ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN

2020/21-2024/25

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

ACCESS
PARTICIPATION
SUCCESS

The Open University

Contents

Introduction

Widening access to and enhancing success in Higher Education (HE) are at the heart of The Open University's (OU's) mission. We aim to support all students to reach their potential and fulfil their ambitions. The OU is the largest single provider of part-time HE in the UK and has a significant presence in all four UK Nations with nearly 25% of the students studying in either Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland in 2021/22.

After carrying out in-depth statistical analysis for students who are under-represented and disadvantaged in HE, the OU developed a plan for the University to remove inequalities in access and outcomes for these students.   This Access and Participation Plan (APP) commits the University to achieving ambitious targets to address:

- the under-representation of Black and Asian students
- inequitable outcomes for Black, Asian and minority ethnic students
- inequitable outcomes for disabled students and students from the most deprived areas of the UK, including progression to highly skilled employment and further study.

Since 2009/10 the number of adults accessing higher education has fallen, and from 2019/20 England has had fewer adults aged 21-64 entering undergraduate study each year relative to its population, compared with the rest of the UK. Annual reports from the OfS have identified barriers to mature learners as a critical factor in exclusion from, access to, and successful participation in HE. Committing to equality of opportunity for all students from all backgrounds and all ages requires us to increase opportunities for mature students.

The University has higher enrolment of mature students than any other English provider. Our mission to be 'Open to people, places, methods and ideas' and our vision 'To reach more students with life-changing learning that meets their needs and enriches society' have widening access and success at their heart. For most of our courses students do not require previous qualifications to start study. Our open-entry policy has made HE accessible to hundreds of thousands of people, for whom conventional full-time face-to-face university education is not always possible.

The OU's APP 2020/21 – 2024/25 was approved by the OfS on 28 April 2020 and remains a key focus within the University's 2022-27 institutional strategy. The plan was enhanced in July 2022 to detail how current activity at the OU supports the new priorities for Access and Participation as set out by the OfS in April 2022.

1. Assessment of Performance

1.1 Content and Purpose

1.1.1 Use of Office for Students and OU Internal Datasets

We have developed our Access and Participation Plan (APP) by carrying out in-depth statistical analysis for students who are under-represented and disadvantaged in higher education (HE). The analysis covers the whole student lifecycle, using both internal and Office for Students' (OfS) datasets. We note there are discrepancies between the two datasets which are likely to be explained by differences in definitions of the measures used by the OfS and The Open University (OU). In conjunction with the OfS, in April 2020 the OU is due to further explore the reasons behind these differences and how they could be mitigated in future given the complex nature of the OU and its student population. Our aim is to develop appropriate metrics during the 2020/21 academic year with the findings being presented by July 2021. To support analysis we have highlighted throughout Section 1 where these gaps are significant or show differing trends. Our assessment of performance is focused on areas where statistical analysis shows significant gaps, allowing us also to identify trends over time.

Our approach to understanding the performance of different groups of students is to analyse absolute differences between all student groups for each chosen metric. We compare same academic year data using internal and OfS datasets where available. We have then used these metrics and applied significance testing to prioritise our focus areas. For Access and Progression measures we have based our targets on OfS datasets which show the largest gaps. For Success measures we have mainly based our targets on where our internal data shows the largest gaps or where the OfS have key performance measures (KPM). The exception to this is for continuation targets where we

have used OfS datasets. Table 21 shows the impact of our targets that have been set using internal data, on gaps identified within OfS datasets.

1.1.2 What Metrics have been Used?

To understand what barriers students face, appropriate metrics that were identified as being relevant to the OU were mapped to each stage of the student lifecycle:

Access – OfS part-time student data has been used to report entrant rates between student groups using the rates tab.

Success – The OU mode of study enables students to study on a module-by-module basis, taking breaks throughout the duration of their qualification which means students can take upto 16 years to complete a degree. The OU's internal data was used to assess the success of different student groups. This approach provided more context-rich data not available through the OfS data dashboard, enabling the APP to be more meaningfully evidenced and actioned. OfS part-time student datasets using the rates tab have been included in the analysis to highlight the specific differences between the datasets.

The award of module pass is used to assess overall year-on-year performance. The award of good module pass[1] is used as an indicator for good degree results[2], as these metrics have previously shown a high degree of correlation. As OU students generally take longer than the three-year sector norm to finish their degrees, using the award of good module pass provides more timely and actionable insight into performance metrics. We have analysed good module pass with internal data using this metric.

Non-continuation rates have been assessed by looking at those being awarded 120 credits by year three. There is a strong correlation between students gaining 120+ credits by year 3 and completing their qualification in seven years – with trends showing a c.-10.5pp (historic range between -10.0pp and - 11.2pp) difference in the proportion gaining 120+ credits in year 3 and being eligible to receive their degree qualification in seven years. These trends are monitored annually and used in all internal target setting and student number predictions. We have committed to undertake additional modelling within the first six months of this APP to better understand the relationship between our internal continuation metric and the OfS continuation data. We have set interim targets based on OfS continuation data whilst this modelling work is undertaken.

Progression – OfS part-time student data using the rates tab has been used to compare progression rates to higher skilled employment or further study between student groups. OU students are often already employed either full or part-time and undertake their studies alongside these and other commitments. The impact of their studies is often not felt immediately and may take several years to come to fruition (Butcher and Rose-Adams, 2015[3]).

The OU has also curated its own survey in the form of the OU Employability of Qualifiers Survey (EQS) which is carried out three years after qualification completion and includes a benchmark comparison group. Questions include whether students can command a higher salary as a result of their OU qualification and whether OU study as enabled them to achieve their career and personal goals. Data has been analysed using the results of the 2018 survey (which had 2977 alumni respond) across specific groups e.g. low socio-economic status, ethnicity, disability and low previous educational qualifications. This also provides significant additional insight into our unique alumni population at this stage of the student lifecycle.

Where the OfS datasets have been used for analysis, we have selected all undergraduates for the level of study alongside the part-time mode of study being selected on the rates tab. For full-time undergraduates, there is little data for many metrics and some demographics were not reportable. There is also limited year data for the Access strand and emerging trends indicate a growing full-time population across all demographics. The University acknowledges that even though there is limited data for full-time students, the performance of these students will need to be monitored throughout the lifetime of this plan to ensure that no groups become disadvantaged or under-represented by their chosen mode of study.

---

[1] Those achieving a high-level pass (first or upper-second class degree) in sector level 5 and 6 modules
[2] First or upper-second class degree (1:1 or 2:1)
[3] Butcher, J. and Rose-Adams, J. (2015) 'Part-time learners in open and distance learning: revisiting the critical importance of choice, flexibility and employability', *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning,* vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 127–37.

1.2 Higher Education Participation, Household Income or Socio-Economic Status

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

Access: Using the OfS dataset the proportion of students entering the OU from the lowest IMD quintile 1 (Q1) has increased from 21.0% in 2014/15 to 21.9% in 2017/18.

Success - Non-continuation: Continuation rates for students from IMD Q1 when compared against those from the highest index of multiple deprivation quintile 5 (IMD Q5) (using both internal and OfS data) shows similar trends with a 12.8pp difference (internal) and 10.8pp (OfS) in 2015/16. Internal datasets show an improvement in continuation rates for all students although this is not mirrored in OfS datasets. Variations in how continuation is measured between internal and OfS data may explain these differences and will be explored further as part of this plan. ***On this basis we are setting an interim target, using OfS data PTS_12: To reduce the gap in continuation between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5***

Success – Attainment (Module Pass): Analysing internal data in relation to module pass shows students within IMD Q1 are 12.9pp (2017/2018) less likely to pass their module than those within IMD Q5 (Table 1). This gap has decreased by 1.3pp since 2013/14. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTS_4: Reduce the gap in module pass between students in IMD Q1 and those in IMD Q5.***

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Percentage Point (pp) Difference	14.2	12.8	13.3	13.7	12.9

Table 1 *Module pass between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 (Source: Internal dataset)*

Success – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Analysing internal data in relation to good module pass shows students within IMD Q1 are 15.4pp (2017/2018) less likely to be awarded a good pass than those within IMD Q5. This gap has increased by 1.1pp since 2013/14. This differs to OfS datasets which shows a 1.2pp decrease since 2013/14 (Table 2). Variations in how good passes are measured between the OU and OfS data may explain these differences and will be explored further as part of this plan with additional resource being recruited by September 2020 which will be tasked with undertaking this work during the 2020/21 academic year. Findings are expected to be reported during July 2021. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTS_8: Reduce the gap in 'good' module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5.***

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Internal Dataset Gap (pp)	14.3	14.4	13.8	14.5	15.4
OfS Dataset Gap (pp)	17.6	14.3	18.9	19.3	16.4

Table 2 *Gap analysis of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 (Source: Internal dataset and OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Progression: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study, students within IMD Q1 are 8.7pp (2016/2017) less likely to pass than those within IMD Q5 (Table 3). This gap has decreased by 0.3pp since 2012/13. ***This analysis has resulted in t*arget PTP_4: Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5.***

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
OfS Dataset Gap (pp)	9.0	9.5	11.7	9.7	8.7

Table 3 *Progression to higher skilled employment/further study between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 (Source: OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Internal Target: We are committed to ensuring that students from the most disadvantaged background continue to access HE. *This has resulted in an internal target OUT_01: Ensure at least 17.0% of entrants to the University are from IMD Q1.*

POLAR4

Access: Using the OfS dataset the proportion of students entering the OU from the lowest POLAR4 Q1 has increased from 0.9pp between 2016/17 and 2017/18 to 19.1%.

Success - Non-continuation: Continuation rates using OfS datasets have stayed relatively stable for POLAR4 Q1 students with 52% compared to 64% in Q5 (2015/16) a gap of 12pp This gap has decreased by 2pp since 2014/15. *This analysis has resulted in target PTS_13: Reduce the gap in non-continuation between students from POLAR4 Q1 and POLAR4 Q5. This relates to the OfS Key Performance Measure (KPM) to reduce the gap in non-continuation between the most and least represented groups (POLAR4 quintiles 5 and 1 respectively).*

Success – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Analysing OfS data reveals the gap between those in Q1 and those in Q5 in good module pass has decreased by 5pp since 2014/15 to 9pp in 2017/18. In 2017/18 41% of students from Q1 achieved a good module pass compared to 50% of those in Q5.

Progression: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study shows there is a gap between Q1 and Q5 students of 9pp in 2016/17 with those in Q1 achieving 52%. In 2013/14 students in Q1 achieved better results than those from Q5 with rates of 57% in Q1 compared to 48% for those in Q5 in 2013/14, the same occurred in 2014/15 with those in Q1 achieving better results of 57% compared to those in Q5 achieving 54%.

The University has now set interim POLAR4 targets as we are only beginning to see an increase in the numbers of younger students. As part of our commitment within our University strategy to growing the appeal of our curriculum to younger students, we will continue to analyse POLAR4 data in relation to all our current targets. This will enable us to gain a better understanding of the difference in outcomes between older and younger students in order to set appropriate targets for the next iteration of our plan.

1.3 Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) students

Access BAME: Using the OfS dataset the proportion of BAME students entering the OU has been decreasing since 2015/16 (11.9% to 10.9% in 2017/18).

Access Black: Using the OfS dataset the proportion of Black students entering the OU has been decreasing since 2015/16 (4.5% to 3.8% in 2017/18). *This analysis has resulted in target PTA_1: Increase the proportion of Black students registered by 2025.*

Access Asian: Using the OfS dataset the proportion of Asian students entering the OU has been decreasing since 2015/16 (3.9% to 3.6% in 2017/18). *This analysis has resulted in target PTA_2: Increase the proportion of Asian students registered by 2025.*

Prior to the 2022 variation, our Access targets measured the percentage of Black or Asian UK part-time (PT) undergraduate (UG) entrants to the OU compared to all UK PT UG entrants to the OU. The target for Black PT UG entrants was therefore a proportion of all other ethnicities, including Asian, mixed ethnicity and white, and for Asian PT UG entrants, a proportion of all other ethnicities, including Black, mixed ethnicity and white. The 2022 variation includes changes so that the targets for Black and Asian PT UG entrants are set as proportions of white PT UG entrants. This better reflects our intention to close the gap between the OU and the HE sector average for Black and Asian PT UG entrants and is also a more effective measure of the impact of our recruitment activity.

Success BAME - Non-continuation: Continuation rates using internal data shows a decrease of 2.7pp between 2012/13 and 2015/16, whereas OfS datasets shows an increase of 0.8pp in the same period. The gap is larger when using internal data (Table 4). The gap in 2015/16 stands at 4.5pp using internal datasets and 2.4pp using OfS datasets. Variations in how continuation is measured between our internal and OfS data may explain these differences and will be explored further as part of this plan with additional resource due to be recruited by September 2020 and work undertaken during the 2020/21 academic year. Findings will be reported during July 2021.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Internal Dataset Gap (pp)	7.2	7.2	7.3	4.5
OfS Dataset Gap (pp)	1.6	2.7	1.8	2.4

Success Black - Non-continuation: Continuation rates using internal data shows an increase for both Black and White students, however the gap between Black and White students has increased from 9.8pp (2012/13) to 11.4pp (2015/16). OfS datasets reveal a different sector trends with continuation for Black students decreasing by 3.9pp between 2012/13 and 2015/16, with White students continuation increasing by 1pp in the same period. The gap between Black and White students has increased from 9.8pp (2012/13) to 11.4pp (2015/16). The gap using internal data is larger than when compared to OfS data (Table 5).

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Internal Dataset Gap (pp)	9.8	10.9	12.9	11.4
OfS Dataset Gap (pp)	1.8	3.4	4.6	6.7

Table 5 *Gap analysis of continuation data between Black and White students (Source: Internal dataset and OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Success Asian - Non-continuation: Continuation rates using internal data shows that the gap in continuation between Asian and White students has been reducing since 2012/13 and currently stands at a positive 0.7pp gap. This trend is mirrored when using OfS data which also shows that Asian students have been more likely to continue than their White counterparts since 2012/13.

Success BAME – Attainment (Module Pass): Analysing internal data in relation to module pass reveals that BAME students are less likely to be awarded a module pass than White students (Table 6). This gap has decreased by 2.8pp since 2013/14 to 8.3pp in 2017/18. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTS_7: Reduce the gap in module pass between BAME and White students.***

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Percentage Point Difference	11.1	11.7	11	9	8.3

Table 6 *Module pass gap between BAME and White students (Source: Internal dataset)*

Success Black – Attainment (Module Pass): Analysing internal data in relation to module pass reveals that Black students are less likely to be awarded a module pass than White students (Table 7). This gap has decreased by 2.3pp since 2013/14 to 13.9pp in 2017/18. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTS_1: Reduce the gap in module pass between Black and White students. This relates to the OfS Key Performance Measure (KPM) to reduce the gap in degree outcomes between Black and White students.***

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Percentage Point Difference	16.2	16.5	14.3	14	13.9

Table 7 *Module pass gap between Black and White students (Source: Internal dataset)*

Success Asian – Attainment (Module Pass): Analysing internal data in relation to module pass reveals that Asian students are less likely to be awarded a module pass than White students however this gap decreased to 4.2pp in 2017/18.

Success BAME – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Analysing both internal and OfS data reveals large gaps in the awarding of good module pass for BAME students when compared to White students. These gaps have increased to 2.4pp (2013/14 to 2017/18) using internal data and 1.9pp in OfS data for the same period (Table 8). The gap in 2017/18 was 19.3pp using internal data and 24.4pp using OfS datasets. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTS_9: Reduce the gap in good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between BAME and White students.***

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Internal Dataset Gap (pp)	16.9	17.3	17.3	16.5	19.3
OfS Dataset Gap (pp)	22.5	25.2	23.1	24.1	24.4

Table 8 *Gap analysis of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between BAME and White students (Source: Internal dataset and OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Success Black – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Analysing both internal and OfS data reveals large gaps in the awarding of good module pass for Black students when compared to White students. There is a disparity between the datasets showing a larger gap when using the OfS dataset (Table 9). In 2017/18 internal data showed a 31.1pp gap with OfS data showing a 38.4pp gap. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTS_2: Reduce the gap in 'good' module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between Black and White students. This relates to the OfS KPM to reduce the gap in degree outcomes between Black and White students.***

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Internal Dataset Gap (pp)	30.0	27.0	26.9	27.2	31.1
OfS Dataset Gap (pp)	37.5	38.2	38.1	39.1	38.4

Table 9 *Gap analysis of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between Black and White students (Source: Internal dataset and OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Success Asian – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Analysing both internal and OfS data reveals large gaps in the awarding of good module pass for Asian students when compared to White students. There is a disparity between the datasets showing a larger gap when using the OfS dataset (Table 10). In 2017/18 internal data showed a 16.6pp gap with OfS data showing a 18.4pp gap. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTS_6: Reduce the gap in 'good' module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between Asian and White students.***

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Internal Dataset Gap (pp)	12.1	15.6	14.9	13.2	16.6
OfS Dataset Gap (pp)	17.5	18.2	20.1	18.1	18.4

Table 10 *Gap analysis of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between Asian and White students (Source: Internal dataset and OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Progression BAME: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study shows there has been an increase in the gap between BAME and White students of 4pp between 2012/13 and 2016/17. The gap has fluctuated over the five years analysed with a peak of 11.1pp in 2014/15 and the gap stood at 8.2pp in 2016/17 (Table 11). ***This analysis has resulted in target PTP_5: Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between BAME and White students.***

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Percentage Point Difference	4.2	3.8	11.1	7.5	8.2

Table 11 *Progression to higher skilled employment/further study between BAME and White students (Source: OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Progression Black: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study shows there has been an increase in the gap between Black and White students of 4pp between 2012/13 and 2016/17. The gap has fluctuated over the five years analysed with a peak of 16.1pp in 2014/15 and stood at 9.2pp in 2016/17 (Table 12). ***This analysis has resulted in target PTP_1: Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between Black and White students.***

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Percentage Point Difference	5.2	7.8	16.1	7.5	9.2

Table 12 *Progression to higher skilled employment/further study between Black and White students (Source: OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Progression Asian: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study, there has been an increase in the gap between Asian and White students of 2pp between 2012/13 and 2016/17. The gap has fluctuated over the five years analysed with a peak of 10.5pp in 2015/16 and stood at 5.2pp in 2016/17 (Table 13).

