

University of Staffordshire

Access and Participation Plan variation for 2025-26 to 2027-28

Introduction and strategic aim

University of Staffordshire is a teaching-intensive and research-inspired University with a focus on delivering an excellent academic experience while also ensuring the development of relevant employability and entrepreneurial skills. This focus enables us to deliver a dynamic, enriching and future-focused student experience, which equips all our learners with the opportunities to make significant contributions to society and the economy.

We are a successful modern University with the foundational purpose of providing higher and applied learning opportunities relevant to our region and beyond. We support the transformation of our learners, our people and the local communities within which we live, work and engage. We are proud that our excellence in applied teaching and learning can be traced back to 1914, when we were founded as the Central School of Science and Technology, with a mission to support regional industries and the needs of society. The centrality of that mission continues to inform our Strategic Plan, articulated as *Catalyst for Change* (Figure 1). This commitment is shaped by and shapes our ‘place’ and drives us to ensure transformational opportunities and outcomes through our academic expertise. This commitment continues to be the dynamic, which drives our ambition for continued learning and teaching excellence.

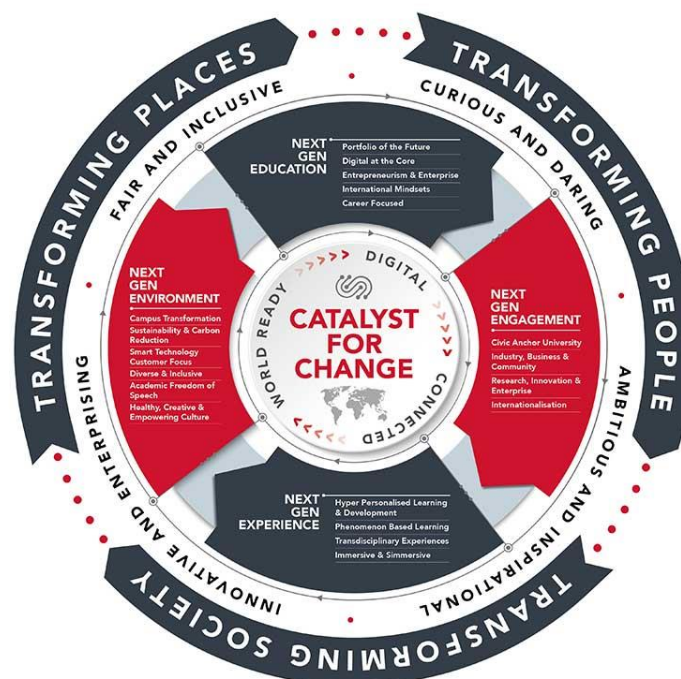


Figure 1. Catalyst for Change

The Strategic Plan focuses on four interdependent priorities: Next Generation Education, Next Generation Experience, Next Generation Engagement, Next Generation Environment. This focus allows us to deliver a student academic experience which reflect our context and the skills needed for the future workforce. Digital innovation is a feature of our pedagogical approaches and it

furtheres our ability to personalise learning through digital coaching and tailored academic interventions. Our embedded employability, work-integrated learning, enterprise skills and business engagement equip all our learners with the knowledge, skills, behaviours and experience to meet directly the needs of the emerging sectors and roles.

Our academic strategy is the framework through which we deliver our Strategic Plan to ensure the academic benefits and outcomes of our students' experience. Our academic strategy is delivered through a consistent educational philosophy across all our courses. It was developed to:

- meet our commitments for access and participation to increase equality of opportunity.
- develop a modern portfolio which meets the needs of the regional and national economy and global civil society.
- ensure the success of students from diverse backgrounds.
- facilitate an inclusive research culture and extend our research base (including enterprise, innovation, and impact) through internationally renowned research centres.
- embed research inspired education at the heart of our curriculum.
- co-create pioneering approaches to pedagogy and digital infrastructure with our students, trainees and apprentices.
- recruit, develop and retain high quality staff, reflecting the region we serve.
- develop sector leading approaches for pedagogic evaluation to raise the standards of evidence for what works.

We serve a diverse range of learners at all levels of study including undergraduate, postgraduate as well as those enrolled on other types of flexible and modular learning provision. The university delivers qualifications at all levels of Higher Education, and in the academic year 2022/23, over 25,700 students were taught directly by University of Staffordshire or by one of our collaborative academic partners within the UK. Figure 2 shows our shape and size by study mode over the previous four academic years. The largest proportion of our delivery is for full-time (FT) undergraduate (UG), but we also have large cohorts of learners on our part-time (PT) UG, FT postgraduate, Apprenticeship and partner provision.

Risks to equality of opportunity

In this section we outline the key risks to equality of opportunity that our plan will address. These risks to equality of opportunity were identified through an assessment of performance (Annex A) of student outcomes within the student lifecycle including access, completion, good degree attainment and progression to graduate employment.

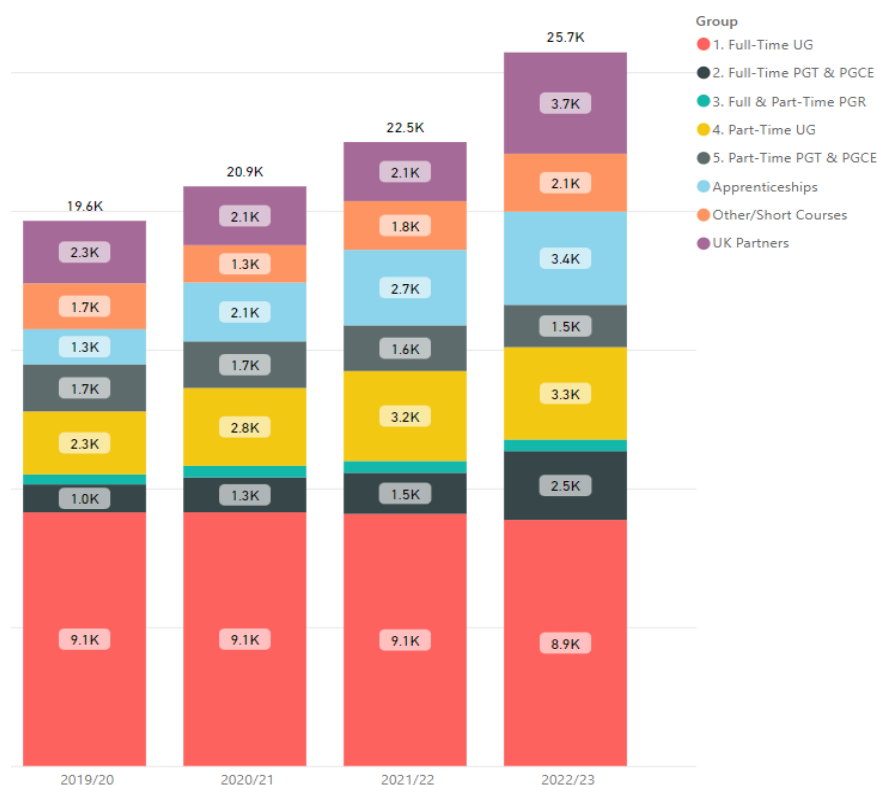


Figure 2. Shape and size of the university

Access

In Stoke-on-Trent approximately half of (53%) disadvantaged 16–18-year-old 2019 school leavers continued their education (DfE, 2021). Over 30% of neighbourhoods in Stoke-on-Trent belong to the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally. The communities we serve face poverty and hardship which is currently exacerbated by increased cost-of-living (Etherington, et al. 2022). Internally we have calculated that approximately 22.7% of Stoke-on-Trent 18-year-olds entered higher education in 2021/22 and that 28.4% of Staffordshire 18-year-olds entered higher education in 2022/23.

As part of our assessment of performance we have analysed the access rates across different student characteristics and found variation between characteristics. As a result we have identified the following indications of risk based on the 2023 Office for Students' APP data release:

- importance of maintaining a free school (FSM) access rate of 19.5% which is higher than the sector average of 18.8%.
- Low access rates for students with racialised ethnicities, particularly students from Black (3.8%) and Asian (6.9%) backgrounds.

Widening access to higher education remains key to supporting the life chances of young people in our region. The Equality of Opportunities Risk Register (EORR)¹ was developed by the Office for Students (OfS) to support and focus higher education providers understanding of the key risks of equality of opportunity faced by students. Through our assessment of performance, we have

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/equality-of-opportunity-risk-register/>

identified four areas of risk from the EORR that may impact equality of opportunity to access higher education for students. They are:

Risk 1. Knowledge and skills. Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required to be accepted onto higher education courses that match their expectations and ambitions.

Risk 2. Information and guidance. Students may not have equal opportunity to receive the information and guidance that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, or to make informed choice about their higher education options.

Risk 3. Perception of higher education. Students may not feel able to apply to higher education, or certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified.

Risk 4. Application success rates. Students may not be accepted to a higher education course or may not be accepted to certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified.

Post-entry

Higher education providers use quality standards, regulation and the provision of an excellent academic experience to ensure successful outcomes for students. However, across the sector there are differences in positive outcomes for different types of students. These unexplained differences may represent a risk to equality of opportunity. Our institutional assessment of performance identified the following indications of risk post-entry based on the 2023 Office for Students' APP data release:

- 5.9pp four-year FT completion gap between students from Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Q1 and Q5.
- 5.6 pp four-year aggregate FT completion gap between Asian and white students.
- 29.5 pp four-year aggregate FT attainment gap between Black and white students.
- 17.6 pp four-year aggregate FT attainment gap between Asian students and white students.
- 6.3pp four-year aggregate FT attainment gap between students with declared Cognitive or Learning disabilities and those without.
- 8.7pp four-year aggregate FT attainment gap between students with declared Social or Communication Impairment disabilities and those without.

Our persistent indications for risk were observed for FT students. Using the EORR, we identified six risks to equality of opportunity which may be linked to our indications of risk outlined above. They are:

Risk 6. Insufficient academic support. Students may not receive sufficient personalised academic support to achieve a positive outcome.

Risk 7. Insufficient personal support. Students may not receive sufficient personalised non-academic support or have sufficient access to extracurricular activities to achieve a positive outcome.

Risk 8. Mental Health. Students may not experience an environment that is conducive to good mental health and wellbeing.

Risk 9. Ongoing impacts from Coronavirus. Students may be affected by the ongoing consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.

Risk 10. Rising cost pressures. Increases in cost pressures may affect a student's ability to complete their course or obtain a good grade.

Risk 11. Capacity issues. Students may not have equal opportunity to access limited resources related to higher education, such as suitable accommodation.

Risk 12. Progression from HE. Students may not have equal opportunity to progress to an outcome they consider to be a positive reflection of their higher education experience.

Lifecycle Stage	APP Objective	EORR
Access	A01. University of Staffordshire will maintain access rates for students eligible for free school meals at 19.5% of our total new entrant population by 2028.	• Risk 1 - Knowledge & Skills • Risk 2 - Information & Guidance • Risk 3 - Perception of HE • Risk 4 – Application Success Rates • Risk 9 – Ongoing impacts from Coronavirus • Risk 10 - Rising cost pressures
	A02. University of Staffordshire will increase the access rates for 18-year-old students from an Asian background to 7%.	
	A03. University of Staffordshire will increase the access rates for 18-year-old students from Black backgrounds to 3%.	
Completion	C01. University of Staffordshire will close the FT completion gap between students from IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 to 3pp or less by 2028.	• Risk 6 - Insufficient academic support • Risk 7 - Insufficient personal support • Risk 8 - Mental Health • Risk 9 - Ongoing impacts from Coronavirus • Risk 10 - Rising cost pressures • Risk 11 - Capacity issues
	C02. University of Staffordshire will close the FT completion gap between students from an Asian background to 2 pp or less by 2028.	
Attainment	At01. University of Staffordshire will close the FT attainment gap between students from Asian backgrounds to 10 pp or less by 2028.	
	At02. University of Staffordshire will close the FT attainment gap between students from Black backgrounds to 15 pp or less by 2028.	
	At03. University of Staffordshire will close the FT attainment gap between students with a declared disability and no declared disability to less than 3 pp or less by 2028. Particular focus on decreasing the attainment gap for students with cognitive or learning difficulties and students with a social or communication impairment.	
Progression	P01. University of Staffordshire will increase the progression rates for students from IMD Q1 to 68% or higher by 2028.	• Risk 9 - Ongoing impacts from Coronavirus • Risk 10 - Rising cost pressures

		• Risk 12 - Progression from HE
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Table 1. Equality of opportunity objectives mapped to the equality of risk register and student lifecycle.

