

Access and Participation Plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

Introduction

The University of Worcester is home to over 10,000 students, many of whom live and work locally to the institution. We attract students from around the UK, Europe and internationally, however a significant proportion of our students travel to study each day combining their learning with family, work and other caring responsibilities. The University has continued to operate innovative modes of delivery through our partnership arrangements with the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) and The Learning Institute, supporting many students returning to learning and a large number of mature students- over 40%.

We remain successful in attracting a significant proportion of our students from low participation neighbourhoods, first generation entrants and those with non-traditional qualifications on entry, the university attracts applications from each of the POLAR quintiles in broadly the same proportions that they are in society, and also evenly across quintiles¹. The whole institution approach to widening participation we adopted is demonstrating a significant positive impact for our learners; for example: we have achieved a significant narrowing of gaps between disabled and non-disabled students, mature and young students and gaps between the most and least advantaged learners.

The University has adopted a new strategic plan in 2019 which embeds the university values and approach as one built on the principle of inclusion and at the core of which are three commitments: we will create possibilities. We will develop potential. We will increase community engagement.

We have taken the leading role in the development of our collaborative work regionally and manage the 'Rural' strand of the West Midlands Aimhigher NCOP. We are pleased with the impact of this strategy, with the evaluation evidence² demonstrating the success of our approach in the increased progression rates of learner engaged in the programme, as well as in our productive and successful partnerships with schools, FE and other HE providers.

1. Assessment of Performance

Approach

We have taken the approach in the assessment of performance to analyse each of the underrepresented groups using the OfS dashboard, the TEF data and our own internal student management information. Whilst we have undertaken comparative analysis against sectoral averages, we do not see the benefit of doing so against 'similar' or 'competitor' institutions, preferring instead to focus on ensuring inclusion is effectively embedded across our whole institution. Our strategic aims are therefore taken with this whole institution approach in mind.

¹ Martin, I 2018, Benchmarking widening participation: how should we measure and report progress?, HEPI, viewed 17 May 2018, <<http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2018/04/05/benchmarking-widening-participation-measurereport-progress/>>

² Aimhigher West Midlands, Aimhigher West Midlands Research in Brief. Viewed 3rd June 2018. <http://aimhigherwm.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Aimhigher-NCOP-HE-Progression-2018.pdf>

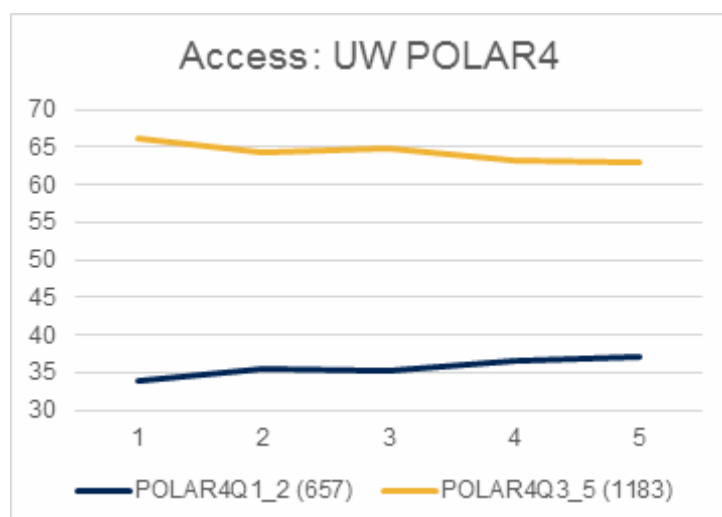
The focus of the analysis is on our full time undergraduate population, as this represents over 90% of the student body. During the analysis it was identified that in a large number of areas the small size of comparator groups makes data statistically less reliable; for this reason the granular level intersectional analysis has been limited. These limitations are noted in the relevant sections of the self-assessment and the APP. Nonetheless, discussions based on absolute measures still lead us to conclusions upon which we can identify clear strategic aims.

1.1 Higher education participation, household income or socioeconomic status

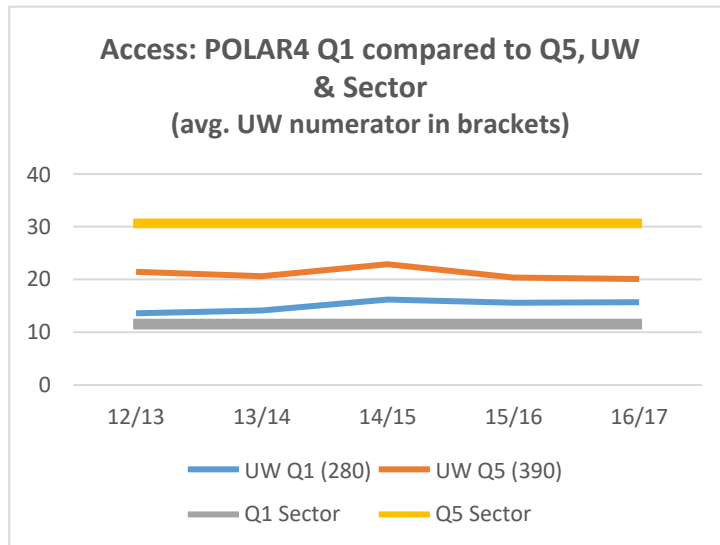
Access

Analysis of those in POLAR4 and IMD Quintiles 1 & 2:

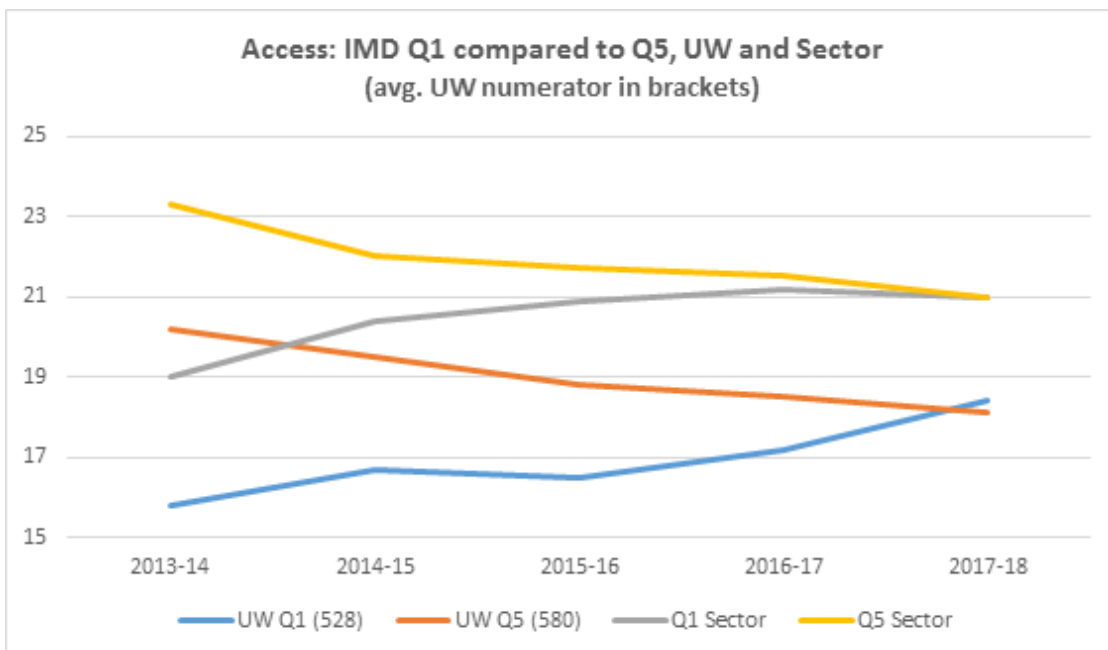
- 1.1.1 Using the OfS data³, students from both POLAR4 Q1 & 2 and IMD Q1 & 2 datasets comprise around 30% of the sample population. They therefore comprise a significant proportion of our students. Our analysis of the OFS data suggests that those students from POLAR4 Q1 & 2 areas are on the whole analogous to those from IMD Q1 & 2 target areas. The following discussion explores data for both POLAR4 and IMD groups and, subsequently, the following targets therefore utilise POLAR4 data as a proxy for both demographic groups. The evaluation plan will comprise monitoring against both datasets.
- 1.1.2 Access (POLAR4): The graph below shows the access gap for the University between POLAR4 Quintiles 1&2 and 3-5 has improved by 6.5pp between 2013-14 and 2017-18, falling from 32.4% to 25.9%. Although the gap remains sizable, it compares favourably with the sector level gap (44.6% in 2017-18) and has reduced at a greater rate than the sector as a whole. However, our analysis shows that given our applicants tend to apply from within our region we believe that we could undertake further work to address this gap. There is a 4.4pp gap between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5.



