Access and Participation Plan

2019-2020

Date: Revised 20th August 2018

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1. Introduction

The University of Chester has a strong reputation and track record for welcoming students from a wide range of backgrounds[1] and providing students from under-represented groups and disadvantaged backgrounds with a high quality and supportive experience. The University of Chester has a long-standing commitment to widening participation and fair access and will continue to invest in increasing its intake of undergraduate students from under-represented groups and disadvantaged backgrounds. The University works with schools and colleges to improve the achievement of children and young people, and raise awareness of and aspiration to Higher Education (HE). The University is committed to delivering high quality learning and teaching and the provision of 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 approach underpins our evaluation strategy and can be seen in our previous commitments to access, student success and progression in previous Access Agreements. Significant investment has been made in these areas, including financial support, and further investment will be made during 2019/20 to ensure that students from under-represented groups and disadvantaged backgrounds continue to be supported during their time at the University of Chester.

2. Assessment of Current Performance

The University uses information from national datasets (such as UK Performance Indicators of Higher Education) and internal management information and data to monitor and evaluate its current performance against targets and sector and national benchmarks.

Note: All references to low participation neighbourhoods (LPN) use quintiles 1&2 within POLAR3 classification.

2.1. Access to Higher Education

For **young full-time undergraduate entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)**, the University continues to perform above sector and locally adjusted benchmarks (Table 1). In line with the UCAS 2016 end of cycle report, young entrants from POLAR 1&2 groups have increased, continuing the longer term trend for **young full-time undergraduate entrants from LPN**[2]. The University has also performed well against sector and locally adjusted benchmarks for the proportion of **mature full-time undergraduate entrants with no previous HE from LPN** over the last five years. Although absolute mature numbers fluctuate year to year, the University consistently does better than the sector, in the context of a national decline in mature student application numbers for 2016[3].

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[1] http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/HEPI-Policy-Note-6-Benchmarking-widening-participation-FINAL.pdf
[2] https://www.ucas.com/file/86541/download?token=PQnaAI5f
[3] https://www.ucas.com/file/85601/download?token=Nj20Wabi

Table 1: Widening Access UK Performance Indicators of Higher Education for University of Chester produced annually by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Year of entry		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Young full-time UK domicile undergraduate entrants – all (Table 1b)						
From low participation neighbourhoods	**Chester %**	**15.9**	**17.6**	**18.5**	**17.3**	**19.8**
	Benchmark	13.4	13.0	13.4	13.3	13.8
	Locally-adjusted benchmark	16.5	15.9	16.4	16.1	17.2
Mature full-time UK domicile undergraduate entrants – all (Table 2a)						
	Number of FT mature entrants	720	755	735	795	775
	% of FT entrants who are mature	24.7	23.7	22.5	24.5	23.5
With no previous HE from low participation neighbourhoods	**Chester %**	**22.0**	**22.9**	**20.5**	**18.4**	**17.7**
	Benchmark %	15.0	15.3	15.4	13.8	13.5
	Locally-adjusted benchmark %	19.5	20.7	19.9	16.8	16.8

Analysis of the **full-time undergraduate** internal data (Table 2) shows that the proportion of male to female entrants has fluctuated but over the five year period remained relatively static. This represents a good performance, especially when nationally females are significantly more likely to participate in HE than males (HEFCE, 2013)[4]. Although young participation rates are generally lower in the most disadvantaged areas, of these, young white males are significantly less likely to participate (DfBIS, 2015)[5]. Of the University's **young male entrants, those from LPN** stood at 37.1% in 2016-17. This was an increase of 2.1% from the previous year, slowly closing the gap between young white male entrants from LPN and those from other POLAR areas.

The proportion of **black and minority ethnic (BME)** entrants has fluctuated over the past five years. The University saw an increase of 2% of BME entrants for 2016-17, its highest proportion over the last 5 years, which exceeded the national increase of 0.8% reported in the UCAS 2016 end of cycle report[2]. Reaching BME young people is a particular challenge for this University, given the population demographic of its surrounding areas, such as 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 Wales[6].

The University shows an overall increasing trend in the number of entrants with a **declared disability** with a very small dip of 0.6% in 2016-17 compared to the previous year. This supports the national trend of more entrants in HE having a declared/known disability[7]. The number of verified **Care leaver entrants** has increased since 2014-15[8]. The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) in 2017 also found a positive increase in the number of care leavers entering higher education, although participation rates are still substantially lower than for other young people[9].

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[4] http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/2013/201328/HEFCE_2013_28.pdf

[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474273/BIS-15-85-socio-economic-ethnic-and-gender-differences.pdf

[6] http://inside.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/find_out_more/datasets_and_statistics/statistics/census_2011

[7] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he

[8] Verified care leaver data represents students who have produced the appropriate care leaver evidence in order to obtain the Care Leaver Bursary. The University works hard to identify all care leavers.

[9] http://www.nnecl.org/resources/moving-on-up-report?topic=guides-and-toolkits

Table 2: Widening Access performance data for other disadvantaged groups for University of Chester (internal data)

Year of entry		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Full-time undergraduate entrants						
Gender	**Male**	**37.2%**	**33.7%**	**40.1%**	**37.1%**	**37.5%**
	Female	62.8%	66.3%	59.9%	62.9%	62.5%
Young white males from low participation neighbourhoods	**POLAR 1&2**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**35.9%**	**35.0%**	**37.1%**
	Other POLAR groups	n/a	n/a	64.1%	65.0%	62.9%
Ethnicity	**BME**	**8.3%**	**8.5%**	**7.5%**	**7.9%**	**9.9%**
	White	91.3%	90.9%	92.2%	91.3%	89.6%
	Unknown	0.4%	0.6%	0.3%	0.8%	0.5%
Declared disability		8.4%	11.5%	11.9%	13.6%	13.0%
Verified Care Leaver *		n/a	n/a	5	10	10

*Rounded entrant numbers provided rather than percentages due to the statistically insignificant size of these populations (rounded to nearest 5)

The Department for Education (2017) reports 15.4% of nursery and primary school teachers in England as male and 13.5% of all teachers in England, not just primary, as black and minority ethnic (BME)[10]. The University has performed steadily over the last five years for the recruitment of males into **primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes** with only 2015-16 seeing a dip (Table 3). Numbers for BME entrants onto our primary ITE programmes have fluctuated over the last five years; however last year saw our biggest increase.

Table 3: Widening Access performance data for entrants onto primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes for University of Chester (internal data)

Year of entry	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Male entrants	18.2%	18.6%	18.5%	10.2%	18.4%
BME entrants	1.8%	3.9%	2.4%	1.0%	5.8%

Access Summary – Most areas are performing well compared to benchmarks and national figures but more work is still needed to increase BME entrants to the University.

2.2. Retention

For **young undergraduate** entrants in 2015-16 there has been an improvement of 2.1% in non-continuation figures for all full time first degree UK domiciled students and an improvement of 1.8% for **students from LPN** (Table 4). The University's general trend in the proportion of students from LPN continuing or qualifying has improved and the gap has been narrowing overall. However, internal data for the 2016-17 entry cohort does not maintain this improvement and the University performs below sector benchmark. The 2011-12 entry cohort were a particularly strong and atypical cohort, being the year before higher fees were introduced. The proportion of **mature undergraduate** entrants continuing or qualifying has improved over the last five years and in 2015-16 the University performed above sector benchmarks. The proportion of mature students with no previous HE qualification continuing or qualifying at the University has fluctuated over the last five years but showed an improvement for the 2015-16 entrants, also performing above sector benchmarks.

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[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/620825/SFR25_2017_MainText.pdf

Both young students from LPN and mature students are more likely to leave their course of study after one year[11]. The University recognises these national and institutional issues and needs to progress further the steps being taken to address non-continuation rates for all target groups.

Table 4: Non-continuation data (following year of entry) from HESA UK Performance Indicators of HE

Year of entry		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Young full-time first degree UK domicile undergraduate entrants						
Non-continuation % ***(following previous*** ***year of entry)*** *(Table 3a)*	**Chester – no longer in HE**	**6.4**	**9.5**	**9.4**	**9.8**	**7.7**
	Benchmark	6.7	6.8	7.1	7.2	7.2
	% continue or qualify at Chester	**92.3**	**88.3**	**88.7**	**88.2**	**89.7**
	% adjusted sector continue or qualify	91.3	90.8	90.5	90.2	90
From low participation neighbourhoods % *(Table 3b)*	**Chester– no longer in HE**	**9.6**	**11.0**	**14.1**	**12.0**	**10.2**
	Benchmark	8.5	8.0	8.8	9.1	8.3
	% continue or qualify at Chester	**89.3**	**84.2**	**83.4**	**85.7**	**87.8**
	% adjusted sector continue or qualify	89.6	89.8	89.0	88.6	89.2
Mature full-time first degree UK domicile undergraduate entrants						
Non-continuation % ***(following previous*** ***year of entry)*** *(Table 3a)*	**Chester– no longer in HE**	**9.0**	**11.1**	**10.2**	**10.8**	**9.7**
	Benchmark	10.2	10.8	10.3	10.3	10.2
	% continue or qualify at Chester	**90.3**	**87.5**	**87.6**	**86.4**	**88.8**
	% adjusted sector continue or qualify	88.4	87.6	88.1	88.0	88.3
With no previous HE qualification % *(Table 3c)*	**Chester– no longer in HE**	**9.6**	**12.4**	**9.2**	**11.00**	**9.3**
	Benchmark	10.4	11.0	10.5	10.7	10
	% continue or qualify at Chester	**89.3**	**86.0**	**88.5**	**86.0**	**89.2**
	% adjusted sector continue or qualify	88.0	87.2	87.7	87.4	88.4

2.3. Student Success

In addition to the published HESA performance indicators, the University has also conducted its own analysis of disparities in successful outcomes within its student body over the past three academic years from 2014-15 to 2016-17.

