

# University of Plymouth

## Access and Participation Plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

### 1. Assessment of Performance

#### Overview and Context

This APP document reflects our institutional Access and Participation Plan (APP) submitted to start in 2020-21, and the variation updates we have made in light of the updated OfS priorities to ensure that those in underrepresented groups are able to access and achieve in Higher Education. The data outlined in this document is representative of data available in the 2019-20 cycle.

At the heart of the University of Plymouth's vision, *Advancing Knowledge, Transforming Lives*, there remains a clear and continued commitment to Access and Participation (A&P) for all student groups across the Student Lifecycle. Since our last Access and Participation Plan (APP) submission, the University has instigated a Student Success Committee to oversee our institutional strategy and direct its operation, targeting where gaps are significant and where to make interventions. Through this five-year APP, the University will ensure that our students have equal opportunities to access higher education, to be successful while at university, and to progress into employment or postgraduate study. In line with our "Students as Partners" strategy, we seek to work with our Students' Union and students, so that their views, experiences and ideas continue to inform our approach, and so that they can contribute actively to widening participation in line with the University's mission, vision and values.

The University of Plymouth is a Higher Education Institution (HEI) based in the South West, a region which has one of the lowest national proportion of entrants to HEIs, as measured by both POLAR4 and UCAS cycle data<sup>1</sup>, and from where we recruit 6 out of every 10 of our full-time undergraduate students. Compared to England and Wales as a whole, the South West's population is older, increasing in size less rapidly and less ethnically diverse<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, the economy of our region is characterised by service industries, particularly tourism, hospitality, agriculture and the National Health Service. Local businesses are predominantly SMEs with approximately 90% of them classified as microbusinesses (i.e. less than 10 employees)<sup>3</sup>. We will consider the importance of these regional factors on our APP below, in tandem with our assessment of performance.

#### Approach to Data Analysis

The large majority (92%) of our undergraduate students are full-time and we have very few part-time programmes of study<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, in the assessment of performance in our APP, we have focused on our full-time students. Our Planning & Analytics Office has used the OfS-supplied Individualised Student Data files to enable strategic, discipline and granular levels of analysis of our student cohort, with the understanding of ensuring individuals cannot be identified via analysis in the plan.

Our initial analysis of this data set resulted in a gap analysis of key underrepresented groups at each lifecycle point, based on the most recent data. Table 1 (above) indicates our institutional gaps for our students and also our performance relative to the sector. We have used Table 1 to identify our most significant gaps, and our performance with respect to the OfS Key Performance Measures (KPM) is the focus for our detailed analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> End of Cycle Report 2018: Patterns by Geography, UCAS

<sup>2</sup> Data: Census, 2011

<sup>3</sup> Data: Heart of the South West LEP, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Data: TEF Year 4 dataset, OfS, 2018

SPLITTYPE SPLIT1 SPLIT2			LifeCycleStage					
			Access			Continuation		
			UoP	SECTOR	VAR %	UoP	SECTOR	VAR %
AgeOnCommence	Young_Under	Mature_Age2	-46.3	-44.3	-2.0	-5.7	-7.4	1.7
Disability	NoKnownDisa	Disabled	-64.1	-70.9	6.8	-0.8	-1.0	0.2
Ethnicity	White	Black	-87.8	-58.4	-29.4	4.3	-6.3	10.6
POLAR4Quintile	POLAR4Q5	POLAR4Q1	-6.9	-18.3	11.4	-6.2	-5.0	-1.2
Sex	Male	Female	13.8	11.8	-2.0	2.6	2.8	0.2

SPLITTYPE SPLIT1 SPLIT2			LifeCycleStage					
			Attainment			Progression		
			UoP	SECTOR	VAR %	UoP	SECTOR	VAR %
AgeOnCommence	Young_Under	Mature_Age2	-1.2	-10.3	9.1	10.1	3.4	-6.7
Disability	NoKnownDisa	Disabled	-5.0	-2.8	-2.2	0.3	-1.8	2.1
Ethnicity	White	Black	-14.8	-23.1	8.3	-14.6	-4.8	-9.8
POLAR4Quintile	POLAR4Q5	POLAR4Q1	-1.0	-9.5	8.5	-8.2	-6.0	-2.2
Sex	Male	Female	5.1	3.8	-1.3	1.6	-0.4	-2.0

Table 1. Gap Analysis for Underrepresented Groups (Year 5 only, full time undergraduates). The gap represents the difference from Split2. Highlights represent OfS KPMs: yellow, KPM1; grey, KPM 3; orange, KPM 4; light orange, KPM 5.

### 1.1 Higher Education Participation, Household Income, or Socioeconomic Status

Figure 1 gives an overview of each stage of the lifecycle for our POLAR4 Q1 and 5 students and the gaps between the groups.

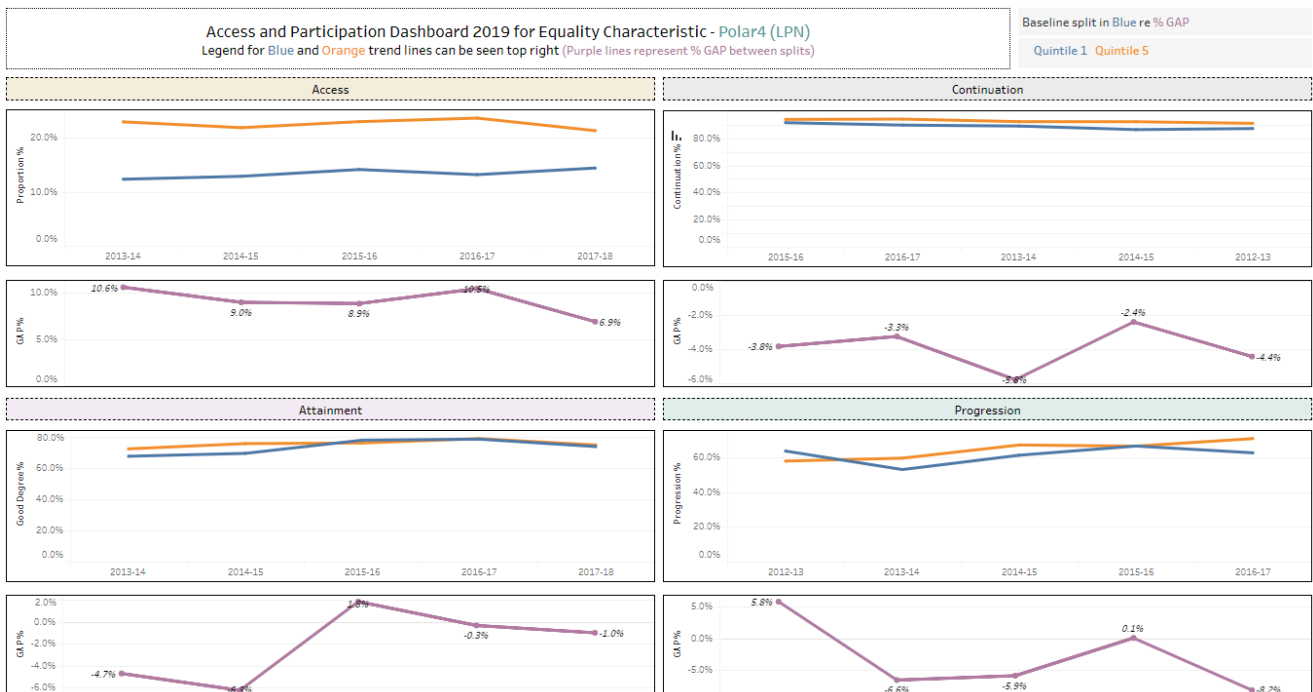


Figure 1. Overview of 5 year Access, Success and Progression trends and gaps between POLAR4 Quintile 5 (orange line) and Quintile 1 (blue line) students.

Plymouth currently delivers an effective programme of widening participation to maintain a student population of around one third of students from widening participation backgrounds. Our POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 proportion is currently 34.9% (Year 5 data).

Regionally, the South West has challenges with participation in HE. UCAS data<sup>5</sup> indicate that 18-year old entry rates are 29% for the South West - the second lowest in the UK. The entry rate for London was 42.4% and for England was 33.7%. Participation rates (using POLAR) are particularly low in wards within Bridgwater, Tiverton, Barnstaple, Bideford, Newton Abbott, Bodmin, Camborne and Redruth, all of which fall below 20%, placing them in the lowest POLAR4 Quintile 1. The major urban centres within the region, Paignton, Exeter and Plymouth, all include multiple wards that fall below a 20% participation rate. The region's profile is further complicated by economic differentiation, including localised low wages and high housing prices, particularly within rural and coastal areas. Transportation can be challenging, students living rurally, at home or on placement further afield, can face a lengthy commute.

With respect to **Access** for students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN) we have made considerable progress over the last 5 years and our POLAR4 Q1 Access is 14.4% (Year 5) compared to 12.0% nationally. Our Q5 to Q1 gap has reduced by 4%. Our five-year performance is better than the sector's and we have a current Q5 - Q1 gap of 6.9% against a sector gap of 18.3%.

Looking internally our subjects with the largest Q5 - Q1 % gaps are in Medicine (34.3%), Biological & Marine sciences (21.8%) and Dentistry (20.4%) [2017-18 data]. These subjects represent 17.7% of our 2017-18 entrants (643 students).

Consideration of the KPM for LPN Access indicates that we still have a gap in Access between Q1 and Q5 students although our Q5:Q1 ratio is close to 1.5:1, well below the OfS' stated aim of 3:1.

Considering the English IMD dataset (2015) for the last 3 years<sup>6</sup> we have found that there has been a slight improvement in our IMD1-IMD5 gap from -9.4% to -9%. We have also improved our proportion of IMDQ1 access from 11.9% to 12.4%. However a significant IMD1-IMD5 Access gap remains in our student population.

Our **Continuation** rates for POLAR4 Q1 students have marginally improved from Y1 to Y5 and now sit at 90.6% (vs. 89.2% for the sector). Comparing Q1 and Q5, the gap has essentially remained level over the last five years, showing a Q5-Q1 gap of approximately 4%. However, in that same time, the sector has experienced a negative trend and the gap between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 has marginally increased. We have identified the subjects with Q5-Q1 continuation gaps that differ significantly from the Institutional average and have found that in these instances the data come from small numbers of students (~10 or less). In summary, consideration of the KPM for LPN Continuation indicates that we still have a significant gap in Continuation between Q1 and Q5 students.

In **Attainment** our data show a notable narrowing of the POLAR4 Q5-Q1 gap over Years 1-5 from -4.7% to a -1% gap for Y5 vs -9.5% for the sector. However, whilst this is a small population, 73.7% of the University's POLAR4 Q1 students obtain a good degree vs. 74.6% for the sector. Our largest Q5-Q1 gaps are in Education (20%) and Art & Design (15%) [2017-18 data]. These subjects represent approximately 160 POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students.

From the IMD data we note that our IMD1 and IMD5 attainment has improved from Y1 to Y5, and we have narrowed the gap by 6.8%. IMD1 attainment has improved faster than IMD5 increasing by 9.8% over the 5 years to 68.8% in Y5 compared to a 3.0% increase to 77.3% in the same time. Comparing the IMD attainment across all quintiles, it shows that our lower attainment scores are seen in the most deprived quintiles (Q1, Q2).

Over the five-year data period the change in the **Progression** gap (to employment or further study) between Q1 and Q5 students has been sporadic. Based on Year 5 data our Q1-Q5 gap is -8.2% vs the sector value of -6%. Despite an increase in the gap over a five-year period our actual progression rates have changed by just over 1 percent, 62.7% of POLAR4 Q1 graduates go onto professional employment in Y5 vs. 63.8% in Year 1. The sector now stands at 68.8% for LPN

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<sup>5</sup> UCAS End of Cycle Report 2018 (<https://www.ucas.com/file/198486>)

<sup>6</sup> Our partner college students were included in our data sets for Years 1 & 2.

graduates. Particular subjects with larger gaps exist in our Business School (15%) and Psychology (14%) [2017-18 data], representing approximately 155 POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students.

We have an Institutional focus on progression. Our Year 4 TEF data show that our institutional employability and higher skilled employability outcomes have been steadily improving over the last three years. Our most recent data (split into a comparison between POLAR4 Q1 or Q2 vs. Q3, Q4 or Q5), show that our lower POLAR4 students have slightly better Employability and Further Study outcomes of 0.6% compared to our higher POLAR4 students. However, for Higher Skilled & Further Study there is a 1.8% gap in favour of the higher POLAR4 Quintile group (both groups are negatively flagged with respect to our benchmark).