In the next sections, we will detail the objectives defined and intervention strategies developed to ensure equality of opportunity.

Objectives

We have committed to nine whole institution objectives to mitigate against the risks of equality of opportunity identified as part of the assessment of performance. Table 1 maps the student lifecycle stage, our institutional APP objectives and the risks to equality of opportunity. We have identified several risks that exist across all parts of the student journey, particularly Risk 9 and Risk 10. We have an ambition as an organisation that we close the gaps which manifest due to a lack of equality of opportunity. However, our objectives offer realistic targets that are achievable within four years while still maintaining our aspiration. We are keen to understand more about the role of higher education in eradicating inequalities and therefore have developed a plan which has this in mind. Our objectives largely relate to fulltime, on-campus students which was where the persistent indications of risk were observed. However, apprenticeship students and students enrolled with our partners also benefit from the range of intervention strategies discussed below to ensure equality of opportunity.

A01. University of Staffordshire will maintain access rates for students eligible for free school meals at 19.5% of our total new entrant population by 2028.

A02. University of Staffordshire will increase the access rates for 18-year-old students from an Asian background to 7%.

A03. University of Staffordshire will increase the access rates for 18-year-old students from Black backgrounds to 3%.

We have identified six post-entry objectives related to completion, attainment and progression outcomes from our assessment of performance.

C01. University of Staffordshire will close the FT completion gap between students from IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 to 3pp or less by 2028.

C02. University of Staffordshire will close the FT completion gap between students from an Asian background to 2 pp or less by 2028.

At01. University of Staffordshire will close the FT attainment gap between students from Asian backgrounds to 10 pp or less by 2028.

At02. University of Staffordshire will close the FT attainment gap between students from Black backgrounds to 15 pp or less by 2028.

At03. University of Staffordshire will close the FT attainment gap between students with a declared disability and no declared disability to less than 3 pp or less by 2028.

- Particular focus on closing the attainment gap for students with cognitive or learning difficulties and students with a social or communication impairment.

P01. University of Staffordshire will increase the progression rates for students from IMD Q1 to 68% or higher by 2028.

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

As an institution we are a *Catalyst for Change* and through the development of this APP we have developed a set of transformational actions around four key aspects of the student journey: Access, Transitions, Curriculum and Student Support. These four aspects of the student experience relate directly to the risks we have identified from the EORR in the previous section and will form the basis of our four strategic interventions for the APP. Our intervention strategies have been developed using a theory of change approach and are aligned with our strategic plan. However, our intervention strategies alone will not be enough to ensure equality of opportunity. We have identified several **mechanisms for change** which will support the University to meaningfully embed the plan across the institution. These mechanisms for change are discussed in the whole provider approach section of the plan. This focus combined with our mechanisms for change will enable us to deliver effective, joined up interventions which can then be evaluated for impact. Each intervention strategy is detailed in the section below.

Strategic Intervention 1: Transforming Access

This intervention strategy addresses two institutional APP objectives – **AO1 and AO2**. These interventions complement existing recruitment and outreach strategies which are designed to widen participation. In addition, the Institute of Education have developed strategic partnerships with local schools and colleges alongside our own Staffordshire University Academy Trust and Woodlands Day and Forest School to enhance equality of opportunity for local young people. These additional strategic interventions detailed below are designed to complement this work to increase equality of opportunity to access higher education particularly for student groups where we have observed persistent indications of risk (i.e. students from racialised ethnicities and students eligible for FSM). Trajectories and outcomes of disadvantaged students in HE requires collective action to be impactful (Colley, et al., 2014). By co-designing and delivering these activities with local and regional partners we aim to reduce access gaps and increase representation of marginalised student groups – particularly those students eligible for free school meals (A01) and students from racialised ethnicities (A02, A03) – to ensure equitable access to HE. Evidence suggests that effective outreach interventions designed to widen access should be implemented early on and in a sustained fashion in learners' education journeys (Siegel, 2010).

Our Transforming Access intervention strategy was developed to:

- make the most out of partnership working including schools and Higher Horizons (HiHo+).
- provide long-term, multi-touch point activities which directly address risks of equality of opportunity.
- offer a range of activities to evidence what works.
- ensure students are aware of a diverse range of pathways including apprenticeships.

This intervention strategy is comprised of a suite of activities designed to support students with English and Maths attainment, familiarise students with the university environment, explore aspirations, create expectations and develop a sense of belonging and mattering to the university community to support future transitions to higher education.

Where objective A01 aims to maintain access rates for students eligible for free school meals at 21.7% of our total new entrant population by 2028, this intervention targets schools like the Staffordshire University Academies Trust (SUAT) in Cannock characterised by income deprivation and lower GCSE attainment. This multifaceted intervention seeks to raise attainment and aspiration among these disadvantaged students, enhancing their chances of progressing to higher education and reducing the access gap. Simultaneously, AO2 focuses on increasing access rates for students from racialised ethnicities, targeting schools in Stoke-on-Trent with higher levels of socioeconomic disadvantage and lower higher education participation. The project also addresses schools with significant percentages of students from racialised ethnicities and those with English as a second language, promoting pathways to higher education through aspiration and attainment-raising activities. These interventions, in collaboration with Higher Horizons+, utilise data-driven targeting and outreach strategies to reduce access disparities and foster greater representation of underrepresented student groups, extending their impact to regions with shifting demographics like Birmingham, Wolverhampton, and the northwest, further promoting diversity and inclusivity in higher education.

More details on the activities part of our transforming access interventions are below:

FutureMe: FutureMe is a bespoke programme designed to deliver a range of informative, immersive and supportive confidence building activities and sessions. Students from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5 engage with HE students and staff as well as work with a range of resources to support the development of self-efficacy and motivation. The programme also supports students with English and Maths attainment. A coordinated long-term programme to support self-efficacy and motivation was developed because evidence suggests that increased self-efficacy and motivation is correlated with high engagement with school (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Saeed & Zyngier, 2012). Engagement with school combined with familiarisation with university is also theorised to increase attainment and enhance access to HE. The sessions and activities in FutureMe are designed to support students through important key stages and transition where self-efficacy support and motivation is needed most.

Children's University: Children's University (CU) is a charity that works in partnership with schools to develop a love of learning in children by encouraging and celebrating participation in extra-curricular activities in and outside of school. Research has shown that participation in the programme has positive impacts on attainment, confidence, aspiration as well as skills development of the pupils. This has been particularly significant, and evidenced by CU in Sheffield, once learners meet or exceed 100 hours of activity within the CU programme (Hamshaw, 2020). University of Staffordshire leads Staffordshire Children's University (CU) and already engages with schools across our region to raise aspirations, support attainment and increase opportunities regionally. Staffordshire CU works with 17 schools in the region and intends to grow this partnership to evidence impact at scale. Currently 52% of active schools have higher than 30% of their student population eligible for FSM. Currently University of Staffordshire has validated 55 extracurricular 'learning destinations' which offer young people opportunities whilst underpinning the value of place and community.

Stoke Scholars: Key Stage 4 attainment rates across Stoke-on-Trent are lower than the England average. There is also a 20pp gap between the proportion of disadvantaged students achieving a grade 4 or above in Maths and English at GCSE, compared to their more advantaged peers. This gap remains the same for the proportion of students achieving a 5 or above (a strong pass) in their Maths and English GCSEs when compared to their more advantaged peers. Across England 50%

of students achieve a 5 or above in their Maths and English GCSEs; in Stoke-on-Trent, 43% of non-disadvantaged students achieve a 5 or above in their Maths and English GCSEs, while only 24% of disadvantaged students achieve a 5 or above in Maths and English. Achieving a 4/5 or above in Maths and English is not only an entry requirement for many university courses. Improving Maths and English attainment levels at Key Stage 4 is key to mitigating against equality of opportunity risks that limit access to university study.

Stoke Scholars is a new pre-16 attainment-raising intervention at University of Staffordshire which has been developed in collaboration with Higher Horizons+ and Keele University. Students take part in workshops related to study skills and metacognition developed by Higher Horizons, which aims to improve key skills needed for learning. Later activities are extracurricular taster sessions focused on core subjects, to stretch classroom learning, while also giving learners an experience of what HE is like and how to get there. Participants return for a final day in the autumn term of Y11 which focused on revision skills ahead of them taking their GCSE exams at the end of the year.

National Saturday Club: Across the UK the National Saturday Club has been working with our partners to deliver real action in local communities for over 13 years (National Saturday Club Annual Review, 2022). The programme offers multiple touchpoints with students to inspire and ignite passion for creative courses. Evidence suggests the National Saturday Club has long term positive impacts on students from widening participation backgrounds (National Saturday Club Annual Review, 2022). As part of our National Saturday Club we enable young people to explore Art & Design subjects within a local university setting (University of Staffordshire). The activities run over 16-weeks and offers insight into a different discipline each week; exposure to a university setting with industry experts. The activities end with a celebration event in London where participants get to display their work.

Transforming Access		
The risks to equality of opportunity addressed by this intervention include: • Risk 1 – Knowledge & Skills • Risk 2 – Information & Guidance • Risk 3 – Perception of HE • Risk 4 – Application Success Rates • Risk 9 – Ongoing impacts from Coronavirus • Risk 10 - Rising cost pressures Further detail can be found in our Assessment of Performance (Annex A).		
Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
		<i>ST=short term (1-2 years)</i> <i>MT=medium term (3-4 years)</i> <i>LT= long term (5 years or longer)</i>
FutureMe	12+ main intervention touch points from KS2 to KS5 HiHo+ Staffs Hub team Project officer	ST1. Increased awareness of pathways and transition to HE. ST2. Positive attitudinal change to HE.

	Placement students Student ambassadors Internal mentoring platform HiHo+ evaluation team Evaluators	ST3. Increased awareness of careers pathways. ST4. Increased self-efficacy (KS2&4). MT1. Improved KS2 attainment (Maths, reading and writing). MT2. Improved attainment at KS4. MT3. Increased aspirations to apply for HE.
Children's University Intervention crossover: FutureMe	Community Engagement Manager Community organisations Student Ambassadors System to track student activity and to support the dissemination of awards Evaluators	ST1. Increase knowledge and understanding of careers and pathways. ST2. Increased engagement with local community organisations. ST3 Increased self-efficacy. MT1. Increased transferable skills development MT2. Increased attainment.
Stoke Scholars Intervention crossover: FutureMe	Academic Staff Student Ambassadors Central team staff time to support with activity. HiHo+ officers HiHo+ evaluation team Evaluators	ST1. Increased knowledge on pathways, routes and delivery methods. ST2. Increased self-efficacy. MT1. Increased aspirations to progress to Higher Education. MT2. Increased attainment because of improved study skills and metacognitive strategies.
National Saturday Club Intervention crossover: - FutureMe - Stoke Scholars	Student Ambassadors HiHo+ staff Academic Staff Resources Transport	ST1. Raised awareness of Higher Education, Careers linked to creative courses and pathways to study. ST2. Increased self-efficacy.

	Workshop space	
	Evaluators	

Table 2. Transforming Access Intervention Strategy.