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Percentage Point Difference	3.2	4.8	8.1	10.5	5.2

Table 13 *Progression to higher skilled employment/further study between Asian and White students (Source: OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Progression EQS Additional Data: Analysis of the 2018 EQS reveals that 51% of Black and 41% of Asian alumni said that OU study had enabled them to command a higher salary compared with 38% of White alumni. Also 89% of Black, 85% of Asian and 86% of White alumni agreed that OU study has or would help them to achieve their career goals.

1.4 Mature Students

Internally we define mature students as over 25, which is different to the commonly used definition of 21 used across the sector. The rationale for this relates to the differences in behaviours of students who only just missed out on entering HE following compulsory education and those for whom there has been a significant gap between compulsory education and HE. For clarity we have analysed success data using both sector and internal definitions.

Access: The average age of our students is currently 27, however the number of younger students entering the OU has increased by 1.4pp between 2013/14 (10.5%) and 2017/18 (11.9%) using OfS datasets.

Success - Non-continuation: Continuation rate gaps for mature student are low and remain relatively stable. Both internal and OfS datasets (when using sector age definitions) show that younger students are more likely to continue their studies with internal data showing a 1.7pp gap and OfS showing a 3.4pp gap. When using internal definitions of age, younger students are 1.7pp less likely to continue their studies than the over 25s although this trend has been decreasing. Our analysis has identified that there is clearly an issue in relation to students between the ages of 21 and 25 which will require further investigation. We undertake to take further exploration to enable us to better understand the behaviour of students with this cohort during the 2020/21 academic year.

Success – Attainment (Module Pass): Analysing internal data in relation to module pass shows that mature students are more likely to pass their module, but the gap is relatively low. Using both sector and internal age definitions show similar trends with a 1.1pp difference in 2017/18 for those aged 21 and over.

Success – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Both datasets show that younger students are less likely to be awarded a good module pass than mature students' whatever definition of age is used. In 2017/18 a 2.6pp gap using internal data and a 5.4pp using OfS data. There are different trends however to both datasets (Table 14).

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Internal Dataset Gap (pp)	4.2	4.9	4.3	7.1	2.6
OfS Dataset Gap (pp)	7.3	3.7	8.1	9.6	5.4

Table 14 *Gap analysis of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between mature and younger students (Source: Internal dataset and OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Progression: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study shows younger students were 5.1pp less likely to progress in 2016/17. This peaked at 8.9pp in 2014/15.

1.5 Disabled Students

The analysis for disabled students has been aggregated to include all students who declare a disability and then broken down into specific disabilities, aligned with internal definitions and OfS disability types. Performance has been analysed across all groups where possible in order to fully understand the barriers faced by students with a disability. If a student fits into multiple groups they have been included in both sets of analysis.

When using OU internal data, disability is grouped as follows:

Physical	Sight, hearing, mobility, manual skills, speech and personal care
Mental health difficulties	Mental health disability
Specific learning difficulties	Dyslexia
Other	Autistic Spectrum Disorder, fatigue pain disability, other disability and unseen disability

When using OfS datasets, disability is grouped as follows:

Cognitive or learning difficulties	Specific learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD)
Mental health condition	Mental health difficulties, mental health condition (e.g. depression, schizophrenia, anxiety disorder)
Other or multiple impairments	Personal care support, two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions, a disability/impairment/medical condition not listed elsewhere
Sensory, medical or physical impairment	Blind/partially sighted, deaf/hearing impairment, wheelchair user/mobility difficulties, unseen disability (e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, asthma) and physical impairment
Social or communication impairment	Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome and other Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Access Disabled: Using the OfS dataset the proportion of disabled students entering the OU has been increasing from 14.7% in 2013/14 to 21.0% in 2017/18.

Access Mental Health Condition: Using the OfS dataset the proportion of students with a mental health condition entering the OU has been increasing from 2.7% to 2013/14 to 6.3% in 2017/18.

Access Sensory Medical and Physical: Using the OfS dataset the proportion of students with a sensory, medical and physical disability entering the OU has been increasing from 2.4 in 2013/14 to 3.2% in 2017/18.

Access Cognitive or Learning: Using the OfS dataset the proportion of students with a cognitive or learning disability entering the OU has been increasing from 2.9% in 2013/14 to 3.7% in 2017/18.

Success Disabled - Non-continuation: Continuation rates using internal data shows an increase of 0.8pp between 2012/13 and 2015/16, whereas OfS datasets show an increase of 2.9pp in the same period. The gap is larger when using internal data but not significantly. The gap was 7.2pp in 2015/16 using internal datasets.

Success Mental Health Condition/Difficulties - Non-continuation: Continuation rates using internal data shows an increase of 3.3pp between 2012/13 and 2015/16 with a 11.5pp gap in 2015/16, whereas OfS datasets show an increase of 3.1pp in the same period with a gap in 7.8pp in 2015/16. The gap is larger when using internal data but not significantly.

Success Sensory Medical or Physical Impairment/Physical - Non-continuation: Continuation rates using internal data shows an increase of 1pp between 2012/13 and 2015/16, whereas OfS datasets show an increase of 3.4pp in the same period. The gap is larger when using internal data but not significantly. The gap was 5.1pp in 2015/16 using OfS datasets.

Success Cognitive or Learning/Specific Learning Difficulties - Non-continuation: Continuation rates using internal data shows a decrease of 0.2pp between 2012/13 and 2015/16, whereas OfS datasets show an increase of 1.1pp in the same period. The gap is larger when using internal data but not significantly. The gap was 3.7pp in 2015/16 using OfS datasets.

Success Social and Communication - Non-continuation: Continuation rates are only available using OfS data. This shows a decrease of 3.4pp between 2012/13 and 2015/16. The gap was -4.9pp in 2015/16 using OfS datasets as continuation rates were better for students with this type of disability compared to those with no disability.

Success Disabled – Attainment (Module Pass): Analysing internal data in relation to module pass reveals that disabled students are less likely to be awarded a module pass than students with no known disability (Table 15). This gap has remained stable, but still shows a significant disparity. The gap was 11.5pp in 2017/18 using internal datasets. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTS_3: Reduce the gap in module pass between disabled students and those with no known disabilities***

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Percentage Point Difference	11.9	11.9	11.9	11.6	11.5

Table 15 *Award of module pass between disabled students and those with no known disability (Source: Internal dataset)*

Success Mental Health Condition/Difficulties – Attainment (Module Pass): Analysing internal data in relation to module pass reveals that students with mental health conditions/difficulties are less likely to be awarded a module pass than students with no known disability (Table 16). This gap has decreased by 1.7pp between 2013/14 and 2017/18, but still shows a significant disparity. The gap was 15.7pp in 2017/18 using internal datasets. *This analysis has resulted in target PTS_5: Reduce the gap in module pass for students with mental health difficulties and those with no known disabilities.*

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Percentage Point Difference	17.4	16.3	17.0	16.9	15.7

Table 16 *Award of module pass between students with a mental health difficulty and those with no known disability (Source: Internal dataset)*

Success Sensory Medical or Physical Impairment/Physical – Attainment (Module Pass): Analysing internal data in relation to module pass reveals that students with sensory medical or physical impairment/physical disabilities are less likely to be awarded a module pass than students with no known disability. This gap has increased by 0.7pp between 2013/14 and 2017/18, but still shows a significant disparity. The gap was 12.2pp in 2017/18 using internal datasets. *This analysis has resulted in PTS_3 which will also address other disparities identified for students with different disability types: Reduce the gap in module pass between disabled students and those with no known disabilities*

Success Cognitive or Learning/Specific Learning Difficulties – Attainment (Module Pass): Analysing internal data in relation to module pass reveals that students with cognitive or learning/specific learning difficulties are less likely to be awarded a module pass than students with no known disability. This gap has decreased by 3.4pp between 2013/14 and 2017/18. The gap was 5pp in 2017/18 using internal datasets.

Success Disabled – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Analysing both internal and OfS data reveals gaps in the awarding of good module pass for disabled students when compared to those with no known disabilities (3.9pp for internal data and 4.6pp for OfS data in 2017/18). These gaps have remained relatively stable over the period analysed with no significant disparities between the two datasets. *This analysis has resulted in target PTS_11 Close the gap in good module pass between disabled students and those with no known disabilities.*

Success Mental Health Condition/Difficulties – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Analysing both internal and OfS data reveals small gaps in the awarding of good module pass. Internal data shows slightly higher gaps, but these are not significant. The gap was 1.3pp in 2017/18 using internal datasets.

Success Sensory Medical or Physical Impairment/Physical – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Analysing both internal and OfS data reveals gaps between the datasets, with the internal data staying relatively stable whilst the OfS data shows fluctuations of 12.7pp between 2013/14 and 2015/16 with a positive gap in 2013/14 (Table 17). The gap was 4.5pp in 2015/16 using internal datasets and 8.7pp using OfS datasets.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Internal Dataset Gap (pp)	4.3	4.8	4.2	4.5
OfS Dataset Gap (pp)	5.1	-4.0	8.1	8.7

Table 17 *Gap analysis of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students with sensory medical or physical impairment/physical disabilities compared with those with no known disabilities (Source: Internal dataset and OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Success Cognitive or Learning/Specific Learning Difficulties – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Internal data suggests a relatively consistent gap over the period analysed. Conversely the OfS dataset shows large fluctuations differing 10.3pp between 2013/14 and 2015/16 (Table 18). The gap was 10.6pp in 2015/16 using internal datasets and 8.7pp using OfS datasets. *This analysis has resulted in target PTS_3: Reduce the gap in good module pass between disabled students and those with no known disabilities. This target will address the disparities identified for students with different disability types.*

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Internal Dataset Gap (pp)	10.1	11.3	10.8	10.6
OfS Dataset Gap (pp)	11.1	19.0	17.1	8.7

Table 18 *Gap analysis of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students with cognitive or learning/specific learning difficulties compared with those with no known disabilities (Source: Internal dataset and OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Progression Disabled: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study, there has been an increase of 5.5pp between disabled students and those with no known disabilities between 2012/13 and 2016/17 (Table 19). The gap was 8.9pp in 2016/17 using OfS datasets. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTP_3: Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between disabled students and those with no known disabilities.***

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Percentage Point Difference	3.4	3.4	6.8	6.6	8.9

Table 19 *Progression to higher skilled employment/further study between disabled students and those with no known disabilities (Source: OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Progression Mental Health Condition/Difficulties: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study shows large fluctuations between 17.2pp in 2016/17 and 8.3pp in 2012/13 (Table 20). The gap was 17.2pp in 2016/17 using OfS datasets. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTP_2: Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between students with mental health conditions and students with no known disabilities.***

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Percentage Point Difference	8.3	17.0	14.2	10.8	17.2

Table 20 *Progression to higher skilled employment/further study between disabled students and those with no known disabilities (Source: OfS Access & Participation dataset)*

Progression Sensory Medical or Physical Impairment/Physical: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study shows fluctuations over the timespan including a 6.6pp drop between 2015/16 and 2016/17. The gap was 4.2pp in 2016/17 using OfS datasets.

Progression Cognitive or Learning/Specific Learning Difficulties: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study shows progression gaps have remained relatively stable and low over the timespan analysed. The gap was 0.8pp in 2016/17 using OfS datasets.

Progression EQS Additional Data: The EQS 2018 suggests that 30% of students who answered the question regarding OU study enabling them to command a higher salary, and who have a disability (not disaggregated), agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 40% of other students. Of those students who have a disability and answered the question whether OU study had enabled them to pursue their career goals, 79% agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 86% of all other students. Of those students who have a disability and answered the question whether OU study had enabled them to pursue their personal goals, 91% agreed or strongly agreed.

1.6 Care Leavers

Access: The average age of OU students is higher than the sector as a whole. We use the term 'care experienced students' because many of these students are not recent care leavers. In 2017/18 a total of 52,739 (50.8%) of our students declared their care experience status (Yes / No / Wish not to declare), with 1,126 (0.63%) of our students declaring they were care experienced. This percentage is low but consistent over the last 5 years.

Success - Non-continuation: Continuation rates for care experienced students using internal datasets shows a decrease in the gap between students who declare they have been in care and those who declare they have not of 3.6pp between 2013/14 and 2015/16. There is a however a significant gap of 15.7pp in 2015/16.

Success – Attainment (Module Pass): Analysing internal data in relation to module pass shows students who are care experienced are less likely to pass than those who are not. The gap is large, peaking at 18.8pp in 2014/15 and stands at 14.7pp in 2017/18.

Success – Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Analysing internal data in relation to good module pass shows students who are care experienced are less likely to be awarded a good pass than those who have not. The gap was 13.8pp in 2017/18.

Progression: Analysing the OfS dataset in relation to progression to higher skilled employment/further study shows large fluctuations of 20pp from 2014/15 to 2016/17 however the gap stood at just 0.3pp in 2016/17. This data must be used with caution however given the small numbers and length of time since many of our students are likely to have been in care.

Internal Target: We have set an internal target OUT_02: 'All students will declare whether they have experience of being in care or not by 2025'. Our baseline data for this measure is that 50.8% of our students have declared their care experienced status (2017/18). Achieving this target will identify many more students with care experience, allowing us to provide appropriate support.

We propose to build on existing scholarship and research in relation to the experience of students who are carers to inform our approaches to the support of care experienced students. We are concerned about the impact of care experience on students for whom there has been a considerable gap between their care experience and participation in HE, an issue that has not been considered within the sector. We will undertake research using qualitative approaches to develop a better understanding of this group of students.

We will aim to undertake this activity in 2021 with a view to the dissemination of findings and implementation of recommendations from 2022, through our biennial conference and regular programme of seminars (see Section 3.3).

We will not be setting any targets for this group within this APP as we believe we need to develop a better understanding of the particular challenges that their experience of being in care has on their study experience.

1.7 Intersections of disadvantage

1.7.1 Students with Mental Health Difficulties

When analysing the intersectional data for students with mental health difficulties, it shows across the board that regardless of which additional characteristic is selected, that students from this demographic are disadvantaged at the module completion stage (Figure 1). Targets PTS_3 and PTS_5 will impact on improving outcomes for the students represented in our intersectional analysis.
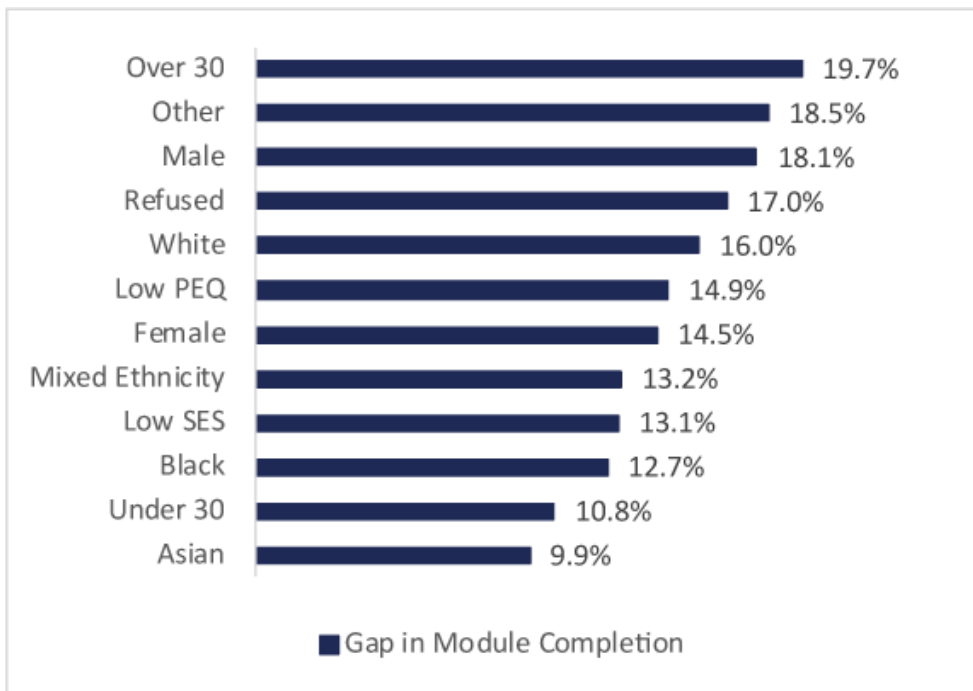
Figure 1 *Module completion gap by each characteristic between students with mental health difficulties and those with no disability (Source: Internal dataset)*

1.7.2 Black Students with Mental Health Difficulties

Further analysis has revealed that mental health declaration rates are lower for Black students than White students, averaging 3pp for Black students compared to 5.1pp for White students. We believe that due to our previously identified attainment and progress gaps with these groups that increasing the proportion of Black students declaring a mental health condition will contribute to success and progression targets.

