

Dartington Trust

Access and Participation Plan (A&P Plan)

2020-21 to 2024-25

Introduction

Overview and Context

Dartington Trust made a fundamental commitment to increasing widening participation in 2017 when a series of key decisions were made to change both tuition fee levels for all postgraduate courses and to apply to the Office for Students for registration, thus allowing UK based students to apply for student loans which previously was not possible.

The adjustment to our tuition fees was part of a strategic shift that included a change to a low residency mode of delivery for the majority of Dartington postgraduate programmes. This focus on more flexible, student-centred pathways has opened up access to courses that had previously only been available as fully residential experiences. The low residency pattern has allowed us to recruit and welcome more diverse cohorts including a greater proportion of students from England and across the UK and more students who are currently employed and who can continue part-time working whilst enrolled.

Moving forward, we are continuing to foreground lower-cost and more flexible learning opportunities both as stand-alone courses as well as steppingstones for entry to full MA programmes. By moving to a student-centred learning pathway model over the 2021/22 academic year and beyond, we are combining online and hybrid delivery with a modular approach to learning to further increased programme accessibility and appeal for a more inclusive cohort.

An additional key change to increase and broaden participation has been to open up intermediate awards in all our masters provision so that potential students have to introduce interim awards thus allowing student to engage with study in ways that suited their circumstance, in some cases maintaining part time employment whilst taking the course. The Trust also decided to open up part-time study across all of its HE provision which very quickly has proved both popular and attractive. All of these changes were incorporated into the wholesale programme of re-approval and portfolio development which was instigated with our accreditation partners the University of Plymouth from 2018 onwards. From that point forward the Trust has either re-approved or approved an average of 5 programmes per academic year.

The refreshed A&P policy is overseen by Dartington Academic Board which also directs its operation both monitoring its impact focusing our recruitment and admissions process and identifying where gaps are detected. The Board then puts in place interventions where they are possible and needed. The Trust is committed to fostering an admissions policy where all potential students have access to our developing portfolio of Higher Education through for example the development of expanded short course as well as developing specific projects which explicitly promote our work in diverse community settings. We also work with our own students through our community learning activities to ensure that their views, experiences and ideas continue to contribute to our widening participation approach alongside growing activities with our alumni network both nationally and internationally.

As a Higher Education Provider based in the South West, we are keenly aware we need to make more of our links to potential feeder schools and colleges. Previously we have not had full-time undergraduate students courses but with those now launched we need to put in place progression pathways from a number of potential partners in Further Education settings, and this work is now underway. Our developing postgraduate portfolio has very much taken into account regional employment sectors such as tourism, hospitality, the cultural industries and importantly agriculture.

Approach to Data Collection

Our admission team collects data on all our students which are collated and evaluated across a series of key categories and characteristics.

These include:

1. Age / Disability / Ethnicity /Sex /Gender
2. Full / Part time enrolment
3. Final Intended Award eg PGCert/PGDip/MA/MFA

Regional Higher Education Participation

There are a number of regional factors which we are working to address.

HE Participation rates vary significantly across the region both urban and rural settings across the SW.

Transport links are challenging from certain regions.

Regional commutes can be lengthy and reliant on many changes on route

We do have an ongoing focus on maintaining good progression levels across our programmes. Cohorts of students are encouraged to build up strong mutual learning community ties and mutual obligations which help with maintaining cohort identity and support.

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Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students

We currently have a very small population of UK minority ethnic students at Dartington and this is an area of active focus for our admissions and marketing team.

We have factored this deficit in UK recruitment when thinking about our portfolio refresh .

In the wider context Southwest as a region has the lowest ethnic proportion in the UK (BAME, 13.3%; Black, 3.0%⁸) whereas the UK average: BAME, 27.5%; Black, 8.5%⁶

Mature Students

As with a number of post graduate providers our admissions data reveals a significant population of mature students come to study at the Trust.

We are concerned to maintain and extend our recruitment to this underrepresented group and to ensure all barriers to potential involvement are minimised or removed

Disabled Students

The Dartington Trust has successfully recruited disabled students to study and access its postgraduate provision.