References & evidence base:

Colley, H., Chadderton, C., & Nixon, L. (2014). Collaboration and contestation in further and higher education partnerships in England: a Bourdieusian field analysis. *Critical studies in Education*, 55(2), 104-121. Accessed on: <https://repository.uel.ac.uk/item/85qxy>

Hamshaw, K. (2020). Sheffield Children's University: How does it make a difference? Accessed on: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/sheffield-childrens-university-how-does-it-make-a-difference-2020.pdf>

Siegel, D. J. (2010). *Organizing for social partnership: Higher education in cross-sector collaboration*. Routledge. Accessed on: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=9ayLAGAAQBAJ&lpg=PP1&ots=1ws37t1vjr&dq=collaboration%20and%20partnerships%20for%20Higher%20education%20access&lr&pg=PA77#v=onepage&q=collaboration%20and%20partnerships%20for%20Higher%20education%20access&f=false>

Linnenbrink, E. A., & Pintrich, P. R. (2003). The role of self-efficacy beliefs in student engagement and learning in the classroom. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 19(2), 119-137.

Saeed, S., & Zyngier, D. (2012). How motivation influences student engagement: A qualitative case study. *Journal of Education and learning*, 1(2), 252-267.

Strategic Intervention 2: Transforming Transitions

Our Transforming Transitions intervention strategy will reshape how we support learners as they transition to and through HE. This intervention strategy addresses five of our institutional APP objectives – **CO1, CO2, AtO1, AtO2, and PO1**. we are committed to empowering students and fostering their sense of belonging in the HE community. This intervention strategy was developed to complement our existing approach to Welcome and our spiralised induction offer which has also been developed to specifically increase equality of opportunity. Across the sector, marginalised students are less likely to access HE, are more at risk of withdrawal and have lower rates of attainment than their peers. Lack of HE awareness and study readiness are known barriers to academic success in HE for harder to reach learners, such as student groups identified in our institutional objectives. These barriers can lead to negative impacts on continuation, completion and attainment across the student lifecycle (Lemmens, 2010).

In 2022 the UPP Foundation released the Student Futures Manifesto which detailed 6 areas of need that students had in the post-covid HE context (these included pre-arrival support, transition support, wellbeing support, learning and teaching support, capital building support and graduate pathways). They also called for universities to develop a student manifesto that addressed these needs. At Staffordshire we conducted a large-scale research project in partnership with our future and current students and the Student's Union to fully unpick their needs and identify what we

needed to address in our own manifesto. The findings showed that students needed accessible support to develop academic, digital and personal skills before, during and after arrival. In response we have developed a transition programme that familiarises them with university life, equips them with the fundamental skills and normalises the use of all the resources the university provides. This intervention weaves through different student lifecycle stages, detailed below.

Student engagement with their academic studies and wider community life is correlated with positive student outcomes. A sense of belonging and mattering at university is crucial to students' engagement and support growth during times of transition (Meehan & Howells, 2019; Vinson et al., 2010). To support students during transition we have developed a strategic intervention focused on

- developing academic skills and study readiness
- enhancing belonging and mattering.

We will do this by providing students with academic skills and study readiness short courses and guidance; linking students to positive connections with the local community and face-to-face programmes designed to settle students to university life. Through the different programmes of learning, we aim to:

- develop students' skills, competencies and confidence to participate effectively and successfully in HE and/or employment,
- increase learners' knowledge of and familiarity with HE environment and learning at University of Staffordshire, and
- cultivate a sense of belonging and mattering for learners at University of Staffordshire.

Our Transforming Transition activities will:

Enhance our programmes for transition. We will enhance our bespoke transition programmes, such as the FE2HE programme and Step Up to HE while also offering asynchronous resources as part of our transition support. Developing a HE learner identity is important for academic success in HE (Briggs, Clark & Hall, 2012). These programmes offer multiple opportunities and activities to smooth the transition to HE. Students are encouraged through the programmes to:

- develop expectations of HE life and a greater understanding of being an HE student may be like.
- aspire to be an HE learner.
- acquire knowledge and skills to underpin academic learning.

These programmes were developed to establish student identities as a learner and develops sense of belonging in students (Briggs et al., 2012). This provision engages with students during key stages of transition in the student lifecycle. It provides a variety of pathways to support learner's transitions:

- **FE2HE Programme:** this programme enriches local FE curricula by addressing the concerns specific to transitioning students through a range of in person workshops embedded into their FE curriculum and asynchronous resources. As part of this, online, modularised courses aim to contribute to students' academic success, personal development, and employability throughout the student lifecycle.
- **Step Up to HE:** this short course provides key academic skills to pre-degree learners joining an undergraduate course at University of Staffordshire.

We will address these aims through the suite of activities outlined in Table 3, the University is dedicated to ensuring that students have the necessary skills, knowledge and support to thrive during times of transition and achieve their full potential.

Transforming Transitions		
The risks to equality of opportunity addressed by this intervention include: • Risk 1 - Knowledge & Skills • Risk 2 - Information & Guidance • Risk 3 - Perception of HE • Risk 5 – Limited choice of course type and delivery mode • Risk 10 – Cost pressures • Risk 12 – Progression from HE Further detail can be found in our Assessment of Performance (Annex A).		
Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
		<i>ST=short term (1-2 years)</i> <i>MT=medium term (3 -4 years)</i> <i>LT= long term (5 years or longer)</i>
FE2HE Programme	Programme Manager Academic Lecturers Programme Content Higher Horizons HiHo+ Staffs Hub Teaching space Evaluators	ST1. Increased familiarisation of university level study ST2. Increased confidence and motivation ST3. Increased study readiness MT1. Increased attainment in HE MT2. Smoother transition into HE MT3. Increased continuation LT1. Increased social mobility
Step Up to HE Programme	Programme manager Academic tutors Teaching space Programme Content Evaluators	ST1. Increased knowledge and skills in academic practices ST2. Increased confidence in participating in HE MT1. Increased sense of belonging in HE MT2. Improved continuation and attainment LT1. Increased social mobility

Table 3. Transforming Transitions Intervention strategy.

References & evidence base:

Briggs, A. R., Clark, J., & Hall, I. (2012). Building bridges: understanding student transition to university. *Quality in higher education*, 18(1), 3-21.

Howells, K. (2019). In search of the feeling of 'belonging' in higher education: undergraduate students transition into higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(10), 1376-1390. Accessed on: <https://repository.canterbury.ac.uk/download/e865b8480e12be80a6144ccc6a87c361f226021c6094a8ca1cdd6c58b45cd583/1168998/17309.pdf>

Lemmens, J. C. (2010). *Students' readiness for university education* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria). Accessed on: <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/26675/Complete.pdf?sequence=8> Meehan, C., &

Thomas, L., & Hill, M. (2013). Briefing report on the What works? Student retention and success change programme, December 2013. Accessed on: <http://lizthomasassociates.co.uk/downloads/Briefing%20report%201%20-%20December%202013.pdf>

Vinson, D., Nixon, S., Walsh, B., Walker, C., Mitchell, E., & Zaitseva, E. (2010). Investigating the relationship between student engagement and transition. *Active learning in higher education*, 11(2), 131-143. Accessed on: <http://eprints.worc.ac.uk/3763/1/Investigating%20the%20relationship%20between%20student%20engagement%20and%20transition.pdf>

Strategic Intervention 3: Transforming the Curriculum

Our Transforming the Curriculum intervention addresses six institutional APP objectives – **CO1, CO2, AtO1, AtO2, AtO3, and PO1**. This strategic intervention reinforces our work to refresh the curriculum, implement our academic strategy and deliver on our goals for equality, diversity and inclusion. This intervention strategy has activities designed to enhance staff pedagogic practice, increase the student voice in equality of opportunity and offer direct support to enable students to engage in placements and work experience. This intervention strategy was developed in response to the assessment of performance which showed indications of risk for students from racialised ethnicities and students with declared disabilities including cognitive and learning difficulties as well as multiple impairments.

This strand of work has three key aims. Firstly, it will create an inclusive environment, across all aspects of university life, that will enable our neurodiverse, disabled, care leaver, commuter, racially diverse and mature students, for example, to participate and experience a high-quality student journey. It does this by firstly, adopting the QAA Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) frameworks and our Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gap (EDAG) toolkit, which ensures that policies, practices, services and the curriculum are designed and delivered in a wholly inclusive way. Secondly there is specialised staff training around neurodiversity and a racially inclusive pedagogy (including the EDAG toolkit). This work will be enabled through the implementation of Curriculum Framework, a whole-institution curriculum refresh of our academic provision. Inclusive course design and accessibility form a key pillar of the Curriculum Framework in which we will map our learning, teaching and assessment to support student success.

To support cohorts in our partnership provision, we provide training to academics from these institutions – enabling them to professionally develop towards inclusive pedagogic practice, as well as connect with colleagues at the University. Details for all these activities can be found below.

Curriculum Framework - Inclusion embedded in the curriculum: Our course design process and curriculum refresh programme Curriculum Framework will ensure that inclusion is meaningfully embedded into all our provision including partners and apprenticeships.

Enhancing staff pedagogic practice: We will deliver staff development packages and resources to support learning and teaching practice for racial equity and neurodiversity. These are key to curriculum development and our intention to refresh our curriculum. This will be delivered through a combination of live training, and asynchronous resources and toolkits. This activity was designed to promote equality of opportunity for students whose needs otherwise might not be considered as part of curriculum design or learning and teaching practice. Evidence suggests that inclusive teaching practices lead to increased student engagement, satisfaction and academic success (Thomas, 2016) so embedding these approaches into academics' practice will be critical to addressing our completion and attainment gap objectives (CO1, CO1, AtO2, and AtO3).

Colleagues at our partner provision are supported throughout this intervention strand through knowledge exchange and our curriculum refresh programme of work. Colleagues and peers from our partners can engage with inclusive education development opportunities offered across this strand.

Transforming the Curriculum		
Risks to Equality of Opportunity	The risks to equality of opportunity addressed by this intervention include: • Risk 6: Insufficient academic support • Risk 7: Insufficient personal support • Risk 8: Mental health • Risk 9: Ongoing impacts of coronavirus • Risk 10: Cost pressures • Risk 12: Progression from HE Further detail can be found in our Assessment of Performance (Annex A).	
Activity	Inputs	Outcomes <i>ST=short term (1-2 years)</i> <i>MT=medium term (3 -4 years)</i> <i>LT= long term (5 years or longer)</i>
Curriculum Framework	Staff Students Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team Educational Development Registry	ST1. Students experience more inclusive and relevant learning activities. ST2. Students receive clearer and more appropriate assessment information MT1. Students from all backgrounds are more satisfied with their courses. MT2. Students from target groups are more likely to complete their course.
Pedagogies for Racial Equity Intervention crossover: • Pedagogies for Neurodiversity	Staff Students Workshop Space Curriculum Framework pillars	ST1. Improved understanding of racial disparities, racism, and how they affect student learning. ST2. Greater awareness of biases and accessibility barriers for students from racial minorities.

	Inclusive Education and Impact Team Educational Development Team Evaluators	ST3. Increased knowledge in ways to effectively signpost students. ST4. Improved understanding of inclusive learning design approaches. ST5. Increased confidence in signposting and support strategies. ST4. Increased knowledge of common biases. MT1. Demonstrated intention to adapt teaching practices to be more inclusive. MT2. Evidence of reflective practice (e.g. changes in lesson planning, assessment). MT3. Increased implementation of pedagogies known to reduce outcome and progression disparities. LT1. Sustained integration of inclusive pedagogies across modules/programmes. LT2. Contributions to reducing gaps in continuation, attainment, or satisfaction. LT3. Increased student belonging.
Pedagogies for Neurodiversity Intervention crossover: Pedagogies for Racial Equity	Staff Students Workshop Space Inclusive Education and Impact Team Educational Development Team Evaluators	ST1. Increased knowledge of what neurodiversity is and its impact on students. ST2. Greater awareness of biases and accessibility barriers for neurodiverse students. ST3. Improved understanding of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

		ST4. Increased confidence in signposting and support strategies. ND students have an increased sense of belonging. (Students) MT1. Demonstrated intention to adapt teaching practices to be more inclusive. MT2. Evidence of reflective practice (e.g. changes in lesson planning, assessment). MT3. Improved student experience and engagement among neurodiverse students. LT1. Sustained integration of inclusive pedagogies across modules/programmes. LT2. Contributions to reducing gaps in continuation, attainment, or satisfaction. LT3. Increased student belonging.
Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gaps (EDAG) Toolkit Intervention crossover: Pedagogies for Racial Equity	Design time (staff) Training hours (staff delivering) Training hours (staff participating) Evaluation design and delivery (hours) Evaluators	ST1. Improved awareness of EDAG ST2. Increased knowledge of how racial disparities affect student outcomes. MT1. Increased engagement with inclusive practices as part of day to day working MT1. Sustained integration of inclusive pedagogies across modules/programmes. LT1. Improved attainment

Table 4. Transforming Curriculum Intervention Strategy.