Internal Target: We have therefore set an internal target OUT_03: To eliminate the gap in declaration rates between Black and White students with mental health difficulties by 2025.

1.8 Other Groups who Experience Barriers in Higher Education

1.8.1 Students with Low Previous Educational Qualifications (PEQs)

Access: Students with low PEQs constitute a large proportion of the OU population with 29.9% of our new entrants in 2017/18 showing this characteristic.

Success - Attainment (Module Pass): Students with low PEQs are less likely to be awarded a module pass than a student with high PEQs. This gap is relatively large and has remained relatively stable over the timespan analysed and in 2017/18 the gap stood at 10.3pp.

Success - Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): The gap between students with low PEQs and high PEQs has decreased by 4pp between 2012/13 and 2017/18 with the gap currently sitting at 9.5pp.

Internal Target: In order to reduce gaps experienced by this group we are setting an internal target OUT_04: Reduce the gap in module pass between students with low and high PEQs to 4pp and OUT_05: Reduce the gap in 'good' module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students with low and high PEQs by 2025 to 2.4pp.

1.8.2 Participation – Adults in HE (AHE)

We use the AHE measure to analyse participation in HE. This measure uses the same postcode areas as POLAR3 but specifically relates to the proportion of adults who have a higher-level qualification within an area, rather than the likelihood of participation in HE which is the definition used for younger 18-21-year-olds. OfS do not have an equivalent measure within current datasets so our analysis draws on internal data. AHE Quintile 1 (AHE Q1) relates

to postcodes where there are a low number of adults with a higher-level qualification. AHE Quintile 5 (AHE Q5) relates to postcodes where there are a high number of adults with a higher-level qualification.

Access: 17.4% of entrants to the OU are from the AHE Q1 compared to 20.4% of entrants from AHE Q5.

Success – Non-continuation: Students in AHE Q1 are slightly less likely to continue their studies than students in AHE Q5 (4.5pp in 2017/18). There has been a slight decrease in the gap since 2012/13 of 0.1pp although the current 4.6pp gap follows a drop in 2016/17 of 2.9pp.

Success - Attainment (Module Pass): Students in AHE Q1 are less likely to be awarded a module pass than students in AHE Q5. The gap has decreased over the period of analysis from 6.9pp in 2012/13 to 5.6pp 2012/13.

Success– Attainment (Module Good Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Students in AHE Q1 are significantly less likely to be awarded a good module pass compared to students in AHE Q5 (13.3pp in 2017/18). This has remained high over the range of data analysed. ***This analysis has resulted in target PTS_10:* Reduce the gap in the awarding of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students in AHE Q1 compared to AHE Q5.**

1.8.3 Carers[4]

Access: In 2017/18, a total of 54,816 (52.8%) of our students declared their status as a carer (Yes / No / Wish not to declare) with 5180 students (5%) declaring they were a carer. We expect the actual proportion to be higher due to the mature profile of our students.

Success - Non-continuation: Continuation rates for carers using internal datasets shows that students who declare they are carers are less likely to continue their studies with a 5.9pp difference in 2015/16 than students who declare they are not carers.

Success– Attainment (Module Pass): Students who declare they are carers are 8.5pp less likely to be awarded a module pass (2017/18) than students who declare they are not carers.

Success– Attainment (Good Module Pass 1:1 & 2:1): Students who declare they are carers are 5.3pp less likely to be awarded a module pass (2017/18) than students who declare they are not carers.

Progression: Trend data suggests that students who declare they are carers are less likely to progress to higher skilled employment/further study compared with students who declare that they are not carers. However, the gap in progression has been decreasing since 2013/14 with data in 2016/17 indicating that students who are carers are slightly more likely to progress compared to students who declare they are not carers.

Internal Target: In 2017/18 only 52.8% of our students declared their carer status. We have an internal target OUT_7: All students will declare whether they are a carer or not by 2025. We believe many more of our students could declare as carers, allowing us to provide appropriate support.

1.8.4 Students in Secure Environments (SiSE)

For SiSE (who are predominantly those in prison) there is a gap in terms of being awarded a module pass when compared to those not in secure environments. Whilst in 2016/17 SiSE outperformed non-SiSE however the general trend is a gap of between 7.9pp (2012/13) and 1.8pp (2016/17). The gap in 2017/18 stood at 4.7pp.

We are aware of anecdotal evidence that suggests students who leave secure environments before the end of their studies are less likely to continue/complete their qualification than those who are in a secure environment until the end of their qualification. Monitoring the learning journeys of students who have been in prison and have no license conditions imposed upon them is challenging as we are unable to specifically identify them within our datasets.

Internal Target: This has resulted in setting an informal target OUT_8: Undertake scholarship in relation to the outcomes for SiSE on release from secure environments beginning in September 2020 and initial findings being presented in July 2021. This will be further embedding into regular reporting in September 2021.

---

[4] A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support (Carers Trust, 2019)

1.9 Summary of Assessment of Performance

Individual sections within the Assessment of Performance highlight where the OU faces the biggest gaps in access, success and progression between students from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds. Our analysis has highlighted discrepancies when reporting OfS and internal data which typically relate to non-continuation and the awarding of good module pass. This is likely to be as a result of differences to how the measures are defined within internal data, which reflect the specific behaviours of our students, our open access policy and our flexible offer. We have set targets to reduce the gap in good module pass for Black and Asian students based on internal data. Whilst the gaps are larger when using OfS datasets, we believe our targets will have an overall impact on reducing the awarding of good module pass in both datasets. We will be working with the OfS to explore these differences further and to develop a metric that most appropriately reflects this unique position. This will be explored further during the 2020/21 academic year with the findings presented by July 2021. Table 21 provides a summary of the analysis we have undertaken that identifies gaps using the OfS data dashboard and the impact on progress based on our targets that have been set using internal data. We have set interim targets for continuation based on OfS datasets as we continue to work on understanding the correlation between module pass and continuation data.

Success Targets	OfS data gaps (2017/18)	Yearly Milestone 2020/21	Yearly Milestone 2021/22	Yearly Milestone 2022/23	Yearly Milestone 2023/24	Progress Against OfS Data Gaps by 2024/25 Based on Targets Set using Internal Data
Reduce the gap in good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between Black and White students **(PTS_2)**	38.4pp	35.4pp	31.9pp	27.9pp	23.4pp	18.4pp
Reduce the gap in good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between Asian and White students **(PTS_6)**	18.4pp	17.4pp	15.9pp	13.9pp	11.4pp	8.4pp
Reduce the gap in good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 **(PTS_8)**	16.4pp	15pp	13pp	10.2pp	7.4pp	5pp
Reduce the gap in good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between BAME and White students **(PTS_9)**	24.4pp	23.4pp	21.4pp	19.4pp	16.8pp	14.4pp
Reduce the gap in the awarding of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students in AHE Q1 compared to AHE Q5 **(PTS_10)**	No OfS dataset for this measure					
Close the gap in good module pass between disabled students and those with no known disabilities **(PTS_11)**	4.6pp	4.2pp	3.5pp	2.6pp	1.7pp	0.7pp

Table 21 *Summary of analysis to identify gaps between datasets*

2. Strategic Aims and Objectives

The OU is the largest provider of flexible part-time HE in the United Kingdom (UK) with over 174,000 students (17/18) studying through flexible distance learning across the four nations of the UK. The OU mission is to be 'open to people, places, methods and ideas' and our open access policy enables this aspiration to be fulfilled. The mature demographic of our student base has been changing over the past few years as the average age of our students continues to fall (currently 27, well above the sector average). Initiatives that are undertaken to widen participation to the OU therefore have an adult and part-time student focus. Our internal data reveals that 76% of OU students study whilst in full or part-time employment (2017/18) and often alongside other caring responsibilities.

The OU aims to promote educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. Our ambition is to ensure that no gaps in module completion, continuation, module and degree awards and progression to higher skilled employment or further study exist between students identified within this APP and the rest of the student body.

Specialist teams support disabled students and SiSE students, responding to the different contexts within which each nation of the UK operates, and our Securing Greater Accessibility team (SeGA) supports us in ensuring that our curriculum is inclusive and accessible to disabled students. Learning designers ensure that the diverse needs of our students are considered, to enable access and success, during curriculum development. Through our Student Recruitment and Support Centres across the nations, we ensure that all students, from whatever background, are supported to begin their journey with the University in the right place and to be successful as they progress through their studies.

Our level 4 curriculum has study skills embedded within its pedagogic model. Students may choose a named degree qualification or follow a flexible study pathway through our Open Programme, which enables students to form their qualification through selecting modules from a range of disciplines. Our innovative open box module enables students to gain credit for existing learning that they have undertaken. This approach is being extended to postgraduate qualifications. Our dedicated widening participation programme (Access) provides a unique tutoring and pedagogic model designed specifically to prepare students who have been out of education for some time to become ready for HE level study, particularly within a distance learning environment.

As a university, we have set key targets to reflect the greatest areas of disadvantage, acknowledging that gaps in outcomes remain for other groups of students. Our approach is to prioritise those with the largest gaps within the first phase of the plan and extend our efforts beyond these groups once a positive impact of the proposed initiatives is evident. We will maintain a commitment to monitor and evaluate the performance of all student groups throughout the student lifecycle as this is paramount to our inclusive approach for all students. We have produced our targets and objectives following consultation with key stakeholders including but not limited to:

- Formal governance including Student Experience Committee, Education Committee, Funding Body Group, Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE), Vice-Chancellor's Executive Academic (VCE-A), Senate and Council
- Faculties through Boards of Study, Teaching Committees and Faculty Assemblies
- Academic Services
- Staff – academic, academic related/professional services and associate lecturers
- Students – through the development of the University's Access, Participation and Success Strategy (APSS) and the OU Students Association
- Other steering and working groups across the University

2.1 Target Groups

This section of our APP presents the planned target areas for improvement of outcomes for the duration of this plan, our aims, objectives and strategic measures, in addition to clearly identified targets to enable effective monitoring of progress. Table 22 below illustrates the focus of our APP in terms of the gap in access, success and progression for student groups identified from the assessment of our performance.

Target group	Access	Success	Progression
Students who are Black	✓	✓	✓
Students who are Asian	✓	✓	
Students who are BAME		✓	✓
Students with mental health conditions		✓	✓
Students who have disabilities		✓	✓
Students from the lowest IMD Quintile (Q1)		✓	✓
Students from the lowest AHE Quintile (Q1)		✓	
Students from the lowest POLAR4 Quintile (Q1)		✓	

Table 22 *Target groups and area of focus*

2.2 Aims and Objectives

In line with our open access policy, the strategic priorities outlined in our Access Participation and Success (APS) Strategy and the targets set for the sector by the OfS, we are committed to continuous improvement and working towards equitable outcomes for all students.

We have identified several challenges to reduce inequitable outcomes for all students. These are:

- 29.9% of our students have low previous educational qualifications. Existing measures of success such as a good pass may not be appropriate given the distance travelled between existing qualifications and degree outcomes. Working alongside colleagues within the OfS data team, we will seek to develop a metric that reflects the uniqueness of the OU offer and the aspirations of all our students.
- Identifying success for students in secure environments who have been released from prison, either on license or not. We will seek to develop metrics to enable us to explore success for these students once released. This is planned to take place by December 2020.
- We want to improve the way in which we capture whether students are carers or have experience of being in care to provide more comprehensive data. This will be delivered as part of a major systems change, which is planned for 2021.

In addition to our aims and objectives set out in this plan, we have targets to improve the access, success and progression of all our undergraduate student population.

Table 23 provides an overview of our aims, objectives and targets. The aims have been developed as a direct result of the assessment of performance undertaken in Section 1. These have been prioritised for action within the 2020/21–2024/25 APP in terms of identifying those areas where the biggest gaps exist. We are committed to achieving these by the end of this plan in 2024/25. A breakdown of yearly milestones to reach our 2024/25 targets is available in the Targets and Investment Plan document which is appended to this plan.

Subsequent aims will be embedded within the plan as progress against these targets, through sustained and targeted interventions, is realised.

Targets have been developed from modelling within our Data and Student Analytics team and takes into account institutional key performance indicators (KPI). We recognise that in some instances the remaining gaps are still significant, but we believe, based on our institutional insight, that our targets are realistic and ambitious, given the institutional changes required to deliver them. With this in mind, and in line with our APS Strategy our aims for this APP are as follows:

Success measure	Aim	OfS KPM	Base data	Target 2024/25
Access	Increase the proportion of Black students registered by 2025 **(PTA_1)** Target from 2023/24		3.8%	5.8% 6.0%
Access	Increase the proportion of Asian students registered by 2025 **(PTA_2)** Target from 2023/24		3.6%	6.1% 6.4%
Success	Reduce the gap in module pass between Black and White students **(PTS_1)**	Reduce the gap in degree outcomes between Black and White students	13.9pp	7.5pp
Success	Reduce the gap in 'good' module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between Black and White students **(PTS_2)**	Reduce the gap in degree outcomes between Black and White students	31.1pp	11.1pp
Success	Reduce the gap in module pass between disabled students and those with no known disabilities **(PTS_3)**	Reduce the gap in degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students	11.5pp	5.5pp
Success	Reduce the gap in module pass between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 **(PTS_4)**		12.9pp	2.9pp
Success	Reduce the gap in module pass for students with mental health difficulties and those with no known disabilities **(PTS_5)**	Reduce the gap in degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students	15.7pp	9.2pp
Success	Reduce the gap in 'good' module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between Asian and White students **(PTS_6)**		16.6pp	6.6pp
Success	Reduce the gap in module pass between BAME and White students **(PTS_7)**		8.3pp	1pp
Success	Reduce the gap in 'good' module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 **(PTS_8)**		15.4pp	4pp
Success	Reduce the gap in the awarding of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between BAME and White students **(PTS_9)**	Reduce the gap in degree outcomes between Black and White students	19.3pp	9.3pp
Success	Reduce the gap in the awarding of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students in AHE Q1 compared to AHE Q5 **(PTS_10)**		13.3pp	4pp
Success	Close the gap in good module pass between disabled students and those with no known disabilities **(PTS_11)**	Reduce the gap in degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students	3.9pp	0pp

Success	Reduce the gap in non-continuation between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 **(PTS_Q12)**		10.8pp	5.4pp
Success	Reduce the gap in continuation between students within POLAR4 Q1 and POLAR4 Q5 **(PTS_13)**	Reducing the gap in non-continuation between the most and least represented groups (POLAR4 quintiles 5 and 1 respectively)	12.0pp	6.0pp
Progression	Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between Black and White students **(PTP_1)**		9.2pp	4.7pp
Progression	Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between students with mental health conditions and students with no known disabilities **(PTP_2)**		17.2pp	8.2pp
Progression	Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between disabled students and those with no known disabilities **(PTP_3)**		8.9pp	4.5pp
Progression	Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 **(PTP_4)**		8.7pp	4.2pp
Progression	Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between BAME and White students **(PTP_5)**		8.2pp	3.5pp

Table 23 *Overview of our aims, objectives and targets for including KPI's, base data and targets*

3. Strategic Measures

3.1 Whole Provider Strategic Approach

3.1.1 Our Approach

The OU's commitment to enabling all students, whatever their background, to access HE and succeed in their studies remains at the heart of the OU mission: 'to be open to people, places, methods and ideas'. Our open entry policy has made HE accessible to hundreds of thousands of people, for whom conventional full-time face-to-face university education is not possible. Aligned to this approach, our fees are kept low to attract low income and debt averse students.

Our strategic aims and objectives are contextualised in relation to this policy which attracts students who are likely to come to the University from diverse backgrounds and with different educational experiences. Most will be adults returning to education after a considerable gap and plenty will register with low PEQs. Issues of low confidence and perceptions of being 'imposters' in higher education are prevalent in the student body. Thus, the OU invests considerable pedagogic support to enable all students to achieve successful outcomes as part of its core offer.

Our approach to delivering APP commitments builds on existing processes to deliver core institutional strategic priorities through unit business plans. Our Academic Services operate across our integrated Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSCs) located in the OU's main campus in Milton Keynes, as well as in our offices in Nottingham and Manchester, and the equivalent dedicated support centres within Scotland, Wales and Northern

Ireland (our nation offices). Activities are coordinated through an integrated SRSC network, which ensures that priorities are delivered consistently and coherently across the entire institution. Academic Services is responsible for Student Recruitment and Fees (SRF), Student Support (SSTs), Careers and Employability Services (CES), and Widening Access Support Services (WASS), which includes our SiSE team and Disability Support Team (DST). Dedicated SiSE and disabled student support teams operate within each of the nation offices to enable tailored support within nation-specific contexts whilst maintaining a coordinated approach with the wider SRSC support, through cross-institutional working groups.

Faculties are responsible for developing and delivering curriculum for all students, wherever they study. We ensure consistency of approach across faculties and within Academic Services through support offered by the APS team to the Planning and Resourcing Officers' (PRO) support group and specifically PRO Support Officers, faculty and unit Finance and People Services Business Partners. This approach ensures institutional commitments within our APP are appropriately embedded, actioned and resourced at faculty and unit level. A newly established Planning Coordination Group, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, will have oversight of all unit business plans and will ensure that objectives have been included that address APP commitments prior to approval through the Vice-Chancellor's Executive.