Progression and employability are largely influenced by our geographic location and regional challenges. We face two main difficulties that we are addressing: a focus on our students' employability behaviours (a feature of our regional student base, their backgrounds and aspirations), and our region's low higher-skilled employment. Over 60% of our students come from the South West and over 65% remain in the region to work. A key factor in our employability data is therefore the very strong affinity between our graduates and the region. Those who remain, do so in spite of fewer higher skilled opportunities and lower salaries, for important personal reasons or through a commitment to social and environmental impact.

The Plymouth economy, bordering Devon and Cornwall, is characterised by low levels of professional jobs (39% compared to a national average of 46%), low average wages (8% below the national average), and a preponderance of SMEs<sup>7</sup>. Regionally, there is a higher proportion of employees with skills and qualifications above the required level of their employment. This profile means that graduates who are unable or do not wish to leave the region, do not have the same level of access to graduate employment opportunities as students who are mobile.

In conclusion, consideration of the data for LPN Progression indicates that we still have a significant gap in Progression between Q1 and Q5 students.

## 1.2 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students

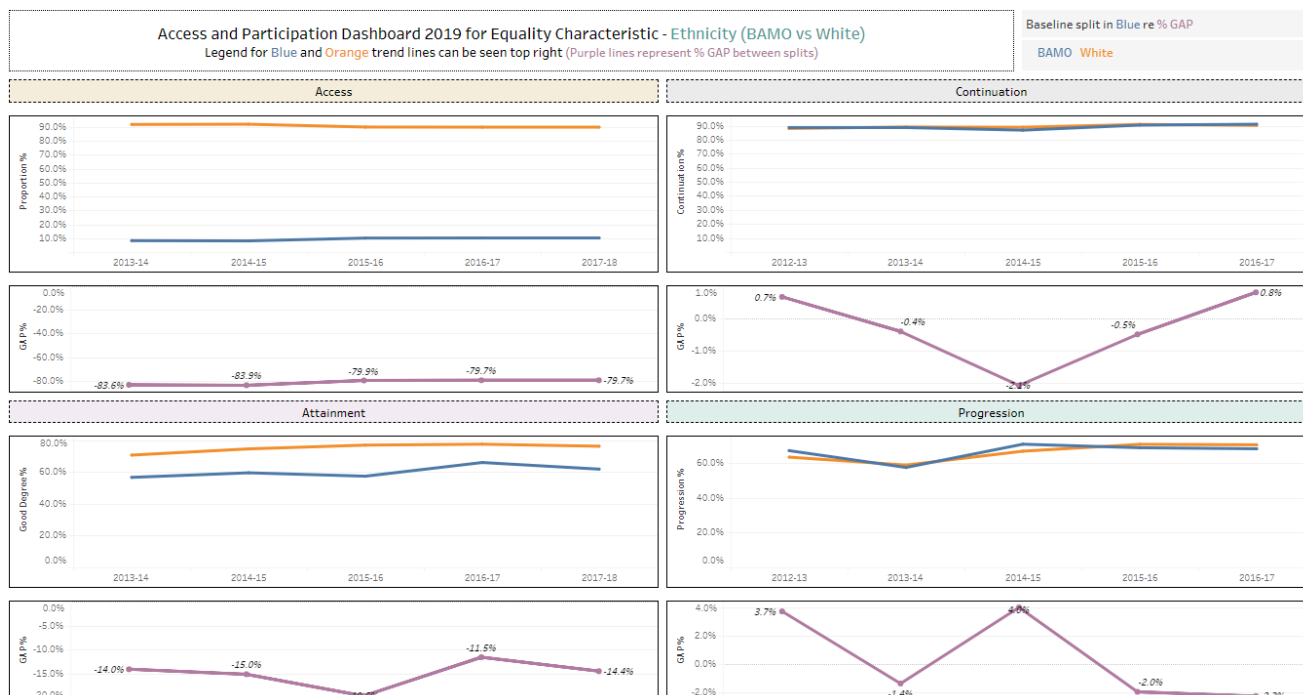


Figure 2. Overview of 5 year Access, Success and Progression trends and gaps between Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (blue line) and White (orange line) students.

<sup>7</sup> Office for National Statistics, Nomis Data

**Access:** Our data in Figure 2 show that we have increased our proportion of Black, Asian and ethnic minority student entrants to the University of Plymouth over the last five years and in doing so we have reduced the White-Black, Asian, and ethnic minority access gap from -83.6% to -79.7%. However, Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students still represent a small proportion of our intake (10.1% in Year 5). Using our internal data, we matched the OfS dataset and for our current 2018/19 intake access for Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students is now at 10.7% (471 students). The sector has also seen growth in Black, Asian, and ethnic minority access between Years 1-5.

We have also disaggregated the Black, Asian, and ethnic minority data to specifically determine our Black student participation across the student lifecycle. For Access, we have found that our intake of Black students is very low compared to the sector. We have maintained our intake proportion at just over 2% for the five years of OfS data. Using our internal data, our current 2018/19 intake access for Black students is at 2.4% (105 students). When looking at any statistical significance it should be noted the actual number of black students at the University is very low (c100). Over the same period, the sector has seen improvement in Black access from 8.6% to 10.5% in Y5. Consequently, our gap is notably higher at -87.8% for Y5 vs -58.4% for the sector.

Across our Faculties the proportion of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority and Black students (separated) is relatively similar, except in Medicine and Dentistry, where we have the highest proportion of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority (33.9%, Year 5) and Black (6.4%, Year 5) students.

Given our small population of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students, our five year **Continuation** trend is not statistically relevant and indeed, the trend is sporadic. Absolute values provide better insight with continuation at 95% for Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students in Y5, an improvement from 93.1% in Y1. In the same period the sector has experienced a negative trend and the White-Black, Asian, and ethnic minority gap increased from -1.9% in Y1 to -3.2% in Y5. In absolute terms, the sector shows a negative trend with continuation falling from 90.0% to 88.1%.

For **Attainment**, the gap has marginally increased from Y1 to Y5. Again, low numbers lead to fluctuations in the gaps. Absolute values show attainment for Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students has improved from 56.6% in Y1 to 61.8% in Y5; this is in line with the sector (62.6% to 68.8% in the same period).

Analysing the disaggregated Black student **Progression** population relevant to KPM 4 produces very low cohort numbers for Plymouth, ranging from 65 students in Y1 to 90 in Y5. This leads to large fluctuations in the data with gaps ranging from -33.3% in Y1 to -14.8% in Y5. The sector gap has remained around -23-24% (-24.6% in Y1 to -23.1 in Y5). With consideration due to our low numbers, absolute values show actual attainment has improved at a greater rate than the sector, moving from 37.3% in Y1 to 61.4% in Y5 vs. 52.8% to 58.9%.

For our Black, Asian, and ethnic minority student Progression, we have a smaller gap than the sector at -2.3% vs. -3.9%. However, with our low numbers, caution in interpretation is advised. Our absolute values show movement from 67% of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students to 68% in Y5. The sector has shown considerably more growth from 59.7% to 70.1% in Y5.

To accommodate these low numbers we have analysed the data using 3 year rolling averages; Y1-3, Y2-4, Y3-5. Over this period we have had steady improvements in progression: Black, Asian, and ethnic minority, 65.1 - 69.2%; Black, 63.0 - 65.8%; White, 62.9 - 69.1%. The Black, Asian, and ethnic minority and White Progression scores show a larger improvement than that of Black students, with the White score improving best of all groups. Reviewing the gaps between the groups, on this basis, the data show that for Black - White the gap has gradually widened (-3.3%), whilst for Black, Asian, and ethnic minority - White it is the reverse as the gap has reduced to +0.1%.

Our Black, Asian, and ethnic minority and Black student performance should be taken in context with our regional demographics. As stated above, nearly 60% of our students are local, and the South West as a region has the lowest Black, Asian, and ethnic minority proportion in the UK (Black, Asian,



and ethnic minority, 13.3%; Black, 3.0%<sup>8</sup>) outside of Scotland and NI (UK average: Black, Asian, and ethnic minority, 27.5%; Black, 8.5%<sup>6</sup>).

### 1.3 Mature Students

Our Access data show that the University of Plymouth has a significant population of mature students. Considering absolute values we had 36.6% Mature students in Y1 (2013/14) compared to 26.9% in Y5. Our Mature Student Access of 26.9% now sits at the Sector average (27.8%). The gap for Mature vs. Young (under 21 students) is –46.3% for Y5 vs. the sector –44.3% (Fig 3).

Across our portfolio, the proportion of Mature students is significantly higher than the University average in the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences (48.3%, Year 5); a large number of Mature students (611) are studying in our Schools of Nursing and Midwifery (61.7% Mature) and Health Professions (29.3% Mature).

Given that the majority of our Mature Students are studying nursing and health profession subjects, our institutional proportion of Mature students is in line with similar universities to ours that also have significant nursing and health programmes (cf. UWE and Oxford Brookes).

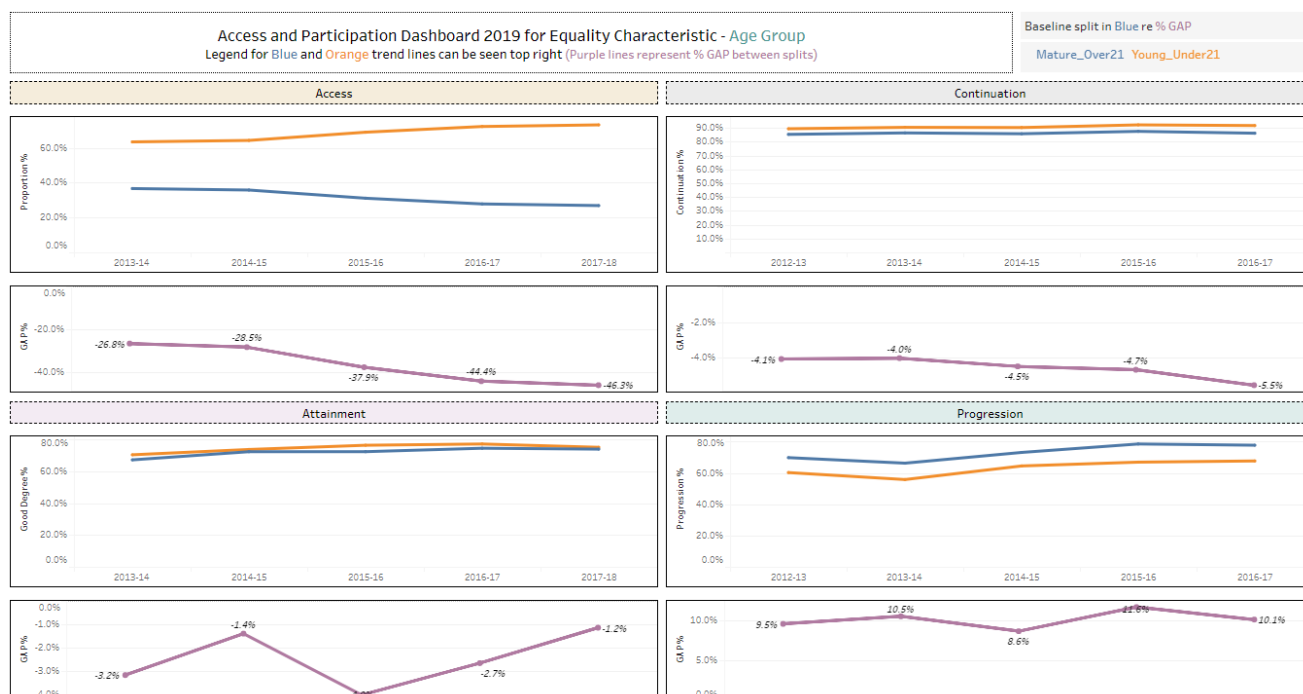


Figure 3. Overview of 5 year Access, Success and Progression trends and gaps between Mature (blue) and Young students (orange).

For **Continuation**, the sector has seen an increasing gap over five years and this trend is also reflected at Plymouth. We have moved from a Mature-Young gap of –4.3% to –5.7%; the sector has maintained a larger gap moving from –6.7% to –7.4%. Absolute values show we have improved from 87.6% to 88.3% in Year 5, whereas the sector has experienced a decline from 86.2% to 84.8%. Our Continuation rate is similar across all of our Faculties, but a little lower (77.3%) in Science and Engineering. However, this has occurred in programmes with a relatively small (<100) cohort of Mature students.

We have reduced our **Attainment** gap for Mature students from –3.2% to –1.2% in Y5, whilst the sector gap has increased from –9% to –10.3%. Absolute values show our larger increases moving from 67.3% in Y1 to 74% in Y5. The sector has also seen positive movement from 66.4% to 70%.

<sup>8</sup> Data: HEIDI Plus, 2017-18

Our **Progression** gap for Mature students is +10.1% compared to +3.4% for the sector. This variance is more pronounced for female mature students (see Section 1.6). Absolute values show a rising trend with movement from 69.7% in Y1 to 77.7% in Y5 with the sector showing similar improvement.

