

Arden University Access and Participation Plan 2020-21

All data sources in this section are from the OfS Access and Participation dataset.

Arden University provides higher education by part-time online distance learning and full-time blended learning through its Study Centres. Its mission is to remove the barriers to higher education, inspire new ways to learn and enrich people and their lives. Arden's vision is to be known as the University that made higher education more accessible and beneficial to all.

Arden University's belief is that everyone, everywhere has a right to higher education. Its insight is that many people, at different stages of life, are constrained in their ability to study and to progress – constrained by expectation, geography, financial circumstances, other commitments or even just by time.

Whilst Arden University does not limit its access and participation strategies to students from BAME backgrounds, students from low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socioeconomic status, mature students or disabled students, data shows that 92.7% of Arden's UK undergraduate students have at least one of these characteristics, and 80% of our full time students are BAME. Therefore, Arden is a significant and growing provider of access to higher education for the government's targeted low participation groups.

Arden University is making headway in improving access to HE. The focus and priority for our change will be on significantly improving the continuation and success of our students, by supporting them with the many challenges that our distinct community of students face.

Since 2016, Arden University has been offering a Full-Time (FT) Blended Learning experience in its study centres located in London (Ealing, Tower Hill, Holborn) and Birmingham and Manchester, whilst it previously offered Distance, Part-Time (PT) provision only. *This change has been a major enabler to access.* As the data shows, our FT Learners enrolling to our face to face Study Centres are a fundamentally different demographic from our PT distance students. In particular, the data for students in high deprivation areas, and also the intersections between this and data on other characteristics such as age, gender, or ethnicity, show that this increase is driven from FT Study Centre recruitment. This suggests that the FT Blended Learning model is attracting students seeking a lower cost, simplified model without a full campus experience but the benefit of financial support through maintenance loans. Most remain at their permanent home address when they study with us.

The challenge arising from this change is that the flexible offer attracts students that are both learning and working alongside often personal challenging circumstances, and/or have other commitments outside FT study. This flexibility and students' other commitments have an impact upon their engagement, learning and progress, both in terms of with face to face teaching (for the Blended model) and online and independent study (all students) This in turn

affects student continuation, progression and completion as although our students have the commitment, they often are unable to give the levels of engagement required for successful study. Furthermore, the majority of our students need support with developing a range of skills and capabilities essential for success such as effective study skills, resilience, time management, work-ready/professional behaviours, self-confidence and social capital, having faced very significant challenges in their lives. This is why Arden is focusing investment in a number of increased support services available to all students (see section 2.2) and closely reviewing and evaluating its modes of study in terms of student outcomes.

What is our priority?

Across the board, Arden University's success rates in terms of non-continuation and attainment show significant gaps between AP Groups and their counterparts. This is not always in favour of non-AP students. For example, our Disabled students have a lower non-continuation rate than non-Disabled students; our White students do less well than most BAME students. Our priority is to close these gaps substantially, and to eliminate them where possible. The internal performance presented in this plan, alongside sector benchmarks, provides an insight as to the very significant challenge we face in delivering continuation and success for our students. We are realistic regarding our level of maturity in understanding and supporting them, and fresh investment with the newly provided recurrent teaching grant will help wherever we note action is required or progress is worsening.

Given the very unusual demographic Arden University sustains, we regard it important to maintain a comparison of our own internal 'gaps' alongside sector benchmark norms. However, our targets and evaluation will focus almost entirely on the objective of improving continuation and success internally through the targeted actions in this plan.

Our significantly increased support for students should impact positively on their success. Whilst we are no longer required to report on investment for success (only access), Arden University has substantial, committed investment plans to support our priority – **improving success**.

Planned areas for investment 2021-2025:

Success & Progression		Academic year				
		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total research and evaluation investment	Initiatives	£160,289.31	£505,708.90	£725,637.22	£809,880.73	£892,293.48
	1 - Schools Liaison Programme	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
	2 - Personalised Admissions Process	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
	3 - Individual Coaching Programme	£33,367.88	£76,102.60	£108,728.52	£179,705.49	£244,112.98
	4 - Two week diagnostic and intensive skills training	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
	5 - Targeted interventions	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

6 - Dedicates student counsellor	£62,564.78	£110,471.52	£265,499.88	£273,464.88	£281,668.82
7 - Wellness Portal	£15,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00
8 - Arden Learning Experience strands	£0.00	£168,616.50	£181,471.42	£182,574.85	£188,052.09
9 - Pilot alternative delivery modes	£0.00	£11,887.96	£12,244.60	£12,611.94	£12,990.30
10 - Develop and expand the career portal	£49,356.66	£108,630.33	£127,692.80	£131,523.58	£135,469.29
11 - Implement annual career enhancement survey (DL)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
12 - Scholarships	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
13 – Financial Hardship Scheme	£0.00	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
<i>of which is funded by higher fee income (£)</i>	£160,289.31	£505,708.90	£725,637.22	£809,880.73	£892,293.48
<i>of which is funded by higher fee income (%HFI)</i>	23.9%	17.7%	12.6%	9.7%	8.4%

During 2020 we will develop a Student Financial Support Scheme targeted in supporting students in financial difficulty. A significant proportion of students who withdraw or pause their studies with us cite financial difficulties as their reason. Research will be carried out in 2020-21 to look closely at which AP groups are affected disproportionately through financial hardship, and a scheme will be designed and implemented by 2021-22.

Alongside the initiatives set out in this plan we will develop our knowledge of our distinctive students in terms of outcomes through Professional and Highly Skilled employment. Arden students started graduating in 2018 but will increase in number over the term of this plan. We will measure our success and deliver knowledge to the sector on the barriers or otherwise to graduate outcomes through the lens of our students.

Where relevant we present different datasets for PT and FT students throughout this plan. There are only two years of data available for Full Time, reflecting the age of this model of delivery; three years are presented for the Part-Time mode. Subsequent updated plans will show a minimum of 3 year's data for both Full Time and Part Time.

Presently, overall, our students are:

- *Mature – 88.6 of all our students are over 21.*
- *Ethnically diverse – 55.9% BAME and 41% White*
- *Predominantly coming from deprived areas – 63.3% from IMD Q1/2*
- *Often coming from low participation areas – 32.2% POLAR 4 Q1/2*
- *As likely to be Disabled as the rest of Sector - 14.8% Disabled*