³ OfS Data Dashboard, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/> accessed 14th May 2019.



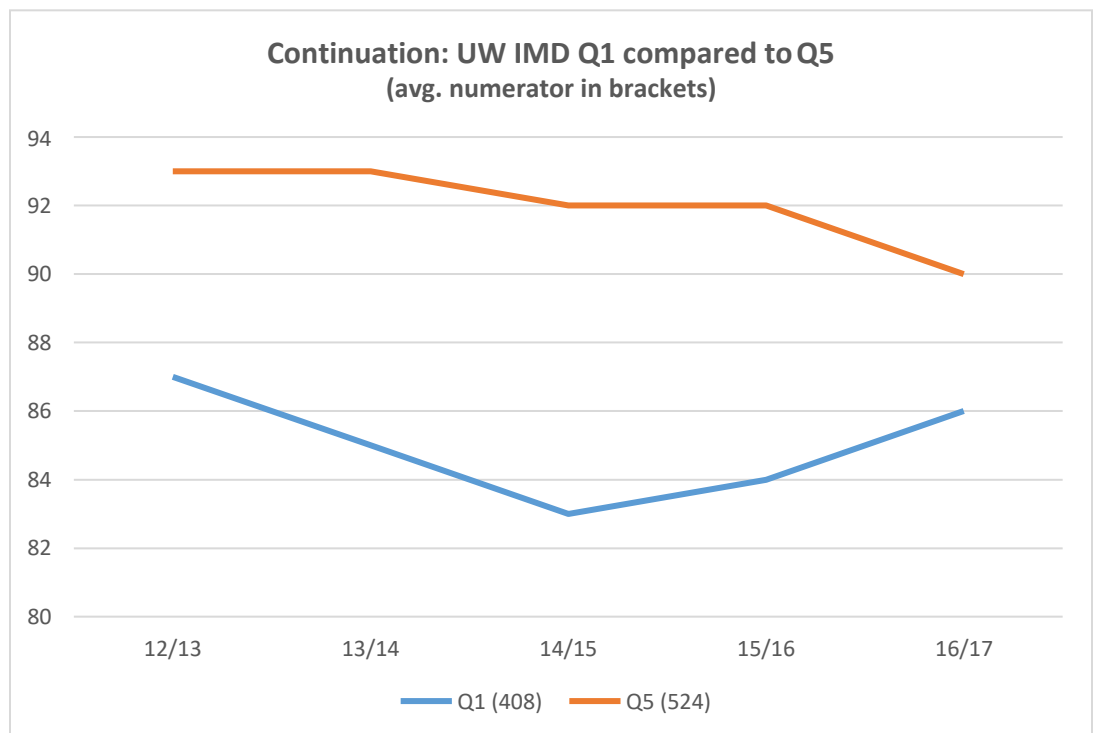
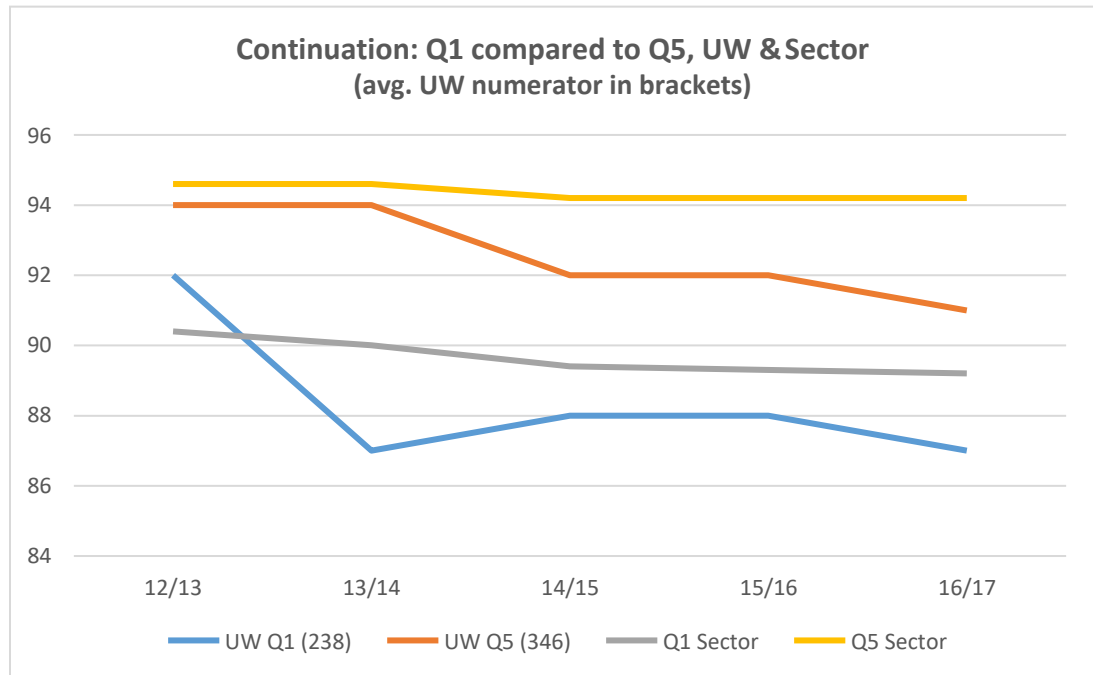
1.1.3 Access (IMD): The graph below shows the access gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 has closed completely at the University. However, the level of access for IMD Q1 is much lower than that of the sector (c. 3pp).



