her] eyes to those new possibilities" and helped her feel equipped to "build the life of your dreams."

Other participants shared:

> *"...I always thought about it, but I never looked into it to much...I think I might research more and see what more opportunities I could do..."*

> *"This project has actually inspired me to want to come here."*

Overall, data from the interviews strongly suggests that the participants developed positive relationships amongst their peers and AUB staff, and really valued the support, advice and guidance given by them. Many participants described feeling more confident in their educational choices and ready and motivated to further research HE and AUB.

PRE AND POST EVENT SURVEYS

When participants were asked at the beginning of the residential to write down two or three words that came to mind when they think about studying a creative degree, there were many different responses, reflecting a variety of views and feelings towards creative HE. Many responses indicated that participants were sure that a creative degree was for them, and they felt confident in this decision, e.g. 'enjoyment',

'free/freedom', 'excited' and 'determined'. Some, however, reflected participants' uncertainty around university, e.g. 'scared', apprehensive', 'unsure' and 'competitive'. Many used the word 'collaborative', which implies they have researched what creative HE is like and already understand the collaborative nature of studying a creative degree, at AUB in particular.

Image 5: Word cloud representing responses to the pre-event survey question '*Write down two or three words that come to mind when you think about studying a creative degree at university.'*

The same question was asked at the end of the residential. The vast majority of responses were positive, suggesting participants had made a decision that creative HE was something they were going to pursue, or at least, research further. Many responses were more specific than in the pre event survey where more general positive statements were given. For example, in the post event survey, responses such as 'collaborative', 'workshops', and 'expression' were given, suggesting the residential had provided them with crucial time to research and reflect on the benefits of creative HE, and in turn, the participants were beginning to make decisions about their futures.

Image 6: Word cloud representing responses to the post-event survey question '*Write down two or three words that come to mind when you think about studying a creative degree at university.'*

FREE RESPONSES IN THE REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Many participants noted and praised the support provided by AUB staff and the positive relationships they had developed with them, suggesting they also trust the information they received from them.

Participants shared:

> *"...the staff and students are so friendly and approachable...love everyone here!"*
>
> *"All the group leaders have been extremely kind and friendly which has encouraged me to open up and be myself."*
>
> *"I am grateful to see that the teachers and staff here really care about us and are always happy to help us with anything."*

When asked to reflect on their next steps and if the residential had affected their choices and decisions, there was a mixed response. Some participants expressed their keenness and determination to go to university and AUB in particular, whereas others shared that the experience hadn't influenced their decision making about HE because

they wanted to go to university before the residential and still do. Some reflected that they weren't sure what course/s they wanted to pursue, and that they were considering a Foundation course to continue to explore their creative passions.

Participants shared reflections such as:

> *"I feel much more confident to continue pursuing art at future education because I did not take A Levels so was still unsure. However, after my visit I feel certain I would love to follow my creative passions."*
>
> *"(All Access AUB) has made me even more sure that I want to study a creative degree."*
>
> *"In the future I want to go into the fashion industry by studying Fashion at university. After the last 3 days my perspective of AUB has become even better and I would love to study here...it has reinforced Fashion is the best course suited for me and my interests."*
>
> *"In the future I would like to come here and study Creative Writing. This is my first choice. The summer residential hasn't changed my mind about anything but I think that is was very interesting and I learned a lot more about the university."*

Overall, most participants felt confident coming out of the experience that HE was or could be for them and were motivated to continue to research HE, in particular, which courses were best for them.

1-1 PORTFOLIO SUPPORT SESSIONS

The primary purpose of the 1-1 portfolio support sessions was to:

Build confidence in the ability of All Access AUB participants to submit a portfolio that is of sufficient quality to facilitate a successful application to creative Higher Education.

There are three desired outcomes of the 1-1 portfolio support sessions:

Outcome 1: Participants have an increased level of confidence in the quality of the work which makes up their portfolio.

Outcome 2: Participants have confidently identified suitable pieces of work for inclusion in their portfolio.

