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ACCESS & PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

The AA is committed to giving the most promising future architects access of opportunity, irrespective of their demographic or personal circumstances, whilst recognising that many students do not experience equality of opportunity across the three main stages of a student's higher education journey: access, participation and progression.

ACCESS

One of the School's three Strategic aims for the next 5 years is **Enabling Access** to extend the reach and impact of the AA to a more diverse cohort of students and staff.

Removing financial Barriers

Scholarships are awarded to new students entering the five-year course in architecture for two or three years, subject to academic progression. Bursaries are awarded on an annual basis to students across all programmes.

Approximately 20% of current AA students receive financial support in the form of scholarships, bursaries, travel grants, hardship funds and student assistantships. The School's 5-year Strategic Plan commits to increasing the number of students in receipt of financial support across the school and will be launching a new funding framework to help achieve this.

In 2023, the AA introduced a new scholarship programme for applicants to the school's five-year course in architecture thanks to the generous support of the Albukhary Foundation. The scholarships have been established to recognise the most academically talented students in need of financial support from one of the UN's list of least developed countries (LDCs) as well as Ghana, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Palestine, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe.

Further Scholarships and Bursaries are in discussion with the intention that more will be available for 25-26 applications.

Increasing awareness of the School to a wider audience

In September 2023, the AA expanded its collaboration with Open City's Accelerate programme by becoming a university partner and introducing a package of benefits to help Accelerate students pursue education at the AA. Accelerate offers learning and mentoring opportunities for 16- to 18-year-olds from underrepresented backgrounds who are interested in studying architecture. As a university partner, the AA hosts workshops at Bedford Square throughout the Accelerate course.

Students at the AA come from all over the world, with 79 nationalities represented in the 2023–24 academic year. The Strategic Plan commits to expanding the AA Visiting School and Global Forums to reinforce our international network and institutional collaborations worldwide. The Director will continue to embark on local and international promotional visits to secure funding for financial support for students and diversify applications to the school.

The AA aims to develop its alumni network to expand funding and develop an integrated programme of mentors, sponsors and outreach champions.

Reviewing accessibility

Making the AA's buildings accessible remains a priority of the School and where accessibility to the building is

limited, reasonable adjustments will be made, when possible, to accommodate those with disabilities. The School is engaging specialists to help develop a plan to enable viable and equitable access to the school.

The School adopted a revised Disability Policy and Student Support Procedure in 2024, which along with a Wellbeing Service ensures support is provided to all students with disabilities, and reasonable adjustments are made when necessary.

The School's admissions procedures and the information it provides to prospective students are reviewed in accordance with the Competition & Markets Authority guidance on Consumer Protection Law for UK higher education providers. The School reviews the information it provides to potential applicants with the aim that all expressions of interest and applicants are provided with the information needed to make an informed decision about study at the AA School, from research and application stage, through to enrolment. All administrative and academic staff, including those involved in the admissions process receive mandatory unconscious bias training, to ensure that any student applying to the School is treated fairly.

PARTICIPATION

The School is committed to ensuring that all students that start on its programmes of study have the ability to successfully complete, whilst recognising that some groups and individuals have particular and specific needs that need to be met if they are to enjoy equal access to the education offered by the AA. Different or more flexible ways of doing things may be needed to ensure genuine equality of access or opportunity for groups and individuals who have persistent and/or longstanding disadvantage.

The Disability Policy and Student Support Procedures seeks to ensure that disabled student's can obtain the support they require to ensure that no individual is at a disadvantage.. Every person is treated equally at the AA, and their requirements are listened to and acted upon to ensure that they receive the best education possible. The AA has comprehensive procedures to address student's with Mitigating Circumstances, and Reasonable Adjustment Plans for those with disabilities. The School has been increasing the student support available over the past few years and this is included as a core strategy of the 2024-25 Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy. The Head of Learning role introduced at the start of 2024-25 provides mentoring support, advice, and guidance for all students across the School. The role oversees student recruitment and outreach, coordinates the pastoral care for current students and the career guidance they receive in preparation for graduation. The Head of Learning guides student progression and provides regular academic support and mentoring to help AA students navigate their programme of study and the curriculum with confidence.

The AA Wellbeing Service provides a range of support including individual appointments, drop-ins and weekly workshops to address study concerns. The Wellbeing Service team has expanded over the past few years and includes a Head of Wellbeing, Mental Health Advisor and a Psychological Therapist.

PROGRESSION

Factors such as financial position, access and time to undertake extracurricular activities, and lack of information and guidance may mean not all students have equal opportunity to progress to an outcome they consider a positive reflection of their higher education experience. The School is developing the support it provides to all students and recent graduates looking to progress from their programme of study. The Careers Office provides an important link to the world of practice, bringing students and alumni together through events and visits. The Office provides advice and support for students through presentations and one-to-one meetings to advise on CVs and interview preparation, as well as weekly emails sharing job vacancies and opportunities.

Visits are organised annually to leading architectural practices. In addition, evening mentoring sessions are held once per month in Terms 2 and 3, inviting recent graduates for one-to-one meetings with students.

A Practice Open Day is held annually with representatives from 21 UK practices coming to the AA at the 2024 event to meet students and discuss possible placements. A Press and Practices Preview of the Projects Review 2024

exhibition attracted participation from dozens of offices. Approaches to offices in New York City and Milan following alumni gatherings in those locations also generated job opportunities for students. The school continues to foster programme-specific alumni networks.

REVIEW OF POLICY/DATA

The data used by the OfS/HESA relating to access and participation mostly concentrates on UK based students, while the AA's current UK student cohort is very small compared to other British HEIs, making this data not very meaningful.

We will reference the range of data consolidated for internal and external reporting which provides a summary of the backgrounds and progress of all applicants to, and students and graduates of, the AA School, while taking the OfS Equal Opportunities Risk Register into consideration. [Equality of Opportunity Risk Register - Office for Students](#)

The AA commits to a review of this statement on an annual basis thus guaranteeing that access to the AA School and its programmes of study remains a primary strategic objective.