

Access and Participation Plan

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1. Assessment of current performance

1.1. Background to Amity

Amity University, London is a small, private, research active higher education provider that offers a portfolio of Higher Education courses at Levels 6, 7, and 8, in the subject area of Business Management. It is part of Amity Global Education Limited which was founded on 1 June 2009 and registered with Companies House as a company limited by shares, which is in turn part of the Ritnand Balved Education Foundation, a leading global higher education group with over 100,000 students, over 240 programmes, and 3,000 researchers and academic staff.

Amity University [IN] London (AU[IL]), the trading name for Amity Global Education Limited, is based in Bedford Square London. AU[IL] has a special agreement with University of London, Birkbeck College under which our students have equal access to learning resources with the University of London students. Such resources include library, IT laboratories, Wi-Fi classrooms, IT desk, student services, clubs, societies and restaurants. Our students are part of Birkbeck College Student Union. AU[IL]'s distinctive features include:

- (1) A close-knit community, where students and staff work together interactively.
- (2) Research-led and research-informed teaching, encouraging independent thinking.
- (3) Final years of most undergraduate final projects contain significant requirements for research/independent working.
- (4) A holistic student experience, contributing to both academic success and a sense of belonging and community.
- (5) Outstanding student resources in an historical location, providing a vibrant learning experience in a secure environment.
- (6) Customised student services based on individual student need.
- (7) A high through-put of students from undergraduate to postgraduate study

Currently, AU[IL] has a franchise agreement with the University of Northampton and a validation agreement with the University of Bolton. Each contract defines clear responsibilities for all parties involved in course delivery.

AU[IL]'s (from now on referred to as Amity) underwent a QAA Higher Education Review in November 2016 with a follow up monitoring visit in 2017 and was judged to meet all expectations across all aspects of the Quality Code. QAA noted in both visits a wide range of good practices highlighting the continuous enhanced student support provided to students. Amity also has a Tier 4 license.

AUL offers a portfolio of programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Business Management subject area. Our courses contribute to key growth sectors and our curriculum is developed in conjunction with employers and sector bodies to ensure that our students are highly employable with the skills, knowledge and capabilities to thrive after graduation.

Amity is exceptionally well placed to provide enhanced learning experience through high quality services and facilities that provide an excellent learning environment for students, the development of employability skills and job opportunities.

In term of student success, with a retention and completion rate of 100% (in 2016/2017). Amity offers to all our students an environment in which they can optimise their academic and personal potential. Our structure supports the creation of cohesive student communities and promotes student personal well-being and personal development. Our Learning and Teaching Strategy aims to develop student's intellectual skills, resilience, self-awareness and self-assurance as well as the ability to form networks

which will help close the social gap for all our graduates. In term of progression, Amity provides students with opportunities to gain experience that will prepare them for employment and better study. As a very small provider, Amity University has not previously submitted an Access Agreement to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Nor is Amity part of UCAS, TEF or providing data to HESA. Thus, there are limitation in our ability to understand the baseline position with regard to the access and participation of students from under-represented groups at Amity. As described below we will be developing a process to collect a comprehensive set of data in relation to students from widening access and participation backgrounds to understand their learning journey through the student lifecycle. In the following section we will outline the characteristics of the student body at Amity with particular reference to widening access, success and progression.

1.2. Widening Access at Amity: assessment of current performance

Table 1: Assessment of current access performance by target group

	2014-2015 percentage	2015-2016 percentage	2016-2017 Percentage
Entrance from low participation neighbourhoods	5	6	10
Disabled students	0.5	0.5	1
Mature students	0.5	1	2
Entrants from BAME backgrounds	2,5	2	3
Care leavers	0.1	0.2	0.2

- Entrance from low participation neighbourhoods

We have made a significant improvement in the recruitment of students from low participation neighbourhoods in the last years, with an increase of 4% in 2016/17 up from 6% in 2015/16. This has been achieved by changes to our recruitment strategy supported by the aspirational bursaries to motivate students to achieve their potential and change focus in how we target access interventions with individual students.

- Disabled students

We continue to make progress in improving access for disabled students. There have been a steady increase in the percentage of entrants with a self-declared disability with 1% of students declared in 2016/2017 compared to 0.5% in 2016/2017. Whilst the number of applications have increased in all types of disability since 2015, this is particularly evident in the number of students presenting with social/communication impairments. Students presenting with a mental condition such as depression or anxiety disorder have increased in the recent years. This has implications for our Wellbeing and support services and we will need to monitor our service structure and resources accordingly.

- Mature students

The percentage of mature entrants has increased from 1% in 2015/2016 to 2% in 2016/2017. We will continue to make efforts to attract mature students in our programme. Mature students usually are favouring vocational subjects; therefore, we will concentrate to develop new progression routes for the mature students. Currently we are not running part-time undergraduate programme due to the lack of demand from students. This may be explained by the proximity of Birkbeck College that is offering only part time and evening classes.

- Entrants from BAME backgrounds

We continue to make progress in building a more ethnically diverse student body increasing the proportion of BAME students from 1.5% in 2015/2016 to 4% in 2016/2017, We acknowledge the proportion of Black students in particular for a London HE provider is still low. We will continue to invest considerable effort and resources to achieve a further progress.

- Care leavers

The percentage of care leavers were observed to be too low to allow a meaningful analysis at this point. We are reviewing our information and procedures to help to understand whether this was an anomaly or whether there are learnings to improve our practice and systems.

Some of our entrant's students have multiple indicators for example our BMI students are likely to be mature and our developing understanding of these characteristics is helpful in shaping strategy and focus of our resources.

As Table 1 illustrates we will need to put in place an ambitious coherent strategy to improve the diversity of our student body. We have though worked hard in recent years to improve the outcomes for these students. As Table 2 illustrates over recent years we have substantially improved the completion rate of our undergraduate students and the retention rate for our first-year undergraduate students.