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Strategic intervention 4: Transforming Student Support

The Transforming Student Support strategic intervention will address the following objectives **CO1**, **CO2**, **AtO1**, and **AtO2**. They have been developed to support our student support offer and to enhance practice following the COVID-19 pandemic. This workstream aims to effectively addresses multiple objectives related to closing the gap in student completion and attainment. To achieve CO1 (close the completion gap between students from ABCS Q1 and ABCS Q5 to 7pp or less by 2028), the university is enhancing its learning analytics capabilities. This will enable early identification of at-risk students, including those from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and provide tailored support. Similarly, Objective CO2 (targeting the FT completion gap for students from an Asian background) will benefit from these analytics, ensuring timely interventions and support. Meanwhile, AtO1, focused on closing the attainment gap for Asian students, will benefit from both enhanced analytics and a redesigned student support system that accounts for cultural nuances, fostering better engagement and academic success. AtO2, addressing the attainment gap for Black students, will also benefit from these strategies, with the redesigned support system ensuring inclusivity and academic mentoring enhancements increasing engagement. Finally, the provision of direct financial support through various funds will further assist students, irrespective of their background, in overcoming economic barriers and ultimately contribute to closing the identified gaps in completion and attainment. Greater detail about activities can be found below. Similarly, objective-activity mapping is outlined in Table 5 below.

Young people and the larger society have experienced the cost-of-living increase and lost learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the sector there is increased prevalence of mental health challenges (Lewis and Bolton, 2023). As a result, there is a strategic imperative to review our current mechanisms of student support to ensure it meets the current needs of students. For students to succeed on their courses we want to enhance our learning analytics capability to personalise support; redesign our service to best support students and enhance the modes of support (i.e. academic, pastoral and peer). In addition to this, our student voice work will encourage and enable students who may be under-represented the opportunity to be more active, have an increased sense of belonging and mattering, and allow the university to be more aware of how to support them effectively. Finally, direct funds for micro-placements allows students from deprived areas to participate in activity that is either curricular or extra-curricular, but which directly enhances their student experience, their skill set and progression outcomes.

Student front doors. Student wellbeing is linked with academic success (Khodabakhsh et al., 2019; Cobo-Rendon et al., 2020; Thomas & Maree, 2022). We are redesigning our student support services to improve accessibility, responsiveness, and equity of access. We recognise that student help-seeking behaviour varies significantly by personal characteristics including culture, gender, age, and locus of control (Martín-Arbós, Castarlenas & Dueñas, 2021). These differences can lead to inequitable patterns of engagement, particularly for students experiencing distress who may not feel able to access conventional student services. To address this, we are creating clearer, more consistent 'student front doors' that connect students with timely, relevant and appropriate support. These front doors will be designed with students and staff to ensure they reflect students' lived experiences and priorities. The student engagement and experience team will use learning analytics to ensure proactive support to students working with academic mentors to support student to progress through their learning. Academic mentoring supports students by fostering belonging, personalised development and early intervention (Palmer, O'Kane, & Owens, 2009). The Academic Mentoring policy will be refreshed to complement our approach to student engagement and experience. Training and support will be developed and rolled out to all Academic

Mentors offering clarity to the role and ensures sessions offer students a supportive environment where staff are equipped to have conversations that lead to positive actions which support academic development.

Direct funds for work experience. Evidence suggests that engaging in formalised work experience during degree studies (e.g.; placements, internships, etc.) improves students' academic success, progression rates and graduate outcomes (Smith, 2017; Kerrigan, Manktelow & Simmons, 2018). However marginalised students are less likely to be able to engage with placements due to several barriers, such as finances, anxiety, or childcare commitments (Abbott, 2019). To ensure equal opportunities for students, new employability initiatives have been introduced to facilitate their engagement with placements and work experience. Paid micro-placements will be delivered and sourced for students to work for the university and other employers. Students will gain valuable and practical employability skills over 6 weeks and 120 hours in their micro-placement.

Direct funds for student needs. Evidence suggests that direct financial support to students in need have a positive correlation with student outcomes. We have identified three funds to provide direct financial support in times of hardship. Our student success fund is available to all students from backgrounds which have been identified as an indication of risk or can evidence hardship. As part of the Care Leavers Covenant, we also offer financial bursaries for care leavers and estranged students to ensure they are able to meet their basic needs. In addition, we provide dyslexia assessments and equipment to students to support their success.

- **Student Success Fund** which provides bursaries for students who experience hardship and/or are identified as at risk through institutional indicators.
- **Care leaver and estranged students fund** which supports care-experienced and estranged students to meet their basic living needs, in line with our commitment to the Care Leaver Covenant.
- **Dyslexia assessment and equipment fund** which covers diagnostic assessments and essential equipment to support the success of students with specific learning differences.

Transforming Student Support		
Risks to Equality of Opportunity Our <u>Assessment of Performance (Annex A)</u> has mapped key indicators to risk at our university, which have informed our objectives, to the EORR.	The risks to equality of opportunity addressed by this intervention include: • Risk 7: Insufficient personal support • Risk 8: Mental health • Risk 9: Ongoing impacts of coronavirus • Risk 11: Capacity issues (re: Student Support Services) • Risk 10: Cost pressures Further detail can be found in our <u>Assessment of Performance (Annex A)</u> .	
Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
		<i>ST=short term (1-2 years)</i> <i>MT=medium term (3 -4 years)</i> <i>LT= long term (5 years or longer)</i>
Student Front Doors	Data infrastructure Front door infrastructure (Solve)	ST1. Increased data informed perspective of our students

	BI developer Attendance and engagement dashboard Student Experience and Engagement Team Academic Mentors Student Life team Educational developer Evaluators	ST2. Increased engagement with Student Life ST3. Increased attendance and engagement with mandatory sessions. ST4. Increased consistency in staff approach to academic mentoring MT1. Reduction in student withdrawals, deferrals, and non-submissions MT2. Increased use of data to inform action with regards to successful student outcomes.
Direct fund for student needs Intervention crossover: Academic Mentoring (one mechanism for signposting funds)	Funds Disbursement mechanism Money Advice and Guidance Service Dyslexia diagnostics Dyslexia equipment Funding governance structure Evaluator	ST1. increased attendance and engagement with mandatory course sessions. ST2. Increased continuation MT2. Increased completion LT1. increased progression LT2. increased social mobility
Direct funds for work experience Intervention crossover: Student Success Fund and Care leaver and estranged student bursaries	Head of Careers and Employability Funding Staff coordinator Evaluators	ST1. Increased confidence in ability to take part in sandwich year, placement or internship ST2. Increased engagement with placements and internships MT1. Increased employability skills LT1. Increased attainment LT2. Increased progression to graduate jobs or further study

Table 3. Transforming Student Support Intervention Strategy.

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Evaluation

This section outlines our approach to evaluation. Our evaluation approach was developed to support our **mechanisms for change**. Our approach was designed to ensure:

- evidence-informed intervention strategies using ToC approaches.
- robust methodologies that inform and strengthen the evidence.
- focus on both the process and outcomes of our intervention strategies as part of our evaluation approach.
- student co-creation and meaningful evaluation experience.
- evaluation outputs fit for external publication.

Evidence-informed intervention strategies. Our intervention strategies were designed using ToC to support the articulation of evaluation questions based upon theorised short, medium and long-term outcomes. The intended outcomes and associated activity rationales outlined earlier in this paper demonstrate clear pathways within our Theories of Change (ToCs), showing how activities are expected to contribute towards achieving the targets set in this APP. It is important to note, however, that while intended outcomes are included for each activity to strengthen the clarity of the logic chain, evaluators do not plan to assess every individual outcome directly. Activities are mapped to a project plan with a complementary evaluation plan to manage delivery and evaluation output timelines which are mapped onto our whole institution intervention catalogue. Project monitoring logs will track timelines, progress and limitations efficiently. Risks to ensuring we meet delivery and evaluation targets will be added to a risk register which will be monitored and updated regularly. These assets will be included in a project strategy document that guides programme teams to support evaluation implementation.

Robust methodologies. Evaluation plans for intervention strategies will include process, outcomes and learning dimensions utilising a mixed method approach. This will ensure that we are able to reflect upon evidence holistically of what we are doing and what impact it is having on our students, staff, partners, and the wider community. Below is a description of the types of metrics that could be included in evaluation dimensions. The incorporation of these will be dependent on the evaluation priorities for each intervention.

- **Process.** This evaluation type will assess elements including the relevance, effectiveness, and coherence of interventions so that we understand how programmes were implemented

and whether the implementation was effective. Process evaluations ensure continuous improvement and provide recommendations for activity enhancement. Evaluating process works best using a range of data collection methods including collation and analysis of statistics such as reach, engagement, length of engagement, use of resource, both individual intervention and summative stakeholder surveys, and semi-structured focus groups and interviews. Through these we will be able to capture satisfaction rates and feedback on delivery and resource.

- **Outcomes and impact.** This evaluation type enables us to track progress against objectives and areas of change for staff, students, partners and community members engaged in equality of opportunity interventions. This could include increases in awareness, knowledge, and skills; changes in attitude, behaviour, and activity; and environmental, social or policy changes that might be attributable to our APP activity. We will capture impact through longitudinal surveys, project diaries and video diaries, and summative semi-structured focus groups and interviews; these will also assess barriers to implementation and perceptions of sustained long-term impact. Where possible, control group testing will be utilised, where relevant and ethical, to explore causal change. A combination of these will help us to evidence change over time.
- **Learning and reflection.** Reflection and learning will be a core focus of our evaluation approach and specific dimensions and questions designed to draw feedback from students, staff and partners that informs how we can improve our delivery processes and enhances the impact we have over the four-year APP cycle.

Student co-creation. Co-creation is an important part of this element; our APP activities will be tailored to the needs of our students and the wider community by ensuring their voice is a part of the creation process, both in terms of designing interventions and evaluation. We will work to develop an evaluative mindset across the institution includes Theory of Change and evaluation literacy raising initiatives to ensure students are a part of the process throughout delivery and evaluation. Project design meetings and annual findings validation and reflection workshops will include a cross-section of stakeholders (including students) to ensure our interventions are tailored to need and that we are able to use findings from evaluation outputs to inform decision-making.

The students as partners approach, central to co-creation, encourages greater student engagement and satisfaction with their learning and increased academic success (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Using these participatory approaches ensures activities and their approaches are designed to centralise students lived experiences and to identify and address barriers that our students may face.

Raising student awareness. We are committed to inclusivity, ensuring that traditionally underrepresented students have opportunities to participate, contribute and benefit from our APP. To ensure this, our efforts will include student awareness initiatives. Our Inclusive Education and team, in collaboration with the Students Union, is actively involved in raising awareness and promoting engagement through various means. This includes organising APP student-specific workshops, which not only raise awareness but also provide and signpost students with opportunities for engagement. We are committed to ensuring that these workshops are accessible to a diverse group of learners. Furthermore, we plan to explore alternative mediums for disseminating information about the APP (e.g.; student-designed comics) which can cater to varying learning preferences and backgrounds. Through these efforts we aim to foster diversity of views and perspectives in the design, implementation, and evaluation of our plan.

Collaborative evaluation. In addition to working with staff and students across the institution to evaluate APP interventions, we are working with Higher Horizons (part of Uni Connect) to co-evaluate many of our access activities and interventions.

