



Royal College of Art

**Royal College of Art
Access and Participation Plan
2023/24 – 2027/28
July 2023**

[Final approved by OfS]

1. Introduction

Founded in 1837 as the world's first publicly-funded Government School of Design, the Royal College of Art (RCA) is now the world's largest community of postgraduate art and design students. The Royal College of Art (RCA) aims to achieve international standards of excellence in the education of artists and designers and related practitioners.

The College is primarily a postgraduate institution. However, there is one course offered that is classified by Student Finance England (SFE) as eligible for undergraduate financial support. The MA Architecture course is what is known as a Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) 2 part qualification. Part 1 is normally taken by students as part of a Bachelor of the Arts (BA) degree at an institution other than RCA. Students will then come to the RCA to take Part 2 of the qualification in 2 years. The SFE has taken the view that, providing there is no more than 3 years between finishing Part 1 and starting Part 2, students are actually undertaking one discrete undergraduate qualification – albeit one that is taken at 2 different institutions.

Given that the students on the MA Architecture programme are now eligible for financial support from SFE, we now need an Access and Participation Plan (APP) which will outline how the RCA will enable progression and success for students from under-represented groups who are undertaking this course.

This APP is the first submitted by the RCA pertaining to these students. We welcome the opportunity to produce this Plan and to develop our work in access and participation at the RCA. There is a deep mission-led commitment to equality of opportunity at the College and we see this plan as providing a vital next step in our work in this area as well as the chance to become part of the national widening-access community.

The information and actions in this APP only apply to the students who are undertaking the MA Architecture Part 2 course and not to the whole student body at RCA, as all other students are postgraduates.

It should be noted that we have not previously collected the detailed data required for a comprehensive analysis of our students on the MA Architecture Part 2 programme. We have very limited data currently available for these students. However, starting with entry to this programme in September 2024 we will commence collecting a broader range of data to enable better analysis of this cohort of students. As a postgraduate college we collect a more limited range of student data and we have to make amendments to both our application forms and IT systems to allow collection of this additional data. We had hoped to start collection of this data from September 2023 but the changes required to both the application form and IT system were

not ready in time. As a result of limited data collection we have had to push out the date for reaching our targets past the 5 year time period for the APP to 2027-28.

2. Assessment of Performance

As the focus of this APP is the students on the MA Architecture Part 2 course, it covers a small number of students. Over the period 2018-19 to 2022-23 there were between 87 and 117 students undertaking this course each year. Hence, while we have some data on the access and success of students by different access and participation target groups undertaking the MA Architecture Part 2 course at the RCA over this period, the numbers are small with potentially high levels of volatility for certain student groups and analysis of the data can be complex.

The nature of the MA Architecture Part 2 course implies that some data points below will differ from those outlined in the Office for Students (OfS) Regulatory Notice 1, Access and Participation Plan Guidance. MA Architecture Part 2 is not a conventional undergraduate course and on completion students are not given a degree classification in terms of First, Upper/Lower 2:1, 2:2, third or fail. They receive a pass or a fail and this is reflected in the data presented below.

2.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socio-economic status

2.1.1 The data and context

As a profession, architecture faces some significant challenges with regard to socio-economic diversity. Research undertaken in 2020 using data from the Office for National Statistics ranked Architecture and Town Planning the most privileged occupation in the UK. In the report, privilege is defined as people who had at least one parent who worked in a 'higher or lower managerial, administrative or professional occupation' when they were 14 years old with these occupations taken from the NS-SEC. The analysis found that 73% of those working in architecture and town planning came from a privileged background.¹

Earlier work undertaken in 2016 looked at the backgrounds of the founders of 93 of the leading architectural practices in the UK and found that 45% of these individuals had been to private school². Data collected for the 2017 RIBA Part 1 Graduate survey found that 47% of graduates' father's and 40% of their mother's last employment was in 'Intermediate managerial, administrative, professional e.g. bank manager, teacher' or 'Higher managerial, administrative, professional e.g. chief executive, senior civil servant, surgeon' classified roles.³

¹ Carey, H, O'Brien, D & Gable O (2021) Social mobility in the Creative Economy Rebuilding and levelling up? - <https://cdn2.assets-servd.host/creative-pec/production/assets/publications/PEC-report>

² Dezeen (2020) Architecture "is more elitist than the most elite university in the world" – 18th August 2020 - <https://www.dezeen.com/2020/08/18/architecture-elitist-phineas-harper/>

³ REPORT - RIBA Student Destinations Survey 2017

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) publishes data on the percentage of undergraduate students who are from the areas of lowest higher education participation in the UK by subject area providing data for Architecture, building and planning. While this data does not focus on architecture alone it shows that Architecture, building and planning is one of the subject areas with the lowest percentage of undergraduate students from low participation areas. In 2021-22 there were 9.5% of students from such areas, which is the 6th lowest from 26 subject areas. In terms of the percentage of students from non-state schools architecture, building and planning has the 8th lowest of the 26 areas.⁴

⁴ See: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/widening-participation>

2.1.2 Socio-economic data on MA Architecture students at the RCA

The initial data challenge for the MA Architecture Part 2 course is that RCA students enter Part 1 at another University. Therefore their residence/accommodation is related to their Part 1 course as opposed to the address of their parents/carers or where they undertook their education prior to higher education (i.e. at age 17 or 18 years). The postcode markers from students on the RCA Part 2 course will not give a reliable indicator of the socio-economic background of the students on the course.

Hence, we do not have data on the socio-economic background of our students for the period up to 2023-24 that enables us to construct measurable and challenging targets. We will be collecting data on the postcodes of students from their residence prior to higher education entry from 2024-25 onwards and our application form for this student group is being amended to accommodate this data collection.

The available research points strongly to architecture as a discipline with a relatively high number of students from higher socio-economic groups. Thus, whilst we cannot in this iteration of the plan establish specific, time-bound targets, the evidence is strong enough for us to prioritise access work with students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

2.2 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students

In Table 1 access performance is shown as the percentage of BAME students relative to white students for that year's cohort. For example, in 2018-19 71% of the students admitted to the MA Architecture Part 2 course were white and 29% BAME.

Table 1 shows retention and continuation students who complete year 1 who are white and the percentage from a BAME background. For example, in 2018-19 90% of white students completed year 1 and 93% of BAME students.

In interpreting this data it is extremely important to bear in mind the small number of students on this course and the high rates of retention and completion. For each of the years 2018-19 to 2021-22 the rates of retention and completion for all students has never been below 88%.

Given that the cohort size of students commencing the course has not been bigger than 60 in any year, a very small change in the number of students continuing to year 2 or completing, i.e. 1 or 2 students, can lead to a relatively large shift in the percentage of students who complete year 1 or the whole course. In addition, due to the small number of total students on the course we are not able to disaggregate BAME students by individual ethnic groups.

We have not collected data on undergraduates progressing to highly skilled employment within six months of their graduation or undergraduates in employment within six months of their graduation or undergraduates in further studies within six months of their graduation by BAME/non-BAME background over the 2018-19 period.

Hence we are unable to assess our performance with regard to progression for BAME students. As indicated in Table 1 below one of our strategic aims is to collect and analyse data to enable us to understand our performance and set targets where appropriate.