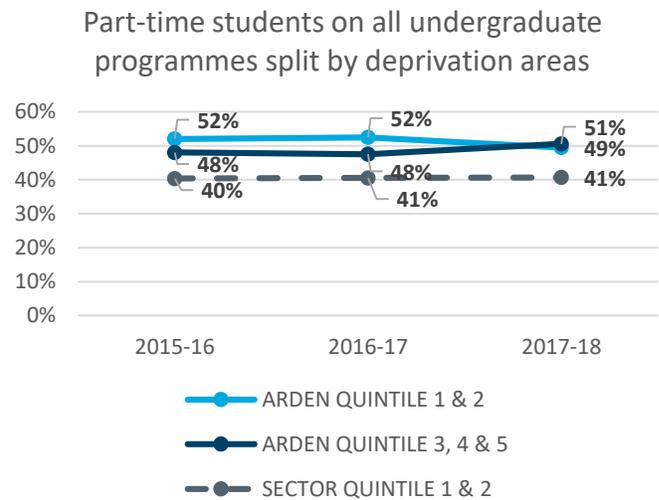
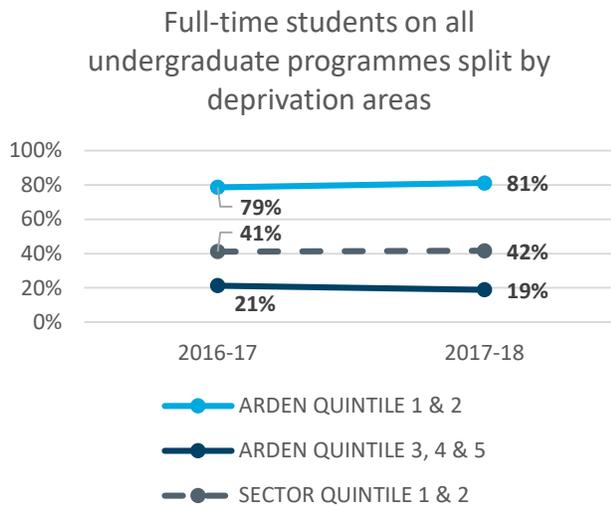
Assessment of performance

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access

Highest Deprivation Areas(HDAs)

Arden University’s students are predominantly from the Highest Deprivation Areas(HDAs). In 2017/18, 81% of our full time students came from Quintiles 1 and 2 (Q1/2). Arden’s success in recruiting students from the HDAs is largely due to a 130% expansion of Blended FT provision over the period. In numerical terms the number of students from HDAs more than doubled, with students from HDAs increasing 2% over the same period. Arden University’s participation rate for PT students is also high but a clear distinction from FT study is apparent. The slight decline in PT students from HDAs over the period is due to students preferring the FT face to face offer that provides the opportunity for a maintenance grant alongside closer face to face support.



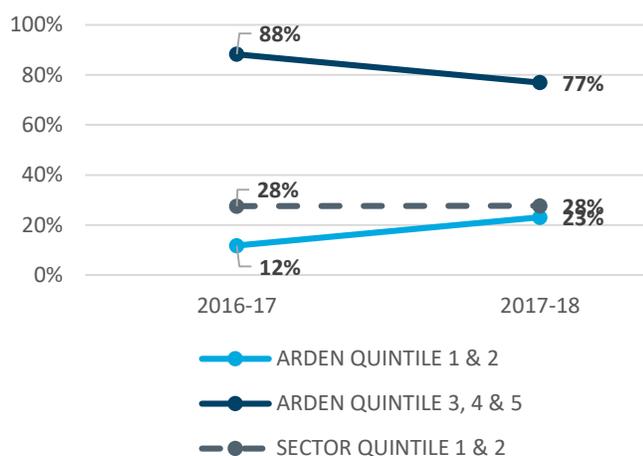
Participation Areas

Arden’s FT students live at home and normally travel less than 5 miles to their study centre. Arden University’s first study centre opened in Ealing in 2016, followed by Tower Hill, Holborn, Birmingham and Manchester in 2017. The opening of our full time mode of study at strategically located Centres has resulted in an increased proportion of the number of students entering Arden University in Q1/2 from 12% in 2016/17 to 23% in 2017/18.

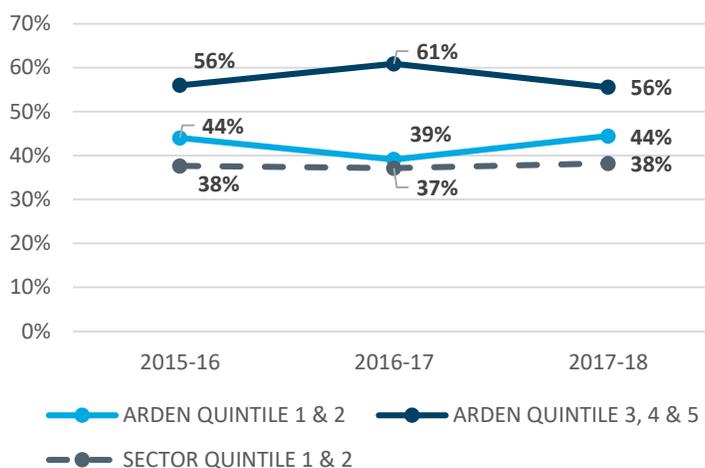
Recruitment in London leads to recorded low recruitment from the lowest participation areas due to the limitations of the POLAR4 model in London, with only 16 out of 700 POLAR areas defined

as low participation quintiles due to the overall high levels of participation in HE in London. PT students from POLAR4 Q1/2 show a fairly equal participation rate to those from Q3-5.

Full-time students on all undergraduate programmes split by participation areas



Part-time students on all undergraduate programmes split by participation areas



Success

Continuation

There is an expected lower continuation rate for students in HDA Q1/2 and POLAR4 Q1/2, with a 10.4%age point gap and 4.5%age point gap respectively (FT students).

<i>Deprivation Areas</i>	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
ARDEN - QUINTILES 1 & 2	68.3%	39.5%
ARDEN - QUINTILES 3, 4 & 5	78.7%	57.1%
SECTOR - QUINTILES 1 & 2	86.9%	61.7%

<i>Participation Areas</i>	PART-TIME
ARDEN - QUINTILES 1 & 2	42.6%
ARDEN - QUINTILES 3, 4 & 5	47.1%
SECTOR - QUINTILES 1 & 2	72.0%

Attainment

<i>Deprivation Areas</i>	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
ARDEN - QUINTILES 1 & 2	47.1%	61.0%
ARDEN - QUINTILES 3, 4 & 5	N/A	66.0%
SECTOR - QUINTILES 1 & 2	70.4%	45.9%

Progression to employment or further study

<i>Deprivation Areas</i>	PART-TIME
ARDEN - QUINTILES 1 & 2	65.0%
ARDEN - QUINTILES 3, 4 & 5	62.8%
SECTOR - QUINTILES 1 & 2	70.7%

<i>Deprivation Areas</i>	From the most deprived areas (Quintiles 1 & 2)
	PART-TIME
ARDEN - QUINTILES 1 & 2	65.0%
ARDEN - QUINTILES 3, 4 & 5	62.8%
SECTOR - QUINTILES 1 & 2	70.7%

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

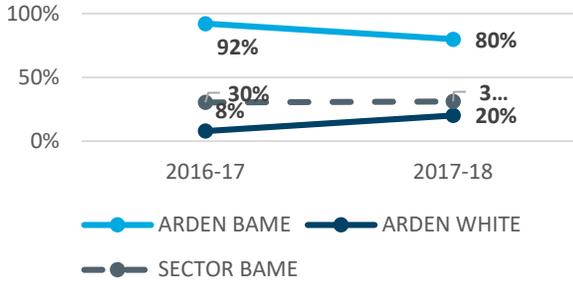
Access

Arden University has exceptionally high access rates of BAME students. This is driven by the BAME demographic in our London based study centres. The fall in overall BAME access rates of 12% from 2016/17 to 2017/18 is due to the larger proportion of students joining from the Manchester and Birmingham study centres with a lower proportion of BAME entrants, broadly reflecting general local demographics.