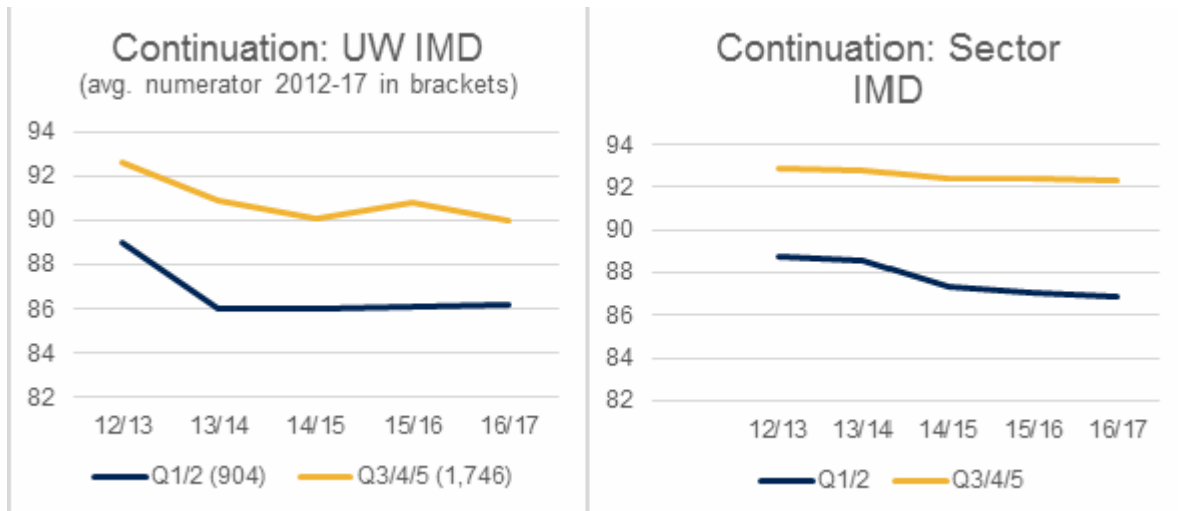
Success

Non-Continuation

1.1.4 Continuation (POLAR4): The graph below demonstrates that the student continuation rate for Q1 is around 4pp below that of those in Q5, which has broadly been the case over the past 3 years. Similarly, the gap for IMD Q1 is around 4pp below that of Q5 although this has closed since 2014/15.

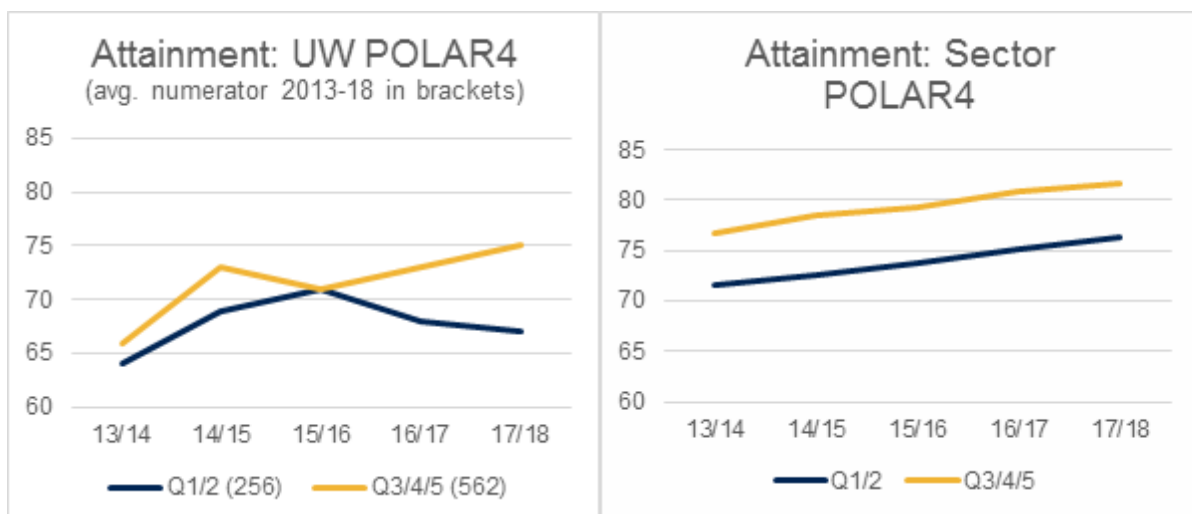


1.1.5 Continuation (IMD): The first chart below shows continuation rates for Q1&2 students have remained almost constant since 2013-14 at around 86%; similarly, those for Qs3-5 have fluctuated only slightly at around 90% over the same period. Whilst this does compare well with the sector, the second chart below, where a gap persists of around 5pp, figures do show a non-closing gap which requires further analysis.

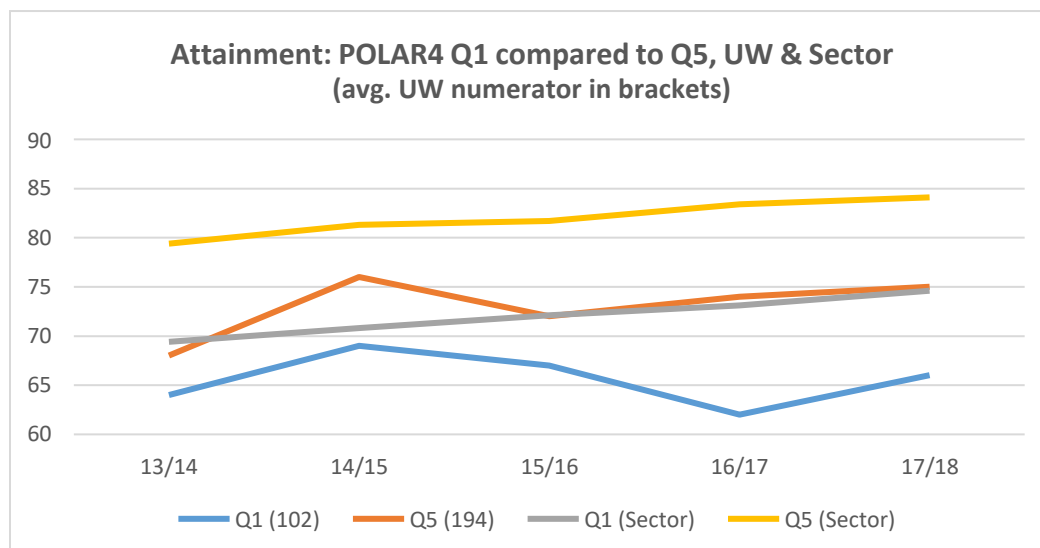


Attainment

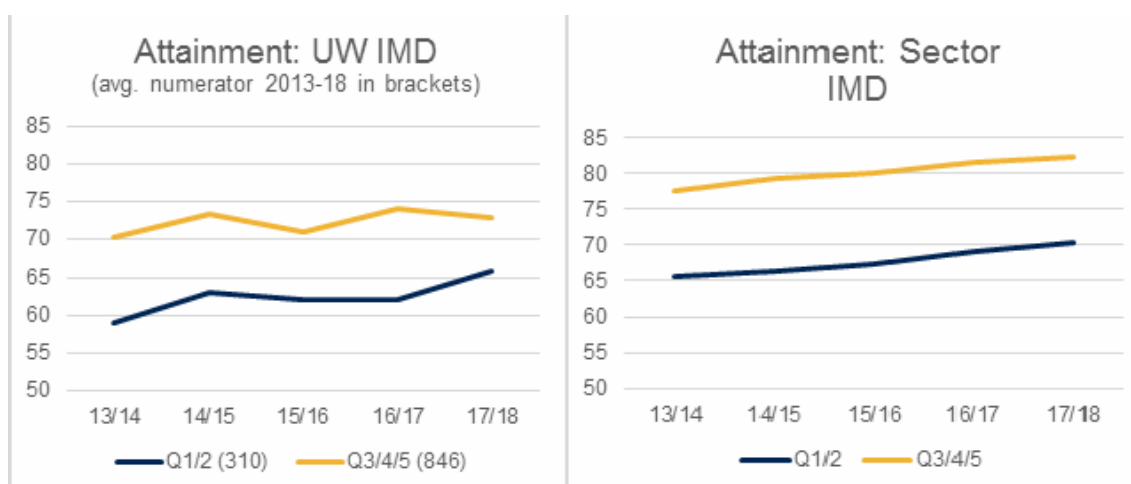
1.1.5 Attainment (POLAR4): The first graph below shows the attainment gap closed for the University in 2014-15, however has since widened again and is currently at about 8pp. This compares to a sectoral gap of around 5pp difference, shown in the second graph below. Attainment has also increased proportionally for Qs3-5 whilst it has fallen for Q1&2 – sectoral analysis shows that attainment for students is generally on the increase nationally, regardless of POLAR4 grouping. Given that, in the OfS dataset, Q1&2 comprise around 31% of the student population this therefore requires further analysis to explore this pattern further.



