

Access and participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Assessment of performance

Hereford College of Arts (HCA) is a small college and many of our data sets are volatile. Where possible we have used qualitative evidence, evidence from other OfS data (for example TEF) and internal data to supplement the data provided by the APP dashboard.

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access

| Access Proportions | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|--------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| POLAR4 Quintile | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Q1 | 17% | 13% | 9% | 20% | 19% |
| Q2 | 18% | 22% | 23% | 20% | 13% |
| Q1&2 | 35% | 35% | 32% | 40% | 32% |
| Q4 | 19% | 18% | 23% | 17% | 27% |
| Q5 | 20% | 21% | 20% | 20% | 22% |
| Q4&5 | 39% | 39% | 43% | 37% | 49% |

| Access Gaps Q1&2 against Q4&5 | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| POLAR4 Quintile | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Q1&2 vs Q4&5 | 4% | 4% | 11% | -3% | 17% |

Overall, we recruit above the sector average from POLAR (POLAR4) Q1&2. Our most recent performance (2017-18) as represented in the APP dashboard data shows recruitment from Q1&2 to be at 19% and 13% respectively. However, our progress over time in recruiting students from Q1 and Q2 is volatile. We had a steep decline in recruitment from Q1 in 2015-16 followed by a decline in Q2 in 2017-18.

To generate a meaningful target, we have compared Q1&2 with Q4&5. This shows an uneven, but at times significant gap, ranging from -3% to 17% in our most recent year of data. Given this volatility, a target around proportion makes sense.

- To summarise, the gap we have identified around access for this group of underrepresented students concerns recruitment from POLAR Q1&Q2 when compared with Q4&5.
- We are currently on track to meet targets (2022). However, current data (OfS, 2022) and a recent student consultation (May 2022) suggests that we should retain our focus on this area.

Success: Non-continuation

| Continuation Rates | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|--------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| POLAR4 Quintile | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
| Q1&2 | No data | 90% | 85% | No data | 85% |
| Q3,4&5 | 87% | 86% | 90% | 90% | 93% |

| Continuation Rate Gaps | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| POLAR4 Quintile | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
| Gap | No data | -4% | 5% | No data | 8% |

Our most recent performance (2016-17) as represented in the APP dashboard data shows that we have a continuation gap of 8% when comparing Q1&2 to Q3, 4&5. Over 4 years the gap between continuation for students from Q3,4&5 and Q1&2 grows from -4% to 8%.

APP data for POLAR4 is suppressed for disaggregated data (Q1 and Q2) but when aggregated shows us that our current continuation rate for students from these quintiles is 85%. In terms of our performance over time this shows a drop from 90% in 2013-14.

Our internal data for years 17-18 and 18-19 suggests that we have closed this gap, but given the previous downward trend over 4 years, we cannot yet confirm that the trend has been reversed.

- To summarise, although we have internal evidence of improvement, we are still considering this gap in performance.

Success: Attainment

| Attainment Rates | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| POLAR4 Quintile | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Q1&2 | 65% | No data | No data | No data | No data |
| Q3,4&5 | 57% | No data | 65% | 65% | 75% |

Our most recent performance (2013-14) as represented in the APP dashboard data shows that Q1&2 attain at a higher rate than Q3,4&5 by 8%. When aggregated, we only have data from 2013-14. This is also true for Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data. Using internal data, most recent performance shows that students from Q1 and Q2 attained slightly lower results when compared with the rest of the student population in 2017-18. When disaggregated, internal data (2017-18) shows that students from Q1 achieved better than students from Q2; Q1 Attainment - 69%, Q2 Attainment - 68%. Aggregated Q1&2 Attainment - 69%. Aggregated Q3,4,5 Attainment - 75%.

- To summarise, when Q1 and Q2 are aggregated, we have identified a recent gap in attainment between this group of underrepresented students and overall HCA attainment, and the statistically uncertain profiles indicate that this is an area that requires close monitoring.
- More recent data from Ofs (2022) show completion and continuation rates are comparatively positive for this metric, but aspects of TEF NSS metrics are less positive for this student group than for other student groups, suggesting we need to monitor their performance closely.

Progression to employment or further study

Due to low numbers, all disaggregated data on the APP dashboard for Q1 and Q2 is suppressed. However, using aggregated data, there is an overall upwards trend until Q3 is removed from aggregation, which causes a slight drop to a current performance rate of 35%. We can therefore extrapolate that overall our performance over time shows we are supporting students from Q1&Q2 at least as well as their counterparts. This is corroborated by our TEF data, which shows that students from low POLAR and IMD have slightly more positive outcomes [against sector benchmark] than those from areas of relative affluence. Most recent TEF data (TEF 4) using LEO data, shows progression to sustained employment/further study is in line with benchmarks for both Q1&Q2 and Q3,4&5.

Progression to above median earnings threshold is in line with benchmark for Q1&2 and double negatively flagged for Q3, 4&5. TEF data using DLHE data shows parity between performance of students from Q1&2 and Q3,4&5 for progression to 'highly skilled employment' (where we are below benchmark for both). We will use data from the Graduate Outcomes survey to monitor this more closely in future. Both TEF, DLHE and APP data shows us to be below sector in progress and our generally low performance in this area makes an area of focus for the college.

- To summarise, we have not identified a gap in progression for this group of underrepresented students.

1.2 Analysis of the most recent data (OfS, 2022) suggests that there is now a gap in progression for young male students from IMD 1 and 2, and this is therefore an area of new focus for us in our APP variation Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access

| Access Proportions | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|--------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Ethnicity | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Asian | No data | No data | No data | No data | No data |
| Black | No data | 1% | No data | No data | 2% |
| Mixed | No data | 2% | No data | 3% | No data |
| Other | No data | No data | No data | No data | No data |
| White | 98% | 97% | 97% | 95% | 97% |

| Access Proportions All English HE Providers | | | | | |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Ethnicity | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Asian | 11.9% | 12.5% | 12.9% | 13.3% | 13.7% |
| Black | 8.6% | 8.8% | 10.2% | 10.4% | 8.5% |
| Mixed | 4.1% | 2.4% | 4.6% | 1.7% | 4.8% |
| Other | 1.5% | 1.7% | 1.8% | 1.9% | 2.2% |
| White | 73.8% | 71.6% | 70.5% | 69.6% | 68.9% |

Our most recent performance (2017-18) as represented in the APP dashboard data shows recruitment of BAME students to be 2% of our total student cohort. We recruit far more white students than any other ethnic group. In part this is due to our context – our main catchment areas have very few students from BAME groups and this recruitment challenge is exacerbated by our specialism. BAME students are underrepresented in the creative industries and in Specialist HE Creative Arts programmes.

Our main catchment areas are Herefordshire, Powys and North Shropshire. Of these, the percentage of the population of Herefordshire who are BAME is 6.4% (2011 census data). This decreases to 2.9% in Powys and 2% in North Shropshire, averaging at 3.7%. By contrast, the percentage of BAME in England averaged at 14%. Our internal data shows our recruitment of BAME students for 18-19 to be 3%.

Disaggregating of ethnic groups is difficult to do meaningfully although it does show that we recruit more from mixed ethnicities. We commit to continuing development of data analysis in this area as our recruitment of BAME students increases.

- To summarise, our lack of ethnic diversity (which compounds the creative industries' lack of diversity), is an access gap we plan to address.
- Most recent data (OfS 2022, internal data 2022) shows that we are on-track to meet this target. However, creating a more diverse community was highlighted in a student consultation as a key area of desired focus for our students (May 2022) and this remains a priority for college.

Success and progression to employment or further study

Due to our extremely low numbers of BAME students we cannot share internal data without compromising individual identities. Internal data shows success for our BAME students to be largely in line with our broader student population and our Equality and Diversity data shows 100% continuation for all our BAME students between 2008-9 and 2015-16 and our most recent performance data also shows 100% continuation between 2016-7 and 2017-18. However, the percentage of BAME students achieving high grades is lower than the college average for the last two years. The very low numbers mean that we cannot draw a meaningful conclusion from this data. However, given the extensive sector-wide evidence of an attainment

gap in degree outcomes between white and black students, we plan to focus on the success of our BAME students as we grow their numbers. Progression data is currently too limited to be of use but will be a focus of improvement (see commentary on improving our data capability in strategic measures).

- To summarise, even though we do not have robust data evidence of a gap in success and progression for this group of underrepresented students, we have identified this as an area of risk to be addressed.

1.3 Mature students

Access

| Access Proportions | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|--------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Age | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Mature | 42% | 47% | 44% | 31% | 36% |
| Young | 58% | 53% | 56% | 69% | 64% |

Our most recent performance (2017-18) as represented in the APP dashboard data for recruiting from aggregated mature students shows us to be above the sector average (at 36% opposed to 28% in 2017-18). This, however, is part of a declining rate of progress over time (from 42% to 36% between 2013-14 and 2017-18).

- To summarise, we have identified the need to address the decline in recruitment of mature students.
- Although recent data (OfS 2022) suggest good performance in this area, HCA intends to keep this as a target area, whilst ensuring that we have equal focus on other under-represented student groups.

Success: Non-continuation

| Continuation Rates | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|----------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Age | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
| Mature (21 and over) | 85% | 84% | 85% | 86% | 85% |
| Young (Under 21) | 90% | 88% | 90% | 88% | 90% |
| 21 to 25 | No data | 75% | 80% | No data | 90% |
| 26 to 30 | No data | No data | No data | No data | No data |
| 31 to 40 | No data | No data | No data | No data | No data |
| 41 to 50 | No data | No data | No data | No data | No data |
| 51 and over | No data | No data | No data | No data | No data |

| Continuation Gap | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Age | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
| Under 21 compared with 21 and over | 5% | 4% | 5% | 3% | 5% |

Our most recent performance (2016-17) as represented in the APP dashboard data for continuation of mature students shows us that when this group is aggregated retention stands at 85%. Limited data on performance for disaggregated groups shows us our retention rates for students who are 21-35 to stand at 90%. APP data shows that in terms of progress over time our retention of students who are 21- 25 has an upward trend whereas aggregated 'mature' data shows, in terms of progress over time, our performance remains static. Over time, we show a lower continuation rate for students 21 and over, when compared with those under 21. Internal disaggregated data suggests that we have a lower rate of continuation for 46-55 year olds than any other age group. APP data shows a consistent gap of around 5% between under 21 years and 21 years and over.

- To summarise, we have identified the non-continuation of 'older' mature students as a statistically significant gap for attention.