1.3 Success and progression at Amity: Assessment of current performance

In relation to these stages of the lifecycle, as indicated in Table 2 below we do have data for aspects of performance in relation to the whole of the undergraduate cohort. However, we have in efforts to be as comprehensive as we are able in this area presented the data we have available with regard to the characteristics below:

- Students from proxy-measures of lower socio-economic backgrounds
- Students of from BAME backgrounds
- Mature students
- Disabled students
- Care leavers.

Below we summarise the position in narrative form in relation to these characteristics before presenting the data we have available in Table 2 below:

- Students from proxy-measures of low participation backgrounds

As the table shows students from such backgrounds generally do not perform as well as the overall student body across the areas related to success and progression, although the retention rate is good and comparable with the overall student body.

- Students from BAME backgrounds

Students from BAME backgrounds achieve slightly lower rates of good degrees in 14-15 but then this improves in 15-16. In the year following graduation such students had higher rates of unemployment than those experienced by the whole student body.

- Mature students

Completion rates for mature students resemble those of the remainder of the student population, although the number of students covered here is low.

- Disabled students

As Table 2 below shows, the retention and success performance for disabled students is good but as with mature students it must be stated that the numbers here are low.

- Care leavers

The numbers of care leavers are so low that conducting a meaningful analysis is challenging, but this remains, as is clear in the Plan, an area of the highest priority for Amity.

1.3.1 Success and progression at Amity

It is our priority at Amity to improve the robustness of measures of performance against the characteristics of the student performance above as we recruit more students. As our work in the plan below outlines, focuses on specific characteristics of the student body not the student body per se.

Table 2: Assessment of success and progression

Performance indicator	2012-13 (Percentage)				
	All students	Low-participation	Disabled	Mature	BAME
Completion rates for undergraduate students	64	50	N/A	100	50
Good degree outcomes	No data	No data	N/A	No data	No data
Percentage of students that exit with credit only	18	10	N/A	0	17
Retention rate for our first-year students	72	90	N/A	100	67
Full-time first-degree graduates progressing to highly skilled employment	No data	No data	N/A	No data	No data
Undergraduates in employment within six months of their graduation	No data	No data	N/A	No data	No data

Performance indicator	2013-14(Percentage)				
	All students	Low-participation	Disabled	Mature	BAME

Completion rates for undergraduate students	78	77	N/A	100	67
Good degree outcomes	No data	No data	N/A	No data	No data
Percentage of students that exit with credit only	11	8	N/A	0	17
Retention rate for our first-year students	83	85	N/A	100	100
Full-time first-degree graduates progressing to highly skilled employment	No data	No data	N/A	No data	No data
Undergraduates in employment within six months of their graduation	No data	No data	N/A	No data	No data

Performance indicator	2014-15(Percentage)				
	All students	Low-participation	Disabled	Mature	BAME
Completion rates for undergraduate students	100	100	100	100	100
Good degree outcomes	65	60	100	100	60
Percentage of students that exit with credit only	0	0	0	0	0
Retention rate for our first-year students	91	90	100	100	80
Full-time first-degree graduates progressing to highly skilled employment	65	70	100	100	60
Undergraduates in employment within six months of their graduation	50	60	100	100	60

Performance indicator	2015-16(Percentage)				
	All students	Low-participation	Disabled	Mature	BAME
Completion rates for undergraduate students	100	100	100	100	100
Good degree outcomes	75	67	100	100	75
Percentage of students that exit with credit only	0	0	0	0	0
Retention rate for our first-year students	100	100	100	100	100
Full-time first-degree graduates progressing to highly skilled employment	75	58	100	50	50
Undergraduates in employment within six months of their graduation	88	83	100	100	75

1.4 Student support – pastoral

We have a student support model firmly embedded across all aspects of the student life. It is based around our 'Integrated Support Service' approach which provides specialist support for students who may be experiencing difficulties at key stages across the student lifecycle.

The model is based around approaching pastoral support as the shared responsibility of our specialist **Student Support Service team** and our academic staff. Again, it is our size and our focus on the student which enables us to deliver such a holistic model.

Academic staff deliver on-course academic and pastoral support, including monitoring attendance and coursework hand-in, and work closely with the Student Support Services team to identify students that may be at risk of withdrawing from their studies. These students are contacted by the SET and support is offered and put in place as appropriate. This support is in the form of online self-help resources and via small group workshops and regular drop in sessions. These sessions include:

- academic writing skills i.e. literature reviews, referencing, improving critical writing, assignment planning and dissertation writing tips
- exam preparation sessions;
- support in mathematics and statistics
- student wellbeing and managing anxiety
- managing your finance or managing anxiety
- English Language

Last year we reviewed our support offer for disabled students. This has led us to look at the systematic adaption of inclusive approaches to learning and teaching that support the needs of all students, including:

- (a) improving access to study skills, mentoring and wellbeing support through a single point of contact, the Disability Officer based in the Student Support Services team.
- (b) staff development for all our staff in inclusive approaches to learning and teaching
- (c) new guidance on our support for disabled students available for academic staff and students
- (d) enable our students through the development of critical academic skills and
- (e) the increased provision of learning technologies to support them.

We remain concerned about addressing the needs of students with mental health difficulties, both those who have disclosed disability and those who have not. The University has seen a year on year rise in the number of students seeking support. We have a member of staff with specialist counselling training who is working with colleagues to support vulnerable students.

1.5 Student support – financial

The Finance Officer will provide support and guidance for all students relating to their funding and wider financial situation. In the last two years we have increased the budget allocated for student financial support. Currently the University provides a range of bespoke financial support packages including:

- (a) a bursary of £1000 to all students on the first degree which come from a family where the income is under £25000;

- (b) the 'Atul Scholarship' (named after the founder of Ritnand Balved Education Foundation) is offered to all students with high academic achievement regardless of their background and programme of study;
- (c) hardship funds available for all students in financial difficulty.

