



Arts, enterprise and excellence:  
strategy for higher education

## Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
Why does Arts Council England need a strategy for higher education?	
Background	
Definitions	
Context for higher education	
Maximising resources	
Research and intelligence	
Common interests	
<b>1 Widening participation</b>	<b>6</b>
A Taking part in the arts	<b>6</b>
B Celebrating diversity	<b>7</b>
C Children and young people	<b>8</b>
<b>2 Creative Economy</b>	<b>9</b>
D Arts organisations	<b>9</b>
E Individual artists and practitioners	<b>10</b>
F Vibrant communities	<b>12</b>
G Internationalism	<b>13</b>

## Arts Council England strategy for higher education

### **Summary**

The higher education (HE) sector plays a major role in arts and cultural development.

Two areas are of increasing importance to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

- contributing to the creative economy by supporting enterprise and innovation
- widening and diversifying participation in higher education

These areas are central to Arts Council England's new agenda for the arts. We must make the most of our shared agenda by engaging at a strategic level with the higher education sector nationally and regionally.

Arts Council England's HE strategy was developed in consultation with the HE sector and is built around the themes of creative economy and widening participation. Key actions within the strategy include the establishment of high level strategic relations with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the implementation of significant pilot projects with clusters of HEIs.

# Arts Council England strategy for higher education

## **Introduction**

### **Why does Arts Council England need a strategy for higher education?**

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are powerful investors in the arts and major players in cultural provision and development. They are central to creating the arts workforce and supporting high quality arts opportunities. Increasingly, HEIs play a role in regeneration and redevelopment, and in regional cultural policy.

Most artists and arts managers receive their initial professional training through the higher education system and people often extend their understanding of and enthusiasm for the arts while at university. HEIs support some practitioners as they make the transition into work and provide opportunities for continuing professional development. Many artists teach in HEIs and some are able to make use of the excellent facilities and equipment available there. A large amount of cutting edge practice-based and policy-based research takes place within the higher education (HE) sector.

## **Background**

The national council of Arts Council England agreed a strategy for its relations with the HE sector in April 2006, in recognition of the important contribution made by HE to the arts in England. The strategy was developed in consultation with national bodies concerned with HE, including the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), HEIs and sector skills councils.

## **Definitions**

The strategy is concerned with all kinds of universities and higher education colleges, including both multi-discipline and specialist arts institutions, such as institutes of art and design, music conservatoires, dance and drama schools. The phrase 'arts courses' is used to cover the full range of creative arts courses available in higher education.

## **Context for higher education**

Arts Council England wishes to support the government's aspirations to enable 50 per cent of young people aged 18 to 30 to experience higher education, and to widen participation in HE among the most disadvantaged groups. We know that the higher education system is an important generator of wealth, boosting the economy through

innovation, the pursuit of excellence, enterprise and job creation, particularly in the crucial creative industries sector.

Arts Council England wants to support HEIs in engaging with the users of knowledge and skills, as a 'third stream' of activity, alongside and integrated with teaching and research. We believe that knowledge transfer is an important part of the successful development of innovation and excellence in the arts and creative industries.

### **Maximising resources**

Annually, Arts Council England invests nearly £7 million in regularly funded organisations based in HEIs and another £11.4 million in arts organisations whose work supports HEIs, for example providing teaching expertise, student placements and exhibition and performance opportunities.

Over the last 10 years HEIs have received £81million capital funding from the National Lottery, contributing to buildings that provide outstanding performance and exhibition spaces for student and community audiences and resources for artists. Considerable investment is made through our Grants for the arts funding scheme. We believe that a strategic approach will enable both the arts and higher education sectors to maximise the impact of their investment.

### **Research and intelligence**

Work with HEIs and other partners, for example the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has enabled Arts Council England to develop applied and cross-disciplinary practice through artist-led research, in health, education and science and technology. We frequently commission policy-based research from HEIs and HEIs are leading on important long term impact studies, for example on the arts and regeneration.

