

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND

Access and Participation Plan 2024-25 to 2027-28

Introduction and strategic aim

The University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) is a modern, dynamic, and future-focused university, supporting students to gain real-world skills and experiences. We have strong local connections and a track record of supporting students from communities that are under-represented in higher education to succeed. Our focus on delivering a university experience that enables all students to achieve their full potential is writ large in our 2030 strategy: Transforming Futures.

We are proud to be a partnership university, working with further education colleges and employers to create pathways to higher skills in areas of economic growth. We are one of the largest providers of Level 6 and 7 apprenticeships in the South West and are the higher education anchor for the West of England Institute of Technology. We work closely with our further education college partners to ensure there are a range of educational opportunities available to those for whom undergraduate level study is not currently the right option.

We are ambitious for all our students and are recognised as being a driving force for social mobility in the region. Almost 40% of students at UWE Bristol are from areas with the lowest rates of participation in higher education¹ and more than 1 in 10 students are from the most economically deprived areas or received free school meals at school². Close to a third (27.2%) of students at UWE have experienced disadvantage prior to joining university based on the OfS Association Between Characteristics of Students (ABCS) analysis, compared to a sector average of 21.2%³.

Around a fifth of students at UWE Bristol disclose a disability during their studies and in the past five years we have significantly narrowed the gap⁴ in attainment between these students and those with no known disability. We have been sector leading in developing whole institution approaches to supporting student mental health. We have contributed to the development of the UUK Step Change framework and have had a strategic plan relating to student and staff mental health since 2018. We recognise that there is more we can do to support all students to develop good mental wellbeing and access support when they need it and have reflected this in our plan.

The focus of our Access and Participation Plan is on closing our awarding gaps. Around a fifth of UK domiciled entrants to undergraduate programmes at UWE are from Black, Asian, multiple heritage or other minoritised groups. UWE's UK-domiciled student population is significantly more diverse than the South West of England from where around half of our students originate, and broadly in line with ethnic diversity in the Bristol city local authority region⁵. However, we have not yet made enough progress in closing the awarding gaps that result in Black students, in particular, receiving good honours degrees at a significantly lower rate than White students. We have committed to eradicating these gaps by 2030 in our university strategy and are working towards

¹ Measured using the [OfS TUNDRA measure](#): Quintile 1 and 2 = 38.7% in 2021-22.

² IMD Q1 = 12.1% and FSM 13% in 2021-22.

³ ABCS Q1 and 2 = 27.2% for UWE in 2021-22 and 21.2% for all HEPs.

⁴ From 5.8pp in 2018-19 to 2.1pp in 2021-22.

⁵ [Regional and LAC ethnic diversity data \(published Dec 22\)](#) e.g. 1.2% residents in South West are Black and 5.9% residents in Bristol City are Black.

becoming an anti-racist university, centering our efforts on the experiences of ethnically minoritised students and staff.

Equality of opportunity is central to our university mission; we are committed to ensuring that all students can thrive and excel at university. We have a strong partnership with the Students' Union at UWE which enables us to deliver on our commitment to listening to students and involving them in decision making.

Risks to equality of opportunity

We initiated an assessment of performance using the OfS Access and Participation data dashboard, internal UWE data and the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risks Register (EORR). This process helped us to identify indicators of risk for relevant student groups at each stage of a student's journey through higher education. We also considered the indicators of risk and student characteristics section of the EORR to facilitate discussion around potential associated risks and considered how different groups of students may be affected by those risks. More detail about our assessment of performance can be found in Annex A.

We believe that all of the risks listed on the sector wide EORR apply across our student lifecycle. When we examined the data, we confirmed that awarding gaps constituted our main gaps for our Access and Participation Plan. Therefore, we considered systemic risks relating to race, and conducted an additional evidence review around awarding gaps in higher education. We utilised this broader sector insight alongside student feedback, and as a result have added three local risks:

- UWE Risk 1 - Insufficient capability to teach diverse student groups
- UWE Risk 2 - Insufficient approach to tackling discrimination
- UWE Risk 3 - Insufficient opportunities to gain positive and meaningful experiences of work during studies

The data used to determine the risks and an overview of the evidence review around awarding gaps can be found in the annexes.

The identified risks to equality of opportunity at UWE are as follows:

There are lower proportions of students from low-socio economic areas at UWE as measured through the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), with fewer students from IMD Q1 compared to students from IMD Q5 enrolling over the last six years. Evidence from the sector and literature suggests that this is related to gaps in prior knowledge and skills (Risk 1), a lack of information and guidance (Risk 2) alongside differential perceptions of higher education (Risk 3). We believe that application success rate (Risk 4) and a limited choice of course type and delivery mode (Risk 5) are also contributing factors to this gap.

There are significant awarding gaps relating to ethnicity and socio-economic status which have not improved significantly over the last six years. For example, Black and Asian students are less likely to be awarded good honours when compared to White students, and students from IMD Q1 are less likely to be awarded good honours than students from IMD Q5. There is also a gap in completion rates between Black and White students. The evidence suggests that there are a number of risks which contribute to these attainment and completion gaps, including insufficient academic (Risk 6) and personal (Risk 7) support, mental health (Risk 8), and the ongoing impacts of coronavirus (Risk 9). Students from lower socio-economic groups will be particularly affected by

cost pressures (Risk 10), and capacity issues (Risk 11) may result in some student groups being particularly under-served in relation to services and support.

Analysing UWE data and considering our own local context has also indicated that the experience and outcomes of ethnically minoritised students are negatively impacted by an insufficient capability to teach diverse student groups (UWE Risk 1), an insufficient approach to tackling discrimination (UWE Risk 2), and insufficient opportunities to gain positive and meaningful experiences of work during studies (UWE Risk 3).

Students with no known disability are more likely to complete their degrees when compared to students with a mental health condition. Evidence informs us that risks for students with a mental health condition include insufficient academic and personal support (Risk 6 and 7), environments that are not conducive to good mental health and wellbeing (Risk 8), the ongoing impacts of coronavirus (Risk 9), and the risk that students may not have equal opportunity to access limited resources related to higher education, such as suitable accommodation (Risk 11). Our assessment of performance and work on developing our anti-racist university plan suggests that an insufficient approach to tackling discrimination (UWE Risk 2) is an additional risk that will affect the mental health of students from minoritised backgrounds.

Finally, male students have a lower completion rate than female students. A review of the evidence determined that the same EORR risks apply for this completion gap as for the completion gap between students with no known disability and a mental health condition, described in the paragraph above. We also know that male students may be less likely to engage with mental health support, so we believe that insufficient personal support (Risk 7) is particularly relevant.

Objectives

Through our assessment of performance across the student life cycle, we have identified multiple indications of risk in the data. The seven most critical of these will be addressed through the Access and Participation Plan. Please see the 'Assessment of Performance' annex A for more information about the process we went through to determine which indications of risk we would focus on in the plan.

Targets 1-4 all have a percentage point gap of 14 or more for the most recent year of data. As these gaps are large, we have taken the decision to close these gaps to zero by 2029-30 in line with our internal University strategy.

1. To eliminate the gap in access between students from IMD Q5 and IMD Q1 by 2029-30 by increasing the proportion of successful applications from students living in IMD Q1 post code areas. This will be achieved through targeted outreach, contextual admissions, summer schools and degree apprenticeships.
2. To eliminate the awarding gap between White students and Asian students by 2029-30 by putting mechanisms in place to increase the award of good honours to Asian students. This will be achieved through inclusive learning experiences with strong and effective practice-based learning opportunities. We also believe that our financial support packages will contribute to closing this gap.
3. To eliminate the awarding gap between White students and Black students by 2029-30 by putting mechanisms in place to increase the award of good honours to Black students. This will be achieved through inclusive learning experiences with strong and effective practice-

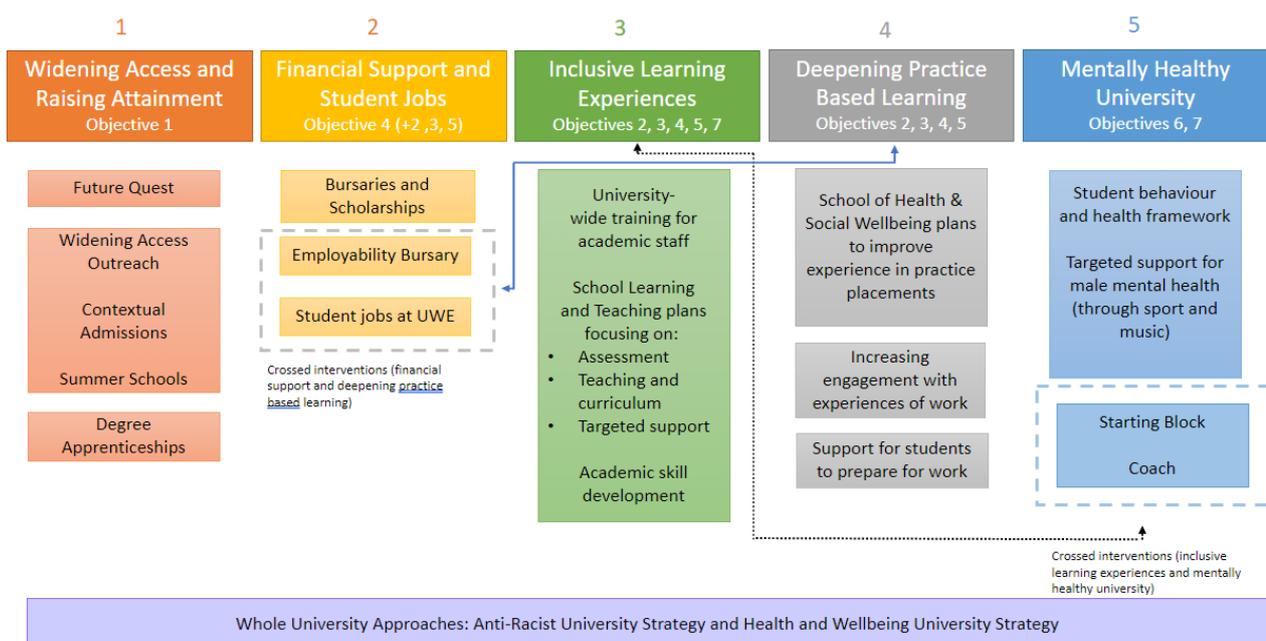
based learning opportunities, and indirectly through financial support that enables students to engage with employability and academic opportunities.

- To eliminate the awarding gap between students from IMD Q5 and IMD Q1 by 2029-30 by putting mechanisms in place to increase the award of good honours to students from IMD Q1 post code areas. This will be achieved through financial support, inclusive learning experiences with strong and effective practice-based learning opportunities.

Targets 5-7 have slightly smaller percentage point gaps in the most recent year of data, and we have therefore decided to aim to close these gaps to zero by the 2027-28 academic year in line with the duration of the Access and Participation Plan.

- To eliminate the gap in completion between White students and Black students by 2027-28 by increasing the rate at which Black students complete their studies. This will be achieved through inclusive learning experiences with strong and effective practice-based learning opportunities, and indirectly through financial support that enables students to engage with employability and academic opportunities.
- To eliminate the gap in completion between students with no known disability and students with a mental health condition by 2027-28 by increasing the rate at which students with a mental health condition complete their studies. This will be achieved through promoting good mental wellbeing and ensuring prevention activities support students to stay in their programme whenever possible.
- To eliminate the gap in completion between female students and male students by 2027-28 by increasing the rate at which male students in specific subject areas complete their studies. This will be achieved through inclusive learning experiences and targeted support for male mental health.

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes



Intervention strategy 1: Widening Access and Raising Attainment

Objectives and targets

Objective 1 – Reduce the gap in access between students from IMD Q5 and IMD Q1 (PTA_1)

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 1 (knowledge and skills), Risk 2 (information and guidance), Risk 3 (perception of HE), Risk 4 (application success rates), Risk 5 (limited choice of course type and delivery mode)

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
DEVELOPING Future Quest: sustained outreach programmes supporting students from year 3 to post-16.	£160k UWE funding	Higher GCSE attainment.	N
DEVELOPING Future Quest: Critical Thinking and Self-Regulation Working with students to develop critical thinking and self-regulation skills via workshops.	As above	Better knowledge and understanding of soft skills and study strategies. Greater ability to progress and achieve academically.	N
DEVELOPING Future Quest: Career Related Activities focusing on curriculum, careers and academic skills.	As above	Improved skills and knowledge of pathways to HE and/or employment.	N
DEVELOPING Widening Access work targeted to schools and colleges with high proportion of IMD students. A range of activities, events and opportunities to equip students with the skills, knowledge and information to increase participation in HE.	Staff time - 2 x Widening Access Officers and Head of Widening Access HEAT membership	Reduction in the IMD Q1/Q5 access gap at UWE. Increased understanding and propensity to apply to HE. Increased human and social capital, and self-belief.	N
DEVELOPING Contextual admissions - piloting UWE's first contextual admissions offer, with an associated support package of activities.	Staff time - 2 x Widening Access Officers 0.4FTE Business Intelligence Analysts	Learners are able and supported to access HE. Reduction in the IMD Q1/Q5 access gap at UWE.	N

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
	Contractual agreements with UCAS	Increased application and enrolment rates. Increased social capital.	
DEVELOPING Summer schools for UWE contextual offer holders.	Staff time - 2 x Widening Access Officers Widening Access Budget Data and Evaluation Officer 0.2FTE	Learner confidence in building social and professional networks, and utilising UWE support services. Learners are able to participate and gain good graduate outcomes.	N
NEW Establish mutual objectives around diversifying apprenticeship intakes.	Apprenticeships team time 0.2 FTE BI analyst time	Diversity and number of employers offering apprenticeships increases. Qualitative data analysis to understand routes into apprenticeships.	N
DEVELOPING Work closely with FE partners to ensure clear progression pathways and pipelines from level 3.	Apprenticeships team time	Numbers of learners coming through mapped pathways from Partner Colleges increases.	
NEW Increase apprenticeship information in outreach	Apprenticeships team time	Increased knowledge of apprenticeships in schools and colleges amongst learners, teachers and IAG staff	N

Evidence base and rationale: GCSE attainment is an indicator of HE participation and it is therefore important for interventions to start early in young peoples' educational journeys (Dodd et al., 2021; Office for Students, 2022), which is why Future Quest works with institutions from primary education to college. Evidence shows that non-traditional routes into HE need better advertisement and packages of targeted support (Casey and Wakeling, 2022; Eguiguren Wray et al., 2022; Mountford-Zimdars and Moore, 2020). Degree apprenticeships are often seen as having lower prestige yet provide better routes into employment than traditional university courses (Casey and Wakeling, 2022). We plan to provide better advertisement through outreach to increase awareness of degree apprenticeships and address concerns of students who seek this route (Green et al., 2022). Contextual admissions offer a route into higher education for disadvantaged young people and it is important that potential contextual offer holders are identified through the

use of nuanced and granular data (Mountford-Zimdars and Moore, 2020). We will identify potential contextual offer holders through UCAS’s intersectional Multiple Equalities Measure and our own context-specific questions which pick up on our relatively high recruitment of refugee students, students with caring responsibilities and students who served as or are children of armed forces personnel. We will also provide a package of support for contextual admissions students made up of targeted communications, workshops and a summer school all of which have shown a positive correlation with student confidence and aspiration to HE (Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020). Evidence suggests that more research is needed on the long-term impacts of contextual admissions (Mountford-Zimdars and Moore, 2020).