2. Ambition, Strategy and Implementation Measures

2.1 Widening Participation and the Amity Mission

Amity is committed to providing higher education to all students who have the potential to benefit from academic study. We welcome the opportunities provided by the new regulatory regime led by the Office for Students (OfS) to realising our ambitions in the area of widening access and participation. Providing higher education for students from all backgrounds and supporting them intensively is inherent to the mission of Amity.

We place great emphasis at Amity on care and support for our students. We have a very small student body because we believe that in the context of who we are and what we can do, maintaining this focus on a small group of students is the best way to ensure they have the highest quality of student experience.

In this section we will outline the Amity Widening Access and Participation Strategy. It has been developed to deliver the ambitions outlined in our Strategic Plan and builds upon and is supported by our all other Amity strategies.

Running through the heart of our Strategic Plan 2018-2023 is our commitment to delivering high quality education that adds value to the social, cultural and economic communities we serve. The strategy highlights the value placed on the rich diversity of our student community and sets out a commitment to offer our students an excellent, personalised experience and a wide range of opportunities, both academic and for their own personal growth. The principles of widening access to our programmes and expertise and supporting students from diverse backgrounds to be successful are core aspects of this commitment.

The strategy takes a holistic approach to widening access and participation, placing it in the context of our Mission Statement and linking it with other strategies in the areas of teaching and learning (for progression and retention) and employability (for employment).

We have very strong ambitions for widening access and participation at Amity. As the higher education market becomes more diverse it is likely that there will be more small providers entering it. We want Amity to be the leading small higher education provider for widening access and participation in England, and a model of good practice in this area for new providers entering the HE market.

To reflect this ambition, we will be investing £50,000 of our own resources in access and participation in 2019-2020 to ensure that there is the appropriate infrastructure and critical mass of activity in the area.

As a University we are committed to the belief that anyone with the talent and potential to succeed should have the opportunity to attend university, regardless of their place of birth, personal circumstances or socio-economic status.

The successful implementation of this Strategy will require collaboration and partnership working, both internally between the Academic Unit, Professional Services and students. This work will be led by an Access and Widening Participation Strategy Group constructed through these groups. We will also place great emphasis on working externally with partners including other universities, colleges,

primary and secondary schools, local authorities, industry and other sector organizations. In addition, we will develop strategies and initiatives which will seek to harness the experiences and skills of our alumni and current student body to provide role models and mentoring to under-represented groups.

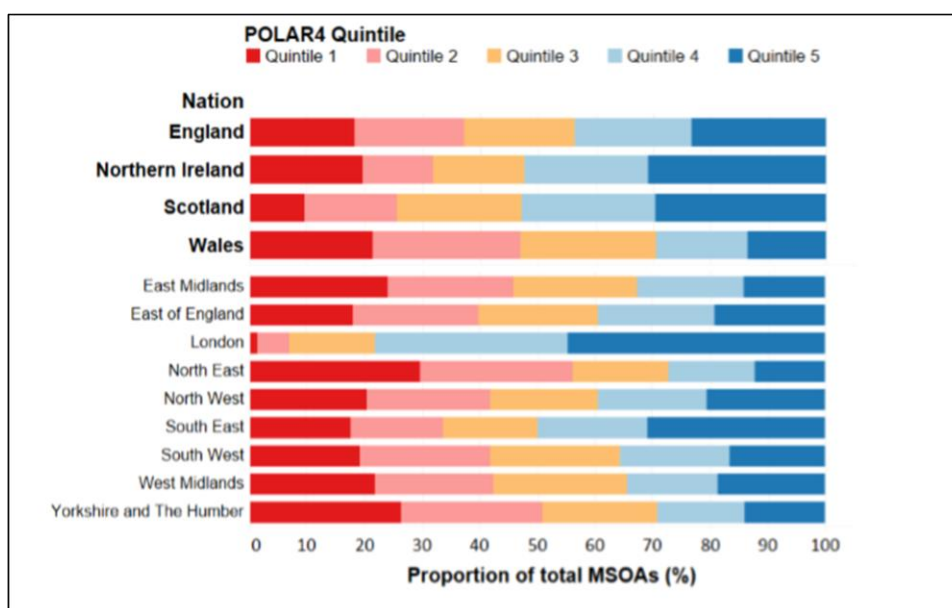
2.2 Widening Access and Participation Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives we are adopting reflect the scale and focus of our ambition:

- To be the leading small higher education provider for widening access and participation in England.
- To be a model of good practice for new providers entering the HE market.
- To be data-informed in all the widening access and participation work that we do
- To provide business focused outreach work to learners in London via sustained and sustainable interventions
- For over 50% of the student body to come from a widening access and participation target group by 2023
- To develop well rounded individuals who can make a difference when they graduate. This means when the students will leave the University they will have a sense of purpose and responsibility and the *appetite for a life-long learning*

2.3 Target groups

There are a number of target groups for widening participation work. Even though our focus on students at Amity mean a small student body, we are committed to encompassing the whole range of under-represented students as far as possible. In addition, as a London based provider who recruit the majority of their students from London, we will have to be mindful of how we target students using proxy measures of under-represented background. The POLAR measure is limited in its effectiveness in identifying specific smaller groups of learners from socio-economic backgrounds under-represented in higher education in London as the vast majority of London wards are located in higher POLAR participation quintiles. As Diagram 1 below shows taken from the October 2017 POLAR 4 report produced by HEFCE, London has an exceptionally small amount of low participation ‘quintile 1’ areas.