Analysis of Level 4 successful outcomes for **students from LPN** compared to students from other areas indicate that the difference in rates between the two groups is increasing negatively (1% per year) since 2014-15 (Table 5). Over the last three years, the gap between successful outcome rates of **female students from LPN** and females from other areas has widened slightly, and the percentage gap between **male students from LPN** and males from other areas has varied but remains negative. The percentage gap between **young white males from LPN** and young white males from other POLAR groups fluctuates, being positive in 2015-16 but negative in 2016-17.

The **difference between successful outcomes of students identifying as BME** and those identifying as white or unknown at Level 4 decreased by 3.8% in 2016-17 compared to the previous year. However, there remains a negative gap and the difference at Level 4 is a particular concern for the University. For **students with a declared disability** the gap in successful outcome rates is closing at level 6; however, the main issue is at level 4 where there remains a widening negative differential in successful

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[11] http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/2017/201720/HEFCE2017_20.pdf

outcomes between those students with disabilities and those without. Verified **Care Leaver** student numbers are very small but over the last three years the overall successful outcome rates of care leavers has improved.

Table 5: Successful outcome data of Level 4 students from disadvantaged groups compared to other groups (internal data)

	Level 4 successful outcome year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Full-time undergraduate entrants				
From low participation neighbourhoods	% gap between POLAR 1&2 and other POLAR groups	-0.9%	-1.9%	-2.9%
Gender by low participation neighbourhoods	% gap between males from POLAR 1&2 and males from other POLAR groups	-3.4%	-1.4%	-3.2%
	% gap between females from POLAR 1&2 and females from other POLAR groups	0.3%	-2.3%	-2.7%
Young white males from low participation neighbourhoods	% gap between young white males from POLAR 1&2 and young white males from other POLAR groups	-5.8%	1.7%	-3.8%
Ethnicity	% gap between BME students and White/Unknown	-8.0%	-12.5%	-8.7%
Declared disability	% gap between those with and without a declared disability	1.3%	-3.5%	-5.5%
*Verified Care Leavers**		0%	20%	50%

* Actual percentage for those who achieved a successful outcome has been provided rather than % gaps due to the statistically insignificant size of these populations

Each year the University performs an analysis of the **sub-sets of our BME student population**, however great caution must be applied when analysing since the numbers are so small and differentials in performance between sub-sets of BME students vary greatly between years, gender, POLAR group and level of study.

The successful outcomes of the BME data sub-sets for both Males and Females compared to White students from both LPN and other POLAR groups gives us a mixed picture (Table 6). There is a possible issue with level 4 BME females compared to white females from other POLAR groups where the recent gap in performance is negatively over 10% different. Level 5 BME males compared to white males from other POLAR groups has had a consistently large negative gap in performance for a number of years, currently the gap is -15.5%.

The best performances for BME students are occurring at level 6 where only BME females compared to white females from other POLAR groups is experiencing a negative gap. Also, performances of male BME students at level 6 appears to be improving (gap is closing or has closed) over the period. The data for all levels shows that the performances of female BME students appears to be worsening.

The successful outcome rates for males in primary ITE programmes have fluctuated over the last five years with no consistent trends. However, 2016-17 shows an increase on the previous year (Table 7).

Table 6: Successful outcome data for sub-sets of the BME population compared to other groups

	Successful outcome year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Full-time undergraduate entrants from low participation neighbourhoods					
Level 4	% gap between BME males from POLAR 1&2 and white males from POLAR 1&2	4.20%	2.70%	-26.20%	-4.30%
	% gap between BME males and white males both from other POLAR groups	-23.90%	-14.70%	-6.60%	-2.60%
	% gap between BME females from POLAR 1&2 and white females from POLAR 1&2	0.80%	4.30%	5.40%	-7.80%
	% gap between BME females and white females both from other POLAR groups	1.80%	-6.50%	-13.80%	-11.10%
Level 5	% gap between BME males from POLAR 1&2 and white males from POLAR 1&2	-11.50%	-8.40%	-2.30%	3.30%
	% gap between BME males and white males both from other POLAR groups	-19.10%	-23.90%	-9.40%	-15.50%
	% gap between BME females from POLAR 1&2 and white females from POLAR 1&2	1.50%	-4.10%	-2.10%	-6.90%
	% gap between BME females and white females both from other POLAR groups	-7.30%	3.60%	-1.30%	-5.10%
Level 6	% gap between BME males from POLAR 1&2 and white males from POLAR 1&2	-10.20%	2.20%	6.10%	2.20%
	% gap between BME males and white males both from other POLAR groups	-7.20%	-21.10%	-5.20%	1.60%
	% gap between BME females from POLAR 1&2 and white females from POLAR 1&2	-5.30%	-2.50%	2.50%	0.30%
	% gap between BME females and white females both from other POLAR groups	-1.00%	-6.80%	-5.70%	-3.40%
All Levels	% gap between BME males from POLAR 1&2 and white males from POLAR 1&2	-4.20%	-1.20%	-13.10%	-2.50%
	% gap between BME males and white males both from other POLAR groups	-18.60%	-19.60%	-6.70%	-4.60%
	% gap between BME females from POLAR 1&2 and white females from POLAR 1&2	-1.20%	-0.40%	1.90%	-5.40%
	% gap between BME females and white females both from other POLAR groups	-2.30%	-2.70%	-5.00%	-6.50%

Table 7: Successful outcomes data for Level 4 males in primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes for University of Chester (internal data)

Level 4 successful outcome year	2012/3	2013/4	2014/5	2015/6	2016/7
Continuation % of males in primary ITE programmes	75.0%	84.2%	73.9%	70.0%	78.9%

Retention and Successful Outcome Summary – Level 4 successful outcome and retention rates for disadvantaged students remain a significant area of concern for the University and we will continue to deliver and monitor actions at an institutional level. Successful outcomes for BME students are worse compared to other characteristics, and the University needs to continue to work to improve in this area of BME, being informed by the sub-set data. Our performance echoes findings that non-continuation rates in the UK have increased from 5.7% to 6.3% between 2012-13 and 2014-15 for young first-time students and that the North West has the second highest level of non-continuation rates for young first-time students in England[12]. Our performance overall remains slightly below benchmarks.

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[12] http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/UPP-final-report.pdf

2.4. Good Honours Degree

Young students obtaining a good honours degree are increasing, although there has been a drop since 2014-15 for mature graduates (Table 8). The percentage of young graduates obtaining a good honours degree has been higher than for mature graduates, which is consistent with HEFCE's (2015) report of an 11% difference for 2013-14 graduates[13].

Comparison of good honours degree outcomes for **students from LPN** with those from other POLAR areas shows the gap closed significantly in 2015-16 but widened in 2016-17. The gap between **males from LPN** and males from other areas has closed over the last three years, with more males from LPN achieving a good honours degree in 2016-17. However, the gap between **females from LPN** and females from other areas achieving a good honours degree has fluctuated, with the highest negative gap in 2016-17. Although the percentage gap between **young white males from LPN** and young white males from other POLAR groups achieving a good honours degree remains negative, the gap has been narrowing over the last three years.

HEFCE (2015, 2017) findings show that the proportion of white graduates achieving a good honours degree is significantly higher than BME graduates[11,13]. For our University, there remains a significant differential negative gap **between students identifying as BME achieving a good honours degree** compared to those identifying as white or unknown although the gap has been closing over the last three years.

Table 8: Good honours degree classifications (1st & 2:i) for disadvantaged groups compared to other groups (internal data)

	Graduating year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Full-time undergraduate entrants					
*Age**	Young (Under 21)	61.7%	65.1%	68.6%	69.0%
	Mature (21 and Over)	67.2%	63.3%	58.0%	59.7%
From low participation neighbourhoods	% gap between POLAR 1&2 and other POLAR groups	-1.2%	-5.9%	-0.5%	-3.5%
Gender by low participation neighbourhoods	% gap between males from POLAR 1&2 and males from other POLAR groups	-3.1%	-8.1%	-1.3%	1.9%
	% gap between females from POLAR 1&2 and females from other POLAR groups	-0.7%	-5.7%	-0.6%	-7.1%
Young white males from low participation neighbourhoods	% gap between young white males from POLAR 1&2 and young white males from other POLAR groups	-	-7.0%	-3.7%	-1.0%
Ethnicity	% gap between BME students and White/Unknown	-15.7%	-20.2%	-14.3%	-13.5%
Ethnicity, gender and low participation neighbourhoods	% gap between BME males from POLAR 1&2 and white males from POLAR 1&2	-15.3%	-28.5%	-18.7%	-28.7%
	% gap between BME males and white males both from other POLAR groups	-21.0%	-26.6%	-34.4%	-26.8%
	% gap between BME females from POLAR 1&2 and white females from POLAR 1&2	4.3%	-8.1%	-6.2%	-16.1%
	% gap between BME females and white females both from other POLAR groups	-23.4%	-26.8%	-25.6%	-19.7%
Declared disability	% gap between those with and without a declared disability	4.6%	4.0%	0.1%	1.4%
*Verified Care Leavers***		n/a	100%	50%	0%

*Actual percentages for young and mature graduates who achieved a good honours degree classification has been provided.
**Actual percentage for those who achieved a good honours degree classification has provided rather than % gaps due to the statistically insignificant size of these populations

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[13] http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/201521/

When looking at **sub-sets of our BME student population**, the largest gaps in degree outcomes occur within the male population. It also worth noting that the gap in outcomes for female BME students compared to white female students from LPN are worsening over time.

Students with a declared disability have been achieving higher proportions of good honours degrees compared to other students, with the positive differential gap fluctuating over the last three years. This does not reflect the HEFCE (2015, 2017) findings that a lower percentage of graduates with declared disabilities achieved good honours degrees than those without a declared disability[11,13].

Verified **Care Leavers** achieving good honours degrees have declined over the last three years, although we cannot make any significant statistical analysis from our extremely small number of care leaver graduates. However, these results remain an area of concern for the University and we will continue to monitor and deliver actions at an institutional level.

> *Good Honour Degree Summary –* Levels of success are improving but gaps remain for most disadvantaged groups, particularly for BME students.