1.1.6 The attainment gap for POLAR4 Q1 has widened slightly from Q5 since 15/16 from 5pp to a current level of 9pp. Similarly, the gap for IMD Q1 has widened slightly over time to a current level of 11pp.

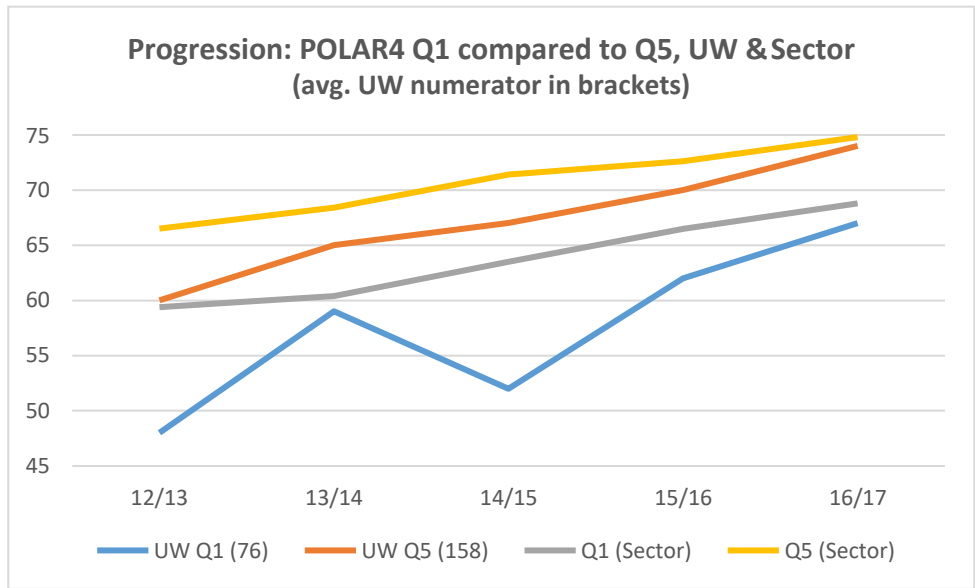


1.1.7 Attainment (IMD): The first graph below shows that although there remains a 6.9pp gap in attainment between Q1&2 and Qs3-5, the gap is narrowing. This compares to a continuing gap in the sector despite overall increases in attainment.

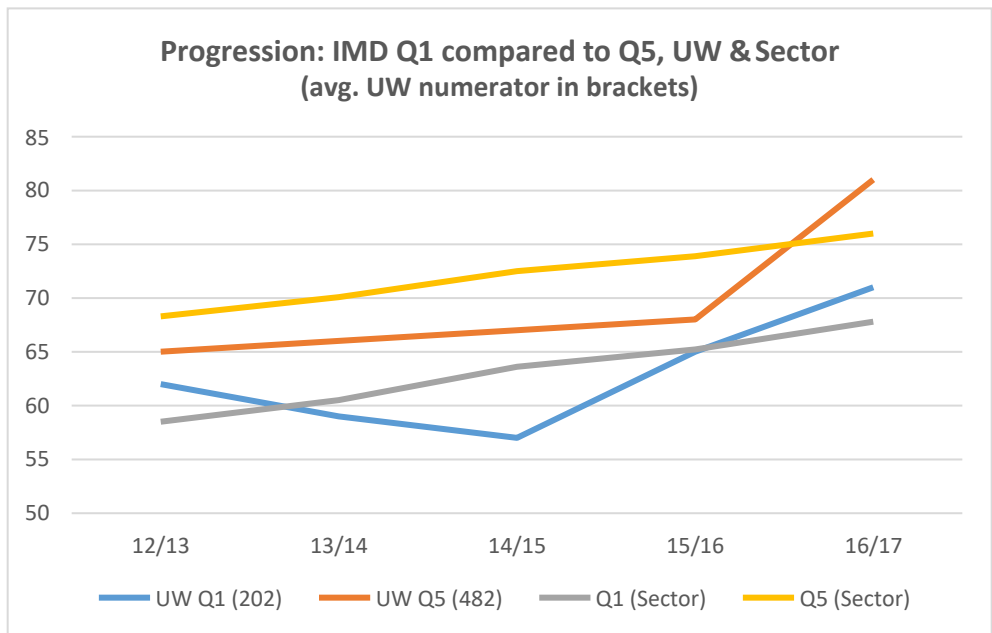


Progression to employment or further study

1.1.8 Progression (POLAR4): Progression for this group shows an improving picture for both Q1 and Q5, with Q5 in excess of the sector. However, the gap between Q1 and Q5 within the University is consistent at around 9pp.



1.1.9 Progression (IMD): Performance here has fluctuated, from a narrow gap in 2012-13 which widened to 10pp in 2014-15; this is an enduring gap although in both cases progression rates have improved.



1.1.10 We note too that there was a negative flag for the IMD split metric in TEF Yr4, as this fell 2.6% below benchmark for 'highly skilled employment or further study'. By comparison Qs3-5 were not flagged, although this also fell 1.6% below benchmark and is therefore of some concern. Given this benchmarked data, and the persistent and continuing gap, we identify this area as one that requires specific action.

1.2 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students

Access

practice, we will identify specific outputs and interventions to address the particular gaps for different ethnic groups as appropriate.

We seek to reduce this gap to 6pp over the 5 years of this plan. We recognise this is a significant challenge, however there is commitment from the senior leadership to make significant progress across the University over a relatively short period of time.

Baseline (current gap) 2016-17 Sector gap of 13.2pp	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
20pp	18pp	16pp	12pp	9pp	6pp

Table 5: To increase attainment rates of BAME students to align with those of White students

Progression

2.2.8 Aim: Reduce the gap in progression for POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 over the lifetime of the plan.

We have agreed to address the persistent gap of around 9pp between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 within the University. This will fall within the remit of our strategic approach to employability, which is a significant element of our newly adopted strategic plan. The strategy focuses attention on our position as one of the leading contributors to the local economy and professional education. We are committed to working in partnership with local employers, including small and medium enterprises which make up the majority of the sub-region's employers. We will continue to work closely with the LEP in order to ensure that we meet the emerging skills agenda and, in particular, we will expound on the benefits of employing graduates, including graduate degree apprentices. We will also ensure that employability is firmly embedded within the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities.