Dissemination of Findings. APP strands will be reported on, led by evaluation leads, at a local level on an annual basis to monitor progress towards outcomes. Opportunities to both disseminate and reflect on progress for all stakeholders will be facilitated at a local level, with an additional commitment to feed these findings into APP Board meetings for review at least once annually ensuring stakeholders voice at all levels becomes integral to delivery. To ensure full engagement from all stakeholders with the findings, we will welcome representation from across the university and students' union to validation workshops to engage with the findings; these will be accessible and tailored to audience with a focus on the key messages from the evaluation and recommendations for future delivery years. In the final year of the APP cycle, a summative evaluation of all strands will also be published at the end of the four-year cycle which will include recommendations on next steps to ensure that learning feeds into the next APP cycle and evaluation is central to informing ongoing access and participation work streams.

Whole provider approach

University of Staffordshire has a whole provider approach to addresses the risks to equality of opportunity outlined in our institutional objectives. We are proud to fulfil our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and have a whole institution approach to equality, diversity and inclusion of which access and participation forms a strand of work. Our whole provider approach for our APP is articulated through our mechanisms for change. We have identified seven institutional mechanisms for change which will enable us to effectively deliver our plan.

Whole provider planning. The interventions developed to support equality of opportunity have been articulated using a theory of change and have defined and measurable short-, medium- and long-term outcomes. Our interventions were designed to support our strategies for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in line with our existing EDI frameworks.

Underpinning our work across the student lifecycle. Our four overarching strategic interventions are connected to our core offers across outreach, transitions, curriculum and student support. We believe that the academic experience and wider student experience we cultivate should be designed to ensure equality of opportunity. As a result, we support students at all stages of their journey, from preschool on to through successful graduates. Our plan supports our ongoing work in the following ways:

- **Transforming Access:** We are strengthening our partnership with HiHo+ and schools to support our core recruitment and outreach approach and to support raising attainment initiatives from KS2.
- **Transforming Transitions:** This strategy enhances focus on transitions before, during and after a students' time at university and links to our core Welcome programme and spirals induction model.
- **Transforming Curriculum:** Our strategic interventions for equality of opportunity are part of our Curriculum Refresh programme to review and enhance our current academic strategy and EDI.

- **Transforming Student Support:** We are working with the Student Support Champion to redesign our student support services while enabling our current offer to remain effective.

Student co-creation and engagement is articulated at the outset of each intervention strategy. Student co-creation is essential so that student can:

- develop their own activities.
- support the development of intervention strategies.
- contribute to the evaluation approach.

Localised planning. Schools will develop plans on a two-year cycle which enable them to:

- articulate their specific commitments to engagement with the institutional plan.
- develop their own interventions relevant to their specific cohorts which may present unique indications of risk. The assessment of performance identified subject-level variation in good degree attainment by racialised ethnicity. We will use a localised planning approach to further interrogate that data with Schools, departments and courses to develop specific actions for equality of opportunity.

Evaluative Mindset. We will embed a cross-institutional approach to developing the evaluative mindset to ensure staff and students engage with our plan through reflective practice with the goal to implement evidence-based approaches to support equality of opportunity into their work with students. This support enables awareness raising regarding ToC and evaluation literacy. We have integrated Advance HE's Changebusters ToC board game methodology into our workshop offer. In addition, the Business and Intelligence Management Reporting (BIMR) department are a team of data analysts who provide support to APP delivery. BIMR creates data reports and dashboards that enable academic schools and professional service departments to prioritise localised APP objectives: including monitoring student recruitment, attendance, mentoring, placements, and attainment. As part of this service, BIMR also offers data literacy session to enhance staff understanding of reports and dashboards.

Strategic Oversight. Our objectives to ensure equality of opportunity are reflected in our strategic KPIs which are overseen by our Board of Governors. Work related to the APP is overseen by a tiered governance structure:

- APP Project Board: this board ensures the strategic direction and oversight of the APP with senior leaders and stakeholders as members. This board reports up to our Academic Board, which in turn reports directly to Board of Governors.

Both are guided by our frameworks and strategy for EDI. Our quality assurance processes such as continuous course monitoring ensure meaningful discussions take place at course level about the local actions to ensure equality of opportunity. The strategic oversight we have in place monitors and ensures target groups are not adversely impacted by the intervention strategies outlined in the APP.

Evaluation and insights. We are building internal capacity through evaluation skills development for key activity and intervention leads. This is led by the Inclusive Education and Impact (IE&I) to:

- ensure the development of robust evaluation design and delivery.
- support colleagues to effectively undertake fieldwork and data analysis.

- publish the four year summative evaluation of APP activity.

Our mission to develop an evaluative mindset at the university, alongside localised planning, will ensure that we can draw on skills and expertise from across the university to develop the evidence base.

Student consultation

The timing of the APP development provided significant challenges to meaningful student consultation. The planning cycle for wave one providers occurred outside of the academic calendar and during the election season for the Students Union (SU). Despite these challenges we have been able to engage the students' union with the development of the plan and we are both looking forward to working more closely together to realise the articulated intervention strategies.

The SU has meaningful presence on the APP Project Board of which a full-time SU Officer and Chief Executive are members. The SU President and the Student Voice manager were part of the task and finish group for our assessment of performance. The task and finish group explored our data using a bespoke Power BI dashboard and supported us to identify the persistent indications of risk articulated in the assessment of performance annex. Additionally, they work within the APP Operational Group ensuring the work of the APP, and its beneficiaries, remain connected with the SU.

Furthermore, The SU arranged a student consultation on the plan which we presented and received feedback from 10 student representatives. We facilitated a comprehensive review of intervention development through a nearly two-hour meeting with Student Union officers. Prior to the meeting, these officers were provided with a summary of our plan as well as the intervention catalogue detailing and its proposed activities, ensuring they were well-prepared to contribute effectively. This session provided a platform for candid discussions, feedback, and suggestions, which directly influenced the design of our interventions, including target populations and the feasibility of various strategies.

Looking ahead, we are dedicated to further enhancing student involvement in our APP and related initiatives. To achieve this, we appointed and trained five Student Research and Evaluation Assistants who actively participated in the evaluation of interventions in the first year of the APP, ensuring that student voices guide our ongoing efforts. We are also working closely with the Students' Union to enhance communication and implementation of the APP among our student population. For instance, we have engaged officers in Theory of Change training, which not only explores the APP but also raises awareness of attainment gaps and their implications. Furthermore, we are developing workstreams to increase awareness and understanding of the APP for true transparency and engagement with our student population.

Student co-creation is key to getting this right and how students will be involved in our plan is reflected in our intervention strategies. Student co-creation will:

- contribute to APP awareness-raising efforts (particularly across the wider student population) and evaluation of the APP;
- ensure that our pedagogies for neurodiversity and racial equity interventions are fit for purpose; and
- allow students to access training and work experience in research and evaluation.

Evaluation of the plan

Evidence informed decision making through robust evaluation is key to the planning and delivery of our intervention strategies. This is reinforced through our mechanisms for change that allow us to understand what works, why and how for our students.

We have developed our evaluation plans in a consistent and standardised manner which articulates an evaluation lead, the standard of evidence we are aiming to generate and the evaluation types we will implement. In addition, each plan has mapped data collection methods to the outcomes articulated as part of the theory of change.

As outlined in our Whole provider approach section above (see page 26), support and training is available to colleagues across the institution and our Students' Union – particularly for those delivering and supporting the APP.

This support enabled us to work with teams to develop a ToC and evaluation plan for their APP interventions. Our small group workshops support awareness raising regarding ToC and evaluation literacy. We have integrated Advance HE's Changebusters ToC board game methodology into our small group offer, where suitable. We support with the design, delivery and reporting outputs offering a level of expertise and independence that is critically important to student-facing and support staff. In addition, the Business and Intelligence Management Reporting (BIMR) department are a dedicated team of data analysts supporting APP delivery. BMIR creates data reports and dashboards that enable academic schools and professional service departments to prioritise localised APP objectives: including monitoring student recruitment, attendance, mentoring, placements, and attainment. As part of this service, BMIR also offers data literacy session to enhance staff understanding of reports and dashboards.

Provision of information to students

Students can access our access and participation plan here:

<https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/access-and-participation-plan>

Our fees are published on our website at <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/undergraduate/fees/>.

All Undergraduate students who are assessed as paying "Home" student fees will be charged at the current capped rate set by the UK government for the academic year 2023/24 this is £9250 per year. All part time undergraduate courses, including those on Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) delivery will be charged proportionally based on the number of credits studied at £77 per credit, up to a maximum of £6935 per year. Home fees are based on UK citizenship, right to remain in the UK and Asylum status. Fees for International, Postgraduate and Research students will be available on our website and are subject to change. See chart below for Home fee paying students.

UKPRN	Provider	Has an approved APP in force for 2022-23?	Fee cap applicable for 2022-23	Holds a TEF award at the relevant time to inform 2022-23 fee caps?	Course type	Maximum full time fees chargeable to 2022-23 entrants	Maximum part-time fees chargeable to 2022-23 entrants [note 1]	Prescribed fee cap for full-time entrants in 2022-23	Prescribed fee cap for part-time entrants in 2022-23
10006299	Staffordshire University	Yes	Higher	Yes	CerHE/DipHE	9,250	*	9,250	6,935
10006299	Staffordshire University	Yes	Higher	Yes	Postgraduate ITT	9,250	4,500	9,250	6,935
10006299	Staffordshire University	Yes	Higher	Yes	Accelerated degree [note 2]	11,100	NA	11,100	NA
10006299	Staffordshire University	Yes	Higher	Yes	Sandwich year	1,850	NA	1,850	NA
10006299	Staffordshire University	Yes	Higher	Yes	Erasmus and overseas study years	1,385	*	1,385	1,385
10006299	Staffordshire University	Yes	Higher	Yes	Other	5,950	4,500	9,250	6,935
10006299	Staffordshire University	Yes	Higher	Yes	First degree	9,250	6,935	9,250	6,935
10006299	Staffordshire University	Yes	Higher	Yes	Foundation degree	9,250	6,935	9,250	6,935
10006299	Staffordshire University	Yes	Higher	Yes	Foundation year/Year 0	9,250	6,935	9,250	6,935
10006299	Staffordshire University	Yes	Higher	Yes	HNC/HND	5,950	4,650	9,250	6,935

* As of 2022/23; fees are subject to government policy changes.

We offer a range of bursaries and financial support which are also set out on our website:
<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/undergraduate/funding/financial-support/>

Information on our support arrangements, including the different elements, the value, the eligibility criteria and priority groups will be provided to prospective students and all current students. The criteria used and value of awards will remain the same through the period of the plan.

Our financial support includes the following bursaries and funds:

Care Leaver & Estranged Student Bursary which provides bursaries to students who are care leavers or estranged from their families.

Eligibility:

- Be an undergraduate 'home' fee status student, studying at University of Staffordshire*, on a full-time or sandwich course, paying the full tuition fee either yourself or through a sponsor (such as the NHS for some health courses).
- Have met the definition criteria of a Care Leaver or Estranged student as detailed on this page (<https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/support/student-support-and-experience/care-leavers-and-estranged-students>)
- Be 25 or under when you start the course.
- Be entitled to funding for fees and living costs from Student Finance England, Wales or Northern Ireland.
- Be in receipt of the full tuition fee loan or comparable funding.

Funding Value:

- Students will receive a bursary worth £1,000 for each year they study and pay full tuition fees.
- On completion of their studies students will receive an additional 'graduation' payment of £225.

Student Success (Support) Fund which provides bursaries to students with indications of risk in times of hardship. Information about the fund can be found on the University's website (<https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/money-matters/student-success-fund/support>).

Eligibility:

- A current and active student (you cannot have withdrawn or taken a break in studies).
- Classed as Home for fees.
- Studying full or part time on an eligible course (if studying part time, you must be studying at 25% of a full-time equivalent course).
- Enrolled onto a course which is a minimum of 1-year duration.
- Enrolled onto a course that leads to an award such as a HND, Foundation Degree, BA, BSc, BEng, Masters or Doctorate.
- Entitled to funding from Student Finance England, Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland.
- In receipt of the full tuition fee loan or comparable funding.
- In proven genuine financial hardship.
- Able to show that reasonable provision was made prior to commencing your course to cover expected tuition and living costs.