For this underrepresented group we will focus on targets that improve the Continuation outcomes of Mature students.

## 1.4 Students with a reported disability

The University of Plymouth has a successful history of supporting **Access** to HE for students with a reported disability. In absolute terms, we have further increased our intake of students with a reported disability from 16.2% Y1 to 17.9% in Y5. This has had the effect of narrowing the Reported Disability:No-report Access gap from -67.6% to -64.1% in Y5. In the same period the Sector gap has moved from -76.4% to -70.9%.

We have also narrowed our **Continuation** gap from -1.4% to -0.8% in Y5, a marginally better rate than the sector (moving from -1.5% to -1%). In absolute terms, the percentage of our students with a reported disability who continue has increased from 89.2% in Y1 to 91.8% in Y5. Conversely, the sector has seen a minor decline from 90% in Y1 to 89.4% in Y5.



Figure 4. Overview of 5 year Access, Success and Progression trends and gaps between a Reported Disability (blue line) and students with no reported disability (orange).

However, our Reported Disability **Attainment** gap has worsened. We have seen an increase in the gap from -3.3% in Y1 to -5% in Y5, while the sector has improved from -3.4% to -2.8%. However, absolute values show we have had an improvement from 66.8% to 70.8%, in line with the sector. Intersectional analysis of this cohort is covered in section 1.6

Given the increase in our Attainment gap, we have disaggregated our students with a reported disability Attainment data. The key conclusions are that our 'good degree' attainment either matches or surpasses the sector in terms of students with mental health conditions or sensory/medical/physical impairment. This is positive given that Plymouth has proportionally higher levels of disability than the sector. Our gap results from two categories: cognitive/learning disabilities (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD) and multiple impairments (which includes many students with cognitive/learning disabilities). Our targets and interventions will focus on these two groups of

students. We have also analysed our Faculty and programme trends but these are volatile, inconclusive and characterised by small, almost individualised data sets.

For **Progression** we have reduced the gap from  $-2.2\%$  in Y1 to  $+0.3\%$  in Y5, while the sector has experienced a negative trend with the gap growing from  $-1.1\%$  to  $-1.8\%$ . Our geographical challenges for professional employment (described above in Section 1.1) apply to this group of students and is evident in the absolute values with  $70.3\%$  of students progressing in Y5 compared to  $71.5\%$  for the Sector.

## 1.5 Care Leavers

We have included an assessment of our performance with respect to Care Leavers however, based on our internal data, we have very few care leavers in our student population. As a result, the numbers are below statistical thresholds and due care is needed with regard to GDPR.

Our **Access** data show that we have very small numbers (Y5, 60 care leavers out of a population of 4,972 =  $1.2\%$ ) but it appears the proportion has slightly increased year on year.

For **Continuation**, there has been a positive to negative swing between the Y1 to Y5 Care Leavers and Non-Care Leavers continuation gap. There are about 60 students in this data cohort.

The **Attainment** gap is closing but Care Leavers Good Degree percentage is still less than Non-Care Leavers. Meaningful analysis is difficult as there are fewer than 25-30 students per annum in the five years of the data cohort.

Considering **Progression**, the Care Leavers population is small (fewer than 20 students in Year 5, with 5 or less in Years 1 and 2) but the data show better progression scores than non-care leavers in most years.

For this group of students our conclusion is not to set any targets but, over the coming 5 years, to closely monitor and track the cohort performance whilst building a stronger evidence base for supporting Care Leavers (see Section 1.8).

## 1.6 Intersectional Analysis

From our intersectional analysis, we have identified four groups where the cohorts are large enough and the gaps indicate that we can draw conclusions.

**Intersection between POLAR4 and Gender:** Both Male and Female continuation at the University of Plymouth has a slight gap between low POLAR4 quintiles and high POLAR4 quintiles. The data have fluctuated over the last five years, but the average gap is approximately  $-2.4\%$  for Males and  $-2.8\%$  for Females (for both genders this is similar to the Sector average over five years). For attainment we have a low POLAR4 Male gap of  $-0.4\%$  and for Females this is larger at  $-3.8\%$ . However, both are lower than the sector averages.

**Intersection between Black, Asian, and ethnic minority and Access:** The gap between Black, Asian, and ethnic minority and White students shows more disadvantaged groups when looking at intersections of demographics. We are less likely to recruit Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students who are Mature on entry and we are less likely to recruit POLAR4 Q1 Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students than in our overall student population.

**Intersection between Reported Disability and Attainment:** The gap between Students with a reported disability and students with No Disability shows more disadvantaged groups. Young students with a reported disability are less likely to have good attainment outcomes compared to all students with a reported disability ( $70\%$  vs  $76.2\%$ ), and this is also the case for Male Students with a reported disability (female  $-2.7\%$  gap, male  $-8.8\%$  gap), and POLAR4 Q5 students (Q1  $-3.7\%$ , Q5  $-15.5\%$ ).



**Intersection between Age and Progression:** Our overall Progression gap between Mature and Young students is +10.1% (77.7% Mature vs. 67.6% Young). This gap is larger for Female Mature students (81% vs. 67.2% Female, Young), for Disabled Mature students (78.5% vs. 66.6%) and for Non-disabled Mature students (77.5% vs. 67.8%)

We emphasise that our intersectional analysis is evolving; we will improve our capability in this, and our learning from it, over the life of this APP (see Section 1.8).

## 1.7 Other Groups Who Experience Barriers in Higher Education

### **Romany, Gypsy, Travellers, and Other Underrepresented Groups**

Data from our student records system show student numbers within these groups are so small (less than 5) that no significant statistical conclusions can be drawn when comparing to other students.

**Military Families, Refugees and Carers:** At present, these data are not required by HESA, and we do not routinely record it to enable us to accurately identify these students (see Section 1.8).

**Commuter Students:** We identified students who commute by combining data from our HESA return with the OfS individualised dataset. We have used the term-time accommodation code as a proxy to identify commuter students as those who live with parents or reside within their own property. Our analysis shows commuter students are an underrepresented group compared to their peers. We have found that: Access, 30.7% of our students are commuters (1,528 entrants); Continuation, Commuter Students have a gap of -4.9% to their peers, 87.0% of commuters continue vs. 91.9% non-commuter; Attainment, there is a -2.4% gap, 73.1% attain a good degree vs. 75.5% non-commuters; and for Progression, 76.8% of commuters successfully progress vs. 67.1% non-commuters (this includes further study).

Over the period of the APP, as we strengthen our data capability, we will analyse Commuter Students at a more granular level to identify any hotspots within Plymouth and the region that may contribute to the gaps.

### **Other Groups to be analysed:**

The student groups below are present at the University of Plymouth in significant numbers:

*(i) Foundation Year Students: we have a significant number of foundation year students in our faculties of Arts & Humanities and Science & Engineering.*

*(ii) those entering with BTEC qualifications: Our UCAS end of cycle data acceptances show that approximately 15% of our entrants hold a BTEC qualification (and not A-levels). This has been consistent for the last 3 cycles; 14.5% 2016 entry, 15.1% 2017 entry and 14.3% 2018 entry.*

Our Assessment of Performance indicates that the attributes of these groups of students may contribute structurally to gaps in Success and/or Progression. We do not currently have the data in a form that can be further analysed to better assess these groups. Therefore, during the period of this APP, we will build our evidence base for these cohorts to evaluate their performance over the lifecycle (see Section 1.8).

## 2. Strategic Aims and Objectives

### 2.1 Target groups

Based on our assessment of performance, we have identified three categories of students/lifecycle that we will focus on during the five year period of this APP.

**(a)** groups where we have evidence that we have minimised gaps and wish to maintain that performance. These are noted in Sections 1.1 to 1.5 above;

**(b)** groups where we wish to collect quality data, develop an evidence base and a clearer understanding of the gaps and barriers to success. These are listed in Section 1.7 above and see also Section 1.8. We will improve our capability and monitor these groups through our Student Success Committee;

**(c)** groups where we have identified significant gaps or challenges and we wish to improve our performance. These are listed below;

The following are the underrepresented students/lifecycle point that we will focus on in this APP:

1. Higher Education Participation, Household Income, or Socioeconomic Status and Access as measured by POLAR4 and IMD. We will continue to maintain our good performance with respect to the ratio of Q5:Q1 students in line with the OfS' KPM. We will focus on closing the Access gap between IMD1 and IMD5 students.
2. POLAR4 Quintile 1 students and Success (Continuation): we will focus on the gaps in continuation between Q1 and Q5 students.
3. POLAR4 Quintile 1 students and Progression: our aim is to reduce the gap between Q1 and Q5 students' progression.
4. Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students and Access: this is where our biggest gap lies and it is also a feature of our regional demographics. We will focus on increasing the proportion of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students that enter the University.
5. Black students and Access: the proportion of Black students entering the University is very low and, in tandem with the group above, we will focus on increasing this.
6. Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students and Success (Attainment): we have identified a Black, Asian, and ethnic minority attainment gap and are including this group to reduce the gap between attainment of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority and White students.
7. Black students and Success (Attainment): we have identified an attainment gap for Black students and will address this over the period of this APP, and in line with the OfS KPM.
8. Mature students and Success (Continuation)
9. Students with a Reported Disability and Success (Attainment): we have identified that we have a Reported Disability attainment gap. This is primarily related to students with cognitive/learning difficulties and we will address this over the period of this APP and in line with the OfS KPM.
10. Higher Education Participation, Household Income, or Socioeconomic Status and Success (Attainment) as measured by IMD.
11. Black students and Progression.

## **2.2 Aims and Objectives**

Our overall Aim is to ensure that all individuals with the ability to benefit from the education we provide have equal opportunities to join the University of Plymouth irrespective of background, and that as members of our scholarly community they have the scope, freedom, and support to succeed in their studies and to progress to successful and rewarding careers. As one of the of the two largest providers of Higher Education in the South West and the largest in our immediate area - Plymouth, South Devon, and Cornwall - we are shaped by our region while being national and international in outlook. We are particularly mindful of our mission to support underrepresented individuals from the South West (from where the majority of our students derive, and where a greater majority find employment after graduation) and our specific objectives reflect in particular the needs of the region, in addition to addressing national priorities. Our commitment to supporting regional students' access and participation is evidenced by our substantial and long-standing FE college partnerships that run from Bristol to Truro, and beyond.

In our APP plan we have 11 specific objectives that are derived from our Assessment of Performance. Three of these objectives relate to Access, six to Success and two to Progression.

*Objective 1:* Over the years we have performed well in Widening Access, and currently our ratio of POLAR4 Q5:Q1 Access is below OfS's target of 3:1. We will commit to maintain our good performance and to reduce further the gap in access between POLAR4 Q1 and POLAR4 Q5 students. Our target in this area will be to reduce the gap in access for IMD1 to IMD5 students from our 2017/18 baseline value of 9.0% to 4.0% by 2024-25, with the longer-term aim to eliminate this gap over a 10 year period.

*Objective 2:* We are conscious of our lower proportion of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students than the sector, but given our low regional proportion this is a very challenging objective that will take longer than the 5-year APP period to resolve. Our target is to increase the proportion of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students accessing the University of Plymouth from the 2017/18 baseline value of 10.1% to a value of 14.5% by 2024-25. It should be noted that the 2024/25 target value is higher than the local BME proportion in the South West (13.3%, 2017-18).

*Objective 3:* This objective is related to Objective 2 and to the OfS KPM. We have identified that our proportion of Black students is very low compared to the sector and this will require our focused attention beyond the 5-year APP period. It should be noted that our situation is a reflection of our region's demography with nearly 60% of our students originating from the South West. We are setting a specific target to increase the proportion of Black students who enter the University from 2.1% (2017/18) to 4.8 % by 2024/25. It should be noted that the 2024/25 target value is over 50% higher than the local Black proportion in the South West (3.0%, 2017-18).

*Objective 4:* We will improve the Continuation of students from low (POLAR4 Q1) as opposed to high (POLAR4 Q5), participation neighbourhoods. We will reduce the gap from its current value of 6.1% to 2.5% by 2024/25.

*Objective 5:* This relates to attainment of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students. We have a Black, Asian, and ethnic minority attainment gap, based on our current data, of 14%. We will reduce this gap by over half to 6.5% by 2024/25. A number of proposed interventions are described below in Section 3.1.3. Because of the challenging nature of this target, and that it will take time for attainment interventions to take effect, we have profiled the yearly milestones such that we make greater progress towards the end of the APP period as our interventions take effect. There is an evidence-based rationale as to why the impact of these measures will be modest initially, before accelerating. Published guidance from UUK and NUS<sup>9</sup> suggests that substantial innovations in terms of curriculum change or student support should be created in close consultation and collaboration with Black and Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students. Allowing sufficient time for this process, initiatives will take time to implement. As a consequence, students graduating towards the end of the APP timeframe (i.e. 2024/25) are more likely to have benefitted from proposed interventions in all of their years at university, such that they enjoyed additive or even synergistic effects from the various strands of support.