- Most recent data (OfS 2022) shows that continuation and completion of mature students needs to be retained as an area of focus for college, although we have improved performance in some metrics for older mature students.
- Most recent data (OfS 2022) suggests that completion rates need to be closely monitored alongside continuation rates.
- **Success:** Attainment

| Attainment Rates | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Age | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Mature | 50% | 57% | 75% | 85% | 75% |
| Young | 59% | No data | 65% | 75% | 71% |

Our most recent performance (2017-18) as represented in the APP dashboard data for the attainment of mature students shows us to be 75%. Using APP data for 2016-17 we have higher attainment rates for those students 21 and over than those below 21. Our performance over time shows that this is a sustained trend over three years, although we present different patterns each year, as would be usual with small cohorts.

- To summarise, we have not identified a gap in attainment for this group of underrepresented students.

Progression to employment or further study

Although some data is suppressed on the APP dashboard, our rates of progress for mature students show a steep rise from 25% in 2013-14 to 65% in 2015-17. However, our latest progress data is still under the sector average, which is 75.7% in 2016-17. We make a commitment to using internal data more accurately in future years (see commentary on improving data capability in Strategic Measures).

- To summarise, we have not identified a gap in progression for this group of underrepresented students.
- Most recent data (OfS, 2022) shows that this continues to be the case. However, to align with OfS Priority C, HCA will continue to focus on raising the outcomes for all our students.

1.4 Disabled students

Access

| Access Proportions | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|---|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Disability | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Cognitive / Learning Difficulties | 14% | 11% | 16% | 21% | 12% |
| Mental Health Condition | 5% | 7% | 8% | 9% | 12% |
| Multiple Impairments | 11% | 16% | 8% | No data | No data |
| Sensory, Medical or Physical Impairment | 7% | 15% | 22% | 17% | 15% |
| Social or Communication Impairment | No data | No data | No data | 2% | 3% |
| No Known Disability | 63% | 51% | 44% | 51% | 55% |

Our most recent performance (2017-18) as represented in the APP dashboard data for recruitment of disabled students is 45%. Our student profile here is very different to the rest of the sector; we have a roughly equal proportion of disabled and non-disabled students in our student population.

Our rates of progress for enabling students with disaggregated types of disability to access HE vary year on year vary, but APP data for 2017-18 shows:

- A steady increase in the recruitment of students with a mental health issue that in the latest

access data shows us to be above the sector average (12% as opposed to 3.5% in the sector)

- A higher than average recruitment of students with a sensory, mental or physical impairment with our rates of performance, though varying year-on-year, showing a rise. We recruit 15% as opposed to 2.3% in the sector average
- We are above the sector in enabling access to HE for students with cognitive or learning difficulties in our latest performance (12% as opposed to 5.5% for the sector) although the data shows a volatile recruitment pattern, it never drops below 11%
- We have suppressed data on the APP dashboard for recruiting students with multiple impairments, suggesting that our recruitment pattern has dropped from 8% in 2015-16, when it was over the sector average of 2.3% (latest performance data is not available from the APP dashboard)
- Access for students with social and communication impairments has increased, with data showing on the APP dashboard a rise from 2% to 3%, and latest performance standing at 3% as opposed to the sector average of 0.8%

We have reviewed the disaggregated data we have around students with different types of disability and internal data shows that although specific learning difficulties vary on a year-by-year basis, our current performance in enabling this underrepresented group stands at its highest point over a four-year period, and in terms of progress over time, the amount of students declaring specific learning difficulties has risen sharply between 2015 and 2018.

- To summarise, we have not identified a gap in access for this group.

Success: Non-continuation

| Continuation Rates | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Disability | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
| Disabled | 90% | 84% | 90% | 85% | 87% |
| Not Known to be Disabled | 88% | 87% | 87% | 90% | 89% |
| Gap | -2% | 3% | -3% | 5% | 2% |

Our most recent performance (16-17) as represented in the APP dashboard data for continuation of disabled students is 87%, and our rate of progress over time is bumpy, but shows a small decline; dropping from 90% in 2012-13. This is in contrast to non-disabled rates which show a bumpy rise in performance.

Our APP dashboard data for aggregated disabilities shows a gap of 2% in our retention of disabled students in our most recent performance. Our data fluctuates, with no clear trend. An average gap over 5 years could be calculated as 1%.

Internal data shows us that our current performance in retaining students in receipt of DSA is volatile; -5% gap in 2017-18 and 8% gap in 2018-19. This limited data for small numbers of students isn't conclusive but demands close monitoring. Internal data around withdrawals suggests there may be an emerging gap around non-continuation for students who have self-declared a mental health disability. This needs further quantitative and qualitative data to build a picture over time.

Internal disaggregated data for students in receipt of DSA is too volatile to show any consistent gap or trend in this area but must be seen as an area to monitor. Additionally, we have identified an area of external risk in students receiving DSA support. Due to our rural location, some of the externally allocated DSA providers fail to deliver effective provision for our students. This has been identified as a potential factor contributing to the non-continuation of students with disabilities that is out of our control.

- To summarise, although we haven't identified a significant statistical gap, we are monitoring
- this area closely
- Our most current data (OfS, 2022) corroborates this picture, as does analysis of four years' worth of

withdrawal data, which shows that 25% of students withdrawing from courses include Mental Health as a reason for withdrawal.

Success: Attainment

| Attainment Rates | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Disability | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Disabled | 55% | 50% | 70% | 75% | 75% |
| Not Known to be Disabled | 58% | 55% | 70% | 85% | 70% |
| Gap | 3% | 5% | 0% | 10% | -5% |

Our non-disaggregated APP data shows that for our current performance (2017-18) there is no gap in achievement of students with a disability and those without a disability. In terms of performance over time we present a bumpy year-on-year profile but have on average improved our performance since 2013-14. There is very little disaggregated data for disabled continuation on the APP data dashboard. Where we have disaggregated APP data, it shows our most recent performance in attainment for those with a sensory, medical or physical impairment to be far above the sector average (90% as opposed to 70%).

Whilst we have some internal data around disaggregated disabilities, we haven't got a robust analysis over time. This will be a priority for our data improvement programme. Internal data for students in receipt of DSA is volatile and defies analysis of trends but shows a significant gap in attainment of those in receipt of DSA for 2018-19. The volatility of the data in the light of increased support requires increased monitoring. 2017-18 (internal data) attainment for those in receipt of DSA was 71% against those not in receipt of DSA-74%.

- To summarise, we have identified a new gap around the attainment of students in receipt of DSA

Progression to employment or further study

| Progression Gaps | | Hereford College of Arts | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Disability | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
| Disabled | 10% | 35% | 50% | No data | 45% |
| Not Known to be Disabled | 30% | 40% | 40% | No data | 60% |
| Gap | 20% | 5% | -10% | No data | 15% |

Using APP data, our current performance shows the progress of our disabled students to be 45% with a gap of 15% to non-disabled students. Our performance over time shows a steep rise and then fall in 2016-17 (data suppressed for 2015-16), suggesting this is a gap which we need to consider in our APP, particularly bearing in mind how far our graduate outcomes are under the sector average. This is corroborated by a recent research report on disabled students' progress 'What Happens Next', Allen and Coney, 2018¹ which shows a gap in disabled and non-disabled student outcomes post-graduation.

Again, using APP data, our disaggregated data for progress is suppressed across all areas in our APP dashboard, and we make a commitment to increasing our use of internal data to support robust analysis of the performance of students from disaggregated areas of disability.

- To summarise, we have identified the progression of disabled students as a gap to be addressed.
- Our most current data (OfS, 2022) and internal analysis of the latest data from the Graduate Outcomes survey suggests that we are making good progress in this area. However, given that our whole performance is under benchmark for Progression to employment or further study we retain this as an area for strategic focus.

1.5 Care leavers

We do not have robust historic data on care leavers. In line with our 2019-2020 APP, we have recently started to identify students who are care leavers in order to offer more support for this group. We currently

enroll less than 1% of students known to be care leavers. We aim to increase access (see section on Aims and Objectives) and develop a strategy appropriate to our context. Herefordshire is one of the most sparsely populated counties in England and has the lowest total number of looked after children among all local authorities in the West Midlands (407 in the year ending 31 March 2018)². We are working with the local authority to improve understanding of the context. In addition, we have drawn on published research including National research references include the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) report 'Moving On Up: Pathways of care leavers and care-experienced students into and through higher education', November 2017³, and 'The Experience of Care leavers in UK Higher Education', by Debby R E Cotton, University of Plymouth, October 2014⁴.

Direct feedback from care leavers to college has highlighted areas for further consideration, for example around barriers to disclosure and issues around residential accommodation.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

HCA has small numbers of students. In most cases when we dissect this data further the numbers become so small it becomes difficult to draw general conclusions. However, the exploration of this small dataset gives us early insight into how important this intersectional analysis will become.

| Intersections | Hereford College of Arts | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Access Proportions Intersections Hereford College of Arts | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Intersections of Deprivation Quintile 1&2 and all ethnicities except white | 2% | 2% | No data | 2% | 3% |
| Intersections of Deprivation Quintile 3,4&5 and all ethnicities except white | No data | 2% | 3% | 2% | No data |

Considering the APP data for access, our intersection data is often suppressed. However, performance in recruiting from the intersection of All Ethnicities except white and Deprivation Quintile 1&2 in 2017/18 is 3% as opposed to a sector average of 20.8%.

Rates of progress around intersections of recruiting from Deprivation Quintile 1 and 2 and ethnicity are also consistently low. We commit to using internal data to support tracking of this group in future as our proportion of BAME students increase (see commentary on improving our data capability in Strategic Measures).

Using APP data, our POLAR4 quintile intersection with sex shows a gap of 4% between female Q1&2 and male Q1&2. There is an average gap of 5% across five years. This is common across creative arts subjects; however, we are committed to exploring this gap further.

We commit to conduct further intersectional analysis once our numbers of certain underrepresented groups of students increase and disclosure improves. We currently have internal data for the attainment of mature students who self-declare a disability, which shows that our current performance in the area is generally positive but that students who are 36-45 and who self-declare a disability have performed less well than other mature student groups in 2017-18 and 2018-19. Whilst this is not enough to set a target, it is clear that increased monitoring of this intersectional group is needed.

Our current internal performance data for intersections of mature and BAME students show that there is no gap in this area, with mature BAME students all achieving success in 2018-19. In respect of other underrepresented groups and students with protected characteristics under the Equality and Diversity Act 2010, our objective around continuous improvement in our data collection and monitoring will enable us to identify any future gaps and take actions to address, but based on our existing data, we have not currently identified gaps.

