

## **AUCB Learning and Teaching Strategy 2011-2016**

### **Introduction**

The Arts University College at Bournemouth (AUCB) is a higher education institution dedicated to education, research, knowledge transfer, and professional development in art, design, media and performance. We provide a professional environment for our students and staff to study, research, and practice to the highest standards. We support students and staff in their creative experimentation and risk taking, and are dedicated to the enhancement of learning and teaching. Our graduates are highly employable, with professionally valued skills, specialist knowledge and a critical understanding of professional practice.

We will continue to build on our strengths as a specialist institution that provides dynamic learning, teaching, and research opportunities within a vibrant sustaining, and sustainable, environment that enables our community to realise its creative potential. We are committed to evolving and redefining creative practice and to enhancing the prospects of our students as innovators and leaders within the creative industries.

### **Context**

This strategy comes into force at a time of significant change in the higher education (HE) and national and international social, political, and economic contexts. The current government has shifted to an explicit marketisation of higher education, and political ideologies are transparent in the focus on the student as a 'consumer', rather than as a 'student'. The repercussions of such an approach are untested, and all universities will be challenged. During its 5-year cycle, this strategy cannot anticipate precisely how our university college will change. However, we will continue to be focused on the student experience, and will be proactive, responsive, and creative, remaining committed to our values in the education of our students and the professional development of both our students and staff.

### **Values and Vision**

The Learning and Teaching Strategy relates directly to the AUCB Strategic Plan 2011-2016, which makes clear our vision to be an international leader in the subjects we offer. The Strategic Plan articulates the values central to the specialist education we deliver:

- Community
- Creativity
- Excellence
- Specialism
- Complementarity
- Enterprise
- Professionalism
- Innovation
- Employability

These values inform and drive the AUCB's aspiration towards enhancing the provision of an exceptional academic and professional experience, reflecting a community committed to and passionate about its subject areas. We encourage curiosity, exploration, and risk taking. We also support a critical engagement with our disciplines and their creative practices and 'industries'; this strategy aspires to enable our students and staff to evolve approaches and positions which question the ways we educate and the ways our professions practice.

We enable and empower students to be competent and confident self-directed reflective learners. We aim to provide appropriate opportunities and experiences for students to pursue and secure their aspirations, sustainable employment and lifelong learning as creative and dynamic practitioners. We seek to maintain, and further evolve, processes, resources, and spaces which nurture and advance high quality learning and teaching experiences, research, scholarship and professional development.

We value learning as a journey: our curricula and methods of delivery are mapped out, with a course plotted and a destination in sight, whilst at the same time, each of us finds our own path, recognising existing signposts as well as marking new directions. As we journey, our community exercises our right to academic freedom: "... to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions" (from: Section 202(2) of the Education Reform Act 1988).

Though we share institutional frameworks and processes, our community is heterogeneous; it is through an appreciation of differences and commonalities that we construct knowledge and promote depth of understanding and awareness. These differences and commonalities are embodied in our practice of *complementarity*: students and tutors from different disciplines collaborating on producing works, and critiquing and evolving their own practices through others' methodologies and epistemological frames. This is a partnership model of education in which independent and highly skilled students and tutors co-create learning experiences.

### **Aims and Scope of Strategy**

A core strategic objective for the 2011-16 period is for the AUCB *to be at the forefront of innovative practice in learning and teaching, aiming to build upon our dynamic learning experiences and distinctive learning environments*. This strategy will enable a planned and coherent approach to fulfilling this objective, through which we will develop and enhance our learning and teaching. The design and delivery of learning and teaching will continue to be advanced by pedagogy, research and scholarship, and be supported by the effective and innovative use of resources.

As this strategy sets out intentions for our academic directions and development, it seeks to build upon existing cross-faculty and local initiatives which already "... demonstrate the progression from quality assurance to quality enhancement." (QAA Institutional Audit Report 2011), and the Quality Assurance Agency Code of Practice informs this strategy. We adopt the QAA's definition of enhancement: 'taking deliberate steps to bring about continuous improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students', and the strategy's objectives aspire to embed such enhancement in our learning and teaching, with actions monitored through the Learning and Teaching Committee.

The Learning and Teaching Strategy is designed to accommodate AUCB's developments in relation to national initiatives and benchmarks. AUCB makes extensive reference to external benchmarks; primary amongst these are the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), the reference points in the HE Quality Code, and the relevant Subject Benchmarks Statements. These are referenced in the design and approval of all courses.

