

Hereford College of Arts

Access and Participation Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29

Introduction and strategic aim

Hereford College of Arts (HCA) is a further education college regulated by the ESFA. It is a dedicated arts college with a specialist focus on art, media, design, craft, music and performing arts and was awarded Ofsted Outstanding in 2023. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees alongside further education and short course programmes. In 2022/23 370 students were enrolled on Higher Education (HE) courses, approximately 40% of the college total population. The development of higher education provision alongside post-16 is an important part of both the college strategy and Herefordshire Council's economic development vision for the county. The college operates as a hub for the region's professional creative community in several ways, including an annual print and illustration festival (CMYK) and a biennial blacksmithing festival (Ferrous). In 2023-24 HCA developed a new 5-year Strategy. The strategy development process has worked in parallel with the development of this Access and Participation Plan. HCA is proud of its strong links with national, regional and local organisations and businesses, including the National Trust, The Courtyard arts centre and Herefordshire Council.

HCA's vision is to be a beacon of excellence and nationally-sought-after partner for practice-based creative education with a clear professional focus. The interventions described in our Access and Participation Plan support our vision, further strengthening our record of accomplishment in fostering high-level creative practice together with widening participation from nationally under-represented groups. We create pathways to creative education from Level 2 to Level 7, including enabling students who may have struggled at school, or entered further or higher education later, to progress to postgraduate education.

The Office for Students' (OfS) access and participation data dashboard has been used as the primary source of data for our plan. This is supplemented by internal data from the Individual Learner Record (ILR) and internal quality assurance data. Due to our small scale, findings from these datasets have been triangulated with course leader consultation and a student consultation which gathered feedback from 112 students. Our intervention strategy has therefore been directly informed by consultation with a sizeable proportion of students.

HCA's access data show our strengths as an inclusive and enabling provider and our student community reflects this, with higher-than-average proportions of mature learners and learners with disabilities or additional needs enrolled on our courses. In addition to maintaining this success, our aim is also to improve access for students from ethnic minority backgrounds and students from lower income households. We aim to contribute further to national initiatives which are intended to support more service children to participate in Higher Education.

Continuation and attainment for students is good overall. We aim to further raise attainment and continuation rates for disabled students and for those from low-income backgrounds, and we are mindful of how intersections of characteristics such as maturity and caring responsibility can exacerbate risk. We are keen to close performance gaps for those students who have intersections of risk. HCA aims to support progression for students from lower-income backgrounds and disabled students into professional and managerial roles and further study.

For some indicators of disadvantage, including some highlighted by our student consultation, the undergraduate student population size is too small to bear the focus of a full intervention strategy. Therefore, for some actions we adopt a whole-provider approach. Similarly, the design of our interventions is informed by the need for secondary aims which support further 'at risk' groups of students. This approach met with approval from students during our consultation.

1.0 Risks to equality of opportunity

1.1 Assessment

Risks for local students were identified and assessed following a review of quantitative and qualitative data appropriate to HCA's scale (Annex A). These are described in this section. The Office for Students' Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) has been used extensively to inform our knowledge of sector-wide risks and how these may relate to the context of HCA. The local Herefordshire context has also been considered when identifying risks and developing intervention strategies.

The risk assessment identified eleven key risks using the methods identified above and in Annex A. Further risks were identified through our student consultation, including that the cost-of-living crisis was having a disproportionate effect on students who commute to college and/or have additional caring responsibilities or a disability; and the need to closely monitor continuation for mature students. Close monitoring at a course level of small groups of students and individuals with multiple risk factors was identified as an appropriate course of action in some cases. This is because when data from groups are aggregated, especially given our relatively small student numbers, external and internal comparators present a mixed picture associated with a high level of statistical uncertainty.

HCA's intervention strategy is informed by the scale of our institution, and designed to benefit both those with specified risk characteristics and, wherever possible, broader groups. This inclusive approach is tailored to maximise the benefits of our interventions in the context of our risk profile, where there are very small numbers of students in our dataset with some specific 'at risk' characteristics. HCA makes a commitment to use data appropriately to understand a fuller picture of the risks associated with these characteristics.

HCA's strategy to support equality of opportunity for access within this Access and Participation Plan includes working with local schools, colleges, and teachers to develop bespoke programmes of support. This aims to help students situated within areas of local deprivation to achieve better educational, and eventually, career outcomes. We plan to help students understand the skills developed by studying for a creative arts degree – including how these are relevant both for creative practice, but are also essential skills which are key for success in many professional careers. In addressing both professional skills and personal development we hope to support progression to HE, engender a sense of 'belonging' in Higher Education and provide an effective springboard for future career success.

HCA's approach to supporting equality of opportunity to study within this Access and Participation Plan includes creating an 'intervention hub' facilitated by qualified staff who can develop a programme of small group activities, some of which will be led by student mentors, for example leading action learning sets. This small group support will be structured and clearly articulated as 'tier two' support to 'fill the gap' for students with at-risk characteristics. Our interventions are designed to directly support students with characteristics that we have assessed as being at risk,

but in a manner that can enable individual self-efficacy and create a virtuous cycle. Students with at-risk characteristics can be supported both to tell their stories and to develop critical, technical and professional skills. HCA's student personal and professional development programmes further support this objective.

HCA's strategy to support equality of opportunity for graduate outcomes is enabled through our 'Launchgrad' programme, which includes working more closely with local third-party organisations. This will support graduates in developing networking and professional opportunities alongside free skills support. Its aims include increasing understanding of how the professional skills developed in a creative arts degree can support the choice of career pathway.

1.2 Key Risks

1.2.1 Access

Risk 1: There are lower proportions of students from Black, Asian, Mixed or 'Other' backgrounds at HCA

There are lower proportions of students from backgrounds other than 'White, British' at Hereford College of Arts than at many FE and HE institutions nationally. Four years of aggregated data show 97.2% of students at HCA self-identify as white. Although student recruitment activity is conducted over a wider area of the Midlands, the South of England and South Wales, in person and more broadly by digital means, enrolment has been largely regional, with a strong emphasis upon Herefordshire. The mix of ethnicities amongst the student body currently reflects their geographical origins. Data from Herefordshire Council from 2022 indicates that 98.2% of Herefordshire residents self-identify as white.

The specialist character of the curriculum at HCA is an additional factor. Evidence suggests that Black and Asian students are less likely to study a creative subject at university than their White peers¹. A lack of diversity in the GCSE arts curriculum could also be a factor in this risk. Recent analysis² showed only 2.3% of named artists referenced in GCSE Art exam papers are from Black or South Asian backgrounds.

Risk 2: There is a downwards trend in students from low-income households studying at HCA

The APP data dashboard indicates that there is a small downwards trend in the recruitment of students from low-income households to creative higher education courses at HCA and that the college is 3pp³ below HE sector average for students in receipt of free school meals accessing higher education. The EORR (Equality of Opportunity Risk Register) highlights students from low-income families as being at risk of not entering Higher Education (Risks 1-3). Additional evidence shows students with higher socio-economic status (SES) positions are more likely to be studying creative subjects than those with lower SES⁴ and that learners from lower SES backgrounds have fewer opportunities to engage with cultural opportunities such as museum visits whilst at school or college⁵. The context of HCA, situated closely to areas that are in the 10-20% most deprived in the

¹ <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/resources/reports/making-the-creative-majority-2023/making-the-creative-majority-policy-recommendations.pdf>

² Begum, Wylie, Anwari & Hood, 2023. Available at: https://assets-global.website-files.com/61488f992b58e687f1108c7c/65e60158b62ce8ab14967d7f_Visualise-Race%20and%20Inclusion%20in%20Secondary%20School%20Art%20Education_Master_Digital.pdf

³ OfS 2022/23 data

⁴ (Policy Recommendations 2023: Making the Creative Majority, Kings College London, 2023)

⁵ Evidence from national charity Art Fund revealed in a study of 1,000 children aged 6-15 years found that only 52% of lower socio-economic status pupils have visited a museum in the past year, compared to 70% of those growing up with higher socio-economic status. The study also revealed that those from lower socio-economic backgrounds were not as likely to be taken to a museum by their school (34%) compared to their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds (47%) (Art Fund, 2023).

UK (IMD), suggests that this risk is one that is appropriate for HCA to address and properly evaluate in our plan through an intervention strategy.

Risk 3: Fewer service children than their peers progress to Higher Education and there are a high population of military families living in the Herefordshire area

Research from UCAS and the Service Children's Progression Alliance suggests that proportionally fewer children from Armed Forces families progress to HE than their peers – the participation rate is estimated by UCAS to be 24% (compared to a national average of 43%). This is recognised in the EORR which recognises military children are at risk of Risk One and Risk Two.

The Service Children's Progression Alliance codes Herefordshire as Decile 10 for number of Service Children in the population. HCA recognises the challenges for children from military families outlined in the Service Children's Progression Alliance and has developed new degree pathways with a focus on digital technology. These aim to appeal to a wider audience than the more traditional arts pathways.

HCA recognises its role in supporting children and mature students from military families and interventions for our APP have been designed so that they have potential to have a positive impact for all at-risk groups through an integrated approach.

1.2.2 On-Course

Risk 4: There are gaps in attainment and continuation for disabled students

OfS data dashboard data shows that attainment for disabled students⁶ is volatile. That attainment is a risk for disabled students is corroborated by internal student survey data. Students self-declaring mental health concerns were highlighted through staff and student consultation⁷ as being a group significantly at risk. The consultation process suggested that this is because of several factors, including long waiting times for formal assessment⁸, the cost of assessment and the need for 'bridging the gap' interim style support. Our support to students extends across a wide range of needs, including to those with temporary and permanent disabilities and conditions, including some work, where appropriate to consider how needs may be framed outside the language of disability. The OfS data dashboard shows a 5.3pp gap in continuation rates for disabled students when aggregated over four years. Internal evidence⁹ indicates that students self-declaring mental health concerns and intersections of this characteristic with other at-risk characteristics (most particularly family commitments) as being particularly at risk of withdrawal.

Risk 5: There are gaps in continuation and completion for mature students

OfS data dashboard 4 year aggregated data shows a 3pp gap in continuation for mature students. Statistics around the wider performance of mature students suggest that a gap in continuation for mature students is due to intersections of maturity with other characteristics, including disability. ILR data confirms this picture, with 85% of mature students withdrawing in 2022/23 also self-declaring a disability.

Internal data and NSS (National Student Survey) data show better levels of engagement and course satisfaction from mature students than other students, with only one year of data showing a less positive picture - a gap in mature students' awareness of reflective strategies to support their

⁶ This was recognised in July 2024 on the APP data dashboard

⁷ 83% of students agreed that students with these characteristics might need extra support

⁸ an adult ADHD diagnosis on the NHS for Herefordshire and Worcestershire trust currently stands at a ten-year waiting list (About ADHD, 2024)

⁹ HCA conducted a small-scale research project around withdrawal data in 2020-21

studies. Internal degree classification data shows that mature students consistently show high levels of positive attainment.

HCA is committed to investigating the effect of additional combinatory risk factors upon mature student continuation and completion. While data indicate that combinations of risks may impact mature students, a separate intervention strategy has not been developed specifically for mature students. Instead, interventions for our APP have been designed so that they have potential to have a positive impact for all at-risk groups, including mature students.

Risk 6: There are gaps in attainment and continuation for a sample of ‘first in family’ students

The EORR notes ‘first in family’ as an ‘at risk’ characteristic (risks four, six, seven and ten). In light of this HCA undertook an initial scoping project in May 2024 which analysed a sample of ‘first in family’ data (2020-21 dataset). Although there were low numbers in the dataset, it showed an 18pp gap between students who were ‘first in family’ and the rest of the student body for attainment. Data also indicated that 60% of L4 students who withdrew from study in the same year were coded as ‘first in family’. Coupled with external research, this suggests that ‘first in family’ may be a key indicator of risk at HCA, and HCA commits to tracking this characteristic. Supporting a sense of belonging for students who are ‘first in family’ will feature in the design of HCA’s interventions.

Risk 7: There are gaps in attainment and completion for students from low-income households

OfS aggregated APP data shows a gap in attainment of 24.6pp for students in receipt of free school meals and a 11.1pp gap for students from IMD quintiles. This is corroborated by internal data.¹⁰ During the consultation process, family income level was flagged by course leaders as an area of high concern, and this was reinforced by data from the student consultation. In contrast, proxy data (POLAR 4 and IMD) show that students from lower IMD and POLAR4 quintiles frequently self-identify as having higher levels of satisfaction than other groups of students in internal surveys. The NSS shows higher levels of satisfaction with academic support, student voice, mental wellbeing, and for assessment and feedback for students from IMD 1 & 2.