¹https://www.agcas.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Resources/Disability%20TG/WHN_report_final_20_October_2017.pdf

Source:https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757933/Children_looked_after_in_England_2018_LA_tables_revised.xlsx

³ <https://www.nnecl.org/resources/moving-on-up-report?topic=guides-and-toolkits>

⁴ https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/3/3293/FINAL_Report_Care_Leavers_Research_2_.pdf

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

We will gather enrolment data around other underrepresented groups (from 2019-20). Taking account of our location, we are going to put an institutional focus on developing our understanding of children from military families. Herefordshire is an area bordering the South-West, where there is a high density of military families as evidenced in MoD Annual Location Statistics, 2019⁵. HCA has started actively to establish links with Herefordshire's Armed Forces Covenant Partnership. There are around 900 students in Herefordshire who attract the Service Pupil Premium and we will continue to develop this work. Our region has a very small population of refugees, but we will start to engage with the local authority and high school partners, to understand what role we can play. One of our cultural partners has strong relationships with national Gypsy, Roma, and traveller communities and we will work with them to develop opportunities in this area further. We will also start to track carers, and people estranged from their family. We already do a lot of wellbeing work with individuals from these groups but will adopt a more strategic overview.

Strategic aims and objectives

Hereford College of Arts is a specialist arts school that champions the development of students' individual creative voices. Our strategic vision is to empower students through giving them the skills for life and work they need to succeed in education and employment so they can have a positive impact on the world.

2.1 Target groups

Through our assessment of performance, we have identified areas we need to closely monitor and the following priority target groups, where there is more consistent evidence of a gap:

- **Students from areas of lower HE participation, household income, or socioeconomic status:** POLAR4 quintiles 1&2 regarding access and gaps in continuation and attainment between Q1&2 and Q3,4&5
-
- **BAME:** to support BAME students to access HE and to succeed; small student numbers do not currently suggest a gap in attainment, but we are alert to the risk given the national OfS KPM
- **Mature:** to increase our recruitment of mature students, and address continuation for some older mature learners
- **Disabled Students:** attainment for students with a DSA and to close the gap around progression for disabled students
- **Care Leavers:** to support improved access and success across the student journey
- **Children from military families:** to support improved access and success across the student journey

Analysis of latest data (OfS, 2022) and reflection on our Access and Participation Plan targets does not suggest there is need to change our target groups unless this is requested by OfS. However, we will be closely tracking the performance of students from low IMD quintiles alongside POLAR quintiles and reporting as a key indicator of socio-economic deprivation in 2025.

2.2 Aims and objectives

Aim1: We aim to inspire and enable people from areas of lower HE participation, household income, or socioeconomic status to have equal access as their peers to success in life through higher education in creative subjects

Although we are not one of the higher tariff providers specifically referred to in the OfS key performance measure (KPM) to close the gap in participation by the least represented groups at higher tariff providers, this relates to the more general national gap in participation between most and least represented groups.

⁵ [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/804440/ALS - April 2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/804440/ALS_-_April_2019.pdf)

Objectives relating to Aim 1

- To increase aggregated enrolment from POLAR Q1&2 from 32% to 40% by 2024-25
- To close the gap in continuation compared with Q3,4&5 from 8pp to 0pp by 2023-4
- To close the recent gap in attainment compared with Q3,4&5 from 6pp to 0pp by 2023-4

Aim 2: We aim to increase the ethnic diversity of our student population and ensure they have an equal and as excellent an experience and outcomes as other students. This aim relates to the OfS KPM to reduce the gap in degree outcomes between black and white students.

Objectives relating to Aim 2

- Longer term, to increase enrolment of BAME students from 3% to 10% by 2029-30
- Shorter term, to increase our enrolment of BAME students from 3% to 7% by 2024-25
- To ensure monitoring and measures in place to support BAME success and progression at least equal to HCA's general student body with implementation of new monitoring from 2019-20 and evaluation of interventions with year on year improvement to 2024-25

We are excited by this aim as its successful achievement will not only benefit underrepresented students but the preparation of all students for life in the modern world. However, both our creative arts specialism (which has a poor track record around diversity at higher and in wider industry) and location make it particularly challenging given the profile of the regional BAME population. Information from HESA (2014-15 – 2017-18) suggests that nationally, students from Black British backgrounds are more than twice as likely to study arts subjects than British Asian students. Nationally, the current BAME population of the United Kingdom is 7% British Asian, and 3% Black British, whereas The Government Office for the West Midlands gives figures of 10.8% and 3.3% respectively for the region.

Aim 3: We aim to address the decline in the recruitment of mature students and ensure they have an equal and as excellent experience and outcomes as other students

Objectives related to Aim 3

- To increase the proportion of mature students from 36% to 41% by 2024-5
- To close the gap in continuation for mature students from 5pp to 0pp by 2024-25
- To ensure mature student journeys are monitored and performance maintained or improved at every stage of the student cycle with implementation of new monitoring from 2019-20 and evaluation of interventions with year on year improvement to 2024-25

Aim 4: We aim to close any gaps in success and progression for disabled students

This relates to OfS KPM to close the gap in degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students.

Objectives relating to Aim 4

- To close the gap in attainment for students in receipt of DSA from 3pp (see commentary on baseline data in targets and investment plan) to 0pp by 2022-23
- To improve progression for disabled students from 45% to 60% by 2024-25

Aim 5: We aim to increase the enrolment and successful participation and progression of care leavers

Objectives relating to Aim 5

- Develop a care leaver strategy to support care leavers through the student lifecycle by the beginning of 2020-21
- Increase enrolment of care leavers from less than 1% a year to at least 1.2% a year by 2024-25 within the context of our projected increase in overall student numbers
- Ensure success and progression of care leavers is equal to their peers with implementation of new monitoring from 2019-20 and evaluation of interventions with year on year development to 2024-25
- Develop and Maintain a dedicated Care Leavers page on our website in line with good practice guidance.

Aim 6: We aim to support children of military families to access and succeed at HCA and in their progression

Objectives relating to Aim 6

- Develop regional partnerships to underpin the development of a strategy and action plan by 2020-21 with research from 2019-20 and the development of a strategy by the beginning of 2021-22. We have not set quantitative targets around care leavers or children of military families, but we will develop an action plan to support signature of the Armed Forces Covenant with further interim targets.

Aim 7: We aim to ensure college systems and data support a thorough understanding of the needs and risks around all underrepresented groups, enable close monitoring of their student journeys, and evaluation of our APP.

Objectives relating to Aim 7

- Improve our internal data collection and analysis to enable us to monitor the full range of underrepresented groups subject to student disclosure (see commentary on improving our data capability in strategic measures.)
- The full range of underrepresented groups are included in internal reports and annual review of APP impact and strategic measures from 2019-20 pilot and evaluation of templates to implementation from 2020-21

3. Strategic measures

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview: Background and outline of our over-arching college strategy. In July 2018 the college adopted a new cross college strategy to grow in scale and impact as a specialist arts school, rooted in place but connected to the world, where students are empowered with skills for life and work, to succeed in education, employment and entrepreneurship, and to have a positive impact on the world. The strategy was developed with consideration of Local Enterprise Partnership priorities around increasing local skills and engagement in higher education as well as industry insight from the creative industries nationally. Within the strategy there are four key areas or 'pillars', of development: Our Curriculum (including FE, HE and Short Course), Our Community (including student, staff, alumni), Creatives Spaces and Places (including College teaching and social spaces, residential accommodation and wider city place-making) and Student Careers and Enterprise (from creative careers advice to schools to support programme for new graduates). The four pillars are underpinned by cross-cutting themes: Our People, Our Operations, Our Stories, Our Values whose development is also important to support the four pillars.

Theory of change: The ambitions to be inclusive and to further social justice have long been part of the college ethos, nonetheless, to deliver the ambitious aims articulated in this APP we believe a step change is needed in terms of connecting and integrating college activity around it.

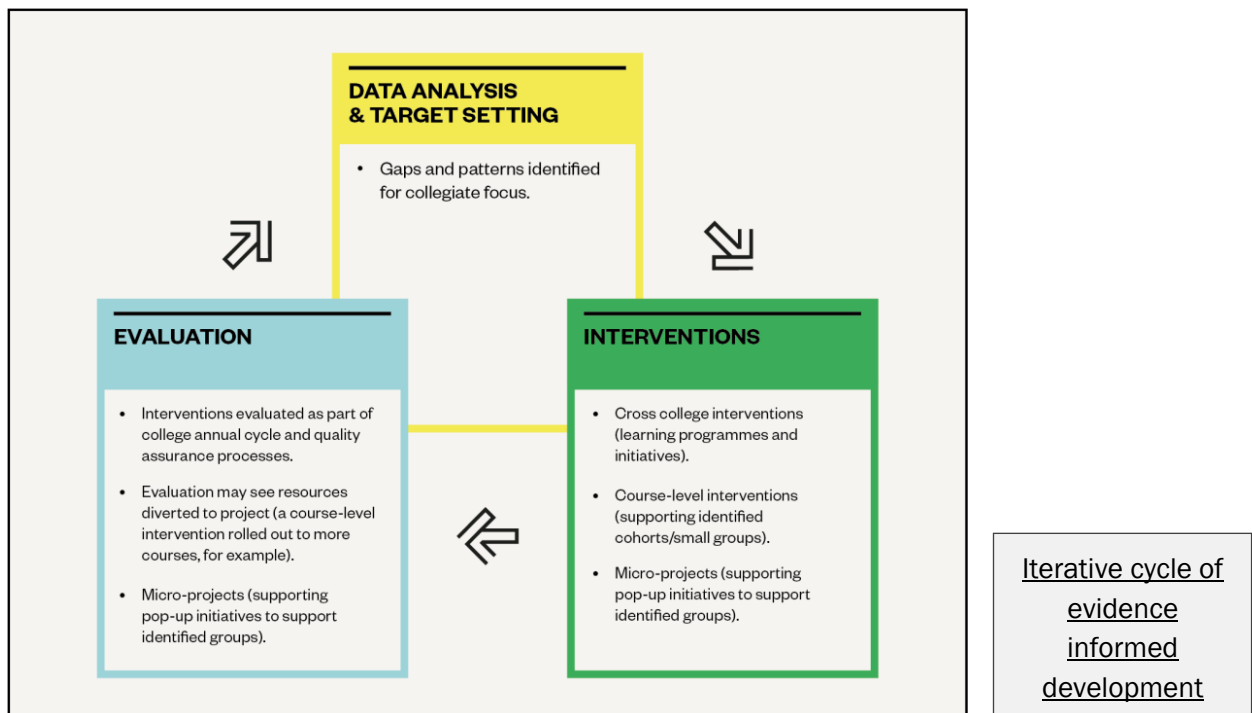
Our higher-level over-arching theory of change concerns how we ensure a fully embedded, whole provider approach to realising our APP aims and objectives, fully embedding our APP strategy within everyday operations, more effectively to focus resources and deliver cross college change. Key inputs include:

- Higher level vision, leadership and establishment of urgency
- On-going engagement of Wider Leadership Group (WLG) managers from across student services; Libraries, IT services, Wellbeing, Accommodation, Finance, Registry as well as academic leadership from FE and HE and technical leadership from workshops
- Cross college wider staff and student engagement including underrepresented groups
- Updating of strategy implementation maps across the four strategic pillars and enablers to include APP objectives e.g. the development of our new digital strategy proposed for 2019-20 to include Jisc guidance around digital inclusion

Key outcomes include:

- Cross college staff engagement with the new APP aims and actions (measures include staff

- survey and feedback, review and development conversations, staff training data).
- Year on year increase in student engagement in design, delivery, evaluation and monitoring of APP activities to be measured quantitatively and qualitatively
- Ongoing development of the over-arching college strategy fully informed by and supporting further development and evaluation of the APP



Within this over-arching theory of change we have identified five key areas of change and development to achieve the objectives for our target groups.

