



Access and Participation Plan

2020/21-2024/25

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The University of Chester has a strong reputation and track record for welcoming students from a wide range of backgrounds¹ and providing students from underrepresented groups with a high quality and supportive experience. The University has a long-standing commitment to widening participation and fair access and will continue to invest in increasing its intake of undergraduate students from underrepresented groups. We work closely with schools and colleges to improve the achievement of children and young people, and raise awareness of and aspiration to Higher Education (HE). We are also committed to delivering high quality learning and teaching and the provision of excellent support services to include, retain and develop successful learners who may have diverse characteristics.

As part of our whole-student lifecycle approach, support is made available throughout a student's time at University and beyond. This whole-student lifecycle approach is also used in our evaluation strategy and can be seen in our prior commitments to access, student success and progression in previous Access Agreements. Significant investment has been made in these areas, including financial support, and levels of investment will be maintained from 2020/21 onwards to ensure that students from underrepresented groups continue to be supported during their time with us.

1. Assessment of Performance

We have used information from national datasets (such as Office for Students Access and Participation Data Dashboards) and internal management information and data to monitor and evaluate our performance on student access, student success and student progression for underrepresented groups within Higher Education (HE). Our assessment of performance will refer (unless stated otherwise) to the Office for Students (OfS) Access and Participation Data Dashboards² which includes all UK domiciled full-time undergraduate and apprenticeship students and/or UK domiciled part-time undergraduate students³. When using or referring to our internal data, this includes data on all UK domiciled full-time undergraduate and pre-registration Nursing students but excludes part-time apprenticeships⁴. The years of data presented in each table within our Assessment of Performance represent the following student cohorts for each stage within their lifecycle:

Access	Year by Entrants
Continuation	Year by Entrants
Awarding: Good Honours (1st or 2:1)	Year by Leavers/Graduates
Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study	Year by Leavers/Graduates

Where "performance gaps" are shown, these are the differences between the two population rates (calculated by the University) for that given cohort and lifecycle. Where there are less than 20 students within a given year and underrepresented characteristic, both the OfS and internal data has been suppressed and no data will be shown. All negative performance gaps are highlighted in red text within the data tables and grey shaded areas represent no data available for that year and stage of the lifecycle.

1.1. Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN) (Table 1)

We have used the participation of local areas (POLAR) classification groups at the University for a considerable number of years and have found it robust over time⁵. The use of POLAR is embedded into our targeted outreach work, our data management and our departmental work and is a widely used measure of underrepresentation by the HE sector. For our Access and Participation Plan 2020/21-2024/25 we will be using POLAR4 as the dataset but additionally, we will periodically check the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) to ensure we are aware of any gaps in performances and work towards closing the gaps⁶. This analysis will be discussed in [Section 1.7](#). Our proportion of entrants from the least represented group in HE (POLAR4 quintile 1) has been steadily increasing over the last 5 years with just a small decrease for the 2017/18 cohort. However, there continues to be a small negative gap between the most represented groups

¹ www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/HEPI-Policy-Note-6-Benchmarking-widening-participation-FINAL.pdf

² www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/. Significant testing by OfS is also available via the access and participation dashboard.

³ OfS 'Access' data includes our partner institutions, students readmitted but excludes students who left early in the term. OfS POLAR data is for under 21 years of age students only.

⁴ Our internal 'Access' data includes those who have left early in the term but excludes our partner institutions and readmitted students. Internal POLAR data is for all ages.

⁵ All references to POLAR are now using POLAR4 classification groups (unless stated otherwise), with quintile 1 being the least represented in HE and quintile 5 being the most represented in HE. Information on POLAR4 classification groups can be found here: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/

⁶ All references to Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) are based on the English IMD quintiles only. The English IMD measures deprivation in small areas in England called Lower-layer Super Output Areas. More information from the latest IMD can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015.

(quintile 5) and the least represented groups (quintile 1), which is a much smaller negative gap than the national findings that those from quintile 5 were 2.3 times more likely to enter HE than those from quintile 1 (UCAS, 2017)⁷.

Continuation rates from the least represented groups have been improving over the last few years, with the negative continuation gap between quintile 5 and 1 being at its lowest for 2017/18 at just 1%. Good honours degree (1st or 2:1) awards from the least represented groups have fluctuated and there has been a persistent negative gap in performance over the last five years between quintile 5 and 1 students. HEFCE (2018) find a consistent sector average negative gap of 10% difference between quintile 1 and 5 being awarded a good honours degree⁸. However, our negative difference was much smaller for 2017/18 and was only 4%.

Whilst our overall highly skilled employment or further study rates have been increasing regardless of the quintile, our students from low participation neighbourhoods (LPN, quintile 1 and 2) have consistently performed worse than those from the other quintile groups (quintile 3 to 5)⁹, similar to the findings from HEFCE (2017)¹⁰. Over time, this negative gap has fluctuated and is currently at 5%.

Due to small numbers of part-time LPN students (less than 20 students), the OfS have suppressed the data for all the life cycle stages.

1.2. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students (Table 2)

The proportion of our Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) entrants decreased between 2013/14 and 2015/16, however our BAME entrants have now increased (although not at the rate found nationally by UCAS, 2017)⁴ and have been at 9.4%-9.5% for the last two years for our full-time population and 6%-7% for the last three years for our part-time population. Our proportion of Black entrants had declined in 2014/15 and 2015/16, but has now increased returning to a level seen in previous years. Reaching BAME students is a particular challenge for us given the population demographic of the region; Cheshire and North Wales. At the 2011 census date, the size of Cheshire West and Chester's ethnic minority population was 2.6%, compared to the North West figure of 9.8% and 14% for England and Wales¹¹. The latest school census by the Department for Education (DfE) shows the proportion of secondary state-funded school BAME students are increasing both nationally and locally to 29.1% for England, 19.6% in the North West and 5.3% within Cheshire West and Chester for 2017¹². Against these demographics we are performing well with our proportions of BAME entrants. For instance comparative to the region, our latest entrant data (2018/19) shows over half our entrants (55.1%) are from the North West region, with BAME entrants exceeding this at 61.8% from the North West region, of which 17.7% are local from Cheshire. Our work to increase BAME entrants will continue.

Overall our BAME student continuation rates have fluctuated but improved over the last five years, with only small variations between the different ethnic groups similar to findings by HEFCE (2017)⁷. The gaps between our White and BAME students, regardless of ethnic group, have now closed for 2016/17 entrants with a larger proportion of full-time BAME students continuing in HE than White students. However, continuation rates for part-time BAME students fluctuate significantly when compared to White students from a positive gap of 9% in 2016/17 to a 19% negative gap for 2017/18. We will monitor and provide support to our part-time BAME population as part of our institutional strategy to improve student success. HEFCE (2017) findings show that the proportion of White graduates awarded a good honours degree is significantly higher than BAME graduates⁷, with White students showing the highest proportion of 1sts or 2:1s and Black students with the lowest proportion (HEFCE, 2018)⁵. There is a significant negative gap between our students identifying as Black being awarded a good honours degree compared to those identifying as White. There is also a negative gap in the proportion of our Asian students and mixed ethnicity students awarded a 1st or 2:1 compared to White students, however these negative gaps are reducing. Due to small numbers of part-time BAME students (less than 20 students), the OfS have suppressed the data for awarding rates.

⁷ www.ucas.com/file/140396/download?token=TC7eMH9W

⁸ webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180405115303/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2018/201805/

⁹ Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN) refers to quintile 1 and 2 of POLAR4 classification groups.

¹⁰ https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180322112445tf_/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/2017/201720/HEFCE2017_20.pdf

¹¹ https://inside.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/find_out_more/datasets_and_statistics/statistics/census_2011

¹² www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2017

The differential gap between our students identifying as Black and those identifying as White gaining highly skilled employment or study 6 months after graduating has closed and has been positive for the last two years, with a larger proportion of our Black students in highly skilled employment or further study than White students. These results are in contrast to the national findings from the Graduate Labour Market Statistics over the last few years (DfBIS 2016, DfE 2017, and DfE 2018)^{13,14,15}. For our Asian students and mixed ethnicity students, performance gaps have fluctuated and there is a small negative gap of 4.5% gaining highly skilled employment or study when compared to White students. Due to small numbers of part-time BAME students (less than 20 students), the OfS have suppressed the data for highly skilled employment or study rates.

1.3. Mature students (Table 3)

Unlike national trends found by Universities UK (2018)¹⁶, we have seen a growth in the proportion of mature entrant's year-on-year, with the exception of the 2017/18 cohort, where nationally the sector saw a fall in UK mature applications to HE (UCAS, 2017)^{17,18}. A significant number of our part-time population are mature students.

Mature students are more likely to leave their course of study after their first year (HEFCE, 2017)⁷. We also see a negative gap between young students and mature students continuing in HE, with the age group of 21-25 years showing the widest (but not significant) negative gap in continuation rates for 2017/18. HEFCE (2018) found a 12% negative difference between young and mature students awarded a good honours degree for 2016-17 graduates⁵. We also saw a negative gap between young and mature students for the 2015/16 and 2016/17 cohorts, however this gap has now closed with a larger proportion of our full-time mature students awarded a good honours degree in 2017/18.

Both our young and mature students demonstrate a steady increase in highly skilled employment or study rates 6 months after graduating, but with more mature graduates (full-time and part-time students) in highly skilled employment or study than young graduates. Our students aged 26 or over at the point of entry demonstrate the highest rates of highly skilled employment or study, which is in line with the DfBIS (2016) findings that younger age groups (the younger ages of 21-30 at the point of graduating) had lower highly skilled employment rates than other age categories¹⁰. Our mature graduates have consistently performed 22-28% better in highly skilled employment or study rates than our young graduates over the last five years which outperforms the Graduate Labour Market Statistics findings of 15-19% difference between 2015-2017 (DfBIS 2016, DfE 2017, and DfE 2018)^{10,11,12}.

There are negative gaps between our mature full-time compared to our mature part-time population across all stages of the life cycle which we will monitor and provide support to our part-time mature population.

1.4. Disabled students (Table 4)

Whilst our part-time disabled entrants fluctuate, there is an overall increasing trend in our proportion of full-time entrants with a declared disability. This supports the national trend of more applications to HE from those with a declared/known disability (UCAS, 2017)¹⁹.

We have seen a fluctuating gap in continuation rates for our full-time disabled students when compared to non-disabled students and there is a negative gap of 5.7% in continuation rates for 2016/17. There has also been a negative gap in continuation rates for our part-time disabled students compared to non-disabled students. HEFCE (2017) found that those in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)²⁰ tend to continue in HE at similar rates to non-disabled students, and disabled students not in receipt of DSA generally do worse compared to those in receipt of DSA and non-disabled student⁷. Our internal data supports this research as there is a negative gap in successful outcomes at level 4 between our disabled students in receipt of DSA and our disabled students not in receipt of DSA, however this gap is beginning to reduce from 9.4% in 2014/15 to 6.1% in 2017/18. The gap between our disabled students in receipt of

¹³ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518654/bis-16-232-graduate-labour-market-statistics-2015.pdf

¹⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/610805/GLMS_2016_v2.pdf

¹⁵ www.gov.uk/government/statistics/graduate-labour-market-statistics-2017

¹⁶ www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/facts-and-stats/data-and-analysis/Documents/patterns-and-trends-in-uk-higher-education-2018.pdf

¹⁷ www.ucas.com/file/135631/download?token=jwJ7Dg4S

¹⁸ For both OfS and internal data, young students are under 21 years of age and mature students are 21 or over, unless stated otherwise.

¹⁹ www.ucas.com/file/139636/download?token=9_xv-zGM

²⁰ Government allowance for students to cover any extra study-related costs an individual may have because of an impairment, mental health condition, learning difficulty or long term illness. More information can be found here: www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas

DSA and our disabled students not in receipt of DSA awarded a good honours degree had closed in 2015/16 and 2016/17 and there is only a small negative gap of 1% for 2017/18. Students with a declared disability tend to do worse for being awarded a good honours degree than non-disabled students, with those not in receipt of DSA performing the worst (HEFCE 2017, 2018)^{7,5}. Whether in receipt of DSA or not, our disabled students tend to do worse when compared to non-disabled students, however our negative gap is only small at 1.8% in 2017/18. Due to small numbers of part-time disabled students (less than 20 students), the OfS have suppressed the data for awarding rates.

Our disabled students, either full-time and part-time students, gaining highly skilled employment or study 6 months after graduating have performed worse than non-disabled students and this has been persistent over the last five years. This is consistent with the Graduate Labour Market Statistics over the last few years (DfBIS 2016, DfE 2017, and DfE 2018)^{10,11,12}. There is also a negative gap in 2017/18 for our disabled students not in receipt of DSA when compared to non-disabled students or when compared to our disabled students in receipt of DSA. The outcomes of those from different disability groups are varied across each cohort and lifecycle, however all disability groups show negative gaps in 2017/18 at each stage of the lifecycle, with students with a declared sensory or physical impairment showing the widest (but not significant) of negative gaps. However, the small number of students categorised as having a sensory or physical impairment may be impacting this result.

1.5. Care Experienced

Due to the small numbers of care experienced (less than 20 students), we must suppress the care experienced data. Overall, the number of our verified care experienced entrants have increased since 2014/15 but in recent years this has plateaued²¹. The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) in 2017 also found a positive increase in the number of care experienced entering higher education, although participation rates are still substantially lower than other young people²². The number of our verified care experienced successfully completing their first year of study has increased, whilst the number being awarded good honours degrees has declined over the last three years. The number gaining highly skilled employment or study 6 months after graduating has remained high, with all of our care experienced for the last two years (2015-16 and 2016-17 graduates) being in highly skilled employment or study. Although we cannot make any significant statistical analysis from our extremely small number of care experienced graduates, we will continue to monitor awarding results and provide bespoke support for these students.

Summary

Our proportion of entrants from all underrepresented groups has been increasing over the last five years. Students from LPN, mature students and students with a declared disability (regardless of disability classification) all show negative gaps in continuation rates. Disabled students, both full-time and part-time, show the widest of gaps in continuation rates therefore this will be an area that we will set an objective and target to reduce this performance gap. The gap has closed in 2016/17 for all our full-time BAME students, regardless of ethnicity group, and our care experienced population successfully completing their first year of study has increased year-on-year.