This suggests that the challenges facing students from low-income households may not be linked to issues around personalised learning experiences (Risk Six on the OfS EORR: Insufficient Academic Support) but around financial hardship and potentially a sense of belonging. Social isolation caused by lack of income and potentially compounded by the need to commute and/or care for others, was a key theme raised across student groups during the student APP consultation. Therefore, we feel that student ‘belonging’ and social integration, alongside lack of income, are key factors in this group’s attainment gaps, particularly when there are combinations of issues or demands that may further drain student resources, such as caring responsibilities or commuting. HCA’s ‘on course’ intervention strategy responds to these challenges by enabling support for low-income students, including bespoke signposting to local streams of financial and practical support.

¹⁰ Student Engagement survey data shows that students from POLAR Q1 and Q2 feel less of a sense of belonging than their peers and feel they have fewer meta-cognitive strategies in place.

1.2.3 Progression

Risk 8: There are gaps in progression for students from low-income households

APP data shows that students from quintile one on the IMD have fewer positive outcomes¹¹ than students from other quintiles. The EORR evidences that poorer outcomes (risk 12) are a risk for students with a low household income.

According to research by the Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre, 52% of those working in the sector are from a professional background compared to only 27% from a working-class background. These statistics are in stark contrast to the wider workforce (37% professional background/ 39% working class background, respectively) and show that real effort is needed to close this gap.¹² Additionally, the research notes that over half the creative organisations in the country are concentrated in London and the South East, reinforcing the additional geographical challenge for those studying in Herefordshire.

Risk 9: There are gaps in progression for disabled students

OfS aggregated APP data show a 3.9% deficit in outcomes for students declaring a disability compared with those students not declaring a disability. Internal evidence from course leaders and student consultation suggests that students who self-declare mental health issues may be particularly at risk, which aligns with research cited on the EORR around outcomes for students with this characteristic.

2.0 Objectives

Following the identification of nine key potential risks to equality of opportunity and social justice at HCA across the student lifecycle, this section outlines eleven strategic objectives set to mitigate their impact on students with characteristics deemed 'at-risk' by the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register. The objectives form the rationale for the interventions detailed in section 3 of this plan.

2.1 Table One: Objectives and Associated Risks

	Objective	Associated Risk
A c c e s s	Objective 1: Increase the enrolment of students from Black, Asian, Mixed, or 'Other' backgrounds	<i>Risk 1: There are lower proportions of students from Black, Asian, or Mixed backgrounds at HCA</i>
	Objective 2: Increase the enrolment of students who are eligible for free school meals	<i>Risk 2: There is a downwards trend in students from low-income households studying at HCA</i>
	Objective 3: Increase the enrolment of students who are from IMD quintiles 1&2	<i>Risk 2: There is a downwards trend in students from low-income households studying at HCA</i>

¹¹ aggregated four-year data shows 35.7% of students from Quintile One have a positive outcomes as opposed to 60.2% for quintile 3

¹² <https://socialmobility.independent-commission.uk/blogs/tackling-the-classcrisis-in-the-creative-industries-how-creative-industries-employers-can-promote-socio-economic-diversity-and-inclusion/>

	Objective 4: Maintain the enrolment of service children and/or mature students from military households	<i>Risk 3: Fewer service children than their peers progress to Higher Education</i>
O n - c o u r s e	Objective 5: Close gaps in attainment and continuation for disabled students to between –2pp and 0pp by 2028/29	<i>Risk 4: There are gaps in attainment and continuation for disabled students</i>
	Objective 6: Close gaps in continuation and completion for mature students	<i>Risk 5 There are gaps in continuation and completion for mature students</i>
	Objective 7: Close gaps in attainment and continuation for ‘first in family’ students	<i>Risk 6: There are gaps in attainment and continuation for a sample of ‘first in family’ students</i>
	Objective 8: Close gaps in attainment and completion for students in receipt of free school meals	<i>Risk 7: There are gaps in attainment and completion for students from low-income households</i>
	Objective 9: Close gaps in attainment and completion for students from IMD 1&2	<i>Risk 7: There are gaps in attainment and completion for students from low-income households</i>
P r o g r e s	Objective 10: Increase the progression rates of students who reside in IMD Quintile 1 postcode areas	<i>Risk 8: There are gaps in progression for students from low-income households</i>
	Objective 11: Increase the progression rates of disabled students	<i>Risk 9: There are gaps in progression for disabled students</i>

3.0 Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

This section outlines the interventions which HCA will develop and design to support the areas of risk detailed above. Each Intervention Strategy includes reference to the risks to equality of opportunity that it will address alongside the intended evaluative approach. It also includes information on the activities that will contribute towards meeting the overall objective, as well as details about the financial and human resources that will be required in support of its delivery. It includes information around HCA's justification for adopting this approach, including why we think this approach will work.

As a small college HCA has used existing structures and groups, which include cross-institutional staff members, to inform the strategic actions proposed in the APP. Academic Board includes staff from HCA's Recruitment and Outreach, Student Services, Registry, Leadership, and teaching teams alongside student representation and has been involved in planning this new APP, development, and delivery since March 2024. The intervention strategies will be underpinned by granular action plans in collaboration with delivery teams. Progress will be reviewed annually as part of a cycle of iterative development.

Student consultation identified a range of options for strategic action that could be taken to meet the newly created objectives. Academic Board and Senior Leadership Team meetings have been used as critical discussion forums in the development of these intervention strategies, which have also been underpinned by critical conversations with the teams responsible for delivery of the projects and external desk research, drawing on resources and information on the Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) website along with additional research from the sector. TASO research and evaluation resources have been used to inform HCA's evidence-base and evaluation strategies.

3.1 Intervention strategy 1: Co-designing, developing, and delivering bespoke learning programmes for students, and teacher CPD to targeted schools and colleges

3.1.1 Objectives and targets

This intervention strategy will contribute principally towards Objective 3: Increase the enrolment of students who are from IMD quintiles 1 & 2. And to Objective 1: Increase the enrolment of students from Black, Asian, Mixed, or 'Other' backgrounds.

3.1.2 Risks to equality of opportunity

The two main contextual risks to equality of opportunity that the intervention strategy will address are Risk 2: There is a downwards trend in students from low-income households studying at HCA; and Risk 1: There are lower proportions of students from Black, Asian, or Mixed backgrounds at HCA. This intervention will support social justice by addressing the following OfS equality of opportunity risks:

Risk 1: Knowledge and skills

Risk 2: Information and guidance

Risk 3: Perception of Higher Education

3.1.3 Related objectives and targets

Objective 1: Increase the number of students from Black, Asian, Mixed, or 'Other' backgrounds
Objective 2: Increase the enrolment of students who are eligible for free school meals
Objective 4: maintain the enrolment of service children and/or mature students from military households

3.1.4 Related risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 1: There are lower proportions of students from Black, Asian, or Mixed backgrounds at HCA
Risk 2: There is a downwards trend in students from low-income households studying at HCA
Risk 3: HCA recruits comparatively few service children despite having a high population of military families living in the Herefordshire area

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy
Identify and communicate offer to relevant schools and/or colleges	Identify key schools/colleges with relevant pupil populations who are willing to work with HCA teams	Outreach Manager. Outreach Officer - desk research, identify schools etc with relevant populations	Identified schools contacted and agreements made to co-operate.	.
Collaborate with school/college staff and students	Work with staff and student groups to develop learning programme aims, objectives & identify staff CPD needs	Outreach Manager Senior academic staff to support development of aims	Aims, objectives and activities of programme designed with one school/college (initially – further to follow) and CPD needs identified	I: 3:

Draft bespoke scheme of work	Design and develop planned scheme of work plus resourcing/training requirement	Outreach Manager to lead and coordinate activity and administration. Senior academic staff to design pedagogically robust scheme of work	Scheme of work, appropriate resources and accompanying delivery options developed on lesson plans	I: 3:
Deliver scheme of work	Required number of sessions delivered to identified students and staff from targeted colleges	Outreach Manager to lead and coordinate activity and administration IT/workshop/academic team staffing Academic staff	Increased sense of potential 'belonging' in HE for students from 'at-risk groups'. Teachers upskilled and can pass on relevant creative skills/knowledge to students. Increased information and guidance given to students from 'at risk' groups. Increased awareness of creative arts degree as professional pathway with embedded higher-level skills	I:3:
Celebration event	Celebration event delivered which involves visit to HCA campus	Outreach Manager Support/estates staff	Increased sense of belonging in HE for students from at-risk groups	

3.1.5 Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

The team developing the relationships, designing delivering and evaluating the intervention: Vice Principal HE, Heads of School, Outreach and Recruitment Manager, Outreach and Recruitment Officer, Scholarship and ED&I Lead, Course Leaders and Lecturers.

Develop relationships and delivery - £50,000

100 lecturer days delivery - £30,000

10 weeks evaluation - £27,200

3.1.6 Summary of evidence base and rationale

The development of HCA's intervention to achieve access targets is based on research by TASO and The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). The EEF suggests that there is evidence to suggest a causal link between arts education and the use of arts-based approaches, and overall educational attainment¹³. It defines arts participation as "involvement in artistic and creative activities ...either as part of the curriculum or as extra-curricular activity" suggesting that any bespoke activity designed to support outcomes, be this delivered inside or outside the arts curriculum has the potential to be of value to disadvantaged students.

Bespoke programmes co-designed with staff and students at schools/colleges will have at least two components, including a celebration event, and this would position them as small-scale multi-intervention outreach events, which TASO suggests may have some advantages in supporting students' sense of belonging, skills development and in raising attainment.¹⁴

HCA, as a small college, can use its size and specialism to advantage including work with stakeholders using human-centred design techniques¹⁵ to design bespoke activities. The literature on the effectiveness of human-centred design, co-design of learning activities and participatory education is extensive, and strategies which work directly with stakeholders to create initiatives are extensively used in healthcare settings to favourable effect.

The specific outreach activities delivered will vary according to participants' needs. However, we anticipate that on-campus visits, where students can see arts exhibitions and/or performance will form a part of most programmes, as TASO's Mapping Outcomes and Activities suggest this type of activity has good potential to support enhanced outcomes (see Annex B for details).

3.1.7 Summary of Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Theory of change developed	Institution recognises at granular level how interventions may affect small cohorts	Type 2 (empirical)	n/a - feeds into future iterations of evaluative activity
TASO's ASQ (Access and Success Questionnaire) questionnaire	Students from target groups have an improved sense of potentially 'belonging' in HE	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
Qualitative feedback from staff participating in CPD events	Staff participating in CPD events are asked for qualitative feedback following sessions	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report

¹³ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/arts-participation>

¹⁴ <https://taso.org.uk/evidence/toolkit/>

¹⁵ <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-resources/seven-tenets-of-human-centred-design/>

Informal live surveying of participants at celebration event	Staff and student participants are asked to complete a quick survey live during celebration events	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
Data analysis of target cohort progression to next stage in education using published government statistics	Progress to next stage of educational journey tracked (this will vary depending on cohort and there will be data lag, but we would hope to see some improvement in a local cohort's progression proportions to HE if we have delivered intervention activities to a significant proportion of learners at KS4	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
HCA analysis of intake	Progress to HCA from participants & participant schools/colleges tracked (there will be data lag)	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
Annual summary included in ED&I report	Data gathered and annual evaluation takes place.	Type 2 (empirical)	Annual report which can also be shared as blog post on ED&I newsletters for partner organisations ¹⁶

More detailed information on evaluation is provided in the 'evaluation of the plan' section and in Annex B.

3.2 Intervention strategy 2: Designing, developing, and delivering an intervention 'hub' to provide small group 'Tier Two' support for disabled students

3.2.1 Objectives and targets

This intervention will principally contribute towards Objective 5: Close gaps in attainment and continuation for disabled students.