The geographical context of London is key in how it shapes our targeting strategy for our widening access and participation work. Alongside our size, it informs our approach to targeting which divides groups of learners by measure of social background/characteristic into Level 1 and Level 2 target groups.

a. Level 1 Target Groups (not in order of priority)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socioeconomic status backgrounds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students of particular ethnicities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mature students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disabled students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care Leavers

b. Level 2 Target Groups (not in order of priority)

- Refugees and the children of refugees
- Applicants from military or ex-military backgrounds, and children from military families with widening participation criteria

2.4 Multiple Equality

While it is possible to allocate individual students to specific target group categories, we know that students, like all members of society, have multiple facets to their identities related to gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background. Hence, while we have target groups as outlined above underlying these groups is understanding of 'multiple equality'. The work by UCAS on developing its Multiple Equality Measure (MEM) is very important here. It illustrates a more granular approach to who is more likely to be excluded from HE. We see MEM as a way of aiding us in enabling our staff to work more effectively with learners who are under-represented in HE.

2.5 Delivering the strategy

In order to meet our objectives, we will put significant additional resource into widening access and participation at Amity. We have created a new post of '*Director of Access and Participation*'. This will be a full-time post with a postholder who has responsibility for access and participation across the whole student Lifecycle. Given our size, to have a full-time member of staff illustrates the level of commitment we have as an organisation to widening access and participation.

To ensure that the Director is effective in their work we will be an exceptionally pro-active in our approach to collaboration in widening access and participation work. We believe that outreach work is by its nature collaborative. It is not in the interest of prospective students to engage in competitive practices at this point which rather than enhancing the information, advice and guidance on offer to prospective students actually confuses them, and duplicates effort needlessly across the sector. Amity is a member of AccessHE which is the largest regional network focussed on widening access and participation in HE in London. AccessHE has 27 HEI/HE provider members working in London and has named AccessHE advocates, who are teachers/support staff, in over 250 schools in the capital. AccessHE supports joint working with schools and colleges across London via its system of AccessHE action forums which are communities of practice bringing together members to enhance their work. Amity will be an active member of these forums looking to achieve its goal of being the

leading small higher education provider for widening access and participation in England by mining the expertise of colleagues in London. AccessHE has action forums in:

- Monitoring and evaluation in widening access work
- Supporting care leavers and estranged students
- Enabling access for disabled students
- Working with student ambassadors
- Access and successful outcomes for learners from BAME backgrounds.

a. Making the holistic approach happen – the Access to Business Education (ABE) Centre

At the centrepiece of our work will be the development of, to our knowledge,¹ the first ‘Access to Business Education’ (ABE) Centre, operating at a London HE provider. ABE will be led by the Director of Access and Participation. All activities related to widening access and participation will run through the Centre. Where success and retention are concerned ABE will work closely with the student experience team. ABE will concentrate on becoming a regional excellence hub for subject specific widening access and participation work in the business subject field. The most innovative aspect of the ABE is that all our academic staff will be part of the centre and all will participate in outreach work, student success and progression activities.

b. Cross-cutting principles

The strategy will be underpinned by 5 cross-cutting principles:

- a strong partnership approach working in collaboration particularly with AccessHE, the largest regional network supporting widening access and participation in HE in the country
- sustained and sustainable interventions, rather than one-off events,
- evaluation and measurement of effectiveness
- whole staff development in widening access and participation work
- the use of data and research which will inform future actions and monitor effectiveness.

2.6 Ambition, Strategy and Implementation Measures for Access

The University will invest 5.2% of the Higher education fee income in outreach and access activities in 2019-2020 (look at duration of plan). This section outlines our work on access in relation to the target groups described above.

a. Students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socioeconomic status backgrounds

Students from BAME backgrounds

Our work in access will be strongly collaborative working with AccessHE. Consistent with our cross-cutting theme sustained and sustainable interventions, rather than one-off events, we are going to work with a defined number of schools/colleges where we can build meaningful relationships. We will work with AccessHE to identify a specific number of up to 20 schools/colleges who admit students with the characteristics described in our Level 1 targeting approach. AccessHE have comprehensive data on the HE progression performance and admissions data as a member we will be able to utilise. It will be co-ordinated by the Director for Access and Participation and delivered by a small team of student ambassadors trained via the AccessHE London Student Ambassador training programme.

¹ We have asked AccessHE to scope out the existence of such a centre in their membership and via their contacts with non-member London HE institutions in May/June 2018. They did not identify a centre such as this.

The programme described above will also allow us to reach parents/carers. We will work with schools to organize a celebration event for learners participating in each programme to which parents/carers will be invited.

Via ABE and our academic staff (who will be part of ABE) we will devise and deliver a 6 intervention programme for each of years 7 – 11 focused on business as a subject in the up to 10 partner schools/colleges with whom we have established relationships. This programme will be available to all partner schools/colleges but we will not be able to offer the whole programme in each school. We will establish in partnership with them where the programme can have the greatest impact in their own particular context. We will aim for each school to work at one of the years 7 – 11, thus delivering one iteration of the programme in each of our 20 schools. The Amity ABE Centre pre 16 outreach programme is described below:

- Year 7/8: What is Higher Education and what is business: these sessions will focus on understanding differences between HE providers, how you get to HE, what subjects are offered and how HE differs from school.
- Year 9: The Amity Challenge: over the course learners will develop their own business idea and learn how going to HE can help you turn that idea into reality. This is a fun and interactive course exclusive to Amity.
- Year 10: Future Focusing: learners will be able to develop core learning skills through working with Amity ambassadors. Each learner will set 4 goals related to possible future careers and via working together will be able to learn how to reach them.
- Year 11²: Skills for Success: these sessions will focus on building core academic skills in a personalized way to help with GCSE success.

In our access work at post 16 we will be working with learners closer to HE admission and the expertise of our academic body will be even more important to the learners. We will still partner with 20 schools/college although their composition may differ to pre16 activities above and we will include some FE colleges in this group. Our work here will have two elements. Our programme will have two elements.