### **Common interests**

Two of the strategic aims of HEFCE's strategic plan, 2006-2011 - enhancing the contribution of HE to the economy and society, and widening participation and fair access - overlap with Arts Council England's six priority areas for the arts:

- Taking part in the arts
- Children and young people
- Creative economy
- Vibrant communities
- Internationalism
- Celebrating diversity

## 1 Widening participation

### **A Taking part in the arts**

Many HEIs support arts venues that provide opportunities to participate in and enjoy the arts that benefit people beyond university campuses and outside term time. Arts centres on university campuses often develop education and access programmes that enable people of all ages to become directly involved in arts activities. HEIs also support voluntary arts networks. HEIs have the expertise and capacity to increase participation in the arts, especially for young people, through the internet and interactive technology and to support arts organisations in developing their use of new technologies.

The arts infrastructure supported by HEIs can give students understanding and experience of arts management and administration, as well as opportunities to perform and exhibit creative work.

The Aimhigher initiative, a partnership programme between HEIs, schools and local authorities, has an important role in widening participation. More could be done to ensure a higher profile for the arts in Aimhigher.

HEIs could play a further role in widening participation in the arts by making students more aware of opportunities to work in participatory settings, such as early years care, schools, the youth and community sectors, hospitals, and the criminal justice system.

### **Actions**

#### **A1**

We will work with Aimhigher regional partnership boards to ensure that young people are aware of the opportunities and benefits of studying arts subjects and that arts-led programmes are included in Aimhigher wherever possible.

#### **A2**

With Creative Partnerships, regional offices of Arts Council England will continue to encourage HEIs to develop qualifications and training for artists to work in education and other participatory settings.

#### **A3**

We will seek to improve online networking between HEIs and arts organisations and promote the benefits of e-learning to the arts sector in consultation with appropriate bodies.

## **B Celebrating diversity**

One of the main themes of government policy for higher education is to increase diversity in higher education, attempting to include young people and adults from the most socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The widening participation agenda is also aimed at disabled people, who face some of the greatest barriers to accessing higher education.

We lack detailed information about participation in the full range of creative arts courses which relates to social class and to disability. More research and consultation is needed about how best to support and encourage disabled people and those from the most socially disadvantaged groups to take up creative arts courses. Artists with physical and sensory impairments occupy few positions in HE, and thus limit the diverse role models experienced by students.

Comparisons with traditionally high-earning subjects show how relatively unpopular creative arts and design are with minority ethnic groups, despite the high growth rate of the creative and cultural industries in the UK economy.

There are very few academics or artist/teachers from culturally diverse backgrounds. Students also tend to have limited exposure to diverse course content.

In many parts of England, initiatives such as Aimhigher (not primarily a subject specific scheme) lack role models from minority ethnic communities who could attract young people from their communities to study the creative arts.

These issues are of concern to both the HE sector and Arts Council England. They compound problems with implementing racial equality schemes in both sectors.

### **Actions**

#### **B1**

Arts Council England will aim to increase its understanding, in partnership with HEFCE, HEIs and arts organisations, of participation in the full range of creative arts courses by disabled people.

#### **B2**

Similarly, we will increase our understanding, in partnership with HEFCE, HEIs and arts organisations, of participation in the full range of creative arts courses by people from the most socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **B3**

We will work in partnership with HEIs, schools and local authorities to ensure that Aimhigher schemes for widening participation target young people from ethnic minority backgrounds and those who are disabled to encourage them to study the arts.

### **B4**

Through a limited number of pilot schemes, Arts Council England will work with selected HEIs and the Equality Challenge Unit to promote race equality schemes that increase recruitment of students and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds and develop culturally diverse arts courses and course content.

### **B5**

We will continue to fund transition into work and CPD (continuing professional development) schemes that help disabled artists and artists and arts managers from ethnic minority backgrounds to work successfully as arts professionals.

## **C Children and young people**

The government has set a target of 50 per cent of young people aged 18 to 30 having experience of higher education and is committed to widening participation among young people from families who have not previously accessed the higher education system. New vocational diplomas for young people aged 14 to 19 and the development of apprenticeships should create more opportunities for young people, providing different pathways by which they can access higher education.

It is important that information, advice and guidance for young people on arts careers and education are accurate and up to date. This will also strengthen the new Arts Award for young people, launched by Arts Council England in partnership with Trinity Guildhall.