A more detailed evidence base is available in Annex B.

Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Future Quest	Increased number of students and higher GCSE attainment.	A theory-based approach to evaluating Future Quest as a whole, using Type 2 qualitative and quantitative data to determine impact.	Yearly reports published on Future Quest website, news articles and blogs. Larger scale peer-reviewed evaluation published after 2-4 years.
Future Quest: Critical Thinking and Self-Regulation	Better knowledge and understanding of soft skills and study strategies. Greater ability to progress and achieve academically.	Pre- and post-workshop knowledge and confidence monitoring (Type 2).	Embedded in yearly published report.
Future Quest: Career Related Activities	Improved skills and knowledge of pathways to HE and/or employment.	Type 1 and Type 2 methods, including pre- and post-session knowledge monitoring, teacher observations, tracking improvements in school attainment.	Embedded in yearly published report.
Widening Access work targeted to schools with high proportion of IMD students	Reduction in the IMD Q1/Q5 access gap at UWE. Students report increased understanding and propensity to apply to HE.	Type 1 and Type 2 methods including monitoring of access gap, impact of enrolment on access gap, monitoring routes taken by students at target schools and colleges, post-session	Publication of official statistics. News articles and blogs. HEAT analysis. Findings included in annual EDI impact report.

	Increased human and social capital, and self-belief.	questionnaires, and in-session activities.	
Contextual admissions	Learners are able and supported to access HE. Reduction in the IMD Q1/Q5 access gap at UWE. Increased application and enrolment rates. Increased social capital.	Type 1 and Type 2 methods including statistical analysis of application and enrolment rates, monitoring of the access gap, monitoring false negatives, and identifying students who would not have otherwise got a place at UWE.	Yearly internal reports. External reports published on UWE research repository. Key updates and findings published on UWE contextual admissions webpage annually when reviewed.
Summer schools for UWE contextual offer holders	Learner confidence in building social and professional networks, utilising UWE support services. Learners are able to participate and gain good graduate outcomes.	Pre- and post-session feedback questionnaires, focus groups, statistical analysis of attainment, progression, continuation and engagement, monitoring offer acceptance rate of summer school attendees. (Type 2). Potential to randomly allocated places (Type 3).	Yearly internal reports. External reports published on UWE research repository. Key updates and findings published on UWE contextual admissions webpage annually when reviewed.
Establish mutual objectives around diversifying apprenticeship intakes.	Diversity and number of employees offering apprenticeships increases. Qualitative data analysis to understand routes into apprenticeships.	Monitoring diversity, overall numbers and qualitative data from entrants (Type 1), and case studies (Type 2).	Objectives to be published in EDI impact report. Development of apprenticeship impact report.
Clear progression pathways and pipelines from level 3	Numbers of learners coming through mapped pathways from	Monitoring the number of learners, data analysis to determine whether apprentices would have otherwise been eligible	Internal news stories. EDI impact report.

	Partner Colleges increases.	to access HE through traditional routes (Type 1), case studies (Type 2).	Development of apprenticeship impact report.
Increase apprenticeship information in outreach	Increased knowledge of apprenticeships in schools and colleges amongst learners, teachers and IAG staff.	Before and after surveys of learners receiving outreach activities, measuring knowledge and understanding of apprenticeships, and interest in applying (Type 2)	EDI impact report. Development of apprenticeship impact report.

Intervention strategy 2: Financial Support

Objectives and targets

This intervention strategy primarily addresses objective 4 but with an intersectional focus on ethnicity, so we see there being secondary benefits to objectives 2, 3, and 5 (our objectives relating to closing awarding gaps and addressing gaps in completion).

Objective 4 – reducing the awarding gap between students from IMD Q5 and IMD Q1 (PTS_3)

Our intersectional analysis of the individualised dataset showed significant correlation in the attainment outcomes when measuring by ethnicity and IMD quintile. Other internal analysis undertaken has highlighted how delicately balanced and interwoven attainment and completion outcomes are for these selected groups, and how the potential implications of strategic interventions may easily impact across both of these lifecycle stages. Therefore, we believe that this strategic intervention will also impact on the following objectives:

Objective 2 – reducing the awarding gap between White and Asian students (PTS_1)

Objective 3 – reducing the awarding gap between White and Black students (PTS_2)

Objective 5 – reducing the gap in completion between White students and Black students (PTS_6)

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 10 (cost pressures), Risk 11 (capacity issues), UWE Risk 3 (insufficient opportunities to gain positive and meaningful experiences of work during studies)

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
DEVELOPING Financial support for students including: £500 bursaries for students from household incomes of <£25K.	EDI Projects Lead 0.1 FTE per week EDI Projects Officer 0.2 FTE per week	No gaps in student outcomes for students from low-income households compared to middle income households.	N

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
<p>£1650 enhanced childcare bursary (household income of <£25K and in receipt of Childcare Grant from student finance).</p> <p>UWE Cares enhanced bursary of £1650 per year + £500 on graduation (household income of <£25K and eligible for UWE Cares support).</p> <p>Sanctuary scholarship and other scholarships targeted at low-income households and specific ethnic groups.</p> <p>Hardship funds of up to £400.</p>	<p>EDI Coordinator 0.05FTE</p> <p>Head of Student Money Service (SMS) and SMS team</p> <p>EDI Project Administrator 0.1FTE</p> <p>Data and Evaluation Officer 0.2FTE</p>	<p>UWE Cares students graduating feel a strong sense of belonging and have access to the opportunities at university that all students would expect.</p>	
<p>*DEVELOPING* Financial support for work experience opportunities through the employability bursary. This will include:</p> <p>£1000 for students undertaking eligible optional employability activities, expanded to cover global travel, degree shows, course trip costs etc. Targeted communications to key groups.</p>	<p>Head of Student Money Service and SMS team</p> <p>0.1 FTE BI analyst time to prepare termly report</p> <p>Head of Careers and Enterprise and Careers' team time</p>	<p>Increase in IMD Q1 students and in Black students, Asian students and students with mental health condition accessing employability opportunities.</p> <p>Increase in student's self-reported skills, confidence and belonging to assess the quality of opportunities.</p>	<p>Y – IS4 (deepening practice based learning)</p>
<p>*NEW* Promoting opportunities for students to work on campus by scrutinising student job opportunities and taking a student first approach to part time work.</p>	<p>0.1FTE Dean of Students</p> <p>0.1FTE Student Experience Project Manager</p> <p>0.1FTE EDI Data and Evaluation Officer</p>	<p>Increased number of students working at UWE (and increased diversity).</p> <p>Improved confidence in employability skills in students with experiences of work at UWE.</p>	<p>Y – IS4 (deepening practice based learning)</p>

Evidence base and rationale: Many studies show a positive correlation between financial support and student retention, satisfaction, completion and degree outcomes, particularly for students from low-income backgrounds (Office for Students, 2020; TASO, 2023; Herbaut and Geven, 2020; Moores and Burgess, 2023). Financial support reduces the burden on disadvantaged students to work to supplement their income; this reduction in paid work seems to be associated with improvements in attainment and academic achievement (Zhang and Yang, 2020; Broton, Goldrick-Rab and Benson, 2016).

Work-integrated learning is widely recognised as having a positive impact on students' post-graduation employability (Jackson and Dean, 2023). Disadvantaged students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, face serious barriers to accessing these types of opportunities which can be mitigated with financial support (Roberts and Ouwehand, 2017; Office for Students, 2020). The UWE Financial Support Review 2021-22 found that students undertaking placements were more likely to be White, young and from POLAR4 Q4 and Q5. It also found that students undertaking placements were more likely to complete their degree and to achieve good honours, which is why we are expanding our targeting of the employability bursary to the groups who could benefit the most.

Hiring students can enhance student employability while also providing financial support through paid work (Barefoot and Boons, 2019; Fuglsang et al., 2018). Student employment in projects aimed at diversifying curricula, advocacy and researching the experiences of minoritised students has also been effective at tackling awarding gaps and enhancing student voice (Barefoot and Boons, 2019; Gefferie and Adewumi, 2023). However, it is important that internal employment opportunities for students provide flexibility and support that extends beyond traditional recruitment processes (Fuglsang et al., 2018).

A more detailed evidence base is available in Annex B.

Evaluation

We know there is a strong evidence base for offering financial support to students to improve outcomes, so we intend to evaluate our financial support package using the OfS Financial Support Toolkit every three years, as opposed to annually. We also intend to conduct a full review of the eligibility criteria and administration of our financial support during the life cycle of the plan, to identify how we can ensure it is reaching those most in need. In addition, we will use type 1 and 2 methods to evaluate the employability bursary, monitoring uptake and outcomes and measuring student's self-reported changes in skills and experience. A key focus will be on evaluating our new initiative to review student jobs at UWE and we intend to publish the findings of this evaluation.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Financial support for students	No gaps in student outcomes for students from low-income households compared to middle income households.	Evaluation using the OfS Financial Support toolkit (Type 3). Monitoring of uptake of enhanced bursaries and UWE Cares students' attainment and completion (Type 1).	Financial review report published externally via UWE research repository every 4 years. Findings shared in EDI impact report.

	UWE Cares students graduating feel a strong sense of belonging and have access to opportunities at university.	Focus groups run 3 times a year to track UWE Cares students' sense of belonging and satisfaction. Survey of graduating UWE Cares students (Type 2).	News articles and blogs summarising key successes. Stand Alone award submissions.
Financial support for work experience opportunities through the employability bursary	Increase in IMD Q1 students and in Black students, Asian students and students with mental health condition accessing employability opportunities. Increase in students' self-reported skills, confidence and belonging.	Monitoring of uptake of the employability bursary and participation in employability activities (Type 1). Compare graduate outcomes for students who access the employability bursary with comparator students who do not access it (Type 2). Post-activity measure of student's self-reported skills, confidence and belonging (Type 2).	Findings shared internally with Financial Support Working Group.
Student jobs	Increased number of students working at UWE (and increased diversity). Improved confidence in employability skills in students with experiences of work at UWE.	Monitoring of student employment at UWE, hours worked, demographic characteristics (Type 1). Survey and interviews with students on their experiences of work at UWE and the impact of these jobs on their student journeys (Type 2).	Monitoring data published annually as an appendix to the annual staff equalities monitoring report. Qualitative evaluation to take place every two years and to be published in the UWE research repository.

Intervention strategy 3: Inclusive Learning Experiences

Objectives and targets

This intervention strategy addresses our objectives relating to closing awarding gaps and addressing gaps in completion:

Objective 2 – reducing the awarding gap between White and Asian students (PTS_1)

Objective 3 – reducing the awarding gap between White and Black students (PTS_2)

Objective 4 – reducing the awarding gap between students from IMD Q5 and IMD Q1 (PTS_3)
 Objective 5 – reducing the gap in completion between White students and Black students (PTS_6)
 Objective 7 – reducing the gap in completion between female and male students (PTS_5)

Analysis of internal data highlights that these gaps are not experienced consistently across the university. We will therefore take a risk-based approach internally, focusing our efforts on subject areas where we have the farthest distance to travel and where most students are currently being affected. We have set targets that align with our university strategy commitment to eliminate awarding gaps by 2030.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), Risk 8 (mental health), Risk 9 (ongoing impacts of coronavirus), Risk 11 (capacity issues), UWE Risk 1 (insufficient capability to teach diverse student groups), and UWE Risk 2 (insufficient approach to tackling discrimination)

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention ?
DEVELOPING University-wide training and guidance for academic staff, which will support the delivery of local objectives	0.1FTE x 3 Academic Practice Directors	Staff feel confident to change their teaching and learning approaches to meet the needs of students.	N
NEW Annual school-led teaching and learning plans developed using risk-based local data analysis and assessment of need and with input from diverse groups of students	0.1FTE x 3 Dean of Learning and Teaching (strategic coordination and leadership) 0.4FTE x 10 School Directors of Learning and Teaching	Changes to teaching and learning approaches are implemented and evaluated.	N
NEW Review of assessment frequency, alignment with learning objectives and the extent to which they rely on a 'hidden curriculum'	0.1FTE Deputy Director of Library, Careers and Inclusivity	Black, Asian and ethnically minoritised students have improved academic outcomes.	N
DEVELOPING Review of teaching approaches, curricula and reading lists	0.5 FTE x2 Senior Black, Asian	Students feel supported	N

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention ?
DEVELOPING Targeted support for students at key points of the student journey using data-led approaches and positive action to reach at-risk groups	Minoritised student project consultant 0.2FTE library services staff (reading lists)	effectively in their learning.	N
DEVELOPING Academic skills development that meets the needs of students and has high engagement from Black and Asian students	0.1FTE x 3 College librarian 0.4 Data and Evaluation officer The QAA good practice toolkit, the UWE Inclusive Curriculum and Practice Toolkit and the UWE dialogic Assessment brief as guidance		N

Evidence base and rationale: Effective plans for addressing awarding gaps should clearly identify accountability (TASO, 2023), focus on the whole student experience (e.g. Smith et al., 2021) and actively involve students (Gefferie and Adewumi, 2023). The evaluation of our Inclusive Curriculum and Practice Toolkit and staff development programmes suggests providing programme teams with practical support and guidance relating to inclusive teaching and assessment results in changes to curricula and teaching. Colleagues from UWE have been involved in a QAA funded project which highlights a ‘hidden curriculum’ that relies on assumed knowledge of often abstract terminology, instructions and expectations which can create additional stress for students (Minett-Smith et al., 2023). This resulted in a QAA good practice toolkit which we will be recommending to programme teams to support their assessments. A partnership project between the university and the Students’ Union involving students and staff in 2021 highlighted the need for greater conversation before, during and post assessment. A co-created dialogic toolkit was developed as an output of this project.