- Advice on studying business in HE: this will constitute a set of 3 sessions looking at the skills necessary to succeed in studying in business at HE, and how to maximize employability chances post HE by what you do in HE.
- The Amity ABE Centre Masterclass Programme: we will work with the partner schools/colleges to identify from across them a cohort of 50 learners who we will offer a coherent 10-week programme of masterclasses linked to A-Level Business Studies which will tap into the global expertise of our academic staff. Each masterclass will look at a different topic delivered in a HE teaching style and will be 90 minutes in length.

b. Mature students

We will work in partnership with AccessHE to contribute to the pan London community outreach initiative. This will mean via ABE enabling Amity staff to contribute to a collaborative 4 session programme of information support delivered across 4 community centres in the central London area.

² Given that this is examination year the programme will only include 4 sessions.

c. Disabled students

We will work with AccessHE here through their Supporting Disabled student's forum. This will mean via ABE participating in the three pan London information events for disabled students and parents. We will also work with local authority partners through AccessHE to ensure that they are aware of the Amity offer and can integrate this awareness into their work with disabled learners.

d. Looked after children & Care Leavers

Again, we will work with the established AccessHE Care Leavers and estranged student's forum. Amity will participate in a collaborative programme of sustained outreach to looked after children established in partnership with virtual schools from 6 local authority areas. This programme will work with a cohort of learners from years 9 – 12 inclusive and our contribution will draw on the work developed above in our pre & post 16 outreach programmes.

2.7 Ambition, Strategy and Implementation Measures for Student Success

Our size and mission allow us to take an exceptionally student focused approach at this stage. We currently provide an extensive tailored transition pre-entry experience to articulating students starting at the University and will undertake the steps needed to expand this to enable all widening participation groups to progress and succeed and achieve graduate level employment. The basis of our approach here will be an **inclusive** one which we believe will benefit **all** target groups. We will ensure that recruitment, selection and admissions processes are fair, transparent and identify the talent and potential of students from all backgrounds. A significant percentage of funds (6.6% from HE fees income) at Amity will be directed towards student success activities including retention. Amity delivers a personalised student experience in a rich, inclusive and diverse environment and to create a sense of identity and belonging and respond to changes in student requirements, learning styles and their different backgrounds

The key elements of this approach are described below:

- Interviewing each student: during the interview we ask specific questions to gain a better insight into their support needs, anxieties or issues.
- Support pre-entry after interview: we contact all students before they arrive to provide reassurance and support and to address any specific needs they may have to put support in place for when they arrive.
- Individualized induction and transition: after a student have accepted a place we follow up with them and develop a personalized approach to induction. Students will not be 'lost' in a vast admission architecture at Amity as can happen at larger institutions. This follow will identify students from widening access and participation backgrounds who will receive additional support via ABE. The first weeks of term are key to ensuring an effective and supported transition into HE.
- Baseline assessments of student need: intelligent use of data will enable Amity to identify where students need support. All students will undergo a baseline assessment of their academic and study skills. We will use this data alongside what research indicates are risk factors where transition/student success is concerned – e.g. commuter student status, socio-

economic background, age, extent of part time working, to build a picture of each student's individual 'potential profile'.

- A strategic, integrated approach: The issues of retention and progression, with particular focus on ABE students, are standing items on all key Amity committees, including the Amity Executive Team, Academic Board and its subcommittees and Amity Governing Body

In the section below, we outline how our approach will be differentiated by social background:

a. Students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socioeconomic status backgrounds

Students from BAME backgrounds

Our approach with these groups has 6 particular features.

- Using data: We will build on the baseline assessment described above to support our students from widening access backgrounds. This will be done by performance and attendance monitoring to ensure that students are engaging and progressing. This will be supplemented by a further assessment of progress at the end of year 1, which will be separate from the assessment related to course modules. It will take the form of an online questionnaire looking at the how the 'student experience' has been for our students and aims to look at **engagement**, which research shows is fundamental to progress and success in HE. In particular we will monitor closely the attainment of different ethnic groups and integrate the use of this data into our learning and teaching approach. It is crucial that throughout our process of learning and teaching planning/review from subject to institutional level measures of performance by our BAME learners are examined and gaps identified from which measures to address these gaps are formulated.
- Personal individual support: each student will have a personal tutor assigned and will have an individual development plan which is informed by the data collected as described above. The individual student plan has achievable targets and milestones and will permit ongoing monitoring through the year. This personalised activity will help students in their attainment and performance through their course.
- Academic support: students will be provided with the learning materials in different formats including hard copy, soft copy and access to Amity Virtual environment Moodle. We will build on our development workshop programme and aim to offer workshops in 6-8 areas which support attainment. These will include: handing data, essay writing, using research, presentation skills, working in teams and being an effective time manager.
- Pastoral support: The ABE centre and the Student Support Services team will work together to provide students with pastoral and academic support including individual counselling where appropriate. Our staff will undertake specialist training in working with learners from BAME backgrounds provided via AccessHE.
- Providing feedback: students will be able to monitor their progress and academic development through detailed, and constructive feedback on assessments, seminars, presentations and permanent contact with academic staff. We prioritise feedback at Amity and have a written feedback policy that all staff have to adhere to.

b. Supporting disabled students

This work is coordinated by the Disability Officer within the Student Services Unit. Amity has a disability policy that ensures the needs and aspirations of disabled students are being addressed. In

this context, to aid retention and outcomes, we will commit access funding to ensure current levels of support for disabled students are maintained following the recent changes to the DSA eligibility criteria. Recent research shows growing need in the area of mental health. The ABE will work closely with our Wellbeing Officer to provide professional support for all students, and in particular those from widening access backgrounds. This support will be in form of individualised counselling where needed and also a continual process of awareness raising to enable students to recognize where they may have problems arising. We will also have a programme of sessions for students to support their resilience in meeting the challenges of academic life. As with access we will also work with AccessHE here, in exchange and development of collaborative practice.

c. Supporting care leavers

Consistent to our collaborative cross-cutting theme we will work with *National Network for the Education of Care Leavers*; The National Network for Education of Care Leavers is a national network, led by the University of Winchester which focus on children in care and care leavers. The NNECL has developed a website to act as a single point of information about outreach opportunities delivered for high education institutions across the country for children in care and care leavers. We are setting up an operational working group to ensure that these learners are supported via our access and participation work. In delivery terms care leavers will access the support described above but we believe that in our ABE model, specific support for these students is needed. Amity will seek in particular to try and support students out of term time by offering employment where possible and also maintaining regular all year-round pastoral support – crucial for this group.

d. Supporting mature students

Mature students will benefit from the individualised, pastoral support outlined above. They will also benefit from specific pastoral support and they will be encouraged to participate in the development workshop programme.