Table 1: Performance gaps for BAME students

Measure/Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
ACCESS					
Access UK students	71% (White) 29% (BAME)	70% 30%	67% 33%	73% 27%	52% 48%
CONTINUATION					
Retention rate at end of Year 1	97% (White) 93% (BAME)	92% 100%	100% 87%	91% 80%	N/A
ATTAINMENT					
Students completing with a Pass	97% (White) 100% (BAME)	92% 100%	81% 88%	N/A	N/A

2.2.1 Access

Table 1 above illustrates that RCA recruits a relatively high number of BAME students compared to the sector average. The OfS data dashboard shows that in 2020-21 the proportion of 18 year old entrants entering higher education from BAME backgrounds was 33%.⁵

The overall number of students that we have on the course is low and a small change in participation will have an impact on the percentage of students from a BAME background relative to a white background. The volatility of small data sets is demonstrated with the last two years for which we have data where the proportion of students from BAME backgrounds jumps from 27% to 48%.

⁵ For more information go to: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

Despite our overall strong performance in this area, we intend to continue to focus on access, continuation and completion to the MA Architecture Part 2 course by BAME students as a strategic target.

2.2.2 Continuation

Table 1 above needs to be reviewed in the context of the very low student numbers and high rates of completion overall. In terms of retention for 3 of the 4 years where we have data, retention is higher for white than BAME students with a gap of over 10% in the last 2 years where we have data. However, the shift from 100% of BAME students completing year 1 in 2019-20 to 87% of students completing in 2020-21 is a result of less than 5 students not completing – so, as emphasised, the numbers are small.

Completion rates for our BAME students are actually higher than for our white students, but again this is for small numbers. In addition, the data for 2020-21 will need to be revised as we do have a small number of students who complete their course in 3 or even 4 years and not 2. This has been the case in each of the years 2018-19 and 2019-20. Hence, we expect the completion rate for the 2020-21 cohort to increase and this to be reflected in updated data, when available.

2.2.3 Attainment

Given that the students receive a pass or fail on completion of their course, the data on completion presented above is the same as the final attainment data, since a student cannot complete without passing their course.

2.3 Mature students

Only 4 students aged 21 or under have been admitted to the MA Architecture Part 2 course since 2018-19 – all other students have been aged 22 or over. As explained above, this is a consequence of the students having already completed three years of undergraduate study at another higher education provider. It should be noted that the average age for all students joining the RCA is 27 years.

2.4 Disabled Students

The number of disabled students participating in the MA Architecture Part 2 course is low and for GDPR reasons we cannot present a completed analysis of the data regarding their access, continuation, attainment and progression. However, we have collected data on disabled students entering the course over the last 5 years. The number of disabled students entering the MA Architecture course actually compares favourably with the sector average as presented in the OfS data dashboard.

Consistent with the high rates of completion and of continuation from year 1 of this course it should be noted that disabled students who enter this course also exhibit high rates of completion and continuation. We will review the data available on access, continuation, attainment and progression of disabled students annually over the course of the APP.

One of our objectives is to increase the number of students accessing RCA who are disabled. However, given the small numbers and the lack of baseline data we are unable currently to construct an annual target for this area. However, we will commit to widening access for disabled students.

2.5 Care Experienced students

We have not actively collected information on our students with regard to their care experience. We are aware of the importance of supporting this group of students and how their student experience is impacted by their background with the care system.

We wish to increase the number of students accessing RCA who are from care leaver backgrounds. However, given the small numbers and the lack of baseline data we are unable currently to construct an annual target. However, we will commit to widen access and support for this group of students to ensure successful completion of the course.

2.6 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

It will not currently be feasible to set numerical targets regarding the access of these particular groups to MA Architecture Part 2. Given the anticipated level of student numbers over the period of this plan, we do not anticipate this will change. We will begin to collect data from students from the 2024-25 academic year.

- Carers
- People estranged from their families
- People from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Children of military families.

Outlined below are our strategic measures and we intend to monitor students from under-represented groups to ensure their success at the RCA and our APP targets are met.

Once we have sufficient data on these groups we will be reviewing on an annual basis their continuation, attainment and progression with regard to their background characteristics, as well as care experience, disability, socio-economic background and ethnicity. The data in this

report will be used to inform our approach to our access and participation work for the following year and ensure that we are meeting our milestones.

2.7 Intersections of disadvantage

As the MA Architecture Part 2 cohort is small we must ensure that we focus our monitoring and data collection work in order to identify where there are intersections of disadvantage.

Our evaluation and monitoring process will focus on identifying intersectionality. We will build this analysis into our strategic and operational framework mechanisms on the basis of the intersection of characteristics which shape a student's entry, progression and success in higher education.

We will review our data on intersectionality from 2024-25 and annually. It will be included in our APP. Given that we do not anticipate student numbers over the period 2024-25 to 2027-28 to grow, the data produced from 2024-25 onwards will be expressed in qualitative terms, as we do not wish to contravene GDPR guidance.

3. Target groups, aims and objectives

3.1 Target groups

Based on the assessment of performance undertaken in Section 1, the target groups of learners for access and participation work at the RCA are outlined below. We do not have data on the access, continuation, attainment and progression of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, the weight of secondary evidence is such that we wish to establish them as a target group, so that the necessary work can be undertaken to build the foundations of our access and participation work to support them.

Even though students from the BAME group are well represented in the MA Architecture Part 2 course we have retained them as a target group with respect to their access to ensure that this representation continues.

We have not designated mature students as a target group, because as a postgraduate higher education provider we have a student body where all students are mature.

We do not have targets related to completion rates for undergraduate students, because as the evidence in Table 1 above shows our performance is strong here across all students regardless of background.

Nor do we have targets related to the retention rates for first year students as our performance is also strong here. However, we are mindful that this performance must remain strong for all groups and hence we do have strategic aims that refer to this below.

As outlined above, we do not have data on the progression of undergraduates to highly skilled employment within six months of their graduation or undergraduates in employment within six months of their graduation or undergraduates in further studies within six months of their graduation. Hence, we have not established any target groups in Table 2 with regard to progression.

For care leavers, we do not have data on their levels of participation, but given that the data on HE participation across the sector is low, especially for higher tariff courses, we wish (as with those from lower socio-economic groups) to retain them as a target group in advance of data being collected on their levels of participation in the MA Architecture Part 2 Course.

Table 2: RCA Access and Participation Target Groups

	Higher education participation, household income, or socio-economic status	Black, Asian and minority ethnic students	Disabled Students	Care Leavers
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3.2 Aims and Objectives

The following strategic aims have been established on our analysis of our performance as detailed above. Our analysis of performance indicates:

- A relatively high number of BAME students.
- An increased representation from disabled students.

Although we do not have data on access by socio-economic background, other evidence indicates our students are drawn disproportionately from higher socio-economic groups.

We therefore need to collect relevant data to inform our work in this area. We need to understand the composition of our MA Architecture Part 2 student body in relation to their characteristics.

The retention and completion rates of all our students is very high, but we want to ensure that it remains high for our students from BAME backgrounds.

Given the high levels of retention and completion overall, it can be concluded that our students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are performing well in terms of retention and completion. However, when we have specific data on this area it will be reviewed to identify any differences, as we have done for our BAME students. While we have set specific targets for various groups of students, we have not set one for Care Leavers. However, we want to ensure that we provide support to this potentially small group of students in our cohort if they do apply to allow successful completion of the programme.