Outcome 3: An increased confidence in participants' ability to create a portfolio which meets the requirements for successful entry to creative HE.

PRE AND POST EVENT SURVEYS

63% of participants had at least one portfolio support session. 14 participants completed the pre-event survey, while seven completed the post-event survey.

Outcome 1: Participants have an increased level of confidence in the quality of the work which makes up their portfolio.

When participants were asked the question in the pre-event survey: '*How confident are you about the quality of work that makes up your portfolio?'* 50% replied *slightly confident*, with 7.1% reporting they felt *very confident*. No one reported that they felt *quite confident*. When the same question was asked in the post-event survey, 85.7% replied that they felt *confident* or *very confident*. This suggests that, for those who completed the surveys, the 1-1 portfolio support sessions achieved the outcome of increasing participants' confidence in the quality of work that made up their portfolio.

Outcome 2: Participants have confidently identified suitable pieces of work for inclusion in their portfolio.

When participants were asked the question in the pre-event survey: '*How confident are you about selecting suitable pieces of work to be included in your portfolio?'* 21.4% reported that they felt *quite confident*, compared to 71.5% in the post-event survey who reported that they felt either *quite confident* or *very confident*. When participants were asked the question in the pre-event survey: '*How knowledgeable are you about how many pieces of work need to be included in your portfolio?'* again, 21.4% reported that they felt *quite knowledgeable*, compared to 100% in the post event survey reporting they felt *quite confident* or *very confident*.

As such, these findings indicate that the 1-1 portfolio support sessions enabled participants to confidently identify suitable pieces of work for inclusion in their portfolio.

Outcome 3: An increased confidence in participants' ability to create a portfolio which meets the requirements for successful entry to creative HE.

When participants were asked the question on the pre-event survey: '*How knowledgeable are you about what a strong portfolio for application to a creative course looks like'*, 21.4% reported they were *quite knowledgeable* compared to 85.7% of participants reporting that they felt *quite or very knowledgeable* about this in the post-event survey.

When participants were asked the question on the pre-event survey: '*How confident are you about your ability to create a portfolio which meets the requirements for successful entry to a creative course at university',* only 7.1% replied that they were *quite confident* compared to 85.8% in the post-event survey who reported they were *quite confident* or *very confident*.

When asked, '*In your own words, what have you gained from your 1-1 portfolio support sessions?", participants* reported positive outcomes such as:

> *"Clearer understanding of how to present my work, of what to include (both work and annotation wise). More confidence in my application."*
>
> *"Helped my confidence with work that I was unsure whether or not to include and gave me ideas of things to add in. To begin with I wasn't sure I was going along the right lines with my portfolio, but the sessions made me feel a lot better about the entire process and made it less intimidating."*
>
> *"I now know to include more pieces in my portfolio that show the theory behind textiles. Including experiments with samples of fabric and trends research in colour and pattern. My portfolio should not just include the final product but the experimentation and research that went into this."*

As such, these findings suggest that the 1-1 portfolio support sessions increased participants' confidence in their ability to create a portfolio which meets the requirements for successful entry to creative HE.

When asked, "*Do you have any recommendations for how we can improve the 1-1 portfolio support sessions for future students?",* participants replied:

> *"Maybe make them longer or have more of them."*

> *"I only attended one of the portfolio sessions. It would've been nice to have a bit more guidance on how to structure my portfolio and feedback on my own portfolio in progress. However I am aware that this is difficult given the small time frame and am appreciative of the advice I received."*

> *"Perhaps have an exemplar portfolio that during 1-1 portfolio support sessions, the teachers can use as an example for guidance."*

Whilst there is clear evidence from the data collected that the 1-1 portfolio support sessions achieved all three outcomes, it is important to acknowledge that only seven participants completed the post-event survey, where 14 completed the pre-event survey. Therefore, this data should be approached with caution due to small and inconsistent sample sizes. There are also useful points of feedback to continually improve the sessions.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews of parents, carers and supporters were conducted during the celebration event. These interviews explored the extent to which the 1-1 portfolio support sessions helped participants feel more confident in preparing and organising their work. Parents and carers were invited to reflect on any barriers to engagement with portfolio support, as well as provide wider feedback and suggestions for improving the programme.