2.5. Progression and Employability

2.5.1. General employment and study

The University has performed well against sector and locally adjusted benchmarks for the proportion of **full time first degree undergraduate students in work and/or study** 6 months after graduating. Rates of **those from LPN** have remained steady over the last four years and are higher than locally-adjusted benchmarks, but it is lower than the overall employment rates (Table 9). This measure for the University does not reflect with HEFCE (2017) findings that general employment and further study outcomes are similar across all students regardless of background[11].

Students **with a declared disability** in work and/or study 6 months after graduating has generally improved or remained consistent over the last four years , albeit at a lower level than for all students.

Table 9: Employment UK Performance Indicators of Higher Education for University of Chester produced annually by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Graduating year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
In Work and/or Study				
Undergraduate full time first degree leavers (Table E1a)	95.2%	95.1%	95.1%	95.3%
Locally-adjusted benchmark %	92.7%	93.1%	94.5%	91.1%
% gap between UoC and locally-adjusted benchmarks	2.5%	2.0%	0.6%	4.2%
From low participation neighbourhood	91.3%	93.6%	91.9%	91.7%
With a declared disability	86.7%	89.8%	88.8%	88.3%

2.5.2. Graduate level employment and study

In 2016-17 the University saw an increased proportion of all **full time first degree undergraduate** students, including **students from LPN,** gaining graduate level employment and/or study 6 months after graduating (Table 10). There was a spike in the number of 2015-16 graduates from LPN gaining graduate level employment/study and the gap closed between them and those from higher participation neighbourhoods. For 2015-16 the University data does not reflect the findings from HEFCE (2017) that these particular students are less likely to be in graduate level employment/study[11].

However, there has been a notable decrease in the number **young white males from LPN** gaining graduate level employment/study over the last three years with a widening negative gap.

Both **young and mature undergraduate** students are demonstrating a steady increase in gaining graduate level employment/study 6 months after graduating, but with more mature graduates in graduate level employment/study compared to young graduates. This is consistent with the DfBIS (2016) findings that younger students (aged 21-30 at the point of graduating) had lower high skilled employment rates than other age categories[14]. Results for **male and female undergraduates** gaining graduate level employment and/or further study have fluctuated. A higher proportion of females are in graduate level employment/study 6 months after graduating than males which is the reverse of the DfBIS (2016) findings that more males are in high skilled employment[14].

The differential gap between students identifying as **BME gaining graduate level employment and/or study** 6 months after graduating and those identifying as white or unknown has closed for 2015-16 graduates, with more BME students than white/unknown in graduate level employment/study) and the best performance overall for the University over the last four years. Students with a **declared disability** gaining graduate level employment and/or study 6 months after graduating have significantly increased by 11.6% since 2012/13 and for 2015/16 disabled students have performed better than those without a disability. The number of **Care Leavers** gaining graduate level employment and/or study 6 months after graduating has remained high over the last two years although we cannot make any significant statistical analysis from our extremely small care leaver population.

Table 10: Graduate level employment/study data for University of Chester (internal data)

Graduating year		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Full time UK domiciled first degree Leavers					
All undergraduate leavers		65.3%	63.1%	64.2%	69.5%
From low participation neighbourhoods		63.3%	63.4%	62.1%	69.3%
Other POLAR neighbourhoods		66.4%	63.0%	65.3%	69.5%
Young (18,19) white males from POLAR 1&2		55.7%	63.2%	56.2%	54.5%
Age	Young (Under 21)	61.6%	58.6%	60.0%	65.2%
	Mature (21 and Over)	79.3%	81.7%	80.9%	84.0%
Gender	Female	66.7%	62.6%	66.3%	72.2%
	Male	62.2%	64.2%	59.9%	63.6%
Ethnicity	BME	65.9%	61.2%	59.5%	72.0%
	White/Unknown	65.3%	63.2%	64.5%	69.2%
Disability	With a declared disability	58.9%	64.0%	61.7%	70.5%
	Without a known disability	66.1%	63.0%	64.5%	69.3%
Verified Care Leavers		n/a	n/a	100%	100%

Progression Summary – For the graduate level employment/study measure the University does well with disabled students and is doing better with BME and mature students. However, more work is still needed for young graduates, young white males from LPN and care leavers.

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[14] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518654/bis-16-232-graduate-labour-market-statistics-2015.pdf

2.6. Financial Support

Financial support was evaluated using the OFFA Toolkit. The data set showed University students who received a bursary in 2010/11 and 2014/15 plus a set of students who did not receive a bursary but were contemporaries to the bursary recipients.

> *Financial Support Summary –* Being in receipt of a bursary or having a low income household may not have shown to be a significant factor in influencing retention rates, degree classifications or employability rates. However, other significant factors have been found from this analysis, such as commuting students/non-campus based students, males and alternative qualifications, and it is these are areas the University will look to address.

3. Ambition and Strategy

The University takes a whole student lifecycle approach to its access, student success and progression activities and has ensured its strategy for 2019/20 is in line with the priorities of the Office for Students (OfS), targeting areas for improvement and closing recruitment and performance gaps of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The University recognises the importance of monitoring and evaluation to inform the development of its access, student success and progression activities and has developed an evaluation strategy allowing it to demonstrate the impact of its activities. The University will continue to examine ways of monitoring cohorts of individuals involved in our pre-application outreach activities throughout their student lifecycle to aid its understanding of the impact of interventions. We aim to reduce gaps in performance between students with differing characteristics and to deliver an inclusive curriculum enabling equality of opportunity for every student to be successful regardless of background.

3.1. Targeted Groups

The University will monitor and evaluate its performance using national datasets such as Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) UK Performance Indicators, UCAS national and provider data, Department for Education (DfS) publications, Graduate Outcomes Survey, Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT), internal data, and the monitoring data collected by our targeted widening participation activities for the following target groups:

- Young students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN);
- Young white males from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN);
- BME students;
- Mature students with no previous HE from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN);
- Disabled students;
- Care leavers.

Each target group will be identified and evaluated at each stage of their lifecycle at the University. In particular, the University will focus on our key underperforming areas and set ambitious goals to drive our work towards continuous improvement in performance for students from these target groups.

3.2. Opportunity Areas

From our Bursary evaluation, we have noted some concerns over the retention of **commuting students.** The University has researched the experiences of its commuting students and is considering

investment in recommendations such as travel bursaries, parking facilities, lockers, student spaces, lecture capture, and staff and student information, as highlighted in wider research[15].

3.3. NCOP

The University is committed to building on its collaborative initiatives and undertakes distinct collaborative work under two **National Collaborative Outreach Programmes (NCOP)**:

- **Higher Horizons + Consortium** delivers activities in line with OfS guidance and reports directly to the OfS. Evaluation is monitored through the East Midlands Widening Participation Research and Evaluation Partnership (EMWPREP) database. Participants' progress into HE is the measure of programme impact. The University has continuously supported the long-term work of this collaboration through three tranches of external funding (Aimhigher, NNCO and NCOP), including years where there was no external funding available.

- **'Shaping Futures'** (the Merseyside consortium) aims to add value locally (25 targeted electoral wards in Liverpool City Region) through two projects alongside its broader activity in targeted regions: 'Through the Eyes of Boys', an intensive outreach project working to raise HE aspirations amongst young males from lower socio-economic groups; and a pilot programme of attendance at local community events to deliver HE aspiration messages.

3.4. Whole Provider Approach

The University works across all areas of the student life cycle to ensure that students from all backgrounds with the ability and desire to undertake higher education are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education. Management oversight of this work is exercised at local level by Heads of Departments and cross University by the APP team (which work with the Chester Students Union). All major reports and findings are fed into the committee structure and directly to the Senior Management Team and the Governing Body of the University. The Governing Body is aware of the work and commitments that were made annually to Office For Fair Access (OFFA) and now to the OfS and has approved the Access and Participation Plan for 2019-20.

The University will ensure that its outreach, collaborative and broader awareness- and aspiration-raising activity is consolidated and continued, whilst also strengthening the focus on attainment-raising, particularly with our sponsored academies. To do this, we shall continue to invest in outreach activities with all age groups, starting at primary school level. The University will continue to work through its established links with schools, colleges, employers and other HEIs in delivering its targeted outreach activity. It will also continue to develop long-term, sustained outreach work with particular targeted groups through collaborative links with schools and colleges in the region. Additionally, we will continue working with Further Education Colleges in the region, notably to strengthen the progression of mature students from Access to HE programmes.

The University is committed to improving the retention and success of all its students and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will continue prioritising investment to sustain and enhance a range of learning and teaching, pastoral and welfare, and employability services and structures to support the retention and success of all our students throughout their life cycle, and to particularly to improve our performance with regard to disadvantaged students.

Evaluation of the University's own Student Retention and Success programme and our involvement with the HEA's What Works? 2 Change programme showed that retention is a complex issue, with multifaceted reasons why students find it difficult to achieve, or decide to leave Higher Education. However, evaluation also highlighted a number of areas of good practice found to have significant

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[15] http://www.lizthomasassociates.co.uk/projects/2018/Commuter%20student%20engagement.pdf

impact. These include study skills development within the academic context; attendance monitoring; developing students' sense of belonging; and the benefits of peer mentoring. We will continue with our ongoing work to embed these good practices in departments across the University.

The University's commitment to developing students' academic skills is set out in the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2017-22 and the associated *Enabling Academic Skills* document. The University has added investment to extend its Study Skills Advisory team, who work closely with the faculty-based Senior University Teaching Fellows (SUTFs) to take forward development work with academic staff.

Student retention, success and achievement for all students, and in particular for under-represented groups and entrants from LPN, will remain a priority and area of focus in 2019/20. Level 4 successful outcome rates remain a significant area of concern for the University and our continuation performance remains slightly below benchmarks. We will continue to prioritise investment in whole-institution approaches to improving retention and student success in order to drive greater change at institutional level. However, we will also continue to support targeted local departmental subject schemes that have been found to make an impact, alongside any appropriate new initiatives.

In terms of employability rates for graduates, where gaps have been identified for specific groups, activity will be supported, targeted and monitored as appropriate. In order to improve the graduate prospects of all students at the University, particularly those in under-represented groups, with disabilities or from LPN, investment in interventions to enhance employability which have been found to particularly benefit to these groups will continue.