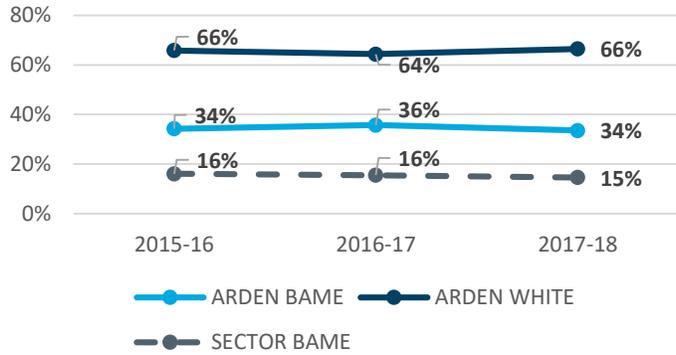
Numbers of White vs BAME students across the UK Centres in 2017/18 were: ((White/BAME: London *Ealing* 28(18.6%)/132(81.4%), London *Tower Hill* 75(13.2%)/493(86.8%), London *Holborn*: 35(14.1%)/213(85.9%), Birmingham 41(27.7%)/107(72.3%), Manchester 93(38.8%)/148(61.2%), Total = 272(19.9%)/1093(80.1%)).

Arden University also has exceptionally high access rates for PT BAME students, currently 34% of all PT students are BAME. Overall, the decrease in PT BAME students is driven by the sector decline in PT study and some cannibalisation of student numbers towards our FT offer.

Full-time students on all undergraduate programmes split by ethnicity

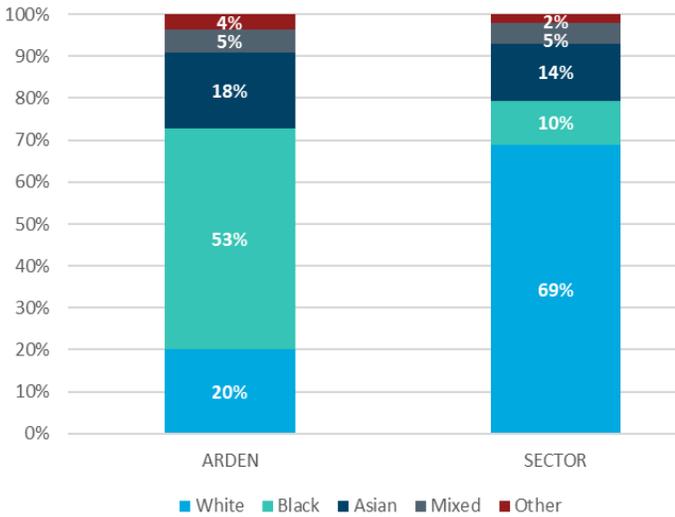


Part-time students on all undergraduate programmes split by ethnicity

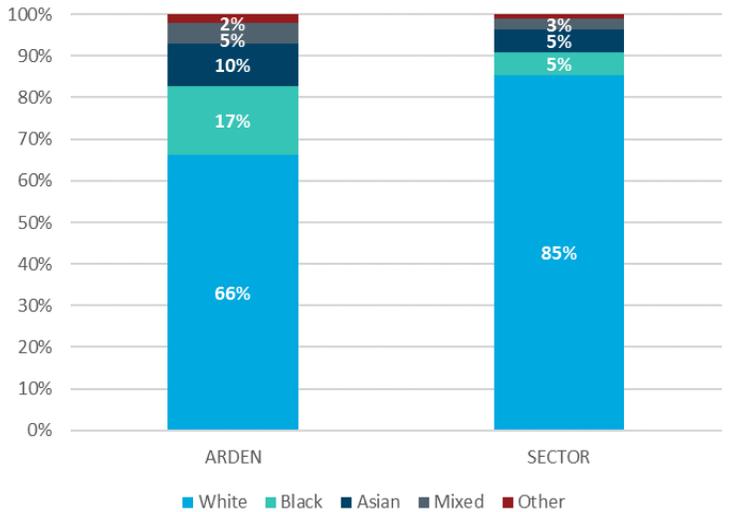


Disaggregation of BAME shows distinctly different demographics between Arden’s Distance Learning (Part Time) students and its Blended Learning Full Time Students studying full time in Study Centres. There is a profound difference between Arden and Sector data for Full Time, with Black students making up 58% of all students and Asian students a further 10%. In the Part Time sector, Arden far exceeds sector average for both Black and Asian students.

Full-time students on all undergraduate programmes split by ethnicity (2017/18)

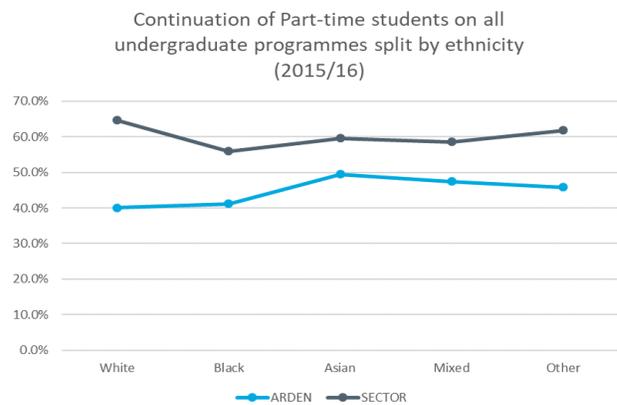
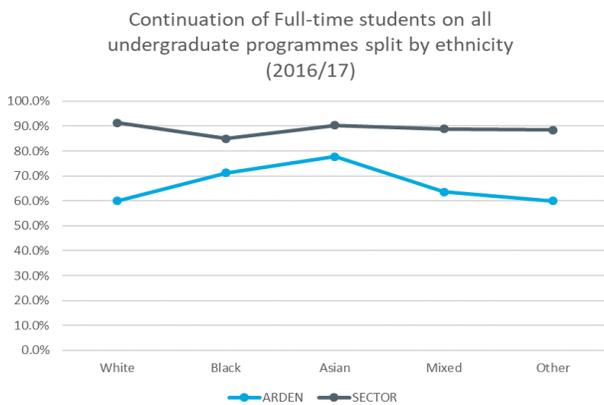


Part-time students on all undergraduate programmes split by ethnicity (2017/18)



Success

Continuation rates for all ethnicity groups are an area for specific focus at Arden University and we treat the data reported here with some caution. This is because the flexible study modes offered by Arden make accurate and fair comparable reporting of continuation rates difficult, where students take study breaks and pause their studies. Overall, the continuation rate for BAME students is 11% higher than White students. The reasons for this difference are currently unknown and will be investigated throughout 2019/20 for action in this plan in due course. Whilst Arden university recognises that White Students are not underrepresented in the sector as a whole and are not a priority for AP Plans, we cannot accept success rates being 11%age points lower than other groups and will seek to change this.



