



Widening Access & Participation Strategy  
2018/2019

## **Introduction**

ALRA's Widening Participation strategy embraces a targeted approach to identified 'groups' who are, and have been historically, underrepresented in HE, their life chances reduced by social and economic disadvantage and other barriers. The strategy is underpinned by the role we have created in offering London and Regional training, thus providing greater choice. The strategy supports the maintenance and enhancement of quality standards in HE, through actions supporting the social inclusion of able, high quality students whose talents and potential may otherwise be unrecognised, undervalued and/or underdeveloped.

Currently POLAR4 is HEFCE's latest measure of young participation in higher education (HE). It measures the proportion of young people who enter HE aged 18 or 19 between the years 2009-10 and 2014-15. Quintile 1 indicates the lowest participating areas; quintile 5 indicates the highest participation. This information will now inform our targeted approach moving forward and we expect to review outreach destinations during the current academic year. Part of this review will focus on the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) target wards which are those wards in England that have low levels of young participation and where participation is lower than expected based on KS4 (GCSE level) attainment. There are 997 target wards.

Widening participation actions aim to impact on disadvantage by increasing the participation of target groups, ensuring appropriate support for their transitional and HE experience at ALRA, optimising their chances of retention and 'success' on undergraduate and postgraduate level programmes through to employment and career opportunities.

ALRA's Widening Participation Strategy has been developed to complement and integrate into our Strategic Plan and all other strategies. This approach ensures social inclusion considerations are embedded into all aspects of planning and policy implementation, whilst specific targets for WP and social inclusion are also set to ensure positive action and continuous improvement.

The student experience lies at the heart of WP at ALRA and it places the needs of potential, actual, and alumni students at the centre throughout the student journey and student life cycle. This permeates through our approach to outreach, fair access, supporting students' transitions into ALRA, their on course experience at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, achievement and employability. Students are also the messengers for widening participation and gain valuable enterprise experience in their role in delivering WP activities – as student ambassadors, mentors and supporters.

### **WP Target Groups 2018-19**

The main focus for widening participation activities will be with the following underrepresented Widening Participation target groups:

- Low income socio-economic class groups and those from Low Participation Neighbourhoods
- BME communities particularly with low participation histories
- British East Asian communities

Each is the focus of a specific programme of designed outreach interventions in the ALRA outreach Scheme and the main focus for new retention and employability measures.

### **Generation Arts**

Generation Arts delivers high quality, free accredited and non-accredited acting and theatre-making projects for young people in the margins in London.

They specialise in working with young people NEET and who may be at risk or have experienced a range of social exclusion risk factors including long-term unemployment, leaving care, offending, gang-affiliation and homelessness.

Working with GA we provide access, bursaries and support for entry to training and develop young people in every way to prepare them for drama school, higher education and the world of work.

*“No-one is left behind and we provide 1-1 signposting to support all participants to progress.”*

### **Yellow Earth/Yellow Academy**

We have also chosen to work with the British East Asian community through 'Yellow Earth' and 'Yellow Academy'. Through this work we have demonstrated significant commitment to teaching, learning, research, administration, management, cultural diversity and widening participation. The collaboration between Yellow Earth and ALRA has been maintained since 2009. As part of our commitment to East Asian actor development, we have offered summer courses free of charge during this period. Yellow Earth Theatre was formed in 1995 by five British East Asian (BEA) actors; Kwong Loke, Kumiko Mendl, Veronica Needa, David KS Tse and Tom Wu. The company sought to develop work that would widen the choice and type of roles being offered to BEA actors at that time and to create work that brought together our physical skills and western drama school training to present plays that explored our own cultural heritage. Over its 21 year history Yellow Earth has worked with many of the best BEA actors, writers, directors and designers to create a wide range of award winning work from new writing to bold adaptations of classics; from family friendly shows to participatory and site responsive work. Yellow Earth also provides professional development opportunities for BEA artists while inspiring the next generation to get involved in the arts.

The company is named after the seminal Chinese film, Yellow Earth directed by Chen Kaige, with cinematography by Zhang Yimou. The film was part of the 5th generation of “new wave” mainland Chinese filmmakers to come out of the 80’s and its combination of poetic lyricism and dark drama inspired many artists and audiences around the world. We use the term British East Asian to mean people of the following descent; Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, North Korea, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and their diasporas. These people remain severely underrepresented in the arts in the UK.

ALRA, working with Yellow Earth, identifies and invests in BEA emerging and established actors, writers and directors and nurture and champion those artists, supporting them to make ground-breaking work that will increase the visibility and profile of BEA theatre in this country and beyond.

Additionally, our research & scholarly practice will be enhanced through the Principal working with Dr Naomi Hynd, HCPC registered Clinical Psychologist, Dramatherapist,

Neuropsychologist; currently working on promoting well being in the mental health of actors and performers.