Our awarding rates show significant negative differences between BAME students compared to White students, with Black students performing significantly worse. This will be an area that we will set objectives and targets to reduce the performance gaps. Students from LPN, students with a declared disability (regardless of disability classification) and our care experienced all show negative awarding gaps, however our mature students (both full-time and part-time) outperform our young student population with a significantly larger proportion awarded a good honours degree.

Students from LPN and students with a declared disability (regardless of disability classification) all show small negative gaps in highly skilled employment or further study rates 6 months after graduating. However, our BAME students outperform our White students, particularly our Black graduates, and our mature students, both full-time and part-time, significantly outperform our young students in gaining highly skilled employment or further study 6 months after graduating. All our care experienced for the last two years are in highly skilled employment or further study, however this population of students are extremely small so no statistical significance can be noted.

²¹ Verified care experienced data represents students who have produced the appropriate evidence in order to obtain the Care Experienced Bursary as they have spent at least 3 months' in Local Authority care before the age of 18.

²² www.nnecl.org/resources/moving-on-up-report?topic=guides-and-toolkits

Table 1: Proportions of POLAR4 quintile 1-5 students and percentage gaps in POLAR4 quintile 1-5 performance rates at University of Chester

Lifecycle	Measure	Data Source		Proportions of students and Percentage Gaps in Performance Rates					
				Year					
				2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Access	Entrant rates	OfS Dashboard	LPN (Q1 and Q2)		37.4%	37.5%	37.8%	38.8%	38.9%
		OfS Dashboard	Quintile 1		17.5%	16.3%	17.4%	18.8%	18.4%
		OfS Dashboard	Quintile 2		19.9%	21.2%	20.4%	20.0%	20.5%
		OfS Dashboard	Other POLAR groups (Q3, Q4 and Q5)		62.6%	62.5%	62.2%	61.1%	61.1%
		OfS Dashboard	Quintile 3		20.1%	21.0%	21.4%	20.1%	18.8%
		OfS Dashboard	Quintile 4		19.4%	21.2%	20.6%	20.7%	21.4%
		OfS Dashboard	Quintile 5		23.1%	20.3%	20.2%	20.3%	20.9%
		OfS Dashboard	Performance gap between Q5 and Q1		5.6%	4.0%	2.8%	1.5%	2.5%
Success	Continuation rates	OfS Dashboard	Gap between other POLAR groups and LPN		3.0%	4.4%	1.2%	2.7%	0.8%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q1		4%	9%	2%	4%	1%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q2		4%	2%	1%	4%	1%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q3		1%	1%	0%	2%	-1%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q4		2%	1%	-1%	2%	1%
Success	Awarding: Good Honours	OfS Dashboard	Gap between other POLAR groups and LPN		2.0%	4.6%	0.3%	4.7%	2.7%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q1		5%	6%	3%	15%	4%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q2		4%	-2%	0%	3%	3%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q3		7%	-4%	2%	6%	2%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q4		0%	-4%	0%	3%	-1%
Progression	Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study	OfS Dashboard	Gap between other POLAR groups and LPN		3.0%	3.2%	7.5%	4.4%	5.0%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q1		3%	1%	5%	2%	9%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q2		0%	7%	9%	5%	7%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q3		-3%	2%	-1%	-2%	6%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Q5 and Q4		-1%	0%	0%	1%	5%

Table 2: Proportions of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students and percentage gaps in Ethnicity performance rates at University of Chester*

Lifecycle	Measure	Data Source		Proportions of students and Percentage Gaps in Performance Rates					
				Year					
				2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Access	Entrant rates	OfS Dashboard	Total proportion of BAME full-time students		8.4%	7.2%	6.8%	9.4%	9.5%
		OfS Dashboard	Total proportion of BAME part-time students		5%	4%	6%	7%	6%
		OfS Dashboard	White		91.6%	92.8%	93.2%	90.6%	90.5%
		OfS Dashboard	Black		3.3%	2.0%	1.9%	3.1%	3.0%
		OfS Dashboard	Asian		2.4%	2.9%	2.2%	3.2%	3.1%
		OfS Dashboard	Mixed		2.4%	1.9%	2.2%	2.7%	2.8%
		OfS Dashboard	Other		0.3%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%
Success	Continuation rates	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and Black	-0.9%	-2.4%	2.4%	0.7%	-3.2%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and Asian	3.1%	-2.4%	-1.6%	2.7%	-4.2%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and Mixed	5.1%	-1.4%	2.4%	0.7%	-1.2%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and BAME	2.1%	-1.4%	0.4%	0.7%	-3.2%	
Success	Awarding: Good Honours	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and Black		-0.1%	22.7%	16.6%	41.1%	28.7%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and Asian		19.9%	17.7%	15.6%	14.1%	8.7%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and Mixed		14.9%	7.7%	3.6%	6.1%	3.7%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and BAME		10.9%	17.7%	11.6%	20.1%	10.7%
Progression	Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and Black		-1.7%	9.9%	-6.9%	-15.5%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and Asian	12.4%	-6.7%	4.9%	-1.9%	4.5%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and Mixed	7.4%	3.3%	-0.1%	13.1%	4.5%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and BAME	6.4%	2.3%	5.9%	-0.9%	-2.5%	

*Full-time students unless stated otherwise.

Table 3: Proportions of Mature students and percentage gaps in Mature student performance rates at University of Chester**

Lifecycle	Measure	Data Source		Proportions of students and Percentage Gaps in Performance Rates					
				Year					
				2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Access	Entrant rates	OfS Dashboard	Full-time Young Students - Under 21		77.0%	77.9%	76.5%	74.7%	76.1%
		OfS Dashboard	Full-time Mature Students - 21 and Over		23.0%	22.1%	23.5%	25.3%	23.9%
		OfS Dashboard	Part-time Young Students - Under 21		2.0%	1.0%	3.0%	1.0%	1.0%
		OfS Dashboard	Part-time Mature Students - 21 and Over		98.0%	99.0%	97.0%	99.0%	99.0%
Success	Continuation rates	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 21 - 25	5.0%	0.7%	3.6%	-0.2%	5.8%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 26 - 30	-4.0%	0.7%	-0.4%	0.8%	1.8%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 31 - 40	-3.0%	-1.3%	0.6%	2.8%	-1.2%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 41 - 50				0.8%	3.8%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and Mature students	0.0%	0.7%	1.6%	0.8%	2.8%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between full-time and part-time Mature students	8.0%	6.0%	18.0%	11.0%		
Success	Awarding: Good Honours	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 21 - 25		-7.8%	-1.8%	4.2%	2.1%	2.6%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 26 - 30		-11.8%	-14.8%	3.2%	1.1%	-2.4%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 31 - 40		-4.8%	5.2%	3.2%	7.1%	-1.4%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 41 - 50		-22.8%	-3.8%	13.2%	20.1%	-8.4%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and Mature students		-8.8%	-1.8%	4.2%	3.1%	-0.4%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between full-time and part-time Mature students		5.0%	7.0%	12.0%	16.0%	8.0%
Progression	Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 21 - 25	-17.8%	-19.8%	-22.0%	-17.0%	-17.1%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 26 - 30	-27.8%	-35.8%	-36.0%	-31.0%	-27.1%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 31 - 40	-32.8%	-26.8%	-32.0%	-25.0%	-30.1%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and 41 - 50	-30.8%	-33.8%	-37.0%	-27.0%	-20.1%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between Young and Mature students	-25.8%	-26.8%	-28.0%	-23.0%	-22.1%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between full-time and part-time Mature students	-1.0%	-1.0%	4.0%	3.0%	6.0%	

**No data for age group 51 or over due to less than 20 students. The data has been suppressed by the OfS. Full-time students unless stated otherwise.

Table 4: Proportions of Disabled students and percentage gaps in Disabled students performance rates at University of Chester*

Lifecycle	Measure	Data Source		Proportions of students and Percentage Gaps in Performance Rates						
				Year						
				2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	
Access	Entrant rates	OfS Dashboard	Disabled Students			9.7%	10.6%	12.8%	13.1%	14.5%
		OfS Dashboard	Non-Disabled Students			90.3%	89.4%	87.2%	86.9%	85.5%
Success	Continuation rates	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and cognitive/learning disability	-4.1%	0.7%	-1.8%	3.9%	6.7%		
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and mental health issue/long standing illness	18.9%	-0.3%	4.2%	8.9%	6.7%		
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and sensory/physical impairment	3.9%	-0.3%	0.2%	-4.1%	8.7%		
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and other disability or multiple disabilities		-0.3%	-5.8%	0.9%	2.7%		
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between full-time non-disabled and disabled students	-0.1%	0.7%	-0.8%	2.9%	5.7%		
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between part-time non-disabled and disabled students	-0.2%	7.0%	7.0%	13.0%			
Success	Awarding: Good Honours	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and cognitive/learning disability		7.2%	6.7%	5.3%	8.0%	1.8%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and mental health issue/long standing illness				-17.7%	-5.0%	1.8%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and sensory/physical impairment		-5.8%	1.7%	-7.7%	5.0%	1.8%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and other disability or multiple disabilities		-0.8%	-3.3%	2.3%	10.0%	-3.2%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between non-disabled and disabled students		3.2%	1.7%	-0.7%	4.0%	1.8%	
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between non-disabled students and disabled students in receipt of DSA			3.6%	6.3%	7.0%	3.4%	
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between non-disabled students and disabled students not in receipt of DSA			5.6%	-4.6%	3.7%	4.4%	
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between disabled students in receipt of DSA and disabled students not in receipt of DSA			1.9%	-10.9%	-3.3%	1.0%	

Lifecycle	Measure	Data Source		Performance Rates and/or Percentage Gaps in Performance Rates					
				Year					
				2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Progression	Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and cognitive/learning disability	-0.6%	-3.7%	1.9%	-0.8%	0.1%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and mental health issue/long standing illness				13.2%	5.1%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and sensory/physical impairment	12.4%	-1.7%	-5.1%	-11.8%	15.1%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between no disability and other disability or multiple disabilities		13.3%	4.9%	3.2%	0.1%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between full-time non-disabled and disabled students	3.4%	1.3%	2.9%	1.2%	3.1%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between part-time non-disabled and disabled students	2%			24%		
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between non-disabled students and disabled students in receipt of DSA			4.1%	-3.5%	0.9%	
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between non-disabled students and disabled students not in receipt of DSA			-2.9%	-3.0%	5.1%	
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between disabled students in receipt of DSA and disabled students not in receipt of DSA			-7.0%	0.5%	4.2%	

1.6. Intersections of disadvantage (Table 5)

We have conducted an analysis of intersections of the underrepresented groups using the OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboards². Where particular intersections were not available, we have used our internal data. Further analysis of POLAR4 and BAME has been conducted as these are the underrepresented groups which show both persistent and wide gaps in performances at particular points in the student lifecycle. Key results from this analysis are discussed below and presented in Table 5. Our female entrants from LPN backgrounds have been increasing over the last five years, particularly young females from LPN backgrounds across all ethnicities. Our young male entrants from LPN (across all ethnicities) have been declining, particularly 18/19 year old white males from LPN. This may be explained by our overall proportion of male entrants which have been declining over the last five years. This can be seen in the national findings that females being significantly more likely to participate in HE than males (HEFCE, 2017)⁷.

Our most recent LPN negative gaps in continuation rates are not statistically significant and analysis of the intersections, including gender and ethnicity, show our continuation rates for LPN students are improving. Our BAME students outperform our White students for continuation rates, regardless of POLAR background. Our internal analysis used successful outcomes rates at level 4 and results show there is a persistent negative gap in successful outcomes at level 4 for males from LPN, for all ages, when compared to males from other POLAR backgrounds and when compared to females from all the POLAR backgrounds. Overall there is a significant negative gap in good honours degree awards for our BAME students from LPN backgrounds, particularly for mature BAME students or young male BAME students, compared to our BAME students from other POLAR backgrounds, and compared to our White students from all POLAR backgrounds. Our male population perform significantly worse than our female population regardless of POLAR background and our young male BAME students have the lowest awarding rates and the widest of negative awarding gaps regardless of their POLAR background²³.

A higher proportion of our female students are in highly skilled employment or study 6 months after graduating than males, regardless of their POLAR background, which is the reverse of the DfE (2017) and HEFCE (2018) findings that more males are in highly skilled employment^{10,5}. Significantly more of our mature students are in highly skilled employment or study compared to our young students, particularly female mature students, regardless of their POLAR background. The gap between mature students from quintile 5 and 1 gaining highly skilled employment or study has closed, however there has been a persistent negative gap in highly skilled employment or study rates between our young students from quintile 5 and 1 which increased for 2016/17 graduates. However, the gap has now successfully closed for White young (18/19 years old) males from LPN.

1.7. Other groups who experience barriers in higher education – IMD (Table 6)

Whilst the University uses POLAR4 as a classification group for disadvantage, we have also reviewed the data on IMD to check for any performance gaps, and intersections of this group, using the OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboards². Key results from this analysis are discussed below and presented in Table 6. Full-time entrants from IMD quintile 1 have been increasing and now are our highest quintile group than other IMD quintiles (quintiles 2-5) for 2017/18. However, the negative gap between our part-time entrants from IMD quintile 5 and 1 is increasing. Our male entrants from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 were increasing slightly (unlike our LPN male population) but dipped for 2017/18, and we have more BAME entrants from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 than BAME entrants from other quintiles.

Our most recent IMD negative gaps in continuation rates are not statistically significant and analysis of the intersections, including gender and ethnicity, show our continuation rates for students from IMD quintile 1 and 2 are improving, except for part-time IMD quintile 1 students. Our BAME students outperform our White students for continuation rates, regardless of IMD background, and whilst our full-time males from IMD quintiles 3 to 5 continuation rates outperform males from IMD quintiles 1 and 2, our part-time males from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 do better than males from IMD quintiles 3 to 5. There is a significant negative gap in good honours degree awards between IMD quintile 5 and 1 for both full-time and part-time students. There is a persistent and significant gap between our BAME full-time students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 compared to BAME students from other IMD backgrounds, and compared

²³ Where there are less than 20 students within a given year and within an underrepresented characteristic, the data has been suppressed. Due to small numbers, performance gaps cannot be presented for young male BAME students from LPN in Table 5.

