**Postcode Inequity: Closing the Awarding Gap for Stage 1 STEM Students residing in our most deprived UK postcodes**

Louise:

The STEM Faculty has identified the awarding gap between IMD Q1 and IMD Q5, that's the most and least deprived UK postcodes, as a priority under Access, Participation and Success criteria. We have identified that gateway stage 1 STEM modules have awarding gaps between 10% and over 25% depending on module and presentation.

We have surveyed around 3,000 students residing in the most deprived UK postcodes alongside a separate survey of another 3,000 students residing in the least deprived postcodes. All of these students have completed one or more gateway stage 1 STEM modules. Questions asked were themed around

study intensity, time available for study, other commitments alongside study, additional costs and financial support, broadband connections, means of accessing module materials, study space and access to resources.

Jennie:

Emerging themes from the survey results indicate IMD Q1 students often do

not have optimal study environments. For example, one student reported "I live in a tower block that is constantly bombarded with noise from outside above and below, there is also excessive drug use from other residents." In comparison, many IMD Q5 students reported having a private study space free of distractions. Also of note, students living in more deprived areas are more likely to have caring responsibilities and/or work full-time.

Encouragingly, approximately 50% of each survey group expressed an interest in being part of a focus group to further explore their study experiences. Next in a separate phase of the project, we will undertake a parallel intersectional study for socioeconomic status with other characteristics, such as ethnicity. Outputs from the project will also inform the production of the new stage one science curriculum modules. It is anticipated that as students with other APS identified priorities very often reside in the most deprived postcode areas, for example, black students and students with declared mental health conditions. The outcomes from this research will encapsulate other APS identified priorities for awarding gaps.