Improving our research, data and evaluation: Improving our **research, data, and evaluation** to support individual students and to measure how far our programmes and initiatives meet their aims and objectives. More specific steps to improve our data capability are detailed below. The implementation and further development of our APP will be iterative and involve clear SMART target setting for all the cross-college measures and specific interventions relating to the APP.

1. Ensuring our curriculum development and new curriculum design support APP aims and objectives: Taking an evidence-based approach to our curriculum development and design, so that it is inclusive in content and delivery and engages students in their own personal development.

We will introduce an integrated approach to short course, FE and HE course development to deliver APP outcomes including:

- Increased cultural diversity within the curriculum to support our BAME objectives
- Development of professional practice modules to support progression for disabled students
- Curriculum design follows APP related research principles such as those outlined in AdvanceHE guidance around inclusive curriculum design for promoting wellbeing

2. Staff Development: Developing our **staff training** so that all staff are aware of how to support students in reaching their potential and gaining personal, social, and professional skills alongside discipline-specific knowledge. All staff training will support the whole provider approach. A priority will be around participatory research in order to support student engagement in the design of micro projects and other interventions. Interim outcomes include cross college staff engagement with the new APP aims and actions (measured by staff survey, personal development conversations and training data).

3. Collaboration: Developing **collaborations** with external partners to support creative education in the wider region and meet our outreach goals of working to raise attainment for schools in deprived areas.

Interim outcomes include:

- Development of more strategic external and collaborative activity around our APP to be measured by year on year increase in formally defined partnerships with defined aims and mechanisms for evaluation reporting to internal management groups.
- Development of some collaborative targets with our major partners such as National

Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) AimHigher West Midlands, and nationally with other specialists through the UK Arts and Design Institutions Association (UKADIA).

4. Community: Developing our **community** so that all students feel engaged with their own personal development and professional practice and so that our students enrolled on Further Education courses and mature students enrolled on short course programmes feel able to progress to Higher Education. Our over-arching college strategy makes developing the sense of belonging and community a key priority (see note below on alignment with wellbeing strategy), and it will be essential to design evaluation of how well our community welcomes underrepresented students.

Alignment with other strategies: As articulated in our theory of change, our APP is fully aligned with the over-arching college strategy. Examples include our strategic focus on developing our MA portfolio to extend the ladder of opportunity for regional students (often mature).

The college actively promotes Equality and Diversity through its values, policies and processes and curriculum activity and through both formal and informal routes. Formal routes are summarised in a Single Equality Scheme currently being reviewed ahead of the creation of a new 2019-20 action plan. The overall objective for the plan will be to ensure the college continues to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equal opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic. Regarding access and participation, this means that any substantial new initiatives to promote our access and participation goals, such as curriculum development, will be assessed for wider impact around equality and diversity to avoid discrimination against other protected groups.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment are at the centre of our higher education development plan and we are developing a new teaching and learning strategy. Differentiation is key to delivery on our FE courses and we are drawing on this experience in our HE development. For 2019-20, we are implementing a knowledge exchange for creative pedagogy. Research and practice relevant to our target underrepresented groups will be a key part of this and a new plan for themed observations will have specific criteria around underrepresented groups.

Our college student wellbeing strategy aligns with our access and participation measures and includes consideration of underrepresented groups. For example, the wellbeing strategy has been developed in line with the UUK Step Change framework around mental health⁶. We are prioritising developing the sense of community and 'belonging' to support engagement from underrepresented groups.

Our employability strategy aligns with our APP, for example in its focus on the development of our major strategic project, Launchgrad and other interventions to improve cross course graduate outcomes through ongoing evaluation of the benefit to underrepresented groups as well general students.

Strategic Measures: Actions to achieve our Aims and Objectives

Improving our data capability: Throughout this plan we highlight the importance of continuously improving our data capability across the student lifecycle throughout the period. We will:

- Implement a new student tracker: As part of the implementation of our 2019-20 APP we have piloted a student tracker to capture important data and qualitative information throughout the student cycle for all year groups. This will be reviewed and improved to support us to identify students at risk and intervene at the earliest point.
- Ensure datasets are joined up so, for example, our ILR-based internal data can be used with data from the Graduate Outcomes survey to improve our analysis progression.
- Annually review our enrolment process as to how it meets APP objectives including the range of information captured and different methods (e.g. enrolment forms and follow up interviews)
- Identify an appropriate tool to aid data analysis and communication (e.g. through visualisation) for introduction in 2020-21 with review and enhancement as appropriate
- Improve staff and student representatives' understanding of data with training from 2020
- Develop data sharing protocols with partners including progression partner colleges in order to evaluate outreach activity more effectively around underrepresented groups

⁶<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange>

- Whilst enhanced data capability should positively influence the whole APP, better disaggregated data around BAME students, students with a disability and mature students will support identification of any differences and patterns between them and their peers and improve the design of interventions.

Our reflections (2022) show that these strategic actions align with OfS Priority C (Set out how access to higher education for students from underrepresented groups leads to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes.) In addition to the above we will:

- Analyse internal datasets for patterns and trends so that the student tracker can be developed to identify potential students at risk early on.
- Carry out research projects on existing datasets that might identify risk (for example, withdrawal data, and the student engagement survey)
- Use this information to identify any granular groups whose experience might be less positive than those of their peers
- Address the needs of students from underrepresented groups within the annual HE quality enhancement plan
- Use a range of internal data to evaluate the impact of wellbeing initiatives as we continue to develop wellbeing support for students from underrepresented groups.

The following outlines key strategic measures for our target groups and the rationale and evidence base behind them. These measures will be developed and supplemented depending on the outcome of our own evaluation and wider sector insight.

Measures around Access

Schools and College Liaison: we will build on our existing network of relationships with secondary schools and colleges and other organisations working with young people. **Target Groups:** students from Polar Q1&2 and BAME, though these actions will also support our emerging strategies around care leavers and children from military families

Context and Evidence Base: We have longstanding progression agreements with more than 25 secondary schools and colleges. Historically, these agreements have been effective for HCA in generating applications to HE from some underrepresented groups, but we will use improved data collection and analysis to review them year on year with a particular focus around students from low participation backgrounds. We also plan to develop new relationships to support our access objectives

for BAME students. We will draw on best practice research, including School-University Partnerships: Fulfilling the Potential October 2014.⁷ Given our scale, we will have a closer involvement with some partners than others, and with these we aim to support raising attainment in underrepresented groups in creative subjects as well as to improve understanding of career pathways.

Our rationale for this focus on schools and college partnerships is that improving participation and attainment by underrepresented students at Levels 1, 2 and 3 in the creative arts is a stepping stone to HE applications. However there is considerable national evidence of a decrease in numbers of pupils taking GCSE's in creative subjects. Between 2010 to 2019 in England there was a decline of -38% in the number of arts GCSE entries from 673,739 in 2010 to 419,664 in 2019.⁸ Therefore, our measures also include ways to increase creative opportunities outside school to support students to develop creative portfolios. In developing our school and college relationships to meet BAME access objectives we will draw on research in the report to the OfS, 'Understanding and overcoming the challenges of targeting students from under-represented and disadvantaged ethnic backgrounds', 2019⁹ and take a full student lifecycle approach to this target including curriculum development (see measures around success). The report notes an imbalance in targeted activity across the sector, with a focus on access at the expense of success and progression. We will therefore aim to develop our BAME access and success measures in a

⁷ https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/supi_project_report_final.pdf

⁸ <https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/further-drop-in-arts-gcse-and-a-level-entries-for-2019/>

⁹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d21cb263-526d-401c-bc74-299c748e9ecd/ethnicity-targeting-research-report.pdf>

holistic way. Regarding access, the report references some specific case studies of targeted interventions around particular ethnic groups 'Understanding and overcoming the challenges of targeting students from under-represented and disadvantaged ethnic backgrounds,' Appendix G: Further case studies, 2019¹⁰ that we will consider applying as appropriate within our own context.

Actions:

- We will use improved data collection and analysis to review the relationships, activity and impact year on year, strengthening existing relationships, and developing new ones
- In 2019-20 we will review our progression agreements and share our new long term APP aims as part of a new annual cycle of review and evaluation
- We will collaborate with regional schools and colleges with comparatively high BAME populations and focus outreach and recruitment activities on these institutions, developing at least one new institutional partnership a year during the period of the APP
- We will draw on existing research and explore the barriers to studying the Arts at HE directly with existing and prospective BAME students and their communities
- We will work with partners such as our local cultural education partnership (LCEP) Creative Connections (part of a network of West Midlands LCEPS supported by Arts Council of England bridge organisation Arts Connect) to develop the regional continuous professional development offer for
- school/college teachers for 2021-22 with a particular focus on engaging Q1&2 students
- As a small college, we cannot sponsor an Academy, but we intend to develop a more formal partnership with at least one secondary school a significant proportion of Q1&2 students by 2021- 22 following OfS advice on effective practice in working with schools¹¹ with specific relevant information in School-University Partnerships: Fulfilling the Potential, 2014¹²
- We will support staff to become governors of local schools with higher proportions of underrepresented students, (this follows OfS best practice¹³ around APP work)
- We will increase our provision of informal creative activity through our Saturday and holiday programme, introducing subsidised places for some underrepresented groups by 2021-22
- We have recently started to increase our outreach with primary schools and we will expand our
- student led schools' initiatives to support creative teaching and learning in primary schools, building on pilot projects we have already conducted where our students have delivered creative activity directly to primary school children
- As an FE provider, we have the opportunity to develop new curriculum entry points to support Q1&2 access. Level 1 pathways are being designed to engage students currently not in Education Employment and Training (NEETs). We have direct experience of successful progression from Level 2 to Level 6 of underrepresented students.