Baseline (current gap) 2016-17 Institutional gap	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
9pp	8pp	7pp	4pp	2pp	0pp

Table 6: Reduce the gap in progression for POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 over the lifetime of the plan

3. Strategic Measures

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

- 3.1.1 The University wishes to ensure that each learner, regardless of background, is afforded equal opportunity to access and succeed in their HE journey. Our strategy is to clearly understand the most effective practices across all aspects of the University's engagement with students and use this knowledge to deliver an evidenced based approach to practice. This requires a whole institution approach, where inclusion is at the very centre of all of what we do, equipping all staff across the University with the knowledge skills and

understanding of how to maximise opportunities for all; seeking continuous improvement in student engagement. One means by which we are progressing this is through a new Learning and Teaching Strategy which was initiated in 2018 and is now currently in consultation, with a view to full implementation from January 2020. Employability is a significant element of our recently adopted institutional strategic plan. A new employability plan will be agreed in 2019/20 with an associated action plan. In line with all institutional strategies this will be kept under review, at least annually, through our Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC) which reports to Academic Board.

A clear strategy for growing the pool of potential HE applicants from groups where participation is at its lowest.

Strategic partnerships with schools

3.1.2 We have clear ambitions to increase the proportions of learners progressing into the University from diverse backgrounds. Our work in this area will focus on the development of our relationships with schools and Further Education colleges. In addition to the continued work of our whole institution outreach programme we will engage in targeted whole school sequenced intervention programmes to raise aspirations and attainment, these will include clearly articulated impartial, information advice and guidance, well-articulated progression routes and agreed compact arrangements. Our evaluation draws on a range of measures including direct school-based performance data such as Key Stage assessments and progression statistics as well as indirect measures such as learner engagement.

Targeted work with care leavers

3.1.3 We have an established strategy in place to support care leavers which clearly articulates the types of support on offer within the institution. In addition, we are also seeking to strengthen our collaborative work in this area. We are working closely with the WM area NCOP, Local Virtual School and the Local authority to better develop pre entry support for looked after children.

Collaborative activity to raise aspirations and attainment – Aimhigher and National Collaborative Outreach Programme

3.1.4 Drawing on the expertise of the partnership developed over many years, and also more recently through the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), we will work collaboratively with cohorts of learners in their 11-16 phase of education on a sustained progressive programme of activity. This activity will be tailored to the needs of learners but typically involve mentoring from undergraduates and other role models, residential opportunities and a range of progressive activities to address aspirations, awareness, attainment, access and application. This provides a progressive and integrated programme of support and advice, to widen participation in HE at sector level. Post-16, whilst the intensive face to face work of the partnership will cease, we will continue a programme of communication and signposting to enable students to engage with the programmes and activities offered by our partner HEIs and neighbouring consortia as part of their recruitment activity. In delivering the programme we will engage with parents and guardians, schools and other influencers. Our activity will seek to complement any activity funded by the OfS such as the NCOP, but also sustain proven activity subject to resource available. A course

offer that provides multiple learning opportunities including the development of degree apprenticeships, foundation years, course delivery through strategic relationships with further education colleges and other learning providers.

An educational student experience that reflects a socially and culturally diverse society, and that is delivered in innovative and inclusive ways and assessed in appropriate and robust ways.

- 3.1.5 Our commitment to social mobility is demonstrated through our strategic approaches to diversifying the course offer at the University. We have fully embraced the Degree Apprenticeships agenda and have new programmes within our schools of Health and Education. We have new foundation year programmes starting in 2019-20 in biological sciences and we continue to see development in our established partnerships with both the National Childbirth Trust and The Learning Institute. We have two University centres established in partnership with local Further Education colleges; Herefordshire and Ludlow College and Halesowen College both have been established to create highly visible partnership work to encourage aspiration and increase knowledge about higher education, particularly by individuals who previously might otherwise not have considered higher education

Student Engagement

- 3.1.6 These courses attract a significant proportion of learners from key target groups identified in this plan and will therefore be a focus of our Access and Participation work. We will continue our work in keeping with our whole institution approach focused on inclusion, implementing major projects on student engagement monitoring, assessment and feedback, and the personal academic tutoring system. Our aim is to embed a culture whereby student retention is regarded as everyone's responsibility, and in which there are clear expectations about engagement with learning activities. We are making progress in developing approaches to learner analytics in a way that will empower learners to monitor and reflect on their learning progress and engage in meaningful discussions with personal academic tutors. Underpinning this will be robust systems for recording attendance and monitoring disengagement.
- 3.1.7 We will improve retention on courses through embedding planned and coherent strategies on study skills, academic engagement, information and digital literacy. This will be embedding within course planning with coherent strategies in place for the development of academic, information and digital literacy through the 'learner journey's' project. We will use a range of measure to assess our impact including: withdrawal rates and non-completion for those on specific programmes and student groups, in particular BAME students and those entering with BTEC qualifications.
- 3.1.8 Striving towards universal design for learning has inspired our understanding of inclusion, and our goal is to anticipate barriers to learning for all students by providing inclusive practices in learning, teaching and assessment. To this end, our planned learning, teaching and assessment activities are informed by best practice and an understanding of the principles of inclusion in relation to diversity. We have developed effective support mechanisms that are aimed at narrowing the disparities in continuation and completion rates for males, mature students, BME students, and students who enter with BTEC

qualifications through targeted mainstream support and targeted intervention within courses where there are significant disparities.

- 3.1.9 We have developed an inclusion toolkit for use across the institution to develop best practice, which includes a suite of inclusivity guides, an inclusivity self-assessment toolkit and an extensive resource list to support curriculum design.
- 3.1.10 We are developing work on transitions support for target groups and as part of this will be piloting innovative approaches to pre entry support given to new entrants and student induction. This work will be prioritised in courses where we have identified the higher numbers of learners from target groups. We will focus specific programmes of work beyond our whole institution approach to encourage greater engagement in culturally and ethnically diverse activity and in focussed targeted work with current BAME students that will address barriers to successful HE outcomes.

Provide outstanding student support, across academic and pastoral engagements.

Student wellbeing and mental health support

- 3.1.11 The University has an established multi-agency approach to student mental health support, working with partners including Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust and Worcestershire County Council Public Health. We will continue to build our data and evidence base to develop our strategy in this area and to refine our provision to better target our resources. This work will be closely aligned with the work that we are developing in the areas of student success and progression to ensure that support for disabled students is seamless across all areas of the student lifecycle. We will also continue to deliver our student wellbeing and health campaigns in collaboration with the Students' Union.

Ensure a prominent and influential representation system with clear evidence of the student voice in the development of policy and practice.

- 3.1.12 The Academic Representation System at the University of Worcester is a partnership between the University of Worcester and Worcester Students' Union. The system aims to ensure that every student (undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research) is both effectively represented and through the system able to feed into the University's efforts to drive forward quality assurance and enhancement and to inform student learning.
- 3.1.13 Effective student representation is integral to the University's work to enhance quality, ensure genuine student engagement in the learning process and in ensuring the relevance of its curricula. The University and Worcester Students' Union have developed a joint Student Academic Representation Code of Practice which is overseen by the Academic Representation Oversight Group and is jointly chaired by the Students' Union VP Education and the PVC Students. The Code of Practice sets out clearly the role of all institutional areas in relation to student representation and voice. This has already delivered an increase in both awareness and effectiveness of student representation, evidenced in the 2019 UW Course Experience Survey.