The data we have in terms of access, attainment and progression by socio-economic background is not currently available consistently over a sufficient time period to enable us to formulate objectives that are specific and time-bound at this point for this APP.

The weight of secondary evidence on access to architecture is sufficient for us to make addressing socio-economic gaps in access a strategic aim. Using data from the academic year 2023-24 we will begin to review our data on access, progression and attainment by socio-economic background to identify equality gaps. This will allow us, when we have sufficient data, to be able to produce measurable and time-bound objectives.

The commitment to reviewing data and producing specific, measurable performance objectives is outlined in our strategic aims. We will undertake to collect and review data concerning the progression of students to highly skilled employment within six months of their graduation or undergraduates in employment within six months of their graduation or undergraduates in further studies within six months of their graduation.

We are also considering asking HESA for relevant data for similar higher education providers to the RCA so that we can begin to monitor our performance to these other providers.

3.2.1 Access

Aim : BAME	To maintain the high numbers of students accessing the MA Architecture Part 2 course from BAME groups.
Target	To maintain access for BAME students at no lower than 40% each year throughout the life of the APP.
Baseline	2022-23 - BAME students 31% of cohort of MA Architecture Part 2 course.

Monitoring	Annual monitoring of data for BAME students on course to ensure the target is being met. Mitigating actions if annual 40% target not met.
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Aim : SOCIO- ECONOMIC	To increase the number of students accessing the MA Architecture Part 2 course from lower socio-economic groups.
Objective	For 20% of all students entering the MA Architecture Part 2 each year to come from lower socio-economic groups by 2028-29.
Baseline	Currently limited data. Set Baseline from assessing similar provider types, initial RCA data and analysis from Free School Meals and TUNDRA data and comparing percentage of students from Quintile 1 (low undergraduate participation) with Quintile 5 (high undergraduate participation). As a result of currently having no baseline data we cannot set a target on our Targets Investment Plan. As soon as we have sufficient data a baseline will be set and our Plan updated.
Monitoring	Currently limited data collection. Data to start being fully collected from 2024-25 academic year. Annual review of data from this point.
Milestone	Annual monitoring to ensure on target with 10% milestone by 2026-27.

Aim : DISABLED	To increase the number of students accessing the MA Architecture Part 2 course who are disabled.
Objective	For 10% of all students entering MA Architecture Part 2 course in 2028-29 to be disabled.
Baseline	Currently limited data but collecting a wider range of disability data from 2024-25. Set Baseline from 2024-25 academic year. As a result of currently having no baseline data we cannot set a target on our Targets Investment Plan. As soon as we have sufficient data a baseline will be set and our Plan updated.
Monitoring	Currently limited data collection. Data to start being fully collected from 2024-25 academic year. Annual review of data from this point using our own internal data.
Milestone	Milestone of 5% of students on entry to be disabled students by 2026-27.

3.2.2 Continuation

Aim : BAME	To maintain the high levels of retention and completion for students from BAME groups on the MA Architecture Part 2 course.
Objective	To reduce the gap in retention from year 1 to year 2 for BAME: non BAME students from 11% in 2022-23 to 5% by 2028-29.
Baseline	Baseline 11% 2022-23.
Monitoring	Annual monitoring of data for BAME students on course to ensure the target is being met. Mitigating actions if milestone not met by 2026-27.
Milestone	Milestone of 6% retention from year 1 to year 2 for BAME students by 2026-27.

Aim : SOCIO- ECONOMIC	To increase the retention and completion of students from lower socio-oeconomic groups on the MA Architecture Part 2 course.
Objective	95% retention and completion of students entering the MA Architecture Part 2 each year to come from lower socio-economic groups by 2028-29.
Baseline	Currently limited data. Set Baseline from assessing similar provider types, initial RCA data and analysis from Free School Meals and TUNDRA data and comparing students from Quintile 1 (low undergraduate participation) with Quintile 5 (high undergraduate participation).
Monitoring	Currently limited data collection. Data to start being fully collected from 2024-25 academic year. Annual review of data from this point.
Milestone	Annual monitoring to ensure on target to meet objectives by 2027-24 with 10% target by 2026-27.

3.2.3 Attainment

Aim : SOCIO- ECONOMIC	To increase the number of students from lower socio-economic groups completing the MA Architecture Part 2 course.
Objective	95% completion rate for students from lower socio-economic groups by 2028-29. Set Baseline from assessing similar provider types, initial RCA data and analysis from Free School Meals and TUNDRA data and comparing students from Quintile 1 (low undergraduate participation) with Quintile 5 (high undergraduate participation).

Baseline	Currently limited data. Set Baseline from 2024-25 academic year.
Monitoring	Annual monitoring of data for socio-economic group of students to ensure the target is being met. Mitigating actions if milestone not met by 2026-27.
Milestone	Milestone of 90% completion for students from lower socio-economic groups by 2026-27.

Aim : DISABLED	To increase the number of disabled students completing the MA Architecture Part 2 course.
Objective	95% completion rate for disabled students by 2028-29.
Baseline	Currently limited data. Set Baseline from 2024-25 academic year.
Monitoring	Annual monitoring of data for disabled students to ensure the target is being met. Mitigating actions if milestone not met by 2026-27.
Milestone	Milestone of 90% completion for disabled students by 2026-27.

3.2.4 Progression

Aim : SOCIO- ECONOMIC	To increase the number of students from lower socio-economic groups completing the MA Architecture Part 2 course to progress to professional level employment or further study within 15 months of completion .
Objective	90% progression rate for students from lower socio-economic groups by 2028-29.
Baseline	Currently limited data. Set Baseline from 2024-25 academic year. Set Baseline from assessing similar provider types, initial RCA data and analysis from Free School Meals and TUNDRA data and comparing students from Quintile 1 (low undergraduate participation) with Quintile 5 (high undergraduate participation).
Monitoring	Annual monitoring of data of socio-economic group of students to ensure the target is being met. Mitigating actions if milestone not met by 2026-27.
Milestone	Milestone of 85% completion for students from lower socio-economic groups by 2026-27.

3.2.5 Data collection and formulating of objectives

We have not previously collected detailed student data for the MA Architecture Part 2 course (details regarding non-collection of this data provided in the Introduction). From 2024-25

academic year we are substantially increasing our data collection for this cohort of students to enable us to fully monitor and identify gaps in access, attainment and progression for this course. This will ensure that our APP objectives are measurable in order to meet our APP aims.

As a result of limited data we have had to push some of the APP Targets out past the normal 5 years of the plan to 2028-29. The issue of not having reliable data in order to set baselines until the 2024/25 academic year has resulted in requiring a longer time period in order to achieve the APP targets.

Closing the gap - we are starting with little data and in some cases cannot as yet set a baseline for our objectives. However, we have tried to set challenging targets. Although this APP is over a 5 year period we do not expect to close the gap on these objectives until 2028-29. We will monitor closely to ensure that we are making improvements year on year and that milestone targets are met.

4. Strategic measures

4.1 Whole provider strategic approach

The RCA's Strategic Plan from 2020 to 2027 places significant emphasis on extending equality of opportunity across the RCA.