Alongside the longer-term work to address systemic barriers to equality of opportunity, targeted support can be useful to improve confidence and skills (Brooman and Darwent, 2014). Preliminary analysis of internal pilots from 2022-23 suggests that in-year data can be useful to improve services to reach the right students and ensure students understand what support may be useful to them.

A more detailed evidence base is available in Annex B.

Evaluation

This intervention strategy is an area where we see opportunities to deepen and widen our evaluation approach. Assurance reporting of school level action plans will enable us to take a risk-based approach to driving action and close monitoring of actions through these reports will enable us to triangulate local changes with improvements in module marks and ultimately good honours rates. We will also regularly evaluate the engagement and perceived impact of training and guidance for staff, and ask student consultants to report on their perceptions of impact within each year. Drawing causal links between these types of inputs and changes in student grades is clearly not possible, however, we will encourage pedagogic projects that evaluate local changes, and will promote opportunities to publish and share findings of these – regardless of impact – through an annual EDI impact report.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
University training and guidance	Staff feel confident to change their teaching and learning approaches to meet the needs of students.	Evaluations of the impact of training and guidance (Type 2).	Evaluations published every 2 years on the UWE research repository.
Targeted school plans prioritising assessments, teaching approaches, curriculum, targeted support and embedding academic skills development	<p>Changes to teaching and learning approaches are implemented and evaluated.</p> <p>Black, Asian and ethnically minoritised students have improved academic outcomes.</p> <p>Students feel supported effectively in their learning.</p>	<p>Assurance reporting of school-level actions (Type 1).</p> <p>Reports from student consultants (Type 1).</p> <p>Minimum requirement of 1x type 3 evaluation per college focused on assessments, curriculum, and targeted support.</p> <p>Type 2 evaluation of academic skills development</p>	<p>Full reports to be shared alongside a risk-based executive summary to be considered through university academic governance pathways.</p> <p>Summarised every year - within EDI impact report and published externally.</p>

Intervention strategy 4: Deepening Practice Based Learning

Objectives and targets

This intervention strategy addresses our objectives relating to closing awarding gaps and addressing gaps in progression:

Objective 2 – reducing the awarding gap between White and Asian students (PTS_1)

Objective 3 – reducing the awarding gap between White and Black students (PTS_2)

Objective 4 – reducing the awarding gap between students from IMD Q5 and IMD Q1 (PTS_3)

Objective 5 – reducing the gap in completion between White students and Black students (PTS_6)

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), Risk 8 (mental health), Risk 9 (ongoing impacts of coronavirus), Risk 10 (cost pressures), Risk 11 (capacity issues), Risk 12 (progression), UWE Risk 2 (insufficient approach to tackling discrimination) and UWE Risk 3 (insufficient opportunities to gain positive and meaningful experiences of work during studies)

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
<p>Increase engagement with experiences of work through positive action. This includes:</p> <p>*DEVELOPING* Work experience opportunities such as Equity and First Gens are targeted to courses with lower rates of positive graduate outcomes for target students.</p> <p>*NEW* Student consultation on existing core offers like UWE Internships to ensure they are inclusive and appealing to diverse student groups.</p> <p>*NEW* Use positive action in student recruitment and create guide for recruiting managers (links to student jobs at UWE IS2).</p>	<p>Positive Action Community of Practice</p> <p>Careers Service staff time</p> <p>EDI Project Officer 0.4FTE</p> <p>EDI Projects Lead 0.1FTE</p> <p>Data and Evaluation Officer 0.2FTE</p>	<p>Increase in career confidence, belonging and skills in students who engage with work experience opportunities.</p> <p>Increased proportion of Black and Asian students gaining work experience opportunities.</p> <p>More students enter their final year having undertaken a career-related experience (Career Registration Q2).</p> <p>Fewer students are in the 'decide' stage of their career readiness by the time they enter their final year (Career Registration Q1).</p>	<p>Y – IS2 jobs at UWE</p>

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
<p>*NEW* Work with external employers and support them to provide inclusive work experience opportunities and use positive action where appropriate.</p>			
<p>*NEW* Support Students to Prepare for Experiences of Work including:</p> <p>Anti-discrimination workshops to build student confidence to challenge discrimination.</p> <p>Digital careers resources and support to learn about disclosures and communicating with employers around interview and workplace adjustments.</p> <p>“Micro-opportunities” to build students’ confidence to engage in larger work experience opportunities.</p>	<p>Positive Action community of Practice</p> <p>Careers Service staff time</p> <p>Data and Evaluation Officer 0.2FTE</p>	<p>Develop and boost students’ skills and confidence for future work, using indicators from activity feedback surveys.</p> <p>Increased awareness and engagement with about the Careers and Enterprise opportunities available.</p>	<p>Y – IS2 jobs at UWE</p>
<p>*NEW* Improving experience in practice for health care students. This will include:</p> <p>Consistent and school-wide approach to preparation for practice (e.g. expectations of behaviour, how to raise concerns).</p> <p>Consistent and school-wide approach to providing support to students on placement (e.g. induction, freedom to speak up</p>	<p>School Director time 0.2FTE</p> <p>Project manager 1FTE time on NHS England funded project</p>	<p>Students feel supported before and during placement.</p> <p>Staff feel more confident to support students.</p> <p>Staff have a better understanding of the differential experience and impacts of racism on students.</p> <p>Students’ outcomes from placement improve.</p>	<p>N</p>

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
<p>training) and working with Careers Service to embed employability in the curriculum.</p> <p>Ensuring staff in practice are appropriately prepared (e.g. information about differential learner experiences).</p> <p>Reviewing internal processes in schools (e.g. placing EDI on senior partnership meeting agendas).</p>			

Evidence base and rationale: Evidence from internal evaluation of the Equity programme shows that students who take part in the programme report increased professional networks, improved confidence to be themselves, increased awareness of where to go for support at UWE and increased sense of belonging at UWE.

Paid work experience and study-related work experience are particularly important factors to positively impact employment outcomes (O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018). A review of the existing evidence shows that internships are critical to secure a graduate job in the UK (Carys, 2017).

A UWE student survey found that students fear rejection and find it difficult to talk about their authentic self in interviews (Positive Action in Work Experience Survey, Feb 2023, completed by 233 current students). The majority of respondents (70/233 and the highest ranked recommendation) felt that UWE should increase flexibility of opportunities (hours/remote) and introduce micro-opportunities (23/233 and joint 4th highest ranked recommendation) in order to build student confidence to undertake a longer-lasting work experience opportunity.

Regarding experience of practice placements, students consulted during the APP planning process noted that it felt more difficult to receive support when they were on a professional placement. They suggested a UWE standard for employers that would ensure that employers are held to account to reduce the risks of discrimination and harassment. It was suggested that this would encourage students to engage more meaningfully, especially for international, Asian, Black and other minoritised students. Research into the experience of student support on placements (Garvey and Griffiths, 2022) has led to the development of an NHS England funded project, led by UWE, to embed inclusive training within practice for health care students and international staff.

A more detailed evidence base is available in Annex B.

Evaluation

This intervention strategy comprises a lot of new activities, based on evidence in the literature and feedback from internal work led by the Positive Action Community of Practice at UWE. We therefore intend to evaluate all of the activities that are being piloted to measure effectiveness and test for scalability across the institution.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
<p>Increase engagement with experiences of work through positive action</p>	<p>Increase in career confidence, belonging and skills in students who engage with opportunities.</p> <p>Increased proportion of Black and Asian students gaining work experience opportunities.</p> <p>More students enter their final year having undertaken a career-related experience (Career Registration Q2).</p> <p>Fewer students are in the 'decide' stage of their career readiness by the time they enter their final year (Career Registration Q1).</p>	<p>Understand uptake and engagement in activities designed to support career planning by demographic (Type 1).</p> <p>Statistical analysis of graduate outcomes for students who engaged with experiences of work and students who were eligible/signed up but did not engage (Type 3).</p> <p>Monitor the recruitment process from application to shortlist to appointment for vacancies using positive action activities. Feedback from hiring managers, candidates and successful applicants (Type 2).</p> <p>Survey for employers to understand their current practices for recruiting students for work experience opportunities and knowledge/confidence in using positive action pre- and post-implementation of new actions (Type 2).</p>	<p>News articles shared internally on UWE staff and students news.</p> <p>Findings shared externally via EDI impact report and UWE research repository.</p>
<p>Support students to prepare for experiences of work</p>	<p>Develop and boost students' skills and confidence for future work, using indicators from</p>	<p>Feedback survey following anti-discrimination workshops measuring student confidence and subsequent follow-up (Type 2).</p>	<p>News articles shared internally on UWE staff and student news.</p>

	<p>activity feedback surveys.</p> <p>Increased awareness and engagement with the Careers and Employability opportunities available.</p>	<p>Repeat the Positive Action Work Experience Survey (Type 2) and measure the effectiveness of career-related resources.</p> <p>Interviews/focus groups with students who take up “micro opportunities” to understand how the opportunity has helped them prepare for other experiences of work (Type 2).</p>	<p>Findings shared externally via EDI impact report and UWE research repository.</p>
<p>Improving experience in practice for health care students</p>	<p>Students feel supported before and during placement.</p> <p>Staff feel more confident to support students.</p> <p>Staff have a better understanding of the differential experience and impacts of racism on students.</p> <p>Students’ outcomes from placement improve.</p>	<p>Assessment of progress in year against school-based plan (Type 1).</p> <p>Evaluation report on NHS England funded project (Type 2).</p>	<p>News articles shared internally on school/college staff and student news.</p> <p>Findings shared externally via EDI impact report and UWE research repository</p> <p>Evaluation report shared externally via NHS England webpage.</p>

Intervention strategy 5: Mentally Healthy University

Objectives and targets

This intervention strategy addresses our objectives relating to improving completion rates for students who have disclosed a disability relating to a mental health condition and for male students:

Objective 6 – reducing the completion gap between students with no known disability and students with a mental health condition (PTS_4)

Objective 7 – reducing the gap in completion between female and male students (PTS_5)

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), Risk 8 (mental health), Risk 9 (ongoing impacts of coronavirus), Risk 11 (capacity issues) and UWE Risk 2 (insufficient approach to tackling discrimination).

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
<p>*DEVELOPING* Starting Block approach to transition and induction. To include:</p> <p>Union Black anti-racist 1hr online course embedded in programme.</p> <p>Introduction to 5 secrets of success and Fika (via Peer Assisted Learning) to support the development of positive wellbeing.</p>	<p>0.2FTE Dean of Students</p> <p>0.4FTE Student Experience Project Manager</p> <p>0.2FTE Associate Director Academic Practice</p> <p>0.3FTE learning technologists</p>	<p>Students feel strong sense of belonging and a sense of connection to UWE Bristol community.</p> <p>Students have greater awareness of and actively practice being active bystanders, anti-racist behaviours, and allyship.</p> <p>Students have a greater awareness of how to support their own wellbeing.</p>	Y – IS3 Inclusive Learning Experiences
<p>*NEW* Coach programme, which will involve the delivery of coaching through a mixed model allowing learning about the impacts of different approaches to coaching as a complement to academic personal tutoring.</p> <p>In addition, Five Secrets to Success will be embedded into the coaching model to support mental wellbeing. Anti-racist principles will also be embedded into the development and delivery of Coach programme.</p>	<p>0.4FTE leadership role</p> <p>0.2FTE Project Manager</p> <p>0.2FTE HR Consultant</p> <p>0.2FTE Business Analyst</p>	<p>All students, but especially ethnically minoritised students and male students report improved sense of belonging and view Coach as positive and valuable for students.</p> <p>All students but especially ethnically minoritised students, male students and students with disclosed mental health conditions increase their engagement with their programme after engagement with Coach.</p>	Y – IS3 Inclusive Learning Experiences

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
DEVELOPING Development of the student behaviour and health framework, enabling targeted and focused support for programme teams. The framework will be linked to school plans to create inclusive cultures and regular reporting will ensure that the framework effectively supports prevention strategies.	0.1FTE Head of Student and Academic Policy Enhancement 0.2FTE Student Casework Team Manager	Programme teams feel more confident and have increased capabilities to build inclusive cultures. Students feel a greater sense of belonging. Data more effectively allows insight into the need or effectiveness of targeted prevention strategies or programme level actions.	Y – IS3 Inclusive Learning Experiences (linking into targeted school based plans)
NEW Sport and music related targeted interventions for male students.	2 x EDI project officer 0.1 FTE Head of Centre for Music 0.1 FTE Sport Experience Manager 0.3FTE Data and Evaluation Officer	Male students engage in more help-seeking behaviours. Male students have a greater sense of belonging following engagement with activities.	N

Evidence base and rationale: One of the most effective ways to support student sense of belonging when transition to university is to go beyond information giving and focus on creating a sense of identity (Hughes and Spanner, 2019). Students find that academic and pastoral support relationships can help them to minimise academic stress, and Seraj and Leggett (2023) note that coaching approaches can have a positive impact on students' sense of belonging.

Poor wellbeing has negative impacts on learning and engagement in education (e.g. Craig and Zinckiewicz, 2010) but we know that students access support differentially. For example, male students are less likely to access support for mental health issues (Sagar-Ouriaghli, Brown and Godfrey, 2020) and would benefit from a focus on signposting services, including using male role models (promotion), increasing awareness of mental health symptoms (prevention), and briefer interventions that may not be formally labelled as mental health interventions (Sagar-Ouriaghli, Brown and Godfrey, 2020).

Students, and particularly those who are under-represented at university, can have experiences of traumatic events such as racism or sexual misconduct, which can impact their wider wellbeing (Olaniyan, 2021). This can have negative effects on broader health and wellbeing (e.g. Duncan, 2000), including through increasing the use of unhelpful coping strategies (Sommer et al., 2020). Building capabilities to talk about identity and traumatic experiences can enhance learning (e.g.

Newman, 2011) but this should be done carefully and with appropriate cultural competence (Mattar, 2011).

A more detailed evidence base is available in Annex B.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the activities in this intervention strategy will also form a core part of the evaluation of the university’s health and wellbeing strategy and plans to support student mental health. Broader work to develop a Service Outcome Framework across student services will provide strong data on a range of services (including Coach), enabling clear measurement of student outcomes which will be used to improve services as required.

We plan to integrate approaches to building inclusive cultures in academic programmes into our school-based plans (see IS3). Driving culture change and talking about identity related issues is a complex and sensitive task and, from our review of the evidence base, we recognise that there may be some capability building work to do with programme teams. Therefore, we plan to take a reflective learning approach to our evaluation of driving cultural change (see student behaviour and health framework activity).