Building on many years of collaboration between artists and schools, Creative Partnerships has been able to present artists as positive role models to children, young people and teachers and develop understanding about working in the arts sector. Creative Partnerships has worked closely with local HEIs in many areas to commission in-service training for teachers and research and evaluation of programmes. However, the arts and creativity and the value of working with artists receive little attention within the curriculum of most initial teacher training institutions.

Creative Partnerships has increased demand for artists and creative practitioners to work in schools and other settings with children and young people and has provided CPD for teachers and some practitioners. Nevertheless, supply cannot always meet demand and there are not enough training opportunities available for artists to develop

skills to work with children and young people.

## **Actions**

### **C1**

Arts Council England will use its established links with the Department for Education and Skills and the Sector Skills Councils to consider how best to deliver good information, advice and guidance about the arts to young people and teachers.

### **C2**

We will explore the feasibility of developing an area of our website specifically for young people (including students). This could give basic information about the benefits of studying the arts and about careers paths and opportunities in the arts and creative industries. It could signpost other more detailed resources and websites.

### **C3**

We will continue to advocate to the Training and Development Agency for Schools (formerly Teacher Training Agency) for the importance of including the arts and creativity and the value of working with artists in the curriculum for training primary teachers.

## **2 Creative economy**

### **D Arts organisations**

Many of the Arts Council's regularly funded arts organisations already benefit from investment by the HE sector, which is a major cultural provider in its own right. Arts Council England invests more than £18 million in regularly funded organisations which are either part of HEIs or benefit them.

To increase and sustain funding for arts organisations which are part of HEIs and encourage universities to make wider investment in the arts, it is important that the Arts Council gains an understanding of each HEI's objectives and priorities. A partnership approach should ensure that both our agendas are met and that investment in the arts achieves its greatest possible impact.

There is particular concern about the transfer of museum and gallery funding from the AHRC back to HEFCE in 2009. It is not yet clear whether this money will remain ring-fenced for university and college museums and galleries. A reduction in this funding could have a major impact in both the museums and arts sector. There are also concerns about how the capital infrastructure for the arts will be developed and renewed in the absence of an Arts Council large-scale capital programme.

## **Actions**

### **D1**

Wherever possible, but especially where arts organisations are jointly funded, Arts Council England will seek contact with HEIs at vice-chancellor or pro-vice-chancellor level to raise awareness of our investment in the sector and to build understanding of shared interests and potential partnership development. This strategic contact will be complemented by operational links with deans and/or heads of departments.

### **D2**

Regional Arts Council offices will consider setting up partnership agreements with individual and/or groups of HEIs, where this would strengthen links, increase leverage and further mutual interests. If possible, agreements will follow an audit of the HEI's current involvement and investment in the arts and creative industries.

### **D3**

We will investigate the potential for arts organisations to be included as partners in the Higher Education Innovation Fund round four.

### **D4**

We will work with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the AHRC and HEFCE to ensure that the 2009 changes to university museum and gallery funding have positive rather than negative impact. This work will be linked to the Arts Council's review of the presentation of the visual arts.

## **E Individual artists and creative practitioners**

Many artists (performers, writers, visual artists) are part of the practitioner-academic communities of practice found in the higher education system. In addition to teaching full or part-time or being 'in residence', artists pursue practice-based research in HEIs, sometimes with financial support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). There are several areas of debate and difficulty around practice-based research, including finding an agreed definition, its status within the research assessment exercise and artists' awareness of AHRC funding and how to apply.

The transfer of skills between practice and academia as well as within disciplines offers a key context for collaboration between Arts Council and HE and for the development of the creative economy. Although there are already many excellent examples of knowledge transfer in design and the creative arts, there is still much potential yet to release in terms of arts and humanities knowledge transfer. More needs to be done to raise awareness of the benefits of collaboration and links between creative enterprises and higher education in research and development.

Many higher education institutions support graduates with the transition into work, for example through providing incubator units, business start-up advice, and showcasing students' work; some enable artists and companies to use their facilities and equipment. However, surveys suggest that graduates from arts and creative courses are the least likely to have had access to a work experience placement opportunity while at university or college. Such placements are very beneficial in developing the ability to survive and thrive in the world of work, especially in terms of creative entrepreneurship.

