

# [University of Hertfordshire] Access and participation plan [2020-21 to 2024-25]

## 1. Assessment of performance

The diversity of our student population at the University of Hertfordshire (the University) is one of our strengths. According to institutional data, in 2017-18, our student community of over 24,500 students included almost 17,000 Home/EU undergraduates. Out of this population, 85% were studying full-time. Within our Home/EU full-time undergraduate community, there were over 7,500 Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students (53%), over 2,600 mature students (21%) and over 1,700 students declaring a disability (12%). In this section, we evaluate student lifecycle (access, success and progression) performance data of key target groups: disadvantaged students, BAME students, mature students, disabled students, part-time students and care leavers. We also evaluated data concerning intersections of these groups specific to the University. This evaluation relied primarily on the latest Office for Student (OfS) dataset and was complemented by the most recent institutional data where necessary to demonstrate a deeper understanding of our current performance across the whole undergraduate student lifecycle. Data refers to young, full-time, undergraduate students, unless otherwise stated.

### 1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

This section draws on HE participation data, defined by POLAR4 and Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), to determine performance gaps of the least and most represented students.

#### Access

The gap between POLAR4 Q1 (least) and Q5 (most) represented students entering the University has been shrinking year on year since 2013-14 and was 20% in 2017-18. This was 10.9% smaller than the OfS's Key Performance Measure (KPM1) regarding access for low participation groups. Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, the difference between IMD Q1 (most deprived) and Q5 (least deprived) students accessing the University has reversed from a gap of 4.3% to a positive difference of 3.3%.

#### Success

##### Non-continuation

There was a slight downward trend in non-continuation for students from all quintiles, but no quintile has dropped below 9% non-continuation. As of 2016-17 the gap at the University between POLAR 4 Q1 and Q5 students was 0.9%, which is smaller than the OfS's KPM3 regarding non-continuation for low participation groups. The gap in non-continuation between IMD Q1 and Q5 groups has increased by 1% since 2012-13 to an absolute figure of 3% in 2016-17.

##### Attainment

The proportion of students achieving a good degree (1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1) from POLAR4 Q1 has fallen every year since 2013-14. Whereas POLAR4 Q1 students used to outperform Q5 students, this trend has reversed since 2015-16 and the current gap between Q1 and Q5 students achieving a good degree is 2%. The gap in achieving a good degree between IMD Q1 and Q5 groups has increased from 11% in 2013-14 to 20% in 2017-18.

#### Progression to employment or further study

The progression rate to highly skilled employment or further study for POLAR 4 Q1 students has improved every year since 2013-14 and Q1 students currently outperform their Q5 peers by 1% (77% to 76%). However, there was an 11% gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 students in 2016-17.

## 1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

### Access

Access- ethnicity	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Asian	20.9%	23.1%	24.5%	23.5%	23.5%
Black	17.2%	18.5%	19.9%	20.9%	21.1%
Mixed	5.1%	5.7%	5.6%	6%	6.1%
Other	3.5%	4.7%	4.2%	4.6%	5.1%
White	53.4%	48.1%	45.8%	45%	44.2%

Table 1: Undergraduate, full-time and apprenticeship entrants to the University categorised by ethnicity (OfS dataset)

Since 2013-14, there has been an increase in the proportion of BAME students accessing the University compared to White students (Table 1). In 2017-18, BAME students made up 53% of our incoming student population compared to 31% across the English HE sector.

Compared to the sector, access to the University for BAME students was good. However, our internal data showed students from BAME backgrounds were less likely to be offered a place, based on application to offer ratios. While these ratios have improved in each of the last 3 years, we have identified particularly low ratios on certain courses in 3 academic schools that rely on interview formats as part of the application process. We believe this is disproportionately affecting overall institutional ratios. For example, in one of these schools in 2017-18, the gap in application to offer ratio for Black students compared to White students was 19%.

### Success

#### Non-continuation

Since 2013-14, non-continuation for Asian, Black and White students has fallen by 1.4%, 2.8% and 1.3%, respectively. In 2016-17, the gap between White and Black students was 0.2% (8.4% to 8.6%).

#### Attainment

The attainment gap in achieving a good degree between White and BAME students was 19% in 2017-18, an increase of 4% from 2016-17.

Success - ethnicity	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Asian	65%	66%	63%	66%	65%
Black	54%	48%	49%	54%	50%
Mixed	73%	61%	68%	63%	71%
Other	66%	65%	64%	67%	66%
White	77.9%	78.4%	78.9%	76.7%	78.6%

Table 2: Undergraduate, full-time and apprenticeship good degree proportions categorised by ethnicity (OfS dataset)

The gap was widest between White and Black students (28.6% in 2017-18) and this gap is increasing (Table 2).

An internal study of good degrees against entry tariff showed that in 2017-18, in each tariff group, White students outperformed BAME students, with the gaps between White and Black students the most pronounced (Table 3).

		Tariff Group					Total
		0-119	120-239	240-299	300-359	360+	
<b>BAME</b>	% Good Degrees	50%	55%	61%	66%	59%	60%
<b>White</b>	% Good Degrees	71%	68%	77%	82%	78%	77%

Table 3: Good degree proportion by tariff for BAME and White students in 2017-18 (UH dataset)

Adding A-Level and BTEC qualifications indicated BTEC students received proportionally fewer good degrees than A-level students, with White students outperforming BAME students in every tariff group for both qualifications. Overall, the good degree attainment gap between White and BAME students with A-Levels was 14%, while the gap between White and BAME students with BTECs was 27% (Tables 4 and 5).

A-Level		Total	BTEC		Total
<b>BAME</b>	% Good Degrees	68%	<b>BAME</b>	% Good Degrees	43%
<b>White</b>	% Good Degrees	82%	<b>White</b>	% Good Degrees	70%

Tables 4 and 5: Good degree proportion by entry qualification for BAME and White students in 2017-18 (UH dataset)

The University has benefited from being part of the OfS funded Value Added project (led by Kingston University) and we have identified a gap in achieving a good degree between White and BAME students who started their course with the same qualifications. On a numeric scale for Value Added where 1.0 represents the expected outcome for students given their entry qualification and tariff, in 2017-18, White students achieved a score of 1.26 compared to 0.99 for BAME students. This represents a 0.16 increase for BAME students from 0.83 in 2016-17 yet also demonstrated the attainment gap between White students and BAME students.

#### Progression to employment or further study

Progression - ethnicity	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Asian</b>	61%	63%	75%	74%	74%
<b>Black</b>	59%	68%	78%	75%	77%
<b>Mixed</b>	63%	68%	74%	70%	70%
<b>Other</b>	51%	65%	62%	78%	76%
<b>White</b>	70.4%	78.8%	75.8%	78.4%	81.8%

Table 6: Progression rates to highly skilled employment or further study categorised by ethnicity (OfS dataset)

Progression rates to skilled employment or further study have improved for all ethnicities since 2012-13 (Table 6). Despite having the lowest good degree attainment rate, Black students had the second highest rate of progression in 2016-17. However, the gap between White and Black students increased slightly.

#### Structural and unexplained factors

We recognise that, based on our assessment of ethnicity data, closing gaps between BAME and White students will be a primary concern of this plan and is reflected in our strategic aims, objectives and measures. However, we also understand the importance of analysing the structural or unexplained nature of these gaps. Our work in the OfS funded project (led by Kingston University (using a Value-added metric and an inclusive curriculum framework to address the Black and Minority Ethnic attainment gap) informs our work on structural and unexplained gaps. The value-added metric explicitly highlights differences in attainment which cannot be explained by students' entry qualifications. A score of 1.0 indicates a student will leave with the expected degree outcome. Our target (see section 2.2) addresses unexplained gaps for all under-represented groups. In relation to unexplained factors our work in this project to develop and implement an inclusive curriculum toolkit is addressing less visible discrimination such as a white curriculum or unconscious bias. A number of reviews are underway to address teaching and learning structures, staff training and specific practices. For example, at module-level, teaching practices and associated staff/student engagements will be assessed as part of quality assurance; staff training will include awareness raising of cultural bias; the academic misconduct

process has been identified as requiring a review to explain why BAME students are over-represented compared to White students. This plan sets out our commitment to racial justice, addressing inequalities and fostering an equal opportunities and outcomes culture, which is reflected in other institutional submissions (e.g. RECM) and our Theory of Change outlined later in this document.

### 1.3 Mature students

#### Access

In 2017-18, mature students at the University made up 21% of the undergraduate population. The gap between mature and young entrants is relatively unchanged since 2013-14 and was 58% in 2017-18.

#### Success

##### Non-continuation

The University's mature non-continuation rate has been slowly declining since 2013-14. In 2016-17 there existed a gap between mature and young students of 3%.

##### Attainment

Mature students on full-time courses are less likely to achieve a good degree than young entrants. In 2017-18, the attainment rate for mature students was 63%, compared to 71.1% for young students. The gap between these two groups has been stable since 2014-15 at around 8.5%.

#### Progression to employment or further study

Progression – Age	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Mature</b>	73%	85%	84%	86%	87%
<b>English HE providers - mature</b>	70.5%	72.5%	73.4%	73.1%	75.7%
<b>Young</b>	63.7%	70.3%	73.3%	74.3%	76.3%
<b>English HE providers - young</b>	63.2%	65%	68.1%	69.7%	72.3%

Table 7: Progression rates to highly skilled employment or further study categorised by age (OfS dataset)

Despite higher non-continuation and lower attainment than young entrants, mature students have consistently higher progression rates to skilled employment or further study (Table 7). In 2016-17, there was a positive difference of 10.7% between these two groups.

### 1.4 Disabled students

#### Access

Since 2013-14 the number of students declaring a 'mental health condition' as a disability at the University has doubled. In 2017-18 this number of students represented 3% of all undergraduates (200 students). Other categories of disability have seen small increases and the overall rate of students declaring a disability has increased by 2.5% since 2013-14 (12% overall in 2016-17).