3.4.1. Access – ambitions and goals

It is the University's ambition to enhance and consolidate its outreach events and activities by working towards the following goals:

- To increase the number of participants at Primary school outreach activity by 25 each year and deliver 1 extra Primary school outreach event per year;
- To increase the number of participants at Secondary school outreach activity by 25 each year and deliver 1 extra Secondary school outreach event per year;
- To increase the number of participants at FE College outreach activity by 25 participants each year and deliver 1 extra FE College outreach event per year
- To increase the number of collaborative events by 2 events per year;
- To increase the number of mentees from our targeted schools linked to a School Mentor by 10 per year;
- To develop and improve the outcome measures of our raising attainment subject specific support programme at our UCAT schools each year.

These ambitious targets for activities and supportive programmes with our outreach networks aim to inspire children and young people to reach their full potential, work towards raising the attainment of its participants and raise awareness of higher education opportunities. A number of University staff give considerable amounts of time to school and FE College governance, both in the immediate area and elsewhere. Our outreach programme is based on the principle of developing **sustained relationships** with a number of targeted schools and colleges with **low HE participation rates** or large proportions of **disadvantaged groups** which will assist the University in achieving our ambitions and goals. The University also sponsors four secondary academies, two primary academies and one primary free school.

The University performs well against sector and locally adjusted benchmarks for the percentage of entrants from our targeted groups but performs below our intake goals for mature students with no previous HE from LPN and for BME entrants. We undertake outreach activity working closely with local

Further Education Colleges to facilitate improved intake rates for **mature students'** entry. Through the University's participation in the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) Project we have gained greater understanding of our **BME student recruitment** challenges. Our increases in outreach and raising attainment activities will also lead to improved intake rates from other under-represented backgrounds. Overall, the University's ambition is to achieve the following intake goals:

- Yearly increase of 0.1% in UK domiciled, young full-time first degree entrants from LPN;
- Yearly increase of 0.2% in UK domiciled, young full-time undergraduate entrants from LPN;
- Yearly increase of 0.2% in UK domiciled, mature full-time undergraduate entrants with no previous HE from LPN;
- Yearly increase of 0.1% in UK domiciled, BME full-time undergraduate entrants.

To date, most of the University's collaborative activity is being delivered through the NNCO and NCOP funding and only minimal non-funded collaborative activity with HEIs has previously taken place. The University will therefore be working with other HE providers on 'non-NCOP' projects into the delivery and evaluation of outreach activity and engagement of other under-represented groups such as people from Gypsy, Roma and traveller communities, refugees, children of military families and the continued work related to Looked-after children. A new collaborative project to widen access for **pupils with disabilities** will be developed for 2019/20 and we will deliver a series of collaborative events with our Virtual Heads for both Primary and Secondary **students in care.**

With the continuing concern over the lack of male teachers and teachers from BME backgrounds in primary school education, the University will maintain ambitious goals and targets supported by its activities for increased recruitment[16]. The University has a steady rate of **males entrants onto our primary ITE programmes** but **BME entrants onto our primary ITE programmes** have been decreasing over the years. Overall, the University will work towards the following ITE intake goals:

- Yearly increase of 0.2% in UK domiciled, male full-time primary ITE undergraduate entrants.
- Yearly increase of 0.2% in UK domiciled, BME full-time primary ITE undergraduate entrants.

Participation of our male and BME students in discussions to understand recruitment and engagement issues has been low due to the small numbers from these groups on our primary ITE undergraduate programme. However, our Faculty of Education and Children's Studies will continue to engage males through targeted promotional activities, develop University-based taster events for BME students in preparation for University life, and better support the application process for BME applicants.

3.4.2. Success – ambitions and goals

The University's ambition is to improve its absolute and relative performance in non-continuation of students following year of entry. It aims to increase the numbers of young and mature students who continue or qualify at Chester each year by the following:

- Yearly increase of 0.5% of UK domiciled, young full-time first degree entrants continuing or qualifying at Chester;
- Yearly increase of 1% of UK domiciled, young full-time first degree entrants from LPN continuing or qualifying at Chester;
- Yearly increase of 0.1% of UK domiciled, mature full-time first degree entrants continuing or qualifying at Chester;
- Yearly increase of 0.3% of UK domiciled, mature full-time first degree entrants with no previous HE continuing or qualifying at Chester;

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[16] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-numbers-of-men-teaching-in-primary-schools-but-more-still-needed

- Yearly increase of 1% of UK domiciled, males on full-time primary ITE undergraduate entrants continuing or qualifying at Chester.

Although the University has improved its performance against sector and locally adjusted benchmarks for retention, we recognise that overall we are performing below our targets and that there remains further work to be done in the area of retention and student success, particularly to support those students from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Although overall levels of success are improving, there remain significant gaps for the most disadvantaged groups, particularly BME students. Therefore, the University's ambition is to make further progress in successful outcomes and degree classifications for the following targeted groups:

- To increase the successful outcomes of UK domiciled students with a declared disability by 0.5% per year;
- To increase the degree classifications of UK domiciled students identifying as BME by 1% per year.

Our wider strategy for improving student retention and success for males and BME students on primary ITE programmes uses our in depth knowledge of schools and our sustained working relationships with their staff. University Link Tutors work as a triangular support system between students and their placement schools. Our Faculty of Education and Children's Services is able to identify quickly students 'at risk' through data analysis and reports from these schools, in order to deliver bespoke interventions, raise schools' awareness of the students' issues and deliver support.

The University will continue its focus on whole-institutional approaches to improving student retention and success through embedding academic skills (including academic literacy and numeracy) in the curriculum at every level and throughout modules, particularly at level 4. Additionally, other major approaches include attendance monitoring and follow-up, developing students' sense of belonging, and peer mentoring. The University is also taking forward in 2018/19, and will continue to do so, its development work exploring inclusivity within the curriculum and invest more resources into staff training on inclusivity within the curriculum, particularly in relation to ethnicity.

The University recognises the need to provide every student with active support appropriate to their needs and characteristics. Recent developments in our Student Relationship Management (SRM) system allow us to identify 'at risk' students more quickly and efficiently, enabling Personal Academic Tutors and support staff to make timely interventions with students from target groups. The newly developed data sets underpinning our scheme for Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation (CME) of academic programmes highlight differences in outcomes for under-represented and disadvantaged groups. This will enable programme teams to better examine and understand the experiences of students in these groups, particularly in relation to gender, POLAR, ethnicity and disability, and to inform their local enhancement plans for teaching and assessment.

The University will also explore differential degree outcomes through research projects, particularly in relation to BME students and their subsets where negative gaps are most prominent. This research will allow for greater understanding and formulate new goals to work towards closing the gap between the success of its BME students and their white counterparts.

3.4.3. Progression – ambitions and goals

For the graduate level employment and study measures, the University does well with disabled students and is doing better with BME and mature students. However, more work is still needed for young graduates, young white males from LPN and care leavers. The University's ambition is to continually improve their rates of progression to work and/or further study and ensure that the

employability rates of undergraduate students from LPN and those with a declared disability are comparable to other students. Goals relating to participation in employability initiatives are based on numbers of students from widening participation backgrounds:

- To increase by 2% per year the percentage of students from LPN participating in employability initiatives;
- To increase the percentage of students from LPN in work/further study after graduating by 0.2% per year;
- To increase the percentage of students with a declared disability in work/further study after graduating by 0.5% per year.

The University's Careers and Employability team along with its well established Work Based Learning team, work in partnership with a large number of employers both locally and regionally to build on the University's **sustained relationships with employers**. The Work Based Learning programme is long established and **employer collaborations and engagements** are well developed. This aspect of the curriculum in particular benefits those from disadvantaged backgrounds who don't normally have the family background to assist with their career opportunities.

The University's Careers and Employability team will continue to communicate and engage with our target groups regarding the employability fund, and to ensure that their participation levels in our Chester Difference Award and other employability incentives increase, to enhance their employability prospects. The University will introduce in our Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 new goals to improve the progression prospects of young white males from LPN and care leavers.

3.5. Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

Led and coordinated centrally by the APP team, local level monitoring and evaluation is undertaken by our access, student success and progression activity leads. Planned discussions take place to influence, develop and advise on appropriate approaches for activities targeting improvement, reducing gaps in performances between student characteristics and student's success throughout their lifecycle at the University. Reports are collated into a template which structures our monitoring and evaluation. This allows an institutional overview of areas of success and areas for future development to ensure spend is carefully monitored and based on evidence of impact. Evaluation is an iterative process and teams involved in the Access and Participation Plan activity meet regularly to discuss the progress of activities and share good practice to influence practice within the organisation. Updates, progress reviews and financial commitments are reported on six times a year to assess progress is being made towards targets.

Monitoring and evaluation reports, including progress against targets and milestones, are received by the University's Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee, which reports to Senate to oversee and influence practice within the organisation. There is student representation on both these bodies. Overall responsibility for the delivery of the agreement resides with the Senior Management Team.

3.5.1. Access evaluation

The University is a member of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) service which assists Higher Education Institutions in England to target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activity. The University records data about its targeted outreach and participants on the HEAT database. Qualitative and quantitative data is also collected through questionnaires, self-assessments and tutor/school assessments of each activity, for the University to assess the effectiveness and influence of the intervention on individuals' aspirations, behaviour, and knowledge and skills learnt and applied.

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, student, teacher and school feedback to provide a

full report on each activity. HEAT's longitudinal tracking system matches records on individual outreach participants to administrative datasets spanning Key Stage 2 data through to postgraduate study and employment. One measurable, long term outcome will evaluate whether the outreach participants attended higher education, in particular whether they attended the University of Chester.

HEAT membership allows the sharing of costs for this type of outreach participant level monitoring and evaluation, and for collaborative evidence-based evaluation. The membership works together to assess the long-term outcomes through research and development of effective, fit for purpose evaluation practice to inform outreach planning and assess impact. HEAT research aims to provide evidence for its members that engagement in outreach activity has a positive impact on outreach participant outcomes and to assess whether our work is:

- Reaching and engaging disadvantaged and/or under-represented students;
- Delivering a progressive and complementary set of outreach activities to a range of year groups;
- Contributing to increased attainment at KS4 and KS5;
- Increasing the HE entrant and success rates of disadvantaged students.