Overall, conversations around the portfolio support sessions and their impact were very positive, and interviewees gave feedback such as:

> *"She had a much clearer idea of what would be expected. So, I think that's really valuable support."*

> *"Doing it has given her confidence."*

> *"Applications to somewhere like this to do an art-based degree... we don't know anything about [it], so yeah, that's fantastic."*

Many felt that these sessions helped students gain a clearer understanding of what was expected within their applications and provided useful structure during what can often feel like an overwhelming process. The opportunity to receive professional insight and tailored feedback was seen as especially beneficial, with several parents noting that

the support helped increase students' confidence in preparing and submitting their portfolios. Overall, portfolio support was viewed as a significant strength of the programme and an important factor in helping students feel more prepared for progression opportunities.

Despite this positive feedback, parents and carers also identified several areas where portfolio support and engagement could be strengthened further. Some students continued to feel uncertain about the quality of their work even after attending sessions, suggesting that confidence-building remains an ongoing need. There was also recognition that not all students fully engaged with the follow-up opportunities available to them, with some either missing additional sessions or leaving their work until the last minute. Parents suggested that clearer communication and more regular reminders about available support sessions could help improve participation. It was also felt that students may benefit from reassurance that they do not need to have fully completed work in order to attend support sessions, as this may currently discourage some from seeking help earlier in the process. Encouraging more regular check-ins and multiple touchpoints throughout the application period was also recommended as a way to maintain engagement, reduce last-minute stress, and build student confidence over time.

Parents/carers commented:

> *"He wasn't 100% confident…he was a bit unsure. I think [name] has left it to the last minute. He didn't take up the 2nd session or send it over to Jamie to have [feedback], even though he did offer."*

> *"Maybe just a reminder and say, you know, it's okay to book in a session still. Even if it's not ready, come along."*

In conclusion, there is much evidence that the outcomes from the portfolio support sessions have been met for the participants that took part, with positive feedback coming from both the surveys completed by the participants and the interview data from the parents, carers and supporters. However, engagement, in particular with the second session offered, remains lower than we would like, and work continues to encourage participants to sign up to and fully engage with both portfolio support sessions offered.

EXHIBITION AND CELEBRATION EVENT

The primary purpose of the exhibition and celebration event was to:

Develop relationships with All Access AUB participants' wider social network, including parents and supporters. Continue to develop the confidence of participants in their ability to frame study at AUB strongly within their horizons for action (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997).

There are four desired outcomes of the exhibition and celebration:

Outcome 1: Participants have seen their work physically represented in a professionally curated exhibition.

Outcome 2: Participants have increased feelings of familiarity with the University, its buildings and the staff involved in All Access AUB.

Outcome 3: Parents, carers and supporters have an increased knowledge of the University and awareness of the careers and opportunities in the creative industries.

Outcome 4: Parents, carers and supporters feel more confident in supporting participants in making an application to creative HE.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three parents/carers/supporters of the participants, who were asked about participants' experiences of the All Access AUB programme, including how they had benefitted from taking part. Questions explored the impact of attending the celebration event and exhibition, including how it felt to see participants' work displayed and whether this had influenced confidence, pride, or future aspirations. Interviewees were also asked about participants' next steps after school or college, their views on creative higher education, and their confidence in supporting applications to creative degree programmes.

Outcome 1: Participants have seen their work physically represented in a professionally curated exhibition

By attending the exhibition and celebration event, participants saw their work physically

represented in a professionally curated exhibition. If participants and parents/supporters did not attend the celebration event and exhibition in person, they have had the opportunity to see their work in the online, digital exhibition.

Parents and carers consistently described the celebration event and exhibition as meaningful and affirming experiences for participants and their families. Seeing work presented within a professional university environment appeared to contribute to feelings of pride, validation, and confidence. Parents and carers spoke about participants feeling proud of their achievements and becoming more confident in expressing themselves creatively and socially.