Table 5: Proportions of, performance rates and gaps in the performance rates of the intersections of underrepresented groups at University of Chester*

Lifecycle	Measure	Data Source		Proportions of students and Percentage Gaps in Performance Rates							
				Year							
				2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18		
Access	Entrant rates	OfS Dashboard	Males			35.5%	35.0%	32.1%	32.4%	31.8%	
		OfS Dashboard	Females			64.5%	65.0%	67.9%	67.6%	68.2%	
		Internal Data	Young (18/19) White males from LPN				8.9%	8.5%	7.9%	7.6%	
		Internal Data	LPN, Female, Young students				18.7%	18.9%	19.0%	19.9%	
		Internal Data	LPN, Female, Mature students				7.7%	8.5%	8.0%	7.9%	
		Internal Data	LPN, Male, Young students				10.6%	10.5%	10.6%	10.0%	
		Internal Data	LPN, Male, Mature students				2.6%	2.4%	2.8%	2.8%	
		Internal Data	Other POLAR groups, Female and Young				30.8%	31.6%	30.8%	31.5%	
		Internal Data	Other POLAR groups, Female and Mature				7.6%	8.1%	9.6%	7.6%	
		Internal Data	Other POLAR groups, Male and Young				18.8%	17.4%	16.3%	17.3%	
		Internal Data	Other POLAR groups, Male and Mature				3.2%	2.7%	2.8%	2.8%	
Success	Continuation rates or Successful Outcome at Level 4 rates	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between female and male students		5.2%	3.5%	4.0%	1.1%	1.8%		
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and BAME from LPN		8.0%	-4.0%	-7.0%	-2.0%	-4.0%		
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between BAME from other POLAR groups and BAME from LPN		14.0%	1.0%	-8.0%	0.0%	0.0%		
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between males from other POLAR groups and males from LPN		2.0%	3.0%	5.0%	1.0%	2.0%		
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between females from other POLAR groups and females from LPN		3.0%	5.0%	0.0%	3.2%	-0.1%		
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between young females and young males from LPN			6.4%	2.8%	6.6%	6.8%		
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between mature females and mature males from LPN			10.4%	5.5%	14.6%	5.5%		
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between young (18/19) White males from other POLAR groups and young (18/19) White males from LPN					3.9%	1.1%	6.0%	2.4%

Lifecycle	Measure	Data Source		Proportions of students and Percentage Gaps in Performance Rates					
				Year					
				2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Success	Awarding: Good Honours	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between female and male students		7.5%	5.0%	9.2%	7.7%	9.5%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between BAME from other POLAR groups and BAME from LPN		-15.0%		-2.0%	20.0%	18.0%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and BAME from LPN		0.0%		9.0%	19.0%	22.0%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between females and males from LPN		14.0%	5.0%	10.0%	2.0%	7.0%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between females and males from other POLAR groups		6.0%	8.0%	12.0%	12.0%	12.0%
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between young (18/19) White males from other POLAR groups and young (18/19) White males from LPN				-0.1%	2.7%	-1.4%
Progression	Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between male and female students	-5.8%	-1.8%	-5.3%	-7.6%	-5.6%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and BAME from LPN	9.0%	5.0%		-21.0%	-3.0%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between male and female from LPN	-2.0%	-3.0%	3.0%	-10.0%	5.0%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between males and females from other POLAR groups	-1.0%	3.0%	-4.0%	-5.0%	-7.0%	
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between young and mature from LPN			-26.7%	-21.4%	-27.7%	
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between young and mature from other POLAR groups			-20.4%	-20.2%	-16.3%	
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between young students from quintile 5 and 1			4.4%	3.4%	8.2%	
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between mature students from quintile 5 and 1			1.7%	-1.0%	-1.7%	
		Internal Data	Percentage gap between young (18/19) White males from other POLAR groups and young (18/19) White males from LPN			1.4%	13.2%	-6.7%	

Table 6: Proportions of, performance rates and gaps in the performance rates of other groups experiencing barriers in HE at University of Chester*

Lifecycle	Measure	Data Source		Proportions of students and Percentage Gaps in Performance Rates						
				Year						
				2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	
Access	Entrant rates	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between full-time students from IMD quintile 5 and 1			3.4%	0.6%	2.1%	0.2%	-2.3%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between part-time students from IMD quintile 5 and 1			7.0%	2.0%	8.0%	6.0%	8.0%
		OfS Dashboard	IMD groups quintile 1-2, BAME students			5.6%	4.4%	4.5%	6.5%	6.7%
		OfS Dashboard	IMD groups quintile 3-5, BAME students			3.5%	3.5%	2.9%	3.8%	3.8%
		OfS Dashboard	IMD groups quintile 1-2, male students			12.2%	12.6%	11.8%	12.8%	10.9%
		OfS Dashboard	IMD groups quintile 3-5, male students			23.9%	23.1%	20.7%	19.5%	20.7%
Success	Continuation rates	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between full-time students from IMD quintile 5 and 1		7%	5%	5%	3%	2%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between part-time students from IMD quintile 5 and 1		-1%	6%	4%	11%	13%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and BAME from IMD quintile 1-2		1.0%	-6.0%	2.0%	-3.0%	-3.0%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between full-time males from IMD quintile 3-5 and quintile 1-2		6.0%	6.0%	5.0%	3.0%	3.0%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between part-time males from IMD quintile 3-5 and quintile 1-2		1.0%	-1.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%		
Success	Awarding: Good Honours	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between full-time students from IMD quintile 5 and 1			8%	12%	11%	17%	10%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between part-time students from IMD quintile 5 and 1				25%	-10%	20%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and BAME from IMD quintile 1-2			7.0%	16.0%	12.0%	25.0%	10.0%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between females and males from IMD quintile 1-2			-3.0%	6.0%	11.0%	4.0%	7.0%
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between males from IMD quintile 3-5 and quintile 1-2			-5.0%	12.0%	12.0%	8.0%	3.0%
Progression	Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study	OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between full-time students from IMD quintile 5 and 1		0%	4%	4%	-4%	-3%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between part-time students from IMD quintile 5 and 1		16%	7%	16%	15%	-5%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between White and BAME from IMD quintile 1-2		11.0%	-2.0%	13.0%	-2.0%	-1.0%	
		OfS Dashboard	Percentage gap between males and females from IMD quintile 1-2		-11.0%	-5.0%	-6.0%	-3.0%	-5.0%	

to White students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2. However, this negative gap has significantly reduced for 2017/18. Similar to our LPN results, our male population perform worse than our female population regardless of IMD background. However, the negative awarding gap between males from IMD quintiles 3 to 5 and quintiles 1 and 2 is reducing. Due to small numbers of part-time male or BAME students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 (less than 20 students), the OfS have suppressed the data for awarding rates.

In highly skilled employment or study, both full-time and part-time students from IMD quintile 1 outperform their counterparts from IMD quintile 5 for 2017/18. A higher proportion of our female students regardless of IMD background are in highly skilled employment or study 6 months after graduating than males, which again is the reverse of the DfE (2017) and HEFCE (2018) findings that more males are in highly skilled employment^{10,5}. Due to small numbers of part-time male or BAME students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 (less than 20 students), the OfS have suppressed the data for highly skilled employment or study rates.

Summary

Our male population from LPN backgrounds are declining, particularly White males aged 18/19 years. Therefore this will be an area that we will set an objective and target to increase entrant rates. There is a persistent and wide gap for successful outcomes at level 4 for our male students of all ages from LPN backgrounds compared to all others. However, this gap does not reflect in their continuation rates. The LPN and IMD quintiles 1 and 2 gaps in continuation rates are overall generally improving for all groups (ethnicity and gender), except for part-time IMD quintile 1 students.

Our male students show a significant gap in awarding rates compared to our female students regardless of their POLAR background, and our young male BAME students have the lowest awarding rates regardless of their POLAR background. Our students from IMD quintile 1, regardless of ethnicity or gender or full-time or part-time, had a significant gap in awarding rates in 2016/17 compared to students from other IMD quintiles. We will set an overall objective and target to address BAME awarding performance gaps which will work towards reducing the awarding gap for BAME IMD quintile 1 students. As there is a large overlap between our POLAR4 quintile 1 and IMD quintile 1 students (i.e. 63.6% of our POLAR4 quintile 1 students for 2018/19 also are categorised as IMD quintile 1), we will set objectives and targets to reduce awarding gaps for POLAR4 quintile 1 students which will also address the significant awarding gap for our IMD quintile 1 students. Males from LPN will also be an additional area that we will set objectives and targets to reduce the performance gap.

There is a persistent negative difference between our young students from quintile 5 and quintile 1 gaining highly skilled employment or study, therefore this will be an area that we will set an objective and target to reduce the performance gap. Generally females outperform males regardless of POLAR or IMD backgrounds. There had been persistent negative gaps for white students aged 18/19 from LPN and other POLAR backgrounds but this has now successfully closed.

It must be noted that the analysis of the intersections of our student population, **particularly our BAME student population**, must be met with great caution since our BAME population is very small.

1.8. Structural factors

When looking at structural factors that may impact on of our underrepresented student outcomes, there is a persistent gap in the average tariff between:

- Male and female students (104 for males compared to 116 for females in 2017/18);
- Black and White students (98 for Black compared to 113 for White in 2017/18).

Our analysis of structural factors shows that:

- LPN students are less likely to enter with A Levels and have higher proportions of Access and BTEC qualifications compared to other POLAR backgrounds;
- Male students are more likely to have BTEC qualifications than our female students and;
- Black students are disproportionately likely to have a non-standard qualification background (such as access or other qualifications) compared to all other ethnic groups. For example, in 2017/18, 35.6% of Black students had

A/AS Levels compared to 61.3% of White students, 21.8% of Black students had Access qualifications compared to 9.5% of White students and 22.8% of Black students had other qualifications compared to only 7.1% of White students.

Students of all backgrounds who enter with Access or BTEC qualifications are significantly less likely to be awarded a good honours degree, something which was highlighted through our analysis when using the OfS financial support toolkit²⁴. In 2017/18, the percentage difference between BAME and White students with Access qualifications upon entry awarded a good honours degree was 20.7% and the percentage difference between BAME and White students with BTEC qualifications upon entry being awarded a good honours degree was 21.9%.

We also have higher numbers of BAME students, particularly Black students, in subject departments where overall awarding rates at the University is currently lower. One department with the fourth highest proportion of BAME students also has the fourth lowest awarding rates within the University. The results from our OfS toolkit also support this finding that the principle subject of a degree was a significant factor for awarding outcomes. The OfS toolkit also showed that degree result was a significant factor across all years, with those awarded a good honours degree significantly more likely to achieve graduate level employment or study also found by the DfS (2017)¹¹.

These structural factors may be impacting on the outcomes of our underrepresented groups, particularly our male students from LPN backgrounds and BAME population. We will be cognisant of these differences when working to reduce the gaps in continuation, degree awards and progression.

2. Strategic Aims, Objectives and Targets

The University of Chester has a long term strategic aim to ensure that all students entering the University should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in higher education, and to gain successful and fulfilling careers. Following the analysis of our assessment of performance, we have identified the significant and widest of gaps in performance between comparative groups for the following underrepresented groups at stages of the student lifecycle:

- Students with a known disability at the success stage of the student lifecycle (continuation);
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students at the success stage of the student lifecycle (degree awards);
- Male students from LPN at the success stage of the student lifecycle (degree awards);
- Students from POLAR4 quintile 1 at the success stage of the student lifecycle (degree awards) and²⁵;
- Young (under 21 years of age) students from POLAR4 quintile 1 at the progression stage of the student lifecycle.

Although the OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboards did not show any wide gaps in 18 year old entrant rates for any of the underrepresented groups compared to the UK population of 18 year olds, our analysis of the intersections found the following student population to be on the decline:

- Young (18/19 year olds) white male students from LPN in the lifecycle area of access.

We intend to sustain our investment in activities aligned to addressing other national key performance measures set by the OfS in order to maintain and continuously improve on our current positive performance. This will allow us to contribute to the other national key performance measures for underrepresented groups in the areas of access, success and progression.

We also intends to increase entrants from other underrepresented groups through targeted raising attainment work in the subject areas of English and Maths within the local region, sustained engagement with Pre-16 school pupils and collaborative activity across the region. We use the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) service to understand and inform us which schools in the region to target, providing regional data on schools which have high proportions of pupils from underrepresented groups²⁶. For all our raising attainment and sustained outreach activities, the short term

²⁴ A statistical tool using binary logistic regression analysis. More information can be found here: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/financial-support-evaluation-toolkit/statistical-tool/

²⁵ The use of POLAR is embedded within our institution and data management systems. There is an overlap between POLAR4 quintile 1 and IMD quintile 1 students. A target to reduce the POLAR4 quintile 1 gap will also work towards reducing the IMD quintile 1 gap.

²⁶ <https://heat.ac.uk/>

(self-assessments) and medium term (GCSE attainment or progression through KS4) measurable objectives and targets will be developed, with data collected and reported over the next year. The longer term outcomes will be measured through HEAT tracking progress at an individual level or at a school level over time. Long term outcomes are expected to be reportable by 2024-25. Our collaborative Uni Connect work through Higher Horizon+ Consortium and Shaping Futures may follow a similar outcomes chain to our sustained outreach programmes, however this is still to be confirmed by the networks and is expected to be clarified over the next year.

Our collaborative Uni Connect work within the North West region, Shropshire and Staffordshire, along with our targeted sustained engagement with Pre-16 school pupils will help us to work towards increasing our Care Experienced entrants by 50% by 2024-25 as this is the region where we receive the highest amount of applications from Care Experienced applicants. However, our target data must be suppressed due to our small numbers of care experienced (less than 20 students).

The University has set itself a number of measurable objectives and ambitious targets that address the significant and widest of gaps in performance for the above underrepresented groups at particular stages of the student lifecycle. We are determined to achieve these over the next five years. These are as follows:

2.1. Access Objectives and Targets

- Objective 1 – To increase the proportions of young (18/19) white male entrants from LPN.
 - Target PTA_1 – To increase the proportions of full-time young (18/19) white male entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2) from 7% (baseline 2018/19) to 9% by 2024-25.