Continuation

<i>Ethnicity</i>	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
ARDEN - BAME	71.0%	55.9%
ARDEN - WHITE	60.0%	40.1%
SECTOR - BAME	88.1%	58.1%

Attainment

<i>Ethnicity</i>	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
ARDEN - BAME	42.9%	41.0%
ARDEN - WHITE	N/A	79.7%
SECTOR - BAME	68.8%	33.2%

Disaggregation of Part Time BAME for Attainment

PART-TIME	ARDEN	SECTOR
White	79.7%	61.5%
BAME	40.9%	26.4%

Progression to employment or further study

Ethnicity	PART-TIME
ARDEN - BAME	46.7%
ARDEN - WHITE	73.6%
SECTOR - BAME	67.8%

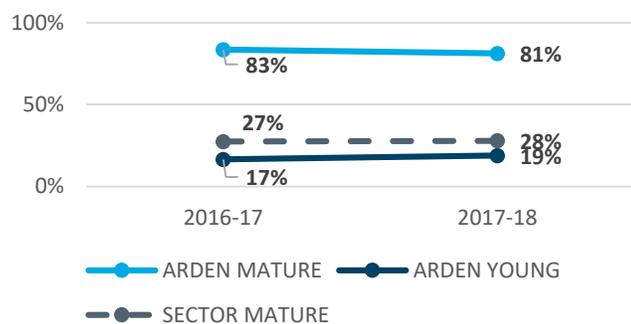
1.3 Mature students

Access

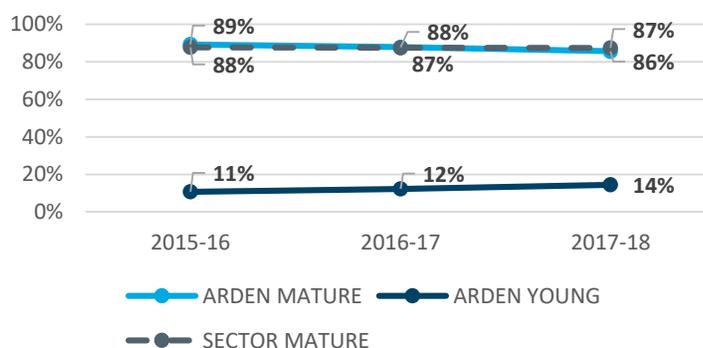
Due to the growth in student numbers in our study centres, the number of FT mature learners nearly trebled from 430 in 2016/17 to 1120 in 2017/18. The small decline of 2 %age points over the same period is not regarded as significant, with only two years' data at this time. Mature learners make of over 80% of our new entrant FT learners.

The overall number of PT mature learner entrants has declined 20% over a three-year period reflecting the overall decline in recruitment to the PT curriculum. The proportion of PT mature learners has also declined by 3 %age points whilst the sector has remained broadly static. The reason for this is unclear and, although the decline is statistically insignificant, it will be monitored for future action if required.

Full-time students on all undergraduate programmes split by age group



Part-time students on all undergraduate programmes split by age group



Success

Continuation rates are an area for specific focus at Arden University and we treat the data reported here with some caution. This is because the flexible study modes offered by Arden make accurate and fair comparable reporting of continuation rates difficult, where students take study breaks and pause their studies regularly.

Continuation

<i>Age</i>	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
ARDEN - MATURE	70.9%	58.9%
ARDEN - YOUNG	66.7%	45.2%
SECTOR - MATURE	84.8%	61.8%

Attainment

<i>Age</i>	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
ARDEN - MATURE	47.5%	65.6%
ARDEN - YOUNG	N/A	N/A
SECTOR - MATURE	70.0%	57.8%

Progression to employment or further study

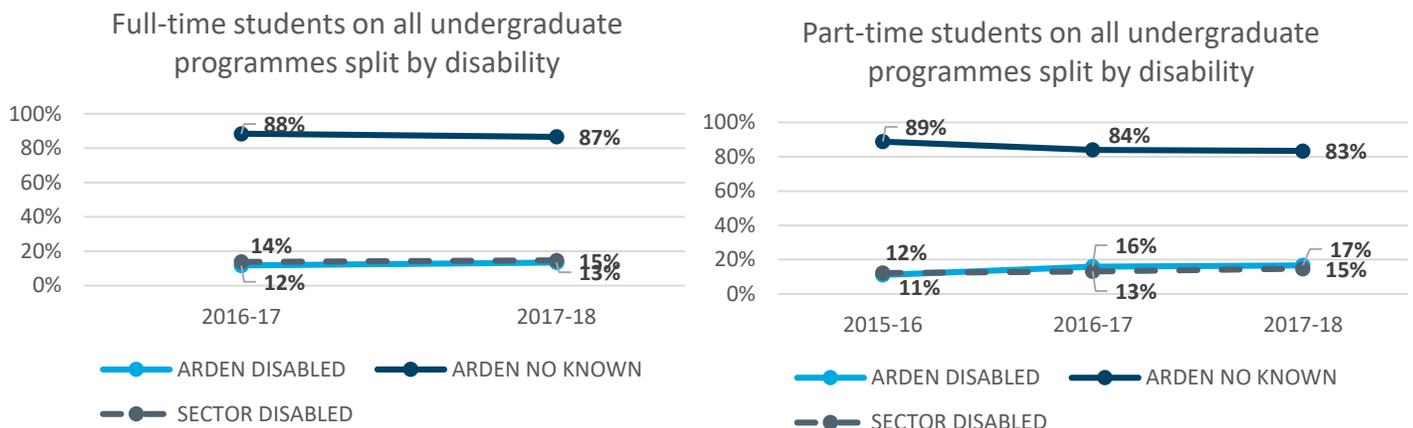
<i>Age</i>	PART-TIME
ARDEN - MATURE	64.6%
ARDEN - YOUNG	N/A
SECTOR - MATURE	75.7%

1.4 Disabled students

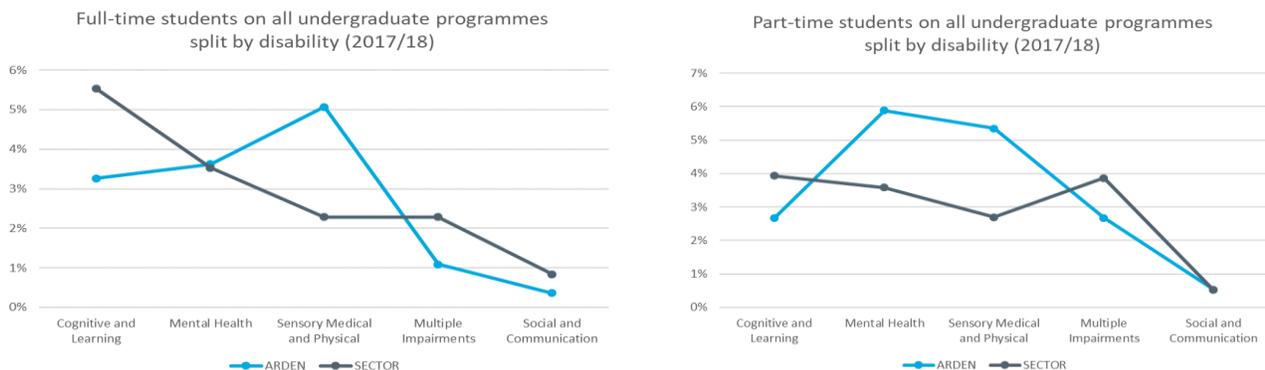
Access

The number of FT Disabled entrants has increased by 300% over one year (from a low base of 60), reflecting the growth in student numbers in our study centres over the same period, as well as their relatively young age. Arden University is developing its capabilities to advise and support students with SEN as well as improving mechanisms for self-identification of Disabled learners.

Overall numbers of new Disabled entrants studying part-time have risen slightly; the proportion of disabled learners has risen by 90% reflecting more developed processes and procedures by the SEN team over the period. The proportion of Disabled students studying part-time with Arden University has risen 5%age points over two years.