The impact of outreach activities will also be evaluated against data such as HESA Performance Indicators, UCAS national and provider data and Department for Education (DfS) publications.

The short-term impact of raising attainment activities will be monitored and evaluated by practitioner assessments, tutor and school assessments and self-assessments. Longer term outcomes and impact will be measured and evaluated from data provided with and by schools.

The University's outreach and raising attainment teams meet regularly with the APP team to discuss the progress of the activities, and the financial commitments, and to identify any barriers or concerns that may affect the University's achievement of its ambitions and goals. Chester Student Union (CSU) and their Student Council will be informed of the outcomes of these meetings allowing for commentary and the opportunity to express views and contribute to the development of outreach and raising attainment activities.

3.5.2. Success evaluation

The data sets underpinning the University's Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation (CME) of academic programmes include, from 2017-18, data on **under-represented and disadvantaged groups**. Academic faculties and departments are now required to monitor and comment in their continuous review processes on the entry profile of new entrants and the retention and success data of different groups. The full reports are scrutinised annually by Faculty Boards of Study, with department and faculty overviews reported to the University Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee. Taking a whole-institutional approach to reviewing differences in outcomes for different groups of students will allow academic staff, and the institution, to better understand the experiences of these groups and to inform development of their enhancement plans for teaching, assessment and support.

The continued development of a Student Dashboard to include engagement recording, attendance recording and informational services will encourage academic and support staff to identify, follow up and monitor 'at risk' students more quickly and efficiently. The Study Skills team now records and monitors its activities through our Student Relationship Management (SRM) system and the impact of these on student outcomes, particularly **students from LPN,** will be measured and evaluated. Our support for the success of **students with a declared disability** is also monitored and evaluated through participant feedback to assess the effectiveness and influence of interventions on individuals' behaviour and outcomes.

Internally funded research projects are investigating links between students' engagement, their attendance and their success. The Learning and Teaching Institute, along with faculty staff, will continue with research projects to better understand factors that positive influence the success and outcomes of students with disadvantaged backgrounds, differing prior qualifications, or differing characteristics. The University is developing its approaches to inclusive curriculum, focusing on resources supported by staff development.

The University has also committed additional resources to some departments for the support of student retention and success. For example, Lecturer in Practice Learning (LPL) roles aim to provide enhanced support for 'at risk' pre-registration nurses' experiences of learning in practice and to develop and implement learning, teaching and assessment initiatives which will enable a full evaluation of the impact of the role on the student experience and retention.

Teams working on our retention and success activities provide the APP team with updates, progress reviews and financial commitments at regular points throughout the year, to ensure activities are on track and progress is being made towards targets. Staff also meet regularly with the APP team to discuss and raise any concerns which may impact on the University achieving its ambitions and goals. The University's CSU and their Student Council will also be informed of the outcomes of the updates and progress reviews and be given the opportunity to express the views of the student body and contribute to the development of retention and success activities.

3.5.3. Progression evaluation

Where possible, the University will follow the New World Kirkpatrick Model (2010)[17], and whilst all incentives measure target groups' reactions, many will also measure participants' increased knowledge and skills and how participants have applied these. The long-term impact of the incentive on students' employment and/or further study rates will be measured and evaluated through analysis of the Graduate Outcomes Survey. Evaluation of this will allow the University to develop and propose long-term outcome and impact targets for discussion with OfS for our Access and Participation Plan 2020/21. The University's Careers and Employability team meet regularly with the APP team to discuss the progress of their activities, financial commitments and raise any concerns which may impact on the University achieving its ambitions and goals. The University's CSU and their Student Council will also be informed of the outcomes of these meetings and be given the opportunity to express the views of the student body and contribute to the development of progression activities.

3.5.4. Financial Support Evaluation

The University will also continue to provide financial support in the form of bursary schemes. Evaluation of impact of these schemes, both on recruitment and on students' success post-entry, is ongoing. Financial support is evaluated using the OFFA Toolkit and the data, over time, will show key areas of concern where the University needs to implement further interventions to work towards closing the gaps in student retention and success for under-represented and targeted groups. As well as analysis of withdrawal and attainment data, questionnaires to those in receipt of awards and national research will also take place. The University has a Student Financial Support Working group to which findings from evaluation are reported and where decisions on the future of financial support packages discussed. Evaluation has shown commuting/non-campus based students, male students and students with alternative qualifications are significant areas of concern which the University is currently investigating. CSU are represented on this working group to allow for consultation and evaluation of our financial support and benefits.

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[17] https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/Our-Philosophy/The-New-World-Kirkpatrick-Model

3.6. Student Consultation and Involvement

The Chester Student Union (CSU) engage with and are involved in the planning and delivery of funded activity and will be involved within our in-year discussions to influence and advise on appropriate approaches for activities targeting access, retention, improvement in performances for students from targeted groups and student's success throughout their lifecycle at the University. CSU have participated in discussions over the content of the University's Access and Participation Plan and consulted over the proposed tuition fees and the planned form of intended financial support and benefits. CSU are represented on the University's Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee and their Student Council consists of underrepresented student groups to allow for consultation and the opportunity to express student views about the content of the plan and evaluation of the University's progress against its targets and goals.

Annex 1 – CSU have provided a statement on how they and their representatives have been consulted and involved in the University's access and participation work.

3.7. Equality and Diversity

The University is committed to its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 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 leavers. Whilst many activities delivered under our Access and Participation Plan are targeted at specific groups, the University does take an inclusive approach to those within cohorts, whether they share protected characteristics or not. Targeted outreach work and internal initiatives to promote student success take an integrated approach. Programme level initiatives to promote student success, for example, engage the cohort as a whole so as not to be selective and isolate those from under-represented groups. The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy (2017-22) sets out aims for the development of an inclusive curriculum. Starting with staff and resource development led by the Learning and Teaching Institute, this is intended 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 under-represented groups.

The student population of the University is still 62.5% female and 37.5% male. In recent years the University has diversified its portfolio into Engineering which is subject area predominantly popular with male students and it is hoped that the provision of these STEM courses may help to redress this imbalance. Conversely, the STEM subject areas are providing female only outreach courses to encourage more females to apply responding to nationally low numbers of females studying STEM subjects.

At the University, Student Futures Support offers bespoke support packages to students with protected characteristics. The department offers one-to-one support for mature students (age), those who are pregnant or have care responsibilities (pregnancy and maternity), Young Adult Carers (under 25) who strive to find a balance between study and caring responsibilities and for care leavers or previously Looked-after children. An International Wellbeing Coordinator offers support to international students but also uses their specialist knowledge to support diverse students throughout the student body with religious and race related concerns. There's also a named contact for students who are experiencing issues with their gender or sexuality (covering the protected characteristics of gender, sexuality and gender reassignment). The Disability and Inclusion team also offers disability support, for disabled students who disclose physical impairments, mental health difficulties and specific learning needs aiding them throughout their student journey from applicant to graduate

Students (and staff) are also 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 those who attend 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. This treatment has found expression and implementation in a Single Equality Scheme (2007-2012) and, most recently, in Equality Act objectives (2012 onwards).

In relation to students generally and matters relating to their access and participation in particular, initiatives, strategy and objectives which have been adopted seek to ensure the University complies with and exceeds our institutional responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty 2012 (PSED). These include:

- maintaining an impartial, non-discriminatory and transparent student recruitment process

- embedding further an inclusive approach to learning and teaching throughout the curriculum

- enhancing inclusivity in a learning and teaching environment which meets the needs of diverse groups

- ensuring availability of accessible teaching materials and resources

Responsibility for implementation and performance in respect of these matters is taken by the Equality Forum of Senate which is chaired by a member of Senior Management. Membership includes a diversity advocate from each Faculty and service area of the University. The Forum oversees the University-wide objectives referred to above.   Any student (and staff) equality issues arising from the University's main functions and support and academic departments can be raised and discussed at the Equality Forum. This informs long-term equality projects, such as the Athena SWAN Charter Mark, which the University holds as an Institution and at a Departmental level for the University's largest department. Additionally, this open Forum provides opportunities for consultation with both staff and students on University equality issues.

For Staff the University has a number of initiatives to further raise awareness of and embedded Equality and Diversity practices within the work of the University. 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.
- A very active LGBT+ Staff group who use Stonewall objectives to ensure the University follows best practice in this area.

These initiatives and embedded practices help to create an organisation that celebrates and supports the differences of all individuals who either work or study at the University.

From 2018/19 the University's Equality Forum will consider the University's Access and Participation along with the University's Equality Act objectives. The University monitors 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, which is considered by the Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee; this report is supported by a more detailed paper on diversity and achievement. An annual report covering both the APP and the Single Equality Scheme is made to both the General Purposes committee and HR committee of Governing

Council. Over the past 18 months the Governing Council has been the subject of an external review as a result of which a new committee, the Planning & Resources Committee, has been formed, which has already confirmed that it wishes monitoring and benchmarking of APP matters to form part of its annual business schedule.

4. Access, Student Success and Progression Measures

4.1. Access to Higher Education

4.1.1   Outreach

The University's outreach programme is based on the principle of developing **sustained relationships** with a number of targeted schools and colleges with **low HE participation rates** or large proportions of **disadvantaged students**. Partnerships with schools, academies and colleges have been developed in Cheshire, Warrington, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, Staffordshire and West Midlands. We work in a co-ordinated way building on **targeted engagement** and **collaborative activity** which provides the basis for extending progression pathways to under-represented children and adults.

Our school outreach activity involves working with Year 7 to 13 students and aims to raise awareness, increase aspirations and increase levels of attainment in students particularly from under-represented groups. Our young people and adult outreach activities work closely with local Further Education Colleges to facilitate **mature students'** entry to higher education through visits and Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) events. Examples of outreach activities for 2019-20 include:

- School mentoring programme places student volunteers in local primary and secondary schools to inspire **children and young people from LPN** to reach their full potential. It aims to raise awareness of HE, improve study skills, develop greater self-esteem and motivation for participants. Evaluation has also shown that the transferable skills of School Mentors enhance employability and so this aspect will be monitored and evaluated going forward. This is a well-established programme which exceeds its targets in the number of children and young people supported year on year.