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation Include type of evidence you intend to generate e.g. Type 2.	Summary of publication plan When evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take
Starting Block	<p>Students feel strong sense of belonging and a sense of connection to UWE Bristol community.</p> <p>Students have greater awareness of and actively practice being active bystanders, anti-racist behaviours, and allyship.</p> <p>Students have a greater awareness of how to support their own wellbeing.</p>	<p>Evaluation report reflecting on student feedback surveys, engagement data and staff feedback (Type 2).</p> <p>Progress against baseline (2021-22) to be produced in year 2 of plan (Type 2).</p>	<p>Internal evaluation report to be reviewed each year through university academic governance pathways.</p> <p>Progress report to be published externally on UWE research repository.</p>
Coach	All students, but especially ethnically minoritised students and male students report improved sense of belonging	Embedded within a developing Service Outcome Framework (see above) (Type 2) including analysis of	Internal reports to be reviewed each year through university academic governance pathways.

	<p>and view Coach as positive and valuable for students.</p> <p>All students but especially ethnically minoritised students and male students increase their engagement with their programme after engagement with Coach.</p>	<p>pre- and post-intervention goal scores using standardised goal form, and analysis of associated feedback forms capturing self-report satisfaction and confidence measures.</p> <p>Comparison of engagement, feedback and outcomes for students by characteristic (ethnicity, IMD Q1/Q5 and male/female students) (Type 2).</p>	<p>Summarised findings and wider evaluation of student outcome framework published at regular intervals on the UWE research repository.</p>
<p>Student behaviour and health framework</p>	<p>Programme teams feel more confident and have increased capabilities to build inclusive cultures.</p> <p>Students feel a greater sense of belonging.</p> <p>Data more effectively allows insight into the need or effectiveness of targeted prevention strategies or programme level actions.</p>	<p>Internal annual assurance reporting (Type 1).</p> <p>Qualitative evaluation of staff confidence and knowledge change compared to 2023-24 baseline (Type 2).</p>	<p>Qualitative evaluation to be published on UWE research repository every 3 years.</p>
<p>Sport and music related targeted interventions for male students.</p>	<p>Male students engage in more help-seeking behaviours.</p> <p>Increased sense of belonging for male students.</p>	<p>Type 3 evaluation of new intervention strategies targeted at male students, comparing those who engage and those who don't.</p>	<p>Evaluation report published externally after 2 years on UWE research repository.</p>

Whole provider approach

UWE Bristol takes a whole university approach to the Access and Participation Plan. Access and participation are integral to the roles of staff across the university, with staff from each of the three colleges and key professional services actively involved and engaged in the planning, development

and review of APP intervention strategies. The Access and Participation Plan is reviewed by the Board of Governors and formally overseen by the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee, which is attended by the Students' Union Vice-President for Education. Colleagues from across the university including finance are actively involved throughout the year in developing our methodologies for understanding the impact of our expenditure. Each of our three colleges has a dedicated senior academic leadership role to ensure congruence of local and university-wide plans and to oversee local budgets.

As well as attendance at decision making groups and committees that approve and monitor progress on matters relating to student experience and outcomes, students are actively involved in formulating, supporting and evaluating access and participation work across the university (see the following section - student consultation). Students work as curriculum consultants and in peer learning support roles, and a student consultation panel enables students to contribute to a broad range of university decisions and evaluations.

UWE implements a full student lifecycle approach, with outreach programmes for primary school students from year 3 onwards, designed to increase their understanding of self, their confidence and their understanding of the options available to them for future pathways. After arriving at UWE, students complete a well-structured and embedded induction programme (called Starting Block) focusing on transition into and through university. On-course success is supported by academic skills development and targeted support for students at key points of the student journey, using a clear coaching model and framework. After students complete their courses, they are supported by UWE's alumni team who plan services, communications and engagement programmes to help alumni excel and engage in the UWE Bristol community.

There is a clear university-wide commitment to access and participation. Data is available to all staff on the progress of Schools and Colleges against the university's targets and is scrutinised and discussed at a wide range of forums (e.g. the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee, College executives and forums, the university's Wellbeing and EDI committees).

Access and Participation is represented throughout our Transforming Futures 2030 strategies. Our strategic commitments relating to widening access and supporting learners from non-traditional backgrounds has recently been demonstrated through a public and long-term commitment to Future Quest, our Uni Connect partnership, made jointly with the University of Bristol. Increasingly we are focused on understanding our impact on communities, businesses, partners and organisations, working to ensure that we use these opportunities to drive our commitment to equality of opportunity.

Closing our awarding gaps is a core target in our 2030 strategy and is a central target for our EDI sub-strategy. Our approach is built on collaboration and connection, working with internal and external partners, our governors, staff and students to achieve our vision of creating an inclusive and diverse university. We take an evidence-based approach, focusing on impact and positive change, drawing on research and data from across the sector, as well as the lived experience and outcomes for our staff and students. The development of a new anti-racist strategy building on existing EDI strategy commitments is part of our goal to become an anti-racist university and focuses on: a) accountability and developing an inclusive culture; b) effective use of intersectional data in decision making; c) investment in staff development, and using positive action to ensure this supports our talented Black and Asian staff to remain at UWE and progress; d) staff diversity through positive action, improving the effectiveness of our recruitment processes in recruiting Black

and Asian staff; e) improvement of the experience for Black and Asian staff at UWE so that we increase staff retention.

Supporting good mental wellbeing is a longstanding priority. The strategic and whole university approach we take recognises the importance of ensuring the curricula and broader university experience helps students understand and build positive wellbeing. Our approach also recognises the important links between staff and student mental health, and means we aim to work effectively with others to ensure students who are experiencing mental ill health access the right support when they need it.

The Access and Participation Plan is a key pillar of the university's Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee's annual plan. The plan reflects the broad range of work being undertaken across the university – for example, the development of an Inclusive Curriculum and Practice Toolkit, a library-led project to decolonise the curriculum, training on inclusive teaching and learning and a 'bridging the awarding gaps' community of practice, through which colleagues can share ideas and examples of good practice to engage and support students from all backgrounds. The plan also recognises work aligned to the Student Mental Health Charter and Suicide Safer Universities framework – for example, taking a trauma informed approach which prioritises compassion, prevention and inclusion in teaching and learning, as well as promoting psychological safety, empowerment and connection.

Student consultation

Students were involved throughout all stages of the APP submission process. In addition to the high-level overview of intervention strategies outlined in the APP, we utilise our own detailed internal plans to develop the specifics of each activity, and student consultation is seen as paramount to this development.

The Students' Union Vice-President for Community and Welfare is a member of the APP Monitoring Group, which is made up of colleagues from across the university who meet four times a year to oversee the production and review of the APP. The Students' Union presidents' team were also given the opportunity to review the draft APP and provide comment before submission. In addition to this, the wider student body were asked to input into the development and review of the intervention strategies, considering the risks and objectives for each. This took the form of a student consultation workshop and a subsequent student survey.

Once the objectives had been drafted using the available data, a student consultation workshop was arranged which included:

- A presentation to the students to provide an overview of the APP – explaining what it is and why it is important.
- An overview of our objectives, proposed risks and proposed interventions for the 2024-25 to 2027-28 APP submission.
- A discussion around each intervention strategy – considering whether it meets our objectives and sufficiently addresses risks to equality of opportunity in education.

A total of 272 students received sign-up information about the student consultation workshop, however there were only a few students in attendance. Although the turnout for the group was disappointing, we expected that engagement would be low due to the workshop taking place in June, when few students are present on campus. Nevertheless, the students who did attend were

extremely engaged and provided rich, insightful and thorough feedback throughout the one hour and 40-minute session.

The group discussed each of the intervention strategies in turn, and first considered whether the appropriate objectives and risks had been matched to each intervention. There was a general consensus that the interventions sufficiently addressed the risks and objectives, however, the students believed that several additional risks applied.

For example, it was suggested that risk 11 (capacity issues) should be related to intervention strategies 2, 3, 4 and 5 as higher rents and longer travel times could negatively impact mental health, finance and ability to fully participate in educational experiences. Risk 8 (mental health) was suggested within intervention strategies 3 and 4 as mental ill health can make it hard to cope with daily life and could be detrimental to studying. These risks have been added to our intervention strategies.

The group then examined the proposed activities for each intervention, considering whether these effectively met our objectives and were appropriate to address each risk. Overall, the students thought that the activities sounded useful, but they made several suggestions for improvement. A common suggestion related to better communication of an activity, rather than changing the activity itself. For example, students felt that financial and wellbeing provision was often sufficient in its current form, but that many students were not aware of available support until they reached a crisis point, if at all.

The feedback from the workshop was shared with the leads for the APP submission and used to further shape the design of the intervention strategies. Once these had been finalised, a survey was created to seek further student input. A link to a Microsoft Forms survey was sent out via the student newsletter and directly to 288 members of the UWE student consultation panel. This panel consists of a diverse range of students who have volunteered to provide feedback on various university projects.

The survey provided an overview of the APP and the objectives, asked students to rate the effectiveness of the activities within each of the intervention strategies on a 4-point scale, and asked students to provide comments on ways to improve the activities. They were also provided with the opportunity to give general feedback on the APP at the end of the survey. 70 students completed the survey. On the whole, students viewed the activities outlined in the plan favourably. Depending on the intervention strategy, students rated activities as 'very effective' or 'quite effective' ranged from 89-94%. Responses in the open-ended questions often referred to the need to better communicate our activities rather than needing to improve them, echoing feedback from the student focus group. Suggestions were also made throughout about engaging with a wider range of stakeholders to plan and evaluate activities. Students made a number of suggestions for improvement for each of the intervention strategies, and these have been shared with intervention leads to ensure they feed into UWE's detailed internal plans.

Evaluation of the plan

UWE Bristol has a dedicated team of EDI data and evaluation experts, whose priority is to ensure there is effective evaluation of the activities included within our APP – including through undertaking a significant amount of evaluation themselves. We value the insight and contribution of students in our evaluation which is why we hire a paid EDI research intern every year to work

alongside our data and evaluation officers to seek the lived experience of students through an annual research project. In the past we have focused on mature students (leading to changes to activities and communications sent during the welcome period) and trans students (results currently being analysed) and we publish our research reports on the UWE research repository. We engage with academic experts through our cross-university APP Monitoring Group. We are a founding and active member of the South West Evaluation Forum and our evaluation lead is a member of TASO's Evaluation Advisory Group, meaning that we lead and engage in conversations about evaluation at an internal, regional and national level.

We have been working hard to increase capacity for robust type 2 evaluation, embedding before and after outcome measures into our activities, identifying links with academic staff who will evaluate work in academic schools across the university, and upskilling project staff to feel confident designing and delivering evaluations and interpreting results. We intend to use TASO's validated survey scales once released, and endeavour to use validated measures where feasible. We are experienced in gathering and analysing qualitative data and see the value in exploring in-depth thoughts and reactions to triangulate our findings. For example, we were an early adopter of the OfS Financial Support evaluation toolkit, having completed the full evaluation twice, and continue to commit to using this evaluation tool every three years to monitor the impact of our financial support.

Evaluation has been considered for every activity across our five intervention strategies and we are using a combination of OfS type 1 (narrative), type 2 (empirical enquiry) and type 3 (causality) evaluation methods where appropriate. Over the last few years, we have increased capability for creating Theories of Change among staff through face-to-face workshops and recorded webinars. This has enabled us to ensure that every activity within our APP is based on a detailed, evidence-based Theory of Change. We often consult and seek the input of students into our Theories of Change, and we are confident that all of our intervention strategies are underpinned by strong evidence and have at least type 1 evaluation planned.

Through our evaluation self-assessment, we identified a need for investment into type 3 evaluation and as such, we have identified at least one key activity per intervention strategy for which we intend to use methods that can support the measurement of causality. This fits with the university's commitment to evidence-informed decision making and will ensure we have the best quality evidence upon which to make decisions.

With regard to evaluation implementation, our dedicated evaluation team is small (2.6FTE) and we have been building evaluation leadership and delivery into the role expectations of project leads and support staff to enable us to increase capacity and fulfil our evaluation commitments in this plan. We need to actively encourage the mentality that evaluation is everyone's responsibility to take a more embedded approach, and we recognise that a skills audit could help us to identify gaps in knowledge and confidence.

Our evaluation self-assessment highlighted the need for more regular and transparent sharing of evaluation outputs with a view to adding knowledge to the institution and the sector. We have outlined a high-level summary of our publication plans alongside our intervention strategies and we plan to create a web page on our external website where we can routinely upload all evaluation findings, both those that support our activities and those that show what is not working. This links to our ambition to consider a wide range of internal and external stakeholders when planning evaluation, as we tend to focus on preparing outputs for sharing with internal UWE groups. We

think that the recent launch of our annual, externally published UWE Bristol EDI impact report will be another route to facilitate the routine sharing of evaluation findings.

We identified a lack of consistency in how the limitations of data are discussed in reports, which we aim to address through the development of a clearer evaluation reporting template. We are also working on a more consistent approach to identify short- and medium-term indicators of success, to ensure we don't have an over-reliance on outcome measures as the only way of knowing whether our interventions have worked. This will require socialisation within the institution and time to be recognised as a way of showing whether an intervention is having the desired impact.

We are a member of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) Service, which provides higher education providers with data and intelligence to effectively target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activities. Through the HEAT national community, we collaborate on the development of knowledge, skills, tools, resources and methodologies required for robust evaluation. The HEAT membership therefore supports our delivery of robust evaluation which will produce high quality evidence of what works and what does not work within our particular context.

Provision of information to students

UWE Bristol is committed to providing clear, transparent and up-to-date information for prospective students. The UWE Tuition Fee Policy is easily accessible on the UWE website as well as the Access and Participation Plan.

Each course has its own webpage, and this includes the costs for each full time year of study, as well as the cost of a placement year, cost of final year (minus placement year fee where applicable) and the cost per 15 credit module which is directed for students undertaking study at less than full time. The tuition fee is also available to see in the UCAS platform when students make their undergraduate funding application. Students are sent specific course information when offered a place and this includes tuition fee information as well as how to access the Tuition Fee Policy.

Student Money Advisers attend all campuses for in-person open days and either deliver an in-person presentation or are seated in the Advice area to answer queries from prospective students and supporters. They also deliver an online presentation at all virtual recruitment events. The main purpose of this delivery is to ensure that students and supporters are clear about the level of tuition fees for their course, how to access Student Loans Company funding, funding available from UWE, the repayment system of Student Loans Company loans and the actual costs of living in Bristol. Our team of Money Advisers also provide advice to prospective students on request.

Regarding financial support, the UWE website has the most up-to-date information about funding available to students. This includes APP funds such as the low-income bursary and student support fund (hardship fund), as well as other funds that students can apply for (internal and external). This always includes eligibility criteria, how each fund is assessed, the amount available and payment dates.