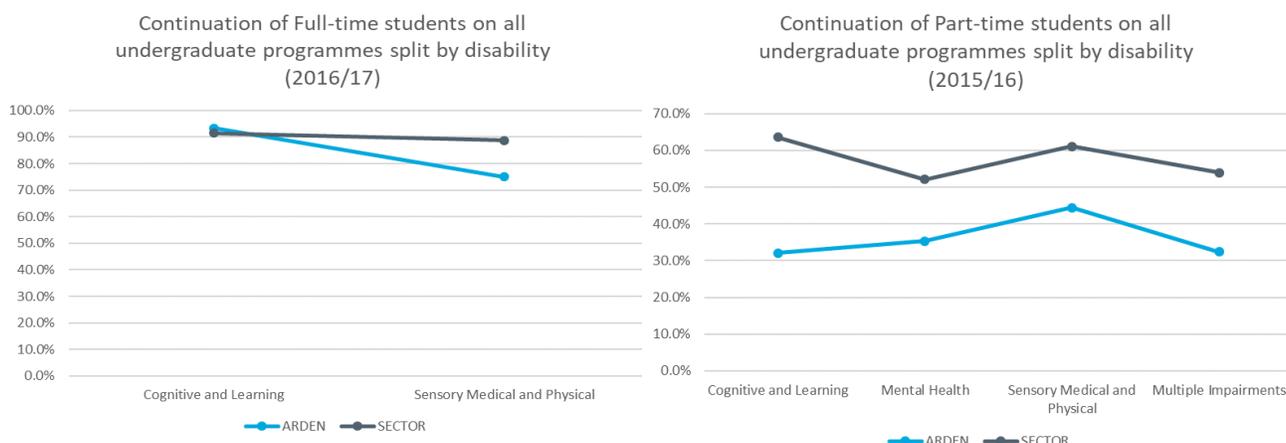


When considering disaggregated disability categories, Arden has high proportions of students with Sensory, Medical and Physical disabilities. The same applies with Mental Health for Part Time students. With respect to Cognitive and Learning, Arden is below sector norms for both Part and Full Time students. We consider this primarily a matter of identification, and steps will be put in place to enhance this through admissions processes.



Success

Continuation for Full Time Disabled students reflects the continuation levels for Arden more generally, and most of this students will intersect with BAME, and high deprivation areas. Whilst the size of the dataset for Cognitive and Learning makes it statistically insignificant, it is clear that across all Disability Groups the continuation rate is low. Investment in and strengthening of SEN provision within Student Support should assist further in developing improvements alongside the current review of our Full Time (blended) provision.



Continuation

Full Time Arden University Students with Disabilities currently have a continuation rate 6.7%age points higher than Full Time no known Disability. Part Time Students have a continuation rate 6.4%age points higher than PT no known disability

<i>Disability</i>	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
ARDEN - DISABLED	77.0%	64.1%
ARDEN - NO KNOWN	69.3%	57.7%
SECTOR - DISABLED	89.4%	58.3%

Attainment

There is currently insufficient data to report on the attainment of Disabled Students. Therefore, as our data set grows, we will ensure that student outcomes within this group is closely monitored and appropriate actions taken.

Progression to employment or further study

In matching HESA data to Arden's own datasets there are statistically small and therefore unreliable datasets to clearly identify progression to employment or further study. Of the 29 students with disabilities completing an UG degree between 2016 and the present, 17 of them achieved a 2:1 or higher (58.6%). As we gain more data we will take decisions on what to do.

1.5 Care Leavers

As an 'alternative provider' Arden University has not historically been required to report on care leavers, so has not previously collected data on this characteristic. The University is currently in the process of collecting and recording data on care leavers to inform the future development of this plan, and will review the levels of access, success and progression for this priority group as soon as robust data is available (from 2021-22). For example, from now on, we will ask applicants to indicate if they are a Care Leaver on their application form. Once enrolled, all students will have access to a range of support services during their studies, appropriate to their needs. Early indications are that Arden has a proportion of care leavers that is broadly in line with the sector average.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

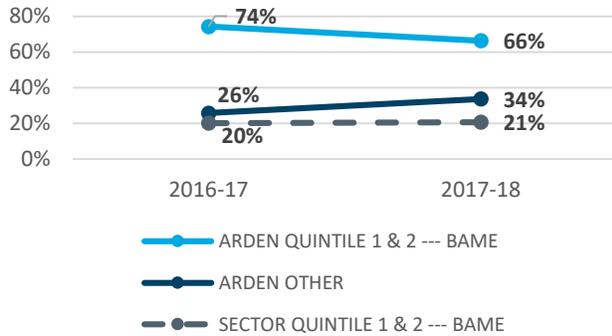
Our focus on intersections of disadvantage is between BAME/HAD and Gender/BAME

Arden University recruits exceptionally high proportions of FT BAME students who are also on the deprivation index, relative to sector. (in 2017-18 this was 45 %age points higher). We should note that the one-year decline from 2016/17 to 2017/18 is primarily driven by the opening of our study centres in Birmingham and Manchester, with relatively lower proportions of BAME students.

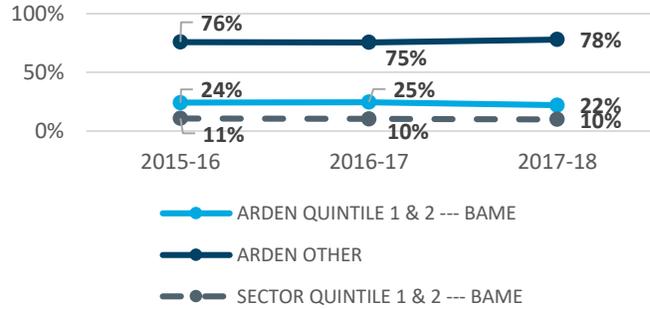
Arden University also recruits exceptionally high proportions of PT BAME students who are also on the deprivation index. In 2017/18, 22% of our PT BAME students fell into this category. There is a statistically insignificant decline in the proportion of PT learners in this category, and the overall number of students reflects a decline on overall Part Time study and a degree of cannibalisation towards our FT offer.

There has been a rise of 9%age points regarding BAME students in Q1/2 in the space of a year, reducing the gap between Q1/2 and other Arden University BAME students from 88%age points to 70%age points. This is driven primarily through our expansion in student numbers in our Tower Hill, Birmingham and Manchester Study Centres. Alongside this, the notable equivalent reduction of Part Time BAME students in quintiles 1 and 2 is due to students choosing the FT offer being made local to them.