#### Success

Non continuation: In 2016-17 there was only a 0.4% gap in non-continuation between students with a declared disability and students without a disability. Within the group of students declaring a disability, the highest levels of non-continuation belonged to students declaring a 'mental health condition' (17%) or a 'social or communication disorder' (15%). Compared to the wider group of students declaring a disability, this represented gaps of 8% and 6%, respectively (although these gaps have decreased slightly in the last few years).

Attainment: The gap in good degree attainment between disabled and non-disabled students was only 0.5% in 2017-18 (compared to the OfS KPM5 of 2.8%). This has reduced from 8% in 2013-14.

Students declaring a 'mental health condition' were most likely to achieve a good degree (74% versus 69% for students declaring a disability), although this was a small cohort of students.

## Progression to employment or further study

Progression to skilled employment and further study for disabled students has increased by 13% since 2012-13 to 77% in 2016-17. For students declaring a 'mental health condition' progression was 75% while those declaring a 'cognitive or learning difficulty' it was 70% (the lowest of any disability group). There was no data available for students declaring 'a social or communication disorder'. The current gap in skilled progression or further study for disabled learners compared to non-disabled learners was less than 2% in 2016-17.

## 1.5 Care leavers

### Access

The 2017/18 intake of care leavers was 15 and the total studying at the University in 2017-18 was 32. In 2018/19, the intake of care leavers was 20 and the total enrolled at the University in this year was 42.

### Success

Non continuation: The non-continuation rate for care leavers between 2017/18 and 2018/19 (all years) was 37.5%. The non-continuation rate following their year of entry was 27.5% for care leavers between 2017/18 and 2018/19. Although it is difficult to establish trends with such small numbers of students, care leavers consistently have much higher non-continuation rates.

### Attainment

Six care leavers completed their degrees in 2017/18. The good degree rate for this group was 67% compared to 69% across all student groups.

Individual progression data is not currently available.

## 1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

In this section, we have drawn on our own institutional data and analysis to complement the OfS dataset in order to better assess our context.

## Gender and ethnicity

### Access

According to institutional data on applications to offers and offers to acceptances ratios, White males were the most likely to receive an offer but the least likely to accept. Black females were the least likely to receive an offer but the most likely accept. Black males were the next least likely to receive an offer and amongst the least likely to accept (along with Asian females).

### Success

Success – Non-continuation	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
BAME Males	10.3%	11.9%	11.9%
White Males	8.8%	8.8%	9%
BAME Females	6.5%	6.5%	6.4%
White Females	8%	6%	7.1%

Table 8: Non-continuation rates for F/T, undergraduate and Home/EU students categorised by ethnicity (UH dataset)

BAME males had the highest non-continuation rate at almost 12% in 2017-18 and since 2015-16 this gap has increased compared to BAME females and White males/females (Table 8). Black males (13.5%) were the most likely to withdraw across all ethnicities.

Success – Attainment	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
BAME Males	54%	59%	57%
White Males	75%	75%	77%
BAME Females	58%	57%	59%
White Females	78%	75%	76%

Table 9: Good degree proportions for full-time, undergraduate and Home/EU students categorised by ethnicity (UH dataset)

In 2017-18, BAME males and females had the lowest rates for good degrees (57% and 59% respectively), although these rates have increased since 2015-16 (Table 9). The gap between BAME and White attainment has fluctuated but is currently at its widest in recent years. In 2017-18, Black male attainment was the lowest of any group (47%) and is 30% less than White males (77%). Asian males have the next lowest rate at 59%. For female groups, Black females had the lowest attainment rate (48%), which was 28% less than White females (76%). Asian females had the next lowest rate at 65%. The gaps in intersections between ethnicity and gender (White males/females versus BAME males/females) has fluctuated but widened in 2017-18.

### **Progression to employment or further study**

Despite having the lowest good degree attainment rate, BAME males had high progression rates to employment or further study (95.5% in 2016). In 2015 and 2016 the gap between White and BAME male progression to employment or further study was only 0.8% and 1.4% respectively.

The gaps in progression between all intersections of gender and ethnicity were more pronounced in terms of graduate level employment and further study. The gap between Black and White males was highest in 2015 (14%) but has decreased to 4.8% in 2016. The gap between Asian and White males has similarly decreased in this period, from 20% in 2014 to 5% 2016.

White females continuously had the highest rate to graduate level employment or further study and the biggest gap between female ethnic groups was 11% between White and Asian females, which has increased by 9% since 2015.

### **Gender and ethnicity and disadvantage**

Although there were gaps in non-continuation and attainment based on characteristics of disadvantage, these were less pronounced than when gender and ethnicity were isolated (see previous section).

## **Age and ethnicity**

### **Success**

#### Non-continuation

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, there was a growing gap between mature BAME learners and mature White learners. In 2017-18 this was 1.5%.

#### Attainment

Between 2013-14 and 2017-18, there was a growing gap in achieving a good degree between mature BAME learners and mature White learners, which in 2017-18 was 29%.

## **1.7 Part-time students**

Since 2013-14, incoming part-time students have declined by 50%. In 2017-18, the number of incoming part-time students was 710. The University has sought to widen modes of study, including more extended degrees, on line distance learning, degree apprenticeships, and our venture with Oaklands College (University campus St Albans), which focuses specifically on mature, part-time learners. We are committing to maintain the proportion of part time students over the lifetime of this plan.

Analysis of OfS and TEF4 datasets reveals gaps in the performance of part-time students compared with full-time students and within our part-time population. According to TEF4 data (2017-18), there is a non-continuation gap of 13.1% between full and part-time students. Progression to highly skilled employment is consistently better for part-time than for full-time students.

Within the part-time population, we have observed important gaps between White and BAME part-time success, including a gap of 9% in non-continuation in 2016-17 and a gap of 22% in attainment in 2017-18. The attainment gap between White and Black part-time students in 2017-18 was 33% (55% for White students and 22% for Black students).

There is also an ethnicity gap in part-time progression to highly skilled employment and further study. For 2016-17, there was a 7% gap between White (87%) and Black (80%) part-time students, however, Asian part-time students had the lowest rate of progression at 70%.

## 1.8 Other target groups

In completing this assessment of performance, it has been challenging to identify robust access and performance data concerning the following groups: carers, people estranged from their families, people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, refugees and children from military families. As part of this Plan, we will develop processes within our Admissions and Registry teams to further identify these groups and track their performance robustly. Additionally, we will review access and outreach programmes to ensure we are reaching these groups.

## 2. Strategic aims and objectives

We will adopt the following strategic aims:

- Equal outcomes for all students
- Transforming lives for all students
- Inclusive culture and environment for students and staff

**Achieving equal outcomes for all students** will address our aims and objectives relating to key target groups (BAME, mature, low participation and disabled) and their non-continuation and attainment.

**Transforming lives for all students** represents our commitment, not only to other target groups, such as low participation, care leavers and mature students, but to the whole student community. We strongly believe that by supporting and improving the student experience for target groups will also benefit the whole student community.

Developing an **inclusive culture and environment for students and staff** will allow us to address key issues and challenges raised by our student and staff communities. A truly inclusive culture will support the whole student lifecycle through curriculum, pastoral and experiential support.

As evidenced by the assessment of our performance, we have a strong record in terms of access and participation, which is evident in our student population and the proportion of students from under-represented backgrounds. We will continue to deliver impactful outreach activity as part of our Uni Connect programme to support participation increases for under-represented groups to both the University and to the sector. Uni Connect activity is underpinned by identifying eligible students based on POLAR4 criteria. However, we also draw on other criteria to define disadvantage, such as Free School Meals, Pupil Premium, low GCSE attainment, low income and Children Looked After status.

We have made good progress in areas such as continuation and attainment for both disadvantaged (measured by low participation and low income) and disabled students. Graduate data reveals high overall progression for all students, including into highly skilled employment and higher further study. We will therefore continue to maintain practices resulting in positive performance while committing to

meet the targets set out in previous Plans. Lastly, we have a strong tradition of supporting care leavers at the University. Although setting measurable targets is difficult for this group due to small numbers (less than 50 declared in 2018-19), we will continue providing tailored support for care leavers to increase their participation, success and progression.

Our data also highlights areas for improvement where gaps exist or are widening. In this new Access and Participation Plan, we draw on our evaluations to identify where these gaps are widest and where we need to allocate resource and activity in order to achieve equality of opportunity and outcomes for all students.

Although the University has a strong record on access, further work should now concentrate on ensuring Black applicants have equal opportunities in accessing all courses in all Academic Schools. Overall, we recognise that our biggest challenge is in addressing equal outcomes for our BAME students, and particularly Black males, compared to White students. Our assessment also revealed the need to support the success of students with a mental health condition and social or communication disorder, as well as mature and part-time learners. These are reflected in our targets. Despite overall very good progression for all students, our analysis exposed gaps between some groups, such as between Asian and White females. The gap in progression to highly skilled employment or further study between White and Black males has reduced but still needs attention.

We have developed targets below to reflect this assessment, which we aim to fulfil by 2024-25. However, we also recognise that these targets focus on specific groups and that achieving equal outcomes for *all* students may not be completed within the lifespan of this plan. With that in mind, we aim to fully achieve our strategic aims by 2030-31.

## 2.1 Target groups

Based on the foregoing assessment of our institutional data and current performance, our specific targets are as follows:

### Access

Our assessment indicated a need to address unequal outcomes for Black male/female applicants in relation to some recruitment or application practices, as well as continuing to improve on participation rates for students from low participation backgrounds. Maintaining access levels of care leavers is also a key aspect of our access strategy.

### Success

Our assessment primarily highlighted the need to focus on BAME student non-continuation and attainment. Furthermore, Black males represent our most at-risk intersection. We also noted gaps in part-time student performance, as well as between IMD quintiles. Additionally, students declaring a mental health condition and a social or communication disability will form a target group. Although we have reported positive trends in supporting the success of low participation students, we aim to eliminate gaps in their non-continuation and attainment rates compared to the most represented students. Recent trends in mature learner and part-time student success mean we will also focus on these groups. Reducing non-continuation and improving attainment for care leavers will continue to feature in our support frameworks.