As part of our whole College approach we will:

- Demonstrate our commitment to access, student success and progression for under-represented groups;
- Establish an approach to widening participation and social inclusion across the whole College community;
- Promote best practice to harness innovation and enhance learning approaches;
- Build more effective approaches to engage with student voices from a diverse range of backgrounds to enhance student opportunity;
- Promote and celebrate our positive impact on widening participation to our wider communities and partners;
- Promote equality and diversity across the whole RCA.

The three key strategic goals underpinning our APP objectives are outlined below:

Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan focuses on research and the value of new knowledge and insights created by the RCA to address diverse global challenges ranging from mobility and urbanism, the circular economy, the climate crisis and decarbonisation to ageing populations and inclusivity.

Including how these new research findings will become translated into new units of study in our taught programmes to enable our students to support diverse global challenges.

Goal 2 puts teaching excellence and student experience at the heart of the RCA. A new one year MA framework aims to broaden student access and align with the world of lifelong learning to support students who are employed and wish to enhance their academic skills.

Goal 3 outlines how the RCA works in partnership with industry and how we contribute as a civic university to the social, economic and cultural fabric of society, in particular our role in UK innovation strategy and creative entrepreneurship.

Goal 2 prioritises widening student access and a commitment to an excellent student experience. The new MA framework has been designed to ensure that we can widen and diversify student access which is crucial in the context of this APP. Although the focus of this APP is on MA Architecture Part 2 students only, the institutional commitment to widening student access across the whole portfolio of its activities ensures that the work of the APP is not isolated and peripheral to its strategy. It embodies the vision of the RCA going forward through the next decade.

4.2 Alignment with other strategies

4.2.1 RCA Community and Public Engagement Strategy

The RCA Community and Public Engagement Strategy is a new strategy launched in 2022. It aims to increase the positive impact the RCA has on the world by improving the ways in which staff and students engage with our wider communities. It links closely with the RCA 2022-2027 strategic plan, in particular the goal of ‘translating new knowledge, skills and insights to bring about economic, societal and cultural benefit through UK and international partnerships and collaborations’.

It specifies priority audiences as:

- Young people aged 11–25 years.
- Neighbours, community groups and organisations.

There will be a particular focus on those groups who have been excluded, marginalised or disadvantaged by society. The Community and Public Engagement strategy aligns closely with our outreach work described below and provides an institution-wide framework to inform our activities related to outreach in this APP. In particular, it will link the work that is specific to the MA Architecture Part 2 students with the broader work on community and public engagement.

This allows strategic and operational linkages between the specific activities described below and relevant College-wide work, thus adding significant added value to our outreach work. In particular, it will ensure that RCA outward-facing activities, such as student exhibitions and other events, link with outreach work and that RCA staff active in volunteering and public engagement are aware of the specific work described here.

4.2.2 Student Experience Strategic Priority

A key enabler of the RCA Strategy 2022 - 2027 outlines RCA commitment to Student Experience. RCA has a shared vision to build a sense of belonging, pride and community within our RCA student body by putting students at the heart of everything we do.

RCA recently appointed a Head of Student Experience to lead this theme of work and explore how we can use student feedback to develop services and understanding of our student outcomes outside of their academic studies.

The RCA Performance Dashboard has committed to measuring overall satisfaction of students receiving our support services (outlined in section 4.4) to ensure students receive the required additional support to make them succeed in their studies.

We have committed to ensuring all students with a disclosed disability will receive an Inclusion Plan that outlines their required reasonable adjustments to assist them to achieve successful completion of their studies.

RCA has also set up in September 2022 a Student Centre to enable students to access services and support from the College. The Centre provides dedicated support to any student, but also provides a safe space for students from under-represented communities and those that need immediate wellbeing help.

Our RCA strategy aims to more than double the percentage of Black British and POC (People of Colour) postgraduate taught students and postgraduate researchers from under-represented backgrounds over the next 5 to 7 years.

In addition, RCA has committed to increasing scholarship funding from 4% to 8% of total expenditure over the next 5 years.

4.2.3 Equality and Diversity

The RCA stands firmly against unlawful discrimination in all its forms against staff, students and visitors with protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (age, sex (gender), sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity). In addition, we will not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of any other characteristics or circumstances including, but not limited to, ethnic or national origin, socio-economic background and trade union membership status. Our stance on Equality and Diversity aligns fully with the access, completion and progression targets of our APP. We wish to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, are successful in their studies at the RCA. We will monitor our APP on a regular basis to ensure that it is aligned with our equality and diversity policy.

4.3 Delivering our strategic measures

This section outlines the strategic measures that RCA will implement to enable the aims, objectives and targets described in APP to be achieved. It outlines the activities related to each measure and why these measures and activities are being implemented.

These strategic measures underpin the successful delivery of our APP. The objectives ensure that our outcomes are achieved over the period of the APP. Our work in this area is overseen by the APP sub-committee, which consists of academics, professional service staff and students. This will report to our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, which in turn reports to our Senate, thus ensuring that the objectives of our APP are fully aligned with the Strategic Objectives of the College and are being monitored.

To ensure the RCA's governing Council is informed and to demonstrate the Council's visible leadership and commitment to this APP, a member of Council will act as the Plan's Champion. The Champion will have regular briefings on EDI activity, present to Council an annual update on progress with the plan and alignment with the College's wider Strategic Objectives, and host events to celebrate EDI success including APP activities.

4.3.1 Access

As indicated above, we will target our work in this area on students from lower socio-economic groups, BAME students, disabled students and care leavers. In order to reach these students, work will be undertaken which will have a dual element, working with students at the pre-undergraduate level and at undergraduate level taking their MA Architecture Part 1 qualification.

The available evidence as outlined in section 2.1.1 suggests that the 'pool' of students who are entering undergraduate higher education courses from the target groups (identified by the OfS)

needs to be expanded. Simply attempting to attract students from these groups from the present undergraduate body, given its composition, is unlikely to allow us to reach our targets. It is crucial that we work at the pre-undergraduate level to contribute to increasing the number of students from widening access target groups entering undergraduate higher education to study Architecture.

Given that our students come to us directly from other undergraduate higher education providers, we will need to undertake some work with those universities/students who are engaged in Part 1 study in architecture related courses at undergraduate level. We intend to put in place a suitable engagement strategy for the 2024/25 academic year.

4.3.2 Work at pre-undergraduate level

There are two specific issues, where architecture is concerned, at pre-undergraduate level. Firstly, it is not available as a specific subject at GCSE. It is available at A Level, but is taken by a relatively small number of students. As architecture is not available at GCSE and has a low A level profile, this means many students from our target groups will not be aware of what architecture as a career offers and how to enter it.

Research undertaken with over 20,000 pupils aged 7-11 years showed that children's career aspirations are most influenced by who they know, their parents and friends of parents, and the TV and media.⁶ If these pupils are not connected in some way to those engaged in architecture, young people in our target group are not likely to aspire to enter the architecture profession.

The second specific issue is that a relatively high number of UCAS points is required to gain entry to an undergraduate architecture course.⁷ According to UCAS most architecture courses require a minimum of 2 Bs at A level. Given that achievement at A level is related to socio-economic background and ethnicity⁸ and that students from such backgrounds are disproportionately likely to enter higher education with BTEC qualifications,⁹ there is a clear attainment challenge here.