Our reflection (2022) shows that these strategic actions align with OfS Priority B (Develop, enhance and expand their partnerships with schools and other local and national organisations, to help raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England.)

However, we additionally commit to the following actions:

- To target our outreach work in a strategic way that will support schools, and in particular local schools which are situated in areas of socio-economic deprivation
- To continue to develop the evaluation of our outreach activities so we can make sure that our approach to schools is genuinely helpful and timed in a way that schools can work with
- To reach out to teachers and students working in local schools situated in areas of socio-economic deprivation and find out if there are ways that we can share our specialist resources and skills to support attainment in creative subjects.
- We will use external resources such as the Transforming Outcomes and Access Evaluation Toolkit to help

¹⁰ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d21cb263-526d-401c-bc74-299c748e9ecd/ethnicity-targeting-research-report.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/strategic-relationships-with-schools-and-raising-attainment/creating-successful-strategic-partnerships/>

¹² https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/supi_project_report_final.pdf

¹³ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/strategic-relationships-with-schools-and-raising-attainment/creating-successful-strategic-partnerships/>

us design and evaluate new programmes of activity.

Our Access and Participation plan reflection (2022) shows that we do not have specific actions that align with OfS Priority D (Seek to develop more diverse pathways into and through higher education through expansion of flexible Level 4 and 5 courses and degree apprenticeships). We therefore commit to the following actions:

- Pilot a new collaboration (The Skills Foundry) which works with local partners including community groups, business and a specialist engineering HE provider to pilot a new collaboration between formal and informal learning and new skills pathways which will strategically outreach to potential learners situated in areas of socio-economic deprivation
- To expand our work-related curriculum in 2022-23 in order to introduce L5 Foundation degrees in 2024-25 and evaluate the impact of these in supporting success and progress for students from under-represented groups
- To introduce two new degree programmes which develop progression pathways for FE (Further Education) students interested in developing digital skills in key areas of employment as part of our HE Quality Enhancement Plan 2022-23
- To carry out initial consultation and discussion to find out if there are imaginative ways that college can support learners to develop higher level technical skills and produce a paper of findings and ideas by Summer 2022-23.

Development over the period of the APP: some of the actions above require incremental development through the period of the APP, for example around the level of data we are able to share with schools and colleges and the data they share with us. We also plan to design a research project within the period of the APP to assess the impact of sustained primary school work in raising achievement with a particular focus on children from underrepresented groups to start in 2021-22. We also expect to develop these measures through deeper collaboration with other HE creative specialists through UKADIA. We have agreed in principle to work in particular more closely with the Northern School of Art.

Improving creative careers advice: we will increase understating of career pathways into the Creative Industries to support wider access. **Target Groups:** students from Q1&2 and BAME. This will also support our emerging strategies around care leavers and children from military families.

Context & Evidence Base: our focus on careers advice is supported by a number of national reports. The government's 'Creative Industries: Sector Deal', 2018¹⁴ highlighted the need to improve careers advice around the creative industries generally and in particular to attract people from more diverse backgrounds into the sector. The Creative Industries Federation report 'Creative Diversity', 2015¹⁵ also highlights this need. The DfE has highlighted the importance of careers advice in promoting social mobility in its report 'Unlocking talent, Fulfilling Potential', 2017¹⁶. It highlights concerns around some students who are: 'Less likely to have the right advice and guidance that can help to make the course choices to unlock their potential; this might be due to poor in-school careers provision; or it might be because they do not have the same family and peer networks that can offer knowledge and experience of how to access the most rewarding careers as those from more affluent backgrounds.'

Actions:

- We will collaborate with regional and national networks to improve understanding of creative careers pathways in school age children and their influencers
- We will integrate careers advice in our schools and colleges relationships, supporting them to reach their Gatsby benchmarks, with a particular focus on Q1&2 and BAME pupils
- We will work with partners in our local cultural education partnership (LCEP) Creative Connections, to promote creative careers
- We will continue working within our regional NCOP, contributing to the new NCOP outreach hubs
- We will actively engage with national organisations such as UKADIA and the Creative Industries Federation (CIF). Including for example the Creative Careers Programme.

Development over the period of the APP: through our partnership work we will seek to find ways to support schools to address the challenge in finding work experience in a rural area. We would build on our partnerships with schools and colleges to build shared objectives.

Mature student recruitment: we will develop targeted communications and an improved application and transition process to support mature students into HCA.

Target Group: mature students from across the whole range of age groups.

Context & Evidence Base: feedback from current HCA mature students has raised the need for more targeted communications. It indicates that some of them have learnt about opportunities to study at HCA only through 'word of mouth'. This suggests our current communications and marketing strategy is not as effective at reaching mature potential applicants. Feedback from the college finance team has highlighted the anxiety this group of students can face around.

Our access strategy for this group also draws on national research. The importance of universities highlighting the range of financial support available for mature students is emphasised in The MillionPlus report 'Forgotten Learners: Building a system that works for mature students' 2018¹⁷. This report also recommends a heightened awareness around the diversity between mature students and the need to make the campus work for their particular needs. The published research 'A report into mature students' experiences of support at the University of Bristol,¹⁸ provides insight into developing ways to support mature students through the application process. It also emphasises the need for specific mature student community building, which includes looking at a specific mature student accommodation offer.

Actions

- Our admissions policy supports mature student access by recognising the value of experience and non-standard qualifications. We already run a well-established pre degree course to transition mature students back into education with the critically creative skills they need to thrive at degree level. The importance of universities continuing to provide flexible routes into higher education for mature students is well documented¹⁹; however, we will explore new ways to support the development of their creative portfolio and their preparation for applications and interview
- We will highlight our financial support packages in communications with prospective mature student, (see later section on bursaries)
- Mature students do not always have the same level of access to information and advice as students studying for A-levels²⁰. We will review and improve the information we provide prospective mature students. For example, we have recently introduced (summer 2019) an area on our website, the impact of which we will evaluate and develop this through the APP period including creative content to share mature student experiences of HCA.
- Feedback from open days suggests some mature students would value more bespoke open events, and we will develop pilot access events with our current mature students for 2020-21 and also pilot a mature student ambassador role.
- As part of our overall improvement of data analysis we will mine our existing internal data for better understanding of changing patterns in the recruitment of mature student (for example how many come to us from FE colleges or from outside formal education) in order to inform further development of these measures.
- We will continue to develop our community to reflect the diversity of age and background in our developing cohort. E.g. working with our mature students to develop extracurricular events with particular appeal to mature students
- We will also seek to better understand the possible intersections of disadvantage that may affect access for example around caring responsibilities and possible mitigation within our context
- As part of our APP related staff development, we will share research around mature student experience. For example, we will raise awareness of the impact of timetable changes on carers

Development over the period of the APP: based on their active feedback to date, we expect student engagement to be particularly influential in this area of our APP. Feedback from our varied mature cohort will help define specific strategies for specific age groups.

¹⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/695097/creative-industries-sector-deal-print.pdf

¹⁵ [https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-06/30183-CIF%20Access%20&%20Diversity%20Booklet_A4_Web%20\(1\)\(1\).pdf](https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-06/30183-CIF%20Access%20&%20Diversity%20Booklet_A4_Web%20(1)(1).pdf)

¹⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667690/Social_Mobility_Action_Plan

¹⁷ <http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/policy/reports/forgotten-learners-building-a-system-that-works-for-mature-students>

¹⁸ <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sraa/documents/Mature%20Students%20Research%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf>

Supporting care leavers access, attainment and progression. Context & Evidence Base: as outlined in our earlier Assessment of Performance we developing our regional understanding through collaboration with the local authority and other organisations working with this group. We have also drawn on national research for example, 'The Experience of Care leavers in UK Higher Education', October 2014²¹ and 'Moving On Up: Pathways of care leavers and care-experienced students into and through higher education', November 2017.²²

Actions:

- Collaboration will again be at the heart of our approach to care leavers including building external relationships through 2019-20 with; schools, pupil referral units, 'No Wrong Door' advice service in Hereford (a collaboration of professional youth service agencies offering advice for young people aged 14 to 25), Herefordshire Social Services, HE providers regionally and potentially nationally to explore collaborative activities for this target group.
- We will also proactively identify any care leaver applicants through UCAS and those currently studying on FE courses at the College and ensure they are aware of dedicated support.
- As accommodation and funding present major barriers for this group (as evidenced in the national NNECL report, 'Moving On Up: Pathways of care leavers and care-experienced students into and through higher education', November 2017)²³, we hope to offer support with accommodation from 2021 (see bursaries).
- We will add information to the care leaver information website Propel and look to join the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) to gain further insight as to how we can improve our available support.
- We will seek guidance and support from the Covenant engagement team to help develop our support 'offer', with the aim of becoming a Care Leaver Covenant Signatory.
- To support care leavers' success and progression, we will start support measures before they start on their course as evidence shows they tend to be less well supported and so prepared for the independent learning expected at HE, as well as the potential further trauma of change.²⁴ 'For this group having a trusted point of contact in their lives was crucial',²⁵ we will have a nominated staff member in our wellbeing team who will act as their reliable, safe and informed 'safety net'.
- We will also develop a student mentoring scheme for care leavers by 2021.
- Course teams will work with care leavers individually to consider any particular needs and help secure appropriate professional experience during their degree programme and they will be consulted on the on-going development of our alumni programme, Launchgrad.

Development over the period of the APP: we expect to build close relationships with schools individual care leavers in our locality, to support them into HE (HCA or otherwise) if appropriate. We will further develop our approach through this liaison with schools and colleges, alongside the professional and charitable organisations helping care leavers.

Increasing Continuation and Attainment for three discreet groups. Target Groups: POLAR Q1&2 and mature students and students in receipt of a DSA, some of these actions will also support success for BAME students.

Context & Evidence Base: We are implementing college wide quality improvement initiatives in 2019/20, which will place particular focus on certain underrepresented groups. We have a range of success measures, some of which are inclusive interventions to affect all students including our target groups. We will also implement exclusive interventions to address the specific issues. Feedback from our older mature students indicates that forms of communication may need to be specific for that cohort. External research underpins the strategic measures alongside internal feedback from our students. The HE Academy report, 'Peer Mentoring Works! How Peer Mentoring Enhances Student Success in Higher Education' by Jane Andrews & Robin Clark, November 2011²⁶ demonstrates the positive impact student mentoring can have on the retention

¹⁹ <http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/policy/reports/forgotten-learners-building-a-system-that-works-for-mature-students>

²⁰ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d21cb263-526d-401c-bc74-299c748e9ecd/ethnicity-targeting-research-report.pdf>

²¹ https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/3/3293/FINAL_Report_Care_Leavers_Research_2_.pdf

²² <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange>²³ <https://www.nnecl.org/resources/moving-on-up-report?topic=guides-and-toolkits>

²⁴ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange>

of students. 'What Works? Student Retention and Success', 2012²⁷, and 'Learning Analytics in Higher Education', 2016²⁸ highlight the need for data usage in accurate and timely interventions. The MillionPlus report, 'Forgotten Learners:

Building a system that works for mature students'²⁹ recommends that mature students may need support to integrate into HE communities.