3.2.2 Risks to equality of opportunity

The primary contextual risk to equality of opportunity that the intervention will address is Risk 4: There are gaps in attainment and continuation for disabled students

This intervention will support social justice by addressing the following OfS equality of opportunity risks:

Risk 7: Insufficient personal support

Risk 8: Mental health

Risk 9: Ongoing impacts of coronavirus

Risk 10: Cost pressures

¹⁶ For example, GuildHE blog

3.2.3 Related objectives and targets

Objective 6: Close gaps in continuation and completion for mature students

Objective 7: Close gaps in attainment and continuation for 'first in family' students

Objective 8: Close gaps in attainment and completion for students in receipt of free school meals

Objective 9: Close gaps in attainment and completion for students from IMD 1&2

3.2.4 Related risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 5 There are gaps in continuation and completion for mature students

Risk 6: There are gaps in attainment and continuation for a sample of 'first in family' students

Risk 7: There are gaps in attainment and completion for students from low-income households

Risk 7: There are gaps in attainment and completion for students from low-income households

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy
Estates audit	Identify space in existing infrastructure which is suitable for repurposing	Senior leader to lead strategic work Estates manager Academic Mentoring Team (AMT) Students	Delivery of small group interventions in designated and appropriately furnished spaces.	Intervention 3: Professional development for HCA students
Peer mentoring	Identify and train peer leaders in action learning methods	Academic Support Manager to facilitate/support, with AMT. Trainer to train peer mentors. Peer mentors	Self-advocacy small group activities delivered by Peer Mentors, facilitated by specialist staff, who develop their capacity to lead/facilitate	Intervention 3: Professional development for HCA students
Neurodiversity small group support	Work with students to facilitate network of small group neurodiversity support	Manager to lead and coordinate activity and administration AMT trained practitioners to facilitate groups	Improved self-efficacy and storytelling leads to improved attainment and continuation for disabled students	Intervention 3:
Discipline-specific small group support	Work with students in course areas to develop extra-curricular discipline-specific groups	Student Engagement Officer to lead and coordinate activity and administration Senior academic staff to support programme and champion in course areas	Increased sense of belonging for students from low-income backgrounds and 'first in family' students lead to increased attainment and completion for	Intervention 3: Professional development for HCA students

		Senior staff member with research qualification to support evaluation	students from low-income backgrounds	
Small group support offering targeted IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance)	Develop scheme of work for IAG sessions to support students to find extra funding, signpost to local third-party support	Student Engagement Officer Senior academic staff to design pedagogically robust scheme of work - IT/workshop/academic team staffing to deliver CPD Academic staff and HCA student ambassadors to deliver programme	Improved access to third party support and funding opportunities leads to improved performance for all target groups	Intervention 3: Professional development for HCA students
Small group support for study skills	Further develop study skills support & referral system	Senior academic staff to design pedagogically robust scheme of work AMT trained practitioners to facilitate groups	Improved access to structured study skills small group support leads to improved performance for all target groups	Intervention 3: Professional development for HCA students
Clearly articulate and communicate offer as Tier Two support	Infographic and email/text/poster comms plan delivered to promote support	Academic manager to develop where provision sits within current structure Graduate ambassador to design infographic/marketing materials Student Engagement Officer to directly inform students in course areas Academic manager to develop comms plan Administrative support to organise posters/deliver comms plan	Improved IAG means students from all groups feel increased sense of belonging and gaps are closed.	Intervention 3: Professional development for HCA students

3.2.5 Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

The team developing the small group intervention programmes, designing delivering and evaluating the intervention: Heads of School, Academic Mentoring Manager, Study Skills Coordinator, Study Skills team, Scholarship and ED&I Lead, Vice Principal HE, Course Leaders and Lecturers.

Developing and Delivering - £129,600

Evaluation - £18,000

3.2.6 Summary of evidence base and rationale

TASO's evidence toolkit¹⁷ suggests that programmes of student support (post-entry) may have a positive effect in improving the following outcomes for students with at-risk characteristics; attainment raising (post-entry), belonging in HE (post-entry), completion, progression to employment, progression to PG study, retention, skills development, social / cultural capital, and wellbeing.

HCA seeks to develop programmes of support which have the potential to both empower and support multiple student groups and which meanwhile can be evaluated for impact on the needs of specifically disabled students. Developing a programme of student support which actively involves peer support and self-advocacy also aligns with TASO's developing evidence around the potentially positive effects of supporting student self-advocacy¹⁸ and providing role models¹⁹.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) suggests that small group tuition can be an effective way to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals in a schools-based context, and its benefits as a model within HE are well established²⁰ suggesting that this approach can be re-contextualised to provide specific intervention support for at-risk groups in an HE in FE (Further Education) setting. The EEF also shares the value of using teaching assistants to deliver small group interventions. HCA's intervention hub and small group support will be facilitated by academic tutors but tailored towards empowering self-efficacy in students.

Intervention groups which form part of the proposed student support programme link to ideas put forward by students during the consultation process, and involve students working in a facilitated mentoring capacity, whilst being supported by qualified specialist staff. As HCA has a small Student Union which is not separately constituted and is staffed by volunteer, enrolled students (as would be expected for a small college) it has limited capacity to act without college facilitation. The mixture of semi-formal discipline-specific study groups and advocacy groups proposed within the intervention aligns with literature around the positive benefits of Student Unions (for example, Dubber, 2024)²¹

This intervention aligns with many of the suggested activities listed on TASO's mapping and outcomes tool (MOAT)²², including those that fall under the grouping of 'extra-curricular activities,' and, in developing a 'hub' space, 'learning environment' and which contribute to the development of enhanced culture and community development through providing co-designed skills workshops.

¹⁷ <https://taso.org.uk/evidence/toolkit/?biro-educationphase=143#biro-filters>

¹⁸ <https://taso.org.uk/intervention/promoting-self-advocacy-for-disabled-students-post-entry/>

¹⁹ <https://taso.org.uk/intervention/mentoring-counselling-role-models-post-entry/>

²⁰ <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/small-group-teaching-toolkit-learning>

²¹ Dubber, J. (2024). Doin' it for themselves: how empowering and supporting students' unions is key to tackling challenges facing students. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 28(3), 132–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2024.2311916>

²² <https://taso.org.uk/evidence/evaluation-guidance-resources/mapping-outcomes-and-activities-tool-moat-resources/post-entry-mapping-outcomes-and-activities-tool-moat/>

As HCA is a small college, it can use its size and specialism to advantage and, again using design thinking techniques, work closely with students with at-risk characteristics to co-devise and co-deliver small group support. This can then form part of an overall learning support programme which has the potential to promote student self-efficacy which will feed into a narrative of improved attainment, continuation, and completion for students with at-risk characteristics (see Annex B for details).

3.2.7 Summary of Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Theory of change developed	Institution recognises at granular level how intervention may affect small cohorts	Type 2 (empirical)	n/a - feeds into future iterations of evaluative activity
Bi-annual HCA student engagement survey incorporates 'belonging' and meta-cognition questions from TASO's Access and Success Questionnaire. Data is spliced with attendance data from small group attendees and ILR data which shows student characteristics so that any improvement in sense of 'belonging' and meta-cognitive awareness between Survey 1 and Survey 2 can be tracked and compared with rest of student population and with their peers who did not engage with small group support groups.	Students from target groups who have attended/shown engagement (using an engagement scale) at small group support sessions have an improved sense of potentially 'belonging' in HE and increased meta-cognitive awareness.	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into Student Engagement Survey reporting to Academic board and AQ&S (Academic Quality and Standards)
Qualitative feedback from students attending small group support	Staff running/facilitating small group support carry out feedback exercise to gather information from engaged students	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
Qualitative feedback from students involved in facilitating groups	Students involved with designing/facilitation of groups complete a focus group activity with researcher	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
Data analysis of attainment, continuation, and completion rates	The gap in attainment and completion rates for disabled students is closed	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
Annual summary included in ED&I report	Data gathered and annual evaluation takes place.	Type 2 (empirical)	Annual report which can also be shared as blog post on E, D & I

		newsletters for partner organisations 23
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More detailed information on evaluation is provided in the ‘evaluation of the plan’ section and in Annex B.

3.3 Intervention Strategy 3: Creating a post-graduation support network which includes collaboration with local third-party organisations

3.3.1 Objectives and targets

Intervention Strategy 3 will principally contribute towards Objective 11: Increase the progression of disabled students into professional or managerial graduate employment by 2027/28

3.3.2 Risks to equality of opportunity

The primary contextual risk to equality of opportunity that the intervention will address is Risk 9: There are gaps in progression for disabled students. This intervention will support social justice by addressing the following OfS equality of opportunity risk: Risk 12: Progression from higher education

3.3.3 Related objectives and targets

Objective 10: Increase the progression of students who reside in IMD Quintile 1 postcode areas into professional or managerial graduate employment.

3.3.4 Related risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 8: There are gaps in progression for students from IMD Quintile 1

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy
Desk research	Associated with our Launchgrad initiative, identify key local third-party arts organisations, businesses and charitable organisations which have the potential to offer support to graduates, including alumni with disabilities.	Manager to lead and coordinate activity and administration Assistant to carry research into potential and existing collaborations	Initial long list of potential post-graduate collaborative organisations developed	Interventions 1 & 2

²³ For example, GuildHE blog

Scoping for potential collaborations	Conduct telephone survey and, if positive, in-person visits to scope out potential for future collaboration	Manager to lead and coordinate activity and administration Senior Leader to support development of aims	Short list of at least four potential post-graduation local core collaborative organisations and six national organisations developed	Interventions 1 & 2
Informal terms agreed	Build a series of collaborations with a small number of key third party agencies with mutually agreed objectives and actions	Manager to lead and coordinate activity and administration Senior Leader to support	Active collaborations in place with at least two local core organisations	Interventions 1 & 2
Offers drafted and agreed	Deliver comms package that clearly outlines the support on offer, including to alumni. Clearly identify students with disabilities who may be most at risk/high risk through use of learner analytics.	Manager Senior leader to support Graphic designer/graduate intern Data analyst	Post-graduation support from third party agencies clearly articulated and placed on HCA's graduate support programme comms channels (mailing list/website) Support provision leaflet given to AMT, library, and course teams to distribute to disabled students identified at being most at risk Support provision placed on posters throughout college in second semester	Interventions 1 & 2

3.3.5 Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

The team developing the small group intervention programmes, designing delivering and evaluating the intervention: Vice Principal Student Experience, Heads of School, Outreach and Recruitment Manager, Outreach and Recruitment Officer, Scholarship and ED&I Lead, Course Leaders and Lecturers.

Developing and Delivering - £38,400

Evaluation - £18,000

3.3.6 Summary of evidence base and rationale

The ethos of HCA is inclusive and enabling and there is some discomfort in our community with the catch-all term ‘disabled’, which is seen to be somewhat negative and discouraging, so there is a strong preference for noting and addressing the needs of students to best enable their success. However, data sources often use the term ‘disabled’, so this is used where studies or surveys have used this designation. Our support for students addresses needs which long term and those which are intermittent or temporary, including for those who have self-identified as having a disability. Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service (AGCAS) research shows that a lower proportion of disabled graduates with first degree or postgraduate taught qualifications were in secure employment, compared to graduates with no known disability, in both 2020 and 2021.²⁴ Similarly, labour market information summarised on Prospects²⁵ highlights that research has repeatedly shown that graduates with disabilities are less likely to be employed six months after graduation and 15 months after graduation and research from IPSE²⁶ shows that self-employment may be a positive step for disabled graduates, but extra support may be needed to ensure equity, noted in the self-employed sector report carried out by Leonard Cheshire (2019) cited by the OfS ²⁷ states that *“only 23% of disabled adults in the UK who are currently or previously working say they currently or have previously received Access to Work support”*.

This suggests that disabled adults currently face barriers to claiming support available to them, and extra support may be needed to enable disabled graduates to claim these benefits. Through providing enhanced IAG and signposting to third party support such as Disability Rights UK²⁸ and through the creation of facilitated self-advocacy groups for learners with additional or complex needs (Intervention Two) HCA hopes to support the take up of government funds for graduates with a disability and improve learner analytics so we can offer further tailored support to these graduates with intersections of risk. This follows good practice guidance from York St John University published by Universities UK in 2023.

Additionally, local third-party organisations, including those who offer workshop resources, business start-up support and incubation support schemes, may be of particular interest to graduates with a disability or additional needs as small group and one-to-one support is built into their offer, enabling the potential for HCA graduates with disabilities to gain access to extra financial support and IAG post-graduation, both of which TASO analysis suggest will have positive impact on this group of students²⁹. John Blake, in 2024, spoke of the importance of working closely with third party organisations³⁰, and this forms the cornerstone of HCA’s approach to further supporting disabled graduates (see Annex B for further details).

²⁴ <https://www.agcas.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Resources/WHN/WhatHappensNextinChallengingTimes-summary.pdf>

²⁵ <https://luminare.prospects.ac.uk/employment-levels-among-graduates-with-disabilities>

²⁶ <https://www.ipse.co.uk/policy/research/disabled-self-employed/making-self-employment-work-for-disabled-people-.html>

²⁷ <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/reimagining-the-workplace-disability-inclusive-employment.pdf>

²⁸ <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/resources/access-work>

²⁹ <https://taso.org.uk/intervention/information-advice-and-guidance-for-employment-and-employability-post-he/>

³⁰ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/embedding-partnerships-john-blake-speaks-on-increasing-equality-of-opportunity-in-english-higher-education-through-collaboration/>

3.3.7 Summary of Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Theory of change developed	Institution recognises at granular level how intervention may affect small cohort	Type 2 (empirical)	n/a - feeds into future iterations of evaluative activity
Survey immediately post-graduation and after support via Launchgrad (HCA's post-graduation support programme)	Data around whether students with disabilities or additional needs, who have opted-in to signposted support have improved scores in confidence & if personal goals have been reached	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
360-degree focus group	Focus group research comprising stakeholders from local third-party organisations, business, graduates, and outreach staff	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
Informal live surveying of participants at HCA events	Graduate participants are asked to complete a short survey tool live during open HCA evening talks and events	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
Analysis of social media posts	Information from social media posts shows engagement and enhanced professional activities	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
Access and Participation plan data around students with disabilities or additional needs	Graduate outcomes for students with disabilities or additional needs show improvement (data lag)	Type 2 (empirical)	Feeds into annual report
Annual summary included in E, D & I report	Data gathered and annual evaluation takes place.	Type 2 (empirical)	Annual report

More detailed information on evaluation is provided in the 'evaluation of the plan' section and in Annex B

4.0 Whole provider approach

This section details how HCA adopts a whole-provider approach to access and participation, and how our status as a provider of HE in FE supports addressing the locally and nationally identified risks to equality of opportunity.