These twin issues shape our outreach work at the pre-undergraduate entry level. It will focus on:

- raising awareness of architecture as a career.
- building understanding of how to progress to architecture.

⁶ Education and Employers (2018) Drawing the Future London: Education and Employers
<https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DrawingTheFuture.pdf>

⁷ See: <https://www.ucas.com/explore/subjects/architecture-building-and-planning>

⁸ See; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analysis-of-results-a-levels-and-gcse-summer-2021/summer-2021-student-level-equalities-analysis-gcse-and-a-level#result>

⁹ See; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analysis-of-results-a-levels-and-gcse-summer-2021/summer-2021-student-level-equalities-analysis-gcse-and-a-level#result>

- support the achievement of the necessary academic level to enter architecture at undergraduate level.

Our intended activity programme is informed by the available evidence regarding what outreach work is effective in this area. It will build on our Community and Public Engagement strategy and the existing relationships that the RCA has with a range of stakeholders in compulsory education.

The available evidence we have reviewed from both national and institutional research suggests that the most effective way of approaching the delivery of outreach work is to develop a coherent, progressive programme involving at each age group multiple interventions that work together in order to aid progression to higher education.¹⁰

Evidence suggests that such work is greatly strengthened through the development of a Student Ambassador programme.¹¹ We will aim to engage 8-10 students per year from 2022-23 to 2026-27 as ambassadors who will support the delivery of the outreach work described below.

4.3.3 Outreach work at pre-16

Our work at the pre-higher education level will focus on a hybrid programme with activities delivered both face to face and online. At pre-16 Key Stage 3 and 4 it will focus on:

- raising awareness of architecture as a career.
- building understanding of how to progress to architecture as a career.

We will work with our student ambassadors drawing on the significant range of expertise that exists across the sector and utilising our collaborative relationship with the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) outlined below to develop a portfolio of activities to support our aims. The sessions, which will be led by our trained student ambassadors, will have different themes at each key stage.

These themes will be:

- Key stage 3: What is architecture? - these sessions will focus on understanding what architects do, the impact of architecture on society and the key aspects of architecture as a career.
- Key Stage 4: students will be able to participate in short interactive sessions with our ambassadors that give insights into what studying architecture is like and enable them to

¹⁰ Bainham, K. (2019) 'The impacts and benefits of employing a progressive and sustained approach to outreach programmes for universities: a case study – the progress to success framework in Broadhead, S., Butcher, J., Hill, M., Mckendry, S., Raven, N., Renton, R., Sanderson, B., Ward, T. and Williams, S. W. (eds.) 'Transformative Higher Education – Access, Inclusion & Lifelong Learning'. London: FACE: Forum for Access and Continuing Education, pp. 193-213

¹¹ Burgess, et al (2018) Role models, mentoring and university applications – evidence from a crossover randomised controlled trial in the United Kingdom - Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Volume 20, Number 4, October 2018

undertake exercises that can help them better understand the academic content of architecture study.

Utilising our existing networks and building on the wider work of the College in terms of public engagement as outlined in the Community and Public Engagement Strategy, we will seek to identify 5-10 partner schools/colleges in London with whom we can work to deliver our outreach work. These schools and colleges will be drawn from areas of London with relatively high numbers of students from BAME backgrounds and lower socio-economic groups.

4.3.4 Outreach work post-16

In our access work at post-16 we will be working with students closer to higher education admission and the expertise of our academic body will be even more important. The focus at this stage will be to support the achievement of the necessary academic attainment level to enter architecture at undergraduate level. In concentrating on attainment we are looking to reflect the recent guidance from the OfS for higher education providers that emphasises the crucial role that attainment plays in driving widening access work.

We will partner with 5-10 schools/colleges: their composition may differ from those we work with via pre-16 activities, and we will include some Further Education Colleges in this group. However, we will focus on schools/colleges with a high proportion of students from BAME backgrounds and from lower socio-economic groups to support meeting our APP objectives. Our work will focus on two elements:

- **Preparing students to study architecture in Higher Education.** This will constitute sessions looking at the skills necessary to succeed in studying architecture at university and short masterclass type sessions on selective topics studied at undergraduate level. With regard to masterclasses these are a long-standing form of widening access intervention and are delivered both physically and online by many universities. The Uni4me platform for example delivered by NEON has over 300 masterclass type activities from over 300 universities. Available evidence, collected recently via an assessment of the OfS funded Uni-Connect programme, also points to the value of a masterclass programme.¹²

- **Developing your portfolio.** Unlike many other undergraduate courses, students are likely to require a portfolio of their own artwork when applying for architecture courses at higher education. We will offer sessions to aid students from our target groups to prepare this portfolio. This is a crucial element of attainment related support for our target groups.

¹² Sandhu et al (2020) An independent review of evaluation evidence submitted by Uni Connect partnerships: A report for the Office for Students on the findings from the second call for local evaluation evidence

4.3.5 Work with Architecture Part 1 undergraduate students

Whilst growing the pool of students studying architecture in higher education is crucial, if we are to improve access to the RCA from our target groups, we need to focus some of our work on students who are studying for their Part 1 undergraduate degree. We already have very strong relationships with many of the providers where our MA Architecture Part 2 students are recruited from. We will work with them to offer a range of focused support for students from our target groups to encourage them to progress to the RCA and hence support our APP access objectives. These activities will include:

- **Reviewing social media channels and student marketing/recruitment materials.** We will review the marketing and recruitment work we do to ensure that it is able to be impactful where widening access target groups to architecture are concerned.
- **Enhance our understanding of our undergraduate recruitment pipeline.** We will build on our relationships with the universities from where we recruit students onto the MA Architecture Part 2 course so as to better understand the profile of this cohort. This will allow us to enhance the targeting of our work at students from our widening access target groups.
- **Work with recruitment pipeline universities.** Alongside enhancing our understanding of the data as described above, we will look to develop partnership activities with these universities focused on widening access target groups.
- **Preparing students to study MA Architecture Part 2.** We will develop an online guide to studying the Part 2 qualification focused on our target group of students, as outlined in this APP. This will include the voices of our students from widening access target groups. We will market this guide to our target groups via our recruitment work.
- **Building on our student ambassador programme.** Our students will have a key role in our widening access work. As well as delivering face to face work activities with young people at pre-16 they will support our outreach work with students who are undertaking or have completed the Part 1 architecture course.

4.3.6 Disabled students and Care Experienced students

As one of our objectives is to attract disabled students and care experienced students, it is crucial that our outreach work reflects the specific nature of these groups. This will be done by integrating activities and content relevant to such students in our portfolio of work described above. However, we will form collaborative relationships with relevant partners and develop bespoke work that is focused solely on these groups of students. In constructing our work here we will draw upon the resources collated by NEON via its Access and Outreach for Disabled learners working group and NEON's Care Experienced students working group.

4.4 The curriculum, pedagogic and student support

To take forward our commitment to ensuring the successful continuation and progression of our students from widening access target groups we will prioritise engagement with the elements of pastoral and academic support that RCA students benefit from. These elements of support are described below:

4.4.1 Induction

The College regards the opening weeks of the programme as key in ensuring eventual success on the programme. Students from under-represented groups may experience feelings of dislocation when commencing their study, and proactive steps need to be taken to ensure that these students feel welcomed and engaged in the programme. The College has a suite of orientation sessions that students from widening access target groups undertaking the MA Architecture Part 2 course will be able to benefit from. They will also be able to participate in a range of support groups when they join the College. These include groups on:

- Neurodivergence
- Race
- Gender / Sexuality.