The vast majority of students do not need to apply for bursaries as we automatically assess these via the Student Loan Company system, assuming the student and sponsor give consent to share their information with us. Bursary recipients are informed of their entitlement via an email from Student Loans Company in the same way as their statutory funding. We always try to allocate bursaries in the first term so that students can budget these funds into their financial plans. The

confirmation email includes payment dates and schedules where applicable. If a student becomes eligible for a bursary later in the academic year, then the bursary (or increased amount) is paid 10 working days later. The bursary is reassessed each year so that if a student's household income reduces below the required threshold in a subsequent year, then they can become eligible to receive the bursary. This also applies to in-year reassessments that can be requested due to a change of financial circumstances. UWE Students no longer need to be taking out the full maintenance and tuition fee loan to be eligible for UWE Bursaries. This means that if a student isn't getting a loan (due to Sharia Law or other personal reasons) they can still access a low income bursary, a UWE Cares bursary or a childcare bursary if they are otherwise eligible.

The hardship fund is a more complex assessment and we want to be transparent about this, so we have made available a 'Rules of the Fund' pdf, which makes it clear how the assessment is made. The hardship fund outcome letter states that applications are assessed each year, so to not expect the same outcome in a future assessment. We also make it clear that if a student experiences a (negative) change in financial circumstance during the year then to let us know, as this may mean they can access additional funds. We set aside hardship funds for the academic year as well as the summer period for students who have reduced capacity to work over the summer. In all of our student support funds, under-represented groups including UWE Cares, disabled students and single parents are classed as priority students, so receive 100% of the assessed shortfall (up to the maximum award amount).

UWE Student Money Service has their own Instagram account where they promote funds and other financial opportunities which students can apply for, and students are directed to the UWE website for further information on how to make an application. We have a team of Student Money Advisers who advise students both pre- and post-registration and a Funds team who assess applications. We sometimes undertake targeted communications to specific groups of students too, based on course and income levels, and we undertake in-person outreach events for current students to raise awareness about available funds and the support offered by the team. We have an engagement team that focuses on upskilling students and increasing financial capability.

For applicants who are eligible to access support from UWE Cares (carers, care leavers, and estranged students), an initial email is sent via admissions to prospective students. The UWE Cares team also send communications to applicants who have contacted them, outlining everything they need to know about the financial support on offer. Applicants are reminded of the financial support at various points through different communications that are sent out pre-registration. Further information on financial support is provided via the UWE Cares Handbook, given to all applicants post-registration and to all current students new to UWE Cares.

The Widening Access and Future Quest teams provide information regarding student finance through presentations and activities to our target schools and colleges. Furthermore, during open days, offer holder days, taster days and other recruitment and widening access activities, we provide access to student finance information and signpost to relevant web pages. In addition, the Widening Access team send a termly newsletter via email to target schools and colleges to provide information relating to courses, fees and funding, and specific activities they can take part in.

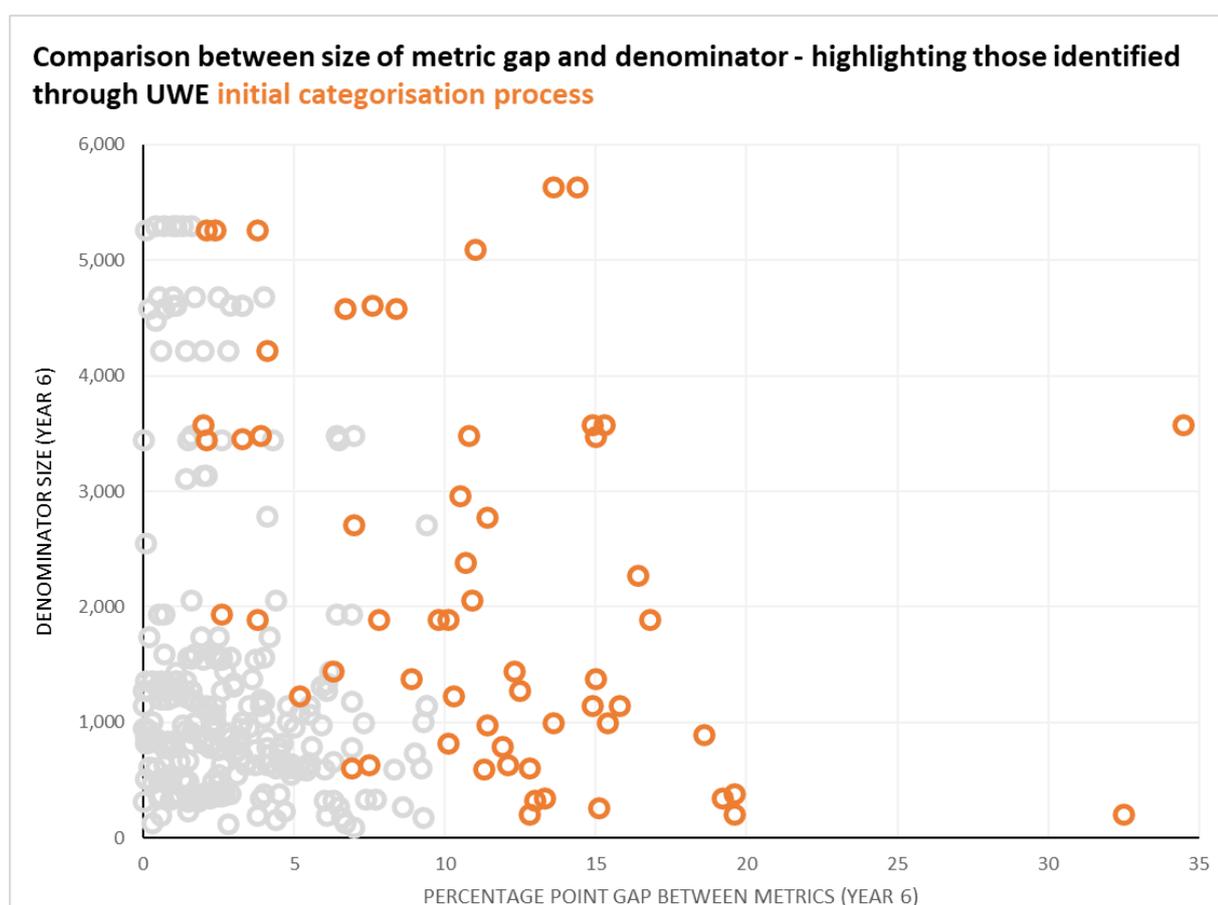
The university completes the Key Information Sets (KIS) which can be used as a reference tool by prospective students, as well as using appropriate channels at the information gathering stage of a student journey such as Unifrog, UniBuddy and Discover Uni.

Annex A: Assessment of performance

1. Process of assessing our performance

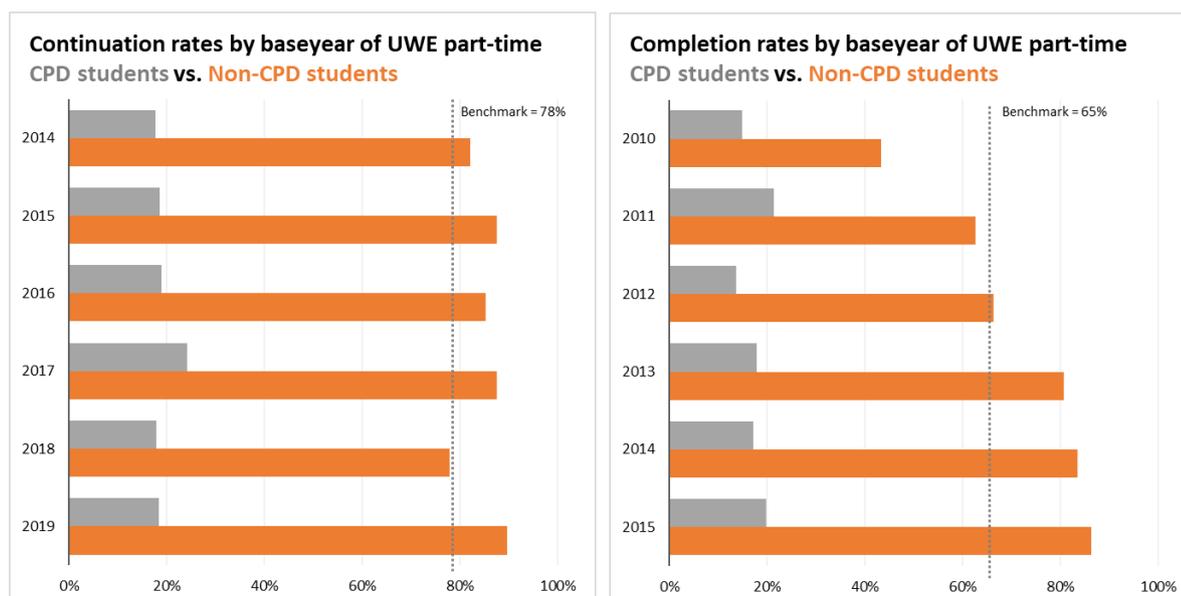
The analysis of performance was led by the university's Planning and Business Intelligence team working closely with members of staff responsible for the APP development. The process was iterative with regular checking of findings with wider university groups (including academic governance groups) and with students. The Office for Students access and participation dataset was cross-checked with internal data where required and decisions about priority metrics were made following consultation with the equality of opportunity risk register (EORR) and through discussion with teams delivering activity. During the assessment and writing process the Board of Governors received an update on the university's performance, plans for targets and broader activity plans, and their feedback was incorporated into the plan.

The outcome data was downloaded from the OfS extranet and reformatted. Impact criteria were designed to categorise gaps and enable an initial assessment of performance. Impact criteria included the size and persistence of gaps, individual sub-indicator performance (regardless of gap) and comparisons with previous APP measures. This initial categorisation provided key trends which were then subject to further exploration.



The decision was made at this point in the analysis process to focus our APP on full time undergraduate students. 86% of UWE students are enrolled on full time undergraduate programmes and although degree apprenticeship students are increasing in number, we do not have enough data across the student lifecycle to see any trends. We are undertaking significant analysis of data within the university on the degree apprenticeship population, and aligning this with our APP linked metrics which will enable us to explore this further in the next few years. We

continue to primarily offer full time higher education experiences, but offer flexibility for students where this is the right option through part time routes. We provide targeted Continuing Professional Development (CPD) modules many of which are for health care professionals who account for more than three-quarters of our part time learners. A legacy administrative approach to our CPD programmes (where students were recorded as having withdrawn from the university) means these students skew the performance of part time continuation and completion outcomes. Our analysis shows that when these affected CPD students are 'removed' from the dataset, the performance of our part time continuation and completion is in line with expected OfS Student Outcome benchmarks (see below chart).



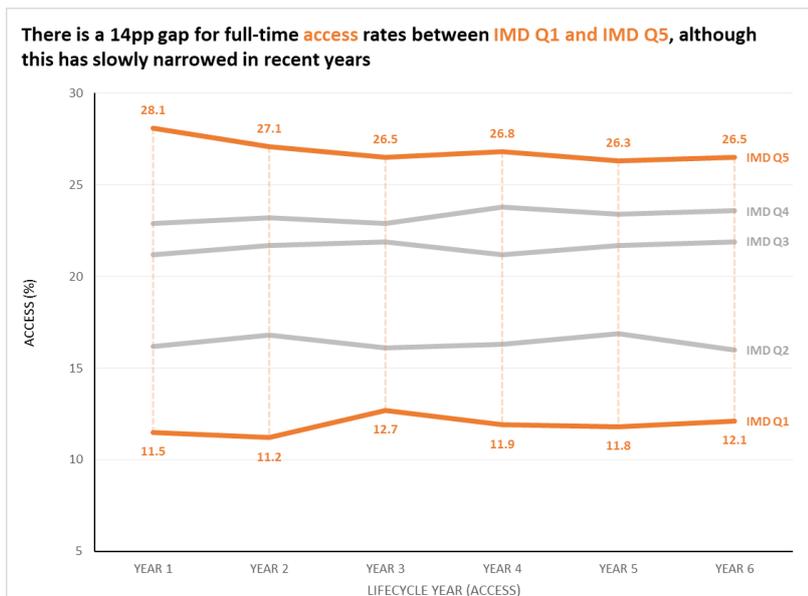
Further exploration of key trends enabled us to review intersectional data and undertake investigations into the causes of performance issues through the use of the individualised student data file downloaded from the OfS portal. Key data emerging from the data analysis was compared with the EORR and a gap analysis identified further risks that relate to systemic capabilities or capacity which we have built into our plan.

Target setting was also iterative in process – building from the analysis of performance and considering practical factors such as timeframes for potential impact and (in the case of Widening Access) the most useful metrics that would support strong partnership engagement with local schools.

2. Assessment of performance

Access

We have large gaps in access for students relating to some measures of socio-economic deprivation. For example, there is a 14pp gap between access rates for IMD Q1 compared to Q5, although this has narrowed somewhat in recent years.



The ABCS data shows a significant gap between access rates for the most disadvantaged learners compared to those who are the most advantaged (15pp). However, socio-economic deprivation is complex and often highly individual. All proxy measures as a result are necessarily imperfect, often have strong relationships with other external factors (such as geography) and can present conflicting pictures of performance. For example, we have no gap in access between students from TUNDRA Q1 compared to Q5 and we have a greater proportion of students from TUNDRA Q1 than the average for England (17.5% compared to 12.3% in the most recent year of data).