A new college strategy starting in academic year 2024/25 highlights the strategic importance of supporting social justice through this Access and Participation Plan. This new strategy also evidences HCA's whole provider approach to fair access and participation, together with a focus on supporting civic engagement, promoting the value of arts education, and championing personal and professional development for students. The new strategy also notes the development of new games and digital content creation degree courses which will provide an enhanced, highly contemporary offer to local and national students. The following sections, 4.1 to 4.9, indicate how our whole provider approach can contribute to student progression and success.

4.1 Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Equality and Diversity are an integral part of life at Hereford College of Arts. We deeply value social and cultural diversity and work hard to promote equality of opportunity for all our students and staff, as well as everyone else we encounter.

The College is committed to ensuring everyone is given equal access to opportunities and is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of age, gender, gender identity, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion, belief or lack of religion/belief, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation.

Course teams go out of their way to cover issues which affect people on a day-to-day basis and to integrate Equality and Diversity fully into the student experience. HCA aims to provide environments that encourage everyone to participate in learning, and to provide a safe community for learning, where harassment and bullying are not tolerated.

HCA's new strategy headlines the importance of ED&I (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) and fully integrates the college Access and Participation Plan, with direct reference to this plan. Examples of HCA's commitment to ED&I are evidenced within the college's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Complaints policy, Scholarship and Ethics policy, Student Code of Conduct, and Student Charter.

Board and internal governance structures such as Academic Quality and Standards Committee and Academic Board have a standing requirement at each meeting to risk assess any key decisions in terms of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is also a standing item on Higher Education Management Team (HEMT) meetings. The content, progress and monitoring of this plan will be presented regularly to Academic Board and Academic Quality and Standards meetings, which include external experts, local stakeholders, and student governors.

Case studies which represent good teaching practice in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are reviewed annually and shared across the college, for example, at celebration events throughout the academic year. Visiting lecturers and speakers at college events are also part of our approach to introducing different perspectives and backgrounds to support ED&I and student awareness.

4.2 Inclusive Teaching and Learning

- Supports on-course attainment, continuation, and completion for all students with at-risk characteristics
- Strategic Theme 3: People: Nurturing a dynamic creative community of knowledge and practice, that is rooted in place and connected to world to support student success

Following the OfS model, HCA adopts an inclusive approach to education which supports the social model of disability, which is not about 'fixing' the individual but restructuring environments and attitudes around them. It can be adopted by building inclusive practices into the structure and operations of college. This includes all areas of practice in college, including pre-enrolment, teaching, and learning and how graduates are supported after graduation.

Arts curriculum design plays a significant role in supporting inclusive learning. By enabling the consideration of complex issues from different perspectives or lenses through both textual and non-textual modes, a range of creative opportunities are provided for students of all abilities and backgrounds to express themselves and develop their skills. The arts are a particularly effective way to engage students who may struggle with traditional academic subjects, and they can provide a means of encouraging reflective practice and the application of critical thinking for students who may have difficulty communicating through text or who struggle with traditional assessment methods such as formal examinations.

4.3 Personal and Professional Development Strategy

- Supports progress to professional employment or further study for a diverse range of students with at risk characteristics
- Strategic Theme 1: Agile curriculum and portfolio development to meet the changing needs of students and society

From 2025 onwards HCA commits to embed a new personal and professional development strategy to support progress towards a range of career opportunities which require creative skills. HCA also commits to facilitate off-campus professional placements and experience for students

Our skills development strategy will include a focus on 'Essential Professional Skills for 2035'³¹ which include: collaboration; communication; creative thinking; information literacy (skills related to gathering, processing, and using information); organising, planning and prioritising work, problem-solving and decision making.

This initiative aims to support students in identifying the transferable skills inherent in an arts degree. Whilst, for example, a student will gain valuable project management skills whilst working on a live project, not all students will recognise this without support or tuition. Making this learning more explicit and encouraging students to become reflective practitioners within a scaffolded environment, can provide a solid platform for employment. Although graduates find employment and enter self-employment across a wide geographical range, HCA aims to mitigate the effects of Herefordshire being in an area of high employment but low graduate employment and encourage recent graduates to engage with creative and other professional careers rather than take lower paid employment due to financial constraints following graduation.

4.4 Inclusive Curriculum Development

- Supports Access to Higher Education for a diverse range of students with at-risk characteristics

³¹ NFER-led Skills Imperative 2035

- Strategic Theme 1: Agile curriculum and portfolio development to meet the changing needs of students and society

HCA commits to continue to develop our portfolio of courses including agile and innovative short course programming and a broader postgraduate offer. This work began in 2023-24 with the launch of two new degree pathways; Games Design and Digital Content Creation. These enable a pathway for our FE students who enrol on UAL (University of the Arts, London) Level 2 or UAL Level 3 Diploma and Extended Diploma in Creative Media Production and Technology (Digital Media). As noted in our 2024 Accountability Statement, these new degrees, together with enhanced facilities for digital creative production in the new Digital Skills Centre at the College Road Campus are aimed at meeting regional and national skills needs as identified in the regional LSIP. These new digital awards are also aimed at developing strong career pathways for a diverse range of students including those who would not otherwise consider an arts pathway into employment.

HCA commits to exploring the viability of offering students new HE pathways with courses at Level 4 and 5 such as Higher Technical Qualifications and we will actively engage with opportunities and new models to facilitate life-long learning.

4.5 Nurturing a creative community

- Supports on-course experience and progress to professional employment
- Strategic Theme 3: We will nurture a dynamic creative community of knowledge and practice, that is rooted in place and connected to world to support student success

Experience of the context, constraints and opportunities of professional practice are embedded in our programmes from the beginning via a range of approaches. Academic and technical staff are encouraged to maintain and develop their professional and technical skills through creative practice and scholarly activity. This dual-professional approach enables staff to bring current industry knowledge to their teaching and demonstration work. Live briefs, where external professionals and companies are involved in setting and providing commentary on projects, enable students to experience authentic professional project considerations, preparing them for professional employment.

Alongside this, we will support alumni success by further developing our Launchgrad professional development programme.

4.6 Civic and community engagement

- Supports Access to Higher Education, on-course experience and progress to professional employment or further study for a diverse range of students with at risk characteristics
- Strategic Theme 2: External connection, collaboration, and co-design of more strategic and impactful partnerships

HCA is proud to have played a leading role in the Stronger Hereford collaboration of county and city councils, business, community, and education organisations and seek to amplify this work to help Hereford thrive as a greener, fairer, more connected, skilled, and creative city.

We aim to create exceptional professional opportunities for students and alumni and help make Hereford and Herefordshire more attractive to live, work, study, visit and invest in, by increasing our city centre presence, promoting public art, exploring more options to showcase creative activity to a wider audience, including the feasibility of year round creative engagement, and continue to

develop and collaborate on profile-raising events and festivals such as Ferrous³² and the CMYK festival of print and illustration.³³

We will strengthen the Towns Fund 'Skills Foundry' collaboration between HCA, Rural Media, NMITE, Belmont Wanders and Growing Local to develop new skills and learning journeys across the city, promoting vital digital skills through HCA's new Digital Skills Centre.

We will engage with public, voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors in championing the value of creativity in service improvement and policy development and collaborating to make Hereford a connected campus and hub of life-long learning, fostering pride in place and helping skill-up, retain and attract talent to Herefordshire.

4.7 Business and cultural organisation collaboration

- Supports: Progress to professional employment or further study for a diverse range of students with at risk characteristics
- Strategic Theme 2: External connection, collaboration, and co-design of more strategic and impactful partnerships

HCA will further develop links and work more closely with industry partners to benefit student learning and meet business needs. Collaboration with business and cultural partners supports students' learning in multiple ways, including through real-world project briefs, professional placements and sharing industry insight. We are keen to expand this work with a wider range of businesses including more employers outside the creative industries.

We will further develop our specialist creative industry liaison groups and grow staff engagement in employer and professional networks, to ensure industry insight continues to impact on our curriculum design and delivery

We will seek to support Hereford's developing integration with the wider region's creative clusters in Bristol, Cardiff, and Birmingham.

We will seek to extend our contact with employers outside the creative industries, for example, engineering, health, and social care to give students a wider range of industry insight and potential progression opportunities.

We have created a new role to focus on business engagement which will make it easier for existing partners and new contacts to connect and explore ideas with us and foster improved relationship management and communication.

We will promote student enterprise opportunities and develop partnerships that support our students and alumni to create new businesses.

4.8 Developing use of learner analytics

- Supports On-course experience and Progress to professional employment for students with at risk characteristics

³² A bi-annual celebration of artist blacksmithing which takes place across Hereford, involves students, graduates and international artist blacksmiths.

³³ An annual festival of illustration which enables students to work as stallholders alongside professional illustrators/printers from across the UK, and which runs a programme of live talks and events open to the public

- Strategic Theme 3, People: We will nurture a dynamic creative community of knowledge and practice, that is rooted in place and connected to world to support student success

Since 2021, HCA has developed use of learner analytics. We aim to further develop our data maturity as an institution, for example, exploring the use of Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) frameworks ³⁴ as guidance and to support evaluation of our data development work.

We will investigate ways of automating data capture and input at registry level, and use of business intelligence and analytics software to support effective access to data.

We will investigate further how far intersections of data affect students who have multiple at-risk characteristics. By developing a more nuanced approach to risk, we aim to develop a system which can target resources at students with intersections of risk so that they can be effectively supported before there is a risk to their attainment or continuation.

4.9 Financial support for students

HCA delivers a clearly articulated programme of bursary support which is advertised on the college website and promoted to students through internal email and poster campaigns³⁵. Course leaders additionally promote the bursary to students who have been identified as being 'at risk' by the 'student tracker' tool that HCA uses to identify risk based on individual progress and whether the student has 'at risk' characteristics or intersections of characteristics.

The purpose of the HCA cash bursary and hardship bursaries 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.

New undergraduates starting Higher Education for the first time with a full maintenance loan from the Student Loans Company are eligible for a cash bursary of £1000 to help with costs for the first year of their course. This is paid directly into students' bank accounts without requiring them to make an application. This ensures all eligible students receive the funds and application is not a barrier.

These bursaries are paid to students in 3 instalments: 25% is payable in the Autumn Term, 25% in the Spring term and 50% in the Summer Term. This staggered approach aims to support financial management.

Any HCA student may also apply for the Higher Education Hardship Fund. Typical grants made will be less than £500, although exceptionally the college may make a larger grant. Eligibility and amount offered is assessed on a one-to-one basis taking account of the specific context of each student applying to the fund. This is generally paid in one instalment.

Analysis of the distribution of cash and hardship bursaries (aggregated for four years between 2019/20 and 2022/23) carried out in September 2024 shows that, using POLAR data as proxy data, cash and hardship bursaries are distributed effectively to learners with 'at risk' characteristics.

HCA offer a care leaver support package³⁶ offering £1000 per year to support care leavers this placed on the college website and on 'Propel', a care-leavers' progression website. This package

³⁴ <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/data-maturity-framework>

³⁵ <https://www.hca.ac.uk/apply/fees-and-funding#>

³⁶ <https://www.hca.ac.uk/student-services/care-leavers>

offers additional financial and accommodation support to care leavers, along with a named staff contact who can advise care leavers on the financial support offered to them at HCA.

Additionally, HCA offer a £500 progression bursary for internal FE students progressing to HCA degree courses. Analysis of HCA internal progression bursaries shows that bursaries³⁷ are primarily distributed between students from POLAR quintiles 1&2 and disabled students.

5.0 Student consultation

Consulting with students has been a cornerstone activity in the development of this plan. This section details the process and rationale behind the student consultation. It goes on to detail how formal student consultation bodies were involved in putting together the plan and how students will be involved with the monitoring, evaluation and delivery of access and participation work.