We will, over the course of this plan, be continually reviewing the induction and ongoing support arrangements for the benefit of our widening access target students. The objective is to support students' retention and success on the course in the furtherance of our APP targets.

4.4.2 Personal Tutoring

All students are assigned a personal tutor whom they meet with at least once a term or as required to cover pastoral issues. This is a safe space where students can articulate or raise any questions relating to finance, accessibility and inclusion. We will provide for our staff a comprehensive programme of developmental activity to enable them to effectively support a more diverse group of students entering the MA Architecture Part 2 course. The objective is to support students' retention and success on the course for the furtherance of our APP targets.

4.4.3 Inclusive curriculum

The College recognises the barriers that an Eurocentric curricula can present to students from BAME backgrounds, which may hinder them from achieving their full potential in higher education. We have taken substantial steps toward the decolonisation of our curriculum.

These include:

- Introduction of new Architectural Design Studio focused on questions of empire and decolonisation with specific reference to extractive conditions of infrastructure and racial capitalism.
- Proactive review of History and Theory in our curriculum and teaching staff to ensure greater diversity of case studies and references and teaching teams.
- Establishment of a number of platforms specifically related to inclusivity and diversity in architecture and architectural education, including questions of gender and race and decolonisation of the curriculum and general discipline.

4.4.4 Supporting disabled students

Our steps specifically targeted to support disabled students include:

- 1-2 week (depending on length of submission) automatic extension for all neuro-divergent students.
- Closed captions for all lectures online in support of the hearing impaired. Lectures are also all recorded and accessible for students on Moodle (Virtual Learning Environment) in support of neuro-divergence and English as a second language.
- Inclusion plans, shared with relevant academics and teaching staff, provide adjusted provision to meet the specific needs of the student, for example:
 - Deadline extensions for dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD.
 - Desk space in natural light for students with vision impairment or head injury.
 - Longer duration of examination to help students with anxiety etc that may affect capacity to present publicly.

We employ a dedicated Disability Coordinator who works 1-2-1 with students to support their needs, including the embedding of reasonable adjustments and assisting students to apply for relevant funding.

4.4.5 Engaging with student mental health needs

The RCA employs a Mental Health Coordinator to assist students with any issues relating to mental health, well-being and any other pastoral issues which may arise throughout the student journey. We also have a specialist in-house BACP and UKCP accredited counselling team available. Our turnaround time for appointment times are excellent, with students being seen within less than 1 week for most cases. The Student Support team also works with the Heads of Programme and students to understand their needs and map out the best support plan. We also provide:

- Drop-in sessions.

- A face to face student centre to provide a triage into services.
- Out of hours services with Togetherall and CiC telephone counselling.

4.5 Employability

As a College we are continually strengthening our offer of employability support to our students via our professional development service, FuelRCA. The FuelRCA programme of events supports students to develop their professional skills, knowledge and networks, and to prepare for life after graduation. It is led by RCA graduates and includes contributions from recent RCA alumni. We will develop our work in this area to embed within it a bespoke focus on our APP target groups undertaking the MA Architecture Part 2 course. For example, we offer to all our students 1-2-1 CV and application workshops through dedicated careers advisors in preparation for their applications for future careers. We will be closely examining this provision to ensure that it meets the needs of our students from access and participation groups and supports the attainment of our targets.

4.5.1 Talks, workshops and events

The RCA is able to utilise its position as one of the leading providers of architecture education in the country to offer a range of expert-led workshops on topics including fundraising, entrepreneurial skills, time management, writing about your work and branding which all students can benefit from. As with all our employability provision we will be strengthening and enhancing this provision over the course of the period of the APP to ensure that speakers reflect socio-economic and ethnic diversity and thus can reflect our strategic aims in terms of access and participation.

4.6 Collaboration

Given our small size it is extremely important that we connect with other providers in the sector to inform our access and participation work. The RCA is a member of the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) which is the national organisation for widening access to higher education in the UK with over 150 organisational members. Working with NEON will add value to achieving our access and participation aims and objectives in the following ways:

- Access for disabled learners: NEON will work with RCA to offer expertise and support in the design and delivery of the information event activities described above.
- Access for looked after children: NEON will work with RCA to offer expertise and support in the design and delivery of the information event activities described above.
- Access, attainment and progression for BAME learners: We will continue to be active members of the NEON Addressing Differential Outcomes for Ethnically Diverse Learners working group. This will allow us to develop our work with these learners informed by

national best practice. This group brings together over 20 HE providers to exchange knowledge and practice with regard to access and participation work with BAME learners.¹³

We intend to be members of the NEON establishing evidence and measuring impact working group. In addition, RCA will also join the special NEON working group that brings together small specialist providers.

Aside from our work with NEON, as an institution we are members of a range of organisations whose work and mission can support our APP objectives. We will undertake an assessment in the first year of our plan to establish how our range of institutional partnerships can support our work with APP target groups. The relevant organisations we are members of are listed below:

- AMOSSHE : The Student Services Organisation.
- BALEAP : BALEAP supports the professional development of those involved in learning, teaching, scholarship and research in English for Academic Purposes (EAP).
- University of London Housing Services.
- Imperial College Chaplaincy.
- NADP : the Professional Association for disability and inclusivity practitioners in further and higher education.
- NASMA : National Association of Student Money Advisers.
- UMHAN : University Mental Health Advisers Network.

4.7 Financial support

As an institution we are strongly committed to offering financial support for all our students. We have in place a system of financial support that can support our APP targets.

Our different forms of scholarship provision are described below. For 2020/21 the College offered the Sir Frank Bowling studentships, available to UK students identifying as Black African and Caribbean diaspora heritage, with a fund of £500,000 to support up to 25 studentships including a full fee waiver and maintenance stipend. For 2021/22 entry and beyond this has increased to an annual fund of £1 million, funding up to 50 studentships. The College's Development Office seeks to augment this offering with externally funded scholarships and for 2021/22 entry this has included 108 scholarships at a total of £1.11 million.

The College has secured 180 scholarships, awards and prizes, with an overall value of approximately £4 million, for 2022-23 entry, including the Burberry Design Scholarship, with

¹³ For more information please go to: <https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/programmes/working-groups/addressing-differential-outcomes-for-bme-learners/>

preference given to students from under-represented communities, and the Tony Snowden Scholarship which supports students with a physical or sensory disability. The RCA offers financial support to students during their studies including the “Back on Track” funding, designed to support students in continuing into subsequent years of study, and “Continuation Funds”, designed to support students unable to pay future instalments of fees. During the academic year 2020-21 (during Covid), the RCA disbursed £223,699 in ‘Back on Track’ and ‘Continuation Funds’. In 2021-22, this figure totalled £219,250. The College aims to continue to provide this funding from its own income, for the period of the plan.

In 2022-23 the College committed a further £100k into student hardship funding supporting students with the College. We have reshaped our hardship funding application to make it easier for students to apply and have worked with the Students’ Union to implement £50 voucher funds to support students to purchase food. We provide financial advice to students through the Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding.

Table 3 below shows the scholarships available at the RCA specific to the aims and objectives in our APP.