*Objective 6:* This relates to Objective 5, as we have specifically set an objective to reduce the attainment gap between Black and White students from the current value of 15%, again reducing it by over half by 2024/25. As for Objective 5, and given the rationale cited above, we have profiled these yearly targets towards the later years of this APP.

*Objective 7:* We will reduce the difference in the Continuation rate between Mature and Young students from the current value of 5.7% to 2.5% by 2024/25.

*Objective 8:* We will eliminate the Attainment gap between Students with a Reported Disability and those with none 5% to 0%, by 2024/25. From our disaggregation analysis we are aware that this gap is primarily related to those with cognitive/learning difficulties, and we will particularly focus on interventions with this sub-group whilst raising attainment with the wider student group with a Reported Disability.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>

*Objective 9:* Our long-term plan is to eliminate the gap between our POLAR4 Q1 and POLAR4 Q5 students' Progression over 10 years. This APP objective will improve the gap from the 2017/18 baseline of 8.2% and reduce this to 3.2% by 2024/25.

*Objective 10:* To address the gap in Attainment between our IMD1 and IMD5 students we are committed to monitoring this gap over the 5 years, using the data to identify the barriers to success and incorporating them into our Success Theory of Change. Hence we will implement appropriate interventions to reduce this attainment gap.

*Objective 11:* We will reduce the Progression gap for Black students through a commitment to build a strand of work into our Progression Theory of Change and roll-out a series of suitable interventions. This objective will be underpinned by Objectives 5 and 6 and will be informed by the recent UUK/NUS guidance<sup>9</sup>.

## 2.3 Key priorities

### Priority B: School partnerships to raise attainment

The University has established working relationships with both primary and secondary schools across the region. We will expand the footprint of our work across schools to support attainment raising, working collaboratively with schools to provide support in the way that best suits the needs of individual schools.

The University currently works with many local secondary schools, both through its own outreach and through the local Uni Connect partnership, Next Steps South West. Through Devon and Cornwall Children's University it also has strong links with many primary schools in the region.

To help identify which schools would be suitable to work with for attainment raising we will use the HEAT secondary planning data to identify schools with high numbers of students from TUNDRA Q1 & 2, from IMD Q1 & Q2 and from ethnically diverse backgrounds. We will cross reference this to schools where attainment at GCSE is below expectations, carrying out a needs analyses in our local areas in conjunction with Next Steps South West.

The University has a number of existing outreach programmes that support raising attainment for students:

- The Junior Academy programme provides instrumental and music theory tuition to promising students who are interested in pursuing a degree in music.
- Working with CoachBright, our student ambassadors provide subject specific coaching for Y10s from underrepresented groups.
- Articulacy works with student ambassadors to build school students' confidence in communication and presentation that results in English Speaking Board qualifications.
- A Year 10 Maths three-day residential course for students who attended previous year 9 Maths Masterclasses that provides subject specific support and knowledge.
- Exim Dance is a community organisation that provides tuition that leads to a Dance Leadership Level 2 qualification.
- Working with Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support we provide IT classes for refugees that lead to students sitting British Computer Society exams.

We evaluate all of these and have empirical evidence to show how they indirectly, and in many cases directly, support attainment raising.

Following guidance from TASO and the OfS we will focus on enhancing our existing activities, and developing new activities, in the following categories:

1. Activities focused on raising attainment as a by-product of raising aspiration and expectation, which can lead to aspirations being raised.
2. Attainment-raising through development of soft skills, which improves metacognition.

3. Attainment-raising through subject specific academic tutoring, subject specific support or project work and curriculum enhancement.
4. CPD for teachers.
5. Research the possibilities of supporting attainment raising through school governance.

Using these categories, along with a newly developed Theory of Change for attainment raising, the University will carry out an audit of current outreach to establish where attainment raising may already be taking place, which activities could potentially be developed to support it and where there are gaps in delivery that need addressing.

We will consult with schools and local stakeholders, including Next Steps South West and our partner colleges, to define which schools and students will be targeted for on-going and new interventions. We will then work with them to develop programmes of multiple engagements that cover the categories outlined above, allocating resources and funding to ensure their implementation. These will be evaluated using validated survey scales to define and measure intermediate outcomes, which show how they are supporting attainment raising. To underpin the necessary data collection, and ensure consistency across activities, we will set up data sharing agreements with schools and where possible, use In School Coordinators to support data collection and student liaison.

As part of the longer-term approach, for those secondary schools we are working with to raise attainment we will identify their primary feeder schools and enrol them as members of Devon and Cornwall Children's University. Research shows that Children's University has a positive impact on KS2 attainment as well as benefits to a range of non-cognitive outcomes, better preparing primary school pupils for the transition into secondary education.

### **Priority C: Access to HE leads to successful participation**

As part of the Education and Student Experience strategy, and to make sure we have digitally enhanced learning opportunities for all, we are refreshing our digital learning principles in relation to demographic and intersectional analysis. We are collating the lessons learnt from the pandemic from students and staff across the institution and reviewing these in relation to learning environments and the training and support required.

The Careers Service recently commissioned an external equality, diversity and inclusivity audit to assess our current provision, and to inform any future delivery. The audit covered a number of broad areas including our work with employers, our own programmes and initiatives and our marketing to students. A subsequent action plan has been agreed which we are now implementing. In addition, we are also adapting our evaluation methods to align more with the Theory of Change for Progression, ensuring that our main development programmes better capture the needs of underrepresented students targeted in the APP so that we can feed forward new ideas, and adapt our practices accordingly.

### **Priority D: More flexible and diverse provision**

Our partners offer and deliver a range of validated University L4 and L5 qualifications. Upon approval of a validated Foundation Degree the University approves and agrees articulated routes of progression to either a L5 or L6 award at the University or delivered locally by the partner, allowing students choice through progression routes. The University hosts a programme of progression events co-ordinated across the faculties and directorates of the University to support all students transitioning to the University. This portfolio of events ranges from digital, online events to a progression/open day event supported with numerous subject based collaborations between academic liaison persons, the outreach team and academic partnerships. This offers students flexibility, choice and informed decision-making.

To support staff in our partner colleges with L4 and L5 courses we will look at developing and sharing curricula expertise to improve capacity for teaching at HE level in technical subjects, with the potential for co-creation and co-delivery of shared resources and materials.



In 2021-22 the University has 584 apprentice learners across 15 programmes from levels 4 to 7, meeting the needs of learners and employers and contributing to the growth of individuals, businesses and the broader economy with which the University engages. Modes of delivery include day release, blocked delivery, in-person and blended learning. The apprenticeship programmes are an important and distinctive element of the University's ambition to grow opportunities for learning that sits outside traditional routes. They are thus a means to increase the University's reach in fulfilling its mission of 'Advancing knowledge, transforming lives'. We note however, that some apprenticeship programmes have high attrition/withdrawal rates and we will address this within our revised objectives.

In February 2022 the University's Senate agreed a revised Apprenticeship Strategy, with ambitions that the University of Plymouth is the provider of choice for degree and higher apprenticeships, that apprenticeship learning is fully integrated into the business, process and culture of the University and is of excellent quality. A 15-month implementation plan is in place to meet these ambitions and continue to grow the apprenticeship offer. The implementation plan includes specific actions to ensure that tailored information, advice and guidance promotes access, achievement and progression for under-represented groups. Our apprenticeship provision includes disciplines such as nursing and allied health care professions, which have moved to an apprenticeship-funding model. In digital and engineering disciplines, provision sits in the framework of the South-west Institute of Technology, which links HE and FE providers in the region, to support skills development in the region, in emerging and regionally-important sectors such as floating offshore wind.

### 3. Delivery of Strategic Aims and Objectives

#### 3.1 Whole Provider Strategic Approach

This APP aligns with our University 2030 Strategy<sup>10</sup>, our Education and Student Experience (ESE) Strategy (2018-2023)<sup>11</sup> and our Equality and Diversity Policy<sup>12</sup>.

The University Strategy, and our Mission *Advancing knowledge, transforming lives*, is underpinned by four core principles: Quality, Sustainability, Reputation and One Team. Our stated vision, 'to be a broad-based research-intensive university open to all who can benefit from a University of Plymouth education' has access and participation at its heart.

Our current Education and Student Experience strategy has as its overarching aim 'to deliver outstanding education that makes a difference, improving local, national and global communities.' Embedded in this are a number of Priorities and Actions that have direct alignment or impact on our APP. The strategy is based around four key ambitions, the first being the provision of high quality education. Our Ambition for Student Success (Ambition 2), has as its Key Priorities: supporting progression; ensuring social mobility and student success and providing student support. Ambition 3, our Community of Scholars, has a High Level Action to be data and evidence-driven to enhance our student success and the student journey. Finally, Ambition 4, which addresses infrastructure and learning environment, has High Level Actions to use technology to support our students in their learning and success with a focus on our commuter students.

We do not have a separate employability strategy. In preparing our new Education and Student Experience Strategy we made a decision to focus on a specific Employability Action Plan that is aligned to the ESE strategy, underpins the changes we wish to see in our progression outcomes, and recognises the diversity in action and progress required across our subject areas.

Our APP has been developed with close attention and alignment to our Equality and Diversity Policy, and the University Equality Scheme. We are confident that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010. Our

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/strategy-2>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/university-strategy/education-and-student-experience-strategy>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/7/7108/Equality\\_and\\_Diversity\\_policy\\_Aug\\_2016\\_v.1.1\\_2\\_.pdf](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/7/7108/Equality_and_Diversity_policy_Aug_2016_v.1.1_2_.pdf)

Equality and Diversity Policy embeds equality, diversity and inclusion relating to both staff and students, into our normal business processes. The policy is delivered through our Equality Scheme (2017 – 2021), an action plan developed around the Equality Act (2010) and which promotes an inclusive learning and working environment for our students (and employees). With regard to this APP, it should be noted that the Chair of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is also a member of the Student Success Committee (Section 3.1.2) which oversees Access and Participation preparation, strategy and operation at Plymouth. In terms of our E&D priorities and progress that overlap with the APP, our recent Annual Equality Report (2017-18) highlights our progress on the following issues: BME representation and engendering a diverse and inclusive culture; addressing attainment gaps (ethnicity, gender, disability, LPN); and de-risking our environment through raising awareness of EDI amongst students.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process, known locally as our Equality Analysis Guidance, is being revised (June 2019) after our APP deadline of May 2019. We will therefore further scrutinise our APP, and particularly our Theory of Change and Lifecycle Frameworks, using the updated Equality Analysis process over the next year, leading up to this APP taking effect in 2020.

The diversity of the student voice is further augmented through the University of Plymouth Students' Union (UPSU) governance structures, which include a number of forums, each led by an elected chair, including such groups as mature students, Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students, students with disabilities, LGBT+ students and postgraduate students.

### 3.1.2 Leadership and Governance

At Plymouth, the APP, and more widely 'Student Success', is led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education & Student Experience who chairs the Student Success Committee. This Committee, which reports to the University Executive Group, is responsible for the governance and strategic direction of "student success" at Plymouth, which includes oversight of our APP planning and its delivery. The Student Success Committee comprises senior academics, professional services staff (from Recruitment & Admissions, Academic Registry, Student Services and Careers & Employability), and student representatives to provide strategic leadership across the student lifecycle. Two further groups report to the Student Success committee; an APP Operations Group, that will be responsible for APP delivery including the evaluation and monitoring, and a Practitioners' Group supporting best practice on success and progression through the academic staff. The University Executive Group has been fully engaged with the preparation of our APP and approved it on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2019.

**Board of Governors:** The Board of Governors were actively engaged in the preparation of the APP throughout the process. A sub-group of Governors were appraised of the development and detail of the plan at regular intervals, and made significant inputs and appropriate challenge. The Board of Governors discussed the complete APP at a full Board meeting and approved it on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2019.

As part of APP governance UEG provides the Board with an annual mid-year update of actions taken, in compliance with the approved Plan, and progress against the Plan's objectives, as identified at the mid-year point. The Board will review and approve the annual impact and assessment reports prior to publication. The Board has nominated lead governors who will maintain engagement with the relevant Executive over the Plan's progress and issues. They will ensure the full Board can appropriately fulfil its role to oversee the APP.

To accelerate the Whole Provider approach the University of Plymouth has set up a Local Improvement Project for Access and Participation. This will align to the institutional change management programme, which follows the DMAIC methodology, a data-driven quality strategy for improving processes that is an integral part of the Six Sigma Quality Initiative. The programme will be governed by the Student Success Committee and supported by facilitators trained in the tools and techniques used to review and improve processes. Aligning the APP to an institutional improvement project will ensure there is a commitment to adopting the whole lifecycle approach to Access, Success and Progression, and engaging staff from both academic and professional service areas.