### Progression

Progression rates for all groups are generally strong, including into graduate level employment and we will continue to monitor these and tailor programming to students' evolving needs. However, Black

males still need support if we are to continue seeing improvements in their outcomes. Asian females are a new at-risk group. Additionally, the gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 students needs addressing.

## 2.2 Aims and objectives

Listed below are aims and objectives for each target group, including intersections where appropriate, which we will achieve by **2024-25**. All targets (with the exception of value added) are reflective of percentage point differences.

### All students

- Achieve a Value Added score of 1.0 for all students in all programmes. Value Added scores take account of structural factors (qualification type and grades) in addressing explained gaps.

### Ethnicity

These targets are aimed at reducing unexplained gaps in performance.

- Reduce the good degree attainment gap between White and BAME students from 19% to 9%
- Reduce the good degree attainment gap between White and BAME students with a BTEC qualification from 27% to 13.5%
- Reduce the good degree attainment gap between White and Black students from 28.6% to 14.3%
- Achieve parity in offers to applications ratios for Black students
- Eliminate the unexplained gap in degree outcome between Black and White students by achieving parity in Value Added scores between these groups

### Asian female

- Reduce the gap in progression to highly skilled employment and further study between White and Asian females from 11% to 5.5%

### Low participation

- Reduce the gap in participation between Q1 and Q5 students from 20% to 10%

### IMD

- Reduce the gap in good degree attainment between Q1 and Q5 students from 20% to 10%
- Eliminate the gap in progression to highly skilled employment and further study between Q1 and Q5 students

### Disability

- Eliminate the gaps in non-continuation between students declaring a disability and students declaring a 'mental health condition' or a 'social or communication disorder'

### Age

- Eliminate the gap in good degree attainment between mature and young learners
- Reduce the good degree attainment gap between mature White and BAME students from 29% to 14.5%

### Part-time

- Eliminate the non-continuation gap between part-time and full-time students

### Care Leavers

- Achieve parity of non-continuation rates between Care Leavers and the rest of the student population

**NB:** The following targets highlight relatively small gaps and although we have not explicitly included these as targets in our Workbook, our Plan is committed to eliminating these by 2024-25 and we will be monitoring them closely:

- Eliminate the gap in non-continuation between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students
- Eliminate the gap in good degree attainment between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students
- Eliminate the gap in non-continuation between IMD Q1 and Q5 students
- Eliminate the gap in non-continuation between White and Black males
- Eliminate the gap in progression to highly skilled employment and further study between White and Black males
- Eliminate the non-continuation gap between mature BAME and White students
- Eliminate the gap in non-continuation between mature and young learners

### 3. Strategic measures

Following a review of access and student success activity in 2016-17, the University adopted a whole institution approach to ensuring equality of opportunity and outcomes for all students. Internally, this resulted in the alignment of key institutional strategies within new monitoring and governance structures, which contributed to important recent success, such as the awarding of TEF Gold and Race Equality Charter Mark (Bronze). Externally, the University is participating in several sector-wide projects, including the OfS Value Added project, which helped inform this Access and Participation Plan.

To ensure a whole institutional approach is embedded, we have developed Theory of Change frameworks for each key group and associated targets. These draw on our strategic approach to set out a clear pathway to successful achievement of our ambitious targets. Our assessment highlighted important performance gaps in relation to socio-economic disadvantage, disability (mental health and social communication disorders), care leavers and part-time study. However, we acknowledge that the biggest challenge and strategic priority facing the University is achieving equal outcomes for BAME students. Therefore, we included this specific Theory of Change in this Plan as an example of how we aim to achieve this and other key targets (see Strategic Measures in section 3.1 below). We also understand that we should embed measures, along with a whole provider approach, not just within the timeframe of this plan, but with a more sustainable approach. So, while strategic measures will enable the fulfilment of targets by 2024-25, they will also facilitate work through 2030-31 that supports achieving equal outcomes for all students.

#### 3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

There are considerable challenges entailed in eliminating explained and unexplained attainment gaps between different groups of students. Fullan<sup>1</sup> (1999) argues that cultural change is always problematic and messy, since it involves the merging of institutional and personal visions. He suggests that efforts must involve interaction and engagement at the institutional, middle-leadership and grassroots levels. As Ball<sup>2</sup> (1990) makes clear, therefore, institutional policy-making must include attention to everyday practice as well as policy production if it is to lead to institutional change.

At the University of Hertfordshire, Philip Woods, Professor of Educational Policy, Democracy and Leadership, emphasises the importance of democratic leadership in which policy and practice is co-developed “through collaborative activity which brings into contact the diverse experiences, expertise and ideas of different people.” (Woods and Roberts<sup>3</sup> 2017:5). We concur with Fullan’s<sup>4</sup> (1990) assertion

<sup>1</sup> Fullan, M. (1999). *Change forces: the sequel*. London, Falmer.

<sup>2</sup> Ball, S. (1990). *Politics and policy making in education*. London, Routledge

<sup>3</sup> Woods, P. and A. Roberts (2017). Collaborative school leadership in a global society: a critical perspective (paper presented at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Leadership)

<sup>4</sup> Management and Administration Society (BELMAS). *BELMAS*. Stratford-upon-Avon, Sage.

that everyone is a change agent. We have therefore adopted an engagement-led approach to cultural change which values experiential, academic and professional expertise and involves both staff and student bodies in development at every level. This approach has successfully driven development of our Strategic plan as well as numerous internal reviews.

It is an approach which moves between institutional, team-based and individual understanding and commitment. Following formulation of a challenge, engagement at grass-roots level enables personal development and personal commitment to act within an individual's sphere of influence. Individuals are then supported to develop team understanding and commitment to act. Teams at all levels—from the most senior to the most junior—are engaged in this process. This engagement of individuals and teams leads to further development of strategic planning and in turn, to further local engagement, driving a cycle of continuous improvement. This shared ownership and personal commitment to act at all levels within the institution produces a collective impact to enable our aims and objectives to be met. While there is clearly still some way to go, this engagement-led approach has enabled promising early outcomes for example our BAME Student Advocate Programme.<sup>5</sup>

As an example of this embedded approach, we outline below our Theory of Change<sup>6</sup> in the context of achieving our commitment to redressing BAME inequality at the University (see Strategic Measures in section 3.1 below).

#### Alignment with other strategies

We have developed this Access and Participation Plan in the context of OfS strategic priorities and assessment of our performance and progress against current targets. The Plan is fully aligned with our most recent Race Equality Charter Mark submission and the following key institutional strategies and policies:

- Strategic Plan (2015-20)
- Strategic Plan (2020-25)
- Strategy for Widening Access and Student Success (2017-20)
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- The University's published Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives (2016-20)

Elements of these strategies are incorporated into our Theories of Change in order to support:

- The adoption of a broad definition of under-represented and disadvantaged groups as identified as part of our assessment: ethnicity, socio-economic disadvantage (POLAR4 and IMD), disability (mental health condition and social communication disorder) care leavers and part-time study
- A reflective and evidence-based approach to all access and participation activity in order to maximise the impact and reach of everything we do
- An inclusive approach that ensures curriculum design, learning and teaching, and student support activity are successful in meeting the needs of our diverse student body in a way that enhances retention, success and employability
- The development of flexible provision and delivery modes to maximise student opportunity (e.g. online delivery and degree apprenticeships)
- The provision of evidence-based, targeted additional support for disadvantaged students to support their continuation and success

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<sup>5</sup> Developing a BME Student Advocate Programme, *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: Case Studies* (2019), London: UUK (<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-case-studies.pdf>)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>

- Working closely in partnership with schools and FE colleges in order to raise attainment of students and promote interest in, and enthusiasm for, higher education
- Working in partnership with our student community to achieve equality of opportunity and outcomes for all
- The diversification of our staff body to be more reflective of our student population
- A targeted positive action approach to staff development in order to effectively support our diverse student body
- Supporting progression to highly skilled employment for all students, including universal access to assessment centres; LinkedIn Learning accounts; and access to careers support for up to 2 years after graduation

We are committed to developing strategic relationships across the sector and through our partnership work with other institutions, such as our leadership of a Uni Connect in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire through the Aspire Higher consortium. Investing in our Uni Connect complements our investment and positive action described in this Plan by addressing wider characteristics of socio-economic disadvantage. This contributes to our wider aims of improving participation rates for the least advantaged and contributing to a sector-wide evidence base around what works in access. A network of local community hubs will ensure sustainable outreach is available across these counties. We will further invest in data analysis, evaluation and monitoring to improve our understanding of the challenges faced by different groups of students and to ensure that investment is informed by evidence to maximise impact and reach in those areas where we most need to improve.

Our Theories of Change provide a roadmap for this work. For each strategic measure, the relevant strand of our Theory of Change regarding equal outcomes for BAME learners is included in this Plan as an example of our ambition to redress existing inequalities (Figures 1, 2 and 3). This focus reflects our assessment prioritising equal outcomes for BAME students. However, we have also developed Theories of Change for other key groups, including socio-economic disadvantage (POLAR4 and IMD), disability (mental health condition and social communication disorder) care leavers and part-time study.

### Strategic measures

In order to achieve our aims and objectives within the lifespan of this Plan (and beyond to 2030-31), we have developed the following strategic measures:

#### Senior leadership

Through regular engagement with strategic measures, aims and targets, including the establishment and on-going monitoring and evaluation of KPIs, we will work to ensure ownership of issues and institutional risks and benefits. This will include the allocation of appropriate and targeted resources; measures to diversify the staff body; and development of strategic relationships across the sector to enhance access, success and progression. This will be underpinned by improved access and understanding of data at university, school and programme level.