2.2. Success Objectives and Targets

- Objective 2 – To work towards reducing the continuation gap between non-disabled and disabled students.
 - Target PTP_1 – To reduce the percentage difference in continuation rates between full-time non-disabled and disabled students from 5.7% (baseline 2016/17) to 3% by 2024/25.
- Objective 3 – To work towards reducing the awarding (1sts or 2:1s awards) gaps and to eventually eliminate the gaps between White and Black students, White and BAME students, between female and male students from LPN, and between students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1. This will contribute to the national key performance measures set by the OfS.
 - Target PTS_2 – To reduce the percentage difference in degree awarding (1sts or 2:1s awards) between full-time White and Black students from 28.7% (baseline 2017/18) to 10% by 2024-25, and to eliminate the absolute gap by 2030-31.
 - Target PTS_3 – To reduce the percentage difference in degree awarding (1sts or 2:1s awards) between full-time White and BAME students from 10.7% (baseline 2017/18) to 4% by 2024-25, and to eliminate the absolute gap by 2030-31.
 - Target PTS_4 – To reduce the percentage difference in degree awarding (1sts or 2:1s awards) between full-time female and male students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2) from 7% (baseline 2017/18) to 4% by 2024-25.
 - Target PTS_5 – To reduce the percentage difference in degree awarding (1sts or 2:1s awards) between students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1 from 4% (baseline 2017/18) to 2% by 2024-25²⁵.

2.3. Progression Objectives and Targets

- Objective 4 – To work towards reducing the progression gap between young (under 21) students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1.
 - Target PTP_1 – To reduce the percentage in highly skilled employment or study between full-time young (under 21) students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1 from 8.2% (baseline 2016/17) to 4.5% by 2024-25, and to eliminate the absolute gap by 2030-31.

Previous analysis of our performance data produced similar results as the current assessment of performance, however some gaps are not significant, or wide, or have now been closed. When considering the previous targets, the University considered whether:

1. The targets had already been met and there were no significant gaps in relation to the target group and comparator group. Therefore the target has been discontinued;
2. The targets had not been met but there were no significant or wide gaps. Therefore the target has been discontinued in order to concentrate efforts where there are the widest gaps (although work will continue to reduce all known gaps);
3. The targets had been met and there was still wide gaps, some of which were significant. Our new objectives and targets for 2020/21 will cover these target groups with the particular stage of their lifecycle;
4. The targets have not been met and there was still wide gaps, some of which are significant. Our new objectives and targets for 2020/21 will cover these target groups with the particular stage of their lifecycle;
5. Populations of three of our previous targets were too small, some of which were less than 20 student. These targets have been discontinued, although work will continue to reduce all known gaps;
6. A selection of the new targets developed in 2018/19 and 2019/20 are covered by our new objectives and targets for 2020/21 and;
7. The targets that are output based targets have been discontinued as these are no longer appropriate.

3. Whole Provider Strategic Approach

3.1. Overview

The University works across all areas of the student lifecycle to ensure that students from all backgrounds have equality of opportunity in accessing, succeeding in and progressing from higher education. Management oversight of this work is exercised throughout the University; at local level by Faculty Deans and academic Heads of Departments, by Activity Leads, our Student Services, centrally by the APP team, and by the Chester Students' Union (CSU) who are continually consulted and engage with Access and Participation work throughout the academic year. Our new Citizen Student Education Plan sets out three key fundamental and guiding principles to ensure high quality of provision; *Research Informed Teaching*, *Social Learning* and *Authentic Assessment*. Our new Committee structure monitors our overall quality of provision and student outcomes, including graduate outcomes, through key Committees:

- Education Committee – overall responsibility for delivering the Citizen Student Education Plan, and covers all taught provision, including PGT and apprenticeships as well as the academic aspects of the student experience.
- Portfolio Development and Management Committee – oversight of the planning, development and enhancement of the University's academic portfolio
- Student Voice and Experience Committee – in partnership with students, directs and monitors strategic initiatives underpinning the delivery and continual enhancement of the student experience

Through our annual Continuous Monitoring of Enhancement (CME) dashboards for Portfolio Review of academic programmes and Strategic Planning processes, academic leads are provided with data for all students, and by underrepresented groups, enabling them to review, monitor and report on quality of provision and student outcomes at a programme-level. This process allows for academic leads to develop action plans in conjunction with Centre for Academic Innovation and Development (linking to our Learning and Teaching Strategy) to enhance quality of courses (i.e. up-to-date, challenging and well delivered, equip students with the skills, etc.) and a offers the opportunity to share and learn from good practice from high quality, high performing provision. All major reports and findings are fed into the Committee structure and directly to the Senior Executive Team and the Governing Council of the University. The Governing Council (Senate) are made aware of the work and commitments that are made to OfS, and carefully monitor this commitment through committee meetings, including APP targets that form part of the University's Risk Register and new Key Performance Indicators (KPI) in our Citizen Student Strategy for 2020-25. In addition, part of our whole provider strategic approach is to further develop and embed our Evaluation Framework (**Appendix A**) across the institution in order to adopt a 'theory of change' culture within our day-to-day management²⁷. This will lead to a better understanding of evidence of impact for our institutional activities ensuring a clearly defined standards of evidence is embedded within our core institutional practices (encouraged by the OfS)²⁸.

²⁷ www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/

²⁸ www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/6971cf8f-985b-4c67-8ee2-4c99e53c4ea2/access-and-participation-standards-of-evidence.pdf

We will ensure that its outreach, collaborative and broader awareness and aspiration-raising activity is consolidated and continued, whilst also strengthening the focus on raising attainment, particularly within the local region. To do this, we shall continue to invest in outreach activities with all age groups, starting at primary school level and continue through to Further Education (FE) Colleges. We will also continue prioritising investment to sustain and enhance a range of learning and teaching, pastoral and welfare, and employability services and structures to support the continuation, student success and progression of all our students (both full-time and part-time students), and particularly to improve our performance with regard to underrepresented students. Evaluation of our Student Retention and Success programme and our involvement with the HEA's "What Works?" Phase 2 programme showed that retention is a complex issue, with multifaceted reasons why students find it difficult to achieve, or decide to leave Higher Education²⁹. The evaluation highlighted a number of areas of good practice found to have significant impact including academic skills development within the academic context; attendance monitoring; developing students' sense of belonging; and the benefits of peer mentoring. Our Employer Engagement Strategy is being revised and will focus on a strategic approach to collaborative work focussing on employers who will add the most value to our students, local and regional employers who have widening participation and diversity at the heart of their recruitment and employment strategies, links with employers to offer more internships and scholarships, and increase the number of employer partnerships from which underrepresented groups will benefit.

3.2. Alignment with other strategies

Learning and Teaching Strategy

Our commitment to developing students' academic skills is set out in the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2017-22 and the associated "Enabling Academic Skills" document³⁰. We prioritised the embedding of academic skills (including academic literacy and numeracy) in the curriculum at every level and undertook an audit in 2017/18 of all level 4 core modules to assess the extent and nature of explicit academic skills embedded within level 4 programmes. The results of this audit led to the production of two embedding academic skills mapping templates, one at programme level and one at modular level, which are progressively being used by academic staff for full-time and part-time course content. The Learning and Teaching Strategy also sets out aims for the development of an **inclusive curriculum**. Starting with staff and resource development led by a specialist staff within the Learning and Teaching Institute, we intend to raise teaching staff's awareness of inclusive practice, to embed equality into teaching practices and thereby to support improvement in retention and success for underrepresented groups partaking in full-time or part-time study. Our curriculum needs to reflect the diversity of our students, their backgrounds, learning styles and encourage a sense of belonging³¹. This large scale commitment will work towards achieving our objective to reduce the percentage gap in awards (1st and 2:1) between White and BAME students, and White and Black students, and to reduce the continuation gap between non-disabled and disabled students.

Building on existing research, the Learning and Teaching Institute and other faculty staff will continue with **pedagogic and research projects** investigating entrant rates, success rates, attendance levels, assignment submissions, retention and degree classifications of LPN students, students with non-A Level entry qualifications, young males and BAME students. For example, our Psychology department conducted research in 2017/18 to explore male undergraduate achievement in the subject discipline by reviewing patterns in good honour degree awards by gender, ethnicity and POLAR background, and conducted student focus groups and staff focus groups. The research found a disproportionate percentage of male students from quintile 1 tend to enter with non-A Level route and perform the worse. Findings from student and staff focus groups identified key issues pertinent to the students, such as integration with staff, better links with assessments, and acknowledging the social context that male students may experience in a female-dominated degree. The department aim to formulate an action plan to reduce the awarding gaps of males from LPN, which will then be shared across Faculties to help work towards achieving our objective to reduce the percentage gap in awards (1st and 2:1) between female and male students from LPN.

²⁹ www.heacademy.ac.uk/individuals/strategic-priorities/retention/what-works

³⁰ www1.chester.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching-institute/learning-and-teaching-strategy

³¹ www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf

Embedding employability in the curriculum

Students from underrepresented groups are less likely to participate in the extra-curricular activities that enhance their employability³². Because of these engagement issues we will continue to work with subject departments that have the lowest progression rates and embed employability within the curriculum. We will also consolidate our plans to feature employers in the curriculum to provide a host of interventions such as discipline-related projects, placement opportunities and paid graduate-level employment for finalists. Employability is developed in a tailored approach within each department. Every academic department has a Career Consultant from Careers and Employability and a Careers & Employability Link Tutor who is the main contact within a department for progressing employability within the curriculum and delivering bespoke activities. Careers & Employability developed the Chester Difference Graduate Profile as a framework to enable departments to review and develop employability-led learning outcomes for their specific area. The Chester Difference Graduate Profile is defined by a set of skills, aptitudes and behaviours that reflect the requirements of employers, and develop students' employability skills. Annual Partnership Agreements between Careers & Employability and subject departments enable a review of activity and a plan for the following year.

Equality and Diversity

The University is committed to its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty 2012 (PSED) and has given due consideration to the impact of these proposals on groups of students and potential students with protected characteristics, including those of disability, minority races, age and gender, and to those from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as care experienced. Whilst some activities delivered under our Access and Participation Plan are targeted at specific groups, we take an inclusive approach to those within cohorts, whether they share protected characteristics or not. Most activities to promote student success and progression are offered to the cohort as a whole, both full-time and part-time students, with additional promotion and monitoring and evaluation processes focusing on underrepresented groups.

Students and staff are encouraged to attend and participate in the annual Diversity Festival fortnight which has been running since 2006. The Festival champions diversity within the University and seeks to inform, celebrate and challenge attendees with a range of events covering all Diversity areas. For many years equality and diversity has formed part of successive corporate strategies of the University namely a Single Equality Scheme (2007-2012) and in Equality Act objectives (2012 onwards). For Staff, there are a number of initiatives to further raise awareness of and embed Equality and Diversity practices within the work of the University. These initiatives and embedded practices help to create an organisation that celebrates and supports the differences of all individuals who either work or study with us. These include;

- Disability Confident employer scheme;
- EHRC's Working Forward charter;
- Mental Health First Aid training;
- Mandatory online Equality and Diversity training for all staff;
- Recruitment and selection training focusing on equality and diversity issues;
- Mandatory training for managers on 'Managing Equality and Diversity'. This enables managers to manage staff, chair committees, make decisions, support students etc. and be mindful of all equality and diversity issues and analyse decisions etc. for equality impact and;
- Six active network groups including a Disabled Staff Group, Parents' Network, Carers' Network, Women's Networking Forum, Menopause network and LGBT+ Staff group. Notably, the LGBT+ Staff Group have recently worked to achieve The Navajo Merseyside and Cheshire LGBTIQA Charter Mark, an equality mark supported by LGBTI community networks across Merseyside and Cheshire. Gaining the institutional Charter Mark is an indication of good practice, commitment and knowledge of the specific needs, issues and barriers facing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

Responsibility for implementation and monitoring our performance lies with the Equality Forum of Senate which is chaired by a member of Senior Executive Team. Any equality issues arising from support and subject departments can

³² <https://upp-foundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/1714-Social-Mobility-and-University-Careers-Services-report-Digital.pdf>

be raised and discussed at the Equality Forum, informing long-term equality projects, such as the Athena SWAN Charter Mark. The Forum oversees University-wide objectives and considers our Access and Participation along with the University's Equality Act objectives. We monitor the effects of its work on equality and diversity in part through an annual report analysing data on student intake, performance and progression according to particular characteristics, including age, disability and ethnicity and an annual report covering both the APP monitoring and the Single Equality Scheme is made to both the General Purposes Committee and HR Committee of Governing Council.

3.3. Strategic Measures

We have a number of overarching strategic measures delivered to all full-time and part-time students regardless of background to support each stage of the student's lifecycle and address gaps in performance. Some of the success and progression measures are embedded activity within students' degree programmes, whilst others are optional. Access measures are all optional for individual pupils and schools.

3.3.1. Access Measures

The following access measures are in place to support the achievement of our objective 1:

Diverse Provision: Degree Apprenticeships and Foundation Years

Degree Apprenticeships form part of our strategy on widening access to HE, providing prospective students with alternative and a wider range of programmes. These programmes attract a more diverse range of students, for example, in 2020/21 48.5% were from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2, 13.3% had a declared disability, were mature learners and 61.2% were first generation students³³. As of 2022, 561 students (in learning) are in the process of completing a degree or higher apprenticeship at the University of Chester. There is the intention to increase these numbers further.

Foundation Years are offered across various subject areas; Business, Law and Social Science; Creative Industries; Education and Nursing; Engineering and Computer Science; Humanities; Life Sciences. Our Foundation Years has nearly doubled in size since beginning in 2016/17 to 280 students in 2020/21³³. They attract a diverse range of students; in 2020/21 47.5% were from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2, 28.8% had a declared disability, 16.8% were BAME, 54.5% were mature learners and 53.4% were first generation students. Foundation Years offer an enhanced personal tutoring system for all students with additional touch-points to support students individual needs, and an enhanced summer reassessment support programme for those students who may have encountered barriers to their progress whilst studying on the foundation year. Due to the high proportion of disabled students, we are also trialling Foundation Year personal tutors contacting these potential students at applicant stage during June and July. This is to ensure they receive early support and information prior to starting their studies in September (if they choose to come to the University of Chester). An additional aim for this pilot is to facilitate relationship-building between personal tutors and disabled students, and to develop open conversations around support needs and inclusion.