At the same time as developing targeted outreach to promote BAME access we intend to draw on research and guidance around promoting success and progression, in particular the recommendations relevant in our context from the report to the OfS 'Understanding and overcoming the challenges of targeting students from under-represented and disadvantaged ethnic backgrounds', 2019.³⁰

Actions:

- Our key measure is to improve our risk-profiling and monitoring of students to facilitate early intervention. The new role of HE Operations and Strategy Implementation Manager will support the Head of HE in developing and implementing these processes. The creation of this new role aligns with our existing APP and its recognition of the need for continuous improvement around our data collection and analysis. Milestones within the first year of our new plan (2020-21) will include dashboard reporting on underrepresented students and improve our interview process and make it more diagnostic to support students better from the very beginning of their HE programmes.
- Early intervention will be bespoke for students' individual barriers or difficulties. These may include, extra tutorials, extra study skills support, peer mentoring, and counselling.
- In collaboration with older mature students we will review modes of communication and alternatives, and implement new mature students communication guidelines by 2020/21.
- Internal student consultation has suggested that students from Q1 and Q2 can be at risk of non-continuation from not feeling sufficiently part of the college community. Community building is part of our over-arching areas of development to meet our APP targets. We will be particularly alert to this group of students' attendance at extra-curricular events as well as timetabled teaching sessions. Interventions will include the development of our pilot student buddy system in 2020-21 to ensure its impact on underrepresented students is at least as good as for their peers (for example, as BAME enrolment grows, exploring if students from BAME backgrounds benefit more from a buddy from a similar background or different).
- As highlighted in our current APP, wellbeing development continues to be a high priority to address our emerging risk around poor mental health and non-continuation. Currently our proactive wellbeing development activity is delivered at HE outside of the core curriculum. In 2019-20 we are piloting a model to enable more delivery of wellbeing development skills within the students' timetable building on some internal evidence of the positive impact of more embedded delivery at FE. We already share insights with multiple third sector and education institutions around the development of wellbeing strategies and will build on this throughout the APP period through the annual review and development of our wellbeing strategy implementation map.
- To address our objective around closing the new gap in attainment for students in receipt of a DSA, we will improve development for tutors, following HEFCE report 'Models of support for students with disabilities, 2017' (for example, around training in assistive technologies where appropriate. Although these are outside our control, we will support students to secure better service from external providers of DSA services, and step in when we can to mitigate the impact when external providers fail to recruit the necessary skilled staff, as has proved problematic in our rural area.
- Curriculum development and validation will support an inclusive approach and we will draw on research around retention as well as progress (see next section) of disabled students and other

²⁵ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange>

²⁶ https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/aston_what_works_final_report_1.pdf

²⁷ https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/what_works_final_report.pdf

²⁸ <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/learning-analytics-in-he-v3.pdf>²⁹ <http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/policy/reports/forgotten-learners-building-a-system-that-works-for-mature-students>

³⁰ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d21cb263-526d-401c-bc74-299c748e9ecd/ethnicity-targeting-research-report.pdf>

underrepresented groups, for example the HEA report 'Inclusive curriculum design in HE', 2011. ³² We

expect this to have a particular impact on older mature students and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Internal evidence shows that some of these students can struggle disproportionately with, for example, the current format of our final dissertation, but that there are ways to offer alternatives that do not compromise overall academic ambition. We will review all key areas of curriculum design such as assessment criteria, module size, modes of delivery, in line with current research and feedback from our disabled students.

- We will collaborate with our validating university and other specialist providers with experience of different curriculum formats ahead of our major revalidation of programmes in 2021.
- As we achieve our access objectives around BAME students, we need to develop our measures to ensure their success and progress. Our improved monitoring of underrepresented groups will help mitigate this risk and we will deepen our research around barriers to success and progression. We will commit to a cross college knowledge exchange event around this subject in 2020.
- We will work with current students and alumni to improve our evidence base and understanding of the experience of BAME students in HCA and produce a report to Board on this in 2020.

We will seek to develop openness and confidence amongst staff and actively encourage questions and discussion around promoting BAME targets and related issues (as a response to the concerns around the need for openness raised in research³³, by some staff and stake-holders in the sector).

- We will increase the cultural diversity of our curriculum and ensure that it reflects the backgrounds and experience of potential BAME students and supports broader equality and diversity within our college community including annual review from 2020-21.
- As part of our wider strategic focus on community, we will draw on the 'Understanding and overcoming the challenges of targeting students from under-represented and disadvantaged ethnic backgrounds, 2019, Appendix D: Community Cultural Wealth Approaches,³⁴ report to frame an exploration of how to develop community for this group of underrepresented students.

Our reflection (April 2022) shows that the above strategic actions align with OfS Strategic Priority C: Set out how access to higher education for students from underrepresented groups leads to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes.

However, additionally we commit to:

- Continue to develop our strategic focus on wellbeing to support students who self-declare a disability, and track whether this improves the continuation and attainment of students from all target groups.
- Use validation to streamline our courses and support internal knowledge-exchange through creating opportunities to share good teaching and learning practice.
- Using best practice guidance and toolkits from new initiatives such as TASO (Transforming Access and Student Outcomes) to develop college-wide systemic practices around how we support students from underrepresented groups who are at risk of withdrawing from courses.
-

Development over the period of the APP: we are mindful that BAME students are not a homogeneous group and will develop more specific measures, as our numbers and insight from other providers with larger cohort sizes develop. Whilst we already work with some HE providers, we expect in this period to develop further partnerships and activity around measures affecting success for underrepresented groups.

The integrating of the APP into the revalidation of the majority of our courses in the next two years will place our measures and increasing knowledge at the heart of the college's development and trajectory. It is very likely that given the scale and reach of this work, other measures will develop.

Measures around Progression

³¹<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180322111239/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2017/modelsofsupport/>

³² https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/introduction_and_overview.pdf

³³ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d21cb263-526d-401c-bc74-299c748e9ecd/ethnicity-targeting-research-report.pdf>

³⁴ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d21cb263-526d-401c-bc74-299c748e9ecd/ethnicity-targeting-research-report.pdf>

To Improve progression for disabled students. Target Group: Disabled students. Whilst we implement these measures, we will also consider how they might be adapted to positively impact our future BAME cohort.

Context & Evidence Base: Our progression data is behind the sector average and the progression of our disabled students is below this. 'What Happens Next?' Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, 2018³⁵ shows that disabled graduates face specific and sometimes unique barriers to their career paths. 'Making A Shift', Arts Council England, 2018³⁶ presents a comprehensive review of barriers and enablers for disabled students in the creative industries. Findings are corroborated by smaller-scale research, for example, 'Creative Graduates Creative Futures' 2016³⁷ identified finance as a key barrier to a successful creative career. 'Making A Shift', Arts Council England, 2018³⁸ also suggests the value of supporting peer networking for disabled careers in the arts. Despite the very small current numbers of BAME students, we will be proactive in our design of measures as national data shows significant gaps in BAME progression when compared with their peers.

Our graduate outcomes need to be considered within the specific socioeconomic context of Hereford. Students who study here find there are benefits of remaining in Hereford to pursue part-time work or temporary work alongside creative practice as part of a portfolio career. However, earnings in Herefordshire are also significantly lower than most of the surrounding area, and lower than average for the UK³⁹. In the last five years, Herefordshire has been amongst the lowest seven authorities for median weekly earnings. In 2018, Herefordshire's earnings were 14% lower than in the West Midlands region and 20% lower than in England.⁴⁰

Actions:

- HCA has appointed a Scholarship and Enterprise Development Manager to support our strategic focus on careers and employability who will lead on the development of measures around this target.
- We have two initiatives, one within their taught courses and one following graduation. These will be developed as an ongoing iterative process to support our disabled graduates, drawing on the enablers suggested by ACGAS 2018⁴¹ and Arts Council England 2018.⁴²
- During 2019-20 a college wide Enterprise programme has been co-designed with a group of students at HCA, of whom a representative (over 50%) proportion were from our target disabled group. The Enterprise programme complements individual course professional practice modules with workshops, visiting speakers and other education around enterprise and employability. As part of ongoing development, specific evidence-based interventions will be designed to support the needs of disabled students.
- Access to funding and work support are highlighted as enablers for disabled progression. We will continue to develop our Launchgrad programme as an 18-month programme to support students around careers and enterprise after graduation. Launchgrad offers recent graduate students subsidised access to workshop facilities, access to Enterprise support, access to subsidised printing and art material purchases and continuing access to the college library. An enhanced offer has been further developed for 2019-20, and we will reach out proactively to students from underrepresented groups, designing bespoke workshops and interventions not just on request but in-line with research around how students from different backgrounds might find different barriers in their career paths.⁴³
- We follow OfS published good practice by supporting mature students to access the programme through some blended and online options for key sessions.⁴⁴ This also benefits disabled students.
- Collaborative support for creative business start-ups: our college strategy includes a long-term objective to

³⁵ <https://www.agcas.org.uk/Latest/what-happens-next-2018>

³⁶ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE206%20MAKING%20A%20SHIFT%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

³⁷ <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/sites/default/files/471sum.pdf>

³⁸ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE206%20MAKING%20A%20SHIFT%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

³⁹ <https://factsandfigures.herefordshire.gov.uk/about-a-topic/economy/earnings-and-hours-of-work.aspx>

⁴⁰ <https://factsandfigures.herefordshire.gov.uk/about-a-topic/economy/earnings-and-hours-of-work.aspx>

⁴¹ <https://www.agcas.org.uk/Latest/what-happens-next-2018>

⁴² <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE206%20MAKING%20A%20SHIFT%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴³ <https://www.agcas.org.uk/Latest/what-happens-next-2018>

support the development of higher-level employment in the creative sector in Herefordshire. This relies on many strategic partnerships across the county. In particular, we are working very closely with our Local Authority and Herefordshire Business Board and we are a leading member of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership whose new 10-year Cultural Strategy (launching July 2019) includes a focus on developing creative industries and creative employment. Longer term, this measure should impact positively on outcomes for underrepresented students (including disabled) and we can influence our partners and the development of future milestones in the implementation of the cultural strategy.