- The University is participating in the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) Project, a research project which aims to gain greater understanding of the University's **BME student recruitment.** The findings will assist us in shaping the content of outreach sessions we deliver, the nature of the programmes we hope to design, and the way we seek to work collaboratively on this challenge with others in the sector.

- Although the University has seen an overall steady rate of **males entrants onto primary ITE programmes**, we perform below target in this area. The numbers of **BME entrants onto primary ITE programmes** has generally been decreasing over the years, despite an increase last year. We will maintain measures to engage males through targeted promotional activities and develop University-based taster events for BME students in preparation for university life. Investigations into offers made against BME applications, shows a lower proportion of offers being made to BME students, which may be due to poor application and interview techniques. The University therefore plans to better support the application process for BME applicants.

- The University will invest in a project to gain further insight into the difficulties **mature students** have faced when entering HE and through their lifecycle at the University, to form suggestions for improvements. The findings will help develop the content of our outreach

sessions, marketing materials, targeted open day events and the provision of support we can offer mature students throughout their lifecycle at the University.

Annex 2 – gives further examples of our targeted outreach activities.

4.1.2. Collaborative work

- Due to small local populations, the University will work in collaboration with other HE providers to evaluate outreach activity and engagement of other under-represented groups such as people from Gypsy, Roma and traveller communities, refugees, children of military families, and to continue the established work relating to Looked-after children.

- To help to widen access for **pupils with disabilities** the University intends to develop Teachers and Advisers events in 2019-20 as a collaborative project specifically targeting Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO) in schools, using the expertise of our Disability Support Officers working alongside our Outreach team.

- We will deliver a series of collaborative events with our Virtual Heads for both Primary and Secondary **students in care** within Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Warrington. The activities are for those in care, plus their carers and advisers, and aim to raise awareness of and promote the benefits of a university education.

4.1.3. Strategic Relationships with Schools – University of Chester Academies Trust (UCAT)

The Government green paper 'Schools that work for everyone', published in September 2016, asks universities to sponsor schools alongside raising attainment projects[18]. The University currently sponsors four secondary academies, two primary academies and one primary free school. A number of University staff are giving considerable amounts of time working to improve school performances within this Multi Academy Trust.

The University Outreach team has developed a progressive programme of activities to raise attainment levels and awareness of HE appropriate for each secondary year group (Year 7, 8 and 9, 10 and 11, 12, and finally 13) within each UCAT school. The programme offers campus visits, staff and student ambassadors led curriculum-based activities, awareness of progression routes, GCSE-linked study activities, UCAS application process advice, finance and student life talks, and preparing young people to live away from home.

4.1.4. Raising Attainment

The Faculty of Education and Children's Services delivers a supportive development programme for teachers within the UCAT schools, whereby teachers delivering five subjects areas attend several subject sessions per year sharing ideas of how to develop their own skills and share good practice, led by an experienced subject practitioner from the University. The programme focuses more on teachers' self-assessment of skills, knowledge and creative ideas guided by the experienced subject practitioner. The aim is to enhance teaching skills to influence children's and young people's attainment levels. Short term impacts will be measured through self-assessments and the longer-term impact will measure student's grades.

Our raising GCSE attainment work within UCAT schools has already led to some success in maths attainment, with the greatest success in the area of decimals and percentages. This has been disseminated at conferences and shared with the wider University of Chester schools partnerships.

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[18] https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/supporting_documents/SCHOOLS%20THAT%20WORK%20FOR%20EVERYONE%20%20FINAL.PDF

Targeted at raising attainment and influencing attitudes of **young white males from LPN**, the Greenpower Racing project works with year 10 male pupils from LPN delivering sustained interventions over two years, including one week work experience in the STEM labs and with companies based at our Thornton Science Park. The project also offers the possibility of paid internships with the Nuffield Foundation if the students complete their A Levels and a potential University of Chester scholarship is under consideration.

Annex 2 – gives further examples of targeted Raising Attainment activities.

4.1.5. Apprenticeship Routes

The University is developing a range of Degree Apprenticeship routes, building on our well-established activity in work-based learning, and we have launched programmes responding to four of the published standards. Our main focus is to develop in areas, such as the public services, where we have a strong reputation and where we already have strong links with employers and professional bodies.

The University also provides a number of programmes which include a Foundation Year. This is provided as an Access measure and students receive a £1000 fee discount in their Foundation Year.

4.2. Success

Although the University is improving its overall performance against sector and locally adjusted benchmarks in terms of retention, we recognise that we are performing below our targets. There remains further work to be done in the area of retention and student success, particularly to support students from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds. For 2019/20, the University will continue to commit investment in a number of cross institutional approaches, including:

- **Attendance and student engagement monitoring and interventions**

Evidence suggests that good attendance and student engagement lead to better student outcomes, particularly for less advantaged students. The University therefore intends to add further investment to improve its embedded mainstream systems for attendance and other student engagement monitoring, and interventions and approaches to provide support for students with poor patterns of engagement[19]. An in-house system based on the University's own app and online reports helps us to produce real-time accessible information for both staff and students. It provides academic staff with the tools to monitor and intervene in a timely manner with students with attendance issues and strengthens our approaches for providing support for these students to be successful at University.

Internal research projects are also underway examining local levels of student engagement and attendance rates. The findings will assist us in shaping the content and nature of the programmes we design and the advice and support that we give to students.

In 2018/19 the University plans to introduce a Student Dashboard which will include engagement recording, attendance recording and other information. Our Student Relationship Management (SRM) system will also include additional features to improve student communication and recording activities beyond attendance, to allow us to identify 'at risk' students more quickly and efficiently.

- **Study skills and resources**

The University will continue to prioritise the embedding of academic skills (including academic literacy and numeracy) in the curriculum at every level, but in particular at level 4 where it is most pressing to improve student retention and success. Each Study and Maths Skills Adviser is aligned to a University

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[19] https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/What_works_final_report.pdf

faculty and engages with the Senior University Teaching Fellow (SUTF) to extend this work. We have now established good coverage in both study and maths skills at all the University's dispersed sites.

In addition to embedding academic skills, the Study Skills Advisory Team continue to maintain their timely responses to individual student requests for one-to-one and individualised email 'feedforward' support, and to develop and enhance their seminars and online resource bank of support activities for both staff and students. Students will continue to receive free texts relating to their programme of study in their first year, including a study skills book.

The team's monitoring of its activities shows that currently these reach proportionately more **young students from LPN** than those in the other POLAR quintiles, particularly at level 4. The impact on student outcomes will be measured and evaluated.

- **Disability support**

To address the reduction in funding for **students with a declared disability** through Disabled Students' Allowance, the University provides support through our Assistive Technologist, who has a remit to work with and support students with technology and learning resource needs. Results showed a correlation with the one-to-one sessions and successful outcome of the student and an on-line survey will be developed to collect direct feedback from students regarding the impact of these sessions. A range of assistive technology, software and library services are available for all students with a declared disability. In future we aim to widen the selection of technology available to students.

Disability Support Officers provide support to students with a declared disability, including drop-in sessions and groups to support transition and integration into HE, such as those for students with a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Condition, and for other disabled students. The University offers an **Early Arrival day** in which students with social and communication difficulties and other disabled students are given the opportunity to arrive a day earlier than other first year students, in order to reduce anxiety and orientate around campus and the city. 90% of those who commented on the Early Arrival day in 2016-17 reported a decrease in anxiety levels and gave positive feedback. The evaluation showed 93% of the students with a declared disability who attended the day successfully completed the year, compared to 91% of those with a declared disability who did not attend.

Students with a Specific Learning Difference (SpLD) will continue to be targeted pre-entry to raise awareness of the self-help resources available at the University and this will be followed up with targeted support aimed at building their academic confidence and improving their outcomes.

- **Mental Health First Aid**

The provision of mental health training is part of the University's approach to creating "a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health, wellbeing and sustainability of its community (staff and students) and enables people to achieve their full potential".[20]

- **Peer mentoring**

Peer mentoring helps to integrate and engage new level 4 students into the University, particularly targeting those subject areas where there has been historically lower retention of students from low participation neighbourhoods. Following an evaluation of the programme, this scheme will now include level 5 and 6 to support students across the whole student-lifecycle. The programme aims to increase the sense of belonging, support students with successful progression to the next level, increase retention rates, raise confidence, increase students' independent learning, and develop Peer

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[20] http://www.healthyuniversities.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/HU-Final_Report-FINAL_v21.pdf

Mentors' transferable and employability skills. A Peer Mentor will also be offered during Induction Week to those with Autism Spectrum Condition. We are also developing a **Commuting Induction Activity** and **Mature Student Induction Event** for new commuting and mature students.

- **Student belonging, feedback and representation**

The importance of students' sense of belonging and the student voice in developing retention initiatives and enhancing academic provision was recognised from earlier department-led retention work. The University will continue to develop its mechanisms for gathering and using student feedback through surveys of students at each level. Our Student Engagement Officer will continue to facilitate the collation and triangulation of student feedback from a range of sources to ensure that all students, including those from less advantaged backgrounds, understand that their views form an important part of the University's enhancement work at all levels. The Student Academic Representatives (StARs) system continues to allow engagement and feedback from students on all programmes.

- **Residential Life**

Residential Life has been introduced as a new approach to providing support for students in University Accommodation. The team provide 'flat chats' on a range of topics such as welfare, employment, community engagement and environmental initiatives. The aims of this initiative are to improve retention, and to encourage personal resilience and responsibility, citizenship and employability.

- **Care leavers and young carers**

We offer specific support packages for care leavers, including a named contact to support the student with all aspects of university life, budgeting sessions, accommodation all year round, assistance when applying for financial support, support with childcare and support into employment or further study. A dedicated person also supports young adult carers, as we recognise that it can be difficult balancing university life with responsibilities at home. We promote a supportive social media page called 'You Care, We Care: Carers Network' providing national and local sources of information, help and guidance.