School Volunteers

Our Volunteering and Mentoring Team has facilitated school volunteers for several years³⁴. School Volunteer roles provide extra assistance to school pupils, both primary and secondary age, by providing support in literacy and numeracy skills. This 8-week programme aims to support pupils application towards their school work, levels of confidence, motivation and self-esteem, as well as general improvement to academic skills. School Volunteers compliment our raising attainment programmes in supporting pupils across the Cheshire West and Chester and Wirral region.

Raising GCSE Attainment in Schools

The Faculty of Education and Children's Services delivers a supportive development programme to target schools within the local Cheshire and North West region, which aims to raise attainment levels of GCSE students in the subject areas of English and Maths. We use HEAT to understand and inform which schools in the region to target²⁶. The raising attainment and supportive development programme we offer includes:

- GCSE revision sessions and masterclasses (direct class room based activity)

³³ Internal data based on UK domiciled full-time students.

³⁴ <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/news/students-schools-supports-young-people-across-cheshire?list=6800>

- Collaborative lesson/curriculum design and implementation and assessment and marking criteria design
- Coaching and professional development of teachers to increase knowledge, skill sets and confidence

Led by an experienced subject practitioner, the programme can be adapted to suit the needs of the school, with the programme delivering some or all of the above depending on the school needs. The programme also goes through a continuous evaluation process. For example, to enable a revised model for teaching statistics to be put in place, a Teacher Research Group (TRG) was formed whereby all teachers within the Maths Department observed and reviewed the impact of the learning models on pupils' understanding. Teachers then used this evaluation to inform their own planning for teaching statistics in KS3 and KS4. Our Raising Attainment Outcomes Chain found in **Appendix B** outlines the short term, medium term and long term outcomes as previously mentioned in the '[Strategic Aims, Objectives and Targets](#)' section of this document. The raising attainment and supportive development programme will support our objective to increase the proportion of young (18/19) white male entrants from LPN.

We have already seen some success within our Maths attainment work finding that one school's maths GCSE results increased by 10% following the steady implementation of the collaborative lesson and curriculum design since summer 2016. The support for teaching offered through action research, collaborative planning and support for pupils through direct GCSE intervention, had contributed to the on-going improvement developments within that school. The evidence of impact for this on-going collaborative approach, particularly for Maths, has been shared externally to contribute to and influence sector practices. A paper called '*Translating research into practice through collaborative planning: The case of the so-called grid method*' was published in the Proceedings of the British Society for Research into Learning Mathematics³⁵, and a conference presentation called '*Using collaborative planning to support algebraic reasoning for middle to lower attaining GCSE students*' was delivered at the joint Association of Mathematics Education Teachers (AMET) and National Association of Mathematics Advisers (NAMA) Conference in March 2019³⁶.

Subject departments: A Level Revision sessions

To further support our programme of raising attainment activities, subject departments in the areas of Chemistry, Physics and Maths provide A Level revision sessions over 3-days to post-16 pupils from across the Cheshire West and Chester, North Wales and Wirral region. The sessions aim to support pupils preparations for A Level exams. Our Physical, Mathematical and Engineering Sciences also hope to expand on this further by hosting T-level placements for students from Cheshire College, particularly for those with additional learning needs.

Sustained School Engagement

Our sustained Outreach programme, Pathfinder, offers a two-year programme of activities with the same cohort of students from Years 6-7, Years 8-9, Years 10-11, and Years 12-13 who are from the following underrepresented groups:

- The least represented groups in HE (POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2), particularly males
- BAME students
- Looked-after children
- Disabled students
- Pupil Premium students
- And first generation students

Target schools are identified using the HEAT service and the first year focuses on enrichment, raising awareness of the breadth of study available at the University, whilst the second year of the programme will shift focus to attainment raising to support students with their studies²⁶. The programme also assists students to complete a Personalised Progression Plan which the Outreach team receive and provide additional support, and then returned to students. This allows students to:

- Identify potential career pathways and pros and cons of different routes at Post 16
- Ability to link subject options and skills to future pathways
- Identify a wide range of courses/careers available beyond curriculum
- Ability to link the importance of school attainment and skill development to future careers

³⁵ www.bsrlm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/BSRLM-CP-38-3-01.pdf

³⁶ www.ametonline.org.uk/conferences/conference-spring-2019/

- Development of basic skills to aid attainment

The programme follows our Evaluation Framework and has a theory of change outcome chain at its core with short term, medium term and long term outcomes, as previously mentioned in the '[Strategic Aims, Objectives and Targets](#)' section of this document, being developed. The programme forms an important element of our longitudinal activity that will be tracked through HEAT to help evaluate the effectiveness of the activity in order to inform the design and planning of the programme in future years. The sustained Outreach programme will support our objective to increase the proportion of young (18/19) white male entrants from LPN, and increase our care experienced population.

Collaborative Work: Uni Connect

We are committed to building collaborative initiatives and distinct collaborative work under **Uni Connect** Higher Education Outreach Hubs across our local regions which are designed to complement our Access and Participation Plan work and will act as a forum for collaborative working/best practice sharing on issues such as disabled students, young people from military families and care experienced. The collaborative work will work towards increasing our Care Leaver population. Both Outreach Hubs are still under development and short term and medium term targets will be developed and reported on in the next couple of years. Long term outcomes will be measured by HEAT²⁶. Our Uni Connect work includes:

- **Higher Horizons + Consortium** is the collaboration of HE providers across Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire, and evaluation is monitored through the East Midlands Widening Participation Research and Evaluation Partnership (EMWPREP) database, and participants' progress into HE is the measure of programme impact.
- **Shaping Futures** is a collaboration of HE providers based within/around Liverpool City Region to aid HE progression by providing impartial HE information, advice and guidance to local learners from target wards/underrepresented groups. The programmes and activities are designed to align to the Gatsby benchmarks³⁷.

3.3.2. Student Success Measures

The following student success measures are in place to support the achievement of our objectives 2-3 (along with bespoke department/subject led projects that will be implemented on a long-term basis or as one-off activities):

Staff Awareness

An understanding and oversight of access, student success and progression issues for underrepresented groups at a local level, i.e. within academic departments, has been a key area of development for the University over the last two years. This has been done through raising awareness of the barriers faced by underrepresented groups (through academic and professional services membership on the Student Success Subcommittee), dissemination of data on the performance gaps of underrepresented groups by subject/department as part of our annual Portfolio Review of academic programmes and Strategic Planning processes, and being given personal one-to-one training on evidence-based action planning and evaluation design for new initiatives aimed at reducing performance gaps of underrepresented groups. Resources have also been invested in raising awareness of inclusive curriculum in particular through Race Equality Challenge Group, Diversity Festival, Faculty-led Decolonisation of Education events, etc. All proposed action plans from academic faculties and departments must support us in achieving our objectives to reduce the continuation gap between non-disabled and disabled students, and to reduce the awarding gaps between White and BAME students, particularly Black students, between female and male students from LPN and between students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1 (addressing the IMD quintile 1 awarding gap).

Wellbeing and Mental Health

With the growing numbers and national concerns of students in HE with wellbeing and mental health issues, we recognise it is important to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health and wellbeing of our students. Evidence of impact of the activities will be developed and embedded using our Evaluation

³⁷ www.gatsby.org.uk/education/focus-areas/good-career-guidance

Framework. The following measures will support our objective to reduce the continuation gap between non-disabled and disabled students:

- Qualified Counsellors;
- Wellbeing and Mental Health section on the University app – 24/7 access to well-being and support, proactive activities and suggestions to relieve symptoms, signposting to support services and formal routes for medical attention;
- Promotion of ‘Big White Wall’ – a leading digital mental health service for people aged over 16, offering 24/7 professionally moderated online peer support network, self-management resources, creative arts and writing therapies and clinical tests³⁸;
- Nightline – due to be launched in 2020 this will provide out of hours support for students;
- Named contacts for students experiencing issues with their gender or sexuality (covering the protected characteristics of gender, sexuality and gender reassignment);
- Mental Health First Aid Training – providing staff with fundamental knowledge, deeper understanding and basic practical skills on how to spot the triggers and signs of mental ill health, the confidence to step in, reassure and support an individual in distress and guide them towards appropriate support and;
- Targeted events for mature and commuting students and student led volunteer activities.

Disability and Inclusion

To address the reduction in Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA) funding for full-time and part-time students with a declared disability, we provide the following support:

- Early Arrival Day for students with social and communication difficulties and complex mental health difficulties, to arrive a day earlier in order to reduce anxiety and orientate themselves around campus and the city;
- Individual library and research induction;
- Help towards the initial purchases of specialist equipment;
- Long term and short term Assistive Technology equipment loans;
- Assistive Technologist providing one-to-one or group base support to students with technology and learning resource needs;
- Disability Support Officers providing specialist support, including monthly one-to-ones, drop-in sessions and groups activities;
- Book fetch service and accessible books service within the Library;
- Disability Academic Skills Tutors;
- Inclusion Plans outlining requirements needed to support the students study, assessment and exam processes and;
- Assistive Technology equipment and non-medical helper support for examinations.

Evidence of impact of our Assistive Technologist one-to-one programme has shown significantly more students attending these one-to-one sessions achieve a successful outcome at level 4 (90% achieved a successful outcome at level 4 in 2017/18) compared to disabled students who do not attend the one-to-one sessions (83.7% achieved a successful outcome at level 4 in 2017/18)³⁹. This work will continue to support our objective to reduce the continuation gap between non-disabled and disabled students.

Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring helps to integrate and engage new level 4 students into the University and aims to increase the sense of belonging, integration into university life and support student’s successful progression to the next level. Evidence of impact has shown that level 4 successful outcomes rates of mentees are increasing each year and now outperform the successful outcome rates of our level 4 population³⁸. In particular, mentees with a disability have similar level 4 successful outcome rates to the rest of the non-disabled students not participating in the programme and they do

³⁸ www.bigwhitewall.co.uk/

³⁹ Internal data based on UK domiciled full-time undergraduate and pre-registration Nursing students.

better than those with a disability not participating in the programme. The programme will continue to target full-time and part-time students pre-arrival, particularly those from underrepresented groups, to participate in the programme and share the evidence of impact results with the wider University to promote the effectiveness of the programme. This work will support our objective to reduce the continuation gap between non-disabled and disabled students.

Support Packages for Targeted Groups

Alongside increased financial support packages, we offer specific support packages for Care Experienced, Estranged, Carers and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman and Boater community students. They receive a key contact within the University and other named contacts within particular support departments such as Finance, Carers & Employability, Wellbeing, Residential Living, Academic Skills, etc. to support the student with all aspects of university life. We also offer an allocated peer mentor upon arrival, budgeting sessions, reduced rate accommodation all year round (for Care Experienced and Estranged students only), assistance when applying for financial support, support with childcare and support into employment or further study. Continuation and employment rates of our Care Experienced students in particular are increasing year-on-year and we aim to provide evidence of impact through case studies from our Care Experienced population. For carers, we also promote a supportive social media page called 'You Care, We Care: Carers Network' providing national and local sources of information, help and guidance⁴⁰.

Academic Skills

Our Academic Skills advisory team offer one-to-one support and individualised email 'feedforward' support, faculty-specific digital resources, seminar sessions, online resources for both staff and full-time and part-time students, joint-delivery of module sessions with academic staff, and the embedding of academic skills within the curriculum. The Academic Skills advisory team's monitoring and evaluation of impact of its activities in 2017/18 showed positive and encouraging findings that of those students attending one-to-one support, receiving feedforward support or attending seminars³⁸:

- 80.9% of Black students successfully completed Level 4 compared to 76.4% of our overall Black population;
- 80% of Asian students successfully completed Level 4 compared to 73.3% of our overall Asian population and;
- 78.2% of Mixed/Other ethnicity students successfully completed Level 4 compared to 76.8% of our overall Mixed/Other ethnicity population.

Further evidence of impact will reflect on students average module marks and good honour degree awarding rates, particularly BAME students and Black students. This will help us to gain more of an understanding of impact on the measures we are taking to achieve our objective to reduce the awarding gap between White and Black students and White and BAME students. Findings from our Assessment of Performance have shown that BAME, particularly Black students, and our male student population are disproportionately likely to have a qualification background (BTEC, Access or other qualifications) that generally leads to lower good honour degree awards. To engage these students with the support we offer early on, our Academic Skills advisory team will be expanding our pre-induction academic skills event (piloted in 2018/19) to prioritise BAME students, male students from LPN and students from POLAR4 quintile 1 with BTEC, Access or other qualifications, along with other underrepresented groups with these qualifications attending the event. This will allow for identification and support to be offered to these students early on. Repeat support will be offered to these student throughout their lifecycle at the University. Our Academic Skills advisory team will also develop an embedding of academic skills pathway for academic staff in order to provide a strategic, coherent and coordinated approach to embedding academic skills with the curriculum. This will be developed, implemented and monitored over the next couple of years. This work will support our objective to reduce the awarding gap between White and BAME/Black students, between female and male students from LPN and between students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1 (addressing the IMD quintile 1 awarding gap).

Engagement Analytics

In 2016/17 we produced a bespoke web application and extended the University's existing mobile app to record and monitor student attendance for full-time and part-time students. The system produces automated emails and online reports to help provide real-time accessible information, for both staff and students. Since the implementation of the

⁴⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/ucarewecare/>

system across the University, the correlation rate between average module mark and attendance rates for BAME students in 2017/18 was the same as White students (0.46 positive correlation)⁴¹. Understanding that attendance can positively correlate to grades is an important factor in supporting our work towards achieving our targets to reduce the awarding gap between White and BAME/Black students and female and male students from LPN. Understanding issues of non-attendance and supporting those who do not attend led to further expansion of the system in 2018/19 to include an individual Student Dashboard which enables data from many sources to be visualised in a single place, allowing monitoring of each student's level of engagement beyond attendance, such as engagement with our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and e-resources. Evidence of impact from staff focus groups has shown that this additional engagement information opens up dialogue between staff and students, is a good way to see how their students are getting on, if there are any issues at a module level, and helps differentiate between students who may not be able to attend (due to work commitments, illness) but are engaged and those who are simply struggling to attend and engage. Students have complex needs and the dashboards are helping staff to interpret and assess the individual student's situation in order to provide the appropriate support for that particular student. This engagement with individual students will support our objectives 2-4; reduce continuation gap between non-disabled and disabled students, and reduce the awarding gap between White and BAME/Black students, between female and male students from LPN and between students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1 (addressing the IMD quintile 1 awarding gap).