Priority groups:

Although applications will be considered from any student, priority is given to students who are:

- Lone parents.
- Disabled students (especially where DSA is unable to meet particular costs).
- Mature students.
- Students who are care leavers.
- Students who are estranged from their parents.
- Students who are carers.
- Students from low-income families.
- Students whose courses have additional costs.

Funding value:

All bursaries will depend on individual circumstances, with awards ranging from £100 to £2,000 per student per year. For those students studying on our London campus an additional weighting will be applied (currently calculated at 31% and based on Student Finance maximum maintenance loan entitlements).

Annex A: Assessment of performance

This annex details our assessment of performance which was used to determine our risks to equality of opportunity and to develop our access and participation plan (APP) to addresses equality of opportunity. Analyses were undertaken at key points in the student lifecycle to identify key indications of risk and to map these indications of risk onto the Office for Students (OfS) Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR).

Our assessment of performance uses sector-level and provider-level data available on the OfS APP data combined with relevant internal data to identify our key indications of risk. These datasets were reproduced in a bespoke dashboard which a task and finish group comprised of student and staff stakeholders explored and supported the process to identify our persistent indications of risk.

Much of the data interrogated had some amount of statistical uncertainty. Indications of risk were identified where the largest gaps existed with the lowest levels of statistical uncertainty. We plan to engage in further course-level disaggregation as part of our localised planning approach set out as part of our mechanisms of change.

Indications of risk were identified at the access, completion, attainment and progression points in the student journey.

Access

We explored indications of risk at the access stage of the student lifecycle by analysing access rates and access gaps for the following student characteristics:

- Age
- Ethnicity
- ABCS quintiles
- Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility
- Indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) quintiles
- TUNDRA quartile
- Disability declaration

Data was also compared at the sector-level to support decision-making around key indications of risk.

The first indication of risk identified at the access stage is the **full-time access rate of students who were eligible for FSM**. Access rates for students eligible for FSM declined from 2019 to 2021 with small levels of statistical uncertainty observed (± 2.1 at 75% confidence interval) in 2021. A decline in FSM eligible was also observed at sector level from 2019. According to the Department for Education, the current proportion of English students at Key Stage 4 who are eligible for free school meals stands at ~25%.² On average, the proportion of students who enter higher education who were eligible for free school meals stands at 18.8% (based on 4-year average) for the sector, indicating a significant gap in access.³ In contrast, the University of Staffordshire's proportion of new entrants who are FSM-eligible, based on a 4-year average, stands at 21.7%. We compared this against the Stoke/Staffordshire regional data, where the proportion of Key Stage 4 stands at 21.1%. This comparison indicates that unlike the sector, we do not have an access gap for students eligible for free school meals, and therefore we should focus on maintaining this position.

² <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-catalogue/data-set/dd43e550-3829-4edd-ba0b-9565573c6278>

³ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

Students are eligible for FSM if their family earns £22,700 or less outside London with one child and £26,300 or less for families outside of London with two or more children. FSM eligibility is often used as a proxy measure for socioeconomic disadvantage. In Stoke-on-Trent over one third (34.8%) of students are eligible for FSM compared to the 17.6% of students eligible across Staffordshire⁴.

Four-year aggregate **access rates for students with racialised ethnicities** continue to remain below the sector average (Figure 4).

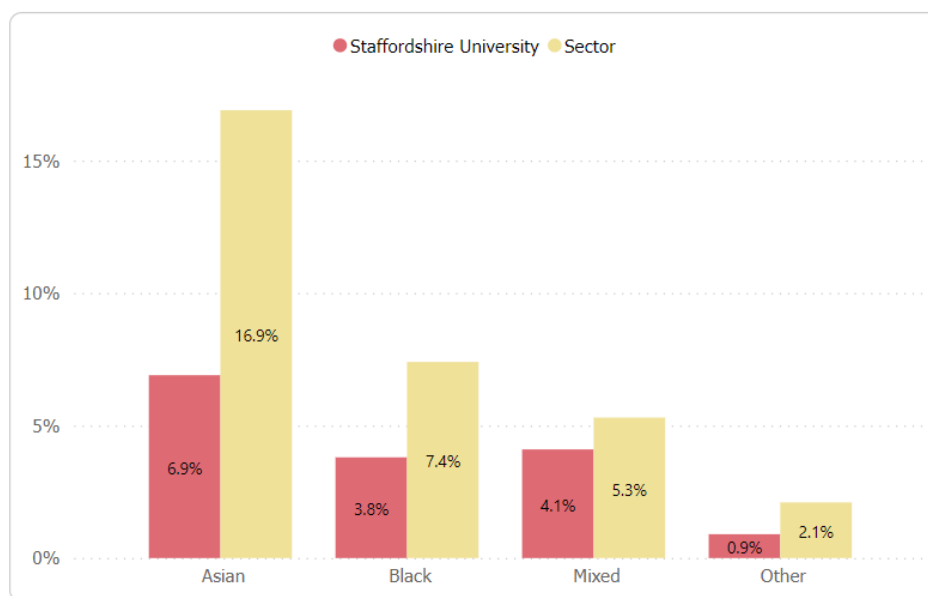


Figure 3. Four-year aggregate access rates for students with racialised ethnicities

In particular, the **access rate for Asian students** is a key indication of risk. We have a 10-percentage point (pp) difference in access rates from the sector. In addition, Asian access rates do not match our local Stoke-on-Trent community profile where 9.9% of Stoke residents identified as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh in the 2021 Census.⁵ **Access rates for Black students** are also a key indication of risk as our access rate is 3.6 pp below the sector average.

According to the 2021 Census, 2.7% of Stoke residents identify as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African. In Staffordshire, these figures are lower: 3.3% Asian and 1.0% Black. These population figures provide a helpful baseline, but it is the school-age population that offers the clearest insight into our future applicant pipeline. In Stoke-on-Trent, of an estimated 45,000 school pupils, 10.5% are Asian (approx. 4,725 pupils) and 3.1% are Black (approx. 1,395 pupils). In the wider Staffordshire area, among approximately 100,000 pupils, 3.3% are Asian (approx. 3,300) and 0.8% are Black (approx. 800).

Post entry

We conducted an assessment of performance for three key post entry outcomes in the student lifecycle: continuation, completion and good degree attainment. We explored how these outcomes varied based on a range of student characteristics to identify key indications of risk. The student characteristics explored were:

- Age
- Ethnicity

⁴ <https://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/news/cost-of-living/number-pupils-free-school-meals-7220946>

⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000021/>

- ABCS quintiles
- Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility
- Indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) quintiles
- TUNDRA quartile
- Disability declaration

Completion

Completion refers to proportion of students who received their qualification four years and 15 days from course start. As a result, our completion data is lagged. We observed four key indications of risk at the completion stage of the student lifecycle.

The 2017 **FT completion gap between students from IMD Q1** and IMD Q5 is 5.9 pp. This gap is smaller than the sector gap (10.8 pp), but remains one of the most persistent completion gaps that is observable in our completion data. Data suggests students IMD Q1 have persistent risks of equality of opportunity.

The four-year **aggregate FT completion gap between Asian** and white students is 5.6 pp compared to the four-year aggregate sector gap of 1.4 pp. In addition, we have larger four-year FT completion gaps who identified as having a mixed ethnic background as well as students who identified as 'other' ethnicity (see Figure 5 below).

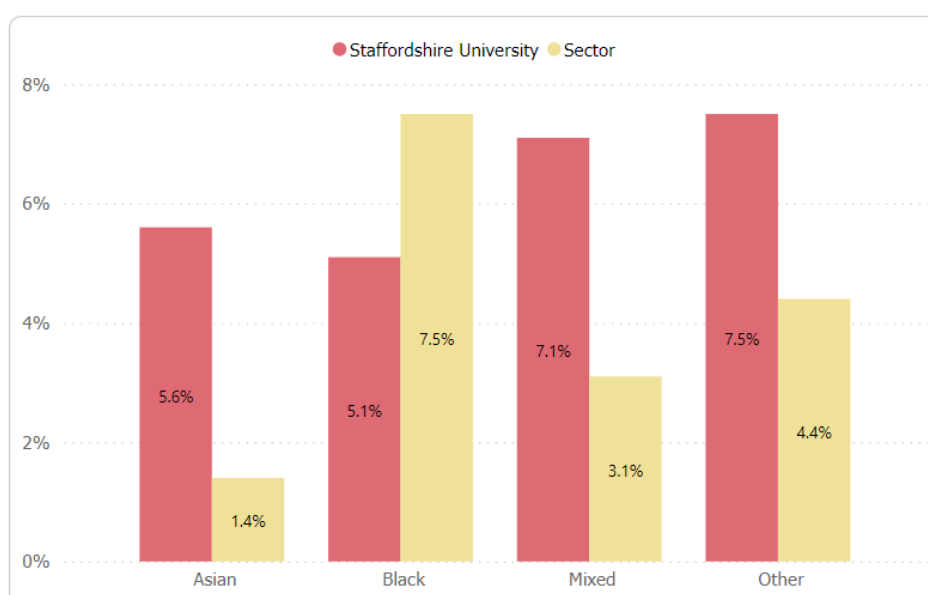


Figure 4. Four-year aggregate completion gaps for students with racialised ethnicities

Good degree attainment

Good degree attainment refers to the rate at which students receive a 2:1 or 1st class degree. We have identified several indications of risk centred on the ethnicity degree awarding gap (EDAG). We have observed several indications of risk through analysis of the four-year aggregate **attainment gap for students from racialised ethnic groups including Asian student, Black students and students who identify as 'other ethnicity'** (see Figure 6).

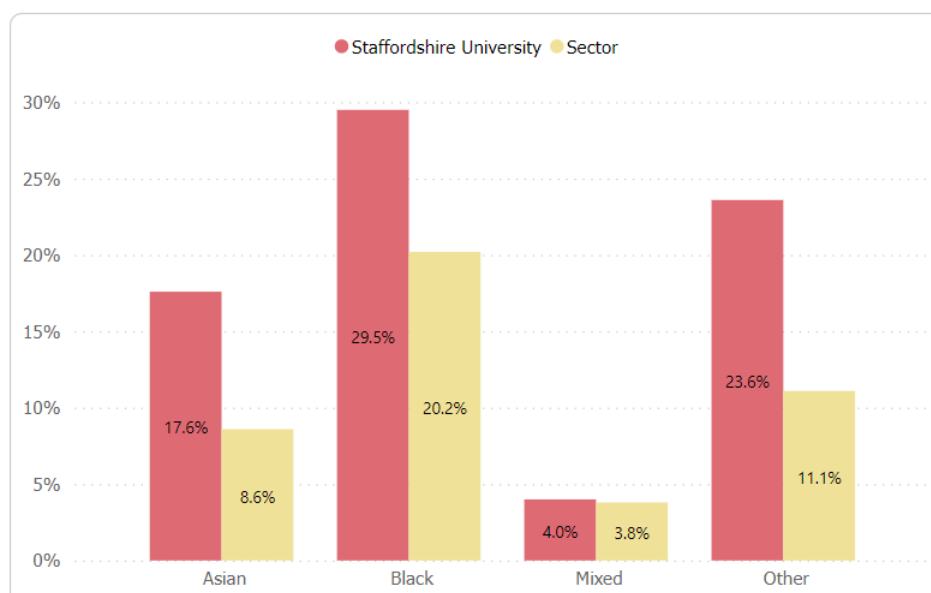


Figure 5. Four-year aggregate good degree gaps for students with racialised ethnicities

A thorough disaggregated analysis of ethnicity and good degree attainment by year was frustrated due to the low population sizes of racialised ethnic groupings and significant variation was observed each year. Four-year aggregate analyses offered more insight and the analysis found that persistent risks exist across a range of ethnicities including:

- 33.2 pp attainment gap between Black or Black British – African
- 23.7 pp attainment gap between Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
- 16 pp attainment gap between Black or Black British – Caribbean
- 13.6 pp attainment gap between Asian or Asian British – Indian
- 9.7 pp attainment gap between Other Asian background

Lower attainment gaps were observed for Mixed – white and Black Caribbean (4.3 pp). Four-year aggregate data were too low to publish ($n < 30$) for the following racialised ethnicities:

- Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
- Arab
- Chinese
- Mixed – White and Black African
- Other Black background
- Other ethnic background

Figure 7 shows four-year aggregate subject-level variation in good degree outcomes between Black, Asian and white students with gaps observed in all areas except for Education and teaching. This data was not disaggregated further due to low population sizes for some racialised ethnicities.