In addition, we will work with The Carers Trust encourage universities to learn how to best engage with pre- entry and on-programme student carers and their database provides a platform for universities to register the support and services available for carers.

2.8 Ambition, Strategy and Implementation Measures for Progression

It is well documented that graduates from widening access and participation backgrounds are at a disadvantage in terms of accessing certain professions and that graduates from low participation backgrounds earn lower incomes after graduation than those from higher HE participation backgrounds.³ Research also shows that students from widening participation background often require specific support in developing career management skills. To address these issues ABE will take forward a programme which builds on Amity's strengths as a London based business orientated institution which works extensively with employers. The University will invest 5.5% of the Higher education fee income in progression activities in 2019-2020. As with our work in student success we will look to offer the activities below to all our learners from identified target groups above. What will be very important to us as a small provider, is that our staff are trained and supported to be able to differentiate their work by target group. We will though offer additional support for disabled students

³ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-higher-education-graduate-employment-and-earnings>

through a range of tailored activities including sessions examining what disability friendly environment are and extended careers guidance appointment.

Our activities to support students from widening access and participation backgrounds will include:

- A special session on employability and careers within the induction programme offered to students from widening access and participation backgrounds
- Opportunities for students to practice their employability skills through a series of workshops developed in collaboration with our industrial partners (including Deloitte). These workshops will encourage self – reflection and understanding of job market.

We will provide focused, individualised support via the work of ABE to allow students to participate in the initiatives below:

- Amity Graduate Loyalty Scheme: The scheme supports students to progress into further study once they have completed their undergraduate degree course. The Amity Graduate Loyalty Scheme aims to reduce the financial burden of postgraduate study costs and encourage academic excellence at undergraduate level. The scheme offers undergraduate students progressing onto a course at Amity a 15% tuition fee discount which rises to 25% for those students who achieve a good degree (2:1 or higher).
- Entrepreneurship Club and Business Support: The Entrepreneurship Club run start up programmes, workshops, talks and competitions. All these opportunities develop our students' employability and confidence, creating future leaders and innovators whether they set up their own business or work for someone else.
- Digital Skills Support: At Amity we offer a portfolio of courses to support students in using new technology and to improve their employability. We intend to diversify and extend the portfolio of courses offered, from entry level to more advanced skills.
- Amity Internship programme: Our status as a leading specialist business HE provider means we have exceptional links with local and national employers. This allows us to secure a significant number of quality internships available to students and the Career and Employability team will support students in submitting successful applications for these opportunities. In terms of internships we will look to devote resources and offer additional support to enable care leavers to participate in our internship programme.
- Expanding networks: We will support our students from widening access backgrounds to build networks, helping them to get insights and build personal contacts in the areas of work that interest them. Amity students are part of the Birkbeck Student Union and have access to numerous clubs and society. Amity also work close with Amity alumni to offer students with lower income access to more opportunities around the globe.
- Gaining experience via Amity: where appropriate we will employ students or graduate interns to undertake outreach activities and student support work, which will mean that additional financial support will be available to students, but in the form of payment for work undertaken rather than simply as a scholarship of the waiver.
- One to one interviewing: in keeping with our individualised approach all learners at the end of year 1, 2 and 3 receive a careers support interview.

2.9 Evaluation and measuring effectiveness

Our progress in widening participation and access work will be measured against the Key Performance Indicators (KPs) described in 2.12 below. The Director of Access and Widening Participation will produce an annual report that will critically evaluate the activities delivered during the year. The reports will highlight areas that need immediate improvement and areas that will enhance the widening participation activities. The report will be presented to the Governing Body for comments, feedback and approval. The delivery of the Access and Widening Participation Plan at the senior level is the responsibility of the Director of Access and Widening Participation, Financial Director and Head of Marketing.

Key to ensuring our performance meets our objectives in this area though will be a thorough approach to capturing the impact of our work across the whole student lifecycle and having an evaluation and research plan that can inform the annual report described above.

We expect the approach to capture the impact on all the groups designated below:

- Students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socioeconomic status backgrounds
- Students from BAME backgrounds
- Mature students
- Disabled students
- Care leavers.

via the approach described in 2.9.1.

2.9.1 Effectiveness of access, success and progression activities

The principles which underpin the plan are outlined below:

- Collection of data: we will be undertaking the necessary entrant data assessments and on progress into and through HE to enable us to assess progress against the Key Performance Indicators in 2.12
- Tracking learners: we are committed to the need to track learners who participate in our outreach work through HE. In order to do so this we will work with an external tracking partner who is able to monitor students who do not progress to Amity, but whom we have impacted on with our outreach work. We are exploring either working with AccessHE who can support us here in the London context or the viability of working the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT).
- Implementation of controlled trials: a strong emphasis on the importance of an experimental approach to measuring the impact of widening access work has been emphasized by sector bodies in recent years. We have the research expertise and our size makes us ideally placed to take this approach and embed it in our outreach work. In our programme from year 7 – 11 described above which is based on sustained interventions we will use controlled trials to assess impact and will commit to the dissemination of this work. Again, we will work with AccessHE here who have the methodological expertise required to assist in the construction of these trials. We are aware of the administrative challenges associated with the assembly of control groups when working with schools and the need for strong research skills here. However, we believe that it is crucial to our mission that embed this approach into our work. This approach will be feasible in assessing our work with students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socioeconomic status backgrounds, students from BAME backgrounds and mature students.