In our APP we have focused on the IMD2019 dataset as our measure of performance and for target setting. This is because it most clearly allows us to highlight a disadvantage gap in access rates and provides us with a school-based and geographical targeting approach that enables us to track the progress of initiatives. We will focus on **improving access for students from IMD Q1 to higher education and UWE in particular.**

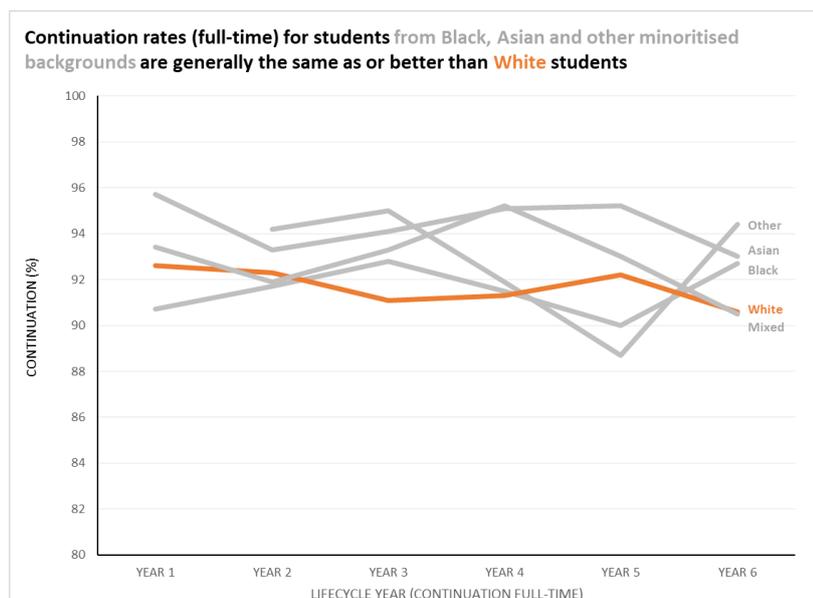
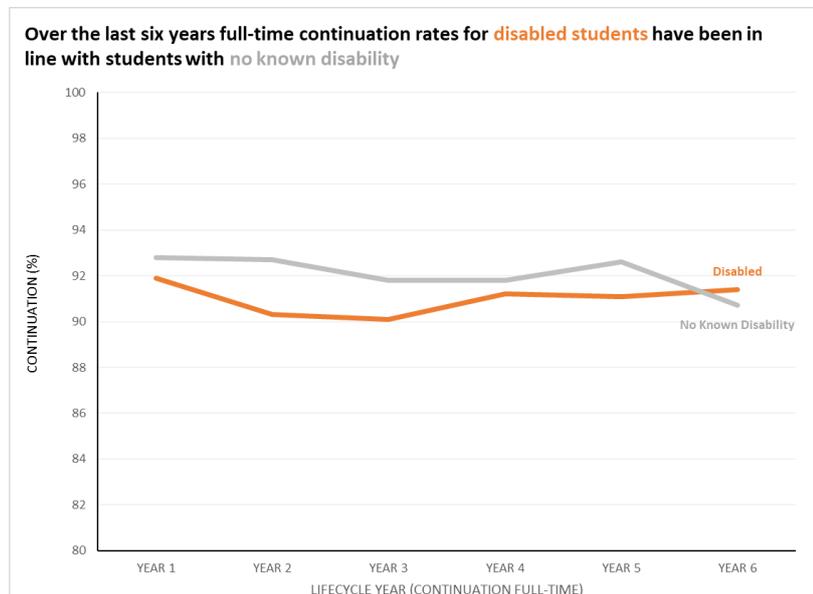
Our review of national evidence and experience in delivering widening access programmes (including Uni Connect) to areas of high socio-economic deprivation was used to consider relevant risks using the EORR. There is strong national evidence to suggest that young people from disadvantaged areas may miss key knowledge and skills (Risk 1) including confidence, resilience and self-efficacy to support them to take the next step in their educational journey. They also may not have received appropriate information and guidance (Risk 2) that would have led them to have positive perceptions of higher education with a strong sense that it is a valid and likely outcome for their own lives (Risk 3). We know that national application success rates (Risk 4) for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds can be lower, and particularly note this could be a risk in selective programmes at UWE where there are additional stages to the application process. Finally, we identified a risk that there may not be suitable course types (Risk 5) which may result in competition for degree apprenticeship places preventing students from IMD Q1 from accessing these routes.

Continuation

We have no large consistent gaps in performance using the continuation metric across any group. The difference in continuation rates between male and female students is 3pp or lower each year

and similarly small gaps exist between young and mature students. Gaps relating to socio-economic proxies are also low; under 4pp across the period of analysis.

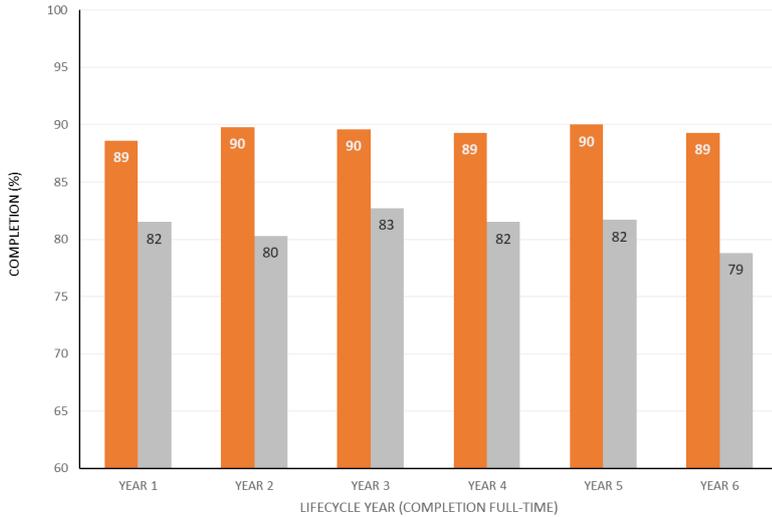
Over the last six years continuation rates for disabled students have been in line with students with no known disability. Continuation rates for students from Black, Asian and other minoritised backgrounds are generally the same as or better than White students.



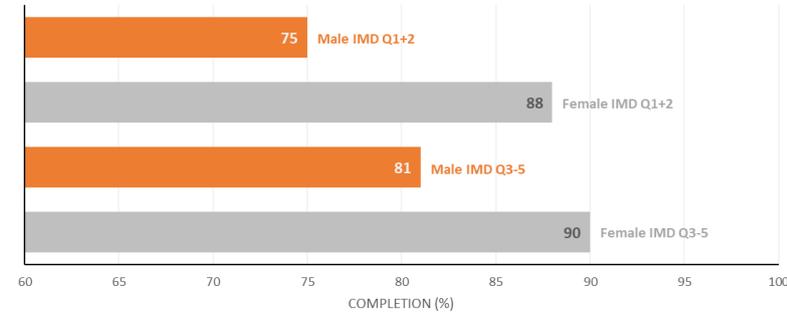
Completion

Completion rates are lower for male students than female students (11pp in the most recent year). Further analysis of internal data has revealed that this variation is not reflective of subject differences and male completion is lower at UWE than the sector average whereas female completion is broadly in line with the sector. The male completion rate is particularly low when we focus on the intersection between sex and IMD. Male students from IMD Q1 and 2 have completion rates that are lower than both female students from the same IMD quintiles and male students from IMD Q3-5.

Completion rates are continuously lower for male students than female students (11pp in the most recent year)

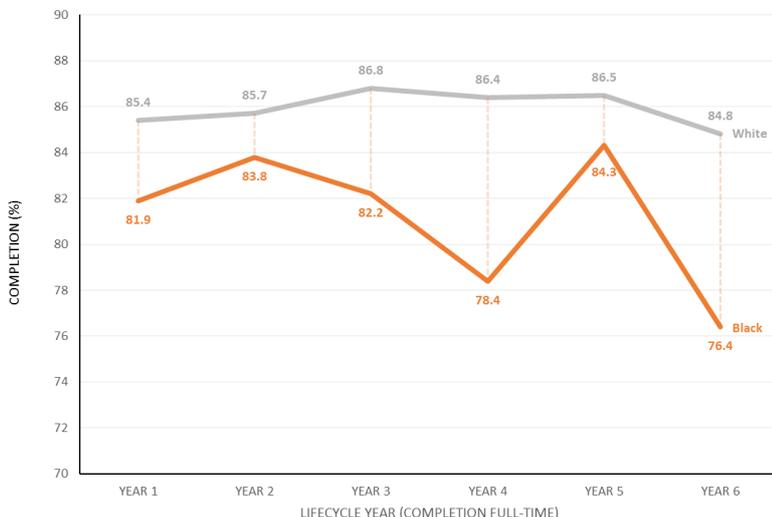


For Year 6, male IMD Q1+2 students have full-time completion rates that are lower than both female IMD Q1+2 students and male IMD Q3-5 students

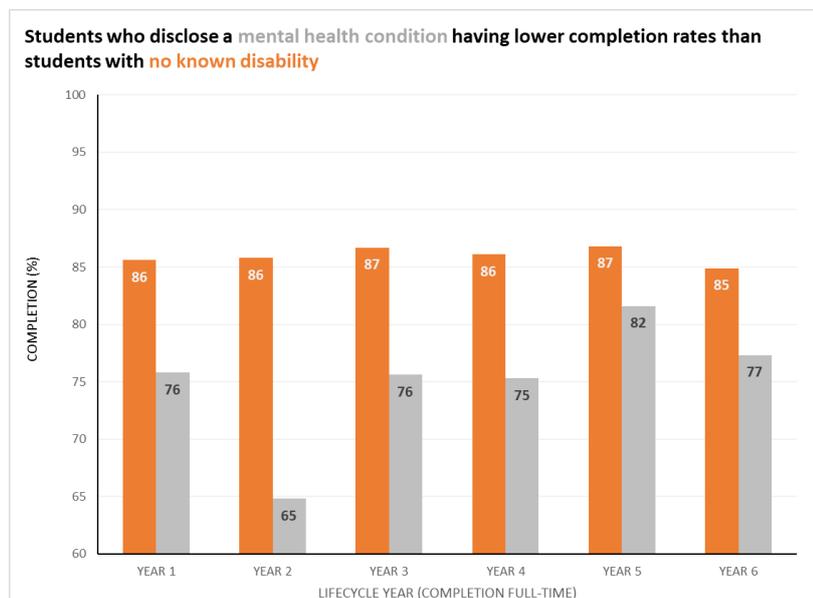


There are no gaps in completion between Asian and White students or students with mixed heritage backgrounds and White students. However, there is an intermittent gap between completion rates for Black students compared to White students. The current year of data shows a gap of 8pp (with 99% statistical uncertainty above 0). Further analysis also shows that the Black student completion rate correlates significantly with gender, with Black male completion rate at 63% vs Black female completion rate at 87%.

There is an intermittent gap between completion rates for Black students compared to White students. The current year of data shows a gap of 8pp



There is a gap in completion rates relating to disability, with students who disclose a mental health condition having lower completion rates than students with no known disability. Gaps for other disability types are typically small.



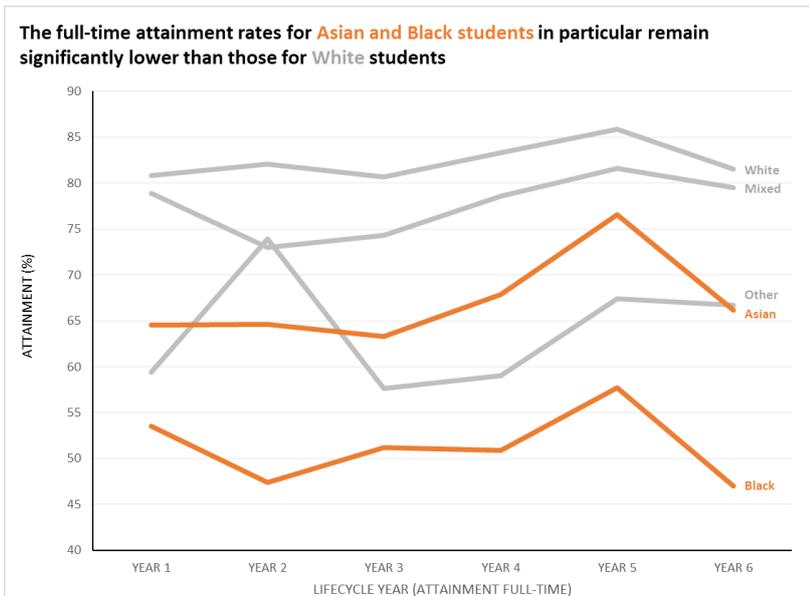
In our APP we have focused on improving completion rates of male students, students who disclose a mental health condition as a disability and Black students.

We have described in our evidence summaries that male students are less likely to access support, particularly in prevention formats, and as such we consider male students may receive insufficient academic or personal support (Risk 6 and 7). Students who disclose mental health conditions may not receive the personal support (Risk 7) necessary or early enough to support their continuation in studies; this may be the result of capacity issues (Risk 11) within the university or in the wider system. However, we also acknowledge that for some students with mental health conditions a break from studies may be the right decision at a particular point in time.

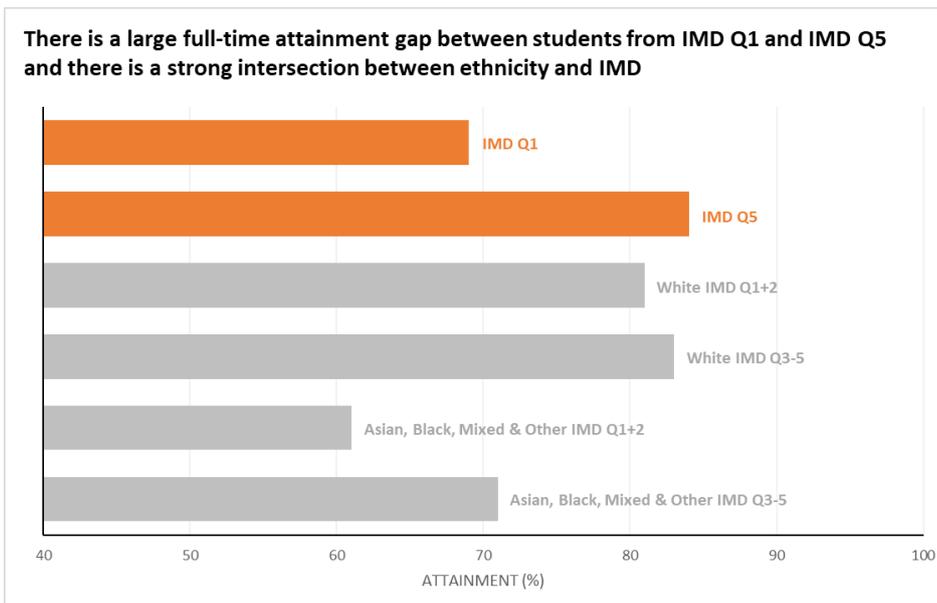
Reviewing evidence relating to awarding gaps and student success highlighted some key risks which we believe are also likely to affect these students' ability to complete their studies. The risks Black students face in relation to being awarded a good degree (see below) will also affect the likelihood of completing their degree.

Attainment

We have not made sufficient progress towards closing our awarding gaps relating to ethnicity. The good honours rates for Asian and Black students in particular remain significantly lower than those for White students. However, we have seen a significant improvement in the rate of good honours for mixed heritage students and are starting to see some improvements in the rate of good honours for Asian students (albeit not fast enough).