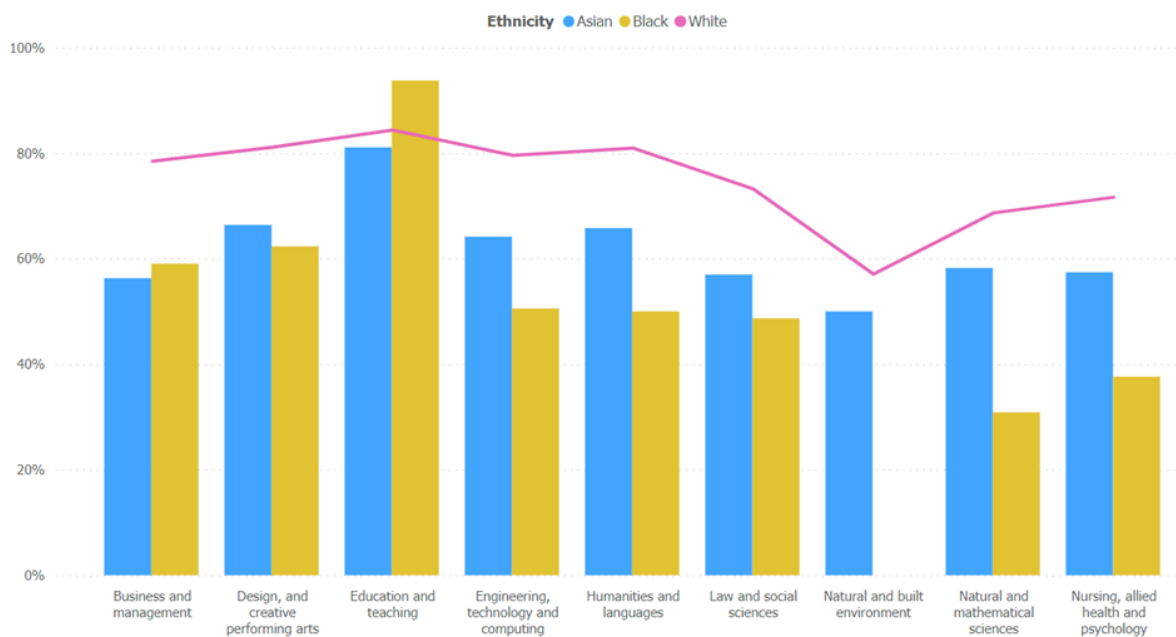


Figure 7. Four-year aggregate subject level variation of good degree gaps for students with racialised ethnicities

There has been a steady increase in the number of HE students declaring a disability in England, with a 47% uptick in the number of students with a known disability from 2014/15 to 2019/20.⁶ Between 2010/11 and 2021/22, the number of students declaring a mental health disability increased nearly seven-fold.⁷ The growth in declaration has been reported across all different disabilities categories, however the sharpest rise has come through mental health declarations,

These figures only consider students with an official diagnosis for their condition(s) and have declared this condition with their providers. We know that there are students outside of these parameters who are likely struggling with mental health. While just over 5% of the student population in England has a declared mental health disability, Student Minds' 2022 mental health survey⁸ indicated 57% of respondents ($N = 1037$) self-reported a mental health issue, while only 27% stated they had a diagnosed mental health condition, suggesting a significant iceberg effect.

FT UG enrolment for students with a declared disability, particularly students with a declared mental health or multiple disabilities have increased from 2018 (see Figure 8 below). We have identified several indications of risk for students with a declared disability. We have **increasing enrolments of students with a mental health condition or multiple impairments** which may have an impact on attainment rates in the future. We also have **low attainment rates for students with social or communication impairments as well as students with a cognitive or learning difficulty**.

⁶ Hubble, S., & Bolton, P. (2021). Support for disabled students in higher education in England. *Briefing Paper*, 8716. Accessed on: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8716/#:~:text=In%202019%2F20%20332%2C300%20UK,47%25%20since%202014%2F15>.

⁷ Lewis, J. & Bolton, P. (2023). Student mental health in England: Statistics, policy and guidance. Accessed on: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8593/>

⁸ Student Minds (2023). Student Minds Research Briefing – February '23 [PowerPoint slides]. Accessed on: https://www.studentminds.org.uk/uploads/3/7/8/4/3784584/student_minds_insight_briefing_feb23.pdf



Figure 8.. Full-Time Undergraduate enrolment for students with a declared disability

Figure 8 (below) summarises the four-year aggregate attainment rates for students with a declared disability. The lowest attainment rates observed were for students with a declared social or communication impairment (65.8%) and for students with a cognitive or learning difficulty (68.2%).

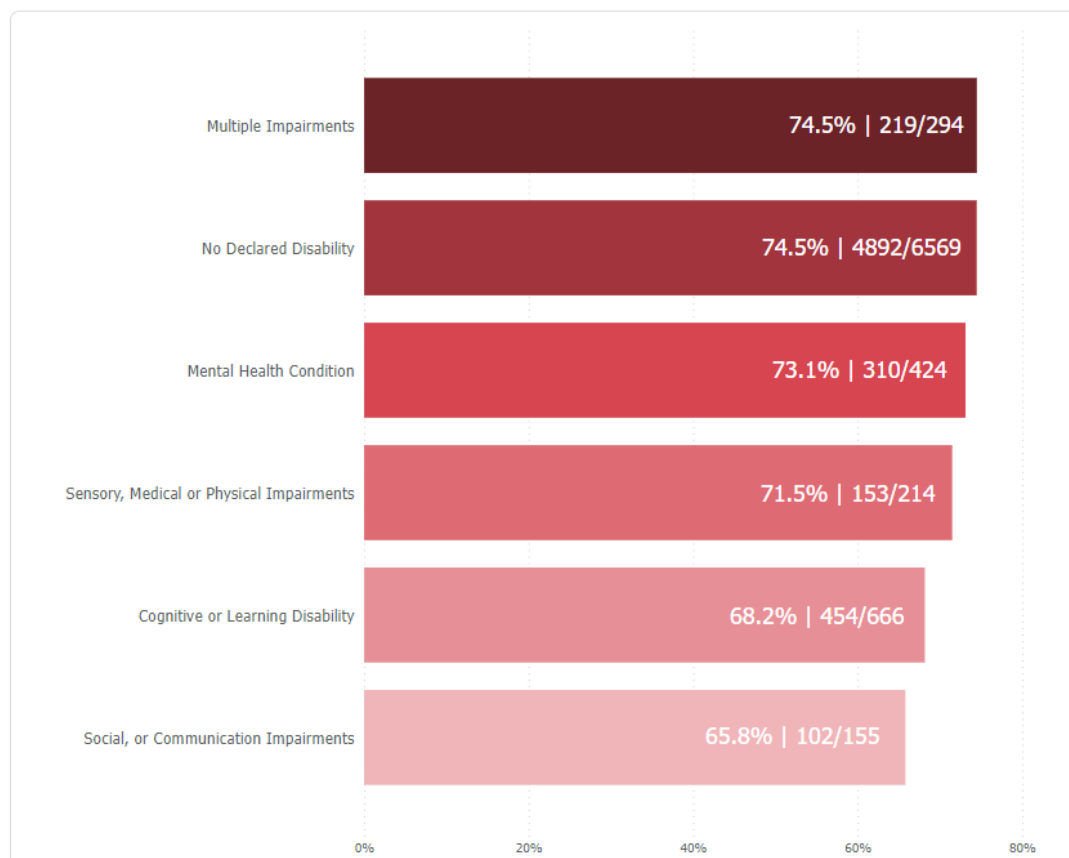


Figure 6. Four-year aggregate attainment rates for students with a declared disability

Progression

Progression is defined as whether a student reports, '*managerial or professional employment, or further study, 15 months after a higher education qualification has been awarded*' as part of the graduate outcomes survey (GOS).⁹ Our three-year (2017/18 to 2019/20) aggregate progression rate was for FT was 68.1% and 78.4% for PT studies. An assessment of performance for [add years here once confirmed in comments!] progression found an indication of risk related to the **progression rate of students from IMD Q1**. Progression rates for IMD Q1 are low (65%) compared to our overall FT and PT rates, and compared to the sector (67.2%). Additionally, our progression rates for students from IMD Q5 are higher than average (74.0% in 2020/21).

⁹ OfS. (2022). <https://officeforstudents.org.uk/media/6c99753c-2ccf-4dc6-93e1-cc712a987b43/exploring-student-outcomes.pdf>

Annex 2. Evaluation plan example

We have created a high-level evaluation template to communicate our evaluation plans with stakeholders. We have reproduced an example of this template using our high-level evaluation plan of FutureMe.

FutureMe. University of Staffordshire's Access and Transitions will lead the local evaluation of FutureME, with supplemented survey data provided by programme lead – Higher Horizons (HiHo+). A data-sharing agreement has been organised, to ensure 1) we can access student survey responses and 2) students are not doubly surveyed as programme participants (e.g.; by University of Staffordshire and HiHo+) This evaluation plan was designed to fit OfS Type 1 and Type 2 standards of evidence and will capture the impact on students' awareness on transition to HE and careers pathways, attitudinal changes towards HE. Programme statistics will be collected to monitor the number of interventions, number of students and staff engaged, and number of deliverers trained to monitor progress against targets. Survey questions will cover satisfaction with delivery and resources with an open-ended question asking participants what they found useful about it. The impact of the programme will be measured using longitudinal intervention day surveys delivered by HiHo+ (embedded into activity resources) capturing increases in awareness, attitudes and skills; while separate summative end of year Key Stage surveys for students and school staff will measure sustained impact. Qualitative outputs, delivered and analysed by the University's Access and Transitions Team, will ensure that we can contextualise and enrich quantitative findings and will combine traditional semi-structured student focus groups with guided student intervention diaries completed by students that trace student learning journeys.

FutureMe Evaluation Plan	
Evaluation lead: Access and Transitions team, Higher Horizons team	
OfS Standards of evidence: Type 1, Type 2	
Evaluation dimensions: Process, impact, and learning	
Data collection methods	Outcomes
Programme data review	MT2
Longitudinal intervention feedback form	ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4, MT3
Annual student survey (from HiHo+)	ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4, MT3
Annual student FGs (1-2 focus groups for KS3-4 and 1 focus group for KS5)	ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4, MT3

Table 4. FutureMe Evaluation Plan

Appendix B. Summary of Access and Participation Plan (variation for 2025-26 to 2027-28)

University of Staffordshire

Summary of 2025-26 to 2027-28 access and participation plan

What is an access and participation plan?

An access and participation plan (APP) sets out the provision we expect will be meaningful and effective to promoting equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups of undergraduate, home students.

You can see the full APP for University of Staffordshire at <https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/access-and-participation-plan>.

Key points

Our APP explains what we will do to improve outcomes and promote equality of opportunity for our students. Our data and other available evidence indicate that some groups of students may face additional barriers to achieving their full potential. This is evident across different points of a learners' journey into, through and beyond Higher Education (HE).

When developing our APP, we conducted an assessment of performance to explore our institution's unique context and student outcomes (see Annex A – page 40 of the APP for more information). This assessment has informed the development of the APP and what we are aiming to achieve. Our APP includes strategic interventions during access, completion, attainment and progression points in the student journey.