Families reflected positively on the quality of the work produced and the value of seeing creative outcomes displayed publicly. The exhibition enabled parents and carers to recognise both the creative achievements and the personal development of participants. For many, the event reinforced participants' identities as creative practitioners and helped families appreciate the level of skill and commitment involved in the work.

Positive feedback from parents, carers and supporters included:

> *"You see the learning they've done, and they should be singing and shouting about it."*
>
> *"I can see how impactful it would be if you had your pieces of artwork framed as part of an exhibition."*
>
> *"He's proud of himself."*

Some nuanced feedback emerged regarding differences in how disciplines translated into an exhibition format. In particular, one parent reflected that film work may feel slightly less impactful in a gallery setting compared with physically displayed artwork, as films are often already viewed digitally outside of the exhibition context.

Outcome 2: Participants have increased feelings of familiarity with the University, its buildings and the staff involved in All Access AUB

There was very strong evidence that the programme increased participants' familiarity and comfort with the university environment, staff, and wider community. Across all interviews, parents and carers described participants feeling welcomed, recognised,

and comfortable within the university setting.

Families repeatedly referred to the warm and supportive atmosphere created by staff and the sense of belonging participants developed through repeated engagement with the university. Being recognised by staff members and becoming familiar with the campus environment appeared to significantly reduce anxiety around higher education and helped participants envision themselves studying at university in the future.
For some participants, this familiarity was described as transformative, particularly for those who had previously struggled with confidence or uncertainty around their educational direction. The programme appeared to create a sense of safety and community that supported both personal development and future aspirations.

Parents and carers reported:

> *"Everyone's so friendly and welcoming. Someone was saying hello to him as soon as he walked in."*

> *"Everybody knows him. What an incredible position to be starting university life already feeling comfortable in your own skin. It's taken that fear away from coming to university."*

> *"Seeing her being at home in this kind of environment is nice. It's like a family here."*

Outcome 3: Parents, carers and supporters have an increased knowledge of the University and awareness of the careers and opportunities in the creative industries

The interviews demonstrated strong evidence that parents and carers increased both their understanding of the university and their awareness of opportunities within creative education and careers.

Several families reflected that, prior to engaging with the programme, they had limited knowledge of how creative higher education applications worked or what studying a creative degree involved. Through their young person attending the residential and themselves attending the exhibition and celebration event, parents and carers gained a greater understanding of both the application process and the value of creative education.

The programme also appeared effective in challenging misconceptions around creative careers and employability. Families described becoming more aware of the transferable skills associated with creative study, including communication, teamwork, and confidence-building. For some, attending the exhibition shifted previously sceptical attitudes towards creative degrees and helped demonstrate the legitimacy and value of creative career pathways.

Parents, carers and supporters shared:

> *"We don't know anything about applying to somewhere like this to do an art-based degree…it gave us a much clearer idea of what would be expected."*

> *"It's nice for them to see the employability side of it…working in a creative degree gives you teamwork and communication skills."*

> *"Now they're raving about it, saying, 'yeah, this is great'. This changed his pathway completely."*

Outcome 4: Parents, carers and supporters feel more confident in supporting participants in making an application to creative HE.

This outcome was evidenced through discussions about portfolio support sessions and increased understanding of creative higher education applications. Parents and carers frequently described feeling better informed and more able to support their young person through what can often feel like a complex and unfamiliar process.

Portfolio support was viewed as one of the strongest aspects of the programme. Families valued the practical guidance provided around portfolio expectations, organisation, and application requirements. The support appeared to increase confidence not only for participants, but also for parents and carers supporting them through the process.

Evidence of parents and carers' wider confidence in supporting participants in making an application to creative HE beyond portfolio preparation is limited. However, it may be implied from their increased knowledge of AUB and awareness of the opportunities in the creative industries.