3.1.2 Theory of Change

The strategic measures contained within this plan are evidence-led and adopt a theory of change methodology which will be embedded within all initiatives to deliver our strategic objectives (Figure 2).
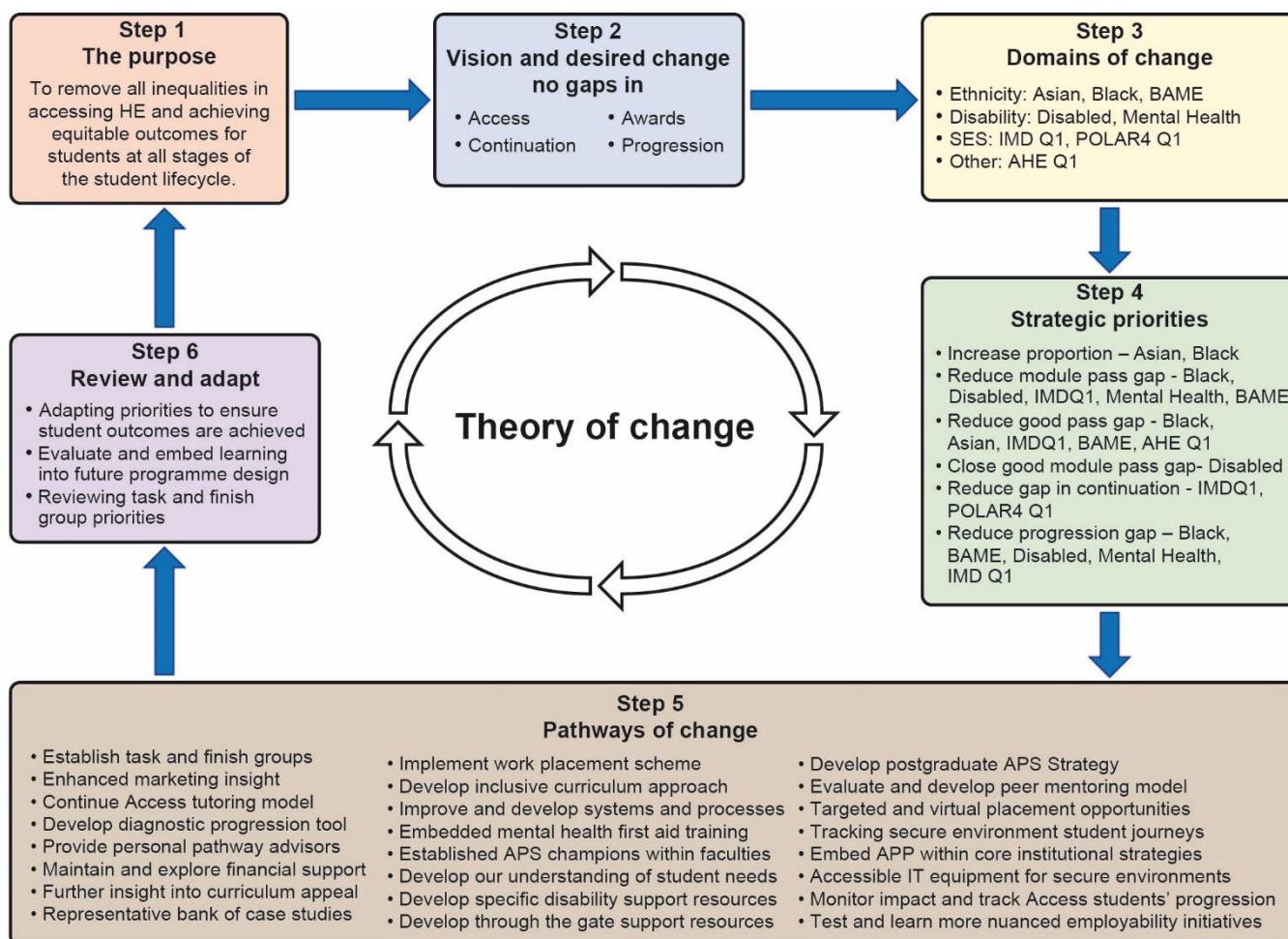

Figure 2 *OU Theory of change model*

3.1.3 Oversight and Reporting

Progress against the APP and its objectives will be reviewed at appropriate intervals throughout its lifecycle as follows:

- Task and Finish – fortnightly
- APP working groups – monthly
- Access Participation and Success Steering Group (APSSG) – bi-annually
- VCE-A/VCE – annually
- Joint Senate/Council meeting – annually
- OfS Impact and Evaluation Report – annually

3.1.4 Strategic Measures

The APS Strategy at the OU (2020/21–2024/25) sets out six strategic priorities for change and improvement to deliver student success priorities. APS priorities respond to the specific contexts within which each nation operates whilst the learning gained from delivering these priorities is shared, adapted and upscaled, to the benefit of all students.

Delivery of the APP will be within the context of the APS Strategy and its six strategic priorities:

1. Curriculum Choices:

i) To enable students who identify with characteristics associated with under-representation and disadvantage to access appropriate and relevant curriculum choices and be confident that these will meet their individual needs at each stage of their educational journey.

ii) To ensure students who identify with characteristics associated with under-representation and disadvantage are guided and supported to get on the right study path.

iii) To enable students who identify with characteristics associated with under-representation and disadvantage to be supported to become study ready.

2. Fees and Funding:

i) To enable students who identify with characteristics associated with under-representation and disadvantage to be supported in the financial models available to them. Please refer to Section 4 for more information.

3. Enabling Access through Partnerships:

i) To support students who identify with characteristics associated with under-representation and disadvantage through partnership arrangements.

4. Identity and Belonging through Inclusive Design:

i) To enable students who identify with characteristics associated with under-representation and disadvantage to successfully meet their study goals, develop confidence in their learning ability, be aware of and understand their relationship with the University and its community and how it supports their progress.

ii) To develop a sense of identity and belonging for students who are under-represented and disadvantaged.

5. Proactive Student Support:

i) To enable learning gained through proactive support campaigns and interventions to be embedded within institutional practice.

6. Personal and Professional Outcomes (Learning, Career and Professional Gain):

i) To develop a greater understanding of the personal and professional outcomes of students who are under-represented and disadvantaged.

The OU is, uniquely, a UK-wide University meeting the needs of students in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as England. The APS Strategy therefore recognises the different funding body requirements across the four

nations. The strategy frames the University's ambitious response to removing persistent differential outcomes between different groups of students, and inequalities in APS.

Currently the University is undergoing a review of its Access provision in terms of ensuring that it is fit for purpose in enabling students, who come from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds, to be successful in their HE journeys.

Progression into higher skilled employment as an indicator of successful outcomes for many of our students is challenging and can be misleading. Many OU students are already in work when they start studying with us. Whilst career goals may be the aim for many of them, others are focused more broadly on personal goals; transition to another activity or job opportunity can be achieved as part of progression during study as well as after completion of study. Responses to our Employability of Qualifiers Survey 2019, relating to whether a student's study goal had changed during their study, found that of those who initially studied for personal reasons and changed their goal, 75% adopted career goals, demonstrating significant distance travelled. Analysis completed by Forward Role found that OU graduates outnumbered those from the University of Cambridge and Oxford employed as CEOs and Managing Directors.

Table 24 on the following page, illustrates how our strategic measures will be developed over the period of the APP, providing evidence as to why we have identified the specific initiatives that we think will achieve our strategic aims. The evidence is drawn from internal marketing insight, research and scholarship projects and outputs from our internal monitoring and reporting processes. Our Targets and Investments Plan details APP countable spend the relates to our Access, Financial Support and Research and Evaluation activity, equating to £4.7m. We have also committed an additional £2m to support our student success initiatives which will be reported in future monitoring returns.

Strategic priority and outcome	Strategic aim linked to APP	Evidence
Strategic priority 1: (Student) Curriculum Choices	Increase the proportion of: • Black students registered by 2025 (PTA_1) • Asian students registered by 2025 (PTA_2)	Marketing insight suggests that students who declare their ethnicity as Black and Asian students are less likely to perceive the OU as a study option. This may be as a result of the age profile of these students across the sector generally being 18 to 21-year olds.
Case Studies	Review the OU's bank of case studies to ensure that they represent BAME students whose ethnic declaration is Black or Asian and their experiences of study at the OU. Work across the University to deploy case studies in national media, on the OU website and through social media (with students' consent). Ensure representativeness of case studies to develop a sense of identity/belonging for BAME students to register with the OU and engage with their studies. Evidence from the sector suggests that developing a sense of identity and belonging supports student success.	December 2020
Tactical marketing activity	Deliver tactical marketing activity to increase the appeal of the OU to prospective Black and Asian students.	June 2020
Planning an integrated programme	Work with an expert in public sector BAME engagement strategies, to develop a more ambitious integrated programme of activities to support behaviour change, using COM-B and MINDSPACE. We expect the programme to include Marketing and Communications campaigns, as well as engagement work delivered in partnership with the relevant communities.	October 2020
Delivering first integrated programme	Deliver our first integrated Marketing, Communications and Community Outreach pilot.	October 2021
Evaluating first integrated programme	Evaluate the outcomes of the activities within the programme, using the OASIS tool.	December 2021
Evaluating second integrated programme	Based on the findings of previous annual evaluations using the Theory of Change methodology, roll out revised version of the programme.	June 2022
Subsequent programmes	Based on the findings of previous annual evaluations using the Theory of Change methodology, roll out revised version of the programme.	June 2023
Subsequent programmes	Based on the findings of previous annual evaluations using the Theory of Change methodology, roll out revised version of the programme.	June 2024
Subsequent programmes	Based on the findings of previous annual evaluations using the Theory of Change methodology, roll out revised version of the programme.	June 2025

| Strategic priority 2: Fees and funding | All students will declare whether they have experience of being in care or not by 2025 (OUT_2)

All students will declare whether they are a carer or not by 2025 (OUT_7)

Ensure at least 17.0% of entrants to the University are from IMD Q1 (OUT_1) | The Access programme has a high proportion of students from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds. Access prepares students for HE study and the OU's distance learning model. A recent internal review of the Access programme reveals at least a 10% improvement in retention, success and progression for students who have undertaken an Access module. They are more likely to submit all their assignments and make proactive contact with their tutors for support, should they need it. OU data also suggests that students who complete and are awarded a pass for the first year of their degree are more likely to continue through their qualification. Butcher et al's (2018) article supports these findings based on students who undertook the STEM Access module.

We therefore aim to continue to offer financial support to encourage more students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds to begin their studies with Access to support their success on the undergraduate programme. It is not possible to use the OfS Financial Evaluation Toolkit to evaluate our financial support as its focus is primarily on younger (18-21 year old) students studying at traditional face to face universities.   We will endeavour to evaluate the provision of this support using an adapted version of the OfS Financial Toolkit. To date we have revised the interview and survey tool but will require some time for our Data and Student Analytics team to develop an alternative to the Statical Tool that can be applied to the OU's context. We will seek to develop this tool by December 2020 in order that it can inform the Impact reporting process.

The OU's existing financial support initiatives (see Section 4) provide additional support as students transition onto the undergraduate programme. We will look to explore whether additional financial support options may be required for students who have undertaken Access through the University's Strategic Student Success Priority 'Support for New Students'.

During 2019/20 students who had submitted their first assignment and had a household income below £25,000 studying on the Access programme were offered a £250 bursary gifted through a legacy fund. Evidence from student feedback suggests this additional financial support was invaluable in helping them purchase equipment to enable them to successfully study.   This is particularly important for OU students who are not on campus and may not have access to a PC or laptop or reliable internet connection from home, a situation less impeding in a traditional university setting. Evaluation of the scheme revealed a 7.4pp increase in the pass rate between students who were in receipt of the bursary and those who were not.

The University also offers a bursary to carers across the University who had a household income of less that £25,000, living in England and on their first undergraduate module. Evaluation of the scheme will take place using the University designed financial evaluation tool mentioned above. |

<table>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>

Whilst offering the bursary is aimed at encouraging carers and care experienced students to declare their status, the evidence above also suggest that bursaries support success for OU students. More reliable data is required, through increasing declaration rates, to enable us to provide a more robust analysis of success for this group of students. We therefore want to support an extension to the carers bursary scheme and include care experienced learners in response to OfS priorities.

Evidence of the impact of bursaries on student success across the sector suggests competing perspectives. For some (Callender et al, 2013) bursaries are not seen positive although this study is of full-time undergraduates, who are mostly under 25 and relates to the awareness of standard university bursaries rather than fee-waivers. The approach we aim to implement is likely to involve targeted communications to existing students who declare that they are carer or care experienced in additional to information and guidance being made available through our Help Centre webpage and our Educational Advisors.

A review of US research (Mundel, 2008) confirms the effectiveness of grants, bursaries and fee waivers in influencing both participation and university choice, and the greater the aid's value, the greater its potential impact. In an examination of the impact of bursary aid on college completion and degree performance, Murphy et. al (2016) suggest that for each £1,000 of financial aid that students are eligible for in the first year increases the chances of obtaining a good degree by 3.7 percentage points. This is driven by improvements in both degree completion and course scores. Our proposed bursary, in addition to other financial support offered by the University is likely to have a similar effect.

The unique circumstance of OU students warrants a more nuanced approach to evaluating their impact however, in order to understand the real impact on the student experience. Evaluation of the bursary scheme implemented through this APP will be undertaken through the adapted Financial Evaluation toolkit initially at the end of the first full academic year, starting in October 2020 and annual thereafter if the scheme proves successful. Evaluation will also look to undertake comparative analysis between different student groups in terms of the impact that this has on their outcomes.

Our Student Success Priority 'Supporting New Students' will be reviewing the impact of the Access programme, particularly the financial support as a priority. This will be reporting to VCE-Academic in July 2020 with recommendations for future support in this area.

</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>Maintain financial support for students on the Access programme.</td>
<td>September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>Explore possibilities to provide financial support for students who progress from Access to the first year of a degree programme</td>
<td>September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>Offer financial support for carers and care experienced students for implementation for October 2020 students.</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
</tr>
</table>

Financial support	Evaluate the impact of the Access bursary using the OU's financial support tool (see above)	October 2020
Bursaries	Scoping and development of operational processes (T&Cs, Application Forms, Comms and Promotions) for care experienced and carers bursaries	March 2021
Bursaries	Applications received and assessed for care experienced and carers bursaries. Selection process completed	July 2021
Bursaries	Module registrations for cohort 1 for care experienced and carers bursaries	October 2021
Bursaries	Theory of change evaluation (both qualitative and quantitative) of care experienced and carers bursaries	January 2022
Bursaries	Adapting current bursaries following theory of change evaluation	March 2022
Bursaries	Scoping and development of operational processes (T&Cs, Application Forms, Comms and Promotions) for future bursaries	March 2022
Bursaries	Applications received and assessed for future bursaries. Selection process completed	July 2022
Bursaries	Module registrations for cohort 1 for future bursaries	October 2022
Bursaries	Theory of change evaluation (both qualitative and quantitative) for future bursaries	January 2023
Bursaries	Adapting bursaries following theory of change evaluation	March 2023
Bursaries	Scoping and development of operational processes (T&Cs, Application Forms, Comms and Promotions) for future bursaries	March 2023
Bursaries	Applications received and assessed for future bursaries. Selection process completed	July 2023
Bursaries	Module registrations for cohort 1 for future bursaries	October 2023
Bursaries	Theory of change evaluation (both qualitative and quantitative) for future bursaries	January 2024
Bursaries	Adapting bursaries following theory of change evaluation	March 2024 – August 2025

Strategic priority 3: Enabling access through partnerships	Undertake scholarship in relation to the outcomes for SiSE on release from secure environments. (OUT_8) Increase the proportion of: • Black students registered by 2025 (PTA_1) • Asian students registered by 2025 (PTA_2) Ensure at least 17.0% of entrants to the University are from IMD Q1 (OUT_1)	Scholarship and anecdotal evidence suggest that SiSE face challenges upon release in terms of understanding the online learning environment or limitations in accessing materials due to conditions imposed. An OU project undertaken in 2014 explored the challenges that students in secure environment may face as they are released. Whilst it is not possible to share the report because of its sensitive nature, the findings which resulted from interviews with 14 students who had been recently been released from prison, suggest: • the critical importance of supportive structures beyond prison • the substantial negative effect on studying as a result of the environment individuals experiences in the short period after release • that intrinsic levels of confidence, motivation and resilience prove a vital aspect of successful study both in and beyond prisons Further exploration is required in relation to students who are released from secure environments and their support needs, particularly those students released from prison without any conditions imposed upon them but without any additional support to support this transition, as there is no way of identifying that they have been detained. We are committed within this APP to explore the challenges that this poses and identify additional interventions that can be put in place, working with the Ministry of Justice and the Prisoners' Education Trust where appropriate. Our approach to partnership working builds on our national scale and reach. Our Social Partnerships Network (SPN) consists of eleven organisations who have a commitment to social justice and operate at scale. Organisations include the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), Leonard Cheshire Disability, UnionLearn, Unison, Association of Colleges, English Football League Trust (EFLT), Learning and Work Institute (LWI), Action on Access, Association for Education and Aging (AEA) and the National Extension College (NEC). It is challenging to measure the impact of the SPN in terms of the number of students who subsequently register with the OU. We aim to explore opportunities to develop a process to enable us to monitor impact. We provide validation services for 42 providers across the UK and globally, opening up the opportunity to study HE through Further Education (FE). We need to develop a better understanding of the impact that these partnerships have on enabling access, success and progression for students who are from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds.
SiSE	Explore mechanisms to understand the student experience for SiSE on release.	December 2020
SiSE	Provide resource pack to support SiSE students through the gate to continue their OU studies	February 2021

SiSE	Work with the MOJ and the Prisoners Education Trust (PET) to enable access to IT equipment in prison, supporting SiSE experience whilst detained and upon release.	March 2021
SPN	Enhance our collaboration with our existing Social Partnerships Network to support the transition of their members into OU study.	November 2020
SPN	Explore the development of a process to monitor the impact of SPN activities on our strategic measures	July 2021
OUVP	Integrate OU Validation Partnerships (OUVP) within the Centre for APS model and develop processes for reporting the impact of OUVP activity on delivering our strategic measures.	December 2021
Sector Opportunity	Develop opportunities to work closer with the Further Education sector	July 2022
Strategic priority 4: Identity and belonging through inclusive design	Reduce the gap in the awarding of module pass between: • Black and White students (PTS_1) • Disabled students and those with no known disabilities (PTS_3) • Students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 (PTS_4 and PTS_12) • Students with mental health difficulties and those with no known disabilities (PTS_5) • BAME and White students (PTS_7) Reduce the gap in the awarding of 'good' module pass (1:1 and 2:1) between: • Black and White students (PTS_2) • Asian and White students (PTS_6) • Students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 (PTS_8 and PTS_12) • BAME and White students (PTS_9) Reduce the gap in the awarding of 'good' module pass (1:1 and 2:1) between disabled students and those with no known disabilities (PTS_11) Ensure at least 17.0% of entrants to the University are from IMD Q1 (OUT_1) Reduce the gap in module pass between students with low and high PEQs to 4pp (OUT_4) Reduce the gap in 'good' module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students with low and high PEQs by 2025 to 2.4pp (OUT_5) Reduce the gap in the awarding of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students in AHE Q1 compared to AHE Q5 to 4pp (PTS_10)	Scholarship projects have explored issues around: • Curriculum • Assessment • Workforce development In addressing inequitable outcomes for Black students an inclusive tool for reviewing curriculum was designed and piloted within the Access programme and four level 4 modules. Feedback suggests that the tool provides a useful framework for assessing curriculum content and design. Scholarship also suggests that assessment guidance should be made clearer and any assumptions should be explained more fully. An article by Butcher et. al., (2017) presents findings from a project exploring the language used in assessment guidance for an OU Access module and how outcomes were implemented in subsequent guidance to support student success. Scholarship exploring academic misconduct has also identified issues relating to clarity of assessment guidance in terms of what it means to plagiarise, particularly in relation to students who have been schooled overseas.