In the 21st century a first degree qualification will only provide graduates with initial knowledge and understanding for their working life; everyone now needs to refresh and develop their professional skills regularly in order to keep up to date with a rapidly changing environment. It is likely that the higher education sector could play a stronger role in developing and delivering the provision of continuing professional development.

## **Actions**

### **E1**

Arts Council England will build on and if necessary update the memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreed in 2005 with the AHRC.

### **E2**

We will ensure that the memorandum of understanding with the AHRC is widely known and understood internally by officers, by external partners in the HE sector and by artists.

### **E3**

We will agree a memorandum of understanding with HEFCE. It will focus on areas of joint interest, including knowledge transfer, widening participation, diversity and transition into work. It will complement the MOU with the AHRC and help to secure a more joined up public policy arena for the arts in higher education.

### **E4**

Working with partners, we will continue to explore how best to support the interests of artists and creative practitioners in the context of knowledge transfer, especially in the creative industries. We will investigate the potential for artists and arts organisations to be included in the AHRC Knowledge Transfer Partnerships programme from 2006.

### **E5**

We will continue to consult with partners, including regional development agencies (RDAs), Higher Education Academy Subject Centres, Higher Education Regional Associations (HERAs), Creative and Cultural Skills, Skillset, and Business Links, about how best to work with HEIs to support graduates in the transition into work, including

making HEIs aware of best practice, and how to ensure effective training and CPD for artists throughout their careers.

## **E6**

We will explore how best to work with relevant partners, including HEIs and arts organisations, to broker more work placements for undergraduates and postgraduates on arts and creative courses.

## **E7**

We will review the way we handle work with HEIs within our Grants for the arts scheme, ensuring that our criteria are clear and our spend can be tracked, in order to inform future planning.

## **F     Vibrant communities**

HEIs are increasingly playing a major role in regeneration and redevelopment, and in regional cultural policy. Many are involved with their regional development agency, regional cultural consortium and other groupings concerned with the creative industries. This is especially important for HEIs that produce large numbers of graduates likely to work in the arts and creative industries.

HEIs contribute to the understanding of the role of the arts in communities through policy-based research, such as impact studies or analysis of the development of the creative industries. Some are partners in the growing network of regional cultural observatories that gather research and intelligence on cultural issues.

In some regions where there are a smaller number of HEIs, Arts Council England engages in strategic partnership through Higher Education Regional Associations (HERAs) or other regional forums. For example, universities in the North East secured funding for a Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) in music, in partnership with The Sage Gateshead.

## **Actions**

### **F1**

Arts Council regional offices will establish an overview of the higher education sector in their region, with the help of higher education regional associations (HERAs) and HEFCE regional consultants. Arts Council England will consider in partnership with HEIs how best to work with them. (See also recommendation B2.)

**F2**

We will work to ensure HEIs that produce significant numbers of graduates who enter the creative sector are represented on regional forums and consortia concerned with economic and cultural growth and development.

**F3**

Regional Arts Council offices will make contact with arts-led CETLs in their region, to discuss areas of mutual interest.

**F4**

We will set up or refine existing systems for information and knowledge management to strengthen our relationships with the HE sector and to improve internal understanding of and information exchange about the sector.

**F5**

We will develop a clear communication strategy for interfacing with the diverse aspects of HE both regionally and nationally.

**F6**

We will continue to support the appointment and networking of regional research officers attached to regional cultural observatories, and advocate for the exchange of information about policy-based research.

**F7**

We will skill up our own officers involved in commissioning and interpreting policy-based research from HEIs and other agencies.

**G Internationalism**

Arts Council England has recently launched its first international policy. The policy is intended to integrate across the Arts Council's core work and will cut across other policy areas, including the HE strategy.

Many HEIs are internationally focused institutions, with campuses in different parts of the world, and opportunities for academic exchange and travel. Academic excellence is assessed against world class standards. There is great potential for the Arts Council to develop its own commitment to strong international relationships through partnerships with HEIs.

## **Action**

### **G1**

Arts Council England will seek opportunities wherever possible to further the aims of its international policy through work with HEIs.

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