Table 3: RCA Scholarship support for MA Architecture Part 2 students

Bursary Scholarship	How it relates to the aims of the APP	Eligibility criteria	Financial award per student	Frequency and amounts of payment
Sir Frank Bowling Studentships	Supports our APP Objectives related to access and completion for BAME students	UK students identifying as Black African and Caribbean diaspora heritage	£21,000 tuition fee plus £15,000 living costs	Full tuition fee plus either 2 or 3 instalments for living costs
Back on Track	Supports our APP Objectives to access and completion for students from lower socio-economic groups (financial hardship and material costs only)	Students studying at RCA who are facing financial difficulties	£250 - £1,000 from emergency Hardship Fund to support living costs £250 - £1,000 from Material Fund to support studying costs	Normally one-off payment for emergency Hardship Fund and 6 weeks for the Material Funds
Burberry Design Scholarship	Supports APP Objectives for	Students from UK and EU Low fee	Fees : Bands A, B and C	Full tuition fee plus 2 or 3 living

	completion by providing financial hardship for students from under-represented communities	status Aimed at students from under-represented communities		costs instalments (depending on total living costs)
Continuation Funds	Supports APP Objectives for completion by providing financial hardship for students from lower socio-economic groups	Students studying at RCA who are facing financial difficulties and struggling to pay fees (including Leave of Absence returnees)	£1,000 - £5,000	A one-off payment to eligible students
RCA Logitech Scholarship Programme	Supports our APP Objectives to access for students from lower socio-economic groups	Students from UK and EU Low fee status who demonstrate financial need. Preference given to students identifying as: Black, Black British, Asian Asian British Mixed or other under-represented communities	Fees : Bands A, B and C	Full tuition fee No living costs payments

4.8 RCA Theory of Change

The work described in this APP is underpinned by a robust Theory of Change. This Theory of Change is described in Table 4 below.

Table 4: RCA Access and Participation Theory of Change

Aims	Objectives	Measurements	Inputs/Activities	Outputs/Impact
To main the high numbers of students accessing the MA Architecture Part 2 course from	To maintain access for BAME students at no lower than 40% each year	Data collected on entry from the HESA return and analysed by the RCA	Outreach activities as detailed in the APP with students at the pre Part 1 level from Key Stage 3 onwards and	Measurement of Outcomes and Impact of inputs and activities

BAME groups	throughout the life of the APP.		undertaken with Part 1 students	
To increase the numbers of students from lower socio-economic groups and disabled students accessing the RCA MA Architecture Part 2 course.	For 20% of all students entering the MA Architecture Part 2 each year to come from lower socio-economic groups by 2028-29. For 10% of all students entering over the whole period from 2023-24 - 2028-29 to be disabled.	Data collected on entry from HESA returns and analysed by the RCA Data collected from MA Architecture students on their postcode prior to initial undergraduate study. Student Loan Company data if available	Outreach activities as detailed in the APP with students at the pre Part 1 level from Key Stage 3 onwards and undertaken with Part 1 students	
To maintain the high levels of retention and completion for students from BAME groups on the RCA MA Architecture Part 2 course	To reduce the gap in terms of retention for BAME: non BAME students from 11% in 2022-23 to 5% by 2028-29. 95% retention and completion of students entering the MA Architecture Part 2 each year to come from lower socio-economic groups by 2028-29.	Data collected via internal RCA data collection system	Our work on curriculum, pedagogic and student support including that on personal tuition support and the inclusive curriculum	
To maintain the high levels of students from all access target groups passing the MA Architecture		Data collected via internal RCA data collection system	Our work on curriculum, pedagogic and student support including that on personal tuition support and the	

course			inclusive curriculum	
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We have determined that this Theory of Change model will be used to deliver out APP targets. We consider that this is the most appropriate model to begin to monitor student targets and success of our APP. We are starting this exercise from a very low base with little data and expect that this model will provide early results to determine how well our APP is meeting the objectives we have set.

The aim is to be able to identify early in the process which of our interventions/activities work and support the delivery of the APP objectives. Each activity we undertake will be monitored as follows to show:

- short-term benefits
- medium term outcomes
- the longer term impact.

This methodology should allow us to ensure that we continue and develop activities that have positive outcomes and reduce/or stop those activities that have little or no impact. Given we start this process with little data, we will need to ensure that we embed this process into our monitoring of the APP.

4.9 Student consultation

Student representation is valued extremely highly at the RCA. Students provide feedback on how the College supports them through multiple channels. We have undertaken an in-depth consultation with student representatives from the Students Union and School of Architecture to inform the development of our APP. The consultation consisted of focus group discussions with 6 student representatives who included those with a specific remit related to the MA Architecture Part 2 course and Student Officers with a College wide role. This consultation was held to draw upon their experience in order to help shape the RCA approach to access and participation. A number of key themes emerged from this consultation exercise.

4.9.1 Key role of financial support

The student representatives emphasised the importance of accessing funding from Student Finance England to fund their MA Architecture Part 2 course. They welcomed the growth in scholarship funding at the RCA and would like to see more scholarship and bursary funding being made available for architecture students, as there are currently only 2 scholarships available. They also pointed to the importance of the financial support which can cover the 2 years of the MA Architecture course. As outlined above we have a strong range of financial support mechanisms that Architecture students can access in order to address these concerns.

4.9.2 Participation in outreach work

The student representatives showed a strong interest in participating in outreach work as student ambassadors. The students consulted welcomed the opportunity to work with students in schools, FE and other HEIs from widening access target groups and support them in progressing to Architecture. They would like to see the RCA work with organisations wider than the London and South East region as many of the students studying architecture at RCA are from outside London and have studied their Part 1 architecture course in universities outside the capital. The desire for a coherent student ambassador programme where students are trained to the accepted sector wide standards and remunerated to such standards as well is reflected in the plans outlined in above for such a programme.

4.9.3 Support across the student journey

The student representatives wished to see improvements in how RCA monitors and supports a student's journey. They would value a student portal that would enable relevant parties to be able to share and track student support interventions. As indicated in 4.4 above we are reviewing our student support mechanisms and will continue to work with our student body to ensure that we enhance our structures and processes to monitor our access and participation work to ensure that our APP objectives are met.

4.9.4 Creating a culture of inclusion

In order for the targets regarding access and participation to be achieved, creating a culture of inclusion at the RCA is fundamental. The students welcomed the commitment of the College in this regard and the opportunity for the Students' Union to collaborate on an ongoing programme of diversity awareness raising and training exercises related to access and participation available to students, staff and the wider RCA community.

4.9.5 Diversity, Inclusion and the APP

The student representatives felt that the MA Architecture programme is inclusive. They recognised; however, the need for ongoing work with regard to widening access and the potential of this APP to drive change in who participates and succeeds in the MA Architecture Part 2 course.

4.9.6 Ongoing need for student consultation

An important caveat to the student consultation undertaken is that (as already stated) we have limited data on the socio-economic make-up of our MA Architecture student population. Hence, any consultation we undertake at this stage is with our overall student body and not the specific groups whom we wish to support via our APP. Thus, through the lifetime of this plan as we

improve our data collection we will be able to undertake more focused consultation with APP target groups to meet our APP objectives.