Intersection of deprivation quintile & ethnicity for all full-time students on undergraduate programmes



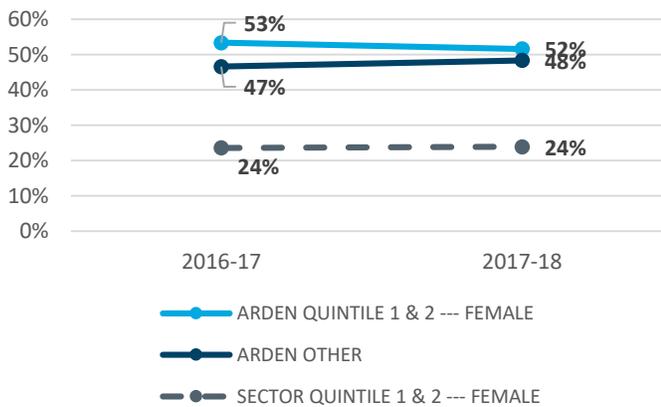
Intersection of deprivation quintile & ethnicity for all part-time students on undergraduate programmes



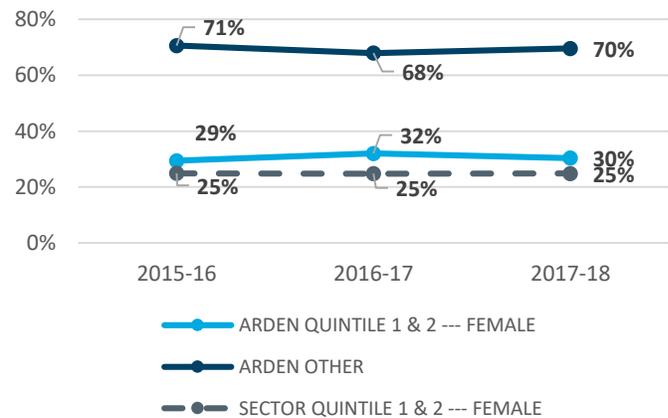
We can see that the Intersection of deprivation quintile & sex for Full Time students reveals a small 4%age point difference between women and other and a 250% increase in number from 2016/17 to 2017/18. This increase is driven almost entirely from study centre recruitment, demonstrating that the FT Blended Learning model is attracting students seeking a lower cost, simplified model without a full campus experience. For PT Distance Learning students, Arden University has remained in line with the current sector norm of 25% with 29% (2015/16), 32% (2016/17), 30% (2017/18)

There has been a rise of 8%age points regarding Female students in Q1/2 in the space of a year, reducing the gap between Q1/2 and other Arden University students from 88%age points to 72%age points. As with BAME students. The gap is significantly smaller for our PT students.

Intersection of deprivation quintile & sex for all full-time students on undergraduate programmes



Intersection of deprivation quintile & sex for all part-time students on undergraduate programmes



Strategic aims and objectives

Arden University is a unique organisation that attracts and supports students through individualised admissions and support packages. This personalised approach that it has attained its current position as a flexible, access-focused and supportive provider. Consequently, the initiatives outlined in this plan cover the priorities identified from its self-assessment against the government's identified priority groups and additionally take into account the University's broader strategic ambitions which reflect Arden's unique approach to accessing an engaging in HE, including:

- Increasing the number of part-time students accessing higher education
- Providing flexible learning, supporting students to succeed in higher education whilst working and/or undertaking family commitments, or where they have disengaged from a more traditional higher education model.
- Providing emotional support and the ability to access higher education without leaving home
- For distance learning students, providing career enhancement during studies rather than only upon completion.

2.2 Target groups – Aims and Objectives

Our strategic ambitions for the next five years in relation to our identified target groups are designed to serve the challenges of delivering success within the context of **92.7%** of Arden's students falling within one of the AP Groups. The exceptional challenges shown in our assessment of performance require solutions that deliver across our entire student population, as it is essentially Arden's entire student population that falls within the auspices of the plan, including Care Leavers for which we currently do not have the data capability to specifically target this group. Arden already demonstrates equality of opportunity for the underrepresented groups and will seek to maintain its performance on access in those areas; heavy investment will be targeted towards maximising the academic success of our students through the use of Coaching and the wellness portal. We have not adjusted our target groups in this plan as they remain the key priority for Arden's next 5 years.

Target group

STUDENTS FROM LOW PARTICIPATION NEIGHBOURHOODS

We will significantly increase the proportion of students studying via full-time blended learning from low participation neighbourhoods and most deprived areas.

Target group

STUDENTS FROM BLACK AND ASIAN MINORITY ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS

We will improve BAME student success rates on full-time blended learning programmes.

We will improve the levels of attainment of first and upper second class honours degrees obtained by BAME students studying via distance learning to be more comparable with those attained by white students.

We will increase the level of employment of BAME graduates and the proportion employed in professional jobs to be comparable with employment levels and types for white graduates.

Target group

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY

We will provide enhanced support for students' emotional and physical wellbeing to increase student resilience and motivation to succeed in higher education. We will ensure all students have access to clear advice and guidance about future study options and employment opportunities throughout their studies. As our data develops we will focus on the achievement of degree qualifications

- **Strategic measures**

Our key targets are as follows, and are referenced against each key initiative that supports the target:

- To increase enrolment of students from low participation neighborhoods on full-time programmes by 10%age points 2024-25
- To increase enrolment of students from low participation neighborhoods on part-time programmes by 10%age points by 2024-5
- To improve continuation rates for full-time students from BAME backgrounds by 15%age points by 2024-25
- To improve continuation rates for part-time students from BAME backgrounds by 15%age points by 2024-25
- To improve continuation rates of students who have declared a physical or mental disability by 15%age points by 2024-25

- To improve continuation rates of students from the most deprived areas by 20%age points by 2024-25
- To improve continuation rates of mature students by 10%age points by 2024-25
- To increase the proportion of BAME completers in Professional and Highly Skilled jobs to 70% by 2024-25
- To increase the proportion of Disabled completers in Professional and Highly Skilled jobs to 70% by 2024-25

The initiatives that Arden will prioritise and measure between 2020/21 and 2024/25 to work towards the achievement of the strategic aims set out above are as follows:

ACCESS

In facilitating access to higher education, Arden’s planned initiatives and identified priority groups are as follows:

Initiative 1 (target 1)

Targeted schools liaison programme around UK blended learning study centres to increase the proportion of students from low participation neighbourhoods studying via Arden’s full-time blended learning offering (priority group: low participation neighbourhoods).

The University has recruited two Schools and Colleges Liaison Officers to take the lead on establishing a liaison programme during 2019-20 and onwards. This will include specific focus on Further Education Colleges in identified low participation neighbourhoods that are within easy transport reach of Arden’s Bended Learning study centres in London, Birmingham and Manchester. Key sixth forms have been identified based on the proportion of free school meals and the liaison officers have promoted Arden at UCAS fairs. A new software tool, Turning Point, is being used to increase engagement in schools, and a peer to peer initiative, and a Student Ambassador Scheme within schools and colleges is being initiated.

One of the University’s priorities is to provide opportunities for students to study from home; therefore, it does not recruit substantial numbers of students to its PT provision from outside the immediate area, which may limit the opportunities to further attract students from this priority group.

Initiative 2 (target 2)

Extend and build upon Arden’s personalised admissions process to increase the

number of part-time students entering higher education (priority group: part-time students).

This initiative is the continuation and expansion of existing work practices in the University's Admissions team that were recently cited as an example of good practice by the Quality Assurance Agency as providing "highly effective ongoing and personalised support... to prospective students at all stages of the admissions process" to expand the number of part-time students enrolling with Arden University and ultimately to increase the number accessing UK HE. Specific activities will focus around staff training and sharing of best practice. Students are assigned a dedicated Admissions advisor during the enrolment process to provide a highly personalised service.

SUCCESS

In facilitating success in higher education, Arden's identified planned initiatives and priority groups are as follows:

Initiative 3 (targets 3,4)

Implementation of individual Coaching Programme and Academic Skills Advisors for full-time blended learning students to improve motivation, support and consequent success rates (priority group: BAME students).