Collaborative Work: Subject departments

We have two large professional based Faculties; Education and Nursing, both of which are very experienced at working collaboratively with employers, practitioners and other stakeholders. Large proportions of the learning takes place in practice and therefore the partnership approach underscores everything we do. The Nursing programmes have a wide entry gate and we strive to recruit non-traditional learners that are representative of the communities that we serve. An excellent example of learning gain for disadvantaged students can be seen at our Birkenhead campus where 74% of students entered the programme without 'A' level qualifications (the majority were Access and BTEC students) and this campus recently celebrated 55% of their students achieving good honours degrees³⁸.

3.3.3. Progression Measures

The following progression measures are in place to support the achievement of our objective 4:

Inspiring Futures

To address the performance gaps for full-time and part-time students from underrepresented groups, we launched **Inspiring Futures** in Autumn 2019 which will be a programme of careers related activities and support, provided by our Careers and Employability Department. This brings together current activities that have been shown to have the most impact on graduate outcomes with 2 new initiatives which have demonstrated impact at other universities. Destinations data demonstrates that a significantly higher proportion of LPN go on to highly skilled employment if they have participated in one of our initiatives now under the banner of **Inspiring Futures**. In the aggregated DLHE data for 2012/13 to 2016-17 LPN graduates' highly skilled employment rates increased by **6%** if they participated compared to LPN graduates who did not participate³⁸. **Inspiring Futures** will offer to full-time and part-time students:

- **Chester Difference Award** – a skills award enabling students to gain recognition for the skills gained through extra-curricular activities;
- **Work Experiences** – ranging from Employer Projects to Graduate Internships for current students (a scholarship of £2000 for a maximum 216 hours) and recent graduates (365 hour Graduate Internship);
- **Futures Employability Fund** – funding of up to £500 to purchase items or undertake activities to enhance employability only accessible to underrepresented groups;
- **Venture** – a programme equipping students with the skills and knowledge to start-up their own business, enter self-employment, freelance or innovate within an organisation;
- **Industry Insights** – a programme of visits to employers in cities other than Chester for students from underrepresented groups only;

⁴¹ Internal data based on Level 3, 4, 5 and 6 UK domiciled full-time undergraduate students.

- **Careers Guidance** – Effective one-to-one careers guidance appointments will continued to be offered to all students in order to improving graduate outcomes and;
- **Graduate Internships for vulnerable cohorts** – For students with a WP background as well as those on courses that perform poorly in progression metrics, there will be an expansion of paid graduate internship opportunities to support the cohorts aforementioned into graduate-level employment upon graduation.

We anticipate that these activities will continue to impact positively on the highly skilled graduate outcomes of those who participate, particularly those from underrepresented groups, supporting our overall objective to reduce the progression gap between young students (under 21) from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1. In line with other universities offering these activities these will raise aspiration, develop confidence and increase applications to graduate recruiters.

Collaborative Work

Employers' recruitment practices, location and the general graduate labour market play a huge role in influencing which graduates succeed. The revised Employer Engagement Strategy will promote a strategic approach to collaborative work focussing on employers who will add the most value to our students. The collaborative targeted approach will see us:

- Develop key relationships with employers who meet a set of criteria including those with widening participation and diversity at the heart of their graduate recruitment strategies;
- Link in with Santander Universities to offer underrepresented groups internship opportunities;
- Continue supporting our sustained relationships with employers who input into our Venture Programme;
- Deliver our Excellence in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Scholarship, supported and funded by Santander Universities, for those participating in the Venture Programme and;
- Deliver our new Employer Engagement Strategy to increase the number of employer partnerships that underrepresented groups will benefit from.

In addition to our Careers and Employability services, '*Enhancing Your Employability through Work Based Learning*' is our flagship 5-week employer-based experiential module which has formed a successful part of our undergraduate curriculum for over 20 years. A large part of the success is down to the many ongoing employer collaborations and engagements we have developed with a diverse range employers from both public and private sectors throughout the UK. The placement offers students the opportunity to spend five weeks with an organisation where they are able to develop and reflect on knowledge, skills and abilities appropriate to any work setting. Work Based Learning (WBL) provides the context for real personal growth and continuous development working towards increasing employability and highly skilled employability rates increased by 2.3% in 2014/16, 1.5% in 2015/16 and 2.7% in 2016/17 for those who participated in the experimental module compared to students not participating³⁸.

3.3.4. Financial Support

Targeted financial support bursaries will continue to be offered to our students⁴². These are offered to minimise the likelihood of students leaving or failing academically for financial reasons. Full details of all of our bursaries are found in **Appendix C** (these are subject to change in subsequent years) and are available on the University's website⁴³. We have supplemented our Care Leaver financial support to include 50% discounted on University owned accommodation and opened the Care Leaver support to those who have spent at least 3 months' in Local Authority Care before the age of 18 for 2019/20 onwards. We also developed an Estranged Student financial support package for 2019/20 and from 2022/23 onwards, we are offering students of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman, Boater community a financial support package. Evaluation of our Financial Support packages using the OfS financial support toolkit found no significant differences between the performance rates of Bursary and Non Bursary students for success and progression, therefore Bursary students are performing at similar rates to Non Bursary students²⁴. Providing financial support to disadvantaged students remains a key element to lessen the financial strain that students from low income household's experience. In addition, we offer a Travel Bursary for 2018/19 onwards aiding prospective applicants in receipt of free school meals, in receipt of benefits (low income), disabled students, care experienced or young carers

⁴² Exclusions to eligibility apply and full details are posted on the University's website

⁴³ www1.chester.ac.uk/undergraduate/finance/bursaries-and-scholarships/general-bursaries-and-financial-support

to attend one of our experience days or interviews, with the potential to expend this to our Open Days in future years⁴⁴. Results of the evaluation of impact of the Travel Bursary will be available in due course. Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have expanded our Financial Assistance Fund (FAF) to include a fund dedicated to Digital Poverty to those most in need from September 2021. This will support the continued and long-term opportunities towards providing an inclusive digital teaching and learning environment more broadly alongside our in-person activities following recommendations from the Gravity Assist report (OfS, 2021)⁴⁵.

3.4. Student Consultation and Involvement

We have developed and used an annual timeline for consultation periods with our students via our CSU. CSU holds Student Council meetings throughout the year which have fixed agenda items at particular points in the year to discuss Access and Participation activities targeting access, student success and progression for underrepresented groups. The Student Council consists of members from underrepresented student groups, such as BME, LGBT+, mature students, disabled students, etc. who are elected by the student body at the University. The Student Council receives our assessment of performance, summary of the activities we deliver that work towards reducing performance gaps and activity developments that may improve performance. We encourage feedback from Student Council in order for the student voice, particularly the voice from the underrepresented groups, to be heard and to shape the development of the new plan. In addition, CSU receives detailed feedback from the APP team following in-year progress review meetings that take place with our Activity Leads. These points of interaction allow for further consultation and an opportunity for students to express views about our progress against the plan, and to influence institutional practice and approaches to improving access, student success and progression for underrepresented groups. In future, CSU will also receive information on the evaluation of impact from the activities. CSU are represented on all key University deliberative committees and those which have responsibility for Access and Participation, in particular the Education Committee, Student Voice and Experience Committee and the Student Success Subcommittee. The Student Success Subcommittee allows CSU to have a direct link to the strategic overview of the evaluation of our access and participation activities. CSU Officers continuously collaborate with us on developing institutional practices and activities by being part of decision-making and implementation committees for projects linked to student success and progression (such as Financial Support Working Group and Attendance Monitoring) and will continue to be part of our whole institutional approach to improving student performance and reducing performance gaps for those from underrepresented groups.

CSU have participated in discussions over the content of our Access and Participation Plan and have been consulted over the proposed tuition fees and the form of intended financial support and benefits offered to our students. CSU have provided a statement, found in **Appendix D**, on how they and their representatives have been consulted and involved in the University's access and participation work, along with their procedures for recruiting student representatives and the how they provide opportunities and channels for the student voice to be heard, particularly those from underrepresented groups.

3.5. Evaluation Strategy

Our evaluation strategy for all activities that aim to work towards closing performance gaps for underrepresented groups across their lifecycle has been developed and is managed centrally by the APP team and has been an ongoing development over the last two years. **Appendix A** outlines the University of Chester's Evaluation Framework. We are using an outcomes chain approach associated with 'theory of change' to enable all those involved with the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of activities to understand the rationale and reasoning behind the activity, to set out clear measurable objectives and the data sources used to measure the objectives and to articulate the desired outcomes and targets for the activity²⁷. The theory of change approach will encourage a better understanding of our evaluation process, produce clearly defined standards of evidence (encouraged by the OfS) which will allow for high quality evaluation of impact evidence, and show how each activity is progressing against its long term aims and targets²⁸. Following the completion of the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool, which enables a critical review of our evaluation strategy to ensure evidence of impact being produced is of a high quality, we are an institution that demonstrates high

⁴⁴ www1.chester.ac.uk/undergraduate/undergraduate-visits/visit-us-travel-bursary

⁴⁵ www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/gravity-assist-propelling-higher-education-towards-a-brighter-future/

quality of standards of evidence that are ‘emerging or in development’⁴⁶. Our aim is to develop further the standards of evidence and theory of change evaluation strategy/approach and embed this into all our activities.

3.5.1. Strategic context

All those involved with delivering access and participation activities are given the opportunity to meet at least twice yearly to discuss and reflect on the evaluation of impact of their activities, led and managed centrally by the APP team. All activities conduct local level data collection, monitoring, evaluation of impact, and evaluation is an embedded process that is resourced within each of the activities budget. Common protocols for building in data collection and evaluation of impact have been adopted for the majority of our activities and implemented accordingly. For example, evaluation of impact is conducted at the end of the academic year. Data collection primarily for success and progression activities is conducted when our Management and Information System’s (MIS) Department provides outcome data following our end of year Assessment Boards. Activity Leads then submit the evaluation of impact template to the APP team annually allowing for an institutional overview of our progress and performance, and areas for future development based on evidence of impact.

Reflection from the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool: The institution recognises that it needs to enhance the existing management structures to further broaden and embed the access and participation agenda. In the light of this, the University has a Student Success Subcommittee which monitors our performance and progress towards the plan and targets. This subcommittee will have strategic oversight of our evaluation of impact and evidence collected, our evaluation strategy and areas of improvements for our evaluation methods. The subcommittee will also help support further initiatives designed to reduce performance gaps for underrepresented groups. The subcommittee will enhance links between other University strategies, such as our Learning and Teaching Strategy, and be part of the University’s deliberative committee structure. We will also encourage Activity Leads to participate in internal and/or external evaluation-related development opportunities and training to ensure staff are equipped with sufficient skills and knowledge to apply our Evaluation Framework.

3.5.2. Programme design

New activities complete an outcomes chain tool associated with ‘theory of change’ before beginning delivery of the activity. This ensures evaluation has been specified and included in the initial planning phase and enables all those involved with the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the activity to understand:

- the rationale and reasoning behind the activity, including internal data or external evidence and research underpinning the need for the activity and its design;
- to set out clear measurable objectives, how data will be collected (qualitative and/or quantitative) and the data sources used to measure the objectives;
- to set out any benchmarks or targets the activity will be monitored against and;
- to articulate the desired outcomes and targets for the activity.

Although the outcomes chain tool was not previously used, existing activities have been reporting their programme design in a similar format to the theory of change approach as part of their end of year monitoring and evaluation of impact. Moving forward, existing activities will complete an outcomes chain tool as part of their end of year monitoring and evaluation of impact report.

Reflection from the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool: There was a general need to review existing activities to ensure a robust evaluation strategy, clearly defined measurable objectives, aims and targets are set out, and common protocols for building in data collection and evaluation are embedded within existing activities.

⁴⁶www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluation-self-assessment-tool/evaluation-self-assessment-tool/

3.5.3. Evaluation design

We are using the standards of evidence approach encouraged by the OfS to evaluate the impact of our activities to ensure we can demonstrate effectiveness of the activities and encourage continuous development of the activities. We can then make informed decisions regarding the future investment of financial resources.

All new activities detail the evaluation design within the initial planning stages including:

- type of evaluation of impact (narrative, empirical or causal) being used to evaluate the activity;
- the type of evidence that will be monitored and evaluated;
- whether the activity's evaluation aims to show a coherent story, association or causal link and;
- a timeline for collection of data and evaluation of the activity, this may also include a within year review of the activities progress and data collection.

The planned timeline will include the collection of data which may originate from different methods / sources which can be collected at different times (pre/mid/post activity). Over the past couple of years we have been developing and working towards embedding an evaluation strategy, similar to the theory of change approach, within our existing activities. Our aim is to develop further the standards of evidence within existing activities and embed our Evaluation Framework within our existing activities as part of the end of year monitoring and evaluation of impact report.

Reflection from the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool: There was a general need to review existing activities to ensure the evaluation design and types of evaluation of impact are appropriate and robust methods of impact evaluation. The University's newly formed subcommittee will broaden the audience of the evaluation of impact of our access and participation activities by being integrated into the formal committee structure. We recognise the selection bias and lack of more inferential statistical analysis when using predominately empirical types of evaluation of impact. We will reflect on conducting research/other research design methods where appropriate.

3.5.4. Evaluation implementation

Activities quantify the resources needed within the initial planning stages, including the allocation of resources for monitoring and evaluation. Evaluation processes are embedded and are proportionate to the activities programme and evaluation design. As part of the evaluation design, all data sources are predetermined and collected, monitored and evaluated at a local level, and all follow clear guidelines with data protection and data sharing. The majority of our activities are able to track progress over time at an individual level (success and progression activities), whilst others can also track individual and school progress over time (access activities). For example, we are a member of the HEAT service which assists Higher Education Institutions in England to target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activity and works in partnership with other participating stakeholders²⁶. In the short term, HEAT will provide details of the types of events and characteristics of the people who attended outreach activities along with pupil, teacher and school feedback to provide a full report on each activity. HEAT's longitudinal tracking system matches records for individual participants to datasets spanning Key Stage 2 through to postgraduate study and employment. One measurable long term outcome will be to evaluate whether the participants attended higher education, in particular whether they attended the University of Chester. In the years to come, HEAT will be able to provide us with information to evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach activities to inform our programme design and activity planning.