5. Evaluation strategy

5.1 Strategic context

Our MA architecture programme only includes a relatively small number of students as circa 55 students join this 2 year programme annually. Hence, the potential for evaluation involving experimental methods is limited. However, there is the potential for detailed multi-methods work that will draw on the growing knowledge base regarding the evaluation of access and participation work being led by Transforming Access and Student Success in Higher Education (TASO).¹⁴ In particular, we will look to embed the good practice emerging from the recent TASO work on undertaking evaluation activity with small cohort groups into our work. This work is especially valuable to us as it provides a range of tools that can potentially be used to assist in the evaluation work with small cohorts.

To ensure that we have the adequate capacity and expertise to undertake the evaluation work described below we will ensure that we engage in the NEON activities related to evaluation. We will consult on a quarterly basis with the NEON Research and Evaluation coordinator, participate in the NEON Evaluation training course and attend the evaluation working group. How we will evaluate the impact of our work across access, continuation, success and progression with relation to our objectives is described in Table 5 below.

Alongside this, the College aims to develop an evaluation approach that is supported by the following principles:

- Is fully integrated with the College's governance framework
- Is evidence based
- Based on robust data collected by the College specifically for the purpose
- Is rooted in an outcome-focused approach
- Focused on continuous improvement
- is part of a feedback loop which means that the evaluation generates new initiatives and approaches to support the primary goal of widening access and participation
- Monitors activities that support and improve our APP performance
- Draws on externally available research and good practice guidance
- Draws on the expertise of other institutions, including small and specialist providers, where possible.

¹⁴ <https://taso.org.uk/evidence/evaluation-guidance-resources/impact-evaluation-with-small-cohorts/>

Although we are working with limited student data to analyse, we wish to ensure that we have the processes and practices in place to both monitor our APP performance and develop strategies that lead to continuous improvement. With a small data set we have aimed to have stretched targets that provide challenge. We will carefully review those relevant processes and activities that demonstrate improvements to support the APP objectives.

Table 5: RCA APP Evaluation strategy

Evaluation	Evaluation work undertaken
Access	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collect data on background/characteristics of participants in outreach work outlined above. ● Undertake 1 focus group with students from each Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 each year from 2023-24 to 2028-29 who participate in our outreach work and at least one teacher from each school annually over this period who has participated in our outreach work to understand the impact of our work on the participation to higher education of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disabled students ● Care leavers ● Students from lower socio-economic groups ● BAME students
Attainment	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collect data on attendance, and academic progress over years 1-2 of students from low income/BAME/other target groups after each semester in the years 2023-24 to 2028-29. ● Undertake a specific survey and a focus group alongside up to 5 individual interviews with students in receipt of financial support for the target groups annually from 2023-24 to 2028-29. ● Undertake 2 focus groups annually from 2023-24 to 2028-29 with students from low income/BAME/mature student backgrounds examining their progress in attainment and to evaluate the impact of the activities related to supporting attainment they may have benefited from. This includes the impact of any financial support they may have received on their academic performance
Progression	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collect data on progress of students from low income/BAME/mature student/other target groups into employment/highly skilled

	<p>employment on an annual basis over the period of the plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake 2 focus groups per year over the period of the plan with students from low income/BAME/mature student backgrounds/other target groups examining their views on the post HE careers/advice support received and their views on the value of the employability related activities listed in section 3 above annually.
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6. Monitoring progress against the delivery of the plan

6.1 How the RCA's Governing Body is engaged in the monitoring of performance and provisions of the plan

The College's Governing body is ultimately responsible for the monitoring of progress and delivery of this plan. There will be an Access and Participation Plan (APP) Committee, which will meet five times per year to monitor outcomes of the plan and its associated activity. This will include the monitoring of any related budgets. The APP Committee will monitor achievement of the plan against targets via the risk register described in 6.4 below.

It will also proactively support engagement with access and participation across the College with specific reference to the MA Architecture students. The APP Committee will be chaired by a senior academic from the School of Architecture. This Committee will report on its work to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee. In turn they report to the Academic Board who report into the RCA governing body.

6.2 How students are engaged with monitoring

A Student Representative from the MA Architecture course will sit on the APP Committee. This will allow them to receive and give input to the monitoring process of our APP. As indicated in 6.1, the APP Committee will report on its work to the EDI Committee.

The Students' Union are members of the College EDI Committee and Chair the student EDI workstream. In order to strengthen the ability of students to contribute to the monitoring of APP progress, data on progress against the risk register described in 6.4 will be shared with the School of Architecture's student representative network group.

6.3 Who at the RCA is responsible for monitoring

The APP Committee, who are responsible for the delivery of the APP, will produce an annual monitoring and evaluation report that includes:

- aims and objectives of the plan
- analyses of the relevant student data
- outline of progress against the APP targets

- a detailed overview of the relevant activities undertaken to support the APP and evidence regarding the relative impact of our work in outreach, success and progression. We will monitor activities that demonstrate continuous improvement to meet our objectives
- monitor and review performance of the identified student groups to support programme design and development
- monitor and review gaps in performance between different student groups to support work on closing these gaps
- commentary informed by data on the work related to strategic measures.

The APP Committee will share ongoing and annual reports with the Vice Chancellor who will report to the Governing Body. The Governing Body will have the responsibility for monitoring the delivery of the APP to ensure objectives and targets are being met.

6.4 How progress against the plan will be monitored, and what action will be taken if progress against the APP is falling short

Progress against the APP will be monitored regularly as well as regular meetings between the Chair of the APP Committee and the College designated lead for widening access work and MA Architecture students.

A red, amber, green (RAG) risk register will be created which will identify and articulate progress against the targets, aims and objectives of the APP. The register will be subject to annual review to ensure that the content of the risk register and the areas covered remain consistent with the access and participation work of the RCA as it evolves and develops. The register will be the responsibility of the designated lead and will form the basis of the reporting and meetings with co-chairs and the Vice Chancellor. If progress is falling short against a target, or it remains in Red for a year, a review process of the measures in place relative to this target will be instigated. The review process will be led by the Chair of the APP Committee in collaboration with relevant academic and professional service staff.

7. Provision of information to students

We aim to publish clear, accessible and timely information for applicants and students on the fees that we charge and the financial support that we offer. All prospective students receive information on fees and financial support at the point of application. If and when they are admitted, they are sent information again on fee levels and all relevant information regarding financial support, eligibility criteria and methods of assessment. This information is also available on the RCA website.

MA Architecture offer holders and continuing students will be emailed in the Spring to let them know that Student Finance applications are open and that further information regarding Student Finance, including support with making an application for Student Finance funding, is available from the Student Support team. Through our recruitment and widening participation work, including open days and social media channels, we will provide information on published tuition fees for the MA Architecture course and our student finance support options. We continue to review this information, taking into account Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Guidance.

In addition, we have members of our finance team available to answer questions at our open and applicant days. We also provide targeted email information to applicants from our widening access target groups about funding opportunities available to them. Information for current students pertaining to financial and other pastoral, academic and employability support, as described in this plan, will be published on the RCA's intranet and communicated directly to our students, including MA Architecture Part 2 students.

Our APP will be published on the RCA website and a direct link to it included in the communication to applicants for the MA Architecture Part 2 course. Students are provided with information about making complaints, and information about the potential for changes to the courses either before they enrol or during their studies.

*****ENDS*****