Individual one to one coaching for full-time blended learning students is being implemented in 2019-20. Alongside this, Academic Skills advisors are being introduced. The effectiveness of this skills programme and its impact on student success rates will be evaluated during 2020-21 but the early signs from our trial pilot are that it is an exemplar in improving student outcomes. A pilot has been undertaken based on documented evidence shared by other providers that individual coaching leads to improvements in engagement, attendance and assessment submission rates, and Arden's own evidence of the correlation of these factors to successful outcomes in assessments. Planned activities during 2019-20 are focussing on bringing this coaching and academic skills programme in house, through staff recruitment and/or training, in order to roll out to all full-time students based in all UK study centres (80.2% of whom are currently BAME students).

Initiative 4 (targets 3,4,6)

Implementation of two week diagnostic and intensive skills training at commencement of studies on full-time blended learning programmes to ensure the provision of targeted study skills support and improve success rates (priority group: BAME students, Students from most deprived areas).

Arden University's Academic Leadership Team have implemented a diagnostic and intensive skills training programme which is initiated immediately prior to full-time students beginning an academic programme of study. It is anticipated that this activity will be launched in October 2019. Robust diagnostic tools are available from week 1 to students, the results of which are presented in a development plan which is held by Coaches and is shared with Academic and student support teams.

Initiative 5

Conduct of an exploratory research project within our Learning and Innovation Fund to help the University to identify successful academic support strategies that improve grade attainment, and assess the impact of these strategies (priority group: BME students).

Evaluation and research activities will be carried out during 2019-20 with a view to full implementation of the identified strategies during 2020-21 or thereafter. They will focus specifically on strategies to improve student outcomes. For example, we are increasing the sources of academic support for students. We are also reviewing the structure of the first year of our undergraduate programmes to provide more early scaffolding for learning and encourage good study habits. Evaluation and research will be carried out by individuals and small teams, with student input and involvement, with oversight by the new Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching and the PVC Academic. Findings will be disseminated to all staff for example, through the Annual Academic Conference.

Initiative 6 (target 5)

Provision of a new, dedicated counselling service for Special Educational Needs students, to improve retention and success (priority group: students who have declared a physical or mental disability).

The University has employed a counsellor within the Special Educational Needs (SEN) team to be in place prior to the start of the 2019-20 academic year in order that this new service can be available to all SEN students from 2019-20. The availability of this service will be published to students on the online learning environment and highlighted directly to all students declaring a physical or mental disability in their enrolment information or at the point at which they declare their disability if this is later.

Initiative 7 (targets 3,4,5,6,7)

Production and implementation of a Wellness Portal as part of Arden's online

learning environment, to provide further support around physical and mental wellbeing including the resilience to study online over long periods of time (priority groups - all).

The creation of a Wellness Portal as part of Arden University's online learning environment to bring together and promote the range of supportive resources offered by the University relating to student health and wellbeing is a new initiative planned to launch in 2019-20. This initiative aligns with Arden's ongoing enhancement of its online platform and its core value of **We Support People**. Arden's online learning environment is the cornerstone of its student learning experience and this prominent positioning of student wellbeing alongside students' learning materials and resources, study skills and careers portals will demonstrate the University's commitment to supporting students' emotional wellbeing and promote inclusivity as well as highlighting the range of resources available. It is planned that the Wellness Portal will include provision of SEN support and that a series of promotional communications with a focus on SEN and vulnerable students will be rolled out.

Initiative 8 (targets 3,4,5,6,7)

Continue to increase focus on the provision of a personalised and tailored learning experience, particularly through the increased use of learner analytics, with the aim of giving students greater visibility of their progress and successes and delivering a more efficient, accessible and engaging online learning experience (priority groups: part-time students, mature students, care leavers, care providers).

Planned activities facilitated by learner analytics during 2019-20 include using online behaviour to aid in the prediction of student success so that automated and personalised intervention policies can be implemented in a timely and sympathetic manner, whilst also developing a seamless student journey – particularly when moving between systems and internal departments – to decrease student barriers to success.

Initiative 9 (targets 1,2)

Develop and expand flexible study options for students to improve retention and success (priority groups: part-time students, mature students, students who have declared a disability).

PROGRESSION

In facilitating progression from higher education, Arden's identified planned initiatives and priority groups are as follows:

Initiative 10 (Targets 8,9)

Development and launch of an Employability Enhancement Service targeting

existing students, particularly less successful groups, spanning advice, guidance, tools, services and industry/employer interaction; and potentially, a broader 'all welcome' free service to the public, including adults neither applying to nor studying with Arden but who have not typically received effective careers guidance and support.

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(priority groups: BME students, students who have declared a disability).

Investment has been earmarked for implementation of this initiative. The project will be led by the Director of Student Experience in partnership with the academic team and will include capital expenditure and investment in staff resource.

Initiative 11

Implement an annual career enhancement survey with students to capture data regarding long term career progression during and following completion of a programme of study, to inform future development of initiatives and support in this area (priority groups: BAME students, Disabled Students).

A career enhancement survey will be designed and system functionality will be put in place to roll out this initiative for new and continuing students from April 2020 onwards. A series of questions regarding employment, salary and career satisfaction and career goals will be added to initial student data collection on admission, which will be revisited annually when they re-register for their next year of study. This will facilitate ongoing tracking of student promotions, salary levels and career satisfaction over the course of their study, enabling the University to identify any programme areas or student groups where greater success is noted, or where course career enhancement is not being successfully delivered, and to identify and plan strategies for improvement.

We will survey all graduates six and 12 months after graduation to establish the overall picture regarding our success, with emphasis in supporting students into Professional and Highly Skilled employment. This will enable meaningful evaluation and setting of baseline performance indicators by 2021-22, and the ability to begin to evaluate performance by 2022-23. By 2024-25 alongside delivering our own improvements in success rates, we will have delivered analysis to

the HE sector on that success, and noted ongoing barriers to success in gaining Professional and Highly Skilled employment by students in the AP groups.

Additionally, Arden University will prioritise the wider review of data over time to ensure robust analysis, particularly around the success and progression of disabled students and the accumulation of graduate destinations data.

A number of strands of activity are proposed, as outlined in the Initiatives above. Some of these are an extension of existing activities or piloted projects, for example in increasing the number of part-time entrants, the implementation of one to one coaching for full-time students and the development of flexible study options and an employer liaison panel.

Other strands of activity will be wholly new for the University, for example the development of a schools and colleges liaison programme, implementation of two week intensive skills diagnostics, creation of a Wellness Portal, employing a counsellor and launch of a career enhancement survey. However, these activities align well with the University's strategic priorities to increase its blended learning recruitment, to improve success rates and to tailor and personalise the student learning experience.

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Arden's overall strategic approach is managed through its Academic Board, the senior Academic authority in the University's Governance structure. Access and Participation is led through an Access and Participation Committee which reports to Academic Board annually; the interrelationship between Access and Participation is managed by Academic Board, in alignment with the other sub-committees which include Admissions and Quality and Standards (which oversees consistency of quality and experience) and Learning and Teaching Committee. Student representation is formally included in all Governance bodies, and in our study centres Student Staff Liaison Groups meet and report into our Quality and Standards Committee. Student participation is also actively supported and managed through an online platform, UNITU.

Arden has adopted a full student lifecycle approach, with each stage in the student cycle actively owned by members of the Senior Management Team and incorporated into individual's strategic plans. The 11 key initiatives, with identified owners reporting into Arden's access and Participation committee, relate directly to aspects of the student lifecycle.