5.1 Rationale

To mitigate for small datasets, HCA analysed data in a way which allowed quantitative data to be triangulated with qualitative data, using a whole-college student consultation as the mechanism for finding out more about how far the lived experience of students tallied with the findings from data and how far students felt that characteristics of risk which applied to a very small group of students needed to be considered when developing interventions.

The student consultation focused on in-course experience so that students could share lived experience and contribute directly to the design of potential interventions. In total, 112 students (approximately 15% of the total HCA student body) took part in the consultation.

5.2 The way students were consulted

HCA was able to capture student voice from a broad range of students using planned engagements, to avoid a 'drop in' approach which risked only speaking to students who were already more engaged, rather than those students who might have lived experience of challenges caused by at-risk characteristics.

Between March- June 2024, students were visited in small groups within course areas as part of a focus-group approach to identifying their priorities and finding out whether they agreed or disagreed with the broader findings from the data. Course leaders or course staff were given an option to be present, and delivery mechanisms were dependent on the size of the course, with larger (up to 35) students being given a presentation followed by organised discussion, and smaller (up to 10) groups of students given a more informal discussion-focused approach.

A short survey was developed, and students completed this 'live' during the session using mobile devices. This enabled the researcher to offer an opportunity for students who were uncertain about speaking in groups to have their voice heard through online comments, and an opportunity to raise issues around risk anonymously

5.3 Incorporating student ideas into the design of strategic interventions

Student ideas were incorporated iteratively as the consultation and risk assessment progressed. For example, several students in the first round of discussions mentioned that having a space where they could discover information about issues which supported their wellbeing (including financial wellbeing) and access support in telling their individual stories would be useful. Others

³⁷ These are £500 bursaries paid to HCA FE students progressing to HE

came forward with ideas around the benefits of peer support, thoughts around how staff might be trained to better understand how to support disabled students, and a wish for a safe space to talk with peers if they felt nervous or concerned in a way that did not warrant them seeking out crisis support such as counselling or accessing one-to-one wellbeing sessions.

This led to broad themes and strands being developed around small group 'Tier-two' support structures. As part of an iterated process these were taken forward to later consultation groups to see if students agreed or disagreed with the possible initiatives to develop small group 'Tier-two' support structures and to support development of the ideas.

A further theme elicited through initial student consultation was the need to provide some kind of structured support for students who were waiting for formal diagnosis of a range of conditions and who felt that they 'fell through the gap' between normal whole-college support in course areas and support given to those in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). HCA offers interim support whilst students are applying for DSA, and has recently bought into a whole-college programme which offers online and 24-hour mental health support with trained counsellors, but there were instances of students who would in all probability meet the criteria for DSA but were unable to complete the formal assessment due to external factors such as long waiting lists for clinical diagnosis.

As a small college, HCA does not have a separately constituted Student Union, but enrolled students form a small Student Union supported by a staff member. The Student Union (SU) sits alongside a structured system of student representatives within each course and a Student Council, which meets regularly. Student representatives are members of Academic Board and there are student Governors for FE and for HE.

Student Council members have actively been involved in the quality assurance process for this plan, with updates regularly given and feedback sought by the Vice Principal for HE.

5.5 How students will be involved with the monitoring, evaluation and delivery of access and participation work

Students will be visited in course groups so that they can be involved in the detail and design of interventions and suggest how they might be best implemented in practice. This will be accompanied by a poster campaign and ongoing discussion with the college Student Engagement Officer, SU team and student council.

6.0 Evaluation of the plan

This section outlines how HCA intends to evaluate interventions and develop its evaluation strategy as the plan progresses.

Hereford College of Arts recognises the role robust evaluation and evidence-based practice plays in supporting student outcomes. Robust evaluation can also ensure that resources are used equitably and enable knowledge-exchange across the sector. In the past five years HCA has made progress in moving beyond a reliance on 'Type One' (Narrative) evaluation methods and towards an evaluative culture which enables the impact of interventions, staff training and student experience to be more thoroughly understood, enabling a more strategic use of resources to ensure the best possible impact. In 2023-4 standardised questions around students' sense of belonging and awareness of meta-cognitive strategies were placed in a twice-yearly student engagement survey. This will help HCA identify risks and track the engagement of students with at-risk characteristics compared to their peers. This work will be further developed in the next five years as HCA works towards data maturity appropriate to its size, scale and capacity.

As a small college, research and evaluation activities are carried out with small student groups, some of less than ten students. This presents challenges in undertaking large-scale 'Type three' research methods such as randomised control trials but also opportunities to trial diverse ways of evaluation, including creative methods such as visual ethnography and quasi-experimental small 'n' evaluation methods developed by TASO³⁸ that enable robust evaluation even when only small numbers of students are involved.

HCA's approach to evaluation recognises that with small, complex cohorts, it will be challenging to identify which parts of what TASO terms the 'causal cake' single interventions have contributed towards. HCA also recognises that whilst it has staff with some of the skills required to conduct small 'n' evaluations appropriately, their use must be limited given the extensive resourcing required to deliver such evaluations³⁹

Alongside trialling different small-scale evaluations, HCA will also use sector tools such as TASO's ASQ and data-based approaches to track performance of some student groups against their peers. HCA recognises that this will not necessarily identify causal links between intervention and outcome and so alongside this will develop more complex and appropriate use of small-scale evaluations as projects iterate, following an initial trial of three different evaluation approaches.

6.1. Use of small 'n' evaluation for ACCESS interventions

TASO's ASQ survey tool, and initial feedback from students and staff, will contribute to an enhanced theory of change for targeted cohorts. This will enable HCA outreach staff to clearly identify, and plan for, key outcomes in bespoke learning programmes ahead of delivery. Following the development and delivery of a programme of work with a school or college having a high proportion of learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds, HCA will carry out an evaluation of this programme to identify the mechanisms which have best potential to work, and following the methodology described in University Centre Leeds (2023) case study⁴⁰

6.2 Use of small 'n' evaluation for on-course interventions

Following initial programme development and following TASO case study guidance⁴¹, process tracing will be used as a trial methodology for evaluating the success of, initially one, small group intervention. At least three hypotheses showing possible causal chains for students with those characteristics will be developed, and mapped to the trajectory of identified students to find out further how far the desired outcomes might be being supported by those attending intervention sessions and/or engaging with the intervention hub.

This method will be evaluated for usefulness following evaluation. Alongside this, the HCA Student Engagement Survey, which uses TASO's ASQ standardised questions to map overall engagement will compare the performance of disabled students who have accessed the intervention hub to disabled students who have not accessed the intervention hub.

6.3 Use of small 'n' evaluation to evaluate post-graduate interventions

To evaluate post-graduate experience, HCA will use mixed methods. A form of visual ethnography which uses social media posts to understand lived experience will be used to track engagement. The social media (e.g. Instagram) posts of identified graduates will also be analysed

³⁸ <https://taso.org.uk/evidence/evaluation-guidance-resources/impact-evaluation-with-small-cohorts/what-is-small-n-evaluation/>

³⁹ <https://taso.org.uk/evidence/evaluation-guidance-resources/impact-evaluation-with-small-cohorts/getting-started-with-a-small-n-evaluation/>

⁴⁰ https://s33320.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/TASO_Case_Study_Realist_Evaluation_University_Centre_Leeds_December_23.pdf

⁴¹ <https://cdn.taso.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/TASO-Process-Tracing-Case-Study.pdf>

to show if there is evidence of engagement with HCA campaigns, networking opportunities or events.

This will be complemented with the use of a questionnaire developed through Launchgrad and data from the Graduate Outcomes Survey.

6.4 Dissemination of findings

External dissemination activities which share what has (and has not) worked will take place through professional network meetings and communication channels. Examples of these include GuildHE, UKADIA the AoC and FE-specific networks such as Learning, Skills and Research meetings and sector podcasts.

HCA recognises the benefit of peer review to ensure robust outcomes, particularly when working with small 'n' evaluations. Internal panels (SLT and Academic Board) will initially act as critical friends, and HCA will additionally explore the possibility of working informally with external colleagues and partners to ensure adequate peer review.

It is planned that evaluative activities will be shared internally with students through data visualisations, and HCA will additionally investigate the possibility of a poster presentation at appropriate sector conferences (such as RAISE).

An annual rolling timeline of internal and dissemination activity can be viewed below:

October-December	January-March	April-June	July-September
Internal dissemination			
ED&I report on previous year to Academic Board & Academic Quality & Standards Students are consulted on the evaluation and invited to discuss/feedback	Activities carried out and internal reports to SLT Student Engagement Survey Semester 1	Activities & interim evaluations carried out and internal reports to SLT Student Engagement Survey Semester 2	Evaluation of activities and papers/visual posters produced In-person student consultation to discuss/feedback
External dissemination			
Poster presentation or case study submitted as abstract to RAISE, BERA, AoC or similar conference.	ED&I report published on HCA website	Dissemination through appropriate educational networks, for example, GuildHE ED&I network meeting or similar	Blog post/case study written for external network publications or similar.

7.0 Provision of information to students

Students are informed about fees through the college website and UCAS pages, prospectus, financial information at open days and interviews and in their written offer. HCA also includes the information in summer packs ahead of enrolment and students are given emails and telephone

numbers to contact if they have a specific query which requires one-to-one support. 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 on the college website and VLE and through poster and email campaigns, additionally by their course leaders if they are identified as being at risk of hardship.

Information around the travel to interview bursary is on the website and promoted through various recruitment and outreach activities. Students eligible for the cash bursary or progression bursary do not have to apply but receive it automatically on enrolment. After students have enrolled, college provides 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. We have created a new role of Student Engagement and Events Officer in 2024 and they, working with a small Student Union and other staff work to promote the support available to students and graduates. Graduates will receive information through the Launchgrad newsletter and through attendance at on-site open activities.

Student awareness of support open to them is checked twice annually through the Student Engagement survey and addressed if necessary. Consultation with the Student Council has helped shape the content of a new student handbook, currently in development. The student handbook will be available in a summary form as a printed publication, but the key mode of access will be via the HCA website.

Annex A: Further information and analysis relating to the identification and prioritisation of key risks to equality of opportunity

1.0 Methods

To assess HCA's performance against student characteristics identified as 'at risk' in the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EoRR), HCA has analysed data from a range of external and internal data sources. External data sources include the Access and Participation dashboard, Teaching Excellence Framework workbooks, National Student Survey, and the Graduate Outcomes survey. Internal data sources include the college ILR, student tracker and student engagement survey data.

In 2022/23 370 students were enrolled on HE courses, approximately 40% of the college total population. The average population enrolled on HE courses at an institution returning data to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in 2021-22 was 7658 students. This means that HCA has comparatively very few students enrolled, there are even fewer numbers of students when they are divided into at-risk groups or considered at course level and data can often be suppressed or only relevant when aggregated. Likewise, data on a year-by-year basis often shows a highly volatile picture and is subject to high levels of statistical uncertainty.

To mitigate for this, HCA primarily used aggregated data across 4 years from the OfS data dashboard as an average indicator of performance across this period and a way to assess differences in performance between students with and without at-risk characteristics. Where numbers of students were too small to show any aggregated performance data in the APP data dashboard, quantitative data was triangulated with qualitative data.

Qualitative data was gathered from staff leading courses and students across HE and Foundation Diploma courses within the institution. 112 students were visited in small groups within course areas to support a more holistic understanding of the picture offered by data and to support co-design of interventions.

Data capture from student consultation took part between February-May 2024, and the initial survey design used for the consultation was written to align with previous iterations of at-risk characteristics to the current OfS EORR.

UCAS applicants do not constitute the full HE student cohort at HCA, as there are some direct applicants. Our data sets are small, and so UCAS data does not currently provide a fully robust indicator of performance. Enrolment forms from Autumn 2025 onwards have been adapted to capture the range of UCAS data needed to further assess performance for students from identified at-risk socio-economic backgrounds, such as first in family, free school meals and commuter students. This will also support HCA in further identifying intersections of risk. Further developing our data maturity is a management objective for HCA.

2.0 Gaps in Performance

Gaps in performance are identified below.

2.1 Access

2.1.1 Ethnicity

Data from the OfS dashboard shows significant gaps in access between White students and those from other ethnic backgrounds. Aggregated data across four years to 2023 shows that 2.8pp of students enrolling at HCA are mixed, 97.2% of students are white and data for Black and Asian students is suppressed due to low numbers. The most recent internal data shows small incremental improvements in performance, but HCA's performance remains far below the national benchmarking data for enrolments of Black and Asian ethnic groups. Across Herefordshire, 1.2% of people identify as Asian, 0.3% of people as Black and 1.1% as Mixed.¹ Students enrolled across the sector in Design, creative and performing arts include 6.2% identifying as Mixed, 4.6% as Asian and 4.5% as Black².