- **Using shared knowledge:** Amity will benefit from engaging in dialogue with other organisations to improve the evidence base that underpins the work that we do. Amity will join NEON who are the professional organization for access to HE in the UK. NEON is a member organisation with 94 members of whom 63 are Higher Education providers, with the remainder voluntary sector organisations. NEON delivers a high quality annual programme of skills training, subject themed summits, research/advocacy, a national awards ceremony and an annual conference. In 2016-17 there were over 1000 participants in NEON events. In terms of research and evaluation specifically 15 NEON has a national research/evaluation group, a training programme in this area which has reached over 200 participants from over 80 organisations and produced over 15 research reports.
- **Understanding learner voice:** crucial to the mission and ethos of Amity is enhancement and understanding of the learner voice. We will undertake a planned series of focus group consultations both with learners we work with at the pre-HE stage and those studying at Amity. These focus groups will be delivered through over year 7 to 13/end Level 3 work, and also with our whole widening access cohort as it grows. Again, our student focused approach embodied in our commitment to quality over high student numbers means that we can consult with **all** our students not just a very small percentage of them as is the case with the larger provider. This approach will be particularly important for understanding the impact of our work with disabled students and care leavers.
- **Disseminating findings:** we will use the data we collect to research barriers for under-represented groups, and disseminate findings to ensure University staff are aware of these barriers and actions required to support students' success in engaging fully while moving in, moving through and moving on. It is our intention that we will produce at least one paper for academic publication per year related to the work of the ABE at Amity.

2.9.2 Effectiveness of financial support programme

The numbers of students benefiting from financial support at Amity is small, but we expect of course to increase. As outlined above we will subscribe to HEAT and this will allow learners who benefit from our work to be tracked. However, we will also adopt a more qualitative approach and undertake a series of regular interviews with our learners who receive financial support to understand as far as possible how the support benefits them.

2.10 Working with students

Student involvement will shape the delivery of this plan. As outlined above we will have a student ambassador cohort in our outreach work, but we will also look at the co-design of the outreach programme with students. The nature of the sessions at years 7 – 13 will be shaped by the Director of Access and Participation working with students using a model developed by AccessHE.

The University will work in partnership with Student Body and Student Committee to deliver outreach activities to the designated groups and targeted schools.

2.11 Adhering to the Equality Act

Due to the responsibilities given to the University under the Equality Act 2010, in our approach to Access and participation, we link our access and student success activity with our equality, diversity and inclusion activity in particular in regard to data collection, evaluation and action. In accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements we monitor our access activities from an equality perspective. Our institutional approach to Equality, Diversity and inclusion covers both the protected characteristics as well as other disadvantaged and at-risk groups including those included in this plan.

2.12 Key Performance Indicators

Table 3: Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicator	Target (baseline year) (2015-16 unless stated)	Target 2023
KP1: Increasing understanding of HE progression amongst target groups	Will be baselined at start of specific initiatives in year 7 – 13 programme.	Over 70% of students more likely to enter HE.
KP2: Increased entrants from widening participation lower socio – economic background target groups	Will be baselined at start of 2018-19 by survey of present student body.	20% of entrants
KP3: Increased entrants from London domiciled widening participation target groups	Will be baselined at start of 2018-19 by survey of present student body.	25% of entrants
KP4: Increased entrants from care experienced backgrounds (headcounter);	Will be baselined at start of 2018-19 by survey of present student body.	5
KP5: Increased entrants from BME backgrounds	4	20
KP6: Increased entrants from disabled students	1 (headcount)	8
KP7: Percentage of FT domiciled entrants from lower socio-economic groups who continue their study or qualify following their year of entry	Will be baselined at start of 2018-19 by survey of present student body.	95%
KP8: Proportion of widening participation students entering graduate employment	Will be baselined at start of 2018-19 by survey of present student body.	80%
KP9: Engagement of widening participation students in employability/mobility opportunities;	Will be baselined at start of 2018-19 by survey of present student body.	90%
KP10: Dissemination of evaluation and best practice	N/A	An academic output per year.
KP11: Increased attainment at GSSE among students among target group	Will be baselined at start of 2018-19 by survey of present student body.	85%

3. Investment

3.1. Fee, student numbers and fee income

We intend to charge £9000 (government approved higher fee cap) for all new students entering the University in 2019-2020 on our full-time undergraduate programmes. This fee covers the HE programmes validated by the University of Bolton. For the 2019-2020, the University will charge a fee of £4500 per annum for the part time provision.

We will allocate 40 per cent of our higher fee income in 2019- 2020 to support our widening access and participation work. As outlined in section 2.1, this investment will be supplemented by a significant investment from our own institutional resources to take forward our widening access and participation work. Given that we do not have a present dedicated level of activity devoted to widening access work in Amity, this investment is essential to meet the ambitious targets we are committed to as an organisation. In Table 4 we outline the total investment in widening access and participation work, illustrating how this investment is constituted from our higher fee income.

Table 4: How higher fee income for widening access and participation work is invested, 2019-20120

Activity support	Expenditure from higher fee income	Expenditure from higher fee income %
Access activities	2340	5.2
Student success	2970	6.6
Progression	2475	5.5
Financial Support	10215	22.7
TOTAL	18000	40

Beyond the expenditure identified above, Amity University will make an additional expenditure of own resources on access and widening participation in 2019-2020.

3.2 Financial support for students

The University is maintaining 2018 entry bursary arrangements for 2019 entry. We believe there is a good evidence that bursaries attract students and support a positive experience on course

Our annual student survey of core bursary recipients produces consistently strong responses in relation to the role of bursaries in supporting a positive experience. Over the last few years, over 80% of the respondents said that receipt of the bursary had helped them to concentrate on their studies without worrying about finances. The bursary was overwhelmingly seen as helpful in allowing students to participate fully in extracurricular opportunities including social and sporting activities. Of the students who responded to these questions, just over 7% were from the lowest income groups (under £25k). A more recent study (Wyness, 2017) was able to confirm that each £1000 of bursary aid increases the chances of achieving a good degree by 3.7 percentage points, with an increasing impact up to £1906. Our own survey has shown that students with bursary worked harder to achieve a good degree.