Inclusive curriculum tool	Include prototype inclusive curriculum tool (designed and piloted in 2019) in learning design workshops (delivered by Learning Design Services - LDS) and editorial workshops (delivered by Development Design and Production - DPP). 60 modules in 2020/21	July 2021
Inclusive curriculum tool	Refine tool using feedback from LDS and DPP and incorporate fully into suite of learning design tools for use in production of all module review and design. 60 modules per year, 240 modules by 2024/25.	September 2021
Inclusive curriculum tool	Develop the inclusive curriculum tool to incorporate within assessment design process and workforce development (staff training design and materials; recruitment and selection including design, advertising, interview tasks and materials).	July 2022
Inclusive curriculum tool	Incorporate use of the tool in the design of all Associate Lecturer (AL) development workshops including teaching principles and practice. Specific training to ALs in use of the tool in development and use of personal (to AL) teaching resources	September 2022

Strategic priority 5: Proactive student support	Reduce the gap in the awarding of module pass between: • Black and White students (PTS_1) • Disabled students and those with no known disabilities (PTS_3) • Students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 (PTS_4) • Students with mental health difficulties and those with no known disabilities (PTS_5) • BAME and White students (PTS_7) Reduce the gap in the awarding of 'good' module pass (1:1 and 2:1) between: • Black and White students (PTS_2) • Asian and White students (PTS_6) • Students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 (PTS_8) • BAME and White students (PTS_9)	Institutional evidence suggests that for some students who declare a mental health issue, continuing their studies at that point in time may not be the best thing for them. Students on the Access programme report that the one-to-one tutoring model has been invaluable in enabling them to develop confidence in their academic ability, study skills and motivation to continue their studies. In October 2017 (2017J cohort) the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences undertook a project to implement a progression tutor model into some of its modules. The outcomes of the project reveals a 15% increase in the number of enrolments in the following year of the initial module. A previous evaluation of the same project in February 2016 (2016B cohort) also reveal a similar outcome. Literature also suggests the positive impact of personal tutoring (Yale, 2017). The OU's Access programme delivers a personal tutoring model whereby students receive one to one support from their tutor, delivered through regular telephone tutorials. Evaluation of the Access programme reveals the significance of this model in supporting students to complete their module and success on the first year of their undergraduate programme. The OU's standard tutoring model provides a personal tutor for each student with group tutorials offered to students. These tutorials may not be delivered through a student's allocated tutor. Tutors are expected to provide personal tutoring to their students throughout their module, however this can be demanding and the capacity for tutors to meet the needs of some students may be limited. Implementing an institution-wide scheme that builds upon the evidence that personal tutoring works and the knowledge that the University's standard tutoring model may place additional pressure on tutor's capacity to

	between students in AHE Q1 compared to AHE Q5 (PTS_10) Reduce the gap in the awarding of 'good' module pass (1:1 and 2:1) between disabled students and those with no known disabilities (PTS_11) Ensure at least 17.0% of entrants to the University are from IMD Q1 (OUT_1) Reduce the gap in module pass between students with low and high PEQs to 4pp (OUT_4) Reduce the gap in 'good' module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students with low and high PEQs by 2025 to 2.4pp (OUT_5)	deliver, we are seeking, within our APP commitments, to implement an additional programme of support to provide more pastoral advice and guidance for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. A full evaluation of the scheme will be undertaken within the framework of our Evaluation Strategy detailed in Section .3.3 Sector evidence suggests that peer-to-peer mentoring has a positive impact on the student experience and subsequent success (HEA, 2011). This findings of the project suggest that 'for a modest investment, the benefits realised in terms of student success at transition are considerable. The institutions involved in this study believe that peer mentoring is key in addressing the challenge of encouraging student success at transition'. The introduction of a peer to peer mentoring scheme at the OU will be implemented based on this evidence. The approach will be nuanced to the specific context of the OU's distance learning model. A full evaluation of the scheme will be undertaken within the framework of our Evaluation Strategy detailed in Section 3.3. Offering a coordinated whole-institution approach to implement additional support for students from widening participation backgrounds in the form of a personal pathway advisor model and a peer to peer mentoring scheme aims to offer a holistic experience for students to whom the objectives within this APP are aimed.	
APS Champions	Working with OU Students Association establish APS champions within faculties to promote diversity within the academic environment and mentoring support for students	September 2020
Mental Health Support	Develop specific resources to address issues for students who declare they are disabled including those with mental health issues.	July 2024
Personal Learning Advisors	Finalise total number of Personal Learning Advisor posts and scope different approaches to role and pilots Create Job Description and Job Specification Establish local stakeholder group for those immediately involved Data analysis of relevant student groups for pilots (by cohort, characteristic, identified gaps in 25 % FLP, completion and pass). Establish methodology for use of data analytics	October 2020
Personal Learning Advisors	Recruit and Select Personal Learning Advisors into post Establish location for posts and specific pilots to start from March 2021 Carry out communications to OU stakeholders and students Establish OU stakeholder group including Associate Lecturers	Feb 2021

Personal Learning Advisors	Begin Pilots Establish evaluation mechanisms (qualitative and quantitative). Review progress of data analytics	March 2021
Personal Learning Advisors	Evaluate pilots to date and review roles and undertake enhancements or amendments to pilots Undertake student consultation Undertake impact assessment through data analytics and analysis Check evaluation mechanisms and improve Obtain Associate Lecturer feedback on pilots Review impact on cohorts and implement plans for forthcoming year (is it reducing the gap)	July 2021
Personal Learning Advisors	Implement any developments to pilots Establish student feedback mechanisms based on student consultation	October 2021
Personal Learning Advisors	Evaluate pilots to date and review roles and undertake enhancements or amendments to pilots Undertake impact assessment through data analytics and analysis	April 2022
Personal Learning Advisors	Undertake student and Associate Lecturer consultation Review stakeholders and consult Review pilots and undertake enhancement/amendments to pilots Review impact on cohorts and implement plans for forthcoming year (is it reducing the gap)	July 2022
Personal Learning Advisors	Implement any developments to pilots	October 2022
Personal Learning Advisors	Evaluate pilots to date and review roles and undertake enhancements or amendments to pilots Undertake impact assessment through data analytics and analysis	April 2023
Personal Learning Advisors	Undertake student consultation Review pilots and establish final role for implementation across service Develop new role– pilots cease – business as usual to Aug 25 Review impact on cohorts and implement plans for forthcoming year (is it reducing the gap)	July 2023

Personal Learning Advisors	Implement new role across service as Personal Learning Advisor Establish ongoing evaluation mechanisms and dashboard for real time analytics	October 2023
Personal Learning Advisors	Evaluate data Student and Associate Lecturer consultation Undertake impact assessment through data analytics and analysis	April 2024
Personal Learning Advisors	Review impact on cohorts and implement plans for forthcoming year (is it reducing the gap)	July 2024
Personal Learning Advisors	Maintain Personal Learning Advisor role as business as usual Ongoing evaluation mechanisms and dashboard for real time analytics	October 2024
Personal Learning Advisors	Evaluate data Student and AL consultation Undertake impact assessment through data analytics and analysis Review impact on cohorts and implement plans for forthcoming year (is it reducing the gap)	April 2025
Personal Learning Advisors	Final analysis and report and establish business as usual post Aug 25	Aug 2025
Peer Mentoring	Evaluate the impact of the FASS peer-to-peer mentoring pilot (October 2020, with around 5000 new students being provided with a student mentor who is in their second year of study, via an online, one-to-one communication channel), with a view to rolling out the model to other faculties. This is a 3-year pilot, the initial impact of which is not likely to be evidenced until the middle of the second year (evaluating year 1 retention-on-module and assignment submission metrics), and full impact in the middle of year 3 (evaluating year 1 progress, of students to the next module, and year 2 retention-on-module and assignment submission metrics).	October 2020
Peer Mentoring	It is proposed that the approach be expanded to other faculties and the numbers of mentored students significantly increased as a result of the pilot (and this could happen as soon as year 3 if there is significant positive results in year 1), and this has been written into the FASS project and procurement plan.	2022 and beyond
Peer Mentoring	Enhancing existing training and guidance for mentors (used successfully on 2 small pilots in FASS) which comprises: • Documentation which advises on the details of the role, boundaries, expectations of both mentors and mentees	September 2020

	• A mentor 'agreement' which needs to be completed and signed as evidence of agreement to the role and associated boundaries and expectations	
	• An online, trackable training resource in the form of a scenario-based quiz which enables mentors to identify when to	
	• Feel it is appropriate to answer a query from a mentee direct,	
	• when to signpost additional resource, and/or	
	• when to re-direct or refer for more specific or tailored guidance.	
	• FAQs and referral routes for tailored advice to individual mentors as and when required	
	The opportunity to communicate with other mentors (hopefully) via a forum	
Peer Mentoring	Developing existing training and guidance within the project from one cohort to the next, as lessons are learned in each iteration of the scheme.	June 2021
Peer Mentoring	Led by FASS on behalf of PV-S: Discussion, consultation and development, working across the university to refine and define peer mentor/buddy roles, based on the experience of pilots and schemes in the OU and, where appropriate, scoping and sourcing expertise from other institutions. This includes • Auditing existing mentoring/buddying schemes already in place across the OU (led by the FASS example above) • Identifying and applying the difference between the mentor role in different schemes and developing roles to suit (i.e. one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many) Developing ideas for best practice, harnessing information and lessons learned from other schemes, in terms of operating one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many schemes and disseminating this across the OU with an accessible central point for guidance and development	2020

| Strategic priority 6:

Personal and professional outcomes (learning, career and personal gain) | Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between

• Black and White students (PTP_1)
• Mental health conditions and those with no known disabilities (PTP_2)
• Disabled students and those with no known disabilities (PTP_3)
• Students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 (PTP_4)
• BAME and White students (PTP_5) | The CES have always adopted an inclusive approach to supporting students in terms of employability, aimed at all students whatever their background. In order to meet the objectives in this APP, this approach will be tailored to specifically provide opportunities and support for the students identified as experiencing gaps in progression to higher skilled employment or further study compared to other students. |

Career registration	Review existing materials to support students for whom there is a gap in attainment. Update for target groups. Market to encourage further engagement. Seek student evaluative feedback to inform methodology, topics, approach, resources.	July 2020
Career registration	In developing Achieving Your Goals pilot findings, create diagnostic tool to enhance student access to appropriate progression support. Develop resources around neurodiversity for students and to support staff in engagement techniques both online and in 1:many and 1:1 interactions. Roll-out to SRSCs. Ensure that guidance and processes for students engaging with CES face-to-face and online are transparent and tailored to the needs of specific groups. Develop customised resources to support students into further study in collaboration with curriculum areas and professional bodies. Target marketing. Review.	July 2021
Career registration	Create case studies/personas to demonstrate benefit of resources to specific groups in collaboration with BOSS and OUSA. Increase integration of bite-size resources into Subject Sites through curriculum discussion. Measure engagement and collect feedback. Increase engagement with the diagnostic tool by 20% Further target groups whose engagement increases the least.	July 2022
Career registration	Refresh existing resources and create new resources to support groups where outcomes in GO/EQS show lower progression into skilled employment or further study. Work to increase response rates in GO/EQS. Also use data on student engagement to inform and tailor marketing for resources/student facing sites.	July 2023
Career registration	Increase engagement with diagnostic tool by specific groups by 10% using data from registration activities to inform approach	July 2024
Career registration	Increase engagement with resources by a further 5% again using data and previous engagement to inform	July 2025
Employer Engagement	Increase attendance by students and employers at OU Online TalentConnect career fairs including integrating support for specific groups into the fairs	July 2021
Employer Engagement	Review face-to-face Insight days with employers to increase opportunities for students in target groups. Implement 12mth longitudinal survey to measure long term gains. Create case studies to further increase engagement.	July 2022
Employer Engagement	Develop a mock video interview service for students to support them to develop their interview and self-reflection skills and receive constructive feedback from employers. Develop a two-stage process involving initial feedback from Careers Consultant.	July 2023
Employer Engagement	Develop materials for employers to better understand the strengths of those students who declare they are disabled, how to proactively attract and recruit them and the adaptive arrangements useful for supporting them in the workplace.	July 2024
Employer Engagement	Make available Virtual Insight days using Ivent Technology to make experiences available for those who cannot attend in person.	July 2025
Employer Engagement	Provision of targeted and virtual placement opportunities, supporting employers to engage with talent from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.	July 2025

Table 24 *Table linking strategic aims to pathways of change*

APS Central Team and Monitoring

In order to deliver these strategic priorities a Centre for Access, Participation and Success will be established within the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students (PVC-S) by July 2020. This Centre will provide the strategic direction and oversight of the delivery of the APP but will be a cross-institutional group made up from new roles (identified below) which are to be embedded across the University. These roles will be responsible for ensuring the effective delivery of our APP commitments. It will include resource to support effective monitoring and evaluation of APP interventions through the Theory of Change model. APS leads will provide the direction to deliver the APP to the strategic priorities, working within faculties and units to support delivery objectives. Support for dedicated resource within faculties will be allocated to implement the strategic objectives, reporting into the Centre for APS and embedding initiatives into unit business plans and the quality monitoring and enhancement (QME) process. Data analysts will provide dedicated support to monitor progress against targets and explore the data in relation to the drivers behind inequitable outcomes, with a view to targeting specific attention on particular aspects of our provision. This will include providing more nuanced faculty and discipline level data. A data dashboard currently in development will enable faculty level ownership of all APS data, filtered by student characteristic and at nation, institution, faculty, discipline, Board of Studies, qualification and module level. The current project plan suggests this dashboard will be available by September 2020.

As a result of the commitments outlined above, as of 2022 we now have a process for APP specific data-collection and analysis within the University's Quality Monitoring and Enhancement (QME) processes. APP-specific module and qualification data dashboards and self-serve dashboard training for all staff have been developed. The APP section of the University's QME template is designed to facilitate analysis of, and reflection on, module performance via the dashboards. We use this for constructive dialogue with academic staff about the outcomes for students with APP characteristics and the planning for, and implementation of, appropriate action to address gaps. The APP QME sections for all Boards of Studies are reviewed annually by the central APP team to offer additional support and guidance where needed and to identify and share good practice across the University. This approach to ensuring quality courses and equitable outcomes for all students aligns with the OU's approach to meeting the OfS's conditions of registration with regards to quality.

3.1.5 Alignment with Institutional Strategies

The key strategic priority for the OU is student success (Figure 3). It is through our scale, reach and ability to support students to succeed, that we are able to achieve our positive impact on society and the economy. This includes:

- Understanding our students' study goals and ensuring they get onto the right study path at the right level
- Supporting our students to successfully progress through and complete their chosen module(s) or qualification
- Delivering a high quality and flexible student experience with high levels of student satisfaction
- Supporting students to achieve positive career and personal development outcomes

The focus on student success is underpinned by a set of related objectives, which together will achieve the overall vision:

- Delivering excellent teaching and research to enhance our distinctiveness, reputation and, above all, student success
- Enhancing our future growth and sustainability by diversifying our reach and sources of income and managing and challenging our cost base
- Investing in technology that enables success – both student-facing technology and our own internal systems

Figure 3 Student success priorities

- Fostering a dynamic and inclusive culture by investing in staff to recognise and maximise their contribution to our success.