### **AUCB Strategic Plan 2011-2016**

The Learning and Teaching Strategy has been conceived and developed to align with, and support, the AUCB Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan's key objective relating to learning and teaching is:

*We will be at the forefront of innovative practice in learning and teaching, enhancing excellence through distinctive learning environments and inspirational delivery methods that give our graduates high levels of skills, specialist knowledge and a critical understanding of professional practice.*

We set out in the Strategic Plan to achieve this by:

- *challenging subject knowledge and understanding*  
through the integration of scholarship, research, practice and enterprise with learning and teaching
- *promoting complementary and interdisciplinary practices*

to support collaborative learning and new subject opportunities

- *stimulating creative interaction between studio-based learning and digital practices*
- *integrating entrepreneurial activities within curricula*  
promoting risk-taking and innovation
- *building industry partnerships in support of employability*
- *developing our curricula through partnerships with industry,*  
ensuring the currency of our courses and supporting the employability of our students

Throughout this strategy, these Learning and Teaching objectives are applied to the other focal areas presented in the AUCB Strategic Plan:

- The student experience
- Progression to employment
- Research and knowledge transfer
- Widening participation and equality of opportunity
- Internationalism

### **Supporting the Strategy**

The Learning and Teaching Strategy relates directly to the following specific strategic documents which also articulate AUCB's aims and priorities consistent with its strategic objectives: Research Strategy, Enterprise and Knowledge Transfer Strategy, Widening Participation Strategy, IT Strategy, Environment Strategy, Human Resources Strategy, Single Equalities Scheme and the Library Development Plan.

This strategy is also coming into force with concurrent work on, and ratification of, the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Regulatory Frameworks. These frameworks will support the Learning and Teaching Strategy in many ways. Student choice will be enhanced through the potential for faculties to set up an elective structure, either within a school or the faculty, or involving all participating courses at the University College.

### **The UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)**

The University College has a strategic commitment to excellence in learning and teaching and the professional development of its staff. We support this commitment in various ways, including through our engagement with the UK Professional Standards Framework. The UKPSF describes the professional values and core knowledge needed for those engaged in the delivery of learning and teaching and supporting student learning in Higher Education.

We will embed the Framework in our mechanisms of staff development (e.g., peer observations, the Staff Performance Review process) and support staff in their attainment of formal recognition by the Higher Education Academy.

### **The Role of the AUCB National Teaching Fellow**

The National Teaching Fellow contributes significantly to Learning and Teaching at AUCB. The NTF designs, organises, promotes, and supports activities which are key in carrying out our learning and teaching strategy. The NTF works with colleagues to advance AUCB 's pedagogic research and scholarship, providing

information, guidance and mentor support to colleagues who are selected by the Learning and Teaching Committee and Academic Board to pursue NTF application.

**Implementation, Review, and Monitoring**

This Learning and Teaching Strategy sets out broad aims and objectives with which, at 'local' levels, academic course teams, support staff, and students will engage in order to enhance learning and teaching, putting into operation the stated objectives in innovative and creative ways.

Whilst the AUCB community will be establishing detailed actions at local levels to operationalise the strategy, its implementation will be overseen by LTC, which will also be tasked with monitoring and assessing its impact.

### **The Objectives**

The objectives that follow are aspirational *and* achievable. They are organised around the AUCB's main strategic objectives (AUCB Strategic Plan 2011-2016), and support the institution's evolution. Although it is upon Faculties, Schools, and courses to implement these objectives at local levels, this strategy does set out some priorities and actions for the upcoming two years; these are boxed and in red below.

## Student Experience

AUCB is committed to placing the quality of the student experience at the forefront of its academic and scholarly activities. Learning and teaching is informed by a vibrant and forward facing ethos that encourages risk taking, collaborative and interdisciplinary working practice. The campus and University College infrastructure is designed to enable innovative teaching practice and student interaction within a wide range of creative learning environments, encouraging students to question the boundaries of individual disciplines. The employability of students informs curricula through the embedding of industry relevant entrepreneurial activity.

We will build on this by:

- encouraging staff to develop research, practice and enterprise in partnership with students in order to discover and develop new subject knowledge

• encouraging sustainable, ethical and responsible practice that contributes to the cultural, economic and social resources of our local and global communities.

- facilitating live briefs and projects inspired by industry experiences, encouraging problem-based models of learning.

- integrating the specialist resources of the University College, including MoDiP, text +work, and The Gallery, into our courses in order to enhance teaching, learning and research.

• ensuring that all students have opportunities to participate in collaborative learning, promoting the complementarity of our courses by developing interdisciplinary methodologies and practices.

• engaging students in the development of new teaching and learning spaces and methods, including digital applications.

• focusing on how student entrepreneurial activity can be used to inform and improve learning and teaching, thereby directly enabling students to contribute to the quality of the AUCB educational experience.

- initiating proactive learning and networking activities which will enhance the student experience and develop valuable industry links between the University College and its alumni.

## **Progression to Employment**

Enterprise and employability are defining features of AUCB's portfolio and we aim to ensure that every graduate of the AUCB has a qualification which would enable them to practice as a professional in the creative industries. The learning experiences provided by the University College equip students with the subject skills, knowledge and understanding of their chosen discipline and the potential to place them at the forefront of that discipline as innovators in their practice. Awareness of the social, political and cultural context of their practice is pivotal to their employability in the creative industries. The success of our graduates is indicative of the degree to which their learning experience reflects this awareness and the values of complementary processes and practices.

We will build on this by:

- ensuring that our learning and teaching is informed by current industry practice, and encouraging students to explore new potential routes to employment and entrepreneurship.

- promoting co-operative learning and collaboration with students learning from, and contributing to, the learning of others through work-based opportunities.