- **Department and subject initiatives**

As an example of subject-specific investment, the University is committing additional resource to support pre-registration nurses during studies and on placements. The Faculty of Health and Social Care has made six appointments of the new role of **Lecturer in Practice Learning (LPL)** in recognition of the added support required by many nursing students, particularly the high proportion from low participation backgrounds, during the practice element of the programme. This is in response to the small but growing evidence demonstrating the significant impact of the first placement on the student nurse and the potential impact this can have on attrition from the programme[21]. An accompanying evaluation project will review the impact of the role on both student experience and retention, examining LPL feedback, the student feedback, retention data and student demographic trends.

- **Use of data from Under-represented groups**

The newly-developed data sets underpinning its Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation (CME) of academic programmes, now including data on under-represented groups, will enable academic staff to review differences in outcomes for different groups, particularly in relation to gender, POLAR, ethnicity and disability, in order to better understand their experiences and develop their enhancement plans for teaching and support.

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[21] http://www.nurseeducationtoday.com/article/S0260-6917(12)00174-8/pdf

- **Research projects**

Building on existing research, the Learning and Teaching Institute and other faculty staff will continue with projects researching success rates, attendance levels, assignment submissions, retention and degree classifications of **LPN students, students with non-A Level entry qualifications, commuting students, mature students, young males from low participation neighbourhoods** and **BME students and their subsets.** We have identified a priority to develop more inclusive curriculum, investing in resources supported by staff development.

4.3. Progression and Employability

The University's Careers and Employability team works hard at communicating and engaging with our target groups to promote their increased participation in the programmes offered at enhancing employability. The percentage of students from LPN participating in our Chester Difference Award (CDA) has been steady and the University performed above its targets until 2016/17. It is anticipated the University will invest the following programmes in 2019/20:

- **Chester Difference Award (CDA)** – encourages students to get involved in additional training events and activities that enhance their employability. As students from low participation backgrounds are less likely to engage with career incentives[22], it is important for the University to explore more ways to engage **students from LPN**.
- **Chester Employability Fund (CEF)** – exclusively targets full time, undergraduate students who are either in receipt of a bursary, a **care leaver** or a **young carer,** and those students with a **declared disability** at the point of enrolment. The fund provides students with funding to support engagement with activities to improve their employability prospects and confidence.
- **Chester Internship Programme (CIP)** – offers valuable summer internships to all students.
- **ASK (Ask questions, Shape ideas, Kick-start careers)** – large scale events to create solid relationships between students, Careers staff, employers and academic staff.
- **Graduate Head Start (GHS**) – prepares students for graduate level employment through face-to-face and online training and further guidance appointments.
- **Student Collaborators** – employing Student Collaborators to provide peer-to-peer support.
- **Venture Programme** – extra-curricular support to prepare students for business start-up, encouraging students to consider freelancing and self-employment as graduate career paths.
- **Warrington Discretionary Fund (WDF)** – targets inter-departmental job opportunities for students at our Warrington campus. We also aim to expand this to our Kingsway campus students, to provide part-time work opportunities directly linked to their future careers.

The University's previous Work Shadowing programme developing **sustained relationships with employers** from the North West was restructured and re-branded in 2017/18 to our new ASK (Ask questions, Shape ideas, Kick-start careers) programme. ASK consists of larger scale Q&A panel events encompassing employers within the North West and our students either on-campus or off-campus. These relationships with employers benefits our students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and allows for increased networking opportunities throughout their time at University.

In addition to our Careers and Employability team, 'Enhancing Your Employability through Work Based Learning' is our flagship 7-week employer-based experiential module which has formed a successful part of the University's undergraduate curriculum for over 20 years. A large part of the success is down to the many ongoing **employer collaborations and engagements** the University has developed with a diverse range of large and small 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

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[22] https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/esect_wideningparticipation.pdf

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.

4.4. Financial Support

Targeted financial support bursaries will continue to be offered to all University of Chester students including nursing students. These are offered to minimise the likelihood of students leaving or failing academically for financial reasons. In particular, the 'in kind' element will be used to reinforce student retention and success activities. Full details of all of our bursaries are available on the University's website.

Consultation with student representatives showed that they were in favour of maintaining these awards for those from the lowest income households. The University will therefore maintain its bursary package and continue to monitor and evaluate their impact on retention and student success.

Scheme 1 – Chester Bursary – An award to the value of £1,500 in cash[23] will be given to any eligible new full-time undergraduate degree entrant paying a tuition fee of over £6,000, who has a declared household residual income of £25,000 or less. This will comprise of £500 cash in each year of the programme.

Scheme 2 – Chester Bursary for Part-time students – This bursary has a total value of £1,500 in cash which will be applied on a pro-rata basis based on the credit intensity at each level of study. Eligibility will be based on new part-time undergraduate degree entrants paying a tuition fee of at least £7000 (full time equivalent), enrolled for a minimum of 40 credits at the start of level 4, and with a declared household residual income of £25,000 or less. Exclusions to eligibility apply and full details are posted on the University's website.

Scheme 3 – Care Leavers Bursary – The University also provides a Care Leavers Bursary Scheme, which will be available to verified Care Leavers on a first come, first served basis. This opportunity is available to all new eligible undergraduate students starting their programme of study in 2019/20 (including students at level 3). The scheme will normally provide Care Leavers with £6000 of benefits over the three years of their programme (or up to a maximum of £8000 if the award is made from the Foundation Year of the programme).

Scheme 4 – Young Adult Carers Bursary – In partnership with organisations such as Cheshire Young Carers (CYC) the University has developed a targeted financial support package for young carers. This will be in the form of a bursary package of £1500 per year, totalling £4,500 over three years of study (or up to a maximum of £6000 if the award is made from the Foundation Year of the programme). This bursary is available in addition to any other bursary the student is eligible for as the University recognises the additional financial pressures that young carers face.

Foundation Year – All students (home and EU) on our extended degree programmes including a level 3 foundation year, will receive a £1000 fee waiver in the first, foundation year of study.

Continuing students – Entrants prior to 2019/20 will continue to receive their entitlements as set out in our previous years' Access Agreements.

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[23] Where bursaries are stated to contain a cash element, this is likely to be made up of a cash award in the most part with an element of 'in kind' benefit (Aspire Credit).

All applicants who receive offers to undergraduate degree programmes at the University will be sent full details of their appropriate financial support packages. We offer financial support packages to students on low incomes, care leavers and young adult careers.

Bursary payments are automatically made at 3 points within the year and triggered when students enrol/complete registration and are confirmed as attending the University. The 'in kind' element (1st payment point) will be used to reinforce student retention and success activities through offering students credit to put towards:

- Sports and gym memberships to enhance wellbeing, boost health and self-esteem, and an opportunity to meet like-minded people;
- University's on-site bookshop to help elevate the costs of materials and books needed to successfully complete their course;
- Printing credits to help elevate printing costs throughout students time at University.

The additional cash payments (2nd and 3rd payment points) will help alleviate all the additional costs students face throughout their lifecycle at University, such as paying rent, utility bills, travel expenses, which may impact on students ability to successfully complete their course.

Financial Assistance Fund – This is a financial hardship fund aimed at supporting students from low incomes and gives priority to students with children; mature students; students from low income families; disabled students; students who have entered higher education from care etc. There is an application and assessment process for this fund.

5.   Investment

In 2019/20, the University of Chester plans to invest **21.4%** of its Higher Fee Income in financial support, access, success and progression measures, consisting of the following:

- Access activity at approximately £1.1 million pounds
- Student success expenditure at approximately £2.1 million pounds
- Progression expenditure at approximately £273,000
- Financial support at approximately £1.9 million pounds

In addition to the Higher Fee Income that will be spent on access and participation measures, a further £3.6 million pounds will be spent in the following areas:

- Access – approximately £755,000
- Success – approximately £2.8 million pounds
- Progression – approximately £86,000

Of the Higher Fee Income this represents **4.4%** on **access activities**, which is a slightly higher proportion than in the 2018/19 Access Agreement. Most target groups are performing well compared to benchmarks and national figures. However, the University recognises the need to invest more in increasing BME entrants and working towards increasing mature entrants with no previous HE from low participation neighbourhoods as our performances over the years have been below or no progress made against our access baseline targets. Additionally, this level of investment will fund the work the University is committed to in Raising Attainment in Schools.

Our Level 4 successful outcome and retention rates for disadvantaged students remain a significant area of concern for the University and gaps remain for most disadvantaged groups, particularly for

good honour degree outcomes of BME students. In 2019/20 our largest area of investment will be in the area of **student success** to work towards closing the gap and hitting or exceeding our performance targets. Our investment in student success will be **8.3%** of HFI which is a higher proportion than previously and in absolute terms is in line with our commitment in 2018/19. This investment will help to develop and embed our success activities, such as attendance monitoring and study skills activities, throughout the student's life cycle at the University.

The investment in **progression** activities will represent **1.1%** of higher fee income which is an increase on the commitments made in 2018/19. Although we do better for some disadvantaged students, particularly for disabled, BME and mature students, on gaining employment or further study after graduating, more targeted investment is needed for young graduates, young white males from low participation neighbourhoods and care leavers. This investment will help us to work towards closing the gaps and hitting or exceeding our success performance targets.

Our investment in **financial support** will represent **7.6%** of higher fee income. The University will continue to provide a Student Support Package made up of cash or 'in kind', with equal amounts across each year of study. We have responded to student feedback on the composition of the bursaries and the bursaries are well understood by both prospective students and current students.

In 2022/23, investment in access, success and progression measures is planned to be at **21.9%** of additional fee income. University of Chester has a relatively equal proportion of students from low participation neighbourhoods to students from other, higher participation backgrounds[1]. The proposed investment will ensure progress is made towards our Access and Participation Plan targets in the coming years.

6.   Provision of Information to Students

The University provides information on courses and tuition fees (including aggregate cost), our financial support schemes, and other information on student finance and accommodation via a multitude of media. All tuition fees are published at individual programme level and the current section on 'Finance' is regularly updated on our website.