Statistical information is reported and acted upon through our Academic Board, and also Arden's academic Standards and Ethics Committee – a sub-group of Arden Board.

Arden University has invested in appointing a Head of Data, Data Analyst, and Head of Access and Participation on a permanent basis in the furtherance of the objectives within this plan.

Alignment with other strategies

The interrelationship between Access and Participation is overseen by Academic Board, in alignment with the other sub-committees, which include Admissions and Quality and Standards (the latter of which oversees consistency of quality and experience). The Learning and Teaching Committee, which reports into Academic Board oversees our Learning and Teaching plan which has student success as it's central focus. As AP Groups make up most of Arden University's students, their needs are integrated into all aspects of the student journey and student lifecycle. Student representation is formally included in all Governance bodies. In our study centres Student Staff Liaison Groups meet and report into our Quality and Standards Committee. Student participation is also actively supported and managed through an online platform, UNITU and is highly reflective of our student demographic. Arden University has also recently developed a revised and extensive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan that will support and deliver a number of the initiatives outlined in the AP plan. A central aim of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan is to enhance the student experience and outcomes, in a number of areas. A new Centre for Innovation, Learning and Teaching will have an evaluation function; that is, new initiatives aimed at supporting access and participation will have their method of evaluation built in from the start so that learning can feed into future projects.

Significant data management and enhancement will take place through our newly formed Data Governance Board, which has, among other things, a remit to ensure the delivery and enhancement of data in our management decisions to support AP students.

As stated in our Equality and Diversity Policy (QA25, May 2017) Arden University is committed to "Providing access to education and learning to a wide and diverse body of students [which is] an integral principle of Arden university's operating ethos". This Access and Participation Plan underpins Arden university's Equality and Diversity Policy in relation to its students by monitoring the statistical information regarding student equality and diversity and driving change. Secondly it supports the close monitoring of student progression and achievement data across the Access and Participation Groups.

3.2 Student consultation

This Access and Participation Plan has been discussed with student representatives on academic committees as part of the approval process prior to submission to the Office for Students. The opportunity for students to submit separate written representation to the OfS has been discussed with the University level 'lead' student representatives (the Student President and elected representatives on the Academic Board, Learning and Teaching Committee and Quality and Standards Committee) and relayed to all students online. Alongside formal Governance routes, we use the UNITU online student forum and Staff/Student liaison groups.

In addition, it should be acknowledged that all student participative groups within Arden have very substantial representation by students in AP groups given that 92.7% of our students are from

one or more AP categories. There is therefore less of a need to disaggregate AP student consultation from our substantial student participation efforts. Of the 46 tangible developments as a result of Student and Staff Liaison, there are a number of specific activities to assist students that have been implemented beyond the key initiatives listed within this AP Plan. These include the ASSIST Project that recognises cultural differences between students on the matter of academic misconduct. The ASSIST Project enhances the support to students who have conducted an initial academic offence such as plagiarism, through the provision of one-to-one tutorials with an academic staff member. Furthermore, Arden has implemented StudentLine, a free, confidential 24-hour helpline for students and their families to assist with stress and anxiety, depression, financial issues, legal issues, medical problems and more.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

Arden University has established structures for the reporting and systematic review of data on student recruitment and success. Such structures will be further supported through the implementation of a developing data governance framework to support the accessibility and rigour of data used to monitor and measure achievement. Our evaluation strategy will centre around a theory of change approach led from our Centre for Innovation Learning and Teaching and manifest through our Learning and Teaching Strategy. The L&T Strategy will see separate evaluation streams in relation to specific T&L initiatives, where we will assess the performance of our AP students relative to others.

However, it has not previously monitored the performance of specific low participation groups within its overall student body, not least because the vast majority of its students (92.7%) are from at least one of these groups. Prior to 2016, it did not routinely consider data on graduate destinations because of its wholly part-time delivery model and the very high proportion of its students that are already in employment. Changes have been made which will ensure systematic consideration of these data going forwards, with appropriate interventions being recommended through various governance and committee channels. Arden University have begun work on enhancing learner analytics capability in order to develop key interventions where disengagement is developing or evident. This will ensure interventions are timely and effective and monitored by academic leaders.

The University's Academic Board has established a new Access and Participation Committee which takes the lead in monitoring performance against this plan and will report to the Academic Board, the Senior Management Team and the Board of Directors every six months. The Academic Standards and Ethics Committee, a sub-committee of the Board of Directors, will monitor the Academic Board's oversight of the plan more frequently on behalf of the Board of Directors and escalate any concerns promptly.

Achievement of Initiatives 1 and 10 will be measured against relevant published HESA data and the AP dataset, as indicated in Table 8 of the Resource Plan.

Achievement of Initiative 2 will be measured by reviewing Arden's total recruitment to distance learning programmes and its contribution to the total number of part-time entrants to higher education year on year.

Achievement of Initiatives 3 and 4 will be measured using Arden's internal data on student progression and achievement, which is produced and published to senior committees quarterly. We will also engage students' views on the effectiveness of each initiative to understand from their perspective the ways in which they have benefitted from them, or not. Summary reporting of this will be presented at the relevant University committees and actioned where needed.

Achievement of Initiative 5 will result in a research output and inform the future development of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan. Evaluating the impact of different initiatives will include the use of Arden's internal data on student progression and achievement in 2021-22 and thereafter. Impact will also be evaluated through gaining the views of students, as noted above.

Achievement of Initiatives 6, 7, 8 and 9 will be measured using both published HESA retention data (in due course) and internal data on student progression and achievement, which is produced and published to senior committees quarterly.

Achievement of Initiative 11 will be evidenced by the collation of data and analysis in future plans.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

Arden University has well established structures for the reporting and systematic review of data on student recruitment and success. Such structure will be further supported through the implementation of a data governance framework to support the accessibility and rigour of data used to monitor and measure achievement. However, Arden University has not previously monitored the performance of specific low participation groups within its overall student body, not least because the vast majority of its students (92.7%) are from at least one of these groups. Prior to 2016, it did not routinely consider data on graduate destinations because of its wholly part-time delivery model and the very high proportion of its students that are already in employment, and students only began graduating from Arden University with Arden awards in 2018. Changes have been made which will ensure systematic consideration of these data going forwards, with appropriate interventions being recommended through our governance and committee channels; in particular, through our Academic Board, Quality and Standards, Learning and Teaching and Access and Participation committees.

Achievement of the initiatives and how they will be measured is set out in section 3.3.

Provision of information to students

Arden University's Access and Participation Plan will be published annually on its website and as such will be fully accessible to all student and prospective students and other stakeholders.

The Arden website provides detailed, comprehensive information to students regarding programme fees and the maximum year on year increases that the University may make to these fees. The basis on which annual fee increases may be made is set out in the University's terms and conditions, which are sent directly to all successful applicants in their Offer Packs. Formal offer letters (which are sent electronically) contain a direct link to the University's Tuition Fee information page on its website.

Information on financial support available to students, including where to find information on and check eligibility for government funding, details of the University's partnership with Future Finance, and how to apply to the University's internal hardship fund, is included in student handbooks which are sent directly to all successful applicants in their Offer Packs at the point when they are offered a place.

The OfS will append the following items from the fees and targets and investment documents when an access and participation plan is published:

- Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)
- Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)
- Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)

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