One reason for a small proportion of Black, Asian, or mixed students enrolling at HCA is geography. Government statistics⁴² show that urban areas tend to be more ethnically diverse than rural areas and internal data shows that HCA attracts around 68% of students from environments that can be coded as 'rural'.

Whilst HCA recruits primarily from the local community it is situated in the West Midlands, which has significant pockets of more ethnically diverse population and recruits on a national level. Although the local demographic and HCA's specialism are contributory factors to a lack of students enrolling who identify as Black, Asian, or Mixed, HCA recognises the value of diversity in the creative arts, and its role in driving awareness of the creative arts as a viable professional career and Hereford as an inspiring and inclusive place to study.

2.1.3 Students from low-income households

The OfS APP data dashboard shows a small downwards trend in students from low-income families accessing creative higher education at HCA. HCA is 2pp below the sector average for students in receipt of free school meals accessing higher education. Although this is not a statistically significant amount given the size of the data sets, HCA's geographical context highlights its situation as having the potential to significantly support social justice in the local area.

Department of Education data from 2022-23 shows that just 17.4% of boys and 22% of girls eligible for free school meals in Herefordshire achieve grades of 5 and above⁵ and that two secondary schools within HCA's catchment area, situated in or close to areas in the lowest IMD decile, are graded 'requires improvement'. One of these has a much higher than average proportion of students in receipt of free school meals (35.1%). Within these schools only 20% of disadvantaged students achieve grades of 5 and above in English and maths.

HCA recognises that the causal relationship between child poverty and educational outcomes is well established, with children from lower-income households less likely to achieve than their more affluent peers. This results in unequal life chances and futures, with children growing up in poverty earning less as adults. HCA also recognises that children and adults living in households in the lowest 20% income bracket in Great Britain are two to three times more likely to develop mental health problems than those in the highest.

⁴² Key findings, Statistical Digest of Rural England, 2024

Evidence also shows that income is linked to socio-economic status and that students with higher Socio-economic status (SES) positions are more likely to be studying creative subjects than those with lower SES are offered fewer opportunities to engage with cultural opportunities such as museum visits whilst at school or college ⁴⁴

2.1.4 Care Experienced Students

Data from the OfS risk register suggests that around 14% of care experienced students will progress to Higher Education. HCA recruits very low numbers of care leavers, which equate to this national picture, but mean that data is volatile and must be suppressed. HCA has a well-articulated package of support listed on Propel and a named care leavers contact and will continue to pro-actively support care leavers applications. Although HCA recognises that it has a role to play in encouraging and supporting students from this group, since there are acutely low numbers from this group this will be achieved through raising awareness of this offer through outreach activities rather than developing a targeted intervention.

2.1.5 Children from military families

Research from UCAS and the Service Children's Progression Alliance suggests that proportionally fewer children from Armed Forces families progress to HE than their peers – the participation rate across all subject ranges is estimated by UCAS to be 24% (compared to a national average of 43%). In 202/23 OfS data noted⁴³ just over 6.4% of all students enrolled in creative arts subjects. If service experienced students enrol in creative subjects at this rate, then their participation rate at all providers in creative subjects would be 1.5%. HCA is in an area with a higher than typical population of service children, and recruitment of service children the most recent internal data shows the proportion of service experienced students at HCA to be 8.4%. Given the noted lower participation rate of this group in HE, enrolment at HCA could be seen as strong. Internal data shows no significant gaps in continuation but a gap in attainment for this group of students. However, raw numbers are very small and course leader and student consultation did not highlight any pattern or trend of risk for this group, with only 22% of students consulted thinking they required extra support (the lowest proportion of all groups identified as potentially requiring targeted interventions).

HCA recognises the stresses on children from military families outlined in the Service Children's Progression Alliance and has developed new degree pathways with a focus on digital technology. These aim to appeal to a wider audience than the more traditional arts pathways. Interventions for our APP have been designed so that they have potential to have a positive impact for all at-risk groups and although HCA recognises it has potential to have an impact on recruiting from this group, this will be managed through sharing good practice guidance with outreach teams rather than a specific intervention project targeted at this at-risk group.

2.2 On-course: Attainment

Due to small numbers of students with certain at-risk characteristics, data around student attainment is frequently volatile and dependent on cohort. Where data is available, HCA's performance is good for mature students, but there are gaps in performance for disabled students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Some 'at risk' categories are not represented on the OfS data dashboard (due to low numbers) and although HCA has made substantial

⁴³ [What do HE students study? | HESA](#) 188,535 out of 2,937,155 students in HE (22/23 data) enrolled in creative arts degrees.

progress in our use of data to highlight areas of risk since previous iterations of the APP, further growing our internal data maturity is an ongoing commitment in our APP.

2.2.1 Students with a disability, additional or complex needs

Aggregated data from the OfS data dashboard⁴⁴ shows that 58.1% of the student intake for HCA (as opposed to 18.3% for the sector overall) declare a disability on enrolment, and a 10.5pp gap in attainment for this group of students. This group includes those with both formally diagnosed and self-diagnosed disabilities, some of which are long term and some temporary or intermittent.

The Access and Participation Plan risk register shows that disabled students are at increased risks across the student lifecycle. Students with this characteristic ranked awareness of mental health support slightly lower than students without this characteristic. However, 93% of disabled students indicated awareness of mental health support, which is ahead of sector benchmarks.

The most recent ILR data (2023) shows a drop in attainment for disabled students and most recent internal Student Engagement survey (HCA, 2024) also suggests that there has been a drop in achievement from students from this group, with a gap of 8pp around students who self-declare a disability feeling they possessed sufficient meta-cognitive strategies to support them during their course. Additionally, students self-declaring mental health concerns were highlighted through staff and student consultation as being students with characteristics which most could benefit from support from strategic interventions. Based on evidence from the student consultation, together with the recent decline in attainment for this group reflected in degree-awarding data from 2023 HCA has flagged disabled student attainment as a risk.

Interventions for HCA's APP have been designed so that they have potential to have a positive impact for all at-risk groups and so a college-wide approach will be used to deliver interventions for this group, at the same time as tracking how far these have a positive effect on performance for students who self-declare as disabled.

2.2.2 Students from low-income households

APP aggregated data over four years shows a gap in attainment of 24.6pp for students who were in receipt of free school meals and a 11.1pp gap for students from IMD quintile 1 when compared to quintile 5. This is a worsening picture that is corroborated by internal data. Lower income was perceived as a risk to attainment for course leaders, and low income was stressed as an area which required further support during the student consultation.

HCA commits to using data more effectively to both use FSM (Free School Meals) data as a primary indicator of lower socio-economic background, track Socio-economic classification as an indicator of performance and identify where intersections of additional risk impact most heavily in student performance when students are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Data from course leader and student consultation suggested that students with intersections of lower socio-economic background with commuting and caring responsibilities were particularly at risk, and HCA has developed an intervention strategy that can be targeted at supporting students to gain external support, thus supporting students with multiple risk factors as well as the broader data around socio-economic background.

⁴⁴ 2022/23 OfS data

Likewise, as we grow data maturity within the institution we can discover more about the impact of intersectional risk. For example, an initial scoping project which analysed a sample of 'first in family' data (2020-21 dataset) suggested that this was a characteristic which might affect attainment and continuation rates for students and supporting a sense of belonging for students who are 'first in family' will influence the design of HCA's interventions.

2.3 On-course: Continuation

2.3.1 Mature Students

OfS data dashboard data shows a 3.4pp gap in continuation for mature students. Statistics around the wider performance of mature students suggest that a gap in continuation for mature students is due to intersections of maturity with other characteristics, including disability. ILR data confirms this picture, with 85% of mature students withdrawing in 2022/23 also self-declaring a disability.

TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) data shows a 1.5pp difference between older mature students and benchmarks. Internal data (four years of data from the HCA Student Engagement Survey) shows an ongoing trend around more positive student engagement for mature students than for younger students, again suggesting that the evidence available suggests that the gap in performance for mature students is due to intersections of at-risk characteristics rather than age. HCA's internal student engagement survey methodology was changed in 2024 to adopt standardised sector tools around student belonging and metacognition. Using TASO standardised question sets around student 'belonging' in 2024, mature students show a positive gap of +20pp in terms of their sense of belonging. Therefore, the gap in continuation reflected on the OfS data dashboard reflects a mixed picture in terms of mature student withdrawals at HCA.

When considering intersections of at-risk characteristics, students self-declaring mental health concerns were highlighted through Access and Participation Plan staff and student consultation as being the group of students most significantly at risk of withdrawal. Internal evidence from a small-scale research project which looked at four years of withdrawal data indicates that students self-declaring mental health concerns and intersections of this characteristic with other at-risk characteristics (most particularly family commitments) as being particularly at risk of withdrawal.

HCA therefore has identified mature disabled students, and particularly those self-declaring mental health issues and with extra caring responsibilities as an at-risk group which would benefit from a planned and evaluated intervention. As part of this intervention HCA commits to finding out further how far intersections of additional at-risk characteristics increase the risk of withdrawing for disabled students.

Interventions for our APP have been designed so that they have potential to have a positive impact for all at-risk groups and so a college-wide approach will be used to deliver interventions for this group, at the same time as tracking how far these have a positive effect on performance for students who self-declare as disabled.

2.3.2 Disabled Students

The OfS data dashboard shows a gap of 5.3pp in continuation rates for disabled students when aggregated over four years. Internal evidence⁷ indicates that students self-declaring mental health concerns and intersections of this characteristic with other at-risk characteristics (most particularly family commitments) as being particularly at risk of withdrawal.

Internal evidence⁷ indicates that students self-declaring mental health concerns and intersections of this characteristic with other at-risk characteristics (most particularly family commitments) as being particularly at risk of withdrawal.

Given HCA's evidence around the intersection of disability with maturity, we have identified this as a risk which affects mature students with intersections of disability and consider this an area for targeted interventions which can then be evaluated.

2.4 On-course: Completion

2.4.1 Mature Students

OfS data dashboard shows a 5pp gap in completion rates between mature and younger students. As other external and internal data shows that mature students are more engaged with their studies than younger students, we believe that, as with continuation rates, this is due to intersections of risk rather than maturity as a sole risk. Evidence suggests that one of these intersections of risk is mental health (see 'Continuation'). Another may be additional caring responsibilities. Internal data which looked at four years of withdrawal forms found that 'family commitments' accounted for 16% of withdrawals during that period.

Although HCA does not currently track students with caring responsibilities, internal evidence from a TEF student consultation survey also showed that 27% of students surveyed agreed that they had extra caring responsibilities and commitments. Statistics from the Office for National Statistics suggest that additional informal caring responsibilities impact people aged in their fifties and sixties more than in other population demographics.

External research from Age UK (2019) shows that Herefordshire is situated in an area of low point density of social care and the 2021 census showed that Herefordshire has an older population than nationally, with around a quarter (26%) of the resident population aged 65 or over, compared with 19% in England & Wales (Understanding Herefordshire, 2023).

Data from the APP student consultation showed that 94% of students felt students with extra caring responsibilities would benefit from extra support and HCA will take this, alongside intersections of mental health and maturity (see 'Continuation'), into account when developing strategies to support completion rates for mature students.

2.4.2 Students from low-income households

The OfS APP data dashboard also shows an -2.5pp difference in performance of students from IMD quintile 1 when compared to those from IMD 5. HCA doesn't track IMD internally but has to this point tracked POLAR4 data which indicates risk in this area. 4 Year aggregated OfS dashboard data shows a gap of 7.8pp in completion for students in receipt of free school meals and 5.1pp for disabled students, suggesting that socio-economic status is only one possible causal factor for the gap in completion rates for students from lower IMD quintiles.

POLAR data is frequently used as an indicator of university participation by local area and in the case of this risk is supported by internal data from 2020-21 which shows a gap in continuation rates for first in family students. HCA will be tracking the progress of first in family students using enrolment data from 2025 onwards.

Student consultation data shows that students with lower incomes were a key area to consider for intervention. FSM data did not show an aggregated gap in continuation of 6.1pp, there is also

volatile performance of students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 which is another indicator of low-income household. Therefore, HCA feels that low income must be taken into consideration as an indicator of risk for this group, particularly when there are intersections of other risk factors.

HCA's interventions for this iteration of the Access and Participation plan have been designed to work in a holistic way and support growing data maturity within the organisation and intervention design will be such that this group of students can not only be supported but their progress mapped to intersectional data.

2.5 Progression

HCA's progression statistics for all students are lower than those of the sector and for some student characteristics data is suppressed on the OfS data dashboard due to low numbers. The social mobility commission (2021) highlights that 52% of the creative workforce come from higher socio-economic backgrounds, that those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less mobile, and over half the creative organisations in the country are concentrated in London and the southeast.