An Amity bursary will be available to students who meet the eligibility criteria below. The criteria for receiving an Amity Bursary from the University for 2019/20 entry are as follows:

- You must be a full-time Home/EU student for fee purposes
- You must be studying for your first undergraduate degree
- You must be starting at the University for the first time in the 2019/20 academic year
- You must be in receipt of a Tuition Fee Loan and Maintenance Loan support from the UK Government for the relevant academic year
- You must have a family income below £25,001
- You must have completed sixth form education in England within the state school sector or at a Further Education College in England (or on a full fee-paying means-tested bursary at an independent school or college in England)
- You must not be entitled to any other statutory support in the form of either a grant or fee waiver for your course.

The Amity Bursary programme will offer support up to a maximum of £2,000pa for each year of a student's course on a sliding scale determined by family income as follows:

- £2,000pa for family incomes less than or equal to £25 000

To ensure that the maximum bursaries are targeted at those most in need, the University will pay additional support of £1,000pa to students who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Students who are Care Leavers or who are from a Foyer background
- Mature students aged 21 or over at the start of their undergraduate course in 2019/20
- Students in receipt of the Special Support Element of the Maintenance Loan,
- Students classed as independent students for student support purposes
- Students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowances, Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance

Hardship funds exists to provide financial support to students who experience vents outside of their control that directly contribute to financial hardship. Amity defines the hardship fund as lacking funding to the extent that a student cannot afford the basics of life, such accommodation, food childcare and has none of their own savings.

Atul scholarship is available for all students that have excellent academic credentials, regardless of their background. The students from all programmes are eligible for this scholarship.

Please see below the financial support breakdown for the academic year 2019-2020 from the higher Education Fee Income

Table 5: Financial support breakdown for the academic year 2019/2020 from the Higher Fee Income

Spend category	Amount (£)	No of bursaries
Bursary for full time students with household of up to £25000	7,000	5
Bursary for part-time students with household of up to £25000	2,000	2
Hardship funds	1,215	N/A
Total	10,215	N/A

Students can also access a range of information advice and guidance relating to financial matters through the University, financial team support.

3.3 Evaluation of financial impact

We evaluate our financial support by evaluating a combination of reactions/opinions and impact on behaviour. Annually, we evaluate the impact of our income-based bursaries. These evaluations inform decisions taken on how we design our financial support to drive improved outcomes for under-represented groups.

The University will subscribe to the Higher Education Tracker Service (HEAT) which enables us to share costs and expertise. HEAT provides the University with tools and reports to support the widening participation outreach cycle. To monitor student retention and success, we will commission an annual data set from HESA which enables analysis of recruitment, retention and student success trends by under-represented groups.

The aim of the University's Equality and Diversity Strategy is to embed equality for all, across all protected characteristics, in all aspects of the University's business. We have a strong commitment to the equality and diversity of all our staff and students and demonstrate this through our policies and priorities. This includes the process of engaging staff and student voice across Equality and Diversity processes.

4. Provision of information for students

4.1 Information for Prospective Students

Amity is aware of its responsibilities within the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and is implementing recommendations made by the Competition and Markets Authority for HEIs. As part of this, Amity is committed to clearly informing prospective applicants and existing students of tuition fees, financial support and additional course costs.

We are committed to providing accurate and timely information to potential students. We maintain an up to date website with full information for prospective students, their parents, advisers and sponsors. We also run a range of open events with staff on hand to answer questions. In addition, we support a range of activities for those supporting and advising prospective students to help them stay up to date with new developments in HE.

We provide a comprehensive information set. This includes:

- (a) a full suite of information for prospective students and their parents;
- (b) an admission team to responds to a wide range of incoming enquiries;
- (c) a website which includes information and advice on applying to university and student finance support available;
- (d) prospectus in an online and hard copy format;
- (e) a range of information about being a student including funding and advice about course choice via website and via open days and other events;
- (f) information about the resources available for students within the university, including student services;
- (g) specialist information and advice for disabled students.

We are committed to providing timely and accurate information to Student Loan Company and other appropriate sector bodies to enable them to carry out their function effectively.

To ensure that all prospective students understand the funding system and see the benefits rather than the headline figures, leaflets and web pages have been designed specifically for mature students.

A dedicated widening participation section within the Amity website will be developed and populated with the details of aspiration and attainment raising events, including distinctive age-focussed IAG (information access and guidance) pages. Links to finance and funding information will be added to the page for potential students, teachers and advisors. We will develop specific parent/carer IAG factsheets around student finance and applying to university to be used at school's parent/carer evenings.

The University is committed to providing timely information to UCAS and SLC to facilitate fully informed applications from students.

4.2 Information for current students

We provide information about all aspects of student life through our internal learning environment Moodle. The VLE provide students with personalised timetables, policies, procedures, academic regulations, key services and other information. We also provide a wide range of hard copy materials, such as course and student information handbooks, feedback reports and committee minutes.

The Student Integrated Services provide a whole range of information, advice and guidance to students as well as developmental activities and opportunities. We work close with our Student body through Student Committee and student representatives to ensure students are provided with a wide range of information including advice and advocacy should they need to formally complain.

We provide further information for students during our pre-entry and welcome programme activities. We are also mindful that there is a great deal of information for new and returning students to take on board and ensure we offer the maximum opportunity to absorb our key messages.

4.3 Consulting with students

Our Student Committee has been involved in the discussion and formulation of this plan. They are members of the Access and Widening Participation Strategy Group and have representatives in the committees at which work is linked to our Access and Widening Participation plan including Academic Board and its constituent committees.