Reflection from the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool: We recognise the need to test or pilot self-reporting data, such as surveys, questionnaires, etc. to control for cognitive bias. Risk analysis has occurred at the end of academic year cycle. New activities will now report risk assessments prior to the delivery of the activity and existing activities risk assessments are currently under review.

3.5.5. Learning to shape improvements

At the initial planning phase, activities articulate programme and evaluation design by including:

- how results and the evaluation of impact are expected to be used to improve the activity or improve the evaluation methods;

- identification of any risks or barriers the Activity Leads foresee which may impact on the progress and success of the activity and;
- how activities intend to share the results and evaluation of impact internally and externally (if applicable).

Annual end of year reports are submitted by each activity and these are written to a template which follows the structures of the programme design, evaluation design and evaluation implementation. The reports demonstrate how activities have used the evaluation of impact to inform improvements to the programme design and evaluation methods used within the activity. These improvements are also discussed at the twice yearly monitoring meetings.

The APP team for the Student Success Subcommittee produce a summary of the evaluation of impact of our activities to share internally with; our Student Voice and Experience Committee, our Governing Council through our Planning and Resources Committee (P&RC) and Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee (AG&SO), and with our student representatives on Student Council through our CSU. From this, the APP team aim to influence and inform institutional practices to develop new activities, invest further financial resources to effective existing activities and to influence our overarching evaluation strategy. For example, evaluation of impact of our mainstream attendance monitoring system led to further expansion of the in-house system to include a dashboard which enables data from many sources to be fed into one place so that staff can monitor the student's level of engagement beyond attendance, such as engagement with our online programme module spaces, eLibrary, etc. This expansion of the institutional practice was led by a Project Team, of which included members of the APP Team. The development aids staff to identify 'at risk' students more quickly and efficiently and to offer bespoke support to students who are struggling with particular aspects of the programme. The University has linked in with JISC on our attendance monitoring and student dashboard since 2016/17, externally sharing our programme design and evaluation of impact results. Any external sharing of evaluation of impact results which aims to contribute to and influence sector practices is conducted at the local activity level.

Reflection from the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool: The APP team will ensure that Activity Leads plan to have a process by which they will share their findings internally and externally where appropriate. This might be through internal or external working groups and networks or databases. We aim to become a contributor to sector 'good practice' knowledge exchange through the Evidence and Impact Exchange.

To enhance our evaluation practices we are members of the North West Widening Participation Research and Evaluation group. The group is open to North West institutions and Uni-Connect colleagues who have an active role in ensuring that access, success and progression related activities are research and evidence-based informed, and effectively evaluated. The group meet at least three times per academic year, where evaluation approaches and findings from North West institutions are presented. Processes such as evaluation planning and ethics are discussed, and effective practice and lessons learnt are shared. Members also provide external and independent advice, constructive feedback, and guidance on the shared evaluation practices in an informal peer review manner.

The Group are keen to develop this work further to support OfS priorities by:

- Sharing evidence-based initiatives with Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO)⁴⁷
- Strengthening the Peer-to-Peer review process outside of the meetings
- And potentially develop collaborative evaluation processes and research

3.5.6. Financial Support Evaluation

Financial support is evaluated using the OfS financial support toolkit²⁴. The purpose of the evaluation is to ascertain if there were differing outcomes for Bursary students compared to Non Bursary students. We found no significant differences between the performance rates of Bursary and Non Bursary students for success and progression, therefore Bursary students are performing at similar rates to Non Bursary students. Providing financial support to disadvantaged students remains a key element to lessen the financial strain that students from low income household's experience. The tool kit has been useful in disaggregating the data and showing differential performances for groups with certain characteristics. For example; students with BTEC qualifications are significantly less likely to continue, complete their

⁴⁷ <https://taso.org.uk/>

degree or gain a good degree classification. These findings support other internal data showing the same issues. A multi-departmental project investigated prior assessment experience of BTEC entrants and found BTEC students reported differences in assessment styles and marking criteria, writing styles and referencing, and generally not having the skills or knowledge to usefully use their spare time for independent learning. Information and guidance will be produced to enhance staff awareness when working with students with BTEC qualifications. As well as analysis of withdrawal and awarding data, questionnaires to those in receipt of awards and national research also takes place using the OfS Interview Tool⁴⁸. We have a Student Financial Support Working group to which findings from the financial support evaluation (toolkit and interview tool) are reported and whereby decisions on future financial support packages are discussed, developed and supported.

3.6. Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

Led and coordinated centrally by the APP team, University wide and local level monitoring is undertaken by our access, student success and progression Activity Leads. Annual progress reports are written to a template which structures our monitoring processes and theory of change evaluation. This allows an institutional overview for monitoring our progress and performance, areas of success and weaknesses, and areas for future development to ensure spend is carefully monitored and based on evidence of impact. Quarterly updates and twice yearly progress review meetings, including the reporting of financial commitments, are reported on by each Activity Lead to the APP team to assess whether progress is being made towards the plan and our targets. The updates and progress review meetings help to identify within year any areas which potentially may fail to make progress against the plan and provide an opportunity to influence, develop and improve on our performance. This embedded monitoring process takes place for all our activities targeted at reducing gaps for underrepresented groups at each stage of their lifecycle and has been in place for a considerable number of years.

A summary of our monitoring returns and evaluation reports, including progress against targets and milestones, are produced the APP team and overseen by our Student Success Subcommittee which monitors our performance and progress towards the plan. These are received by our Student Voice and Experience Committee, which in turn reports to Senate which oversees and influences practice within the organisation. Faculty and student representatives are consulted and asked to contribute to actions to improve our progress through the Student Success Subcommittee. Our CSU also engage with the twice yearly progress review meetings through a written summary on our progress against the plan and any new developments, and are provided an opportunity to feedback, through our Student Council, underrepresented student views on further activities that may influence our performance or improve performance.

Our Governing Council engages with the APP monitoring through our Planning and Resources Committee (P&RC) and Academic Governance & Student Outcomes Committee (AG&SO) whereby the APP team, via the subcommittee, submits a summary of our monitoring report on our progress against the plan and targets. APP targets are also part of the University's Risk Register and are a new Key Performance Indicator (KPI) in the Citizen Student Strategy for 2020-25 which are periodically monitored through the Governing Council. In the Autumn of 2018 we employed external consultants, *'Applied Inspirations'* to review our Access and Participation work. As part of this work they reviewed our monitoring activities and found *'very strong leadership'* with respect to monitoring and reporting. Direct responsibility for the monitoring of the plan resides with the APP team who report regularly to the Senior Executive Team.

4. Provision of information to students

We provide information on courses and tuition fees (including aggregate cost), our financial support schemes, and other information on student finance and accommodation, through our website, emails, blogs, prospectuses and through our 'material information in a durable medium' communication at the point of offer. All tuition fees are published at individual programme level and the current section on 'Finance', including financial support packages, is regularly updated on our website⁴⁹. Our Access and Participation Plan, promoting our commitment to fair access to

⁴⁸ www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/financial-support-evaluation-toolkit/interview-tool/

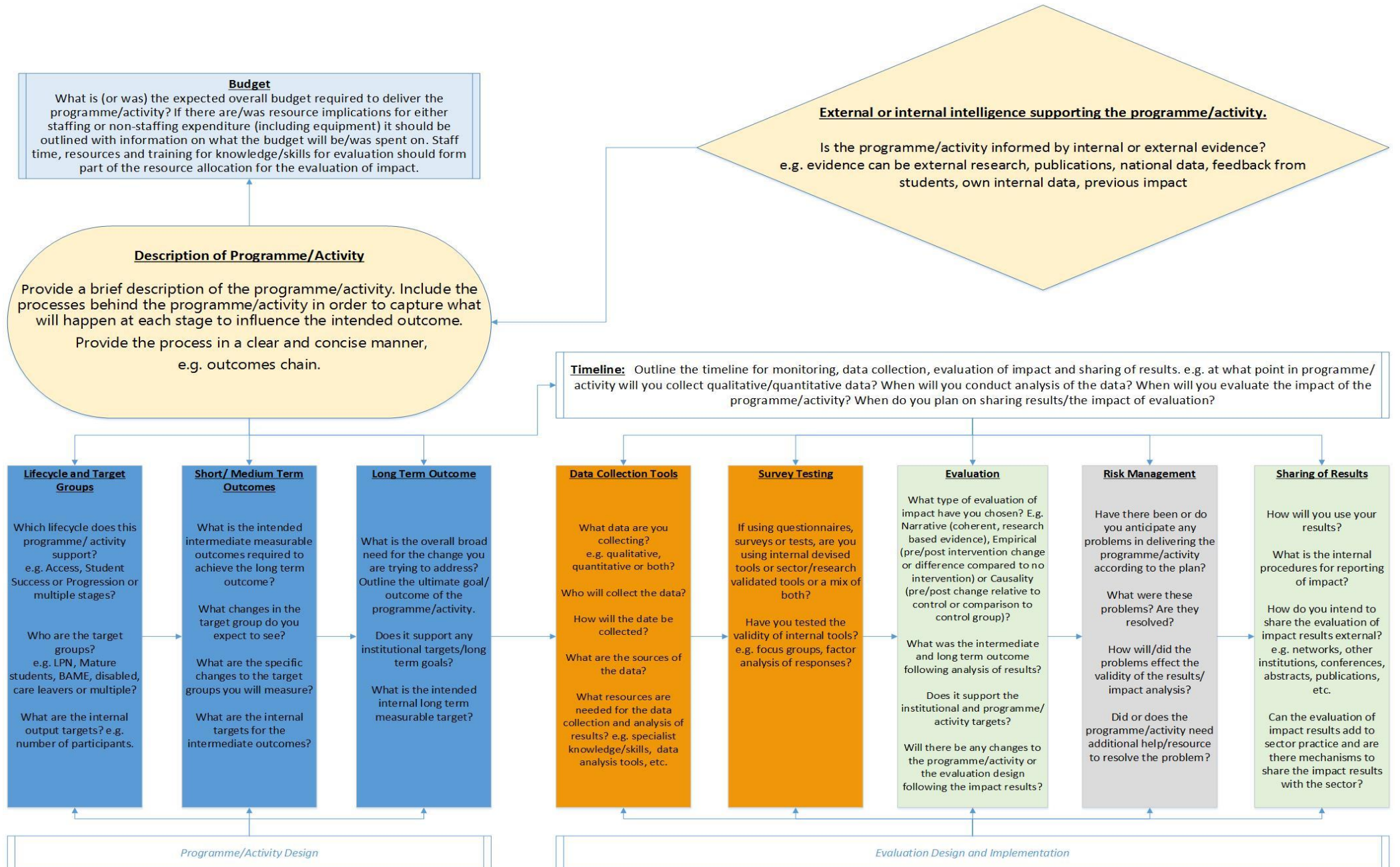
⁴⁹ www1.chester.ac.uk/finance

higher education and support for students from underrepresented backgrounds throughout their lifecycle, is also published on our 'Widening Participation' webpage for prospective and existing students⁵⁰.

For prospective students, financial support information is provided in the University-wide prospectus, University website, electronic newsletters, printed brochures, and during face-to-face activity and presentations during Open Days, Experience Days and outreach activities, all of which are targeted at prospective students, their families and teachers/advisers in schools and colleges. The provision of material information in the form of a durable medium is part of the offer-making process and this is sent via a link in an email to all offer-holders. Timely communications are sent to applicants to enable prospective students to make informed choices about what and where to study. This information includes the associated tuition fees, how and when to apply for financial support and other support opportunities available to them throughout their lifecycle at the University. All information on the financial support we offer our students also includes the eligibility criteria and level of financial support underrepresented groups may receive each year of their studies. Information about tuition fees and financial support is also provided to UCAS as soon we receive confirmation of permitted tuition fees for the given year.

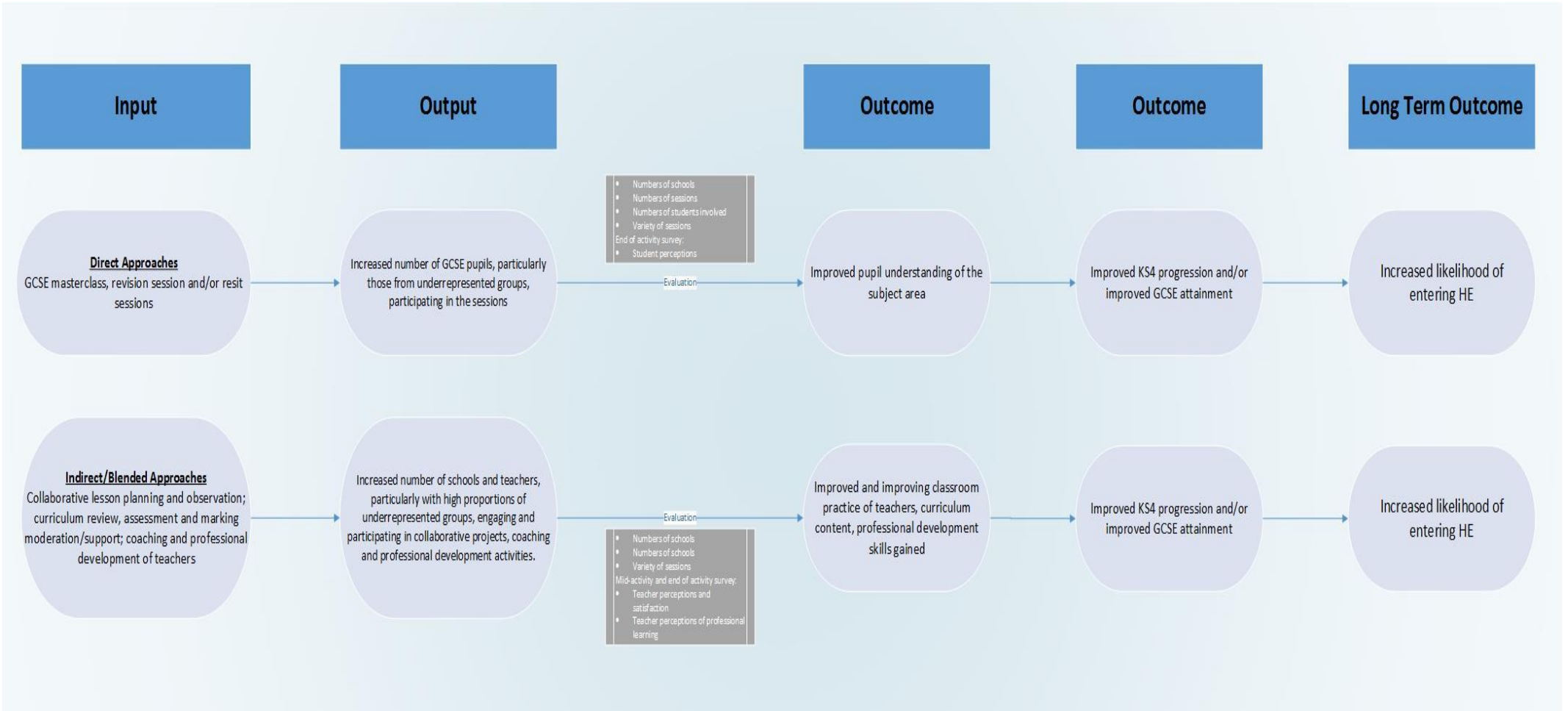
Existing students will benefit from publications and direct advice provided by our Student Services team, in particular information relating to the support offered for students declaring a disability, for carers, care experienced, estranged and those in financial hardship. We also provide information of particular benefit to underrepresented students throughout their lifecycle at the University on, for example, receiving a peer mentor, academic skills sessions, Student Union activities and events, bursary support, hardship fund opportunities, and Carers and Employability funding opportunities, which includes eligibility criteria and level of financial support underrepresented groups may receive each year of their studies where applicable.