Additionally, HCA has a high proportion of graduates who are mature and internal data shows that many graduates undertake informal caring responsibilities. This may prevent students physically relocating to areas with a higher proportion of available graduate jobs¹⁴.

Many students in the creative arts follow a portfolio career pathway (Handy, 1994) meaning they will begin with several income streams, for example, working as a freelance illustrator whilst working in a part-time teaching role or in a service industry. There is relative availability of lower-paid work in Herefordshire and if acute financial need is present many students may default to a background position of taking on lower-paid roles whilst continuing to build their creative portfolio.

HCA's data shows gaps in performance for students with certain characteristics that align with research findings into the inequalities inherent within arts and cultural organisations and act as confirmation that HCA has a strong role to play in supporting social justice not just for its own students from at-risk categories, but the wider sector.

2.5.1 Students from low-income households

Although data on those in receipt of Free School Meals is suppressed on the OfS data dashboard, using IMD as a proxy measure shows that students from IMD quintile 1 perform significantly less well post-graduation, showing a gap of 9.8pp between those graduates and graduates from quintile 5.

The EORR evidence that poorer outcomes are a risk for students who come from a background with a low household income. Student consultation also highlighted students from lower-income households as requiring extra support, particularly when there are intersections of risk such as caring responsibilities and supporting students with this characteristic is a strategic theme in HCA's Access and Participation Plan.

2.5.2 Disabled Students

APP data shows a 3.9pp gap between outcomes for students declaring a disability as opposed to students not declaring a disability aggregated over 4 years. Internal evidence from course leaders and student consultation suggests that students who self-declare mental health issues may be

particularly at risk, which aligns with research cited on the EORR around outcomes for students with this characteristic.

Government statistics show that the disability employment rate is lower for disabled people with a mental health condition and that disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to be working in lower-skilled occupations, part-time, self-employed or for a small employer.

HCA has a crucial role to play in supporting the creative futures of disabled graduates.

2.6 Areas of risk for student groups where there is little or no data available

Where student numbers, even when using aggregated data over four years, are so low that there is little or no data available, and where internal data and evidence from course leaders could suggest no pattern or trend, HCA used a consultation approach to identify risk. 66% of students involved in the consultation felt that students whose gender is different from it was at birth needed extra support, and 58% of students felt that students from non-academic backgrounds (a previous iteration of APP risk category) might need extra support.

HCA has designed some interventions to support a whole-college approach, and this design choice addresses the need to support students with some at-risk characteristics even when numbers are too low to use data to fully understand gaps or trends.

3.0 Summary and Recommendations

Despite HCA's scale, themes, and patterns of where HCA might benefit from interventions targeted to support students with characteristics can be found within the data.

3.1 Access

Students from Black, Asian, Mixed, or 'Other' backgrounds are underrepresented at HCA. Whilst the lack of ethnic diversity within the region will contribute to this, HCA seeks to further diversify its student intake through the strategic activity detailed in the plan, engaging in outreach activities with schools who have a higher proportion of Black, Asian, Mixed or 'other' students than the average in Herefordshire.

Given the geographic context of HCA within an area close to areas of acute rural deprivation, it has a strategic role in supporting a very local population by offering students from low-income household's a pathway to HE and works to achieve this through the activities detailed in this plan.

Where student numbers are very low, such as for care-experienced students and those from military families, HCA recognises its role in supporting access to HE but will engage with this through whole college activity, whilst developing data practice to fully capture the trajectories of these students.

3.2 On-Course

A significant proportion of mature students study at the institution along with a very high proportion of students with reported disability. The student consultation agreed with all data findings and highlighted the need to develop interventions to support students with limited incomes, neurodiverse students, and self-declared disabled students who are waiting for external assessment and support.

The assessment also showed how intersections of risk, such as commuting students and students who are also carers, may be important indicators in spotting risk and using resources to support those most at risk. To fully engage with this, data practice must be further developed at the institution to make it easier to record and track students with multiple intersections of risk.

Consultation revealed that although some groups of students have acutely low numbers and cannot be represented in the data, it is ethically important that the risks they face are not discounted or overlooked as risks. This critical point has influenced the design of our interventions, which has been designed so that very small groups of students can still access and benefit from tier two support, even if they are out of the scope for specific intervention strategies.

The assessment found wider patterns and trends, most particularly highlighting HCA's role in supporting students who are from low-income households and disabled students (particularly those self-declaring mental health issues and those who self-identified during the student consultation as neurodiverse).

3.3 Progress

Assessment shows that HCA has a significant strategic role to play in supporting students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and disabled students to thrive in arts and creative careers. This represents significant challenges due to geographical location but aligns with the wider strategic trajectory of HCA to be 'rooted in place, connected to the world.'

With significantly high numbers of students who are disabled, mature and have intersections of risk attending HCA, it is important that these students are supported on to fulfilling and rewarding post-graduate pathways. As such, the plan develops and deploys a range of approaches which inform the design of interventions on-course as well as specifically for graduates to ensure that students have the best chance to thrive post-graduation in their chosen trajectory.

Annex B: Further information that sets out the rationale, assumptions and evidence base for each intervention strategy that is included in the access and participation plan.

This section offers further underpinning evidence used in developing HCA's intervention strategy and the rationale and assumptions related to the underlying theory of change which applies to each intervention strategy.

Intervention Strategy 1: Co-designing, developing, and delivering bespoke learning programmes and teacher CPD to targeted schools and colleges

OfS statistics clearly show an unequal progression (to HE) rate between students in receipt of free school meals and those who are not in receipt of free school meals. Although FSM is one indicator only of low-income household, all evidence suggests that there are gaps in educational attainment and university participation.

The 'State of the Nation' report (Gov, 2022) states:

"Educational attainment gaps between pupils from higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds have narrowed, especially at key stages 2 and 4. The

gaps between professional and working-class backgrounds for both university participation and degree attainment have also narrowed.”

In the 2023 report *Creative Majority* from King’s College London, the inequalities of those with lower socio-economic status in creative higher education are also highlighted. Students with higher socio-economic status (SES) positions are more likely to be studying creative subjects than those with lower SES and are offered fewer opportunities to engage with cultural opportunities such as museum visits whilst at school or college.

The Cultural Learning Alliance (2017) highlights connections between improved outcomes and participation in creative education. The report's findings include that participation in the arts can increase cognitive abilities by 17%, improve attainment in maths and English and improve participation in higher education, stating:

- Learning through arts and culture develops skills and behaviour that lead children to do better in school
- Students from low-income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree
- Employability of students who study arts subjects is higher and they are more likely to stay in employment
- People who take part in the arts are 38% more likely to report good health.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) suggests, based on 80 studies, and with an evidence strength as ‘moderate’ that there is some evidence to suggest a causal link between arts education and the use of arts-based approaches with overall educational attainment. The EEF defines arts participation as “involvement in artistic and creative activities, such as dance, drama, music, painting, or sculpture. It can occur either as part of the curriculum or as extra-curricular activity”, suggesting that any bespoke activity designed to support outcomes, be this delivered inside or outside the arts curriculum has the potential to be of value for disadvantaged students.

The context of Herefordshire suggests that wider participation in the arts is critical to support those living in areas of socio-economic deprivation. Department of Education data from 2022-23 shows that just 17.4% of boys and 22% of girls eligible for free school meals in Herefordshire achieve Grade 5 and above. Two secondary schools within HCA’s catchment area, situated in or close to areas in the lowest IMD decile, are graded ‘requires improvement’. One of these has a much higher than average proportion of students in receipt of free school meals (35.1%). Within these schools only 20% of disadvantaged students achieve grades of 5 and above in English and maths.

Therefore, HCA feels there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a small-scale multi-intervention outreach targeted at schools and colleges with a higher-than-average proportion of learners in receipt of free school meals has the potential for successful impact on progression to Higher Education for these learners, even if not all learners engaged in the outreach interventions enrol on specifically creative arts courses.

This intervention strategy included participatory, co-created approaches. Participatory design techniques vary depending on use cases, but they have been shown to be effective in a range of contexts, including healthcare (Holmid, 2012). HCA intends to work closely with partners and design bespoke programmes based on what target schools and colleges feel would best benefit

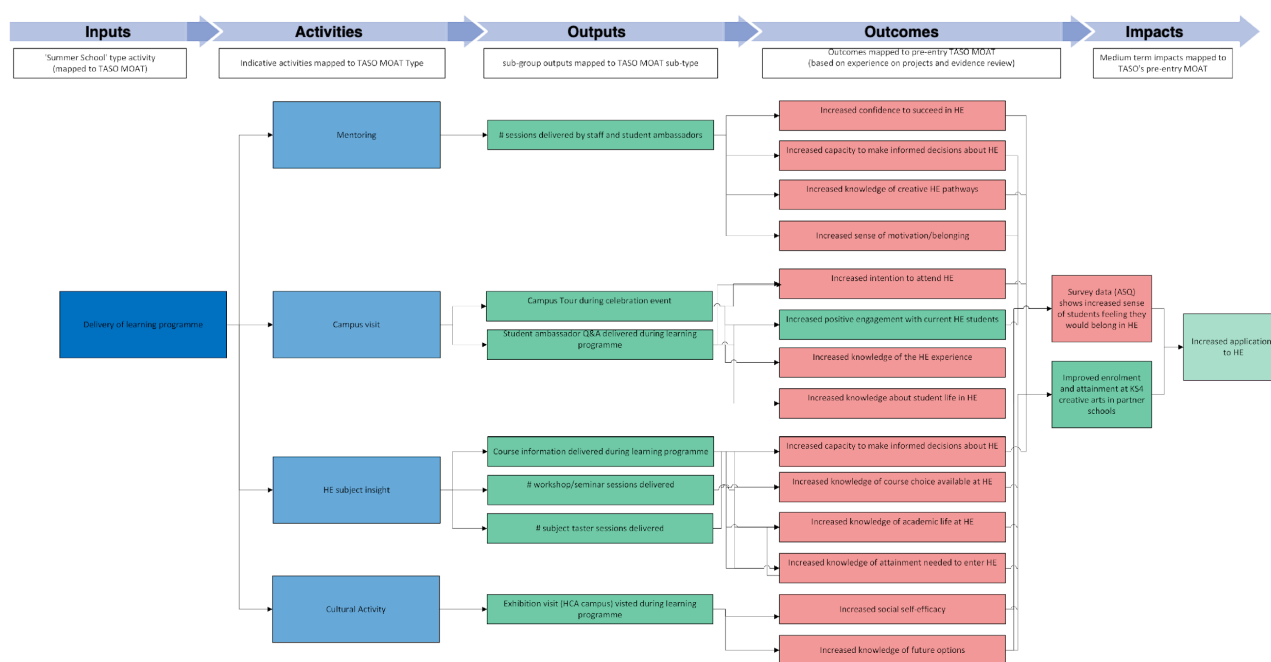
their staff and learners and therefore participatory design techniques are a viable and productive choice of method which hopes to increase engagement from those involved in outreach projects.

A first iteration of a theory of change document is drafted below. However, this will be added to and enhanced theory of change documents developed as the intervention progresses. These documents will also support analysis and evaluation of how far outcomes have been achieved and 'what works' in the context of HCA's outreach and recruitment initiatives.

The diagram below uses TASO's pre-entry Mapping Outcomes and Activities tool to provide a standardised approach. It adapts the 'Summer School' activity type as this is the closest overarching activity to the intervention activity proposed, and the clustered activity sub-types match this activity more precisely.

We have not included resourcing requirements or delivery details in this enhanced Theory of Change document as these are already outlined in our plan, but instead focused on the outcomes and outputs that the intervention wishes to achieve.

1.2. Enhanced theory of change diagram



Intervention Strategy 2: Designing, developing, and delivering an intervention 'hub' to provide small group 'Tier Two' support for disabled students

OfS statistics highlight that disabled students are at increased risk of lower attainment and continuation. The OfS risk register suggests that disabled students are at risk of Risk Six, Insufficient Academic Support, and Risk Seven, Insufficient Personal Support.

HCA's consistently high NSS scores and internal student engagement survey data suggest that disabled students at HCA are, in the majority, happy with the academic support they receive. Student consultation as part of the Access and Participation Plan process, together with an analysis of the support that is currently provided by HCA suggests that there is a gap in 'tier two' provision for students; crisis support is available, as is excellent whole college support, but students would like to have a space where they can access a friendly chat, signpost to external

support and a 'little bit extra'. Some students talked of how difficult it was to muster the courage to seek out extra support, and others spoke of the importance of raising staff awareness of disability in a non-generic way. Others said that at times they wished to access one-to-one crisis support but did not feel that they 'should,' and that extra chats with course tutors or similar staff would be a nice addition to their studies.