### 3.1.3 Strategic Measures

## **Theory of Change**

Following the outcomes from the OfS 'A new approach to regulating access and participation in English higher education', the University started work on a new evaluation strategy for its Access and Participation programme. This built on existing expertise, while making full use of the OfS Self-Evaluation Toolkit and the Access and Participation Standards of Evidence. In addition, it utilised the practical experience of evaluating outreach from the Next Steps South West (NSSW), the local, University-led consortium of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP).

We have developed an overarching Theory of Change (ToC) (Figure 5), which starts by identifying a long term outcome to, 'Increase the number of under-represented groups accessing and succeeding in HE, and the number progressing from HE into skilled employment and postgraduate study.'

The ToC then takes the premise, derived from our narrative research, that there is a multitude of barriers to higher education for potential students from under-represented groups, and that these are more problematic and difficult for these cohorts to overcome. We have identified the key barriers as: attainment, socio-economic, soft-skills, geography, responsibilities, finance, knowledge, influencers and identity. Each barrier can impact at the three different stages of the student lifecycle i.e. Access, Success and Progression. However, some are more specific to a particular stage.

Aligned with the barriers are the potential impacts that we believe we can achieve with targeted and evaluated interventions and programmes. These will lead to intermediate outcomes, which will build to the overall, long-term outcome, overcoming the main problem of, 'Identified gaps exist in Access, Success and Progression for all under-represented groups throughout the student lifecycle'.

Linked to these are some key assumptions:

- Working closely with schools and individuals allows the University to provide support and guidance that encourages students and influencers to engage with Access, Success and Progression programmes and interventions.
- Providing interventions to address the barriers for students to attend Higher Education increases the chances of students considering HE options and progressing to HE.
- Attainment is the single biggest predictor of positive outcome in later life and is one of the largest barriers for students when considering HE progression. By providing relevant interventions, students are able to attain grades at KS4 and KS5 to access HE while undergraduates are able to succeed and progress.
- Having continual engagement for students and influencers throughout the education journey, from Primary School age through to adult, increases applications to HE and conversion rates, as well as success and progression.

## **Linkage To Our Objectives And The Lifecycle Stages**

From the overarching ToC, we have developed individual Theories of Change for pre-16 and post-16 Access (Appendices 4a and 4b). We have used these to devise a Lifecycle (or Progression) Framework that demonstrates how the proposed interventions and programmes for Access address the barriers, as well as the type of impact evaluation used as evidence for the intervention (Appendix 5). We will build on this and extend it to create Theories of Change and Lifecycle Frameworks that cover the Success and Progression strands to ensure there is continuity and consistency across the whole of the student lifecycle.

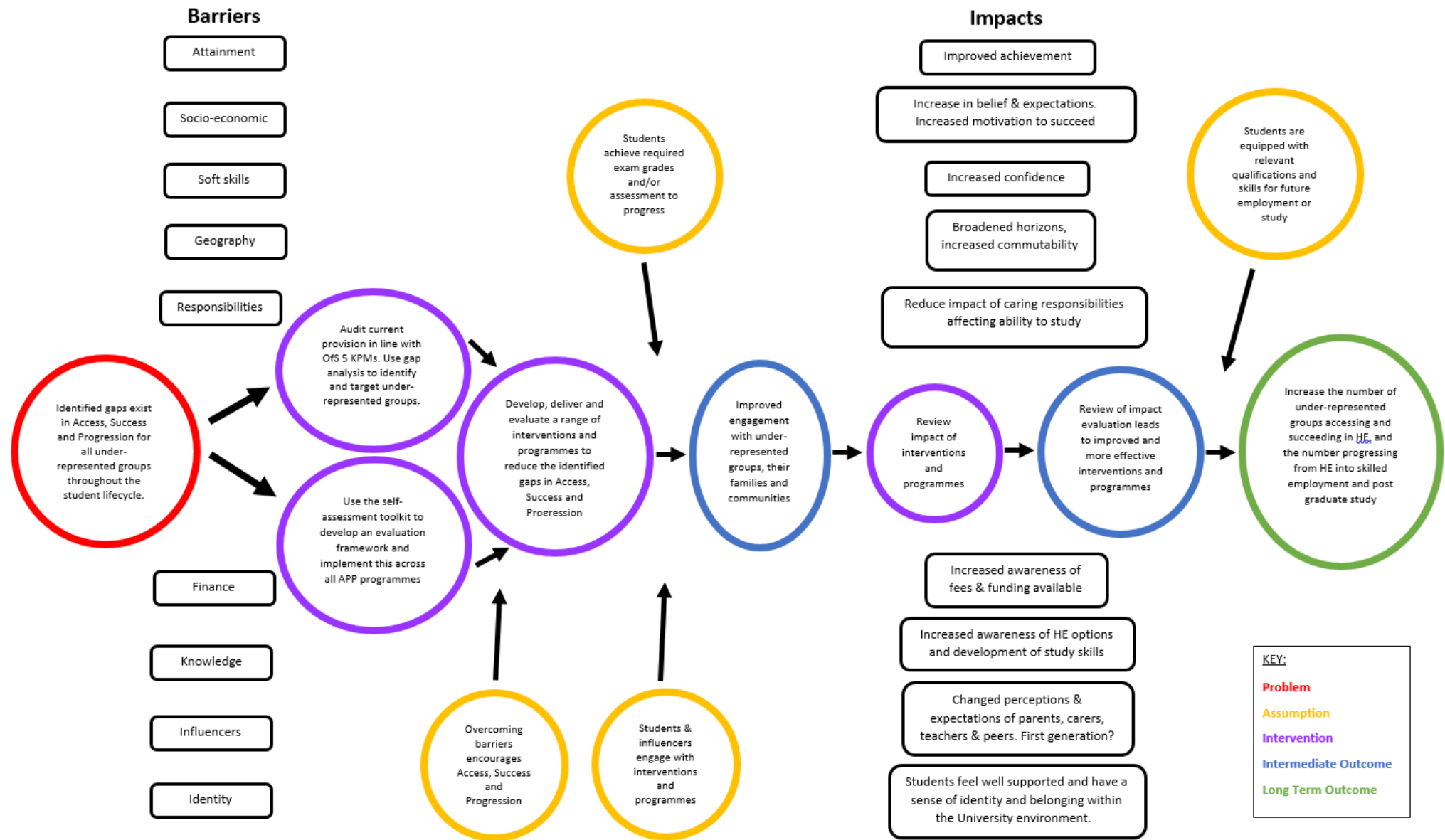
## **Theory of Change for Attainment Raising**

The Theories of Change and Lifecycle Frameworks for the Success and Progression strands were completed in 2019-20. To build on this, and support Priority B of the Variation Requests due in July 2022, we are designing a Theory of Change for Attainment Raising. This is being done in consultation with The Centre for Transforming Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) so that it includes the latest research and thinking on what constitutes attainment raising outreach.

In this section we have given some key examples of the measures that we have, or are putting in place, to link to our objectives for the different target groups and student lifecycle stages. Further examples are outlined in Table 2. The evidence that underpins these comes from impact evaluation; for all of our interventions we have used Narrative Evaluation and, where we are building on existing

programmes which have it, Empirical Evaluation. In most cases they fit into a relevant Theory of Change and often they are part of a developing Lifecycle Framework.

Figure 5. Overarching Theory of Change for Access, Success and Progression





**Table 2 – University of Plymouth, Examples of Strategic Measures for Target Student Groups and Lifecycle Stage**

Objective	Lifecycle Stage	Type of Impact Evaluation:		Theory of Change	Lifecycle Framework	Example Measures
		<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Empirical</i>			
1. Reduce the gap in enrolment between POLAR 4 Quintile 1 and 5 students.	Access	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	A programme of interventions from Primary School level through to adults to overcome barriers into HE identified in ToC.
1. Reduce the gap in enrolment between POLAR 4 Quintile 1 and 5 students.	Access	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Attainment raising programmes for secondary level. Junior Academy, History, Maths, Dance and IT.
2 & 3. Increase the proportion of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority/Black students enrolling at UoP.	Access	Yes	In development	Yes	Yes	Specific outreach with local community-based company targeted at local Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students.
2 & 3. Increase the proportion of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority/Black students enrolling at UoP.	Access	Yes	In development	Yes	Yes	Regional outreach targeting schools in regions with high populations of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students.
4. Reduce the gap in continuation rates between POLAR 4 Q1 and Q5 students.	Success	Yes	Yes	Yes	In development	Student Mentoring Programme to support study skills, increased knowledge of HE and sense of identity.
4. Reduce the gap in continuation rates between	Success	Yes	Yes	Yes	In development	SPRINT female career development programme.

Objective	Lifecycle Stage	Type of Impact Evaluation:		Theory of Change	Lifecycle Framework	Example Measures
		<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Empirical</i>			
POLAR 4 Q1 and Q5 students.						
4. Reduce the gap in continuation rates between POLAR 4 Q1 and Q5 students.	Success	Yes	In development	Yes	In development	Peer Assisted Learning scheme to support and mentor students.
5. Reduce the gap in degree attainment between Black, Asian, and ethnic minority and white students.	Success	Yes	Yes	Yes	In development	Tailored Professional Mentoring Programme targeting Black, Asian, and ethnic minority.
5. Reduce the gap in degree attainment between Black, Asian, and ethnic minority and white students.	Success	Yes	In development	Yes	In development	Black, Asian, and ethnic minority Student Success Programme with development of diversity networks.
6. Reduce the gap in degree attainment between black and white students.	Success	Yes	Yes	Yes	In development	Tailored Professional Mentoring Programme targeting black students.
6. Reduce the gap in degree attainment between black and white students.	Success	Yes	In development	Yes	In development	Black, Asian, and ethnic minority Student Success Programme with development of diversity networks.
7. Reduce the gap in continuation rates between young and mature students.	Success	Yes	Yes	In development	In development	Peer Assisted Learning scheme to support and mentor mature students.
8. Reduce the gap in continuation rates between students with a Reported	Success	Yes	In development	In development	In development	Specifically trained Study Skills Advisors that lead

Objective	Lifecycle Stage	Type of Impact Evaluation:		Theory of Change	Lifecycle Framework	Example Measures
		<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Empirical</i>			
Disability and students with no disability						workshops to provide targeted support.
9. Reduce the gap in progression between POLAR 4 Q1 and Q5 students.	Progression	Yes	In development	In development	In development	Sector specific networking events for Business, Arts & Humanities and STEM
10.Reduce the gap in access between IMD1 and IMD5 students	Access	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	A programme of interventions from Primary School level through to adults to overcome barriers into HE identified in ToC.
10.Reduce the gap in access between IMD1 and IMD5 students	Access	Yes	In development	Yes	Yes	Regional outreach targeting schools in regions with high populations of IMD 1 & 2 students.
11.Reduce the gap in progression between Black and White students	Progression	Yes	In development	In development	In development	Professional Student Mentoring – specifically for WP groups. For students from all programmes and stages.

For the Access part of the lifecycle we are working with a community based group to set up a programme aimed at Objectives 2 & 3 (Black, Asian, and ethnic minority & Black Students/Access). This will involve using existing Black, Asian, and ethnic minority/Black undergraduates to deliver sessions in schools, using Narrative Evaluation from Donnelly & Gamsu (2018) that suggests that Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students are more comfortable with, and react more positively to, interventions from people of a similar ethnic background. It will address the socio-economic and soft skills barriers from the Theory of Change.

For the Success part of the lifecycle aimed at Objective 4 (LPN/Continuation) is our Professional Mentoring Programme. This uses current undergraduates from underrepresented groups to mentor new students, to overcome the barriers of soft-skills, knowledge and identity from the Theory of Change. For this we use Narrative Evaluation which shows that mentors give encouragement to move ahead with a degree and succeed, from Collings et al (2016)<sup>13</sup>, and empirical evaluation from the mentoring scheme in the form of pre- and post-surveys.

Black & Black, Asian, and ethnic minority/Attainment (Objectives 5&6) are being addressed through a range of measures including: expanding our existing WP professional mentoring programme to targeting Black, Asian, and ethnic minority and Black students; nuanced auditing of School teaching portfolios with a view to ensuring critical, inclusive, and challenging curricula that provide opportunities for attainment regardless of individual cultural context; and specific briefings for personal tutors about the Black attainment gap.

Contained within our Employability Action Plan are specific actions which form part of a programme designed to meet the relevant APP objectives for Success and Progression. For example for Objective 4 (LPN/Continuation), one of the measures is the Professional Mentoring Programme which supports students with their studies and adaptation to HE, helping them overcome the barriers in the Theory of Change of soft skills, knowledge and identity.