This collaboration will see the publication of a book in 2018/19 and starts with a lecture in March at University College London co-presenting with Dr Kirsty Kennedy, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist on the mental health of actors and performers.

### **WP performance to date**

ALRA has a strong performance record in WP and a good reputation in the sector for best practice in both outreach and retention. ALRA was one of the first Drama Schools to outreach to specific communities and the first to offer a 'care' package to potential students to ameliorate the stress and anxiety of transition to HE.

The targets illustrate ALRA's contribution to the broader national social mobility outreach agenda and commitment to:

1. Improving an already excellent performance on participation of key target groups at ALRA
2. Continuous improvement on retention when performance at ALRA is already amongst the highest recorded in the sector
3. Continuous improvement on representation, employability and destination outcomes, when annual studies already show positive outcomes for WP student experience at ALRA
4. Improve recruitment of mature students, particularly those from low income groups
5. Improve recruitment of disabled students providing solutions to perceived barriers
6. Improve recruitment of children in care/care leavers
7. Improve recruitment of under-represented BME groups

ALRA will:

1. Provide opportunities, actions and associated information to inspire our target groups in order to raise their aspirations towards education and HE
2. Work with appropriate partners to contribute to and support activities to raise standards of achievement in target schools/colleges and organisations, hence facilitating progression
3. Provide appropriate information and awareness raising activities for people who act as key influencers on target populations (e.g. parents; community enablers; school teachers; FE lecturers; careers/education guidance staff)
4. Invest in key local community and voluntary organisations
5. Provide regional opportunities for links with key influencers; As examples – Regional events for Teachers/local Authority staff relating to work with looked after young people/care leavers; for SENCOS and agencies working with disabled learners; for Access to HE programme/OCN staff working with mature learners
6. Seek to optimise and reframe further progression opportunities available to target populations through locally accessible HE provision delivered through the ALRA's partner-college provision and HE in FE framework
7. Further develop specific link activities, progression and access arrangements with key target groups, schools and colleges

8. Continue to provide, at a free or subsidised fee rate, Foundation Year 0 programmes opening up opportunities for WP cohorts to access progression to HE.

**In addition to support recruitment and retention to induction ALRA will:**

1. Apply best practice regarding fair admissions processes and procedures:  
<https://alra.co.uk/courses/how-to-apply>
2. Offer appropriate transition programme models for target WP populations as highlighted and provide enhanced support from pre-entry to induction
3. Deliver appropriate transition programme models to target populations to enhance support for students who completed early stages of their HE programmes at partner colleges and who seek to top up to Postgraduate and/or Honours programmes at ALRA

**Increasing the employability of target students**

ALRA will:

Further design and develop forms of recognition and accreditation relating to unpaid/paid part-time work/volunteering opportunities to add to the student experience whilst studying.

Continue to identify and develop appropriate tracking, monitoring and evaluation systems to measure target students' progress, achievements and exit destinations. This will include an annual comparative study on WP/non-WP student cohorts and destinations. This includes graduate employment and further study destinations

Target after-care employability programmes supported by ALRA graduate mentors to WP students

**Strategic direction- general points**

ALRA will:

Ensure the mitigation of financial barriers to study by assisting in private fundraising of with national and locally sourced funding. Opportunities for students to earn whilst studying will also be developed where possible

Work to support the Learning and Teaching Strategy and other strategies which address key transition, retention, support for achievement, and employability issues for target groups

Ensure equitable provision and positive action in relation to disabled student experience to support DSA compliance

Monitor impact and progress of the Widening Participation Strategy. Summary annual reports will be considered by the Senior Leadership Team and the Trustees. Reports will provide details on performance, progress and issues.

**Monitoring and evaluation of performance**

ALRA believes that establishing rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes are key to further embedding a widening participation philosophy in the institution. This rests, however, on a monitoring process which is rigorous and constructive, formative as well as summative, and enables opportunities for dissemination of good practice and lessons learnt within the process itself.

Data relating to WP performance will be collected and examined through the SLC and an annual report will be provided for consideration by the Trustees.

ALRA will provide annual reports on progress and performance to external bodies through regulatory reporting mechanisms.

### **Use of funding to support the widening participation agenda at alra**

ALRA has additional expenditure committed from additional fee income to be spent on access and retention measures to support the target groups.

### **Students as partners**

Students also lead on the delivery of certain activities and projects relating to WP. Example:

- Volunteering and/or performing in deprived communities.
- Providing mentoring and support functions
- Working with community groups

Students are also integral to the delivery of aspects of the WP agenda- as student ambassadors, mentors, peer assisting etc. During 2018/19 there will be an expanded number of opportunities available for the recognition of student contributions to the delivery of the WP agenda at ALRA through additional funding and research opportunities.