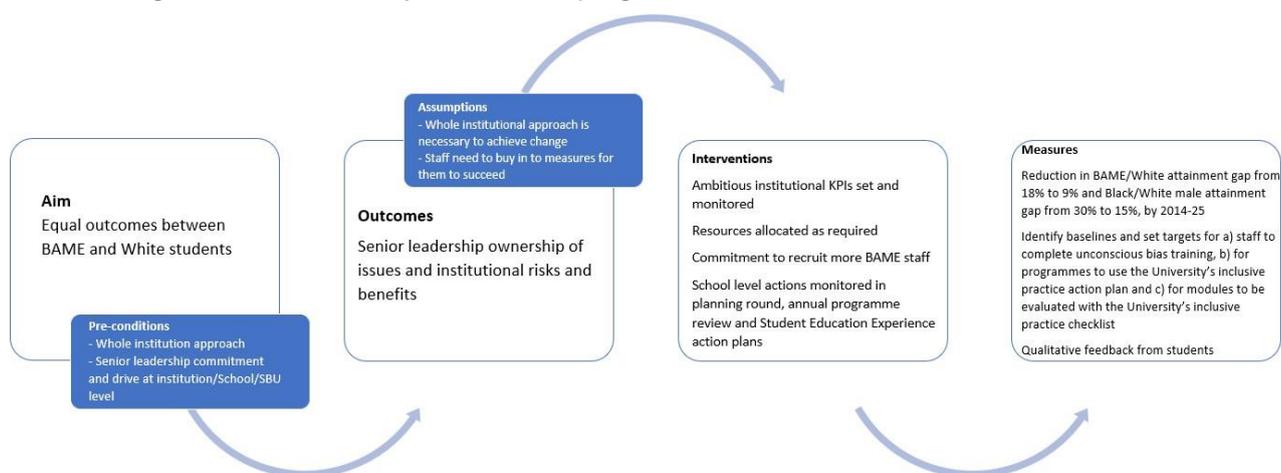


Figure 1: Senior leadership (using BAME attainment) element as one example of Theory of Change

### Inclusive practice

Through a programme of centrally led inclusive practice activities, we will embed changes that enable high quality engagement for all our students. This approach will address teaching and learning practice, the curriculum and structural inequalities. This will build on existing work, such as the use of the University’s inclusive practice curriculum design toolkit; compassion-focused pedagogy to facilitate effective group work<sup>7</sup>; data-informed programme level action plans; coaching and mentoring programmes; as well as success and progression initiatives. These programmes will be informed by the work of our student-staff partnerships (e.g. BAME Student Success Working Group) and other key groups, such as the Student Wellbeing Team and Hertfordshire Students’ Union.

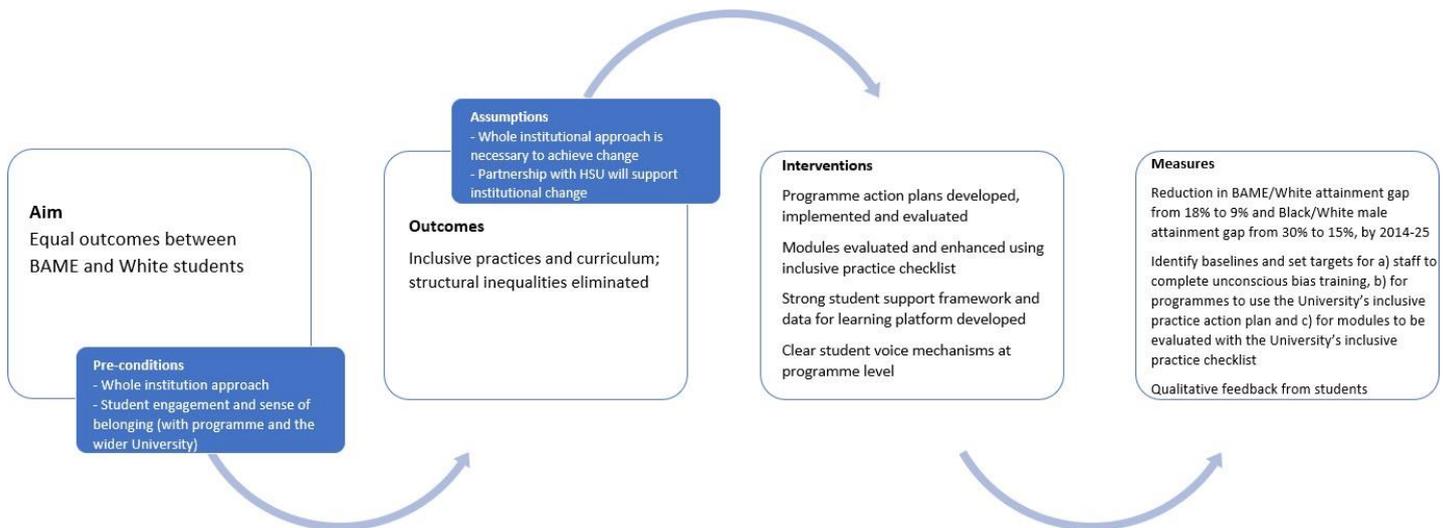
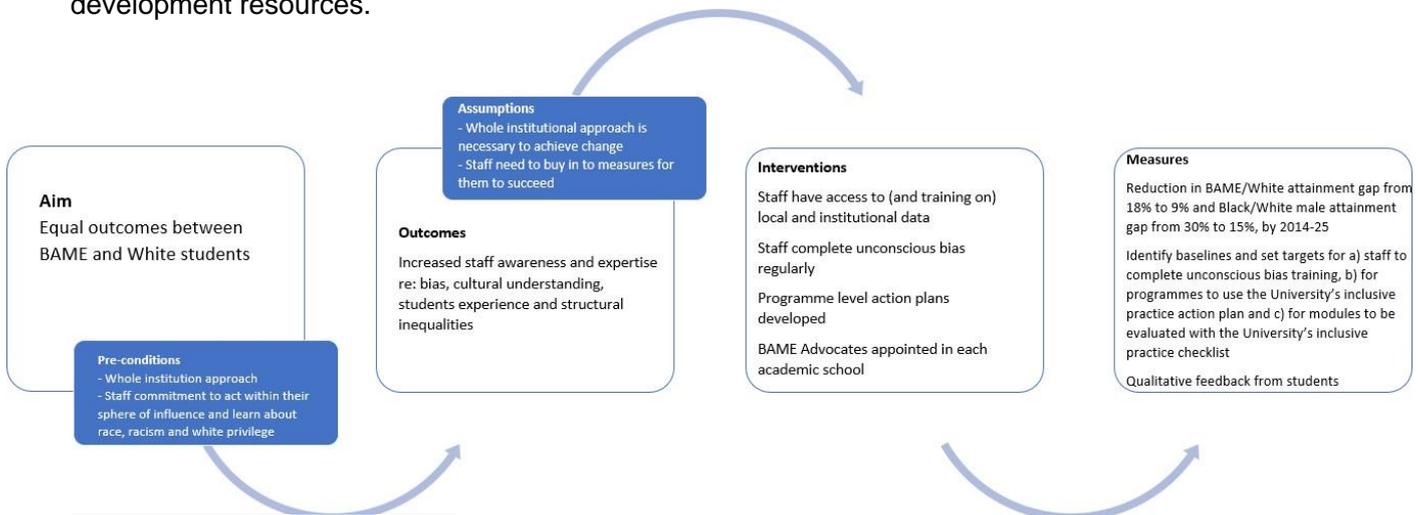


Figure 1: Inclusive practice element (using BAME attainment) as one example of Theory of Change

### Staff awareness and expertise

Staff awareness and understanding of racism, white privilege and bias, cultural differences, student experiences and structural inequalities will be developed through a range of targeted development activities, including implementing an inclusive teaching action plan, peer review teaching, unconscious bias training and better access to student success and progression data at individual and programme level. For example, BAME Student Advocates appointed in each School will work in partnership with staff (e.g. BAME Staff Network) to support this development. We will further enhance staff understanding in relation to mental health first aid and continue to expand our Autism Awareness staff development resources.



<sup>7</sup> Gilbert, T. (2016) ‘Assess Compassion in Higher Education: Why and how would we do that?’, LINK 2016, vol. 2, issue 1

In line with our whole institutional approach supporting institutional, team-based and individual ownership of targets, School-level work on these strategic measures will be undertaken in partnership with central teams from the University, including the Learning Teaching Innovation Centre, Widening Access and Student Success, the Office of the Dean of Students, Careers and Employment and Hertfordshire Students' Union.

### 3.2 Student consultation

The University is wholly committed to staff-student partnership and student co-production, consultation and evaluation is deeply embedded in all aspects of our work; an approach which was highlighted as good practice in our TEF Gold Award statement of findings. The University and Hertfordshire Students' Union (HSU) co-fund student School Community Organisers to support the work of elected student representatives and has appointed BAME Student Advocates in each academic School. Additionally, students are members of all formal university committees including the Student Educational Experience Committee, where our Access and Student Success activities are considered and approved as a standing item on the committee's agenda. The University consults with, and gains feedback from, students in many ways, including working with students from underrepresented groups. Feedback from the following student groups about their experiences via surveys, focus groups, informal discussions and evaluation reports have all informed the development of the Plan:

- Herts Success students (students from low income and low participation backgrounds)
- BAME Student Advocates
- Commuting students
- Leaders of student societies
- Widening Access and Student Success ambassadors

Students from the Herts Success and BAME Student Advocates groups formed 50% of our Theory of Change Workshop where initial targets and high-level objectives were set and their feedback on early drafts has informed our final Plan. Feedback from the BAME Student Success Working Group, which has a very diverse membership and includes student representation from each School within the University, has also informed actions and activities within the Plan relating to student success and graduate employment.

HSU has worked in partnership with the University to develop our Educational, Access and Student Success strategies and this Access and Participation Plan. HSU are enthused about the University's inclusive approach to ensure all students achieve their potential and remove barriers which may exist to transform the lives of every student at the University of Hertfordshire.