Furthermore, we are developing an employer engagement programme aimed at Objective 9 (LPN/Progression). This is based on narrative research from Brooks and Youngston (2016),<sup>14</sup> which found that completing a work placement is associated with improved academic performance in the final year of study and that placement students are also more likely to secure appropriate graduate-level work and higher starting salaries upon completion of their degree in comparison to non-placement students.

As noted in Section 1.1 the South West has a number of challenges with respect to regional participation in HE, and because of economic factors our progression outcomes are low, particularly for POLAR Q1(+Q2) students<sup>15</sup>. There is increasing evidence<sup>16,17</sup> that graduate progression, success and earnings are influenced by socio-economic background and not eliminated by access to HE or reduction in attainment gaps. These structural factors are likely to be important in our students' progression, so we will develop our Theory of Change and Lifecycle Framework for Progression to develop, consider and account for these emerging ideas and hence identify appropriate interventions.

## **Financial Support**

We recognise that students from low-income households face access barriers under the broad heading of 'finance', and we offer an access bursary (the Mayflower Award) to such students. The purpose of this bursary is to mitigate against some of the financial challenges of accessing higher

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<sup>13</sup> Collings, C, Swanson, V & Watkins, R (2016) Peer mentoring during the transition to university: assessing the usage of a formal scheme within the UK, *Studies in Higher Education*, 41:11, 1995-2010, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1007939

<sup>14</sup> Brooks, R & Youngson, P L (2016) Undergraduate work placements: an analysis of the effects on career progression, *Studies in Higher Education*, 41:9, 1563-1578, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2014.988702

<sup>15</sup> Data: TEF Year 4

<sup>16</sup> Britton et al (2016), How English domiciled graduate earnings vary with gender, institution attended, subject and socio-economic background, *Institute for Fiscal Studies Working Paper*, W16/06.

<sup>17</sup> Britton et al (2018), Is Improving Access to University Enough? Socio-Economic Gaps in the Earnings of English Graduates, *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 81, No. 2, pp. 328-368.

education, for instance contributing to accommodation, living or transport costs. From our own evaluation of the Mayflower Award, using the OfS Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit (see Section 3.3.1), we know that more students who received the Mayflower Award continued into their second year of study, compared with those who did not receive it. We will continue to offer this support because our data and evaluation have shown that by supporting students from low-income households we are also reaching other underrepresented groups, in particular, low participation neighbourhood students, mature students, students with a reported disability and care leavers. This links to Objective 1 (IMD1/Access), Objective 4 (LPN/Continuation), Objective 7 (Age/Continuation), and Objective 8 (Disability/Continuation).

We will invest 4.2% of our higher fee income on Financial Support which is approximately £1.5M pa. Our eligibility criteria for this support are reviewed annually, our current criteria use the household income indicator in order to group students, initially by identifying the lowest household income group as £0 to £16,000 and a second tier of low household income of £16,001 to £25,000. In addition, students are also eligible if they have been granted the relevant SFE status as a care leaver or estranged student or are Young Adult Carers. This links to our commitment for Care Leavers.

The core criteria also include that recipients: must be England domiciled, must have no previous study at higher education level at any institution, their programme must be the first one they have started, they must not be studying at a partner college, and they must be regularly attending throughout the academic year. The criteria for financial support are publicised to prospective and existing students (see Section 4).

The level of the financial award is reviewed annually, on the basis of student demographics, and supports living costs. Broadly, the value of the award ranges from £400-£1500 (Table 3). The exact value of the award is tiered according to a student’s household income. For care leavers, the award is usually provided in every year of study to the value of £1500 per student (see also Section 4).

**Table 3 – Summary of Financial Support Available for Students (2019/20 figures)**

Student group	Financial award	Other terms
Household income between £0-£25k per year	£1000	Paid in 2 instalments in the first year only
Household income between £25,001-£35k per year	£400	Paid in 2 instalments in the first year only
Care leavers	£1,500	Paid in 2 instalments in each year of study
Young Adult Carers higher-rate (criteria available from Student Funding Team)	Between £300 - £1,500 depending on nature of caring responsibility	Paid in 2 instalments in each year of study
Students who are estranged from their families	£1,500	Paid in 2 instalments in each year of study

### 3.1.4 Collaboration

#### Academic Partnerships

The University has a number of longstanding collaborative academic partners located across the South West who deliver University approved, successful, higher education programmes within a further education (FE) context: this equates to approximately 4500 students pa. Our partnerships facilitate HE opportunities for those who may not have been able to access them due to individual circumstances such as family commitments, caring responsibilities, geographical location, work commitments and mode of delivery. The University values partnership as a means of providing



inclusive, high quality student learning opportunities built on research-informed practice with co-designed, co-delivered and co-monitored programmes.

Amongst the partnerships, we recognise the needs of our students within the respective colleges, with a large proportion entering from non-traditional backgrounds including many mature students from low participation neighbourhoods that want to study on a part-time basis, for example our Nursing and Health Professions students. This links to Objective 7 (Age/Continuation). Partners also have extensive FE portfolios including BTEC, Access to HE, NVQ and Apprenticeships at both FE and HE level. This natural extension to HE within the FE context provides students with opportunities to gain degree level education in their locality which links to Objective 1 (IMD1/Access).

Although partners have their own institution APPs, the University aims to work collaboratively to support them and share events, activities and best practice. This widens opportunities for both students and partners, demonstrating our commitment to building stronger and more inclusive partnerships across the region. This includes offering student-focussed engagement along with targeted support for progression when students are transitioning into honours degree study.

### **NCOP Outreach Hub Strategic Approach to Collaboration**

As the lead institution for the NSSW NCOP Consortium, the University of Plymouth is driving collaboration both strategically and operationally. The NCOP Outreach Hub expansion in Phase 2 will facilitate relationship-building with a broader range of regional stakeholders, employers and third sector organisations e.g. the Heart of the South West LEP and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Careers Hubs, the Enterprise Advisor Network and local Councils. Partner institutions will be able to capitalise on NSSW-forged relationships to develop broader, partner-led WP activity.

Phase 2 of NSSW provides a flexible operational model offering partners the opportunity to match fund NCOP partner-led projects with institutional APP funding. This will support WP outreach delivery beyond the immediate remit of NSSW. Benefits to partner institutions who opt to engage in this way include:

- access to NSSW staff with expertise and experience in WP outreach work
- access to Outreach Hub funding to build economies of scale and increase viability of jointly delivered outreach projects
- opportunities to deliver activities initiated and fine-tuned by NSSW, to a wider WP audience
- evaluation of activities by the NSSW Evaluation Team, providing capacity and expertise not necessarily available at the partner institution
- opportunities to capture best practice for outreach, communications and evaluation, and to implement institutionally

Each partner-led project proposal will be subject to NSSW procedures, which require explicit identification of which barriers to HE will be addressed, SMART targets, a finance profile, project collaborators, shared aims, and rigorous evaluation of impact, through outcomes-based evidence (Objectives 1, 2 and 3).

The University of Plymouth is one of the NSSW partner institutions that will collaborate with joint NCOP-APP funded projects in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

### **Access Partnerships**

The University of Plymouth has been active in building partnerships with schools and third sector bodies, both local and national, over a number of years. The key relationships that support increased access to Higher Education are detailed below.

*Sir John Hunt Community Sports College* – the University has worked closely with the History department at this school to develop a programme that uses History undergraduates to raise attainment for students studying at GCSE. The additional benefit is to the undergraduates who develop their own soft-skills and enhance their CVs (Objectives 1 and 9).

*Children's University* – as a Children's University partner the University oversees and manages the implementation and operation of Devon and Cornwall Children's University throughout Cornwall and

Devon. This is the key programme within our access strand through which we engage with primary level children and currently includes approximately 130 primary schools, as well as some secondary schools where we work with year 7 and 8. A significant number of the partner schools are within low participation and low quintile IMD neighbourhoods (Objectives 1, 2 and 3).

*Exim Dance* – this attainment raising programme is delivered throughout the academic year, teaching dance to students from year 9 to year 12. For participating students up to the age of 16, there is a Dance Leadership, Level 2 qualification in Dance, that provides 16 points towards UCAS applications. For participating students and the undergraduates who support the delivery of the programme there is a Level 3 qualification which also provides 16 points towards UCAS applications (Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 9).

*Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support* – in this attainment raising programme Black, Asian, and ethnic minority refugees receive support and training in how to use the most common ICT software and platforms. The students take British Computer Society exams, which lead to nationally recognised qualifications that enable them to either enrol in further study or to apply for jobs in the local community (Objectives 2 and 3).

*Articulacy* – this South West Company specialises in building students' confidence in communication and presentation through summative assessment in the form of English Speaking Board exams. The University built on the existing Literacy programme delivered through NSSW for Y9s, to pilot and deliver Employability workshops for Y10. The aim is to continue this intervention and align it more closely with the schools and students who took part in the Articulacy programme in Y9 so that we can evaluate the cumulative impact of a follow up intervention in Y10 (Objectives 1, 2 and 3).

*National Citizen Service* – the University ran a collaborative programme with NSSW to build on the four-phase NCS summer programme. The Plymouth Argyle Community Trust delivered this in Plymouth, and we provided a series of follow up evening workshops around accessing HE and skills. Following the empirical evaluation from this, we have reviewed and revised the programme and will repeat it on a bigger scale next academic year (Objectives 1, 2 and 3).

*Beyond Face* – this is a community-based performance company whose mission is to raise the profile and visibility of people of colour within the arts (Objectives 2 and 3). The University will work with Beyond Face and Black, Asian, and ethnic minority undergraduates to deliver a series of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority into Arts workshops with the goal to develop the model and scale it up for other subject areas in the near future.

*CoachBright* – the University has recently started work with CoachBright, an organisation that trains university students to coach individual pupils for one hour a week over the course of a term in school, helping them become independent and resilient learners. They focus on one GCSE or A Level subject requiring improvement, and this can lead to better grades, greater confidence and more independence (Objectives 1, 2 and 3). We will aim to expand this to include more schools.

*Careerpilot* - As part of our strategy, we are using the impartial, collaborative Careerpilot website for 13-19 year olds, which is co-funded by twenty universities. This supports schools to meet their statutory careers responsibilities (including meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks), and to reach underrepresented young people within engaged schools, by providing information about the range of higher education pathways and providers in the South of England.

By delivering Careerpilot workshops the University works with underrepresented groups in schools to provide clear and consistent information and support to ensure young people know their options and can make informed decisions about progression to higher education (Objectives 1, 2 and 3).

Where we partner with schools to raise attainment it is our intention that as part of this we will support them to use the Pathway Planner tool. This provides effective, efficient and targeted personal careers guidance to meet the individual needs of young people, using triage and a whole-school, integrated approach. Evaluation shows that it raises aspiration and expectation to support the intermediate outcomes indicative of attainment raising.

*Lifepilot* – in addition, we use the Lifepilot website as a tool to engage and support mature and potential part-time learners in progressing to higher level education. The site provides information and advice to support a range of entry points to learning that are the starting points for progression to HE. The site also includes tools to help adults assess their HE level skills and activities to help them upskill ready for progression to higher education (Objective 7).

From the Lifecycle Framework for Access (Appendix 5), we show how the various programmes and interventions that we deliver with our partners impact positively on the barriers around attainment, socio-economic, lack of soft skills, lack of knowledge of HE, finance, the impacts of influencers and geography.

Building on the relationships developed through NCOP, the University is in discussion with the other HEI providers in Plymouth; Plymouth Marjon University, Plymouth College of Art and Plymouth City College, to develop a collaborative programme to address the shortfall in Black, Asian, and ethnic minority student access, which, as already noted, is a feature of our regional demographics (Objectives 2 & 3).

### **3.2 Student Consultation**

The design and development of the five year APP was implemented through a number of work streams and a steering group. The University of Plymouth Students' Union's (UPSU) representatives<sup>18</sup> were members of the steering group and the work streams responsible for student consultation. We asked key questions from each of the main work streams (Access, Continuation, Attainment and Progression), which were sent to a range of student ambassadors in the form of a survey. We built on this with a Student Focus Group to gain higher-level qualitative feedback. The outcomes were incorporated into the main workstreams to determine the key measures to address the gaps identified through analysis of the data provided by the OfS.

Student engagement with the institutional decision-making and the governance is well established. Our students are full members of all the major academic governance committees, including the University Senate and the Board of Governors. In addition, the Student Life Committee is jointly chaired by the UPSU President with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience. All Schools have staff-student liaison committees, as do the University's partner institutions. In collaboration with academic staff, students are actively involved in curriculum and programme development through their membership of Faculty and School Teaching, Learning and Quality Committees, Academic Programme Committees, programme approval events and periodic review panels. Furthermore, at least once a year, students are encouraged to engage in discussion with External Examiners, either in person or remotely. This enables the latter to obtain direct feedback relating to student experience, which is subsequently included in External Examiner annual reports, and later scrutinised by Programme Committees.