Table 25 below presents our institutional student success KPIs and how they align with our APP strategic objectives and aims.

Institutional KPIs	Aligned to the following APP strategic objectives	Evidence by specific APP aims
Increase the proportion of students succeeding in OU study particularly focusing on: - Module pass rate - Module return rate	Reduce the gap in the awarding of module pass between: - Black and White students (PTS_1) - Disabled students and those with no known disabilities (PTS_3) - Students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 (PTS_4) - Students with mental health difficulties and those with no known disabilities (PTS_5) - BAME and White students (PTS_7)	Reduction in the gap in the awarding of module pass
Reduce the retention gap between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students and White students, for any cohort, from registration to qualification (Equality and Diversity Scheme)	Reduce the gap in the awarding of module pass between: - Black and White students (PTS_1) - BAME and White students (PTS_7)	Reduction in the gap in the awarding of module pass (leading to increase in the number of students progressing to their next module)
Reduce the degree awarding gap between BAME students and White students (Equality and Diversity Scheme)	Reduce the gap in the awarding of 'good' module pass (1:1 and 2:1) between: - Black and White students (PTS_2) - Asian and White students (PTS_6) - BAME and White students (PTS_9)	Reduction in the gap in the awarding of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1)

Table 25 *Institutional strategic plan*

PVC-S has ultimate responsibility for:

- APS
- Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)
- QME
- Enhanced Employability and Career Progression (EECP)
- Curriculum Innovation
- Assessment
- Student Voice
- Recognition of Prior Learning

This provides the structure to enable collaborative working and alignment across each of these areas, enabling impact across the whole institution.

3.1.6 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

PVC-S has overall accountability for the student-facing objectives within the University's Equality Scheme. The APS team are embedded within PVC-S and work closely with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team to align their

objectives, measures and approaches to reducing inequitable outcomes for under-represented groups and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Student-facing objectives within the OU's Equality Scheme 2018-22 align to the APP:

- Reduce the retention gap between BAME and White students
- Reduce the degree awarding gap between BAME and White students, to be in line with the sector average

Staff facing objectives also contribute to the success of our students and include:

- Improve the representation of disabled, BAME and female staff in senior roles
- Improve line managers' capability to recruit, manage and develop diverse teams

The APS team also supports the development of the University's submission to the Race Equality Charter (REC) and similar quality marks. Through the hosting of joint workshops, the EDI and APS teams work to support all areas of the University to embed APS and EDI objectives within unit business plans and the monitoring of outcomes. EDI champions work within each faculty and an academic lead represents both EDI and APS objectives within their role. The EDI Steering Group (EDISG), chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students), oversees the institution's responsibilities for EDI. The Senior Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Manager is represented on the institution's APSSG to ensure alignment with EDI and APS strategies.

Along with the appointment of a Dean for EDI, a revised EDI committee structure has been established into which the APP Steering Group will report. An EDI Institutional Plan 2022-27 has been developed and will include priorities and objectives directly aligned to closing awarding gaps.

3.1.7 Academic Strategy

The OU's mission to be 'open to all' informs all our policies and statements. APS provides one of several pillars within the University's Academic Strategy to ensure its six aims, presented in Figure 4 can be realised.
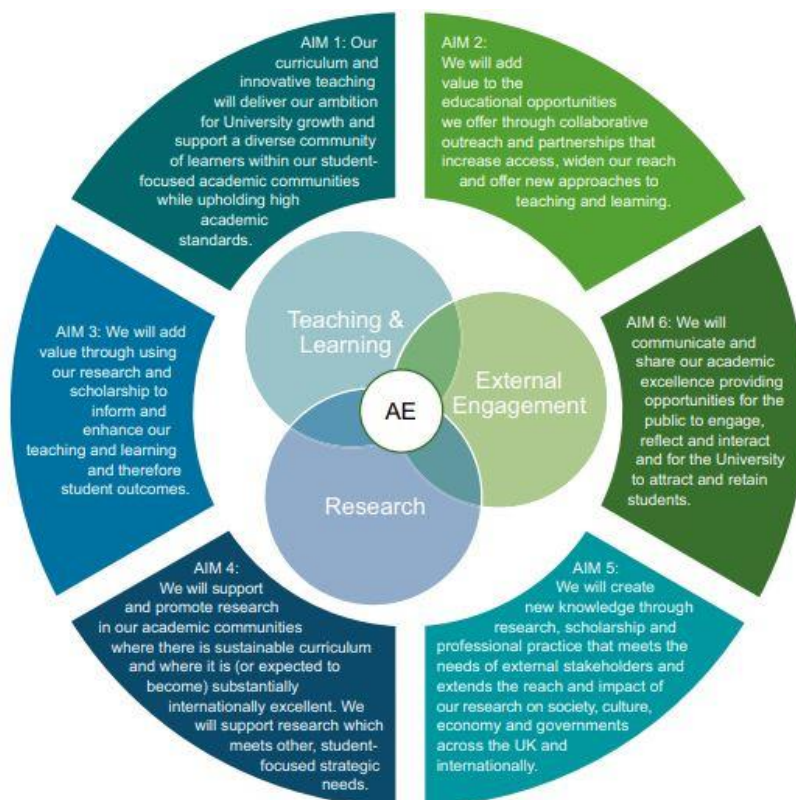

Figure 4 Six aims for enhancing our Academic Excellence through our Teaching & Learning, Research & Scholarship and External Engagement

3.1.8 Employability and Career Progression

EECP is an institutional programme focussed on embedding employability across the institution. This is delivered via a Student Employability Strategy which is tracked at institutional level via key performance indicators, measuring positive impact of OU study on student career and personal goals. The work focusses on three main areas:

- Student engagement and support
- Embedding employability in the curriculum
- Deepening employer engagement

These activities are being developed in close collaboration with CES and are designed to ensure a positive impact across the University and support the needs of all the groups identified in the APP.

CES is designed for our unique student population. The approach has been to integrate support for all students across our delivery whilst at the same time recognising that some students will need additional resources. Rather than these resources being separated out they are integrated at key points where students might need to access them. The careers website for students also includes resources on the disclosure of a disability to employers; these resources are part of a section on job hunting for all students as well as being referred to in a separate section focussed on equality and diversity.

We recognise the need for customised resources to support different groups of students and to this end have incorporated two Careers and Employability Consultants with specific responsibility for diversity into the design of the service. These staff have a responsibility for leading the development of resources via forums, webinars and online materials as well as training colleagues across the service to be able to respond to queries from any student.

Following the approval of this APP, the CES team will explore nuanced activity in order to address gaps in the progression to higher skilled employment and further study for particularly groups of students, specifically those who are Black and disabled by 2022.

3.1.9 SiSE

The OU's ambition to be open to all includes those students in secure environments. Our current provision is spread over 150 prisons and 50 secure hospital units. We offer a wide range of qualifications. Most students who begin their OU studies whilst in a secure environment, start with studying an Access module.

Our curriculum offer within secure environments has specially adapted delivery formats to support those who do not have access to the internet. These materials can also be used by students who are serving community sentences and are subject to legal restrictions and conditions.

The OU has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) which is reviewed annually, and the Prison Service Instruction also references the OU as a distance learning provider.

3.1.10 Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

A Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is being developed to provide the strategic direction for the University to support students' mental health and wellbeing. A working group oversees the development of the strategy which is due to be approved through the University's formal governance structure in 2020.

3.1.11 Accessibility

The University's Accessibility Policy 'sets out our commitment to supporting all of our students in ways that effectively meet their needs'. It defines the principles the OU will follow in order to:

- Promote an inclusive environment
- Ensure proactive and responsive processes and procedures
- Enable effective communication

The University has also created a general accessibility statement in line with Government Digital Service recommended standards and the Public Sector Digital Accessibility Regulations. This incorporates a clear and accessible feedback mechanism. We have undertaken a proof of concept audit of several University web pages with a third-party provider and we are now considering how to take this forward.

Over the past decade, the Securing Greater Accessibility (SeGA) initiative, based in the Institution of Educational Technology, has been developed to ensure a pan-university approach to tackle both technical and pedagogical accessibility issues. SeGA manages a network of Accessibility Coordinators, who provide guidance and share good practice within each faculty, and Accessibility Champions who work to ensure accessibility is considered in all relevant units, including the library, IT services, and marketing. APS and PVC-S are represented on the SeGA Coordination Group, which is the forum for strategic discussion of accessibility issues across the university.

3.2 Developing and enhancing partnerships with schools and other local organisations to help raise pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England.

The OU's mission and vision is to support adult learners who may not have had the opportunity or aspiration to attend HE earlier in life. The University believes that successful study by adults in positions of influence provide role models for young people, thereby supporting pre-16 attainment. Many of our students are parents, carers or significant adults, and achieving with the University means they can inspire a young person. The adult learner will themselves be in a better position to demystify HE study and support the young person as they consider, then apply to, and finally enter HE. Many adult learners have said a significant driver for their own study is to provide a positive example to their children.

3.2.1 Raising attainment through our Curriculum offer

Whilst the OU in England no longer offers a PGCE or accredited initial teacher training, our curriculum offers free resources and accredited modules and programmes in the fields of education, child development, mental health and teaching online that support students to gain a sound foundation of further study relevant to a range of roles within education.

3.2.2 Support for teachers and schools

The OU works to raise pre-16 attainment and the aspirations of young people through its support of teachers and schools rather than more traditional 'outreach' activity.

Our partnership with the Ogden Trust aims to increase the uptake of physics post-16 by supporting physics education and engagement for young people aged 4- to 18-years-old, particularly those in under-represented groups. The Trust supports schools, teachers, projects and programmes that are committed to enhancing physics teaching and learning.

OU research has inspired the Reading for Pleasure (RfP) coalition, involving a range of partners including the UK Literacy Association. Over the last five years, the movement has fostered over 300 Teacher Reading Groups, supporting a community of teachers, librarians, teaching assistants and literacy coordinators. The OU trains and supports the leaders of these groups that reach approximately 7,000 members, who in turn have shaped the lives of an estimated 180,000 children. The programme enables schools to build a rich reading culture and curricula that will impact on children's life chances.

The OU supports the Reading Schools Programme: Building a Culture of Reading, which is aligned to the National Curriculum and the new Reading Framework (DfE, 2021). Working with DfE, the OU has trained 170 literacy specialists in the English Hub schools on fostering a love of reading. These senior leaders work with over 4,000 supported schools nationally.

The Street Law project offers public understanding of law through 'Street Law' workshops in secondary schools and community groups with the aim of promoting a greater understanding of law and legal issues.

The OU Cisco Academy Support Centre has connections to many schools and helps educators reach students aged 13 and over to develop their attainment in the digital space. Teaching from the Cisco NetAcad portfolio: Python, Linux Essentials, CyberSecurity Essentials, Networking Essentials, Network Security, CyberOps, DevNet, CCNP-Enterprise and our core cohort of CCNA-R+S, the OU helps schools and education-focused charities become Cisco Academies.

The OU Business School has been leading on a project 'Leading school learning through Covid-19 and beyond' to investigate challenges and opportunities in the strategic management of online learning in English secondary schools, through Covid-19 and beyond.   One of the outputs from this project is the launch of a free OpenLearn course 'Strategic planning for online learning: a whole school approach' in September 2022.

Studentships for UK school teachers are offered to help support the introduction or development of Classical Civilisation or Latin into the curriculum of the schools in which they work. Three fully-funded scholarships for teachers to study a Masters of Arts in Classical Studies are offered through funding from the A.G. Leventis Foundation and three further fully-funded equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) scholarships are offered for teachers to study a Level 5 module.

3.2.3 Resources to support attainment via learning and teaching

The OU's free OpenLearn platform and content supports young people, parents and teachers in raising attainment and aspirations in children under 16. The vision of our Open Access resources, on OpenLearn, YouTube, iTunes U and Open Research online, is to break down barriers to education through free educational resources, addressing access, lack of confidence, and cost. During the pandemic OpenLearn developed a dedicated hub that brings together free courses and content appropriate for school study, encompassing English, Literature, Maths, science and languages, alongside life skills course such as finance. A project is currently taking place to work with teachers to map appropriate OU resources to the school curriculum.

The Children's Research Centre (CRC) was established in 2004 to support children and young people to undertake their own research. In collaboration with national and international partners, the CRC works with diverse groups of children and young people in schools and community settings, provides them with age-tailored research training and then supports them to undertake original research of their choosing. To reach diverse groups of children, the CRC works with organisations and practitioners across many different contexts spanning education, health and social care and is creating a practitioner toolkit to be promoted to schools nationally.

3.2.4 Raising attainment in partnership with the BBC

The OU's and BBC's respective partnership strategies are aligned to include a focus on younger adult audiences with content that resonates with a pre-16 age group, consumed on devices commonly used by that cohort. Television co-productions include Wild Isles - a poster and interactive map exploring UK ecosystems in the UK. There will be additional partnering with World Wildlife Fund and RSPB for a public engagement campaign, likely to include schools and libraries. There is another major series with poster and digital content planned for 2024. The OU extensively commission short videos/animations with BBC Ideas, published under an OU playlist. This platform is aimed at younger audiences.

3.3 Diverse pathways

3.3.1 Milestone qualifications

The University's undergraduate programmes are structured so students can be awarded a Level 4 Certificate of Higher Education and/or a Level 5 Diploma of Higher Education as milestones on the way to being awarded a Bachelor's degree. Given the flexible nature of OU study, this helps students to have a recognised award for their years of study on their journey to a full degree. OU students may choose a named degree qualification or follow a flexible study pathway through the Open Programme, which enables them to construct their qualification through selecting modules from a range of disciplines. In addition, the OU's OpenPlus programme offers a flexible route to an honours degree in chemistry, environmental science or physics. Students complete Level 4 study at the OU before completing their degree by studying for two years full time at a partner university.

3.3.2 Apprenticeships

The University offers 10 Higher Apprenticeships and Degree Apprenticeships across the UK delivered by blended learning, to allow greater flexibility for employers and apprentices. These qualifications have been designed to meet specific occupational needs whilst allowing flex around the demands of working life. The University maintains its open access policy across its apprenticeship offer enabling employers to open up education and work opportunities to people from all backgrounds. Developing these offers with employers enables us to increase and diversify the ways that students can access and benefit from higher education.

3.3.3 Higher Technical Qualifications

From Autumn 2022, a new wave of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) will be available to learners in England: Dip HE in Network Engineering and Dip HE in Software Development. The OU has submitted the Foundation Degree in Nursing Practice for approval and more subject areas are likely to be opened for HTQ provision in the coming years. All OU HTQs have pathways on to further Bachelor level study.

3.3.4 Further Education Validation partnerships

The OU will work with further education (FE) colleges that do not currently offer higher technical education or want to expand the range of courses they offer. Supported by £10 million UK Government funding, the scheme will enable colleges to put on a wider range of technical courses, supporting more people to secure jobs with higher wages and grow the economy in their area. This approach, which will see the OU initially working with 10-12 FE providers over the next three years will be vital in supporting levelling up of skills with qualifications that employers want and need.

3.3.5 Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of students' prior learning at HE level can provide an avenue for learners to continue studying at Level 4 or 5 and/or progress onto Level 6 study and complete a full degree. Recognition of this learning reduces the cost and time taken to gain a qualification. The OU has a long-established centralised team who manage and support applications for the recognition of prior certificated learning towards both undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. Approximately 6000 awards for credit transfer are made annually. We are currently expanding progression agreements with FE colleges in England for students completing Level 4 and 5 qualifications.

3.2 Student Consultation

The development of the APP aligns with the development of a new University-wide APS Strategy. This strategy was approved by the University's Senate in June 2019 and formally launched in September 2019. An OU Students Association Senate Reference Group scrutinise and comment on all papers, strategies and policies that are presented to Senate and an OU Students Association representative is also a full member of Senate and the University's Council, which has had full oversight of the development of the APP and approval of its submission to the OfS.   The APS strategy aligns with the APP objectives to remove inequalities in access and participation in HE across the four nations of the UK, within which the University operates. In addition to scrutiny through the formal governance and management structures, the APP and APS Strategy have been developed in consultation with students, through the University's online Student Consultative Forum. The forum consists of approximately 300 student volunteers from a range of backgrounds and is used by the University to seek student views on a range of strategic and operational priorities.

OU students often have competing priorities in terms of study, work and caring responsibilities and we therefore have a duty of care not to impose too many additional requests that may impact upon their ability to receive a positive study experience. The adopted approach enabled the student voice to be represented through the development of the APP and will continue to be represented through the implementation phase of the APP.