Provide opportunities for students to develop their skills, knowledge and experience that will enhance their employability in the competitive graduate market.

- 3.1.14 We have completed a review of our employability strategy which has highlighted areas in the institution where there are any progression gaps. Employability and work-based learning is embedded within courses and course teams work closely with personal academic tutors and the careers and employability team to develop programmes that support student progression. The teams work collaboratively to develop coherent strategies for the development of career learning, career planning and guidance.
- 3.1.15 We have excellent relationships with the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Skills team in the LA, with whom we are working to further enhance our strategic approaches to increasing the availability of graduate level jobs.

3.2 Student consultation

- 3.2.1 We have included students in all aspects of developing this plan; students have been engaged in the self-assessment process; students from all backgrounds have been included by ensuring multiple opportunities and methods for engaging in the process; we have organised focus groups; attended course representative conferences and meetings as well as engaging fully with the students union at all stages.
- 3.2.2 Students are fully engaged in the process of developing our access and participation aims and objectives, the University and Students' Union regularly consult with students to evaluate the impact of our work in this area through both the representation system and through wider consultations such as the 'Big Worcester Survey' and 'Change Week'. The elected officers are members of the committees that oversee this work and contribute fully to the decision-making process.
- 3.2.3 In addition, the Students' union and University work together to provide opportunities for students to feed into the development of our plan and associated activity through working groups, task groups and inclusion in course representation meetings, conferences and briefings. We provide a range of resources and support to the Worcester Students' Union, to enable them to help us to engage with students and to provide effective student academic representation and advice and guidance. This includes student financial advice, academic and disciplinary representation, and the development of sports societies and volunteering. All of these activities are vital in improving the student experience and all have a positive impact on student happiness, retention, progression and success.
- 3.2.4 The role of President has a strong welfare focus ensuring that such matters are consistently championed by the Union. The Union also strives to keep the cost of getting involved in activities such as societies and sports as low as possible, operating a grant system to support those groups, to ensure that students are not excluded for financial reasons. The Union operates an independent advice service that provides 1-2-1 guidance for students. The casework undertaken helps to inform the Union's ongoing campaigns and activities, such as a recent Accessibility Fair and academic support campaign. We are committed to growing the role of the Students' Union in the representation and development of our students. We have therefore identified several key areas where we wish to strengthen our collaboration:
- a. Peer mentoring initiatives e.g. Student Minds' peer support network and the Post Graduate student mentoring scheme;
 - b. Supporting the growth of diversity competence among students through training development and campaigns such as an annual diversity calendar;
 - c. programmes to support BAME continuation, attainment and progression;

- d. Enhancing the role of internship support and work placement opportunities;
- e. Increased participation in recreational sport and activities related to health and wellbeing;
- f. Increased investment in developing the diversity of representation;
- g. Data, evaluation and monitoring: involving students in the coordination of surveys, focus groups and report commissioning.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

- 3.3.1 In 2016 we began work to develop a whole institution approach to evaluation- The Worcester Model. Our approach to the evaluation of initiatives and interventions and utilises accepted methods of evaluating these (such as the HEA Toolkit) so that comparative assessment over time and with other institutions could be made. This approach goes beyond the toolkit approach in order to evaluate wider institutional impact upon widening participation and gives a more accurate and contextualised analysis and assessment of how the University widens participation than methods that restrict themselves to detailing specific initiatives and interventions.
- 3.3.2 Our self-assessment of our access and student success evaluation demonstrates that we are making good progress with evaluation and we will continue to embed this strategic approach.
- 3.3.3 Our strategic approach to evaluation is not yet fully embedded across the institution – this has been challenging within the institutional context, much of our widening participation and success work is undertaken independently by academic departments, resulting in differing approaches across the institution. A key element of our strategy moving forward will be to address this by adopting a systematic and consistent approach, for instance through the dissemination and support for the Evaluation Framework.
- 3.3.4 We are strongly committed to the continued utilisation of the AimHigher West Midlands Evaluation Framework through, for example, the evaluation of our schools outreach programme. Our involvement with AimHigher also provides opportunities for collaborative approaches to evaluation and research which would otherwise, as a smaller institution, be neither cost effective or of a sufficient scale.
- 3.3.5 The self-assessment recognises that we have made good progress in utilising evaluation evidence to plan interventions, this is evident across all areas of the student lifecycle where we have used data and evidence to inform programme design. This is particularly effective in relation to on programme support designed to enhance student retention and success.
- 3.3.6 Examples of this include the use of internal data to identify courses, programmes and groups of students that are at risk of withdrawal or non-completion and then using this evidence to develop the University retention protocols.
- 3.3.7 We have worked closely with our partner’s John Smiths to develop our approach to student financial support, a potential barrier to access and continuation. We have monitored student engagement with our financial support system using both data and student feedback from surveys and focus groups. This has helped to shape our approaches and supported the embedding of some aspects into other institutional strategies. This has been a successful approach and we will continue to undertake full analysis and impact assessment relating to

the both engagement and successful lifecycle outcomes. Where appropriate we will undertake additional evaluation using the OfS Financial Toolkit.

3.3.8 Our outreach and retention strategies have focussed on delivering sequenced interventions to learners in a targeted and meaningful way, and we have in place good methods of collecting monitoring data for this work. Our evaluation of outreach activity is particularly strong where we work in collaboration as we are able to utilise economies in scale to identify and deploy robust evaluation measurements.

3.3.9 In light of our self-assessment we have identified 5 key strategic priorities for evaluation:

1. Develop institutional approaches to evaluation design.
2. Identify skills gaps in evaluation practice and to build the skills base amongst key staff.
3. Build awareness across the institution of approaches to evaluation and of the institutional strategy for these areas of work.
4. Agree an institutional approach to resourcing evaluation and ensure that this is effectively communicated and evidenced at the planning stages of any activity or programme.
5. Establish a clear mechanism for sharing of institutional good practice and evaluation outcomes.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of plan

Strategic management and oversight

3.4.1 The APP will be the key document which frames the institution's approach to fair access, success and progression across the student lifecycle and its targets set the institutional priorities for maximising equality of opportunity across all areas of the institution.

3.4.2 Oversight for the achievement of the aims set out in this plan sits with the Vice Chancellors Executive Board (VCEB); the most senior executive committee within the University. The VCEB and Academic Board make regular reports to the Governors on all aspects of the University and this includes progress of the APP. Operational delivery will be supported through integration with the wider institutional strategies; the University's strategic plan, the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (LTSE) strategy, and through the relevant committees; Academic Board, LTSE Committee and the Academic Standards and Quality Committee.

3.4.3 A small working group consisting of the Pro Vice Chancellor Students, Director for Quality and Educational Development, Director of Access and Inclusion and the Students' Union VP Education will undertake the regular monitoring of the Plan. Progress against targets will be regularly reviewed by this group utilising available evidence and, where appropriate, they will make recommendations to LTSEC for revisions to either actions or targets in order to take account of the context and ensure the best outcomes for students.

4. Provision of Information to Students

We will publish clear and accessible information on the fees that we charge, and any financial support offered, in printed materials (e.g. the University Prospectus) and prominently on the University's website. We will ensure that there are opportunities available to applicants at Open and Visit Days to attend specific sessions on Fees and Finance. In making offers, we will always refer to the financial commitments that the student is undertaking and any financial support that is

- 4.4.3 The Reach cashless bursary will be continued for **all** full-time fee paying students regardless of family income (full eligibility is published on the University website).