There is a large awarding gap between students from IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 and there is a strong intersection between ethnicity and IMD. There is almost no gap in the good honours rate for White students when comparing IMD Q1-2 with IMD Q3-5 whereas there is a 20pp gap for students from Black, Asian or ethnically minoritised groups. Further, the good honours rate for Black, Asian or ethnically minoritised students from the most advantaged areas (IMD Q3-5) was lower than White students from the least advantaged areas (IMD Q1-2).



We have made progress in significantly reducing the awarding gap relating to disability in the past six years and have also made fast progress in reducing the gap in awarding of good honours relating to age. This has decreased from 10.4pp in 2017-18 to 3.9pp in 2020-21, with progress being consistent year on year.

In our APP we have focused on improving good honours rates for **Black and Asian students**, and students from **IMD Q1**.

Reviewing evidence relating to awarding gaps and student success highlighted some key risks.

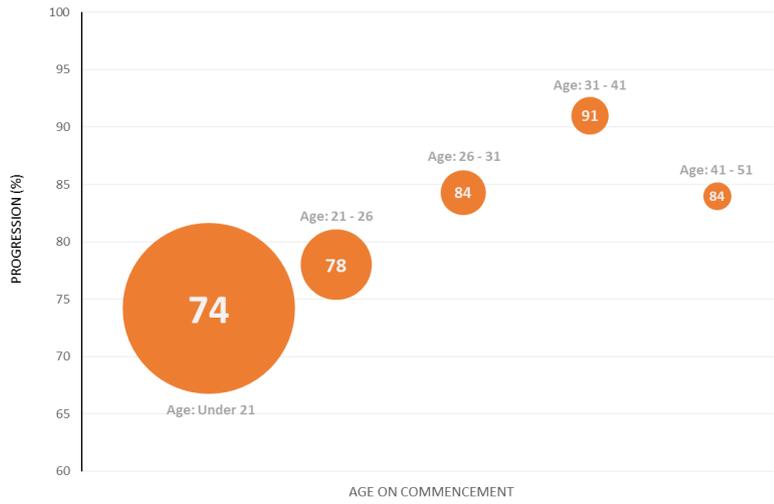
Black students are likely to receive insufficient academic and personal support (Risks 6 and 7). Our analysis also identified systemic barriers related to race which will affect Black and Asian students' experiences and outcomes. In particular, we consider that not all staff have the capability to teach diverse student groups (UWE Risk 1) and that we have an insufficient approach to tackling discrimination (UWE Risk 2) which will significantly affect Black and Asian students.

The intersectional analysis of our student cohort identifies particular risks relating to cost pressures (Risk 10) that would affect all students, particularly those from the most socio-economically deprived backgrounds (IMD Q1 as a proxy). In addition, we recognise the extraordinary educational experience of this cohort of students and feel that all students are likely to continue to be affected by ongoing impacts from the coronavirus pandemic (Risk 9).

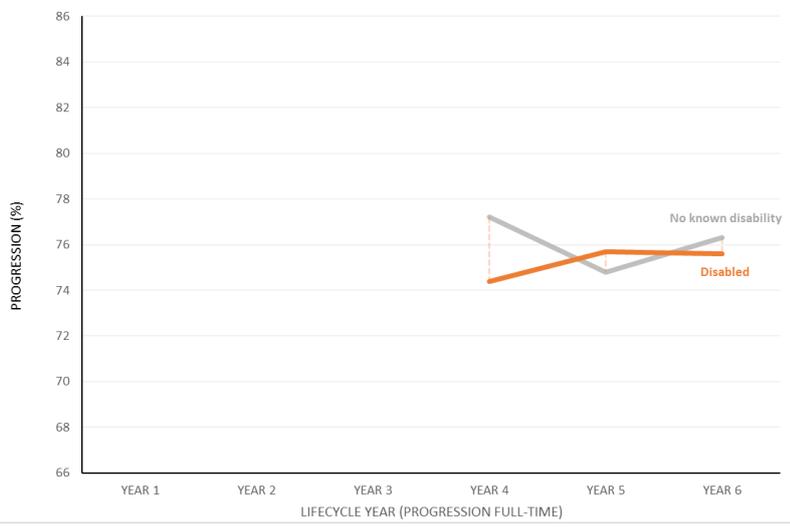
Progression

There are no significant gaps in progression rates for students related to socio-economic factors (using TUNDRA and IMD datasets). Mature students continue to have significantly stronger graduate outcomes than young students. This is related to the higher proportion of mature students on healthcare programmes with clearly linked graduate destinations. There is no gap in progression related to disability; this is a significant improvement from 2017-18 when disabled students' progression to good graduate outcomes was 2.8pp lower than students with no known disability. There are small gaps for Black, Asian and other ethnic groups (e.g. the gap between Black and White student outcomes was 2pp), and there are no intersectional patterns in outcomes between ethnicity and IMD.

Mature students continue to have significantly stronger graduate outcomes than young students



There is no gap in progression related to disability; improvement from 2017-18 when disabled students' progression was 2.8pp lower than students with no known disability



Annex B: Evidence base and rationale for intervention strategies (further detail)

IS1 – Widening Access and Raising Attainment

Evidence shows that South West England has the lowest proportion of young people entering higher education (HE) compared to the rest of England, 37% compared to 42% (Office for Students, 2021), demonstrating the need for UWE Bristol to engage with our local communities. We know GCSE attainment is an important indicator of HE participation and it is therefore important for intervention programmes to start early in young people's educational journey, beginning at least at GCSE level if not earlier (Dodd *et al.*, 2021; Office for Students, 2022).

The Theory of Possible Selves relates ideas about what individuals believe to be likely in their future to their academic outcomes, and there is evidence to show that maintaining a focus on possible selves in disadvantaged settings can lead to improved academic outcomes due to effective self-regulating behaviours and focus (Oyserman, 2004). Further, Oyserman (2002) found that positive possible selves developed through group activities led to improved motivation and outcomes. The Theory of Future Selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986) sees potential future states as being elements of an individual's working self-concept; a form of self-knowledge that guides our everyday decision making and experiences by identifying what actions are "legitimate and comfortable" (p. 961). The range of future selves are assessed for desirability and potential in reference to both personal experiences and the wider context of life (Harrison, 2018).

This theory underpins the approach of Future Quest, the Bristol Uni Connect partnership led by UWE Bristol. Evaluations of the programme, as well as the national Uni Connect surveys, noted that students' expectations to progress to HE was high during baseline surveys. We believe this further supports the claim that *raising aspirations* has limited effect (Green *et al.*, 2018) and therefore should not be the focus of outreach activities; rather we should focus on ensuring the participants in outreach are supported to *continue* to see HE as a likely route for themselves as they progress through secondary and post-16 education.

It is evident that for some young people progression to HE is the most likely option, whereas for others barriers (Gorard *et al.*, 2007) or perceptions of risk (Clayton *et al.*, 2009) reduce the likelihood of actually progressing to HE. Evidence shows that non-traditional routes into HE need better advertisement and packages of targeted support (Casey and Wakeling, 2022; Eguiguren Wray *et al.*, 2022; Mountford-Zimdars and Moore, 2020).

Degree apprenticeships are often seen as having lower prestige but often provide better opportunities for practice-based learning and routes into work than traditional university courses (Casey and Wakeling, 2022). Better advertisement of these options is needed to increase the awareness of degree apprenticeships and address concerns of students who seek this alternate route (Green *et al.*, 2022). Contextual admissions offer a route into higher education for disadvantaged young people and it is important that potential contextual offer holders are identified through the use of nuanced and granular data (Mountford-Zimdars and Moore, 2020), which we will do through use of UCAS's intersectional Multiple Equalities Measure and our own context-specific questions which pick up on the fact that we have relatively high recruitment of refugee students, students with caring responsibilities and students who served or are children of armed forces personnel. We will also provide a package of support for students arrived on contextual offers which will include targeted communications, workshops and a summer school all of which

have shown a positive correlation with increased student confidence and aspiration to HE (Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020).

Literature suggests more research is needed in the long-term impact of contextual admissions on the HE institutions that offer them (Mountford-Zimdars and Moore, 2020). Evidence also shows that students who are disadvantaged in society are more likely to consider HE later in their education journey and are thus more likely to enter HE with non-traditional qualifications such as vocational qualifications (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, 2021). We will work with targeted schools who are more likely to have high proportions of disadvantaged students in their student body, providing workshops, information and guidance, and regular (not one-off) communications which have been shown to have a positive correlation on school students' confidence, aspiration and awareness of HE (Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020).

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IS2 - Financial Support

The OfS analysis of access agreement monitoring returns found that financial support provides a “levelling effect” between bursary recipients and their peers. Bursary recipients generally performed the same or better than comparator groups in terms of retention, degree completion, degree outcome and graduate outcomes (OfS, 2020). Students in receipt of bursaries noted that their bursary is important or very important for their financial ability to continue studying and felt less pressured to obtain money from elsewhere (e.g. paid work or borrowing from family/friends) and felt less anxious about their finances. This meant that bursary recipients were better able to take part in social and society activities, which improved their overall student experience (ibid).

The TASO review of evidence on financial support post-entry (2023) also concluded that needs-based (income contingent) grants can be effective in supporting retention/completion among students from low-income households. There is limited evidence on whether merit-based support is effective but existing studies are not promising. However, there wasn't enough evidence to tell us whether or not performance-based support is effective.

Most of the UK-based evidence comes from HE providers who have analysed outcomes (e.g., retention, attainment, employability) for recipients of their financial support packages versus a comparator group, using matching (Byrne & Cushing, 2015; Harrison & Hatt, 2012; Hoare & Lightfoot, 2015; O'Brien, 2015; Ilie et al., 2019). This type of analysis tends to show a positive correlation between receiving financial support and retention/completion, but it is not causal – that is, it cannot tell us for sure that the financial support is responsible for any impact on student outcomes.

There is a high-quality body of evidence that finds financial support can have a positive impact on retention/completion in HE. However, most of the existing research comes from the USA and more evidence is needed on the impact of financial support in the current UK context (TASO, 2023).

Financial help, in the form of bursaries, can be particularly important for care experiences students. Offering year-round accommodation and facilitating access to hardship funds and bursaries can provide these students with stability in one aspect of their student experience (OfS, 2021).

Herbaut and Geven (2020) found that need-based grants do not systematically increase enrolment rates and only improve outcomes when they provide enough money to cover unmet need and/or include an early commitment during high school. However, broadly need-based grants quite consistently appear to improve the completion rates of disadvantaged students. This correlates with the UK findings from Moores and Burgess (2023) who noted that, after controlling for multiple demographic and attainment factors (age, gender, ethnic grouping, disability, nationality, household income, prior educational attainment, and local Higher Education participation rates), scholarships improved student retention, but principally for those students from households with low and intermediate incomes.

Kaye (2021) reminds us of the persistence of socioeconomic disparities in HE participation which affects both access and challenges to “fit in” to university life. He highlights that for provision of financial support to be effective, a consistent method to identify the most vulnerable groups of students is necessary. Whilst bursaries can overcome the financial barriers to participation, other non-financial challenges remain and the effectiveness of bursaries alone to promote greater diversity in HE is not yet proven.

Zhang and Yang (2020) note that employment has negative effects on academic performance and a review of evidence found only one study concluded more positive than negative effects. For those that reported mixed results, the threshold was found to be 10-25 hours per week. They recommend that this information should be used to guide undergraduate students in taking employment when considering their study and work balance.

Evidence from Wisconsin found that students from low-income families who were offered additional grant aid were 5.88 percentage points less likely to work and worked 1.69 fewer hours per week than similar peers, an 8.56% and 14.35% reduction, respectively. Students offered the grant also improved qualitative aspects of their work experiences; they were less likely to work extensively, during the morning hours, or overnight. Grant aid thus appears to partially offset student employment, possibly improving prospects for academic achievement and attainment (Broton, Goldrick-Rab and Benson, 2016).

Access to internships is often much harder for students from low-income backgrounds, and from minority groups because of a range of socio-cultural and financial barriers. Alongside issues of access not having the money to undertake either unpaid or insecure work can limit students' opportunities (Roberts and Ouwehand, 2017).

Opportunities for students to work on campus can deliver mutual benefits of providing paid employment for students and improved approach to race equality in the university (Barefoot and Boons, 2019). Gefferie and Adewumi (2023) described the benefits of students working as co-producers in developing diverse curricula and Islam, Burnett and Collins (2021) noted the importance of driving partnership as an outcome from partnerships between staff, SU and students

– to improve greater representation from under-served groups of students. Hall, Ansley and Connolly (2023) note the distance to travel on antiracism in the higher education sector and calls for universities to work closely with students to ensure their voice and experiences deliver change.

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IS3 - Inclusive learning experiences

Although the higher education sector has not made fast enough progress in closing awarding gaps, and especially those relating to ethnicity, evidence does show that institutions that have successfully reduced their ethnicity awarding gaps have considered all elements of the learning experience including teaching practice, curriculum and assessment (e.g. McDuff et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2021; TASO, 2023). The 2023 TASO review of APPs noted the importance of clear accountability and responsibility, and this being mainstreamed in the university, as well as intersectional approaches. Successful approaches to reducing awarding gaps also make strong use of student engagement and create change at the local level (Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning, project outputs; Gefferie and Adewumi, 2023; Barefoot and Boons, 2019). During the development of this APP students at UWE noted that they wished to see evidence of consistency in assessment, academic support and curricula across the university. They felt that inconsistencies were contributing to widening the awarding gap.

Universities that have focused on diversifying or decolonising their curricula have seen improvements in Black and Asian student satisfaction, motivation, and connection with course content however, the importance of focusing not just on content but also on assessment including type, frequency, student preparedness, and marking criteria is also key to reducing awarding gaps (Hall, Ansley and Connolly; 2023; Cramer, 2021).

In particular, the concept of a 'hidden curriculum' in assessments usefully describes the assumed shared understanding of abstract terminology, instructions, tasks or assumed content knowledge which are too often found in higher education assessment briefs. These can be exclusionary for students (Barnett and Coate, 2005 quoted in Cagliesi, Hawkes and Smith (2023) and can create additional stress (Minnett-Smith et al 2023 and Butcher et al., 2017). As an output of the Minnett-Smith et al project, the team developed a toolkit which supports staff to critically reflect on their assessment practice and increase support for students through a series of prompt questions at key stages of the assessment and feedback process. It is accompanied by a list of key terms and phrases used in assessment and feedback that the research team investigated in their project, and a note on how to use the list. This project builds on an internal project led jointly by UWE and the Student's Union at UWE in 2021 with an aim of improving students' experiences of assessment and feedback. During the project, the team identified a general lack of agency and understanding for students undertaking assessments. They didn't always understand the processes associated with assessment which undermined their confidence and sometimes resulted in perceptions of unfairness. They also saw assessment as something that was 'done to them' rather than being a process that supported their learning – this finding was further supported by a lack of connection between feedback or assessment brief and the extensive support available to support students' academic development. Assessment briefs that were too long, unclear or used abstract language created further barriers. The group identified a significant role for student-centred dialogue around assessments that is focused on addressing students' anxieties and allowing them to plan their time well, as well as helping them to contextualise the assessment as part of their learning (Minnett-Smith et al., 2021). A dialogic assessment brief was developed by the project team to trial some of the recommendations from the project.