A statement from HSU is included below:

*"Hertfordshire Students' Union and the University have aligned aims of equal access and opportunity to Higher Education success; we have worked in partnership on tackling the BAME and other attainment gaps by discussions in collaborative working groups.*

*HSU is very pleased to see such passion and commitment within the University in tackling attainment gaps. The University has demonstrated an early adoption of best practice and are beginning to lead in the sector, having Universities UK highlight the BAME Student Advocates programme and the inclusive practice workshops. It is encouraging to see the University supporting staff in their inclusive practice, facilitating workshops that explore gaps in attainment as well as discussions of race, racism and implicit bias in the workplace.*

*There have been various successes at the school level which we would welcome seeing replicated throughout the University where practical. There are programmes within schools that have made extensive efforts to diversify their curriculum content in order to drive engagement and by having the teaching content reflect students' interests. HSU strongly encourages this practice to be shared across the entire institution, and indeed, across the sector.*

*HSU and University partnership is very effective and strong, together we provide representational opportunities for students to voice what matters to them, and campaigns that respond to student needs, such as the Commuters' Appreciation Week and the BAME Minds Matter campaign run by the Elected BAME Officer. A further example of this partnership is the student working group chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor, which invites 46 highly engaged, diverse students every six weeks to discuss such topics as BAME Attainment and retention, including 10 BAME Advocates, 27 School Community Organisers, five Campaign Officers and four Elected Full-Time Officers.*

*The idea of becoming a lecturer/gaining a PhD degree may never be considered as an option to students of an ethnic minority background. This was combated by events such as our The Secret Life of a PhD Student, which was an informal yet constructive networking opportunity between undergraduate students and PhD students, which aimed to demystify the journey of becoming a PhD student and the experience of being on such a course.*

*HSU and University raised awareness in autism, and circulation of best practice teaching guides for autism in higher education, which gained a lot of momentum across academic departments. This has been communicated requesting embedding the need for our university's standard teaching and learning practice to be adequate for students with autism as part of the Access and Participation strategic planning for student success.*

*HSU would like to emphasise the importance of community feel and sense of belonging among our students to ensure their engagement during their time at University – the work detailed above is an essential part of building this community feel and the HSU welcomes further development in this area.*

*HSU is delighted to see that the issue of attainment gaps is being approached with the same ambition and rigour often displayed in the pursuit of knowledge, high quality research and teaching excellence. We encourage the University to continue being an exemplar in the sector, and we are committing to deepening our collaboration to further this. We support the University developing an action plan to eliminate attainment gaps that is embedded and embraced institution-wide, with interventions that aim to achieve cultural change and drive for equality in opportunities and outcomes.*

*We are committed to continuing our collaborative approach of gathering and analysing data, tracking progress and implementing evidence-based interventions through a clear and inclusive action plan. We are optimistic that we will continue to work together to make great strides towards closing and eliminating attainment gaps together.”*

The PVC Education and Student Experience chairs a Student Advisory Group that offers input and guidance on all aspects of student experience. The group, which includes our BAME Student Advocates as well as School Community Organisers and HSU Sabbaticals and Campaign Officers, was consulted during the drafting of this Access and Participation Plan for their views on the areas of key focus. With an emphasis on activity that is 'more than the degree', students talked about the importance of co-curricular activities, internship opportunities, engaging with representative activity and joining societies. This was true whether they were discussing outreach activity (benefits of supporting a

summer school); Herts Success (trips/activities that built friendships and a sense of belonging); employability (internship opportunities as well as 'work like' activities) or other activity such as organising events and attending meetings. Their feedback aligned with, and further informed, the content of the Plan. We will report back to the group to monitor implementation as well as consult with them during the development of future iterations of the Access and Participation Plan.

In addition to student input into the development of the Plan, feedback on draft iterations was sought from students and the HSU. BAME Student Advocates were given the opportunity to feedback on the draft as were Executive Officers within HSU. Their feedback and suggestions were acted on before the draft plan was considered by the University's Chief Executive Group and the University's Board of Governors. The Chief Executive's Group and the Board of Governors includes student representation via the President of HSU and thus provided further opportunities for student input before final approval of the plan.

### 3.3 Evaluation strategy - amended section

This section is informed by an assessment of our evaluation strategy, design and practice using the OfS' evaluation self-assessment tool and is structured according to the subtitles used in the tool.

This section has been amended to address the OfS' expectation that universities will significantly increase the volume and quality of evaluation across their access and participation activity.

#### Strategic context

Our strategic context for evaluation was categorised as 'advanced' by the self-assessment tool. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of our actions is at the heart of the University's strategic approach to evidence-led improvement. We have a dedicated resource within the Widening Access and Student Success and Student Information and Planning teams for evaluation of impact. There is a growing culture of evaluation-informed practice at the University, including the availability of opportunities to reflect and share findings. We are also engaged with sector-wide work in areas such as BAME attainment.

The new OfS priorities for access and participation will inform a revised evaluation strategy which will provide a clear direction for our evaluation work. The strategy will align with the University's Strategic Plan which supports a whole institutional approach to evaluation. This approach will build on our existing strengths and experience in adopting consistent and effective approaches to evaluating access and participation activity across the student educational journey.

The new strategy will focus on further embedding a 'What Works' culture amongst staff who design, implement, and evaluate access and participation initiatives. Key to this will be enabling staff to increase the volume and quality of evaluation which can be used to inform access and participation activity and providing the tools and support necessary to do this.

The strategy will be underpinned by an implementation plan which will include the development of an evaluation toolkit, staff training and development, and mechanisms for sharing learning.

The intended outcomes of the strategy will be to:

- To establish a consistent and effective approach to evaluating access and participation activity and measuring impact on student outcomes.
- To embed a 'What Works' culture amongst staff who design and implement access and participation initiatives.
- To disseminate learning derived from evaluation activity in a timely, accessible, and purposeful way.

The strategy will be comprised of five key elements:

- Theories and models for working
- Resources and tools
- Data as evidence
- Staff training and development
- Dissemination of learning

Evaluation will be operationalised using annually agreed plans which will determine evaluation priorities for the year ahead, along with intended outcomes, evaluative methods, and indicative timelines for each.

Measuring 'disadvantage', the effect it has on individuals and the impact of institutional support is complex. Our new evaluation strategy acknowledges this and proposes to monitor and analyse student data at key points in the student lifecycle, using Value Added data, as well as continuation, degree attainment, completion and progression data. This specifically includes the continuation and success of those students in receipt of additional financial support. These data points, along with programme evaluations influenced by the OfS' standards of evidence, inform the design of programmes aiming to support our target groups.

Responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of the Access and Participation Plan falls under the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education and Student Experience. Progress against targets, along with evaluation of access, success, and progression activity, is reported to the Education and Student Experience Committee and the Academic Standards and Audit Committee, and is further disseminated to appropriate sub-committees, reflecting our whole institutional approach. Our Student Performance Monitoring Group is responsible for producing the data that informs the reporting process. By regularly tracking progress against the Plan's targets and aims, we can measure changes in student outcomes.

### **Programme design**

Our programme design for evaluation was categorised as 'emerging' by the self-assessment tool. Programme planning is evidence-informed using our own sources plus evidence from other institutions (e.g., via our Uni Connect partners) and sector published research. Evaluation plans for individual programmes and activities are embedded during the planning stages against intended outcomes and measures of success which focus on how the programme will impact participant outcomes. A 'What Works' Planning Model has been designed to further support staff to employ evidence-informed approaches to the planning and evaluation of access and participation activity (Fig. 1)

## 'What Works' Planning Model

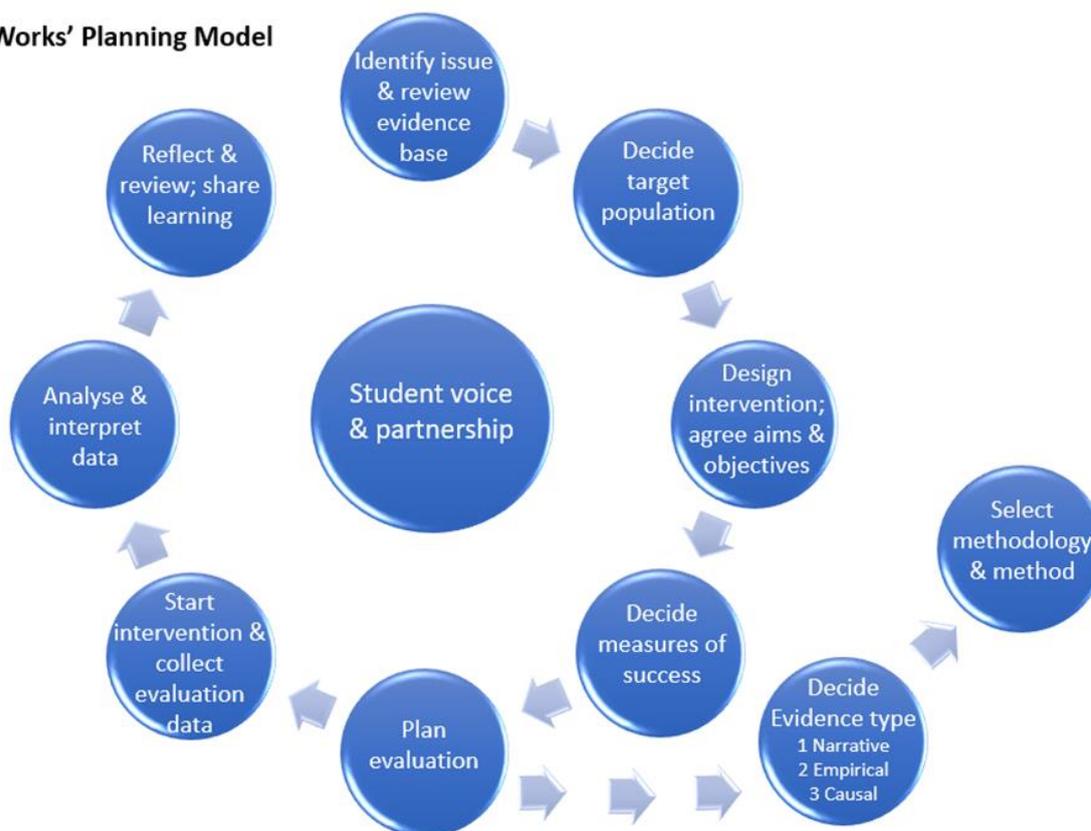


Fig 1.