Conclusion

This APP demonstrates our ongoing commitment to investment in outreach, student success and progression.

Our assessment of our performance and position in the sector indicates that we continue to deliver positive impact through our whole institution approach. However, we aim to make greater progress in gathering robust evidence of the impact of practices on specific groups of students where gaps in performance exist. A key feature of this plan is the investment and implementation of a systematic approach to evaluating the impact of our work in this area, and understanding the differences that this makes to all students across the whole spectrum of the student lifecycle.

5. Addendum to 2020/21 to 2024/25 access and participation plan, July 2022.

This section sets out our intentions for how we intend to address the priorities that the Office For Students have set for access and participation over the next 4 years. We have structured the document to address each of the four priorities and the variations that we request in relation to our plan for academic year 2023-24:

5.1 Priority A: Make access and participation plans more accessible.

We have created a summary of our access and participation plan. This is published on our website alongside the full access and participation plan.

5.2 Priority B: Develop activity to raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England.

We have identified two priority areas of focus for our work:

- Improve attainment of pupils from lowest SEC groups in key subject areas within local schools and schools in strategic areas of investment.
- Contribute to the local learning from early years upwards to raise attainment and engagement in learning particularly in areas of high deprivation.

5.2.1 The university is situated in Worcester City and is the only university. Many students enrolling at the university come from the local area with 66% travelling in daily to study. In developing our plans for working with schools to raise attainment we have considered the local context as well as our strategic partnerships. We plan to focus our work for the remainder of this plan on the areas of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Dudley.

5.2.3 The current picture in these 3 strategic areas is mixed, there are however some schools that are below the national average in attainment of pupils. These impact upon HE (Higher Education) progression rates and progression to higher level technical qualifications for learners. There are several schools in each of the 3 areas where attainment is well below or below average, using progress 8 measures. These schools also have significantly lower attainment at GCSE in key

subject areas.

- 5.2.4 Currently learners in Herefordshire and Worcestershire access on average, 3 outreach activities throughout their school experience. This is low in comparison to schools in urban areas within our partnership (average 14). We believe that aspiration has an impact on attainment, and we will therefore ensure that any activity to impact attainment must be combined with aspiration raising activity.
- 5.2.5 The university has an established and successful range of collaborative partnerships that currently contribute to attainment raising with local schools. We will develop these partnerships to offer a comprehensive programme of interventions.

5.3 Developing, enhancing, and expanding our partnerships with schools to raise educational attainment for the most disadvantaged learners.

- 5.3.1 The University of Worcester has consistently sought to develop initiatives to support potential students from areas with low participation in higher education. In 2019 this included the introduction of 'Open Day Roadshows', delivered at Dudley, Hereford, Sandwell and Wolverhampton Colleges, all areas among some of the most deprived in the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation, and one of the most diverse areas in the West Midlands Region. These innovative approaches have significant impact on HE progression with application to study at University of Worcester increasing by 18% as a result. Applications from students at Wolverhampton College rose a remarkable 71% the year after the introduction of its first Roadshow.
- 5.3.2 The university was appointed to lead the teaching on £25million plans to build a university centre at Castle Hill as part of Dudley Council's Towns Fund plan.
The University is working in partnership with Dudley Council, Dudley College of Technology, tourist attractions and other key organisations in Dudley, on the development of a University Park.
The University centre will offer flexible routes and modes of study, focused on learner needs and that meet the emerging skills needs in the local area.

5.4 Early Years

- 5.4.1 Our work to raise educational attainment begins in the early years; the University works extensively to support children in getting the best possible start in life. A dominant theme within this area of focus is collaboration. Early years networking hubs bring together local early years leaders and practitioners throughout Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, providing a platform for knowledge exchange and discussion of key priorities within early years. Through the hubs, the university has involved practitioners in research projects, sharing summaries of research in relevant areas. The hubs are also used to provide training to individuals who mentor students in placements and promote the university's continuing professional development (CPD) offer.
- 5.4.2 The university also co-runs the Smethwick Language Enrichment Project in collaboration with nurseries in Smethwick. The project helps parents to support their children's language development with research suggesting that even by the age of two, children in low-income families may already be six months behind their peers in language development.
- 5.4.3 The Hive, Europe's first integrated university and public library creates a unique opportunity for the University to reach and engage with people across the city. At 10 years old the Hive has

delivered events and activities such as the summer reading challenge, Beeline; one of the UK's largest story-telling festivals, as well as regular family activities for ages from 0 to 5 which combined have reached more than 300,000 people. This work has been recognised by the Levelling Up Universities Awards for meeting **Goal 1: Strong foundations in Early Years.**

5.5 Successful School Years.

- 5.5.1 The university's work in driving successful school years spans partnerships, sponsorships, outreach work and extracurricular activities. We have extensive partnerships and hold several contracts to lead on the initiatives across the West Midlands area schools.
- 5.5.2 Our School of Education manages the West Midlands STEM Ambassador Hub contract on behalf of STEM Learning; the largest provider of STEM education and careers support to schools, colleges and other groups working with young people across the UK (United Kingdom).
- 5.5.3 We also hold the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme - AMSP, West Midlands Area contract for Herefordshire and Worcestershire, making support available to develop mathematics provision in local schools. Local professional development for teachers, and events for local school students are among its activities.
- 5.5.4 Our work with the Ogden Trust seeks to enrich the science curriculum through family engagement and networking with local employers to provide a range of broader physics experiences for pupils. The university supports the Trust in delivering its work in local schools.
- 5.5.5 We are proud of our existing work to raise attainment in schools however we believe we can do more, and in this plan, we set out how we will expand this work and enrich our current offer to become a strategic and targeted programme that leads to improved success for those learners.

5.6 Partnerships with Targeted Schools.

- 5.6.1 We will build partnerships with schools in the 3 areas: Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Dudley. These schools will be identified using a range of measures such as the Ever6 measure, Progress 8 score, entitlement to Free School Meals and School level performance. To identify target primary schools, we will track back to early years providers that feed into those schools.
- 5.6.2 Building on our strong foundations in the early years we will work in partnership with our local schools to design and deliver an Early Years primary KS1 to KS4 programme of sequenced partnership activities. We will build on our current partnerships – STEM Hub, Ogden trust, the Hive, GLOW Maths Hubs and the advanced mathematics support programme. Our programme will involve all partners working together to build a comprehensive programme of enrichment, attainment raising and aspiration raising activities.
- 5.6.3 At the secondary level, attainment raising activity will be developed in collaboration with our other partners in Aimhigher West Midlands which incorporates the Uniconnect partnership SPOC hub.
- 5.6.4 During the 2022/23 Academic year we will actively participate in the scoping and development of an attainment raising programme that will:
 - Increase the provision of outreach to learners in areas identified as underserved for HE partnerships

- Create, in partnership with schools, an attainment raising offer that compliments and enriches support in schools for those learners most impacted by low attainment
- Agree a collaborative approach to consistent delivery of the programme in target schools
- Agree a collaborative approach to data collection, monitoring, and evaluation of the programme.