FEEDBACK WALL

A feedback wall was created at the celebration event as an additional method of gathering data from participants and their parents, carers and supporters. It was set up next to the exhibition, and respondents could visit the feedback wall and add comments when convenient. Respondents were asked to use Post-its to record any comments, feedback or reflections (both positive and opportunities for improvement) in the following areas: the portfolio support sessions, the exhibition and celebration event, and the programme overall (e.g. it's impact, how it's supported progression to HE, general organisation).

Much positive feedback was received with comments including:

> *"The course was a real turning point for them, gave them such confidence and excitement, that they can find like minded people and make 'art' a lifelong choice. Thank you X"*
>
> *"AAAUB really helped my child decide to take a massive step and supported her really well. Thank you!"*
>
> *"You are amazing! You have really changed our boy's life. He is now so confident and so much more HIM."*
>
> *"Thank you so much for a lovely day. We have now lots of info about AUB."*
>
> *"This programme really helped me step out my comfort zone – friends and try new art mediums. Thank you."*

It is difficult to draw conclusions from the limited data gathered from the feedback wall, especially given that the participants, parents/carers and supporters who attended the celebration event were likely to already have positive views of the programme. However, the overwhelmingly positive comments shared do suggest that the programme is effective and impactful in developing participants' ability to frame HE study, and study at AUB, within their horizons for action.

In conclusion, there is much evidence to suggest that all four outcomes were either met or partially met. A particular strength of the celebration event is the attendance of parents, carers and supporters and their engagement with the AUB community. This is a success of the programme and we continue to build on this year on year.

TRANSITION TO CREATIVE TO HE DAY

The primary purpose of the transition to creative HE day event was to:

Provide All Access AUB participants with experiences and information for them to develop the necessary skills for a successful transition into creative Higher Education and life as an undergraduate student.

There are three desired outcomes of the transition to creative HE day:

Outcome 1: Participants understand the expectations of them in relation to their first year at AUB as an undergraduate student.

Outcome 2: Participants are familiar with the additional academic and pastoral support offered by AUB and are confident they would know who to speak to if they wanted to access it.

Outcome 3: Participants are aware of the extra-curricular opportunities offered at AUB and understand how engagement in opportunities supports their personal and professional development.

FOCUS GROUP

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a small group of two All Access AUB students who attended the Transition to Creative HE Day. Feedback about the day was overall very positive, with some helpful ideas for additions to the day also suggested.

Outcome 1: Participants understand the expectations of them in relation to their first year at AUB as an undergraduate student.

Participants reported that the Transition to Creative HE Day helped clarify expectations around university study and student responsibilities at AUB. While both participants indicated they already had some prior understanding of university life, the session helped reinforce and deepen this knowledge by providing more detailed and structured information.

Participants particularly valued the opportunity to speak directly with course leaders and staff, which helped make expectations feel clearer and more accessible. The breakdown of information throughout the day was also described as helpful in consolidating existing understanding and filling in gaps in knowledge.

One participant reflected that the day acted as “icing on the cake,” reinforcing an already positive perception of studying at AUB, while another explained that the experience had strengthened their confidence in their course choice after previously having some doubts.

Participants shared:

> *“I’ve also learned more stuff and even the stuff I knew before, I think I learned more in detail now.”*
>
> *“It’s good to get some additional information in case you didn’t know something.”*
>
> *“It’s made me more passionate about my actual course because I was having some doubts before.”*

Outcome 2: Participants are familiar with the additional academic and pastoral support offered by AUB and are confident they would know who to speak to if they wanted to access it.

Participants demonstrated awareness of several support services introduced during the day and expressed strong confidence in their approachability and accessibility.

Participants specifically referenced learning about Student Services and the Student Union with one participant noting that they had previously underestimated the role of the Student Union but now understood that support was available for a wide range of issues, including societies and mental health concerns.

Importantly, participants consistently described staff and support services as approachable and welcoming. Although one participant struggled to remember the names of specific services, this did not appear to affect their confidence in seeking support if needed.

Outcome 3: Participants are aware of the extra-curricular opportunities offered at AUB and understand how engagement in opportunities supports their personal and professional development.