Access refers to learners the opportunity learners have to access and enter HE. It is known that some disadvantaged student groups may face unique challenges that impact whether they access HE.

- Free School Meal (FSM) recipients are less likely to come to Higher Education than those who do not receive FSM.
- There are low access rates for students with racialised ethnicities, particularly students from Black and Asian backgrounds.

Completion refers to learners finishing their course in which they have enrolled. Some student groups may experience barriers which can impact their ability to complete their degree.

- Students with associations between different marginalised characteristics are less likely to complete their degree.
- Racially minoritised students, particularly from Asian backgrounds, are less likely to complete their degree.

Attainment refers to students receiving a “good degree outcome” which equates to a 2:1 or a 1st degree classification. We know that some students face barriers which can impact their ability to achieve a “good degree”.

- Racially minoritised students, particularly from Black and Asian backgrounds may face barriers to achieving a good degree.
- Students that have a declared a disability are less likely to be awarded a good degree outcome compared to students that have not declared a disability.

Progression refers to students being in graduate employment or postgraduate education 15 months after completing their degree. Some students may face challenges which make them less likely to progress after completing their course.

- Students with associations between different marginalised characteristics are less likely to have “good progression” after completing their course.

Fees we charge

You can see a full list of fees for courses at University of Staffordshire at <https://www.staffs.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/fees-and-funding/fees>.

Financial help available

See page 37 of the APP for more information.

We offer financial support to help students in need complete, succeed and thrive in their course (see page 37). This support includes:

- **Student Success fund** which provides bursaries for students with indications of risk in times of hardship.
- **Care leavers and estranged students fund** which provides bursaries to students who are care leavers or estranged from their families.
- **Disability assessment fund** which provides funding for assessment and equipment to enable dyslexic students to succeed.

Information for students

Prospective students can learn more about the University of Staffordshire by attending in-person events and open days. You can email us with any questions you have about fees, financial support or student life from our [website](#).

You can learn more about our peer mentoring programme on our [Careers Support page](#).

Current students receive information about fees, financial support and student life from the Beacon student platform as well as through communications and emails.

Our [website](#) will have the most up-to-date information for you.

What we are aiming to achieve

We want to support students to access higher education and enable our students do well in their studies and be successful in their careers or postgraduate study.

We use data to help us make decisions about prioritising our work to support students. We looked at our evidence and decided to focus on the following areas of work:

- We will maintain **access rates** for students **eligible for free school meals** at 19.5% of our total new entrant population by 2028.
- We will **increase access rates** for **students from racialised ethnicities** in our undergraduate student profile by 2028
 - We will increase the **access rates** for 18-year-old students from an **Asian background** to 7%.
 - We will increase the **access rates** for 18-year-old students from **Black backgrounds** to 3%.
- We will close the **full-time (FT) completion gap** between students from **IMD Q1 and IMD Q5** to 3pp or less by 2028.
- We will close the **FT completion gap** for students from **Asian backgrounds** to 2 pp or less by 2028.
- University of Staffordshire will close the **FT attainment gap** for students from **Asian backgrounds** to 10 pp or less by 2028.
- We will close the **FT attainment gap** for students from **Black backgrounds** to 15 pp or less by 2028.
- We will close the **FT attainment gap** for students with a **declared disability** to less than 3 pp or less by 2028.
 - Particular focus on closing the attainment gap for students with cognitive or learning difficulties and students with a social or communication impairment.
- We will increase the progression rates for students from IMD Q1 to 68% or higher by 2028.

A full list of our commitments is available on pages 5-7 of our plan.

What we are doing to address keys risks to equality of opportunity

We have developed a series of interventions and activities to address key risks to equality of opportunity and achieve our aims. Our full intervention plans can be accessed on pages 7-26.

Transforming Access (see pages 11-15) – our access interventions aim to provide support and opportunities to traditionally disadvantaged students, ensuring they have equal access to higher education and promoting their success in the academic journey.

Transforming Transitions (pages 15-18) – our transition interventions are strategically designed programmes and activities aimed at empowering learners with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to navigate critical periods of change successfully and foster a sense of belonging during transitions into higher education and employment.

Transforming Curriculum (pages 18-22) – our curriculum-focused interventions involve comprehensive changes to learning and teaching approaches to create more inclusive, relevant, and effective learning experiences for students.

Transforming Student Support (pages 22-26) – our student support interventions involve implementing evidence-based approaches and tailored strategies to address diverse needs and challenges to promote student success and well-being.

How students can get involved

We worked with the Students' Union to gather student input into the design of our access and participation plan. Students are represented on our Access and Participation Plan Steering Board which is responsible for overseeing implementation of the plan.

To provide feedback, students can contact their Students' Union representative lead – contact details can be found on [SU's website](#).

Evaluation – how we will measure what we have achieved

Our activities are informed by what works to support student success. We use data and insights to make sure our activities make a difference for our students. Our activities are evaluated so that we are certain we are delivering the best support for our students. We use evaluation to understand:

- how we need to improve the design of our activities;
- the impact of our activities on different types of students;
- whether we are improving access and attainment for our students.

Our evaluation activities are overseen by experienced practitioners. We are also supporting staff and students to better understand and practice evaluation within their work. Our evaluation work is discussed regularly at the Access and Participation Steering Group who helps us to enhance our approach.

As part of our APP, we will provide paid training for five, year-long Student Research & Evaluation Assistants each year of the plan. These Research & Evaluation Assistants will be guaranteed fieldwork experience by co-evaluating the plan's outlined interventions with the university's dedicated APP research teams.

Contact details for further information

You can contact Inclusive Education and Impact team at erev@staffs.ac.uk for more information.

Fees, investments and targets

2024-25 to 2027-28

Provider name: University of Staffordshire

Provider UKPRN: 10006299

Investment summary

A provider is expected to submit information about its forecasted investment to achieve the objectives of its access and participation plan in respect of the following areas: access, financial support and research and evaluation. Note that this does not necessarily represent the total amount spent by a provider in these areas. Table 5a provides a summary of the forecasted investment, across the four academic years covered by the plan, and Table 5c gives a more detailed breakdown.

Notes about the data:

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Yellow shading indicates data that was calculated rather than input directly by the provider.

In Table 5c (under 'Breakdown'):

"Total access investment funded from HFI" refers to income from charging fees above the basic fee limit.

"Total access investment from other funding (as specified)" refers to other funding, including OFS funding (but excluding Uni Connect), other public funding and funding from other sources such as philanthropic giving and private sector sources and/or partners.

Table 5a - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£1,528,000	£1,582,000	£1,400,000	£1,400,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£851,000	£877,000	£851,000	£851,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£452,000	£469,000	£452,000	£452,000

Table 5c - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£42,000	£44,000	£42,000	£42,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£1,337,000	£1,383,000	£1,209,000	£1,209,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£149,000	£155,000	£149,000	£149,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£1,528,000	£1,582,000	£1,400,000	£1,400,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment (as % of HFI)	6.4%	7.0%	7.2%	7.8%
Access activity investment	Total access investment funded from HFI (£)	£1,472,000	£1,526,000	£1,344,000	£1,344,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)	£56,000	£56,000	£56,000	£56,000
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£262,000	£270,000	£262,000	£262,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£589,000	£607,000	£589,000	£589,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£851,000	£877,000	£851,000	£851,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)	3.5%	3.9%	4.4%	4.7%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£452,000	£469,000	£452,000	£452,000
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)	1.9%	2.1%	2.3%	2.5%

Fees, investments and targets

2024-25 to 2027-28

Provider name: University of Staffordshire

Provider UKPRN: 10006299

Targets

Table 4a: Access targets

Aim [500 characters maximum]	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2024-25 milestone	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone
University of Staffordshire will maintain access rates for students eligible for free school meals at 21.7% of our total new entrant population by 2028.	PTA_1	Access	Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)	Eligible	Not eligible	University of Staffordshire proportion of new entrants who are eligible for FSM stands at 21.7% (4 year average), this is against the Stoke/Staffordshire regional data where the proportion of KS4 students who are eligible for free school meals stands at 21.1%. Unlike the sector, University of Staffordshire does not have an access gap for students eligible for free school meals, and therefore we should focus on maintaining this position.	Yes	The access and participation dataset	2021-22	Percentage	21.7	21.7	21.7	21.7	21.7
University of Staffordshire will increase the access rates for 18-year-old students from an Asian background to 7%.	PTA_2	Access	Ethnicity	Asian	Not eligible	Four-year aggregate access rates for students with racialised ethnicities continue to remain below the sector average. In particular, the access rate for Asian students is a key indication of risk. We have a 10-percentage point (pp) difference in access rates from the sector. In addition, Asian access rates do not match our local Stoke-on-Trent community profile where 9.9% of Stoke residents identified as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh in the 2021 Census.	Yes	The access and participation dataset	2021-22	Percentage points	6.6	6.6	6.6	7	7
University of Staffordshire will increase the access rates for 18-year-old students from Black backgrounds to 3%.	PTA_3	Access	Ethnicity	Black	Not eligible	Four-year aggregate access rates for students with racialised ethnicities continue to remain below the sector average. Access rates for Black students are also a key indication of risk as our access rate is 3.6 pp below the sector average.	Yes	The access and participation dataset	2021-22	Percentage points	1.9	2	2.5	3	3
	PTA_4														
	PTA_5														
	PTA_6														
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 4d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2024-25 milestone	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone
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University of Staffordshire will close the FT completion gap between students from IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 to 3pp or less by 2028.	PTS_1	Completion	Deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivations [IMD])	IMD quintile 1	IMD quintile 5	The 2017 FT completion gap between students from IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 is 5.9 pp. This gap is smaller than the sector gap (10.8 pp), but remains one of the most pertinent completion gaps that is observable in our completion data. Data suggests students IMD Q1 have persistent risks of equality of opportunity.	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	Percentage points	5.9	5	4	3.5	3
Staffordshire University will close the FT completion gap between students from an Asian background to 2 pp or less by 2028.	PTS_2	Completion	Ethnicity	Asian	White	The four-year aggregate FT completion gap between Asian and white students is 5.6 pp compared to the four-year aggregate sector gap of 1.4 pp.	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	5.6	5	4	3	2
Staffordshire University will close the FT attainment gap between students from Asian backgrounds to 10 pp or less by 2028.	PTS_3	Attainment	Ethnicity	Asian	White	4-year aggregate analyses offered insight into good degree attainment gaps, where the analysis found that persistent risks exist across a range of ethnicities including: 1) 23.7 pp attainment gap between Asian or Asian British – Pakistani, 2) 13.6 pp attainment gap between Asian or Asian British – Indian and 3) 9.7 pp attainment gap between Other Asian background	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	17.6	17.4	15	13	10
Staffordshire University will close the FT attainment gap between students from Black backgrounds to 15 pp or less by 2028.	PTS_4	Attainment	Ethnicity	Black	White	4-year aggregate analyses offered insight into good degree attainment gaps, where the analysis found that persistent risks exist across a range of ethnicities including: 1) 33.2 pp attainment gap between Black or Black British – African and 2) 16 pp attainment gap between Black or Black British - Caribbean.	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	29.5	27.7	24	19	15
Staffordshire University will close the FT attainment gap between students with a declared disability and no declared disability to less than 2 pp or less by 2028. Particular focus on decreasing the attainment gap for students with cognitive or learning difficulties and students with a social or communication impairment.	PTS_5	Attainment	Reported disability	Other (please specify in description)	No disability reported	We have increasing enrolments of students with a mental health condition or multiple impairments which may have an impact on attainment rates in the future. We also have low attainment rates for students with social or communication impairments as well as students with a cognitive or learning difficulty. The lowest attainment rates observed, using 4-year aggregate data, were for students with: 1) a social or communication impairment (65.8%) and 2) a cognitive or learning difficulty (68.2%).	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	7.5	2.6	2	2	2
	PTS_6														
	PTS_7														
	PTS_8														
	PTS_9														
	PTS_10														
	PTS_11														
	PTS_12														

Table 4c: Progression targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2024-25 milestone	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone
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