### Evaluation design

Our evaluation design was categorised as 'good' by the self-assessment tool. All access, success and progression activities are underpinned by a Theory of Change encompassing a whole institution approach, logic chain, and evaluation plan (detailing aims, targets, outcomes and methods). This alignment helps to ensure that the type of evaluation in place is appropriate to the type of activity, lifecycle stage and our understanding of the intervention. To date, all access, success, and progression activity has been evaluated based on the OfS standards of evidence type 1 – 2. Our revised strategy will enable us to continue with this work whilst additionally moving towards the generation of Type 3 evidence over the course of the next three years. Our newly developed Evaluation Toolkit will provide staff with a practical resource to further support the development of robust evaluation design as will staff training resources which will be produced as part of the new strategy.

### Evaluation implementation

Our evaluation implementation was categorised as 'advanced' by the self-assessment tool. Our evaluation plans (formerly called Frameworks) outline reliable and robust data collection processes for the capture of data that points to the impact of our interventions on participants. These include pre and post surveys, learner focus groups, and Likert scales. We work in partnership with data teams, Academic Schools, and Professional Services to share and analyse data. Our use of Tableau gives us enhanced programme-level monitoring, including value-added data, which allows increasingly sophisticated analysis of student outcomes. Externally, our relationship with our access schools and the local authority ensure we are provided with accurate and timely data on participants and their participation outcomes. Our access work is supported using the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) that allows us to triangulate programme outcomes and impact with individual participation outcomes.

Evaluation implementation is supported by a dedicated resource and all aspects of data collection

comply with internal protocols, GDPR guidelines and data sharing agreements between delivery partners.

### **Learning**

Our learning was categorised as 'good' by the self-assessment tool. However, we are conscious of the limitations of our own evaluation design when disseminating results (e.g., small samples, participant self-selection). We draw on mixed methods to promote different perspectives but are aware we could better triangulate the information (e.g., the impact of an in-school information, advice, and guidance programme on pupils over a period of time combined with teacher and parent data). We are cognizant of the need to embed a 'What Works' culture where evaluation findings inform practice, and evidence of impact is the end goal.

Internally, we have well established dissemination routes for outcomes and impact reporting, via senior committees, including the Academic Registrar Recruitment and Admissions Advisory Group, Student Education and Experience Committee (formerly the Student Experience and Education Committee), Academic Board, Chief Executive Group and the Board of Governors. Learning is also disseminated through other channels such as the University's Learning and Teaching Conference where good practice is shared, and collaborative partnerships are built. Externally, staff share learning in sector forums (e.g., HEAT; FACE) and conferences, and by publication in journals and blogs.

### **3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan**

Formal monitoring of the implementation of the Access and Participation Plan will be carried out by the Student Education and Experience Committee (formerly the Student Experience and Education Committee), which, as mentioned previously, includes representation from HSU elected officers. Ongoing feedback on the implementation will be sought through our Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Advisory Group, the BAME Student Advocates, and through focus groups of students with disabilities, care leavers, mature students and key staff networks, such as the BAME Staff Network. Through the BAME Student Success Working Group, students have been involved in the discussion of attainment and employment data relating to students from underrepresented groups. Sharing the analysis of the data with students has been crucial in aiding our understanding and we will continue to do this as part of our data evaluation of the Access and Participation Plan.

The University's Student Performance and Monitoring Group is responsible for the analysis and reporting of timely data to Student Education and Experience Committee, Academic Standards and Audit Committee, Academic Board and the academic Schools. All the Student Performance and Monitoring Group's work is fully aligned with the Access and Participation Plan key targets and further development of Tableau dashboards now allows granular monitoring at institution, academic school and programme level where appropriate. As the dashboards enable us to consider data at a greater level of detail, the University can monitor and specifically target activity and resources to address attainment gaps in those areas of the highest concern. We utilise the OfS financial support evaluation toolkit, data analysis and qualitative methods to measure the impact of financial support for key student groups at different points in the student lifecycle, such as access, continuation, progression and student life in general.

The University's Annual Monitoring and Periodic Review process for academic programmes has been revised to include the provision of data against key Access and Participation Plan targets at programme level. Programme teams are tasked to include specific actions where these targets are not being met; and provide examples of good practice for wider dissemination where this has been identified and shown to be effective.

BAME Attainment is now a standing item on the Academic Board Agenda where progress towards

achieving key targets will be reported. The Board of Governors and Chief Executive's Group are ultimately responsible for monitoring progress and performance against the Plan and receive regular reports through the Student Performance and Monitoring Group and other committees, as well as the Tableau dashboards

The Governing Body is fully engaged with the monitoring of performance and all provisions of the Access and Participation Plan (APP). Board members regularly interact with Officers and Groups that are engaged with the APP activities. It is regular practice that our Board members are invited to and attend events such as the Learning and Teaching Conference, Research and Equality seminars and workshops. Board members are also openly invited to Academic Board and their sub-committees.

The Audit and Risk Committee sits within the Board of Governors governance structure and its role is to provide assurance to the main Board of Governors. The Audit and Risk Committee was fully involved with the ongoing development of the APP. The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee attends the Academic Standards and Audit Committee of the University and receives the monitoring reports of the SPMG Group mentioned above. On completion of the APP, the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee updated the Board regarding the development of the plan, concentrating on the specific targets and objectives, prior to the Board of Governors approving the plan for submission to OfS.

The Audit and Risk Committee will be the main governing body committee that will oversee the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the plan. A review and monitoring of the APP has been incorporated into the University's internal audit plan for 2019/20 and the Committee will specifically assess the targets and objectives, highlighting any gaps with recommendations on how these should be addressed. In addition to this, presentations by the University will be made to the Audit and Risk Committee on a regular basis, to ensure full engagement. As the University has a significant number of BAME students, the reduction of the BAME Attainment Gap has clearly been identified by the Board as a specific published Equality objective which requires ongoing monitoring.

If progress with the specified targets and objectives is limited, the Board would expect to see specific activities/initiatives targeted at the areas that were under performing, along with ensuring that underperforming areas had appropriate Board level KPIs in place allowing for clear ownership and accountability. The Board would also ensure that sufficient resources were allocated to assist with improvements of the underperforming areas. The Board is cognisant that the objectives and targets within the APP are aligned with other published strategies and therefore the Board will look at the APP targets in the context of how they relate to these other objectives for example, Strategic Plan and Equality and Diversity objectives.

## 4. Provision of information to students

**Fee information** – Fee information is provided at application stage within our Prospectus and the Course Pages of our website and is held in our Application Guide pages, which stores our Fee and Finance Policy. Applicants are then made specifically aware of the fees for their course at the point of receiving an offer to study at the University. They are emailed detailed information about the course, which outlines the fee, and at this point they also receive a direct link to the Fee & Finance Policy.

**Financial support** - Financial support for students is a key part of our access and participation strategy. We estimate (based on analysis of OfS target groups currently accessing our courses) that just under 70% of our undergraduate, UK/EU fee status, undergraduate student population are from under-represented backgrounds, so our bursaries

This section has been amended to reflect changes in how financial support funds are distributed to under-represented students

have been, and continue to be, reviewed annually to ensure a meaningful level of support is provided to as many students as possible.

The University focuses financial support on improving continuation for economically disadvantaged and under-represented students. Research by York and Longden (2004), suggests that financial barriers are a contributing factor to non-continuation which is highest following the year of entry for economically disadvantaged students. They also cite financial difficulties as one reason for poor student engagement.<sup>8</sup> Tight (2019) also highlights the connection between student retention and student engagement issues.<sup>9</sup> While the University's record on continuation for disadvantaged students is strong, there has been a slight downward trend. Our own internal evaluation of continuation rates for students in receipt of a bursary compared with those without, suggests that bursaries are effective in supporting continuation.

The University provides financial assistance to support successful outcomes through the following bursaries:

**The UH Bursary.** From 2022-23, £1,500 (previously £1000) is available to students in their first year of study, specifically targeted at entrants from areas of low progression into higher education who also have a household income of £25,000 and under.

**Care Leaver Bursary.** Care Leavers in every year group receive £1,500 per year of undergraduate study to support successful outcomes. From 2022-23, this will increase to £1,800 per year.

**Independent (Estranged) Student Bursary.** From 2021-22, Independent (Estranged) students received £1,500 per year for every year of undergraduate study to support successful outcomes. From 2022-23, this will increase to £1,800 per year.

The University offers an additional bursary of £1000 to all graduating Care Leaver and Independent (Estranged) students on completion of their degree, to enable them to participate in graduation and/or cover initial expenses upon graduation (including accommodation and accessing job interviews) and therefore support their transition to life beyond their course of study.

From 2022-23, the University will also provide financial assistance via the following bursaries:

**Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) computer bursary.** Where a DSA funded computer is recommended for students with disabilities (following a diagnostic assessment) they are required to contribute the first £200 towards the cost of the equipment. Funding is available to support these costs to ensure students have the necessary equipment to complete their studies.

**Young Adult Carer bursary.** The University recognises the potential additional barriers to academic success faced by this group. £250 a year is available for each year of undergraduate study.

As well as the bursaries offered above, further financial assistance for students can be accessed via the University's hardship fund (maximum award of £2,500), which provides discretionary resources to support retention, particularly for those students who need help to meet extra costs that cannot be met from other sources of support. In addition, financial education is provided via workshops and a financial skills programme that aids students to learn how to manage their money effectively. This provision seeks to retain students who may otherwise have to leave the University due to the financial implications of undertaking university level studies.