⁵⁰ www1.chester.ac.uk/widening-participation



APPENDIX B

Raising Attainment Outcomes Chain for University of Chester



APPENDIX C Financial Support Packages at University of Chester

University of Chester's current bursary packages for 2022/23 are as follows⁵¹:

- **Foundation Year Bursary** – A £500 cash bursary for eligible students studying a Level 3 Foundation Year course at the University. Eligible to new undergraduate students with a means-tested household income of £25,000 or less.
- **Chester Bursary** – An annual £500 cash bursary award to new undergraduate students entering the University with a means-tested household income of £25,000 or less. Part-time undergraduate are awarded on a pro rata basis.
- **Care Experienced Bursary** – An annual £1,500 cash bursary for new undergraduate verified Care Experienced students⁵². The bursary also includes a £1000 fee waiver and 50% discount on University owed accommodation each year.
- **Estranged Student Bursary** – An annual £1,500 cash bursary for new undergraduate verified estranged students⁵³. Students may only apply for the bursary in their first year of study and will not be eligible for any other bursary. The bursary also includes 50% discount on University owed accommodation each year.
- **Carers Support Package** – An annual £1,500 cash bursary for new undergraduate students with caring responsibilities or registered with a recognised carer organisation or previously in receipt of Carer's Benefits, and have a means-tested household income of £40,000 or less.
- **Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman and Boater Bursary** – An annual £1,500 cash bursary for new undergraduate students who have identified as Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman and Boater on their UCAS / enrolment application.
- **Continuing students** – Students prior to 2022/23 will continue to receive their entitlements as set out in our previous years' Access Agreements and Access and Participation Plans.

All applicants who receive offers to undergraduate degree programmes at the University will be sent full details of available financial support packages. Bursary payments are automatically made on set dates during the year once students enrol or complete the relevant bursary application forms (if required) before or after enrolment. These cash payments will help alleviate all the additional costs students face throughout their time at University, such as paying rent, utility bills, travel expenses, which may impact on students ability to successfully complete their course.

In addition, we provide a Financial Assistance Fund (FAF) if students get into financial difficulties while completing their course. These awards are given to students as cash and are not repayable. Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have also expanded the FAF and included a fund dedicated to Digital Inclusion Fund to those most in need from September 2021 onwards. This will help to support our continued, and long-term objectives of providing an inclusive digital teaching and learning environment more broadly alongside our in-person activities.

For prospective students, we offer a **travel bursary** of up to £100 to assist to attend our open days and interviews/auditions. This is open to all prospective students who receive free school meals/pupil premium, are Looked after Children/those have been in local authority care or are Estranged, are a Carer, or are in receipt of benefits due to low-income or declared disability.

⁵¹ All bursaries are subject to change following evaluation. Bursaries are for full-time UK undergraduate degree student paying tuition fees of at least £6,000 and part-time UK undergraduate student paying tuition fees of at least £7,000 (full-time equivalent) and enrolled for a minimum of 40 credits at the start of Level 4. Exclusions to eligibility apply and full details are posted on the University's website www1.chester.ac.uk/undergraduate/finance/bursaries-and-scholarships/general-bursaries-and-financial-support

⁵² Verified Care Experienced students are those who have provided the appropriate evidence and have been in local authority care for at least three months before the age of 18, or have been subject to a Special Guardianship Order, and are 25 years old or under on 1st September (start of course year).

⁵³ Estranged students are identified and verified by the Student Loans Company are 25 years old or under on 1st September (start of course year).

APPENDIX D Student Consultation and Involvement

Chester Students' Union (CSU) representatives have engaged with and will continue to be involved in the planning and delivery of funded activity and have participated in discussions over the content of the University's Access and Participation Plan. We have been consulted over the planned form of intended financial support and benefits, and have given feedback regarding these cash awards.

Our Officers at CSU are democratically elected by the student body to represent them and undergo various NUS training events, such as 'Lead and Change' and 'NUS Zones Conference', as well as both internal and external training sessions. Our Officers have involvement with and representation on performance improvement groups, such as Attendance Monitoring User Group and Engagement Analytics Steering Group and we take an active role in initiatives to promote student engagement and success at the University.

Monitoring and evaluation reports, including progress against targets and milestones, are received by the University's Student Voice and Experience Committee on which CSU representatives sit, thus allowing the opportunity to express student views about the progress against the plan and any areas for future development. CSU representatives will also be part of the Student Success Subcommittee from 2019/20 in which the student voice will play a key role in the strategic overview of the evaluation of the access and participation activities. CSU are also involved in the monitoring activities that take place and can influence and advise on appropriate approaches for activities targeting access, student success and progression for underrepresented groups.

CSU Student Council members include students from underrepresented groups, such as BME, LGBT+, mature students, disabled students, etc. who are elected by the student body at the University. The Students' Union updates student representatives, at Student Council, when there is an update provided at our regular catch ups on the activities targeting access, student success and progression for underrepresented groups. This provides an opportunity for Student Council members to feedback, on a regular basis and in a timely manner, the underrepresented student's voice on the assessment of performance, further activities that may improve performance, evaluation of impact from the activities, and to be part of the development of the new plan. CSU also delivers the Student Experience Representation (SERs) system allowing for consultation and engagement from students on all programmes at all levels to be heard and influence institutional practices. SERs are elected by the student body on their programmes to act as a link between students and academic staff. SERs undergo training for this role and attend termly Staff Student Liaison Meetings where they are able to provide the student voice on academic issues specific to their programme. This acts as a direct channel for the student voice to impact on department and institutional practices to improve the student experience.

Mental health is at the forefront of the CSU agenda, and we actively promote the general welfare and mental well-being of all of our students. Many of our representatives that work in direct contact with students, such as sports and societies committee members, have undertaken Mental Health First Aid training and we aim for all our student representatives to undergo this training over the coming years. CSU are pleased with how the University has invested resources into many mental health support projects for our students during their time at the University, such as the development of the well-being and support section on the University App which acts as a quick reference point for students, signposting them to relevant support, providing proactive activities and suggestions to relieve symptoms, and formal routes for medical attention, all of which is accessible 24/7.

We can confirm that we were involved in the review of the assessment of performance, the yearly monitoring return and evaluation of impact, and the development and formation of the Access and Participation Plan for 2020/21. As with last year, all future consultations will involve the consideration of how the Students' Union can help the University to meet the objectives and targets around recruitment, retention, awards and progression. CSU will continue to work in collaboration with the University on the development of new incentives and activities with the aim to take a direct approach with the implementation of activities that work towards reducing performance gaps for underrepresented groups.



CSU President and VP Education

Provider fee information 2022-23Provider name: University of Chester
Provider UKPRN: 10007848**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	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£7,850
Foundation year/Year 0	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£1,850
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£1,385
Other	*	*	*

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

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	Hammond School Limited (The) 10002869	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
First degree	The Light Project 10032260	Fee applies to continuing students only	£6,750
First degree	The Light Project 10032260	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,900
Foundation degree	The Light Project 10032260	Fee applies to continuing students only	£6,750
Foundation degree	The Light Project 10032260	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,900
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
First degree	Work Based and Integrative Studies	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
First degree	Work Based and Integrative Studies co-delivered	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,180

Foundation degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Foundation degree	Work Based and Integrative Studies	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

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

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	The Light Project 10032260	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Foundation degree	The Light Project 10032260	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	The Light Project 10032260	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Provider fee information 2021-22Provider name: University of Chester
Provider UKPRN: 10007848**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	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£7,850
Foundation year/Year 0	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	Fee applies to continuing students only	£1,385
Sandwich year	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£1,850
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£1,385
Other	*	*	*

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

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	Hammond School Limited (The) 10002869	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
First degree	The Light Project 10032260	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,750
Foundation degree	The Light Project 10032260	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,750
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
First degree	Work Based and Integrative Studies	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
First degree	Work Based and Integrative Studies co-delivered	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,180
Foundation degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935

Foundation degree	Work Based and Integrative Studies	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

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

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	The Light Project 10032260	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,750
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: University of Chester

Provider UKPRN: 10007848

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

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

Inflationary statement:

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	£1,385
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	Hammond School Limited (The) 10002869	£9,250
Foundation degree	The Light Project 10032260	£6,750
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	*	£6,935
First degree	Work Based and Integrative Studies	£6,935
First degree	Work Based and Integrative Studies co-delivered	£6,180
Foundation degree	*	£6,935
Foundation degree	Work Based and Integrative Studies	£6,935
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	The Light Project 10032260	£6,750
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Chester

Provider UKPRN: 10007848

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 (£)	£732,884.00	£863,793.00	£760,001.00	£760,000.00	£790,000.00
Access (pre-16)	£267,154.00	£316,968.00	£275,212.00	£280,088.00	£291,144.00
Access (post-16)	£284,165.00	£320,534.00	£278,308.00	£281,197.00	£292,297.00
Access (adults and the community)	£145,535.00	£172,734.00	£149,979.00	£151,575.00	£157,558.00
Access (other)	£36,030.00	£53,557.00	£56,502.00	£47,140.00	£49,001.00
Financial support (£)	£1,579,823.00	£2,002,229.00	£1,825,863.00	£1,872,060.00	£1,937,339.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£230,224.00	£290,000.00	£300,000.00	£310,000.00	£330,000.00

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)	£21,270,210.00	£23,865,075.00	£23,034,095.00	£23,876,300.00	£25,569,965.00
Access investment	2.0%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%
Financial support	7.4%	8.4%	7.9%	7.8%	7.6%
Research and evaluation	0.9%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%
Total investment (as %HFI)	10.4%	11.6%	11.1%	11.1%	10.7%

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Chester

Provider UKPRN: 10007848

Targets

Table 4a - Access

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	2020-21 milestones	2021-22 milestones	2022-23 milestones	2023-24 milestones	2024-25 milestones	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To increase the entrant proportions of students from underrepresented groups	PTA_1	White economically disadvantaged males	Increase in the proportion of young (18/19) white male students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2)	No	Other data source	2018-19	7%	0.073	0.075	0.08	0.085	0.09	Internal data - UK domiciled full-time undergraduate and Nursing entrants who are young (18/19) males and from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2. Data includes students who left early but excludes readmitted students. Evidence of impact will be measured through HEAT. Our raising attainment, sustain outreach, NCOP Hub work and targeted STEM outreach activity (young white disadvantaged males) will assist in achieving this target.

Table 4b - Success

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	2020-21 milestones	2021-22 milestones	2022-23 milestones	2023-24 milestones	2024-25 milestones	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To reduce the continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_1	Disabled	Percentage difference in continuation rates between non-disabled and disabled students	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	5.7%	0.055	0.053	0.05	0.04	0.03	The gap is not significant but it is increasing and we have increasing proportions of entrants with declared disabilities (full-time students).
To reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_2	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in degree awarding (1st and 2:1) between white and black students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	28.7%	0.25	0.21	0.18	0.14	0.1	This is a significant issue for the University, therefore we have set a reaching and ambitious target for 2024-25 and aim to address the national key performance measures by eliminating all gaps by 2030-31 (full-time students).
To reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_3	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in degree awarding (1st and 2:1) between white and BAME students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	10.7%	0.1	0.09	0.075	0.06	0.04	This is a significant issue for the University, therefore we have set a reaching and ambitious target for 2024-25 and aim to address the national key performance measures by eliminating all gaps by 2030-31 (full-time students).
To reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_4	Multiple	Percentage difference in degree awarding (1st and 2:1) between female and male students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2)	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	7%	0.06	0.055	0.05	0.045	0.04	We have a significant attainment performance gap between female and male students. Further analysis showed the widest gaps are between females and males from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2.
To reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_5	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Percentage difference in degree awarding (1st and 2:1) between students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	4%	0.038	0.0325	0.03	0.025	0.02	We have a significant gap attainment gap between IMD quintile 5 and 1. The use of POLAR is embedded within our institution and data management systems. There is an overlap between POLAR4 quintile 1 and IMD quintile 1 students. A target to reduce the POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1 attainment gap will also work towards reducing the IMD quintile 5 and 1 attainment gap.

Table 4c - Progression

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	2020-21 milestones	2021-22 milestones	2022-23 milestones	2023-24 milestones	2024-25 milestones	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To reduce the progression gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTP_1	Multiple	Percentage difference in highly skilled employment or study between young (under 21) students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1	No	Other data source	2016-17	8.2%	0.075	0.07	0.065	0.055	0.045	Internal data - UK domiciled full-time first degree undergraduate and Nursing students who are young (under 21) from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 5. Our assessment of performance showed a gap between POLAR4 quintile 5 and 1. Further analysis showed the gap to be at its widest for young (under 21) students.