Participants in the consultation were provided with background information relating to inequalities in HE and were asked for their views about how the OU could improve learning and career outcomes for students identified as under-represented or disadvantaged. Students were asked to comment in relation to:

- Fees and funding
- Curriculum choices
- Accessibility and inclusion in curriculum design
- Advice and guidance at the start of your studies
- Teaching and student support
- Learning communities and networks

The findings from the consultation were consolidated and a response submitted to the forum in the form of 'You said, we did' in relation to developing the strategic priorities within the strategy and APP. The feedback specifically related to the action that University could take to address some of the issues for different groups of students. These have been included within the overall student success priorities in the PVC-Students' portfolio:

- Student communication
- Supported open entry
- Flexible study intensity

and have been manifested through specific initiatives within the Office of the PVC-S. These initiatives are implemented through business as usual activity and identified as discrete initiatives to be offset against the University's higher fee income:

- Recording of tutorials
- Assessment
- Support for students with mental health conditions
- Support for progression
- Personal pathway advisers
- Peer to peer mentoring

Student representatives are embedded within institutional structures and processes and reflect the diversity of our student body. Feedback, following the initial consultation was received through these established institutional structures. Students have had the opportunity to express their views about the content of the plan through their representatives on formal University committees namely:

- Student Experience Committee
- Education Committee
- Senate

Views have also been elicited as part of a series of APP presentations across the University faculty Boards of Study, teaching committees and the APS Steering Group. Student representatives are members of these groups.

3.3 Evaluation Strategy

Assessing our current practice using the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool, we are advanced in terms of Strategic context, Programme design, Evaluation implementation, and Learning from evaluation. However, in each of these areas, there are activities where we recognise that practice is still being developed. These form areas of focus in this Evaluation Strategy (Tables 26, 27, 28 ,29 and 30).

The OU has mature processes and systems for data collection, analysis and QME, which is described below. A worked example is provided at the end of this section relating to the aims and targets contained within Section 2.2. Our QME process enables us to monitor student progress and success and also to implement and evaluate specific interventions. This enables us to respond to issues identified through the analysis of quantitative data, the outcomes of which are communicated to faculty leads who then work with the SRSCs to improve outcomes for students. Faculty boards of study receive QME reports in order to inform future programme design. A similar process is also implemented through the Student Support Team (SST) reporting template.

The University has several tools which it has developed, such as OU Analyse and Analytics for Action which are being used in real time to provide live data on student progress and to trigger supportive interventions. These tools enable scrutiny of large-scale datasets to inform approaches to pedagogy and are used by module teams to ensure continuous enhancement of the student learning experience. Our Evaluation Strategy will systematically use the outputs from these tools e.g. conducting sentiment analysis, to inform future programme design.

A central team for Access, Participation and Success (APS) has been established within the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students. The team includes two APP Impact Evaluation Managers along with two APP Information Analysts. These posts have enabled us to apply an 'external and independent' lens to the evaluation of initiatives committed to within the current plan. They have also enabled us to develop and disseminate a range of data and evaluation resources through our internal intranet pages along with regular evaluation workshops and drop-in surgeries to support APP work across the University. A monthly APP Data and Evaluation Management Group has also been established to:

- Ensure priority APP/S initiatives are evaluated in a way that is appropriate, robust and co-ordinated.
- Support (as far as resources allow) APP/S relevant evaluation and research undertaken elsewhere in the OU to be robust and appropriately focused.
- Support the APP Management Group with data, insight and evaluation to enable:
  - o Reporting;
  - o The successful implementation and delivery of APP initiatives; Evidence-based recommendations about changes to or cessation of initiatives.
  - o Development of APP implementation.
  - o Ensure that APP data analysis and evaluation resources are used effectively and in a way which reflects APP priorities.

A further APP post within our Learner and Discovery Services is also being trialled to embed APP support into the already established Analytics for Action process. This role will support module teams in enhancing inclusive pedagogy. A data science project exploring the 'Identification of key drivers of our APP awarding gaps' has also been commissioned with outputs due in the summer 2022.

We have a well-established Access, Participation and Success sector-wide events and publications programme to support dissemination of our learning which includes:

- The Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning journal.
- Our annual APS seminar series which brings together internal and external colleagues working to make HE more equitable, sharing best practice and the benefit of discussing common issues, and collaborating to improve outcomes for students. At least four half-day seminars take place each academic year and speakers and guests from across the sector are invited.
- The Biennial APS conference brings together leading practitioners from across the sector to explore practical solutions to improve access, participation and success for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. The conference comprises a mix of keynote presentations, workshops, seminars, lightning talks and panel discussions.

We have begun to use this programme to disseminate emerging evaluation findings from our APP initiatives and also to share in the learning from others.

3.3.1 Strategic Context

The University's Culture of Evaluation	How can this be Improved to Support APP Strategic Objectives? What will we do?
The University's established QME process provides a strategically embedded approach to evaluating and improving modules across the University. Student Experience at the End of a Module (SeAM) surveys are embedded within the University's strategic approach to evaluation. Outcomes are used by curriculum teams to improve the success of students going forward. Evaluation is also embedded within specific programmes and initiatives above the QME process and institution-wide student surveys and used at faculty and unit level to inform future practice. Evaluation of our SeGA programme (which works to improve staff awareness and skills in producing accessible learning for disabled students) is designed into the programme (supported through the OfS-funded project IncSTEM) to capture staff awareness and training needs We adhere to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Code. Our provision will be reviewed in 2021 where we will undergo a quality enhancement review.	The APP Evaluation Strategy will build on the University's existing culture of evaluation to enhance our current focus on APS. Evaluation will be embedded from the start within the strategic priorities committed to in this APP, using quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the impact of these initiatives and inform future programme design. Prioritisation of evaluation, through the recruitment of two research and evaluation specialists will enable the development of an Evaluation Strategy to: 1) Audit current and planned projects which have an APS theme with a view to identifying lessons learned to inform future practice 2) Work with project teams to disseminate and scale-up the outcomes 3) Develop guidance on an appropriate theory of change, intervention implementation and robust evaluation approach 4) Run workshops to develop institutional understanding of Theory of Change methodology with a view to ensure a consistent approach to evaluation that is applied to all initiatives that support access, student success and progression. 5) Develop processes for disseminating and embedding learning into strategic initiatives reported through the established QME process

Table 26 *Overview of strategic context in relation to evaluation*

3.3.2 Designing your Programmes

Evidence Informed Programme Design	How can this be Improved to Support APP Strategic Objectives? What will we do?
Initiatives that are delivered in response to analysis of student data have evaluation embedded in order that improvements to programme design can be made going forward. APS roadshows to Boards of Study aim to disseminate the outcomes of scholarship projects including reporting the impact of initiatives on reducing inequitable outcomes, with a view to faculties and units implementing similar initiatives, embedding evaluation within.	Embed Theory of Change methodology within all initiatives aimed at supporting APP objectives. Develop Analytics for Action to identify learning design strategies to improve access and participation.

Table 27 *Overview of programme design in relation to strategic objectives*

3.3.3 Designing Impact Evaluation

Standards of Evidence	How can this be Improved to Support APP Strategic Objectives? What will we do?
Our approach to evaluation primarily falls within empirical enquiry using both quantitative and qualitative methods primarily focused at a local level as opposed to institutional change initiatives.	There are many factors that may influence successful outcomes for an OU student which makes it difficult to demonstrate causality. We will continue to use empirical enquiry as our primary approach to the evaluation of specific initiatives through quantitative and qualitative methods. We will develop our approach to evaluation to ensure that existing processes are reported at a strategic level. Whole-institution initiatives proposed within the APP will adopt Theory of Change methodology from the start and the evaluation of their impact at faculty and institutional level will be embedded within a newly established monitoring and reporting process into the APS team. Develop a process for enabling project outcomes to be evaluated locally and reported into the APS team to enable sharing of good practice and learning across the institution.

Table 28 *Overview of impact evaluation in relation to strategic objectives*

3.3.4 Implementing Evaluation

Data Strategy, Skills and Expertise	How can this be Improved?
Evaluation of initiatives is undertaken within the faculties and units to whom the initiative belongs, using mixed methods approaches within empirical enquiry.	In the next period, the APS team will work with the units and infrastructure to encourage more robust and consistent approaches to evaluation, that are strategically embedded. This will ensure that we harness the power of the infrastructure, expertise and scale of student data available, towards more robust empirical and causal research outcomes.

| More expertise required at a local level (e.g. within faculties and units) to ensure approaches to evaluation follow Theory of Change methodology. |
| Additional expertise within the APS team to support faculties and units in evaluating their initiatives, and to collate and report on institution-wide initiatives, and outcomes of QME and SeAM data. |

Table 29 *Overview of implementing evaluation*

3.3.5 Learning from Evaluation

Interpreting Results, Using and Sharing Findings	How can this be Improved?
What works is embedded within the Unit Business Planning process to enable sharing of good practice. Quality Enhancement (QE) APS seminar series and biennial conference, open to internal and external colleagues, supports the sharing of good practice across the institution and sector more widely. APS intranet site provides data reports and outcomes of pilot projects for use by colleagues. APS team roadshows aim to disseminate good practice identified from projects carried out within their remit. Faculty specific seminars/conferences share good practice generally.	Develop a strategic approach to sharing findings and embedding learning that impact on whole institution approaches to reducing gaps in student outcomes. Development of the APS intranet and internet sites to ensure timely dissemination of outputs, communicating what works. Encouragement and support for colleagues to attend QE seminars (where appropriate for APS), APS seminars and the biennial conference to learn from the evaluation of initiatives both internally and from across the sector.

Table 30 *Overview of learning from evaluation*

3.3.6 Evaluation of Core APP Initiatives

The APP commits the University to several initiatives that we believe will deliver our objectives, aligned to our strategic measures, to reduce inequalities in outcomes for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. There are four core initiatives in which we are investing heavily:

- Personal pathway advisers
- Peer to peer mentoring scheme
- Bursaries for carers and care experienced students
- Fee waiver on Access modules

Whilst established evaluation processes are already embedded across the University, our approach to evaluate these core APP initiatives will be used to further inform this work. We will recruit two Research and Evaluation specialists to lead the development of the evaluation and collaborate with colleagues responsible for delivering our strategic priorities. It is anticipated that this will involve as first steps the implementation of personal pathway advisers and the establishment of a working group to formalise the objectives of the programme with the expected impact that it will have on student success. An Evaluation Plan will be developed that identifies medium- and longer-term milestones and points at which formative evaluation will be undertaken through quantitative and qualitative methods. We will seek to engage students within this approach through one to one discussions and focus groups. Evaluation of the impact of non-financial support initiatives will follow the same model.

In close alignment with the established evaluative processes at the OU we plan to draw on the OfS toolkit to evaluate on an annual basis the specific impact of our spend on financial support for disadvantaged students. In order to take full account of the distinctive context in which our students learn (generally part-time while working) and of the prevalence of under-represented groups (adults with low prior entry qualifications) in our body of learners, we have adapted and customised the OfS survey and interview tool to enable a greater understanding of the impact of financial support (OU survey and interview tool). In many cases this is simply a nuanced wording to reflect the fact that OU students will be more likely to be working full-time than in the holidays, and will be more

likely to have significant family responsibilities. However, we feel the fundamental nature of the toolkit has been adhered to, and will generate valuable insights enabling us to judge the effectiveness of our financial packages on access, success and progression. We intend to issue the survey to students recorded as previously being in receipt of a fee waiver (Access) or bursary (undergraduate) six months after the start date of their current module (likely to be May and August to capture the OU's dual start dates. Analysis of results will help shape any additional interview questions we would wish to follow up beyond the template and inform the future design of financial support packages.

We also plan to align this learning with statistical analysis by making full use of a customised version of the statistical tool in the OfS toolkit. This will be prioritised by new colleagues in the Data and Student Analytics team and be ready for use in 2021.   Additional evaluation of the financial support on Access modules will be undertaken through the review of the Access programme under our Student Success Priority: 'Support for New Students'.

Task and finish groups established to deliver the initiatives with membership consisting of colleagues with responsibility for delivering the initiatives will ensure the outcomes of the evaluation will be embedded into future programme design.

3.3.6 Worked example based on aims and targets within Section 2.2

Aim: To reduce the gap in good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) for students who are Black (PTS_1)

Programme Design: Roll out the inclusive curriculum tool to all faculties and within Learning Design

- Informed by sector knowledge regarding developing inclusive curriculum that reflects the backgrounds of Black African and Black Caribbean students
- Pilot project completed within the Access programme to develop the inclusive curriculum revealed areas for improvement within module content

Designing Impact Evaluation: Empirical Enquiry

- Produce benchmark data
- Review the module and implement changes
- Offer revised curriculum to new student cohort
- Compare outcomes data with benchmark data

3.3.6.4 Implementing Evaluation

- Theory of Change methodology applied to the whole process
- Datasets comparable and align with institutional definitions

3.3.6.5 Learning from Evaluation

- Outcomes shared across other Boards of Study through faculty roadshows
- Approach published on APS intranet site
- Lessons learned and areas for improvement embedded within future implementation of the tool
- Methodology applied to more modules (evaluation process continues)
- Practice becomes embedded within all curriculum
-

3.4 Monitoring Progress against Delivery of the Plan

Senate are responsible for strategic academic decisions for the University. Council are accountable for management decisions. Consequently, academic and management commitments within the APP are required to be approved through both channels. A joint Senate/Council meeting is proposed to monitor progress towards APP objectives on an annual basis.

Students are represented on Council, Senate and core committees throughout the University and feed into the development and monitoring of the APP through the APSSG. A Student Monitoring Group will also be established and in the first instance will monitor progression within all working group activity linked to the APP objectives.

The OU's APSSG which is chaired by Dr Liz Marr, the Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students), will evaluate and monitor the delivery of our APP activities and provide institutional level assurance regarding the strategic direction of the APSS. The APSSG's membership consists of:

- Directors from across the University (Academic Services, Marketing, Strategy, Finance, University Secretary's Office, Data and Student Analytics, Learner and Discovery Services)
- Head of Governance
- Chief Information Officer
- Executive Deans from each of the faculties
- Nation Directors
- Chair of the Associate Lecturer Executive
- President of the Open University Students Association (OUSA)
- Senior Equality, Diversity and Wellbeing Manager

The APSSG meets biannually and reports to the University's Student Experience Committee. The group receives data reports on the strategic measures contained within the APP, covering the whole student lifecycle.

The action plan linked to the APP identifies key targets for APS which will be overseen by the APPWG. The APPWG will identify separate task and finish groups to work on each task area. Separate task and finish groups will provide the operational arm to deliver the strategic objectives. The outputs of these groups will be monitored on a regular basis by the APS team located in PVC-S and overseen by the Assistant Director, APS.

The Task and Finish group methodology within the OU contains a charter detailing the:

- Vision – Why are we doing this? What are we trying to solve?
- Mission – What will we do to meet the vision? What will we create/produce/deliver as a group?
- Success criteria – How will we know we have been successful? What are the key metrics?
- Definition of done – How will the Task and Finish group know the work is complete and when they should stop?

The charter also details the academic lead, the facilitator, membership of the working group and other stakeholders that might need to be consulted. What is inside and outside the scope is also listed alongside assumptions, constraints, dependencies, risks and a timeline of key events. This charter allows for monitoring and evaluation to take place as the Task and Finish group progresses, which in turn can be reported back to the APPWG, APSSG, Council and Senate.

If it is seen during the monitoring process that progress against any of the identified key targets for access, success and progression is worsening this will be notified immediately to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) and the Vice-Chancellor as well as entered on the University's risk register. This will result in a review of the Task and Finish group's actions and a remedial action plan developed to be undertaken immediately.

4. Provision of Information to Students

Information regarding the fees and funding options available for all students is available from the Funding your study option on the homepage of the OU website and through our Student Resources and Support Centre. Everyone who visits this webpage or contacts our SRSC is asked to confirm their country of residence so that the appropriate fee options are made available to them.

Our website asks students to choose the qualification they wish to study before then detailing the length in years the qualification will usually take them, the number of credits they will need to study each year in order to achieve it, details of the fees per year for that qualification and the total qualification cost based on this year's course fees. Students then have the ability to explore funding options available to them including information on:

- Student Loans – detailing how over 70% of our students fund their studies using a student loan
- The OU Student Budget Account – which allows payments of modules via manageable monthly chunks

- Credit/debit card payment or bank transfer payments – stating we accept payments via American Express, Mastercard, Visa and Visa Electron
- Employer sponsorship – detailing how more than one in ten of our students are financially supported by their employer
- Enhanced credits – detailing how those who work for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) may be entitled to their course fees being paid for by their employer
- Mixed payments – how a combination of the above can be used to support their studies
- OU Bursaries – detailing how they may be eligible for up to £3,000 to help towards their study costs
- Access module funding – how they may be able to study a free introductory Access module to help increase their confidence and skills before moving onto a full qualification, with a direct contact number to discuss this with one of our specialist Access Advisors
- Disabled Students Allowance – detailing the government grants available for those with a disability
- Disabled Veteran's Scholarships Fund – detailing scholarships available for those who have been injured in or due to military service
- Table 31 provides further detail of discretionary funding that is available to eligible students in England.