We have good study support available for both dyslexia and dyspraxia and have successfully registered with DSA allowing students to claim additional resources and specialist support. We work with a partner Amarno to support both application and allocate support for UK based students.

It is estimated that around 5-10% of Higher Education student intake will require specialist learning or mentoring support and in the current academic year, we have supported 10 UK or international students with diagnosed dyslexic and/or other neuro-diverse challenges and/or mental health conditions. This has amounted to approximately 80 hrs of working time. A further 20 hrs of time has been spent delivering online group study skills support sessions, for all students to support their studies.

We currently employ an Academic Support Advisor, who works with these students and provides academic learning support and mentoring. With the potential extension and expansion of our course provision, we are responding to increased demand by developing partnership arrangements with a local, student disability service provider, to access DSA funded study skills tutors and mentors and related entitlements, for UK students with a recognised learning disability or mental health diagnosis. We have also appointed a further Student Support Adviser who focuses on student wellbeing and who links to our Personal tutor network.

Whilst international students are ineligible for DSA, they have access to our learning support advisor on site for one to one and group learning support with essential study skills and we are able to provide reasonable adjustments for physical disability and long-term care conditions for any student accessing our courses. We have access to a Health and Safety officer who can advise on mobility and access requirements for students.

Other Groups Who Experience Barriers in Higher Education

Romany, Gypsy, Travellers, and Other Underrepresented Groups

Military Families, Refugees and Carers

Improving Our Data Collection and Analysis

We are building our taught programmes team to have greater staff capacity in managing data collections and analytics. In addition to assisting our understanding of recruitment trends and developments this capacity will provide improved monitoring tools as well as assisting our growing requirement to submit HESA/Unistats annual statutory returns.

We are also investing in a new Student Records System which in addition to partially automating our admissions system will allow greater overview at Trust level of information governance, monitoring student achievement and controls.

This increased monitoring and analysis of trends will enable the Trust to have a greater understanding of how effective our recruitment strategies are in reaching target groups.

Strategic Aims and Objectives

Target groups

Based on our review of admissions we have identified two categories of students/lifecycle that we will focus on during the five year period of this APP.

(a) UK Minority Ethnic groups taking into account our regional demographics

(b) Regional students groups including Disabled students

Aims and Objectives

Need to develop strategic relationships with the substantial number of FE college colleges across the region and especially those within the Academic Partnerships network run from Bristol to Truro, and beyond in order to discuss progression opportunities.

Notes.

Our APP has been developed with close attention and alignment to our Dartington Equality and Diversity Policy, and our HR policies.

Bursary and Scholarship Financial Support

Our Bursary policy is framed by a desire to increase access to Educational opportunities to students who otherwise would be unable to study at Dartington. The purpose of our bursary scheme is to assist in some of the financial challenges of accessing higher education, for instance contributing to tuition fees, accommodation, living or in some cases transport costs.

Our eligibility criteria for this support is reviewed annually,

The criteria for financial support are publicised to prospective and existing students

The level of the financial award is reviewed annually, on the basis of student demographics, and supports living costs and factors arising from monitoring and reviewing this policy.

A short report of the impact of bursary allocation will be provided to Academic Board annually.

Link to Learning Bursaries information:

<https://campus.dartington.org/study/fees/bursary/>

Monitoring Progress and Publishing information

As described earlier this A&P policy is monitored by Academic Board which meets three times a year.

This strategic group ensures that both momentum and consultation are maintained across the Trust through these termly meetings with key Faculty staff and Trust teams.

In line with the Competition and Markets Authority guidance and our obligations under the QAA Code of Practice Dartington is committed to publishing clear and accessible information about its fees and financial support for prospective and existing students. We provide this information in a range of formats, through recruitment publications and on the website:

Higher Education Fees:

<https://campus.dartington.org/study/fees/>

Dartington also publicises information on our external website about external funding options:

<https://campus.dartington.org/study/fees/external-funding-options/>