Similarly, students spoke of the financial pressures that can exacerbate health conditions, including for those who had extra caring responsibilities and/or had to commute to college. These 'extra pressures' also prevented students from engaging with social activities, or trips, as these were too expensive.

HCA is a human-scale institution, which offers a highly personal learning experience. However, many students face significant financial barriers which may impact on their ability to access extra-curricular activities. Data from the NSS survey as well as from the student consultation suggests that small, social support groups, delivered close to course areas or in dedicated safe spaces might be welcomed by students on low incomes or with intersections of 'at risk' characteristics which have the potential for disabling access to, for example, evening social events run by the NUS (National Union of Students).

Dubber (2023) presents a compelling argument for the benefits of Student Union groups in improving the outcomes of students, and in particular promoting students' wellbeing.

Students at HCA work within small groups (from between 5-25 students) and have frequent access to formal and informal one to one support from academic, workshop and professional services staff. Access to personalised support was not mentioned during the student consultation as a risk element, nor does it feature in quality assurance surveys or other internal datasets. Therefore, evidence suggests that access to activities delivered outside of the curriculum area have the potential to encourage students to self-support. Approaches such as using action learning methodologies are relevant to risk seven which this is the focus of this intervention. This is triangulated by the student consultation, who also mentioned the possible benefits of peer mentoring, which has been written into the intervention.

This intervention has been broadly designed so that the needs of many different students can be met through the provision of the hub. For example, there is some evidence (Dickinson, WonkHE) around the benefits of students having access to discipline specific informal groups, and the creation of non-formal discipline specific groups was strongly supported by students during the student consultation exercise for the APP. Supporting and directly facilitating the creation of student-led discipline specific groups (for example, a 'drawing club' run by illustration students) will, again supported strongly by student consultation, may be a positive element of the intervention.

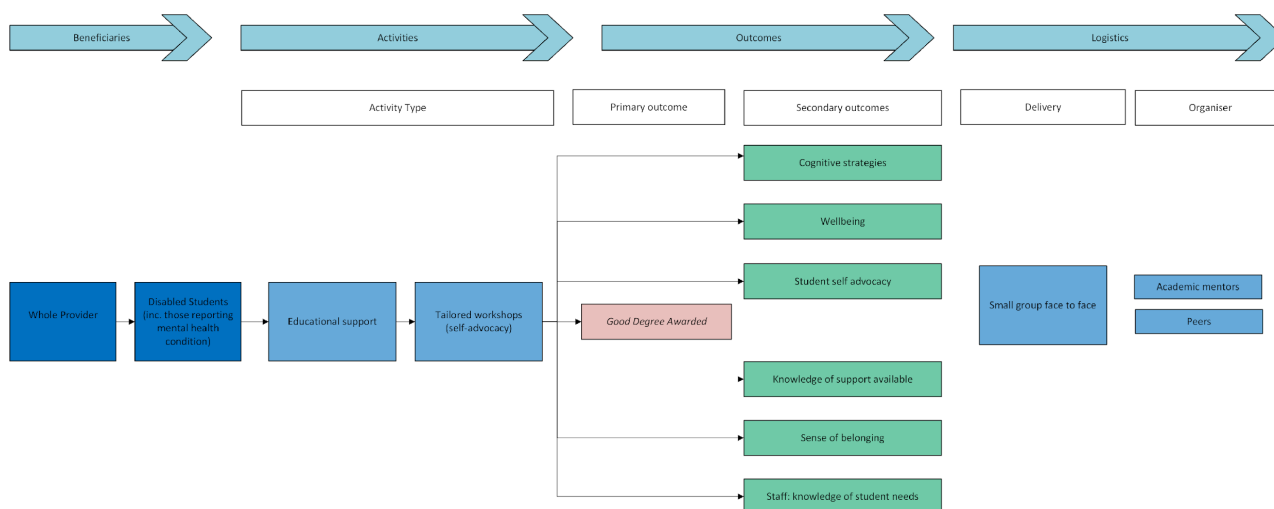
Using TASO's mapping and outcomes tool (MOAT), this intervention aligns with many of the suggested activities, including those that fall under the grouping of 'extra-curricular activities,' and, in developing a 'hub' space, 'learning environment' and which contribute to the development of enhanced culture and community development through providing co-designed skills workshops.

Similar to Intervention One, it is hoped that by enabling students to have direct input into exactly how the small group activities are organised and by supporting students to self-advocate, the design of the intervention aligns with participatory design techniques and supports meta-cognition

and self-regulation. Supporting meta-cognition and self-regulation is recognised by the EEF as having a potentially very high impact for very low cost based on extensive evidence.

It is hoped that through investing in students and providing them with a facilitated safe place in which to access support but also develop student-led initiatives, HCA's intervention will not foster a culture of dependency but instead create a virtuous cycle which empowers students to story-tell, lead and thrive in the complex landscape of Higher Education and after they graduate.

An indicative theory of change document is provided below, but this will be worked on further to support evaluation of the intervention.



Intervention Strategy 3: Creating an enhanced Launchgrad network by collaborating with local third-party organisations to enhance the support available for disabled students' post-graduation

Working in collaboration with local and national third-party organisations to support student experience is an approach taken by the Office for Students, for example when launching collaborative projects to find out more about how student mental health might be improved.

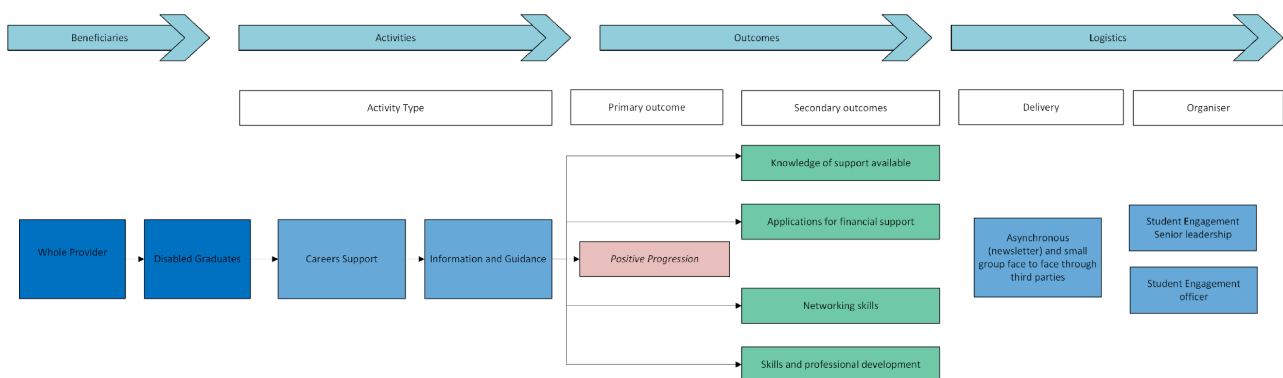
John Blake has also frequently called on collaboration as a way forward to support access and participation and Baloch, writing in WonkHE, cites examples of practice where the involvement of external organisations has had a positive effect, stating: "where priority populations are very small or have specialist support needs, interventions delivered through third sector partners are likely to have a greater impact and offer economies of scale".

As a small college, HCA does not have the capacity to build, for example, additional workshop facilities aimed at supporting graduates, and safeguarding requirements mean that access to HCA specialist facilities is challenging once students have graduated. However, workshop space and access to facilities is crucial to the success of creative graduates, particularly those pursuing a crafts career. Through developing collaborations with local crafts organisations and new co-working spaces such as Bloomspace and working collaboratively with local economic hubs, HCA can further support graduates who wish to enter self-employment. By working with local creative networking groups such as The Hereford Herd, graduates will be able to expand their professional networks more swiftly, and disabled graduates will be able to access more robust IAG following graduation.

Similarly, HCA seeks to collaborate with local industry groups to enable better networking for those graduates who wish to join local industry following graduation, and work with third parties to expand existing short course provision so that graduates and local business can have access to CPD activities following graduation.

TASO's evidence toolkit suggests that better information and guidance post-entry might support disabled learners and this further development of Launchgrad will enable HCA's graduate support programme to add to the available IAG available whilst supporting graduates to engage with wider social networks.

This intervention aims to be evidence-led in its development, with a 360 working group formed to steer how collaborations will operate. An enhanced theory of change which draws on TASO's resources for student engagement will be further adapted following the development of the intervention.



Dubber (2023) ^[OBJ] presents a compelling argument for the benefits of Student Union groups in improving the outcomes of students, and in particular promoting students' wellbeing. There is some evidence (Dickinson, WonkHE)⁴⁵ around the benefits of students having access to discipline specific informal groups, and the creation of non-formal discipline specific groups was strongly supported by students during the student consultation exercise for the APP.

⁴⁵ <https://wonkhe.com/blogs-sus/school-plays-sell-out/>

Annex C: Targets, investment, and fees

The OfS will append the information from the fees, investment, and targets document when an access and participation plan is published.

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Hereford College of Arts

Provider UKPRN: 10003022

Summary of 2025-26 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflation statement:

We will not raise fees annually for new entrants

Table 3b - Full-time course fee levels for 2025-26 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree		N/A	9000
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 3b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2025-26

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Table 4b - Part-time course fee levels for 2025-26 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree		N/A	4625
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2025-26

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Hereford College of Arts

Provider UKPRN: 10003022

Investment summary

A provider is expected to submit information about its forecasted investment to achieve the objectives of its access and participation plan in respect of the following areas: access, financial support and research and evaluation. Note that this does not necessarily represent the total amount spent by a provider in these areas. Table 6b provides a summary of the forecasted investment, across the four academic years covered by the plan, and Table 6d gives a more detailed breakdown.

Notes about the data:

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.

Yellow shading indicates data that was calculated rather than input directly by the provider.

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

"Total access investment funded from HFI" refers to income from charging fees above the basic fee limit.

"Total access investment from other funding (as specified)" refers to other funding, including OFS funding (but excluding Uni Connect), other public funding and funding from other sources such as philanthropic giving and private sector sources and/or partners.

Table 6b - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£21,000	£21,000	£21,000	£21,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£66,000	£73,000	£80,000	£87,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£13,000	£13,000	£13,000	£13,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£6,000	£6,000	£6,000	£6,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£21,000	£21,000	£21,000	£21,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment (as % of HFI)	2.3%	2.0%	1.8%	1.7%
Access activity investment	Total access investment funded from HFI (£)	£16,000	£16,000	£16,000	£16,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£50,000	£55,000	£60,000	£65,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£16,000	£18,000	£20,000	£22,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£66,000	£73,000	£80,000	£87,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)	7.1%	7.1%	6.9%	7.1%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£13,000	£13,000	£13,000	£13,000
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)	1.4%	1.3%	1.1%	1.1%

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Hereford College of Arts

Provider UKPRN: 10003022

Targets

Table 5b: Access and/or raising attainment targets

Aim [500 characters maximum]	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
Objective 1: Increase the number of students from Black, Asian, Mixed, or 'Other' backgrounds	PTA_1	Access	Ethnicity	Other ethnicity		Since aggregated numbers of Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnicities are low, this target is an aggregated target to support diversity in the arts Due to small population sizes HCA uses four year's of aggregated data to set baseline targets and sets targets against the local context of college. This data target uses ILR (internal) data as a source and the target percentage refers to the years intake not the whole college population. HCA will monitor aggregated data.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2022-23	Percentage points	2.8%	3.5%	4.8%	6%	7%
Objective 2: Increase the enrolment of students who are eligible for free school meals	PTA_2	Access	Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)	Eligible		Due to small population sizes HCA uses four years of aggregated data to set baseline targets. HCA will monitor aggregated data alongside annual data to assess progress.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2022-23	Percentage	17.1%	17.4%	18%	18.5%	19%
Objective 3: Increase the enrolment of students who are from IMD quintile 1	PTA_3	Access	Deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivations (IMD))	IMD quintile 1	Other (please specify in description)	HCA, like the sector has seen a downturn in the proportion of enrolments from IMD quintile 1 since 2019/20. This target's comparator will be IMD quintile 1 as a proportion of our overall student population. HCA will monitor aggregated data alongside annual data to assess progress.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2022-23	Percentage	14.7%	15%	16%	18%	20%
	PTA_4														
	PTA_5														
	PTA_6														
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
Close the gap in continuation for disabled students	PTS_1	Continuation	Reported disability	Disability reported	No disability reported	Due to small population sizes HCA uses four years of aggregated data to set baseline targets.	No	The access and participation dashboard	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	5.3%	4%	2.6%	1.1%	0%
Close the gap between disabled students achieving First and Upper Second Class degree grades (attainment) to bring this in line with their peers and whole-sector attainment	PTS_2	Attainment	Reported disability	Disability reported	No disability reported	Due to small population sizes HCA uses four years of aggregated data to set baseline targets.	No	The access and participation dashboard	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	10.5%	9%	7%	4%	0%

[illegible]