- Development of MA pathways: development of our MA offer is part of the wider college strategy. As part of the whole college approach and strategic alignment of APP priorities we will ensure these are designed to be as accessible to underrepresented groups including disabled students as other students. Internal student feedback, (which we will test through more rigorous internal research), particularly from those more locally based and mature, indicates interest in pursuing research at HCA rather than moving to another provider. We already offer part time BAs to support mature students and subject to validation we will offer a new part time MA programme from 2020-21.

The above strategic measures align with OfS Strategic Priority C (Set out how access to higher education for students from underrepresented groups leads to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes). However, we additionally commit to:

- Use the opportunity afforded by validation to further develop and embed employability skills and entrepreneurship within our professional practice modules and ensure robust cross-course delivery of key areas of practice
- Conduct research into how we might best support young male students from IMD Q1 and Q2 within our courses and implement any findings through our HE quality improvement plan
- Further develop our pilot Graduates in Residence scheme in 2022-23
- Pilot a post-graduate bursary during 2023-24 to support APP targets in line with student feedback from our May 2022 APP variation consultation.

Development over the period of the APP: The Art Council England report 'Making A Shift' 2018,⁴⁵ highlights the need to 'Ensure peer networking mechanisms support deaf and disabled people to develop their careers and creativity'. Over the period of this APP we expect to pilot an industry mentoring programme to support the progression of disabled students.

Further strategic measures that apply across the student lifecycle:

Staff development will be critical to ensuring the success of our whole college approach as highlighted in our higher level theory of change. It will include all staff briefing and the launch of an Access and Participation induction programme for new staff for 2020-21. Training targets will be set and monitored through our formal Talent Management meetings. Milestones for all our strategic measures will be monitored through college management and Board committees with reports at Board level. Monitoring and evaluation will be established around specific measures as befits their scale.

Bursaries: we will continue to invest strategically in financial bursaries to support access and participation. Student and staff feedback suggests that, contrary to some national evidence, the offer of a bursary does have some impact on access in the recruitment of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In a report by NEON on behalf of Universities UK, 'The financial concerns of students', June 2018 ⁴⁶, it states that previous research by NEON has shown that financial constraints are of particular significance to those from lower socio-economic groups, and have the potential to affect a student's choice of provider, location of study, and subject.

The purpose of the HCA cash bursary and hardship grants are to relieve anxiety about the financial commitments of HE for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and support their materials, transport or living costs as they choose. Our finance staff work very closely with other student services and have detailed

⁴⁴ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/mature-learners/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE206%20MAKING%20A%20SHIFT%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/the-financial-concerns-students.pdf>

records and understanding of individual circumstances and the positive benefit of hardship grants on continuation. Internal survey information from 2017 indicated that just under half of students from low income families receiving the cash bursaries said it was influential in their decision to apply to HCA. The front loading of the bursary has also addressed evidence of concern about some of the 'start-up' costs around higher education. However, we want to make this data more robust and are introducing the annual use of the survey and interview tools from the OfS Financial Support toolkit in November 2019-20. (This follows the advice from institutions involved in the pilot to implement at this time). We will use this and other insight from peer institutions to restructure our bursaries in 2021-22. Our plan, based on internal and external research to date, is to split the HCA cash bursary for students from low income families over the 3 years of a full-time degree. This is based on student feedback around the value of bursaries in supporting material and travel costs throughout their programme. From further research we want to find out more about how students would see the impact of this proposal to change the time when we make grants in the year and between years and what would be the response to delivering some support in kind e.g. through materials.

We also want to test further the feedback we have had around impact on access decisions.

As external research shows the cost of travelling to interviews is an increasing problem for students from poorer backgrounds, we offer a travel bursary for all students travelling to interview from outside our local postcodes. The bursary is currently a contribution of up to £30.

We will also explore ways in which bursaries might support the development of a feeling of belonging for underrepresented students and, for example, support them to join some of the optional trips. We will do further research on this in 2019-20 and update our bursary plan accordingly.

In 2020-21:

- All students progressing from our own FE provision and from our partner progression colleges receive a one-off bursary of £500 paid in their first year. A proportion of these students are from underrepresented groups.
- All students from low income families (below £25K) receive a £1K cash bursary in their first year only.
- All care leavers in receipt of a letter confirming their status from a local authority will receive the general low-income bursary and we will seek to offer free accommodation in our new halls of residence when these are delivered. Ahead of this being confirmed for 2021 we will offer a further £1K for their second and third year.
- All students in receipt of a full maintenance loan can apply to a hardship fund for emergency funding support to relieve financial stress; in exceptional circumstances this can amount to £500 a term.
- All students travelling to interview outside local postcodes can reclaim up to £30 of expenses.

Micro-commissioning: to support our cross college approach we will also establish a micro-commissioning fund for staff and student collaborative ideas that will make a positive impact towards achieving our APP targets. This specific form of action research will mirror the creative cycle of innovate, implement, evaluate, develop, implement, as used in the creative sector. We expect them to be small-scale and often less formal projects. Whilst we have not yet used this measure around access and participation our rationale by making them relatively low stakes, we hope to encourage participation.

These agile interventions are pitched as additions to other activity and can also help facilitate a supportive culture where learning through failure is recognised as well as success.

The use of micro-commissioning as a way to design and deliver educational development work related to wider discourses around student engagement and 'students as partners' as explored in 'Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education', 2014.⁴⁷ These can be used to empower students and staff through action research, as in HEA Action-Research: Sector Case Studies, 2018⁴⁸. This is also relevant in terms of the importance of supporting student and staff sense of 'belonging' whilst building an inclusive academic community as evidenced in 'Embedding equality and

⁴⁴ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/mature-learners/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE206%20MAKING%20A%20SHIFT%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>
<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/the-financial-concerns-students.pdf>

⁴⁷ https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/engagement_through_partnership.pdf

⁴⁸ <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/hub/download/Case%20Studies%20AR.pdf>

⁴⁹ https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/eedc_model_for_learning_and_teaching_practitioners.pdf

diversity in the curriculum: a model for learning and teaching practitioners', 2014.⁴⁹ The importance of empowering staff and students to make a difference within their community through activities which micro commissioning can support also has traction in supporting active citizenship.

On a more granular level, case studies from Ravensbourne and Bishop Grosseteste in 'Making Student Engagement a Reality: Turning Theory Into Practice', 2015⁵⁰ suggest that students can act as change agents within the community and support WP agendas at a local level; this has particular potential given HCA's scale.

3.1 Student consultation

Where our scale presents challenges with data analysis, it presents great opportunities around student consultation and feedback. We have approached consultation on our APP in a variety of ways

- We have run an online survey with our level 5 & 6 students with questions specific to the APP, which has produced quantitative and qualitative data.
- We have conducted interviews or small group discussions with 7% of our students, resulting in rich qualitative data.
- The Head of HE has consulted with the Students Union, including going through the draft APP.
- The Head of HE ran a focus group with students.

The APP summary document we used for the quicker consultations was also available in an audio version to make it more accessible. The findings represent the views of 36% of the level 4 & 5 students at HCA, from across all programmes related to the APP. The students consulted came from a range of different backgrounds including different groups of underrepresented as well as general students.

In general, the student feedback supported the aims of the plan, and it was felt that the ethos of the college was in keeping with the ambitions set out in the document. Concerns were raised about the challenge of recruiting BAME students to our locality. This in turn informed our target setting and the focus we will put on building a community that feels inclusive for BAME students. Other feedback on our plan from the Students Union included:

- Welcoming the focus on maintaining our mature student numbers (as it was felt this increases cohesion in the groups).
- A query about how we monitor and support students as they progress through their course and become increasingly independent. This has led to increase absence wellbeing checks.
- A desire to see a more standardised approach to the progression from the course into the world of work or further study. This is influencing curriculum development around collaboration.
- That the aspirations in the plan were ambitious and stretching for the college but it was not felt that the SU could make a judgement on whether they were achievable.

Progress on the APP will be evaluated through our formal student engagement process. Given our scale we will be able to hear views from a significant proportion of our underrepresented students. However, we are mindful of the risks involved in over-engagement with specific small-scale student groups and will adopt an inclusive and open approach to any interventions we design. This will be a consideration in our Equality Impact Assessment of new APP initiatives. The approach to our student consultation (specifically with our target groups) will be adjusted through the contact with our students. In effect, it will be a living process that evolves through the course of the APP. However, there will be firm outcomes regardless of the design of our approach:

- Evaluation of our approach to recruitment of BAME, Mature, and POLAR Q1&2 will be a priority. The description of what we offer and the benefits need to match the experience in order to allow challenged students to make accurate life changing decisions.
- Evaluation of BAME, Mature and POLAR Q1&2 experience on their programmes, and their experience of the wider college and locality
- Evaluation of the wider college and academic experience of all our students in receipt of DSA.
- Evaluation of our Professional Practice modules and LaunchGrad initiative.

We welcome feedback through our formal and informal processes. College feedback mechanisms for students are multiple from the digital student intranet feedback button⁵¹ to face to face Head of HE Course meetings⁵² to informal Café and reception Feedback books.⁵³

From our experience of APP consultation to date we know that students generally find it harder to engage with longer text formats. Following approval of the APP we will produce a much more creative visual representation of it for use in consultation and publication on our website by 2020-21.

To support OfS Priority A (Make access and participation plans more accessible in a way that prospective and current students, their parents and other stakeholders can easily understand) HCA has completed the summary template provided by OfS. Following approval, we will produce a visualisation of the document to publish on our website in 2023 alongside the summary document.

3.2 Evaluation strategy

Strategic context: Our evaluation self-assessment shows that in many areas our evaluative practice is still ‘emerging’ and needs to build on previously tacit or wholly qualitative methods of assessment and evaluation and develop more evidence-based processes. However, it does show that some key staff possess necessary skillsets and can help develop a cross college working group to support the development of evaluation across our APP. We will introduce a more cohesive, resourced, more systematic approach to use these skills and to develop training programmes to ensure good practice is understood across the college. We recognise in particular the need to develop understanding around participatory research in order to develop interventions more effectively with students. Part of our allocation of funding will be used to develop participatory action research projects, which support delivery of the APP targets. This will involve a substantial multi-year training programme.

Programme Design: Our self-assessment shows that our performance here is uneven across areas of the student lifecycle. We use external research and formal Quality Assurance information to design our courses including feedback from internal and external stakeholders such as students and employers,

but we are at an emergent stage of using quantitative evidence to design our course-level programmes. However, our newly-developed cross college progression initiatives within the ‘Launchgrad’ programme have been designed using external research into good practice, DLHE data and an internally commissioned survey of recent graduates which took place in 2017-18 (gathering data from graduates who left college 2016-17).