Participants demonstrated awareness of extracurricular opportunities at AUB, particularly societies and Student Union activities, and recognised the potential personal and social benefits of engaging with them.

One participant reflected positively on the range of societies available, describing them as opportunities to "*broaden my horizon and understand more about things generally.*" Another participant emphasised the social value of extracurricular activities, particularly in helping students build friendships and community connections.

While participants were generally clearer about the personal and social benefits of extracurricular engagement than the professional benefits, there was still evidence of understanding around transferable skills and wider personal development.

The Student Union appeared particularly effective in communicating extracurricular opportunities and encouraging engagement.

Additionally, participants expressed enthusiasm for continuing engagement with the university beyond the session itself, with one participant stating:

> *"I just like the university in general. It's a nice place to be. If there was anything else after this, I'd come to that as well."*

Overall, the evidence suggests participants left with a good awareness of extracurricular opportunities and a clear understanding of their role in supporting social integration, confidence, and broader personal development. Understanding of direct professional development benefits was present but less strongly articulated.

These comments suggest that overall, the Transition to Creative HE day was a very positive experience for the participants, and all the outcomes were met. It gave them confidence in and reassurance about coming to study at AUB and equipped them with the necessary knowledge and understanding to make a smooth transition from school/college into creative HE at AUB.

While feedback on the Transition to Creative HE Day was overwhelmingly positive, several areas for improvement were identified. Some participants found it difficult to remember the names and details of the support services discussed, suggesting that clearer takeaway materials or follow-up communication could help reinforce key information. Although extracurricular opportunities were viewed positively for their

social benefits, participants were less clear about how involvement could support professional development and employability, indicating that these links could be communicated more explicitly.

Participants also highlighted practical barriers affecting attendance, including mock exams and competing commitments, suggesting that timing may need consideration in future planning. Finally, some participants expressed interest in additional opportunities to stay connected with the university beyond the event, indicating value in continued engagement and transition support after the programme concludes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the programme met its intended aims and outcomes to a large extent, however there are a few changes that could be made to increase its value and effectiveness:

- **Strengthen outreach to underrepresented groups with lower participation rates.** While all participants met widening participation criteria, some target groups (such as care-experienced and estranged young people) remain underrepresented. Develop targeted partnerships and recruitment strategies to increase engagement from these groups.

- **Increase engagement with portfolio support sessions.** Given the significant impact of portfolio support on confidence and application readiness, implement additional reminders, flexible appointment options, and clearer messaging that students can attend with incomplete work.

- **Provide more course-specific and career-focused information.** Participants valued learning about university life but requested more information about individual courses, career pathways, and graduate destinations. Embedding course-specific sessions and careers-focused content within the residential could help students make more informed decisions.

- **Develop a structured alumni and peer mentoring network.** Participants reported strong benefits from connecting with current students and like-minded peers. Creating opportunities for alumni and current AUB students to mentor future cohorts could further strengthen confidence, belonging, and progression outcomes.

- **Enhance progression support between programme stages.** Maintain engagement beyond the residential through regular check-ins and online resources to sustain momentum and support participants throughout their decision-making and application journeys.

- **Improve attendance at the Transition to Creative HE Day.** Attendance remains low despite positive feedback from attendees. Review the timing of the event to avoid clashes with examinations and other commitments and consider offering hybrid or online alternatives to increase accessibility.

- **Strengthen communication around employability and professional development.** Participants and families gained confidence in creative higher education, but there is scope to further demonstrate the links between creative study, transferable skills, graduate outcomes, and career opportunities within the creative industries.

- **Continue investing in activities that foster belonging and confidence.** The programme's strongest outcomes relate to increased confidence, reduced anxiety, and a sense of belonging at AUB. Future programme development should continue prioritising small-group experiences, peer connection, staff interaction, and opportunities for creative collaboration.

- **Improve evaluation and feedback collection methods.** Low and inconsistent survey response rates, particularly for portfolio support sessions and transition activities, limit the robustness of some findings. Consider introducing simplified evaluation processes, incentives, or embedded feedback collection to improve participation and strengthen future impact measurement.

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