Thus, whilst the student voice is strongly embedded in the academic governance and management of the institution, the development of a new five-year APP has provided the University with an opportunity to re-assess, in collaboration with the student body, its strategies for improving the engagement and participation of specific groups of students. Discussions with UPSU, via two workshops and an APP student consultation group, have highlighted that the University should develop a deeper and more structured approach to consultation and working with the Union.

The APP student consultation group supported the view of the UPSU representatives that to target students belonging to either under-represented or under-performing groups was both difficult and potentially alienating. In agreement with the UPSU representatives, a much broader approach was favoured, one that aims to identify measures that can make a positive impact on all students, rather than those solely from identified groups. To achieve this, it was determined that we should take a more structured approach (detailed below), that takes full advantage of the channels which exist through UPSU.

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<sup>18</sup> This included the UPSU Vice-President for Welfare, who was the Union President-elect for 2019/20, ensuring continuity of representation through the formulation of the original document.

The first planned step is to understand the representation pathways and how these operate, in order to make best use of these forums and channels. These include Course Student Representatives, School Student Representatives, Student Officers, Sabbatical Officers and part-time Officers elected by UPSU Council, and the UPSU Council itself. Since under-represented groups of students have roles on the UPSU Council, it was agreed that the Council would be a valuable focal point for consultation feedback. A detailed review will take place with UPSU over the coming months to map these representation pathways and groups and, in particular, how they interface with University governance and processes such as Quality Assurance mechanisms. This review will identify how best to make use of these pathways in order to optimise consultation so that it produces honest and effective feedback, allowing the institution to understand which measures will make a significant positive difference. In the first instance, the Academic Registrar, who is the Chair of the new APP Operations Group, will lead this review. The Group has representation from across the institution, including members of UPSU, and reports to the new Student Success Committee.

Secondly, as suggested by the UPSU representatives, we will develop a programme of areas for feedback, and from this we will focus on a specific issue each month. This single issue would then be subject to comprehensive consultation using the UPSU channels and forums. With the advice of UPSU, we will identify key platforms, such as the Union Council, where we can present the feedback to students. This will allow a timely response so that the consultation is dynamic. The APP Operational Group will oversee and co-ordinate the consultation. The programme of questions will be developed by the APP Steering Committee, via the APP Operations Group, and we will use the feedback to inform the measures taken to address the targeted categories of students where improved access and performance is needed, allowing the APP to evolve in response to student feedback. A further role for this newly structured consultation will be to promote the initiatives and programmes designed to positively impact students, including the specific target groups, but also to obtain meaningful and timely feedback on the value of such measures so these can be adapted, enhanced or even replaced if necessary.

The APP Operations Group will work in partnership with UPSU to provide additional training to Course Representatives and part-time SU officers for under-represented groups, on optimising consultation feedback collection. Supported by our Planning & Analytics Office, this training will include guidance on interpreting data in relation to the areas for improvement. Discussions on designing and delivering this training will take place in time for the start of the next academic year to ensure that it can form part of the induction programme for students in these roles and builds on existing training.

### **3.3 Evaluation strategy**

#### **Strategic Context**

As stated earlier we have 11 specific objectives that are derived from our Assessment of Performance in 2019, three relating to Access, six to Success and two to Progression. These objectives provide our long-term outcomes from which we derive our overarching and subsequent Theories of Change. From these, we are developing lifecycle frameworks in which we collate our activities and programmes, and use impact evaluation to develop and analyse the interventions. This is a long-term process which will develop over the life of the APP to ensure the outcomes from our programme will enable us to achieve our objectives.

In order to embed evaluation across the Access, Success and Progression strands the University has put in place an Evaluation Steering Group comprised of Professional Service Staff, Academics and Students. Meeting on a quarterly basis to review how the different types of evaluation are working across the different strands, share best practice and inform further development, the group, allied to the Theories of Change and Student Lifecycle Frameworks, will lead to a consistent approach to evaluation planning across all access and participation programmes. It will also look to build on existing academic research of evaluation of Widening Participation.

Following an audit of the evaluation skills of outreach staff the Evaluation Steering Group will set up training and workshops to build their understanding of; the different evaluation types, the approaches

used, how to implement systematic data collection and utilise the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT), the implications of GDPR and the required ethical standards.

We will effectively implement the proposed evaluation for each programme and intervention and ensure that the data produced is collected, tracked and monitored. Using HEAT and relevant staff expertise, we will produce specific reports for the Evaluation Steering Group. This will enable critical appraisal of the programmes and interventions, including the effectiveness of the investment made, to ensure that we base improvements and changes on the learning and outcomes.

The University is in discussion with several of its regional partner colleges to set up an evaluation support group. This will share expertise, explore joint approaches to evaluation and enable larger sample sizes for data analysis to provide scalability and potential generalisation of data. In addition, the University is working jointly with external organisations to build on its existing evaluation practice and expertise.

- Delivering joint Outreach Hub projects with NSSW, working with their Evaluation Team to pool knowledge and resources.
- Delivering an outreach project as part of a new NEON Improving Access project. This initiative builds on the findings of the recent “Working Class Heroes, Understanding access to higher education for white students from lower socio-economic backgrounds”. The aim is to bring a range of different projects together and enhance their impact as distinct pieces of work, whilst also making a tangible impact on the national agenda in this area.
- Through Devon and Cornwall Children’s University we intend to participate in an EEF effectiveness study which builds on an existing, small scale, randomised control efficacy study. This will involve scaling the evaluations to test the security of the previous findings in an attempt to build evidence and higher confidence in Children’s University interventions.
- To support our APP impact evaluation we will utilise the expertise and experience of SERIO, a specialist social, economic and market research arm of the University, which has extensive evaluation experience.

### **Programme Design**

Using the Self-evaluation toolkit, in conjunction with the Access and Participation Standards of Evidence, the University has identified that for the Access strand, there is evaluation that is either already in place, or emerging or in development. We will develop the evaluation for the Success and Progression strands over the next year. We have carried out a literature review of the key target areas to ensure that there is narrative evaluation to inform the design of the programmes and interventions in all three strands. Empirical evaluation is well developed in Access and while it is limited for Success and Progression it is being developed.

As detailed earlier, the University has an overarching theory of change for the whole student lifecycle that details the expected overall outcome from the Access, Success and Progression APP strands. From this, it has developed separate Theories of Change for the disaggregated access strands of pre-16 activities, post-16 activities (Appendices 4a and 4b), and work is in progress to develop separate Theories of Change for the areas of Success and Progression. These will give a clear set of intermediate outcomes that take into account, and are underpinned by, relevant assumptions.

The Student Lifecycle Framework developed for Access (Appendix 5) has enabled a complete review of the current interventions and programmes so that they are now clearly outcomes’ focused and linked to one of the three types of impact evaluation. With this model in place, we have a clear framework which is transferrable to the Success and Progression strands. This will enable us to develop programmes and interventions that build on those in the previous strands to meet our objectives, align good practice and, using the results from evaluation, to continually review and assess the effectiveness of our interventions and how to improve them where required.

### **Evaluation Design And Implementation**

To evaluate our progress supporting students from the underrepresented groups to overcome the individual barriers identified in our Theory of Change, we embed evaluation of students’ perceptions of barriers within different activity evaluations. This allows us to assess the distance travelled by

students towards overcoming individual barriers, with longitudinal tracking and follow-up surveys used to monitor the impact of interventions on students' experiences of each barrier, e.g. attainment or knowledge of HE.

In addition, each activity in the Lifecycle Framework is mapped by the stage in the student lifecycle or age group to the barriers identified in our Theory of Change. This mapping allows us to identify areas where there may be shortfalls in activities and develop additional activities if required. Engagement of students in all activities is monitored through the collection of data (student name, date of birth, home postcode, school, year group) which is gathered for each individual intervention, and then uploaded onto HEAT to facilitate longitudinal tracking.

To enable us to achieve our aims and objectives for the target groups we have identified, and evaluate whether activities and programmes are successfully contributing to these, we will engage in mixed-methods evaluation of the different interventions. Alongside the longitudinal tracking and use of surveys to monitor students' attitudes towards HE and their perceptions of barriers to HE progression, and to map changes against engagement with activities in the Lifecycle Framework in order to show impact, we will use the following tools to evaluate individual activities:

- Student Surveys – pre- and/or post-activity surveys to collect quantitative and qualitative data, that include key questions relating to the Theory of Change barriers, so that we are able to conduct comparative analysis of activities and their impact against the barriers they seek to address. These provide formative feedback on our provision, and feed into the development of future interventions.
- Teacher Surveys – pre- and/or post-activity surveys, as well as later follow-up surveys to identify students' needs and gaps in provision, as well as to assess effectiveness of activities, suggestions for improvement, and longer-term perceptions of impact.
- Focus Groups and Interviews – to assess the impact and identify areas for improvement of activities.
- Informal Discussions – to identify the impact of activities and good practice and/or areas for improvement. These can take place with staff (teaching and activity delivery staff), students, parents, and Student Ambassadors.

### **Learning To Shape Improvements**

The data collected from these different evaluation methods will allow the University to produce reports on individual activities, which inform and shape future interventions for these activities, as part of an evaluation cycle. All reports produced will feed into the monitoring of progress towards the APP aims and objectives, as part of the overall evaluation cycle, supporting us to assess how well we are aligning with our objectives, and enabling us to evidence the impact of the APP programme.

With this process in place, we have a clear framework that will transfer to the Success and Progression strands, where evaluation is more in development. This will enable us to design programmes that build on those in the previous strands in the student lifecycle and align good practice. We will use the results from evaluation to continually review and assess interventions' effectiveness and how to improve those where desired outcomes have yet to be achieved.

The University of Plymouth is a member of HEAT which assists Higher Education Institutions in England to target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activity. Being part of the HEAT service allows us to share the costs of a monitoring and evaluation system and it also underpins the collaborative delivery of evidence based evaluation. The national community of HEAT members work together in the research and development of effective, fit for purpose evaluation practice to inform outreach planning and assess impact.

Working collaboratively within HEAT, we can critically reflect on our approach to evidence-based practice. HEAT subscribers have developed a student data tracking system and a set of reports which allow annual tracking of outreach participants longitudinally from Key Stage 2 through to entry to HE, postgraduate study and employment. Moving forward, as the University of Plymouth collects sufficient data of its own, it will be able to use these reports to assess the relationship between outreach programmes, disadvantage, attainment and patterns of progression into HE.

The use of longitudinal tracking on HEAT will allow the University to assess the longer-term impact of our interventions with students from our target groups and lifecycle stages. This will enable us to evaluate the impact of the University's engagement on their HE progression and inform our programmes for those underrepresented groups for which we have identified the largest gaps in access, success and progression.

## **Evaluating impact**

The University is committed to robust and quality impact evaluation. Since we set up the Impact Evaluation Team in 2020, we have been working to implement impact evaluation that follows the OfS Standards of Evidence across the student lifecycle.

At this stage, while the primary focus is on implementing impact evaluation and collecting the data to enable analysis, where possible we use sector-standard tools and techniques.

- We use triangulation to provide second and third sources of data to compare responses.
- Through our APP Question Bank, we are building a bank of questions that can be used across evaluations to ensure there is consistency in the questions asked.
- We use existing tools and research from the OfS, the NERUPI framework, TASO and Uni Connects.
- Before carrying out any activity evaluation, we meet with those responsible to ensure that they are involved in the process and can input into the questionnaire design so that it is appropriate to the participants.

Currently, there is empirical impact evaluation in place for a number of activities. Moving forward we will extend this so that there is a range of evaluated activities across the student lifecycle to ensure that we produce a wide selection of data to collect, track and monitor. To support this process we use the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) as a shared, central, online repository and reporting tool. This provides a web-based, data-capture system that tracks student engagement in Access and Participation outreach and inreach activities.

In future we will collate all the outreach activities in HEAT. This will provide us with reports that analyse the type and intensity of activity and enable us to analyse where there are gaps in our coverage in relation to our APP objectives. It will also ensure that all of our outreach activities feed into the National Outreach Coverage Dataset and the HEAT KS4 Attainment Tracking Dashboard.

To support staff across the University to understand impact evaluation we have developed an Evaluation Toolkit. This includes all the relevant documents that explain and support the processes involved and enables the University's Impact Evaluation Team to refer people where they need to develop their understanding. For the longer term, intensive activities, there is a process evaluation to review how the activity was implemented and to understand how it could be improved in the future. We will be investing in the training and development of staff so they can respond to the OfS new direction of travel for evaluation.