We commit to ensuring clear objectives around interventions will be shared with delivery teams, as well as data collection and evaluation teams. The evaluation methods will be integral to the design of all activities; our programmes will be designed with outcomes, evidence and evaluation as the three starting points. Our scale is significant in the collection of data. Careful consideration will be given to the impact of activities on individuals as well as the contribution to institutional goals. We will refer to our Ethical Research Policy where any activity could impact on the individuals involved. All programmes will be bespoke and will be designed with the specific context and national research as guidance

Evaluation Design: Continuous review of the effectiveness of activities will inform iterative improvement. The scale of our institution will make it difficult to run control samples to aid evaluation of activities (counter-factual). However, where possible we will evaluate against control scenarios and checks will be made on the true causality of outcomes.

The scale of the teams working across the range of programmes associated with the APP can easily be drawn together to share, review and evaluate other’s activities. This will lead to revisions in the design of the process.

We will collect data at different points in the life cycle of the activity and participants to allow in programme evaluation and adjustment. Where available, national data as well as data from our partner colleges and Universities will be used as ‘external controls’. Where possible and appropriate we will share data with our

⁵⁰ <https://guildhe.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/6472-Guild-HE-Student-Engagement-Report-36pp.pdf>

partner schools and colleges to enable a greater impact for our programmes.

In evaluating larger keystone programmes (such as our postgraduate support programme, Launchgrad), we will be using mixed methods as an evaluative approach; triangulating information from the Graduate Outcomes survey with quantitative feedback from stakeholders (which includes visual or creative methods where appropriate), and using attendance (remote or live) as a proxy measure for graduate engagement. Evaluation for this, and any similar large-scale initiative in access and success will be annual, and amendments made to the programme design as a response to the evaluation. For these larger programmes data will be gathered across a 3 year period as well as annual in order to check for patterns and trends, and APP data sets will be used as part of this 3 year evaluation. It is difficult to gather empirical evidence without risking adverse impact to participants, but where possible, 'opters-in' to the programme and 'opters-out' can be compared in terms of Graduate Outcomes survey results.

For smaller scale projects, more flexibility will be given to the co-creators of the project, including students where appropriate; but intervention design will be expected to use robust methods which include some quantitative aspect, and support given if required. A template will be produced to ensure projects are semi-standardised, and can be tracked effectively.

For example, a success intervention considered how far the use of less-formal learning spaces supported delivery of the academic element of a practice-based course. The intervention used grade outcomes and attendance data, together with student verbal feedback (group interviews). The intervention was initially delivered to only three of a potential six student groups at L5, and although data sets were too small to offer robust evidence, when student profiles were mapped across groups, students receiving the intervention appeared to perform better in grade results than students not receiving the intervention.

Our evaluation of financial bursaries will be enhanced as described in the section on strategic measures and we will improve the tracking of students receiving bursaries over time including their progression.

Creative methods

We also plan to use creative methods in evaluating the impact of particular interventions in the APP; for example, gathering evidence around how many 'rhizomatic' micro-projects the programme has supported, and using visual ethnography (Pink, 2007) and visual discourse methods (Rose, 2012) to evaluate the impact of creative projects, exhibitions, and events within the programme that aim to support specific underrepresented groups.⁵⁴ We will also use creative methods as part of our research methodology, for example, using storytelling techniques to support disabled students in thinking about their creative futures, and narrative theory and scaffolds to support mature students in sharing their thoughts around access to HE. We have already piloted the use of poetic methods to enable students to write about their practice and received positive feedback from students from our target groups.

Learning from Evaluation

We are developing our capacity to evaluate and learn from evaluation. We will start an evaluation development group to support robust, agile, evaluation of small-scale micro-projects and medium-scale action-research based interventions. This group will also facilitate analysis of impact of larger cross-college project and disseminate findings through formal college structures and at less-formal course team meetings. To support understanding throughout the institution we will enhance our 'Festival of Practice' annual knowledge-exchange event to support dissemination of individual projects. This is already under development, and one action research project was shared this way in Spring 2019. Staff will be supported to disseminate projects at national level through conferences, and through writing case studies to be internally published (college journals) and through platforms such as SEDA, AdvanceHE, GuildHE, the AoC and LSRN. 'Festival of Practice' is a paired project with Coleg-Sir-Gar, offering scope for inter-collegiate activity between colleges in similarly rural locations.

⁵¹ A digital feedback space where students can directly offer comments to SLT

⁵² Where the Head of HE personally engages with each course year group

⁵³ Open sketchbooks available in the college café where students can offer comment

⁵⁴ For example, one planned project aims to use photovoice as a way of understanding the travels of commuter students

3.3 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The College Board has considered the APP commitments and the ambitions behind the new regulatory requirements and Board Committee for Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQ&S) reviewed work in progress on this APP. The on-going implementation of strategic measures to deliver the APP will be a standing item for the AQ&S meetings at least twice a year and progress against annual targets will be reported to the full Board. Our Finance and General Purpose Committee will also monitor the investment plans. The Scholarship lead monitors, evaluates progress and reports on the Access and Participation Plan at Senior Leadership Team Meetings, and Academic Quality and Standards Governors meetings. The Board may at any time decide to set up a working group to oversee the APP and Board members will join development sessions and events contributing to APP delivery in order to get a deeper insight and discuss the APP with a wider range of students than the student governors. College level monitoring will be done through the Senior Leadership Team and Wider Leadership Group as well as Academic Board and our Further and Higher Education monthly management meetings. The engagement of the Wider Leadership Team ensures a whole college visibility and engagement.

At an operational level, the headline Strategy Implementation Map (SIM) and action plans behind it will be owned by the new HE Operations and Strategy Implementation Manager who reports to Head of HE. The SIM will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team in depth periodically but any emerging risks will be reported as part of our regular risk review. Student engagement in monitoring will take place through the formal board meetings that include student board members as well as through the student representative meetings where the APP Strategy Implementation Map will be presented and this will also be shared in less formal consultation meetings (See the earlier section on student consultation for a fuller discussion of student involvement including monitoring). If individual interventions around particular targets are not proving effective they will be reviewed and adjusted or terminated depending on context, as part of our iterative process of improvement. If progress is worsening against key targets or new gaps emerge it will be picked up through our Higher Education Management and Senior

Leadership Meeting monitoring and reported to the Board in interim and annual review. New strategic measures will be implemented and resource allocation reconsidered. This might include further external consultation. If our context has changed dramatically, the Board might consider applying for a variation on the APP but appreciates that any reduction in ambition would only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

The Access and Participation plan is monitored through a live tracker, with key persons involved feeding information into the tracker at set intervals. Summary reports are distributed to Senior Leadership Team meetings and Academic Board, with reporting and monitoring of the Access and Participation plan sitting with the college board's Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

The additional actions on this Access and Participation Plan variation request will be added to the monitoring tracker and progress tracked accordingly.

4 Provision of information to students

Students are informed about fees through the college website and UCAS pages, prospectus, financial information clinics at open days and interviews and in their written offer. We also include the information in summer packs ahead of enrolment. Students are informed about the HCA cash bursary for students from low income families, progression bursaries and the hardship fund alongside the general fee information through the various mechanisms. The care leavers' bursary will now be added to this information for 2020 entry. Information around the travel to interview bursary is on the website and promoted through various recruitment activities. We will proactively ensure it is flagged to potential applicants from underrepresented groups. Students eligible for the cash bursary or progression bursary do not have to apply but receive it automatically on enrolment. After students have enrolled, student experience support roles act as a mechanism for providing informal and formal information to students across their journey in person and digitally. Information around the hardship fund is included in general written information about student life online and both the student experience officer and other staff draw this to the attention of underrepresented

students who might benefit.

As part of Launchgrad, more general financial information and opportunities from other sources relevant in supporting post-graduates, such as the local community foundation, are disseminated through the Launchgrad blog and regular newsletter. We will continue to review the dissemination of information around HCA bursaries and other potential sources of financial support through our student surveys including the OfS financial bursary toolkit and in consultation with students.

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

We do not intend to raise fees annually

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

| Full-time course type: | Additional information: | Course fee: |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| First degree | | £9,000 |
| Foundation degree | * | * |
| Foundation year/Year 0 | * | * |
| HNC/HND | * | * |
| CertHE/DipHE | * | * |
| Postgraduate ITT | * | * |
| Accelerated degree | * | * |
| Sandwich year | * | * |
| Erasmus and overseas study years | * | * |
| Other | * | * |

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

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

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

| Part-time course type: | Additional information: | Course fee: |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| First degree | | £4,500 |
| Foundation degree | * | * |
| Foundation year/Year 0 | * | * |
| HNC/HND | * | * |
| CertHE/DipHE | * | * |
| Postgraduate ITT | * | * |
| Accelerated degree | * | * |
| Sandwich year | * | * |
| Erasmus and overseas study years | * | * |
| Other | * | * |

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

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

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Hereford College of Arts

Provider UKPRN: 10003022

Investment summary

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

Note about the data:

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

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

| Access and participation plan investment summary (£) | Academic year | | | | |
|--|---------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
| Total access activity investment (£) | £45,000.00 | £48,500.00 | £52,000.00 | £55,500.00 | £60,000.00 |
| Access (pre-16) | £9,000.00 | £10,000.00 | £11,000.00 | £12,000.00 | £13,000.00 |
| Access (post-16) | £16,000.00 | £17,000.00 | £18,000.00 | £19,000.00 | £21,000.00 |
| Access (adults and the community) | £12,000.00 | £12,500.00 | £13,000.00 | £13,500.00 | £14,000.00 |
| Access (other) | £8,000.00 | £9,000.00 | £10,000.00 | £11,000.00 | £12,000.00 |
| Financial support (£) | £78,000.00 | £90,000.00 | £100,000.00 | £110,000.00 | £118,000.00 |
| Research and evaluation (£) | £20,000.00 | £22,000.00 | £25,000.00 | £28,000.00 | £31,000.00 |

Table 4b - Investment summary (HF1%)

| Access and participation plan investment summary (%HF1) | Academic year | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
| Higher fee income (£HF1) | £1,003,590.00 | £1,224,720.00 | £1,474,200.00 | £1,664,145.00 | £1,839,915.00 |
| Access investment | 4.5% | 4.0% | 3.5% | 3.3% | 3.3% |
| Financial support | 7.8% | 7.3% | 6.8% | 6.6% | 6.4% |
| Research and evaluation | 2.0% | 1.8% | 1.7% | 1.7% | 1.7% |
| Total investment (as %HF1) | 14.2% | 13.1% | 12.0% | 11.6% | 11.4% |