The University takes an evidence-led approach to evaluating the effectiveness of bursaries on continuation of under-represented students. We evaluate the impact of bursaries on an annual basis, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. As part of our evaluation strategy, we will assess the longer-term impact of financial assistance using the OfS' financial support evaluation toolkit and internal evaluation methods. Complete tracking/analysis of degree outcomes data for students who have benefited from financial support will be available in 2024-25. Evaluating the schemes on offer will enable the effective interpretation of findings, measuring the extent to which intended objectives have been met. This will also allow for an evidence-based approach to financial investment over the duration of this plan.

We will adopt a theory of change approach to financial support:

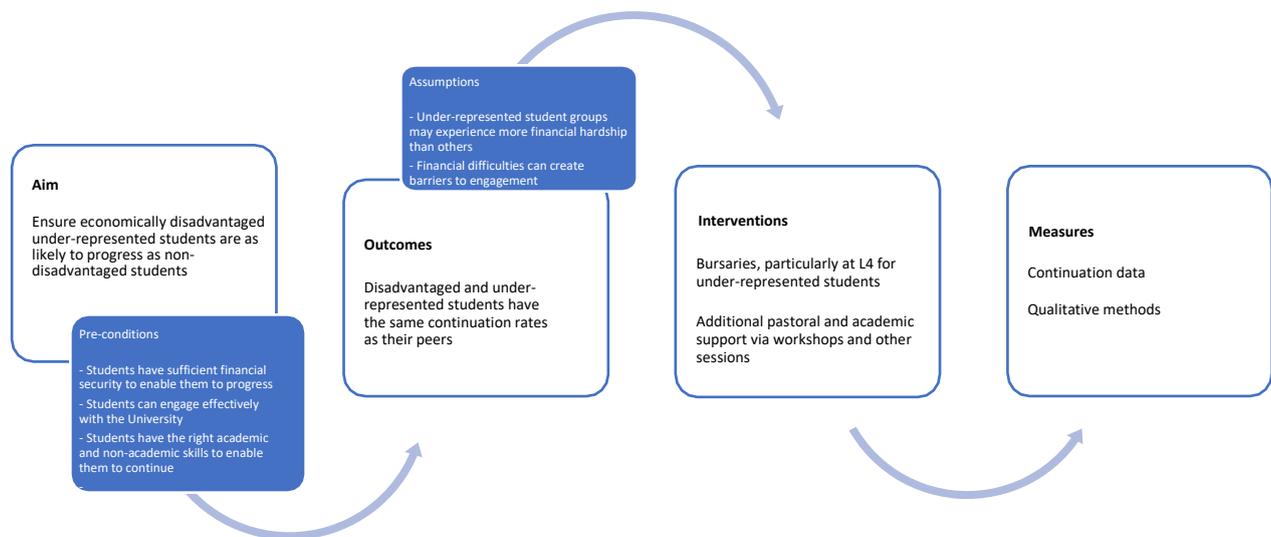


Figure 4: Financial support element as one example of Theory of Change

<sup>8</sup> Yorke, M. and Longden, B. (2004) Retention and Success in Higher Education, SRHE & OUP

<sup>9</sup> Tight, M. (2019). Student retention and engagement in higher education. Journal of Further and Higher Education: 1-16.

## **Appendix 1: New Priorities**

### **Priority B – Develop, enhance and expand their partnerships with schools and other local and national organisations, to help raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England.**

We will strengthen and develop our programme of work with schools, working across key stages, to help raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from under-represented groups. We will continue to lead the Aspire Higher (Uni Connect) programme supporting progression to university from schools in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire. Our work will include targeted activities with Hertfordshire schools identified with high numbers of pupils from under-represented groups and non-targeted activities with other Hertfordshire schools.

We will continue to review our school partnerships and expand as required.

#### **Key stages 1 and 2 targeted schools:**

- These are four Hertfordshire primary schools identified with high numbers of pupils from underrepresented groups, including SEND pupils, and chosen as key feeders to target secondary schools in low progression areas.
- The Joy of Reading project involves the primary schools with an aim to raise attainment in English
- Funding for KS2 resources to raise literacy attainment.

#### **Key stages 1 and 2 non-targeted engagement:**

- Primary Science Quality Mark – having already engaged with over 1000 primary schools in the UK to raise the quality of science education in primary schools, we will continue to transform primary school science teaching by growing confident leaders and teaching of science and raising children's attainment in science.
- The Big STEAM – over 400 primary school pupils, including from our 4 target schools, will engage in a day of science, engineering, art, and maths activities on the campus.
- Pop-up Outdoor Education Day – over 150 children will engage in outdoor engagement and nature learning at our Bayfordbury field centre campus.

#### **Key stage 3 targeted schools:**

- Hertfordshire target schools (23 schools identified as having low progression to university) – Pathfinder Days at the University, summer residentials and in-school talks/workshops to raise pupil attainment and expectations to study for a higher education qualification.
- Aspire Higher (Uni Connect) partnership schools - Pathfinder days and talks/workshops to raise pupil attainment and expectations to study for a higher education qualification.

#### **Key stage 4 targeted schools:**

- Hertfordshire target schools (23 schools identified as having low progression to university including Aspire Higher (Uni Connect) partnership schools) – GCSE booster workshops, in-school talks/workshops, summer residentials, parent workshops (e.g., next steps after GCSE).
- Teacher Continuing Professional Development – expansion of partnership work with Herts for Learning (Leadership & Management and Teaching & Learning training organisation).
- Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors – expansion of sponsorship of staff at target schools to gain professional recognition in assessment expertise and improve standards in educational assessment.

#### **Key stages 3 and 4 non-targeted engagement:**

- Aspire Higher (Uni Connect) website – ongoing enhancement of resources, materials, and signposting of Continuing Professional Development opportunities.
- Expansion of partnership work with Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors to enable more teaching staff to improve standards in educational assessment and gain professional recognition.

**Priority C - Set out how access to higher education for students from under-represented groups leads to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes.**

Our vision is that all our students, whatever their background, will achieve their full potential and go on to have successful and rewarding careers. Our learning environment supports a consistent drive to improve the student experience. We aim to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and attributes to thrive in business and the professions by addressing barriers to success faced by students from under-represented groups. We are continually focused on closing gaps in participation between students from low participation neighbourhoods, reducing degree awarding gaps for ethnic minority students and mature learners and eliminating non continuation gaps for care leavers, part-time learners, and other under-represented groups.

We ensure that students from under-represented groups are supported to successfully participate in their courses and achieve excellent outcomes by:

1. Taking a flexible, inclusive approach to learning and teaching that ensures curriculum design and student support activity meet the needs of our diverse student body in a way that enhances retention and success, and thus employability. This includes:
  - a commitment to decolonising the curriculum via an inclusive teaching toolkit and student partnership and consultation to ensure the needs of our diverse student community are met;
  - a personal tutor framework to actively monitor student engagement with learning and address barriers to success;
  - providing data for learning dashboards to academic staff and students to communicate individual student attendance and engagement in learning which allows staff to provide early intervention and support and allows students to reflect on and manage their learning;
  - regular review of the experiences of students with a disability and how individual student needs are inclusively met e.g., implementation of an improved system from 2023-24 to better communicate study needs agreements, reasonable adjustments, and enhancements to accessibility.
  - Re-design and development of inclusive assessments as a key aspect of our Learning and Teaching Policy.
2. Focusing on employability from the very start of the student journey, offering a range of opportunities to support students' career development including:
  - An Assessment Centre Experience (ACE) for all level 5 undergraduate students each year;
  - Organising and hosting an annual BAME Careers Event – co-created with BAME students to recognise the specific needs of BAME students in accessing and navigating graduate job markets;
  - Promoting Study Abroad opportunities and placement sandwich degree options (offered on most degrees) to ensure equal opportunity e.g., offering financial support via the Turing scheme;
  - Working closely with employers to give students exposure to the working world through employer & alumni panel events and proactively working with employers to support their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) aims (positive action statement used with all employer links, promotion of employers' diversity schemes);
  - A Go Herts Award to encourage students to get involved with extra-curricular activities and empower them to better articulate their skills and attributes to future employers. Students

undertake activities that develop the University's six Graduate Attributes and produce a series of reflections on their experiences and learning. The Go Herts Award enables students to graduate with more than a degree, preparing them for their next steps into either work or further study. We aim to increase the number of students from our priority under-represented groups achieving the Award, by ensuring they understand the benefits and are supported to get involved in the sorts of activities that will provide evidence for their application.

3. Providing financial support to students from under-represented groups via bursaries to recognise and address the additional barriers to success faced by students from under-represented backgrounds (see financial support section on page 21 of the plan).

#### **Priority D: Seek to develop more diverse pathways into and through higher education through expansion of flexible Level 4 and 5 courses and degree apprenticeships.**

We will review our provision of diverse pathways into and through higher education and aim to extend our degree apprenticeship provision, Foundation and Extended degrees and other forms of vocational education.

#### **Degree Apprenticeship Provision**

The University is well positioned to embrace further review of our apprenticeship agenda and establish itself at the forefront of apprenticeship delivery. The recent apprenticeship reforms have allowed the University to extend its core aims to widen participation and to broaden our offer. We see that the vocational relevance of apprenticeships, combined with salaried employment and lack of tuition fees/loans is likely to attract non-traditional learners, supporting widening participation and social mobility goals. This aligns with our institutional Strategic Plan and apprenticeship strategy.

The University's apprenticeship provision continues an upward trend, despite lower new starter numbers than anticipated in 2021/22. Recruitment to apprenticeship programmes reduced in 2021/22 to 220 from 343 in 2020/21, a decrease of 36%. In comparison nationally, however, for the equivalent programmes delivered at the University, there was a decrease of 60%. Despite a challenging landscape, total active apprentice numbers at the University in 2020/21 rose by approximately 29% year-on-year to 766, spread across 12 different standards. To date, the University has recruited approximately 1,100 apprentices since 2017 and 170 students have successfully completed their programme.