Through the Impact Evaluation Team, the Student Success Committee and APP Operations Group will ensure that any APP outreach activities are based on relevant narrative research, and where available, existing empirical evaluation. All activities will have to align with the appropriate Theory of Change.

The Evaluation Steering Group will oversee, review and analyse the impact evaluation for the APP. From this it will provide recommendations to enhance the quality of methods used, deciding which interventions could be utilised for quasi-experimental studies and randomised control trials. We will bring in expertise from across the University to help shape some selected programmes for control trials and will hold discussions with our Institute of Education, our Faculty of Health and the Socio Economic Research Intelligence Observatory (SERIO) to facilitate this and add rigour.

We will work closely with our Uni Connect, Next Steps South West, to collaborate on attainment-raising activities and use their In School Coordinator network to support data gathering.



When they are available, we will use the validated survey scales from the TASO Survey Validation Project to define and measure our intermediate outcomes, and show how they are leading to and/or supporting attainment raising.

Once we have enough longitudinal data we will use the HEAT KS4 Attainment Tracking Dashboard to analyse how our attainment raising activities are impacting on KS4 attainment within the schools we are working with.

The IET will interpret the OfS guidance, and work with TASO to determine how to work with independent evaluators. We will share our learning to support understanding of what works across the sector and learn from other people's learning, setting up informal networks with other HEPs as appropriate.

### **3.3.1 Financial Evaluation**

Financial evaluation is carried out within the Student Funding Unit which provides reports to the Student Success Committee as required. We will continue to evaluate our provision of financial support to students, in particular our Mayflower Award. We do this currently using the OfS Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit, a survey of recipients of financial support to evaluate how and why such support affects their academic, personal and social outcomes, and an interview of a sample of recipients of financial support to provide more detailed and in-depth understanding of the impact of financial support. This evaluation will help us to inform decisions about this provision in the future, enabling us to target support where it is most impactful upon students' academic outcomes.

### **3.4 Monitoring Progress Against Delivery of the Plan**

As described in Section 3.1.2, the University has established a governance structure for the oversight and management of the APP with a strategic, University-level Student Success Committee. The Student Success Group is supported by two sub-groups: the APP Operations Group, and a Practitioners' Group. Students are members of the Student Success Group and its two sub groups to ensure that there is a strong voice in the development, monitoring and evaluation of the APP.

The APP Operations Group, which is responsible for overseeing the implementation and ongoing monitoring of the APP, marshals the ongoing consultation with the student community as set out in Section 3.2 above. The Operations Group is responsible for the ongoing monitoring of the delivery of the plan and progress against targets, as well as the evaluation of the measures deployed through the APP. Evaluation activity includes the development of an Assumptions, Risks, Issues and Dependencies (ARlAD) log to facilitate regular reviews of outcomes against plan, along with reviews of each strand i.e. Access, Success and Progression. Where progress is not on track, the APP Operational Group requires the lead for the relevant strand(s) to develop an action plan to mitigate against lack of progress and will report to the Student Success Committee on progress.

The Student Success Committee ensures that momentum and consultation are maintained across the University through quarterly meetings with key Faculty Lead staff, including Associate Deans for Education along with Heads, and Associate Heads of School. In addition, we will put in place regular communications targeted to different stakeholders.

## **4. Provision of Information to Students**

The University makes its latest, approved APP, available on its website, via a link to the OfS website. This enables it to be accessed by current and prospective students. The agreement for 2019/20 on can be found at <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us> in the section, 'Further Useful Information...', at the bottom of the page. This information is produced in line with University statements on Value for Money, which are reported in our Annual Report.

In line with the Competition and Markets Authority guidance and our obligations under the QAA Code of Practice, the University is committed to publishing clear and accessible information about its fees and financial support for prospective and existing students. We provide this information in a range of formats, through recruitment publications and on the website [www.plymouth.ac.uk/study/fees/tuition-fees](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/study/fees/tuition-fees). As part of the commitment to giving clarity to fees and funding information, we include the following statement both in publications and on the website:

*'Please note that fees are reviewed on an annual basis. Fees and the conditions that apply to them shown in the prospectus are correct at the time of going to print. Fees shown on the web are the most up to date. Continuing students may receive an annual increase in line with an appropriate inflationary measure (within the appropriate maximum fee cap).'*

Information regarding fees is also detailed in the University's offer letters for admissions, with applicants also being directed to the University's website for the most up to date information.

The University publicises information on our external website about financial support (<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/study/fees/scholarships-bursaries-and-funding/bursaries>). This webpage describes the Mayflower Award, our access bursary for underrepresented groups. The eligibility criteria as currently listed are : students who are from a household where the income is less than £35,000 per annum, care leavers, estranged students, and young adult carers. To be eligible, students must also be in the first year of study of their first course (with no previous higher education study), and must be domiciled in England.

The amount of award provided is dependent on the student's circumstances (e.g. students with a household income of £0-£25,000 per annum receive £1,000 in their first year of study, whereas those with a higher household income below the £35,000 per annum threshold receive a lower award of £400, also in their first year of study only). Care leavers and estranged students receive £1,500 each year of study. Students will receive the highest award they are eligible for if they meet multiple criteria, and must be in receipt of the full funding package from Student Finance England.

We continually review the level of award given, to ensure we are maximising our value for money and focusing the award on those groups for whom finance could be a significant barrier to access and success. The webpage describes the eligibility criteria, and students contact the Student Funding Team to find out the exact amount of award they may be eligible for each year.

## **5. Appendix**

The following items from the fees and targets and investment documents have been appended, along with our Theory of Change and Lifecycle Framework documents:

1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)
2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)
3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)
4. University of Plymouth Theories of Change for (a) pre-16 and (b) post-16 Access
5. University of Plymouth Lifecycle Framework

**Provider fee information 2022-23**Provider name: University of Plymouth  
Provider UKPRN: 10007801**Summary of 2022-23 course fees**

\*course type not listed by the provider as available in 2022-23. This means that any such course delivered in 2022-23 would be subject to fees capped at the basic fee amount.

**Table 1a - Full-time course fee levels for 2022-23 students**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	*	Fee applies to continuing students only	£9,000
First degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation year/Year 0	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£11,100
Sandwich year	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£1,850
Sandwich year	*	Fee applies to continuing students only	£900
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£1,385
Other	*	*	*

**Table 1b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2022-23 students**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	BCNO Limited 10000911 - BCOM – Integrated Masters	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

**Table 1c - Part-time course fee levels for 2022-23 students**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Foundation degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Foundation year/Year 0	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*

Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

**Table 1d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2022-23 students**

<b>Sub-contractual part-time course type:</b>	<b>Additional information:</b>	<b>Cohort:</b>	<b>Course fee:</b>
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

**Provider fee information 2021-22**Provider name: University of Plymouth  
Provider UKPRN: 10007801**Summary of 2021-22 course fees**

\*course type not listed by the provider as available in 2021-22. This means that any such course delivered in 2021-22 would be subject to fees capped at the basic fee amount.

**Table 1a - Full-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	*	Fee applies to continuing students only	£9,000
First degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation year/Year 0	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£11,100
Sandwich year	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£1,850
Sandwich year	*	Fee applies to continuing students only	£900
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£1,385
Other	*	*	*

**Table 1b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	BCNO Limited 10000911 - BCOM – Integrated Masters	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

**Table 1c - Part-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Foundation degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Foundation year/Year 0	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*

Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

**Table 1d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students**

<b>Sub-contractual part-time course type:</b>	<b>Additional information:</b>	<b>Cohort:</b>	<b>Course fee:</b>
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

## Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

\*Course type not listed by the provider as available to new entrants in 2020-21. This means that any such course delivered to new entrants in 2020-21 would be subject to fees capped at the basic fee amount.

**Inflationary statement:**

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we intend to increase fees each year using the RPI-X

**Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	£11,100
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	£1,385
Other	*	*

**Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 students**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	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	*	*
Other	BCNO Limited 10000911 - BCOM – Integrated Masters	£9,250

**Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	£6,935
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	£6,935
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21**

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	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	*	*
Other	*	*



# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Plymouth

Provider UKPRN: 10007801

## Investment summary

The OfS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

### Note about the data:

The figures in Table 4a relate to all expenditure on activities and measures that support the ambitions set out in an access and participation plan, where they relate to access to higher education. The figures in Table 4b only relate to the expenditure on activities and measures that support the ambitions set out in an access and participation plan, where they relate to access to higher education which is funded by higher fee income. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

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.

**Table 4a - Investment summary (£)**

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£1,803,700.00	£1,748,477.00	£1,750,732.00	£1,696,650.00	£1,696,650.00
Access (pre-16)	£1,010,072.00	£1,276,388.00	£1,276,034.00	£1,238,555.00	£1,238,555.00
Access (post-16)	£523,073.00	£174,847.00	£175,073.00	£169,665.00	£169,665.00
Access (adults and the community)	£90,185.00	£87,425.00	£87,537.00	£84,833.00	£84,833.00
Access (other)	£180,370.00	£209,817.00	£210,088.00	£203,597.00	£203,597.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£1,515,108.00	£1,468,721.00	£1,470,614.00	£1,425,186.00	£1,425,186.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£541,110.00	£524,543.00	£525,219.00	£508,995.00	£508,995.00

**Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)**

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£36,074,016.00	£34,969,546.00	£35,014,631.00	£33,933,006.00	£33,933,006.00
Access investment	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Financial support	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%
Research and evaluation	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	10.7%	10.7%	10.7%	10.7%	10.7%

**Targets and investment plan  
2020-21 to 2024-25**

Provider name: University of Plymouth

Provider UKPRN: 10007801

**Targets****Table 4a - Access**

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	2020-21 milestones	2021-22 milestones	2022-23 milestones	2023-24 milestones	2024-25 milestones	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To further reduce the gap in participation in HE for students from lower household income or socioeconomic status backgrounds	PTA_1	Socio-economic	Gap between IMD1 and IMD5 students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	9.0%	8.0%	7.0%	6.0%	5.0%	4.0%	This target and milestones will deliver more than a halving of the IMD1-5 access gap over 5 years
To increase the proportion and reduce the gap in participation in HE for BAME students	PTA_2	Ethnicity	Proportion of BAME students to the University of Plymouth	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	10.1%	11.9%	12.5%	13.1%	13.7%	14.5%	These are ambitious milestones for Plymouth given our demographics. The South West has the lowest BAME proportion in the UK at 13.3%. At the end of the 5 years we aim to be above our local BAME population.
To increase the proportion and reduce the gap in participation in HE for Black students	PTA_3	Ethnicity	Proportion of Black students to the University of Plymouth	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	2.1%	3	3.3	3.8	4.3	4.8	These are ambitious milestones for Plymouth given our demographics. The South West has a very low Black population of 3.0%. At the end of the 5 years we aim to be above our local Black population.

**Table 4b - Success**

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	2020-21 milestones	2021-22 milestones	2022-23 milestones	2023-24 milestones	2024-25 milestones	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To improve the relative continuation rate for students from LPNs	PTS_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Percentage difference in continuation rates between POLAR4 Q5 and Q1 students	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	6.1%	5.0%	4.5%	4.0%	3.5%	2.5%	This target and milestones will deliver a halving of the LPN continuation gap over 5 years
To reduce the attainment gap for BAME students	PTS_2	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between White and BAME students.	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	14.0%	12.8%	11.8%	10.5%	8.8%	6.5%	The milestones are set to halve the attainment gap over 5 years. Noting that it will take time for these interventions to take effect, the yearly milestones have been profiled so that we make greater progress towards the later years.
To reduce the attainment gap for black students	PTS_3	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between White and Black students.	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	15.0%	13.5%	12.4%	10.7%	8.9%	6.6%	Noting that it will take time for these interventions to take effect, the yearly milestones have been profiled so that we make greater progress towards the later years.
To improve the relative continuation gap for Mature students	PTS_4	Mature	Percentage difference in continuation rates between Mature and Young students	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	5.7%	4.5%	4.0%	3.5%	3.0%	2.5%	This target and milestones will deliver a halving of the LPN continuation gap over 5 years.
To reduce the attainment gap for Disabled students	PTS_5	Disabled	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between Disabled and Non-Disabled students.	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	5.0%	4.2%	3.5%	2.5%	1.2%	0.0%	This target and milestones will eliminate the Disabled-Non-disabled attainment gap over 5 years.

**Table 4c - Progression**

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	2020-21 milestones	2021-22 milestones	2022-23 milestones	2023-24 milestones	2024-25 milestones	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To reduce the gap in progression for students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods	PTP_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Percentage difference in progression between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students.	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	8.2%	6.8%	6.0%	5.2%	4.2%	3.2%	These milestones will improve the gap between our POLAR4 Q1 and POLAR4 Q5 students' Progression to higher-skilled employment or postgraduate study