- enabling students to augment their core skills and develop wider complementary skills towards building an appreciation of continued, lifelong learning and better employment potential through an expanded short course offer.

- providing opportunities for shared units and projects informed by industry specifications and based around Live Briefs and competition entries to prepare students for progression to employment.

- enabling students to identify how studio based and digital learning can promote their employability.
- enabling the integration of entrepreneurial activities with academic study, recognising and promoting commercial success.
- developing a national and international exhibition presence to promote the entrepreneurial activities of our students.
- ensuring the continued presence, on teaching teams, of professionals whose contribution to the curricula provides industry insight and currency in practice.

- ensure that as much of our course provision as possible achieves recognition and accreditation, where appropriate, by the relevant professional bodies and industrial agencies such as Skillset.

## Research and knowledge transfer

AUCB's research, scholarship, and knowledge transfer activities operate in a complementary fashion, with each influencing and informing the other. Our range of 'pure' and applied research, including practice-based and practice-led methodologies, combines with our entrepreneurial projects in knowledge transfer to produce rich works that produce more than the sum of their parts. Their combined outcomes, as well as their independent trajectories, influence our learning and teaching practices and promote AUCB's focus on applied pedagogical research. Engaging our students, through their learning, in staff research and knowledge transfer activities reflects the co-creation of our 'community of practice'.

We will build on this by:

- ensuring that research and knowledge transfer is promoted and effectively contributes to, and celebrates, the development of innovative curricula and entrepreneurial activities.
- promoting the participation of our postgraduate Taught and postgraduate Research students in our teaching and learning to support and evolve our partnership model of education and foster an environment of collaborative research.

• extending our interdisciplinary and complementary practices, developing new spaces and opportunities to ensure that new and evolving models of industry practice are promoted through our subject offer.

• establishing mechanisms to capture pedagogical research, developing on-line platforms for communicating studio-based teaching and learning which promote new forms of practice to other HEIs and industry partners.

• promoting the entrepreneurial potential of research activities and outputs by encouraging a research and knowledge transfer culture which values cross-fertilisation and risk taking.

- encouraging the application of research and knowledge transfer to local, national and international communities, recognising the need for social, economic, cultural and environmental sustainability.
- pursuing and instigating opportunities for enterprise projects and developing practice-based PhDs that draw upon industry support and sponsorship.
- utilising our relationships with industry to test forms of professional practice by supporting students and staff to engage with enterprise communities and transmit innovative practices.

### **Widening participation and equality of opportunity**

AUCB actively promotes widening participation and equality of opportunity, recognising the benefits gained through the diversity within its learning community. The University College seeks to raise aspiration and inspire ambition, and to ensure that all learners are provided with the opportunities and encouragement that will enable them to fulfil their academic and artistic potential. Within this is an implicit recognition that the differing backgrounds, cultures, learning styles and educational experiences of our staff and students offer opportunities for imaginative and creative approaches to learning and teaching. The University College promotes an ethos that values and promotes originality of thought and alternative approaches to practice, celebrating difference and actively encouraging innovative interpretations of studio-based learning and teaching.

We will build on this by:

- ensuring that due regard is given to equality and diversity issues throughout our curricula, research, scholarship and practice.

- promoting equality of opportunity in employability and entrepreneurship, challenging traditional stereotypes within the creative industries.

- maximising accessibility to physical and digital learning resources, making flexible use of space and providing opportunities for different modes of study.

- ensuring that our curricula empower learners by promoting different learning styles and experiences.

- engaging with the local community to raise awareness and aspiration, promoting the use of local resources and learning experiences that are accessible to all learners.

- promoting learning across discipline boundaries to ensure that our learners recognise the value of difference.

- ensuring that our curricula, research and scholarship encourage our learners to develop as ethical practitioners suited to a global marketplace.

- ensuring that our curricula are informed by industry initiatives that promote and celebrate diversity.

## Internationalisation

The global context in which AUCB operates requires a learning and teaching experience that is international in its focus. Through embedding and promoting a supranational approach across our curricula, we can ensure that our students become global practitioners and international ambassadors for the University College. The ethos of a diverse community produces an environment in which overseas, EU and UK students each serve to enrich and enhance the experiences of those with whom they work and study. This provides an internationally orientated learning context that promotes the University College's global status.

We will build on this by:

- contributing to the international development of our disciplines through overseas collaboration and staff engagement in international learning and teaching activities.
- using the Research Strategy and activities associated with the preparation for the Research Exercise Framework to enhance our international research reputation.

• supporting students to engage in opportunities to study abroad in ways that offer originality and flexibility, recognising equivalence in accreditation to maximise the progression opportunities for students.

• working collaboratively with overseas institutions to provide inter-disciplinary learning and teaching and new subject opportunities that utilise innovative approaches to subject spaces and boundaries.

- utilising virtual methodologies to facilitate collaborative projects with international academics, promoting the development of a subject understanding that is internationally contextualised.
- developing transferable employment skills through collaboration with overseas industries and a global approach to entrepreneurship.

• giving explicit consideration in curriculum design to diverse global industry practice, enabling students to negotiate different educational and cultural environments and giving them the tools to be competitive in the global employment market.