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, Applicant Days and outreach activities, all of which are targeted at prospective students, their families and teachers/advisers in schools and colleges. Information is also included in offer letters and timely email communications 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. Information about tuition fees and financial support is also be provided to UCAS as soon as this is possible.

Existing students will benefit from publications and direct advice provided by the University's Student Futures Support Team, in particular information relating to the support offered for students declaring a disability and for care leavers. We also provide information of particular benefit to disadvantaged students throughout their life cycle at the University on, for example, receiving a peer mentor, study skills sessions, Student Union activities and events, bursary support, hardship fund opportunities, and Carers and Employability funding opportunities.

The University's Access and Participation Plan promoting our commitment to fair access to higher education and support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds throughout their lifecycle is also published on the University's website and Chester Students' Union website for prospective and existing students

Annex 1 – Student Consultation and Involvement

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 proposed tuition fees and the planned form of intended financial support and benefits, and have given feedback regarding the preferred options for how the 'in kind' element (Aspire Credit) of the financial support packages can best support and enhance the student experience.

Monitoring and evaluation reports, including progress against targets and milestones, are received by the University's Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee. A CSU representative sits on this committee to allow for consultation and the opportunity to express student views about the content of the plan and evaluation of the University's progress against its targets and goals.

CSU will be involved within the in-year discussions that take place to influence and advise on appropriate approaches for activities targeting access, retention, improvement in performance for students from targeted groups and students' success throughout their lifecycle at the University.

CSU also delivers the Student Academic Representation (StARs) system allowing for consultation and engagement from students on all programmes at all levels. StARs are elected by the student body on their programmes to act as a link between students and academic staff. StARs undergo a number of training modules and sessions for this role and attend termly Staff Student Liaison Meetings where they are able to provide student feedback on academic issues specific to their programme.

Our Elected 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 Student Officers have involvement and representation on implementation groups (such as Attendance Monitoring User Group, Engagement Analytics Steering Group etc.) and take an active role in initiatives to promote student engagement and success at the University.

Our Student Council consists of members of 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 will be given the opportunity to express their views and contribute to the development of the plan and the monitoring and evaluation of the University's progress against its targets and goals, where these will particularly affect these underrepresented student groups.

The University has consulted and engaged with ourselves at Chester Students' Union (CSU) and we have advised on the student perspective. We can confirm that we were involved in the review of monitoring data and the formation of the Access and Participation Plan 2019/20.

We have asked for future consultations to involve consideration of how the Students' Union can help the University to meet their objectives around recruitment, retention, success and progression and look forward to taking an even fuller part in the process going forward.

Sophie Bell
VP Education

Annex 2 – Summary of Additional Outreach and Raising Attainment Activities

- **Performing Pathways** offers a range of interactive bespoke workshops to targeted schools. These are delivered by Performing Arts graduates and aim to teach pupils about the various routes into further and higher education.

- **Outreach activities in STEM** include; careers fairs, talks, working with STEM Ambassadors (STEM undergraduate students), course talks, practical sessions, RAF experience days, and mock interviews. These activities are to raise awareness of HE and to give an insight into how higher education can lead to specific job roles.

- **General subject specific 'taster' events** via University-based residential events. For example, in 2017-18 our Theology and Religious Studies Department plan to deliver a free 24 hour residential visit for disadvantaged pupils giving them the opportunity to stay in the University's accommodation and attend lectures and workshops designed to give potential students a taster of university life, along with help to complete UCAS applications, personal statements, exam tips and financial advice on student fees.

- **Primary Schools** outreach activity providing transitional experiences between primary and secondary schools. For example, the idea of university through a range of fun and interactive activities, including campus and school visits, the use of drama to raise awareness of university, mini lectures; all culminating in a mini 'graduation' day.

- The **Future First Programme** will aim to identify cohorts of students from across our target schools (including Looked-after children) to engage in approximately 6 interventions per year between Y10 and Y11. The programme will also form an important element of our attempted longitudinal activity with particular cohorts of target students, based within target schools.

- The **LIFE Programme** builds on an activity previously delivered in the Warrington region as a partnership between local schools and employers. The project will include a series of 'off-site' events delivered with multiple schools within local business to showcase employability skills, while also identifying the benefits of educational attainment in line with career aspirations.

- **Targeted interventions at key transition points** in a students' learning (e.g. Level 2 and Level 3 options) are undertaken at parents evening events and careers fairs. We will also continue to provide information and awareness raising activities for people who act as key influencers on our target populations (for example, parents; teachers; careers/education guidance staff and careers advisers).

- The Faculty also delivers **TeachMeet**, a supportive programme facilitated twice yearly and also offering CPD sessions for schools. The sessions focus on themes and act as a place to share good ideas from across the curriculum and across primary and secondary settings. The aim is to enhance teacher's skills to influence children's and young people's attainment levels.

- The STEM team at our Thornton Science Park are the custodian of a Large Outreach Careers Maths Kit (LOCMK) which consists of a series of practical activities to support undergraduate teaching and learning as well as Maths workshops in secondary schools provided by postgraduate maths students to help raise attainment levels.

* course type not listed.

Full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants.		
Please enter inflationary statement in the free text box below.		
The University will not be applying any inflationary increases for students entering in 2019/20 in their subsequent years of study.		
Full-time course type:	**Additional information:**	**Course fee:**
First degree		£9,250
First degree	Nursing and Midwifery Programmes	£9,250
Foundation degree		£7,850
Foundation year / Year 0	All Foundation Years are subject to £1000 fee waiver	£9,250
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT	PGCE Core	£9,250
Postgraduate ITT	PGCE Schools Direct Route	£9,250
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		£1,385
Erasmus and overseas study years		£1,385
Other		*
Franchise full-time course type:	**Additional information:**	**Course fee:**
First degree	The Hammond 10002869	£9,250
Foundation degree	The Light Project 10032260	£6,250
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
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	£6,210
Foundation degree		£6,935
Foundation degree	- Work Based and Integrative Studies	£6,935
Foundation degree	The Light Project 10032260 -	£6,250
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

								Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					
Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
T16a_01	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	**HESA T1a** - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	To maintain the proportion of entrants against sector and locally adjusted benchmarks - %	No	2013-14	17.5	17.9	18	18.1			
T16a_02	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	**HESA T1b** - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, undergraduate entrants)	To maintain the proportion of entrants against sector and locally adjusted benchmarks - %	No	2013-14	17.6	18.2	18.4	_			
T16a_03	Access	Mature	**HESA T2a** - (Mature, full-time, all undergraduate entrants)	To increase the proportion of entrants with no previous HE and from low particpation neighbourhoods against sector and locally adjusted benchmarks - %	No	2013-14	23.2	23.8	24	_			
T16a_04	Access	Ethnicity	**Other statistic** - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	To increase the proportion of UK domiciled entrants from BME backgrounds - %	No	2013-14	8.5	8.9	9	_			
T16a_05	Access	Gender	**Other statistic** - Gender (please give details in the next column)	To increase the proportion of male entrants to UG Primary ITE programmes - %	No	2013-14	18.5	22	22	_			
T16a_06	Student success	Gender	**Other statistic** - Gender (please give details in the next column)	To increase the propotion of male level 4 UG Primary ITE students progressing to the next level of study - %	No	2013-14	82	86	88	_			
T16a_07	Access	Ethnicity	**Other statistic** - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	To increase the proportion of BME entrants to UG Primary ITE programmes - %	No	2013-14	3.7	6	6.5	_			

Table 8a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

T16a_08	Student success	Other (please give details in Description column)	**HESA T3a** - No longer in HE after 1 year (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	To increase the % of students continuing or qualifying at the University	No	2013-14	88.3	90.5	91	_			
T16a_09	Student success	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	**HESA T3b** - No longer in HE after 1 year & in low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	To increase the % of students continuing or qualifying at the University	No	2013-14	84.2	89	90	_			
T16a_10	Student success	Mature	**HESA T3a** - No longer in HE after 1 year (Mature, full-time, first degree entrants)	To increase the % of students continuing or qualifying at the University	No	2013-14	87.5	87.9	88	_			
T16a_11	Student success	Mature	**HESA T3c** - No longer in HE after 1 year & no previous HE qualification (Mature, full-time, first degree entrants)	To increase the % of students continuing or qualifying at the University	No	2013-14	86	87.2	87.5	_			
T16a_12	Progression	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	**Other statistic** - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	To increase the % of students progressing to work and/or further study from low partipation neighbourhoods	No	2013-14	91.2	91.5	91.6	_			
T16a_13	Progression	Disabled	**Other statistic** - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	To increase the % of students progressing to work and/or further study with a declared disability	No	2013-14	85.7	87.5	88	_			
T16a_14	Access	White economically disadvantaged males	**Other statistic** - Socio-economic (please give details in the next column)	To increase the proportion of young white male entrants from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds	No	2015-16	35	35.4	35.6	_			
T16a_15	Student success	Ethnicity	**Other statistic** - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	To increase good degree outcomes (1st & 2i) of BME (non white) students	No	2015-16	54.7	58	59	_			
T16a_16	Student success	Disabled	**Other statistic** - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	To increase the success outcomes of students with a disability	No	2015-16	83.1	84	84.5	_			

Table 8b - Other milestones and targets.													
Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16b_01	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of mentees participating in outreach mentoring programmes	No	2013-14	224	240	250	_			
T16b_02	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of events and participants benefitting from Primary outreach activity - events/participants	No	2013-14	22/1494*	25/1500	25/1500	_			
T16b_03	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of events and participants benefitting from Secondary outreach activity - events/participants	No	2013-14	29/1182	32/1280	32/1280	_			
T16b_04	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of events and participants benefitting from FE College outreach activity - events/participants	No	2013-14	14/438	16/496	16/496	_			
T16b_05	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Number of events run in collaboration with Outreach HEI networks	Yes	2013-14	4	10	10	_			
T16b_06	Progression	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	Other (please give details in Description column)	Proportion of participants in Employability initiatives from a low participation background	No	2013-14	31	38	40	_			
T16b_07	Access	Attainment raising	Other (please give details in Description column)	Raise Attainment in schools	Yes	2018-19	n/a	To develop appropriate outcome measures	To improve on the outcome measures				