Bursaries & Scholarships 2020/21		
Scheme	**Description**	**Eligibility Criteria**
Disabled Veterans Scholarship Fund	The Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund provides disabled veterans, injured in or due to military service, access to free OU education. In addition to free study, applicants will be offered further specialist careers and disability support. Full fee waivers up to a maximum of 120 credits per academic year, 360 credits in total and not exceeding £18,000 for the total duration of the applicant's qualification will be available for each successful applicant. Awards will be strictly limited to a single qualification.	In order to qualify for the scheme, the applicant must meet all the following criteria: • Be starting OU study for the first time in the 2019/20 academic year • Be eligible for a UK fee • Be disabled as a result of, or in, military service • Be intending to study an OU module for which some, or all, of the tuition fees will be charged to the applicant
Carer's Scholarship	Carers face disadvantages that may prevent them from pursuing the education that they need. Providing unpaid care for a friend or family member can place huge demands on the lives of carers. It can affect progress in school, make sticking to a timetable difficult or require a career change to find employment that fits around caring. We have launched the Carers' Scholarships Fund to offer 50 carers, including a minimum of 15 young carers aged 18-25, the opportunity to study for free. It will give them the freedom	A carer is defined as anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and can't cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid. In order to qualify for the scheme, students must meet **all** the following criteria: • Be starting OU study for the first time in the 2020/21 academic year • Be ordinarily resident in the UK and eligible for a UK fee • Be a carer who cares for an average of 15 hours per week or have been a carer within the last 2 years, with caring responsibilities for an average of 15 hours

	to plan for their futures and build lives around their responsibilities. Full fee waivers up to a maximum of 120 credits per seasonal academic year and 360 credits in total will be available	per week, but due to bereavement are no longer a carer • Be able to demonstrate proof of your current, or recently ended, caring responsibilities • Have a gross household income of not more than £25,000 per year or be in receipt of a qualifying benefit • Be studying a minimum of 30 credits of undergraduate study per year, on a modular basis or towards an OU undergraduate qualification.
Access fee waiver	Access modules are offered at half the standard OU fee. A full fee waiver is also available for eligible students in England.	• Have a household income of less than £25,000 • From 2022/23 students will be eligible for the Access fee waiver if they have an individual income of less than £25,000. • Have no previous experience of HE
Field School Bursary	The Field School Bursary is available to support students with the cost of attending the field school(s) for Science modules S206/SXF206 Environmental Science and/or S209 Earth Science.	• Be studying towards an OU qualification • Have already successfully completed at least 60 credits of Level 1 study towards their registered qualification (either through OU credits or credit transfer) • Be registered on the module(s) to which their application relates (i.e. S206, SXF206 and/or S209) • Be actively participating on the relevant module(s) • Be in receipt of a qualifying benefits or have a household income below £50,000*: • Students with a household income of £25,000 and under will be eligible for an award which covers 100% of the field school and travel costs. Students with a household income over £25,000 but under £50,000 will be eligible for a tapered contribution as outlined in the table below;

Gross household income	Award amount
£25,000 and under	100%
£25,000.01 – £29,999.99	80%
£30,000.00 – £34,999.99	60%
£35,000.00 – £39,999.99	40%
£40,000.00 – £44,999.99	20%

| | | £45,000.00 – £49,999.99 | 10% | |
| | | £50,000.00 and over | 0% | |

Open Futures Bursaries for Black and Minority Ethnic Students	The Open Futures Bursary scheme for students from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background will provide a fund for new, UK students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) low income families, where the household income is less than £25,000, or if the applicant is in receipt of a qualifying benefit. There are 50 bursaries available for students for the first two years of OU study. Each bursary is for the value of £1,000 and are designed to help with course costs or other living expenses. The Bursary is intended as a contribution towards costs and is not a tuition fee payment method.	In order to qualify for a bursary, students must meet all the following criteria: • Be from Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds • Have a household income of not more than £25,000 or be in receipt of a qualifying benefit • Be ordinarily resident in the UK and eligible for a UK fee • Be a new student to the OU – students will not be eligible if they have taken any credit-bearing modules, including Access modules • Hold no existing higher education qualification • Be studying a first OU module which begins no later than 31st October 2020 • Be studying towards an undergraduate OU qualification • Be studying at a minimum intensity of 30 credits per academic year
Scholarship for Black Students	50 scholarships are available for Black students, with no previous Higher Education Qualifications, for undergraduate study. Students are eligible if their individual income is less than £25,000, or they are in receipt of a qualifying benefit.	In order to qualify for the scheme, students must meet **all** the following criteria: • Be starting OU study for the first time. • Be ordinarily resident in the UK and eligible for a UK fee • Have an individual income of not more than £25,000 per year or be in receipt of a qualifying benefit • Be studying a minimum of 30 credits of undergraduate study per year, on a modular basis or towards an OU undergraduate qualification.

Study Related Costs Schemes

General Eligibility Criteria	To be eligible for Study-Related **Costs** Funding, a student must be:
	
	• studying towards a qualification (undergraduate or postgraduate)
	• studying a module of at least 30 credits (including Access modules if the Access module is linked to the student's qualification) which starts in the relevant academic year for which they are applying
	• actively participating on the module
	• eligible for a UK fee (EN, WT, WN or NI)
	• in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits listed below or have a household income of not more than £25,000*:
	    o Income support
	    o Housing benefit (including Local Housing Allowance)
	    o Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
	    o Income-related Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
	    o Universal Credit

	o A reduction under the Council Tax Scheme (*students in Wales only*)
	*Students applying for Diagnostic Assessment **Costs** must have an income below a qualifying threshold, see [Diagnostic Assessment **Costs**] for more information.

Scheme	Description
General Study Costs	• Study materials • Stationery, pens, paper etc. • Up to £50 per academic year. • Items should be purchased up front. • Receipt(s) detailing item(s) purchased, dated after module reservation date.
Internet access	• Up to a maximum of £20 per month for the module duration, up until date of exam or end-of-module assessment submission deadline. • Support can be claimed for line rental and/or broadband, and dongles. • Funding is not available for the cost of calls, set up fees or payments for account arrears. • Copy of internet bill or statement dated from month module starts.
PC/Laptop/Tablet	• A maximum of £200 towards the cost of a new PC, laptop or tablet (e.g. iPad). • Support is not available for items bought second hand or for parts purchased to upgrade an existing computer. • Students who have already been awarded funding to purchase a PC, laptop or tablet will not normally be eligible to apply again. If a student requires a second PC/laptop/tablet grant, these requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. • Item should be purchased up front. • Students should provide a receipt or Buy Now Pay Later agreement detailing the item purchased. • Students who can't afford to buy a PC/laptop outright and are applying for an up-front payment do not need to supply a printout from the internet/cut-out from a catalogue of the PC/laptop they wish to purchase.
£200 DSA PC/Laptop contribution	• Students resident in England who are required to pay a £200 contribution towards a PC on which to run their DSA-funded assistive software are eligible to apply for support towards this cost. Payment will go directly to the supplier.
Printer	• A maximum contribution of £50. • Item should be purchased up front. • Receipt detailing item purchased, dated after module reservation date.
Printer ink	• Up to a maximum of £50 per academic year. • Item(s) should be purchased up front. • Receipt detailing item purchased, dated after module reservation date.
Travel	• For OU organised events e.g. tutorials, day schools, exams, residential schools. • Limited to public transport or car (not taxi) travel costs only. • If travelling by car, mileage costs can be claimed at a rate of 37.5p per mile. • Evidence of trips taken must be provided e.g. train ticket, and confirmation from tutor that student attended tutorial (email from tutor is sufficient).
Childcare	• A separate Childcare costs form must be completed, this can be requested from Student Fees. • For support towards study-related childcare paid in addition to the level of free government-funded childcare the student is entitled. • Up to a maximum of £4.00 per hour. • Funding considered for up to 8 hours a week per 30 credit modules, and up to 16 hours a week per 60 credit modules (90 credits = 24 hours, 120 credits = 32 hours). • Support is available for children aged up to and including 12 years. • Childcare support is awarded monthly, the student's child(ren) must have attended all childcare sessions for the month before any funding will be paid.

	• A separate form must be submitted for each month of childcare the student wants support for. • Childcare provider must be registered with OFSTED (England), CIW (Wales) or NICMA (Northern Ireland).
Compulsory module materials	• For materials which are a compulsory module requirement e.g. set books, scientific calculator. • Items should be purchased up front. • The materials requested must be listed in the module description.
Residential school accommodation and subsistence fee	• Students can only claim if they have received a charge for a residential school accommodation and meals separately from their tuition fee. • Support is available for residential schools where the accommodation and meal costs are directly booked through the OU's Residential Schools Office and where students arrange their own accommodation and meals. • If a student arranges their own accommodation, reimbursement of up to £50 per night will be offered upon receipt of a copy of hotel booking confirmation.
Medical evidence	• Medical evidence such as a doctor's letter. • To support a student's application where medical evidence is required, for example an application for a Discretionary Postponement or DSA. • Paid retrospectively, student should provide receipt detailing cost of medical evidence.
Specific Learning Difficulties - Diagnostic Assessments (commonly referred to as Dyslexia/Support)	• Students needing a diagnostic assessment for a specific learning difficulty (SpLD) such as dyslexia or dyspraxia can apply for support towards the cost of this assessment. • The amount of support awarded depends on the student's household income: | Gross household income	Award amount
£25,000.00 and under*	100%
£25,000.01 - £29,999.99	90%
£30,000.00 - £34,999.99	80%
£35,000.00 - £39,999.99	70%
£40,000.00 - £44,999.99	60%
£45,000.00 - £49,999.99	50%
£50,000.00 and over	0%	
Student Assistance Fund (including provision for Diagnostic Assessments)	The Student Assistance Fund provides funding to students in hardship who need 'emergency payments' towards medical evidence/emergency travel money to a tutorial or books etc. A proportion of the Student Assistance Fund money has been allocated to provide students with funding towards diagnostic assessments – this is specifically for students who do not meet the Study Support Scheme criteria in their respective nation. **Emergency Payments:** There is no specific criteria used when determining a student's eligibility for funding for 'emergency payments' except for assessing whether student is in hardship, has access to no other funds and needs funding for e.g. emergency travel, medical evidence from the Student Assistance Fund to access and remain in Higher Education. A student's needs are assessed on a case by case basis and students are awarded funding no higher than £200. The funding from this pot covers activity in the nations (Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland).

Table 31 *Details of available financial support and eligibility criteria*

To support both prospective and continuing students making a decision on which funding option is the right one for them, there is a Finance Finder option which asks students a series of questions and then provides details of eligible and appropriate funding options for them.

Continuing students can register for the next module of their qualification through calling our SRSC as well as through their Student Home login which provides them with clear and accessible information relating to the progression routes for their qualification. All continuing students continue to receive the same finance options advertised to them when they initially started their qualification subject to inflationary increases. They are also eligible for any new financial support options that have been released since they started their studies, subject to eligibility.

Our APS Strategy 2020–2025 is accessible to current and prospective students within our widening participation page of the main OU website. Our latest APP is also available on the same page.

5. Appendix

The following documents are included in the appendix to this Access and Participation Plan:

- Targets (Tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the Targets and Investment Plan)
- Investment Summary (Tables 4a and 4b in the Targets and Investment Plan)
- Fee Summary (Tables 4a and 4b in the Fee Information document)

Provider fee information 2022-23

Provider name: The Open University
Provider UKPRN: 10007773

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 entrants/all students	£9,000
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
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	*	*	*
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	£6,750
Foundation degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,750
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,750
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

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

Provider fee information 2021-22

Provider name: The Open University
Provider UKPRN: 10007773

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 entrants/all students	£9,000
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
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	*	*	*
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	£6,750
Foundation degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,750
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,750
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

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

Access and participation plan
Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: The Open University

Provider UKPRN: 10007773

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:

This forecast uses fees raised annually using RPI-X (this decision is reviewed annually and future forecasts will not necessarily use this method). For 2020/21 OU fees will increase by 2.8% (the OfS maximum rate) and be linked to RPI-X in August 2019. This will increase the fee per FTE (England) to £6192 (an increase of £42 per 30 credits). The OU have used either CPI or RPI-X as an inflationary measure for the last 7 academic years.

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	£9,000
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
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	*	*

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	£6,750
Foundation degree	*	£6,750
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	£6,750
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: The Open University

Provider UKPRN: 10007773

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
Total access activity investment (£)	£452,200.00	£438,800.00	£438,800.00	£438,800.00	£438,800.00
Access (pre-16)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Access (post-16)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Access (adults and the community)	£452,200.00	£438,800.00	£438,800.00	£438,800.00	£438,800.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£3,933,000.00	£4,064,000.00	£4,199,000.00	£4,326,000.00	£4,457,000.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£320,415.00	£326,606.00	£332,979.00	£339,484.00	£346,120.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£23,157,000.00	£26,935,000.00	£30,777,000.00	£33,916,000.00	£34,966,000.00
Access investment	2.0%	1.6%	1.4%	1.3%	1.3%
Financial support	17.0%	15.1%	13.6%	12.8%	12.7%
Research and evaluation	1.4%	1.2%	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%
Total investment (as %HFI)	20.3%	17.9%	16.2%	15.0%	15.0%

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: The Open University

Provider UKPRN: 10007773

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)
Increase the proportion of Black students	PTA_1	Ethnicity	Increase the proportion of Black students registered by 2025	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	3.8%	4.1%	4.6%	5.0%	5.6%	6.0%	Target based on the analysis of OfS data
Increase the proportion of Asian students	PTA_2	Ethnicity	Increase the proportion of Asian students registered by 2025	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	3.6%	4.4%	4.9%	5.3%	5.9%	6.4%	Target based on the analysis of OfS data

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)
Reduce the gap in module pass between Black and White students	PTS_1	Ethnicity	Reduce the gap in module pass between Black and White students	No	Other data source	2017-18	13.9pp	13pp	12pp	10.9pp	9.2pp	7.5pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Reduce the gap in good module pass between Black and White students	PTS_2	Ethnicity	Reduce the gap in good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between Black and White students	No	Other data source	2017-18	31.1pp	28.1pp	24.6pp	20.6pp	16.1pp	11.1pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Reduce the gap in module pass for students with disabilities	PTS_3	Disabled	Reduce the gap in module pass between disabled students and those with no known disabilities	No	Other data source	2017-18	11.5pp	10.8pp	9.8pp	8.8pp	7.4pp	5.5pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Reduce the gap in module pass between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5	PTS_4	Socio-economic	Reduce the gap in module pass between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5	No	Other data source	2017-18	12.9pp	12.4pp	11.9pp	9.0pp	6.2pp	2.9pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Reduce the gap in module pass between students with mental health and those with no disability	PTS_5	Disabled	Reduce the gap in module pass for students with mental health difficulties and those with no known disabilities	No	Other data source	2017-18	15.7pp	14.8pp	13.8pp	12.8pp	11.2pp	9.2pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Reduce the gap in good module pass between Asian and White students	PTS_6	Ethnicity	Reduce the gap in good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between Asian and White students	No	Other data source	2017-18	16.6pp	15.6pp	14.1pp	12.1pp	9.6pp	6.6pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Reduce the gap in module pass for BAME students	PTS_7	Ethnicity	Reduce the gap in module pass between BAME and White students	No	Other data source	2017-18	8.3pp	7.3pp	6pp	4.5pp	3pp	1pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Reduce the gap in good module pass between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5	PTS_8	Socio-economic	Reduce the gap in good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5	No	Other data source	2017-18	15.4pp	14pp	12pp	9.2pp	6.4	4pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Reduce the gap in good module pass between BAME and White students	PTS_9	Ethnicity	Reduce the gap in good module passes (1:1 & 2:1) between BAME and White students	No	Other data source	2017-18	19.3pp	18.3pp	16.3pp	14.3pp	11.7pp	9.3pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Reduce the gap in good module pass between students within AHE Q1 and AHE Q5	PTS_10	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Reduce the gap in the awarding of good module pass (1:1 & 2:1) between students in AHE Q1 compared to AHE Q5	No	Other data source	2017-18	13.3pp	12.3pp	10.3pp	8.3pp	6.3pp	4pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Close the gap in good module pass between disabled students and those with no known disability	PTS_11	Disabled	Close the gap in good module pass between disabled students and those with no known disabilities	No	Other data source	2017-18	3.9pp	3.5pp	2.8pp	1.9pp	1pp	0pp	Target based on the analysis of institutional data
Reduce the gap in continuation between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5	PTS_12	Socio-economic	To reduce the gap in continuation between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5	No	The access and participation dataset	2015-16	10.8pp	10.3pp	9.5pp	8.4pp	7pp	5.4pp	Target based on the analysis of OfS data
Reduce the gap in continuation between students within POLAR4 Q1 and POLAR4 Q5	PTS_13	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Reduce the gap in continuation between students within POLAR4 Q1 and POLAR4 Q5	No	The access and participation dataset	2015-16	12.0pp	11.2pp	10.2pp	9pp	7.8pp	6pp	Target based on the analysis of OfS data

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)
Reduce the progression gap between Black students and White students	PTP_1	Ethnicity	Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between Black and White students	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	9.2pp	8.9pp	8.4pp	7.6pp	6.4pp	4.7pp	Target based on the analysis of OfS data
Reduce the progression gap between students with mental health conditions and students compared to those with no disability	PTP_2	Disabled	Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between students with mental health conditions and students with no known disabilities	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	17.2pp	16.2pp	15.0pp	13.4pp	11.2pp	8.2pp	Target based on the analysis of OfS data
Reduce the progression gap between students with disabilities compared to those with no disability	PTP_3	Disabled	Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between disabled students and those with no known disabilities	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	8.9pp	8.5pp	7.8pp	7pp	6.2pp	4.5pp	Target based on the analysis of OfS data

Reduce the progression gap between students in IMD Q1 and those in IMD5	PTP_4	Socio-economic	Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between students within IMD Q1 and IMD Q5	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	8.7pp	8pp	7.2pp	6.2pp	5.2pp	4.2pp	Target based on the analysis of OfS data
Reduce the progression gap between BAME and White students	PTP_5	Ethnicity	Reduce the gap in progression to higher skilled employment/further study between BAME and White students	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	8.2pp	7.5pp	6.5pp	5.5pp	4.5pp	3.5pp	Target based on the analysis of OfS data