

Monitoring diversity in a specialist Higher Education institution

The presentation will describe an approach to the way in which diversity is monitored and reviewed to estimate the impact of work to increase participation from under-represented groups and to inform the recruitment, curriculum design and enhancement of teaching and learning and the student experience. It will draw on the internal and external mechanisms used for monitoring and discuss potential challenges around gathering complete information on student profile characteristics.

The Arts University College at Bournemouth is a leading university sector institution offering specialist education in art, design, media and performance across the creative industries. It aspires to enhance cultural and economic life at regional, national and international levels, and to generate and disseminate new knowledge. We believe that higher education should be available to all those who have the capacity to benefit from it. Diversity is an essential aspect of the learning environment within the creative arts and design, and in consequence there is an obligation on us to ensure that we are providing appropriate opportunities for students from all backgrounds to access our undergraduate and postgraduate offer.

Recommendations from the National Audit Office indicate the need for rigorous evaluation of individual activities and the University College maintains its existing 'robust approaches to evaluation when setting up activities which aim to widen participation, and uses the results to promote and direct those activities which the evidence indicates are the most effective'.ⁱ The University College developed a comprehensive schedule of targets and milestones as part of its Access Agreement, which took account of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) performance indicators as well as internal management data. Additional targets have been developed in support of the extended activity covered by the full Widening Participation Strategy. These are included in an annual report on widening participation activity, and include the following:

- Increased enquiries and applications from under-represented groups
- Conversion rates at each stage of the admissions process for under-represented groups which are comparable with the University College average
- Retention and achievement rates for under-represented groups which are comparable to the University College average
- Student satisfaction ratings for non-traditional learners which are comparable to those of the University College as a whole.

Success against nationally recognised markers will be a sign that the University College has been effective in devising and delivering its strategy and a demographics report on student data considers outcomes by a range of demographic factors. It is important to note that the numbers in some of the categories are small, but nevertheless the data is considered in detail to monitor potential anomalies or further investigation or action.

ⁱ *Widening Participation in Higher Education*, National Audit Office, June 08