In 2022-23, our focus will be to achieve a target recruitment of 320 students to degree apprenticeships. We also plan to review our degree apprenticeship portfolio provision to identify areas for potential recruitment growth and link this strategically to our partnerships with Hertfordshire schools with high numbers of pupils from underrepresented groups.

#### **Flexible Level 4 and 5 Provision**

The University of Hertfordshire is committed to the provision of flexible Level 4 and 5 provision primarily through its lead partner role of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium (HHEC). The HHEC is a mature partnership between the University and four Further Education colleges based in Hertfordshire that collaborate to deliver flexible, high-quality courses that support vocational higher education. Since its introduction in 2000, the partnership has provided access to the University of Hertfordshire Level 6 degree programmes for approximately 15,000 students. Approximately 600 students currently study within the Consortium each year through either a Foundation Degree or Extended Degree route.

#### **Foundation Degrees**

Our Foundation Degrees are specifically designed to meet local demand and typically attract students from existing College based L3 provision; school leavers unable to enter university directly; and mature applicants often looking for a career change or enhancement. On successful completion of their course, students are equipped to directly enter employment with a UH validated Level 5 qualification or access the next level of study at UH. Progression rates from Level 4 to Level 5 for Foundation Degree students across HHEC was 77% for 2020/21. Demand for Foundation Degrees across the HHEC and the sector has seen a gradual decline more recently, but the Consortium continues to collaboratively offer this flexible study option.

In 2022-23 we will review our standalone full-time and part-time Foundation Degree provision in partnership with the Consortium to expand this where appropriate and in line with demand.

### **Extended Degrees**

A suite of Extended Degrees has been added to the Consortium portfolio across business-facing and technical areas including Engineering, Law, and Science. Typically, students on these courses do not meet the required entry tariff to join the University directly. Consortium students undertake their Extended Degree course at one of the four partner colleges and on successful completion can progress to the relevant Level 4 programme at UH, subject to meeting the relevant University progression tariff. Progression rates to UH were 83% in 2020/21, providing a gateway into higher education for more than 220 students that were previously unable to gain entry to their preferred degree course. Demand for Extended Degrees across the HHEC and the sector is currently buoyant.

In 2022-23 we will continue to explore new Extended Degree course provision to add to the Consortium portfolio, offering additional routes into higher education for key subject areas.

**Access and participation plan  
Fee information 2020-21**

Provider name: University of Hertfordshire

Provider UKPRN: 10007147

**Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees**

\*course type not listed

**Inflationary statement:**

Students will retain the fee package for the academic year they commence, unless they change their course or mode of study.

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Standard UH Campus based course fee for 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 in 2020	£9,250
First degree	UHOnline courses	£5,750
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT		£9,250
Accelerated degree	Accelerated Law (LLB)	£11,100
Sandwich year	Placement - 3rd year (full year)	£0
Erasmus and overseas study years	Erasmus full year out	£0
Erasmus and overseas study years	Full year study abroad in year 2	£1,385
Other	Students on credit accumulation programme	£9,250

**Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	HIBT Limited 10010019	£9,250
First degree	Pen Green Centre 10034200	£9,250
First degree	Unified Seevic Palmer's College 10005736 - USP first degree students starting in 2020-21 and afterwards	£9,250
Foundation degree	Hertford Regional College 10003035 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
Foundation degree	North Hertfordshire College 10004690 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
Foundation degree	Oaklands College 10004835 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
Foundation degree	Unified Seevic Palmer's College 10005736	£5,800
Foundation degree	West Herts College 10007417 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
Foundation year/Year 0	Barnet & Southgate College 10000533	£6,165
Foundation year/Year 0	HIBT Limited 10010019	£9,250
Foundation year/Year 0	Hertford Regional College 10003035 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
Foundation year/Year 0	North Hertfordshire College 10004690 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
Foundation year/Year 0	Oaklands College 10004835 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
Foundation year/Year 0	The WKCIC Group 10007455	£9,250
Foundation year/Year 0	West Herts College 10007417 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Standard UH Campus based course fee for 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 in 2020	£6,935
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	Standard UH Campus based course fee for 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 in 2020	£6,935

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

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Oaklands College 10004835 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
First degree	Pen Green Centre 10034200	£6,935
First degree	The Interactive Design Institute Limited 10006389	£6,935
First degree	University Campus St Albans Limited 10047339	£4,500
Foundation degree	HIBT Limited 10010019	£6,935
Foundation degree	Hertford Regional College 10003035 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165

Foundation degree	New City College 10006963 - Foundation degree Early Years	£6,000
Foundation degree	North Hertfordshire College 10004690 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
Foundation degree	Oaklands College 10004835 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
Foundation degree	Pen Green Centre 10034200	£6,935
Foundation degree	The WKCIC Group 10007455	£6,935
Foundation degree	Unified Seevic Palmer's College 10005736	£5,800
Foundation degree	University Campus St Albans Limited 10047339	£5,000
Foundation degree	University Campus St Albans Limited 10047339 - 2020-21 entrants to Foundation Degree in Builders Merchating Management (Part time)	£5,000
Foundation degree	West Herts College 10007417 - Consortium College Fee	£6,165
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Hertfordshire

Provider UKPRN: 10007147

## Investment summary

The OfS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

### Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£3,456,000.00	£3,529,200.00	£3,599,784.00	£3,671,779.68	£3,745,215.27
Access (pre-16)	£280,000.00	£285,600.00	£291,312.00	£297,138.24	£303,081.01
Access (post-16)	£2,596,000.00	£2,652,000.00	£2,705,040.00	£2,759,140.80	£2,814,323.62
Access (adults and the community)	£580,000.00	£591,600.00	£603,432.00	£615,500.64	£627,810.65
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£925,000.00	£925,000.00	£925,000.00	£925,000.00	£925,000.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£156,940.00	£160,078.80	£163,280.38	£166,545.98	£169,876.90

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£39,067,995.00	£39,993,140.00	£40,090,105.00	£40,090,105.00	£40,090,105.00
<b>Access investment</b>	8.8%	8.8%	9.0%	9.2%	9.3%
<b>Financial support</b>	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	10.5%	10.5%	10.6%	10.8%	11.0%

# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Hertfordshire

Provider UKPRN: 10007147

## Targets

Table 2a - Access

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones					Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
								2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
Reduce the gap in participation in HE for students between POLAR 4 Q1 and Q5 students	PTA_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Percentage point difference in participation between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	20pp	18pp	16pp	14pp	12pp	10pp	
Achieve parity in application to offer ratio for Black students	PTA_2	Ethnicity	Percentage point difference in application to offer ratio between White and Black students	No	Other data source	2017-18	15.2pp	12pp	9pp	6pp	3pp	0pp	This target draws on institutional data
	PTA_3												
	PTA_4												
	PTA_5												
	PTA_6												
	PTA_7												
	PTA_8												
	PTA_9												
	PTA_10												
	PTA_11												
	PTA_12												
	PTA_13												
	PTA_14												
	PTA_15												
	PTA_16												
	PTA_17												
	PTA_18												

Table 2b - Success

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones					Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
								2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
Eliminate the non-continuation gap between part-time and full-time students	PTS_1	Part-time	Percentage point difference in non-continuation (after year of entry) between part-time and full-time students	No	Other data source	2017-18	13.1pp	11.5pp	9pp	6pp	3pp	0pp	This target addresses unexplained gaps in performance.
Reduce the good degree attainment gap between White and BAME students	PTS_2	Ethnicity	Percentage point difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between White and BAME students	No	Other data source	2017-18	18pp	17pp	15pp	13pp	11pp	9pp	This target draws on institutional data in order to group together BAME ethnicities. It also addresses unexplained gaps in performance.
Reduce the good degree attainment gap between White and Black students	PTS_3	Ethnicity	Percentage point difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between White and Black students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	28.6pp	26pp	23pp	20pp	17pp	14.3pp	This target addresses unexplained gaps in performance.
Reduce the good degree attainment gap between White and BAME students with a BTEC qualification	PTS_4	Ethnicity	Percentage point difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between White and BAME students with a BTEC qualification	No	Other data source	2017-18	27pp	25pp	22pp	19pp	16pp	13.5pp	This target draws on institutional data in order to intersect ethnicity and entry qualifications. It also addresses unexplained gaps in performance.
Reduce the good degree attainment gap between mature White and BAME students	PTS_5	Multiple	Percentage point difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between mature White and BAME students	No	Other data source	2017-18	29pp	26pp	23pp	20pp	17pp	14.5pp	This target draws on institutional data in order to intersect ethnicity and age. It also addresses unexplained gaps in performance.
Reduce the good degree attainment gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 students	PTS_6	Socio-economic	Percentage point difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between IMD Q1 and Q5 students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	20pp	18pp	16pp	14pp	12pp	10pp	This target addresses unexplained gaps in performance.
Eliminate the gap in good degree attainment between mature and young students	PTS_7	Mature	Percentage point difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between mature and young students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	8.5pp	7.5pp	5.5pp	3.5pp	1.5pp	0pp	This target addresses unexplained gaps in performance.
Eliminate the gap in non-continuation between students declaring a disability and students declaring a 'mental health condition'	PTS_8	Disabled	Percentage point difference in non-continuation (after year of entry) between students declaring a disability and students declaring a 'mental health condition'	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	8pp	7pp	5pp	3pp	1.5pp	0pp	This target addresses unexplained gaps in performance.
Eliminate the gap in non-continuation between students declaring a disability and students declaring a 'social or communication disorder'	PTS_9	Disabled	Percentage point difference in non-continuation (after year of entry) between students declaring a disability and students declaring a 'social or communication disorder'	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	6pp	5pp	4pp	3pp	2pp	0pp	This target addresses unexplained gaps in performance.