Assessment changes during covid that provided more flexibility appear to have improved students' outcomes overall and resulted in improved outcomes (in this case of Cagliesi, Hawkes and Smith, 2023 for international students specifically). UWE analysis of the impact of covid changes saw improvement in pass rate and pass mark for Black UK domiciled students following covid-linked regulatory changes although it did not reduce the awarding gap. Therefore, we see there being strong, albeit preliminary, empirical evidence that increasing clarity around expectations in assessment can reduce awarding gaps.

Our Inclusive Curriculum and Practice Toolkit (ICPT) project began in 2019 and takes a holistic approach to the awarding gap challenge - prompting programme teams to consider content, curriculum delivery and assessment design. Internal evaluation of the ICPT shown positive change from those who have engaged with the toolkit. Feedback noted that it had supported increases in diverse course content, building in student lived experience, making use of student voice in curriculum design, and individualised feedback on assessments.

Targeted 1:1 and small group work can be effective at improving students' wellbeing, confidence and academic skills (Brooman and Darwent, 2014; Education Endowment Foundation, 2023). Data can be used effectively to identify key points of the student journey where students need targeted support and this in turn can help improve student experiences (Award, 2022). Internal preliminary evidence (not yet published) from pilots in 2022-23 academic year suggests that in year targeted support can improve awareness and engagement with key support services and analysis of engagement levels by student characteristic can support services to take positive action.

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TASO (2023) Approaches to addressing the ethnicity degree awarding gap

IS4 - Deepening practice-based learning

Work experience, internships, placements, and work-based learning can enhance student employability and professional development (Barefoot and Boons, 2019; Seyitoğlu and Yirik, 2015; Tomlinson, 2008). Global Majority students are more likely to experience discrimination in workplaces and poorer graduate outcomes than their White peers (Rafferty, 2012; McIlwaine and Bunge, 2018; Henehan and Rose, 2018). Positive action projects, particularly those that provide minoritised students with work experience and/or support to prepare them for the world of work build work-readiness, CVs and confidence (Universities UK/National Union of Students, 2019; Ugiagbe-Green, 2023).

Internal data from our long-running Equity programme, aimed at Global Majority students, shows improvement in participants' professional skills, professional networks, and self-efficacy on completion of the extracurricular Equity module. In 2022-23, 96 students engaged with the Equity module, and 47 of these undertook 6 or more Equity activities which could include coaching, skills workshops, mentoring or attending an Equity webinar. We intend to build on this success and target promotion of the module to courses where Black, Asian and ethnically minoritised students have poorer outcomes.

Positive action initiatives have been increasingly adopted in UK organisations, with potential benefits seeming to outweigh potential costs (Marcinko and Taylor, 2021). Although there is limited evidence of the wider impact and use of positive action, good practice recommendations, case studies and guidance exist in a range of different sectors among the UK suggesting positive action initiatives could be one of the most effective ways to rapidly increase demographic diversity in the workplace (Marcinko and Taylor, 2021; Davies, 2019; Davies and Robinson, 2016).

Literature and evidence show that that initiatives work best when they are embedded rather than bolted on, when they combine bottom-up and top-down approaches and partnerships between senior managers, students, and academics and professional service staff (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2017). This aligns to feedback from the UWE Positive Action community of practice staff event which highlighted the need for careers services staff to work with academic teams to embed employability opportunities into the curriculum.

Student support on placement is crucial for them to gain the relevant skills and experiences that a placement can offer. The Health Education England funded project led by UWE "Black, Asian Minority Ethnic Healthcare student support in practice - partner collaboration project" (Garvey and Griffiths, 2022) created a space for students to share their lived experience of racism in practice settings. The project recommended a regional approach to improving EDI in the NHS for healthcare students and staff which is being developed through an integrated care academy (more specifically through an NHS England funded project led by UWE "South West approach to inclusive training within practice for healthcare students and international staff") and in internal actions. Recommendations from a report on the national best practice in anti-racism for ethnically

minoritised Allied Health Profession (AHP) students identified practice-based learning as a key area to implement interventions to support students (Council of Deans of Health, 2023).

As reported in the TASO call for evidence, for students at Nottingham Trent University, “the gap in professional employment rates between widening participation and non-widening participation students disappeared if they had undertaken a sandwich placement” (Wilson and Dauncey, 2020).

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IS5 - Mentally healthy university

Transition into university is a critical time to build strong feelings of connection and belonging (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2011; Student Minds programme guidance, no year) – and are best considered as being extensive (rather than limited to the first few weeks of the first year). Ensuring students understand our expectations of behaviour and have a similar level of understanding of behaviours we won't tolerate (such as discrimination and harassment) should lower stress and prevent re-traumatising students by creating a strong sense of commitment to shared community values. Inductions are most effective at building wellbeing when they are focused on identity rather than information giving (ibid). Course-specific inductions that provide a strong level of academic staff support, small group activities and semi-structured social time have been found to improve students sense of belonging on entering university (Brooman and Darwent, 2014; Blake, Capper and Jackson, 2022).

Students told us that they felt high levels of academic stress and look to the strong pastoral relationships they have with tutors to help them manage this. When personal tutor relationships are properly developed, they can have a significant and valuable impact on students' academic confidence and sense of belonging (Blake, Capper and Jackson, 2022). Adopting coaching approaches can have a positive impact on students' sense of belonging and the value of personal tutor/tutee relationships (Brooman and Darwent, 2014; Blake, Capper and Jackson, 2022; Seraj and Leggett, 2023).

Students often report having experienced traumatic events prior to university and are at increased risk of sexual and community violence (Galatzer-Levy et al., 2012). Exposure to traumatic events is

more common in those from under-represented groups and can be detrimental to long term mental health (Olaniyan, 2021). Trauma can result in individuals isolating themselves and transition periods and new environments can exacerbate problems and increase the use of unhelpful coping strategies (Sommer et al., 2020) which can have negative effects on broader health and wellbeing.

Although there are limited studies supporting trauma's direct effects on academic performance, students with a childhood history of sexual assault, or who have experienced two or more kinds of abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional), or who report PTSD at the start of their freshman year are more likely to drop out (Duncan, 2000). In addition, negative adjustment can result in poor school performance and may be related to attrition (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004). The development of PTSD during freshman year is related to lower grade point averages (Bachrach & Read, 2012), as is having a higher rate of past negative life events (Anders et al., 2012). Research shows links between wellbeing and educational outcomes – specifically that low level of mental wellbeing, and its physical consequences can reduce our capacity to learn due to impacts on concentration, motivation, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and ability to engage (Craig and Zinckiewicz 2010; Tinklin et al. 2005; Quinn et al. 2009).

Talking about identity, belonging and reflecting on societal and local inequalities (such as racism, sexism or religious prejudice) can be difficult and could result in emotional distress or reawakening memories from previous traumatic incidents in students' lives (Allen, Thursby and Carthy, 2021, Resnick, 2022). Despite this, clinical educators such as Newman (2011) provide evidence that it is possible to safely integrate discussions about these topics into the curriculum, and teach students how to effectively listen and respond to pain (see also Foynes & Freyd, 2011). Guidance for teams include ensuring discussions are not overly extensive, varying the intensity of materials and providing information on self-care (Zurbriggen, 2011). Mattar (2011) notes the importance of building cultural competence into discussions that relate to actual or potential trauma.

At UWE we have developed a trauma informed university-wide approach to health and wellbeing adapted from the Fox et al (2003) Teaching Pyramid which was designed for early years settings to describe practices for promoting social-emotional development and preventing and addressing challenging behaviour. It consists of three different levels of support: promotion, prevention, and intensive interventions (e.g., individualised behaviour support plans or specialised interventions).

Male students are less likely to access support for mental health issues (Sagar-Ouriaghli, Brown and Godfrey, 2020). Support that is not labelled as being 'mental health' and that is provided informally can help overcome barriers, create positive role models where men talk positively about mental health and seeking support and creating male only spaces can help. We will be developing initiatives for male students through our Centre for Music and Centre for Sport, to try and address this issue.

Social Prescribing is recognised within the NHS Long Term Plan as a tool to support socio-emotional and psychological wellbeing and can support the increasing personalisation of care for individuals. UWE has had a small social prescribing project for students since 2020 (when it was believed to have been the first such programme) and provides a non-clinical intervention focused on supporting students to achieve their goals and improve their overall wellbeing. There is evidence of impact in the programme albeit with small numbers of students referred into the programme due to resource limitations.

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Fees, investments and targets 2024-25 to 2027-28

Provider name: University of the West of England, Bristol

Provider UKPRN: 10007164

Summary of 2024-25 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflation statement:

We will not raise fees annually for 2024-25 new entrants

Table 3b - Full-time course fee levels for 2024-25 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	17/18 starters onwards	N/A	9250
First degree	2012/13 starters - 2016/17	N/A	9000
First degree	Pre 2012 starters	N/A	3465
Foundation degree		N/A	9250
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT		N/A	9250
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	17/18 starters onwards	N/A	1156
Sandwich year	Pre 2017/18 starters	N/A	1125
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	17/18 starters onwards	N/A	1385
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	2012/13 starters - 2016/17	N/A	1350
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 3b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2024-25

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	BRISTOL CITY ROBINS FOUNDATION - Partner delivery	10043794	9250
First degree	Bristol Old Vic Theatre School Limited - Partner delivery	10000900	9250
First degree	Gloucestershire College - Partner delivery	10002696	9250
Foundation degree	Bristol Old Vic Theatre School Limited - Partner delivery	10000900	9250
Foundation degree	City of Bristol College - Zoo, less than 100, all f/t	10001467	9250
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Table 4b - Part-time course fee levels for 2024-25 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	17/18 starters onwards	N/A	6935
First degree	2012/13 starters - 2016/17	N/A	6750
First degree	Pre 2012 starters	N/A	2600
Foundation degree		N/A	6935
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2024-25

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Fees, investments and targets

2024-25 to 2027-28

Provider name: University of the West of England, Bristol

Provider UKPRN: 10007164

Investment summary

A provider is expected to submit information about its forecasted investment to achieve the objectives of its access and participation plan in respect of the following areas: access, financial support and research and evaluation. Note that this does not necessarily represent the total amount spent by a provider in these areas. Table 6b provides a summary of the forecasted investment, across the four academic years covered by the plan, and Table 6d gives a more detailed breakdown.

Notes about the data:

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Yellow shading indicates data that was calculated rather than input directly by the provider.

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

"Total access investment funded from HFI" refers to income from charging fees above the basic fee limit.

"Total access investment from other funding (as specified)" refers to other funding, including OFS funding (but excluding Uni Connect), other public funding and funding from other sources such as philanthropic giving and private sector sources and/or partners.

Table 6b - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£1,541,000	£1,613,000	£1,650,000	£1,722,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£5,027,000	£5,021,000	£5,025,000	£5,033,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£353,000	£360,000	£365,000	£369,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£1,441,000	£1,513,000	£1,550,000	£1,622,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£1,541,000	£1,613,000	£1,650,000	£1,722,000
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment (as % of HFI)</i>	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment funded from HFI (£)</i>	£1,441,000	£1,513,000	£1,550,000	£1,622,000
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)</i>	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£4,050,000	£4,056,000	£4,056,000	£4,061,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£124,000	£112,000	£116,000	£119,000
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£853,000	£853,000	£853,000	£853,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£5,027,000	£5,021,000	£5,025,000	£5,033,000
Financial support investment	<i>Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)</i>	4.6%	4.4%	4.4%	4.3%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£353,000	£360,000	£365,000	£369,000
Research and evaluation investment	<i>Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)</i>	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%

Fees, investments and targets

2024-25 to 2027-28

Provider name: University of the West of England, Bristol

Provider UKPRN: 10007164

Targets

Table 5b: Access and/or raising attainment targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative ?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2024-25 milestone	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone
Reduce the gap in access between students from IMD Q5 and IMD Q1 (IMD 2019, full-time, all undergraduates)	PTA_1	Access	Deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivations (IMD))	IMD quintile 1	IMD quintile 5		No	The access and participation dataset	2021-22	Percentage points	14.4	9.0	7.2	5.4	3.6
	PTA_2														
	PTA_3														
	PTA_4														
	PTA_5														
	PTA_6														
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative ?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2024-25 milestone	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone
Reduce the awarding gap between White students and Asian students (full-time, all undergraduates)	PTS_1	Attainment	Ethnicity	Asian	White		No	The access and participation dataset	2021-22	Percentage points	15.3	9.6	7.7	5.7	3.8
Reduce the awarding gap between White students and Black students (full-time, all undergraduates)	PTS_2	Attainment	Ethnicity	Black	White		No	The access and participation dataset	2021-22	Percentage points	34.5	21.6	17.3	12.9	8.6
Reduce the awarding gap between students from IMD Q5 and IMD Q1 (IMD 2019, full-time, all undergraduates)	PTS_3	Attainment	Deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivations (IMD))	IMD quintile 1	IMD quintile 5		No	The access and participation dataset	2021-22	Percentage points	14.9	9.3	7.5	5.6	3.7
Reduce the gap in completion for students with no known disability and students with a mental health condition, to address the lower completion rate for students with a mental health condition (full-time, all undergraduates)	PTS_4	Completion	Reported disability	Mental health condition	No disability reported		No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	Percentage points	7.6	2.5	1.5	0.5	0.0
Reduce the gap in completion between female students and male students to address the lower completion rate for male students (full-time, all undergraduates)	PTS_5	Completion	Other	Other (please specify in description)	N/A	Target focusses on the performance gap for the characteristic of Sex. Target group = Male students; Comparator Group = Female students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	Percentage points	10.5	2.5	0.5	0.0	0.0
Reduce the gap in completion between black students and white students to address the lower completion rate for black students (full-time, all undergraduates)	PTS_6	Completion	Ethnicity	Black	White		No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	Percentage points	8.4	3.5	2.5	1.5	0.0
	PTS_7														
	PTS_8														
	PTS_9														
	PTS_10														
	PTS_11														
	PTS_12														

Table 5e: Progression targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative ?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2024-25 milestone	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone
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