5.6.5 In addition to our collaborative attainment-raising activity, the University will increase resource investment in developing our relationships with School, College, and Multi-Academy Trusts leaders, to build sustainable collaborative approaches to the education challenges those local learners experience. Learners in the Rural Area covered by the Aimhigher UniConnect partnership currently experience significantly fewer outreach activities than their peers in urban areas. We will seek to redress this balance by increasing our pre and post 16 outreach activity. We have made significant impact during the Covid pandemic with remote and digital outreach, and we will continue to deliver this work whilst increasing the volume of in-person activities.

5.7 Key Outcomes.

- Develop and lead on a local attainment raising forum – this group will bring together all our current partners (Ogden trust, Hive, school, and colleges etc.) with the aim of aligning approaches to targeting and development and evaluation.
- Create strategic partnerships with target schools.
- Design and deliver activity in Maths, English and Science to support successful outcomes at KS3 that will support ongoing success at KS4.
- Enable target schools to participate in the university CPD programme for school leaders.
- Deliver activity for learners in school, digitally and in community settings.
- Generate evaluation evidence that informs ongoing delivery at each stage of the programme.

5.8 Targets.

5.8.1 In 2023/24 we will begin delivery of the first phase of activity which will focus on the end goal of raising attainment for learners in Key Stage 2. We will utilise existing assessment data such as Fisher Family Trust to identify learners / groups of learners for the primary intervention. This data can predict future performance and we will seek to improve on key outcomes for these learners in current assessment (SATS). These targets will need to be agreed upon with the local attainment-raising partnership.

5.8.2 Clear targets will be set for impact of attainment raising activity at the end of Key stage 4 as part of the scoping work we will undertake during 2022/23.

5.9 Evaluation.

5.9.1 The university is an active contributor to the Aimhigher West Midlands Evaluation Group which has oversight of the collaborative evaluation of data collected in the Aimhigher West Midlands database. This group have commissioned several research projects and evaluation pieces at a range of levels and will be reviewed to ensure that it has an appropriate remit and membership to support our evaluation work.

5.9.2 Our targets in years 1 and 2 will be focused on engagement and relationship development. We will measure this through the strength of engagement with our partners, strength of delivery and participation levels in planned activity. This will be a level 1 evaluation using empirical evidence.

5.9.3 We will undertake level 2 evaluation activity in years 3 and 4, measuring impact on outcomes for

participating learners. This will include quantitative evaluation of learner's attainment scores, impact upon Progress 8 scores for the school and individual pupils' attainment at GCSE.

5.10 Priority C: Set out how access to higher education for students from underrepresented groups leads to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes.

5.10.1 Five of the seven targets in this access and participation plan relate to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes for students from lower socioeconomic groups and students from underrepresented ethnic minority backgrounds. Following the initial assessment undertaken to identify these priorities we have developed an institution wide comprehensive plan and framework for student retention and success.

5.10.2 This plan details activities that will address systemic issues that negatively impact upon diverse groups of students, as well as a range of interventions designed to support student success. The plan has 8 priority outcomes:

1. **To understand the reasons for gaps between demographic groups with respect to retention, attainment, and progression to further study and/or graduate employment**
2. **To ensure students have a smooth and successful transition to University regardless of background**
3. **To build in all students' a sense of belonging to the University and to their programme of study**
4. **To enhance student engagement with learning activities including assessment a**
5. **To monitor student engagement and progress, and develop appropriate support interventions at the point of need**
6. **To ensure data for monitoring and evaluation purposes is developed and enhanced, and that evidence informs our ongoing work**
7. **To positively contribute to the good health and well-being of students**
8. **To support students to develop the skills, capabilities, and attributes to realise their potential through progression to highly skilled employment of further study**

5.11 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.

5.11.1 Over the next 12 months the University will further develop their Higher and Degree Apprenticeship programmes. A University of Worcester Apprenticeship Strategy, to be published in the summer of 2022, will outline the aims and ambitions of the University over the next 5 years. Running throughout these is the aim to increase the number of students studying with us, particularly in areas with national employment shortages (including nursing, wider professional allied healthcare, and children and young people education).

5.11.2 The strategy will also contribute to the overarching aims of the University's Strategic Plan whilst also meeting the employment demands locally, regionally and (where appropriate) nationally, in skills shortage areas such as health, adult social care, allied health and children and young people education.

5.11.3 We will continue to build on the successes achieved since the introduction of our apprenticeship programmes to work effectively with a variety of stakeholders, to contribute to the national up-skilling of the region and country's workforce agenda to support the economic prosperity of our communities. This will include working in partnership with the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce to support the design and delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Whilst the list is not exhaustive, our key stakeholders will include:

- Employer Organisations
- Local Enterprise Partnership – Worcestershire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull
- Worcestershire County Council and associated District Councils
- Worcestershire MP's
- Dudley Borough Council and associated partners of the Towns Fund programme
- Further Education Partners
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce
- Professional Bodies
- Health Education England
- Department for Education
- Education and Skills Funding Agency
- Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
- Office for Students

5.11.4 The Apprenticeship Strategy and our commitment to apprenticeship programmes will open broader learning opportunities to all sections of the community, and will increase the opportunities for mature students, particularly working adults, and for those without traditional entry qualifications.

5.11.5 Running parallel to our Higher and Degree Apprenticeship development, over the next 12 months, we will also explore our curriculum development of Higher and Technical Qualifications. We will achieve this by again working in closely with regional and national Employment and Skill leaders / lead organisations (private, statutory, and professional bodies).

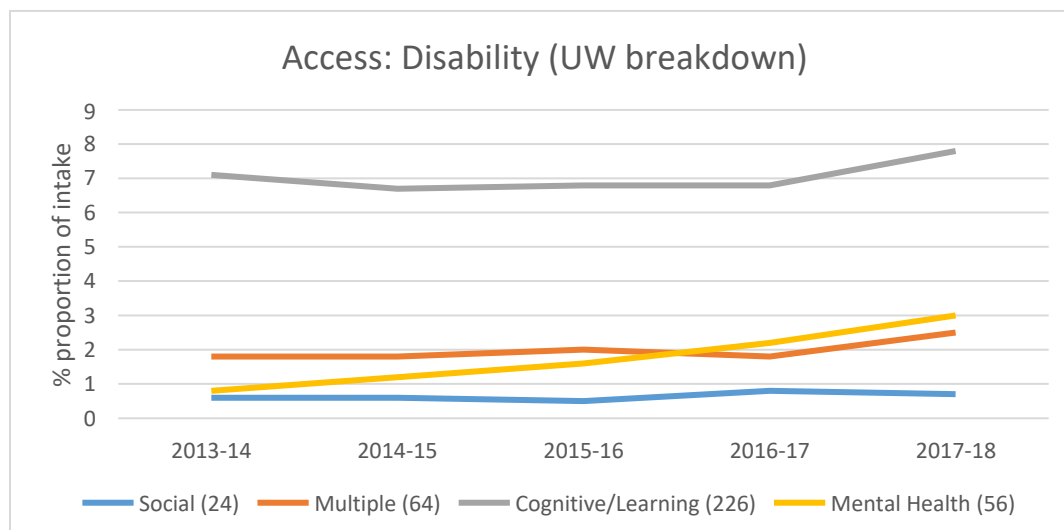
5.12 Resource Investment

5.12.1 The current level and distribution of our investment between access, continuation, success, and progression remain appropriate for our plans.

Appendix I Access & Participation plan 2020-25 10007139

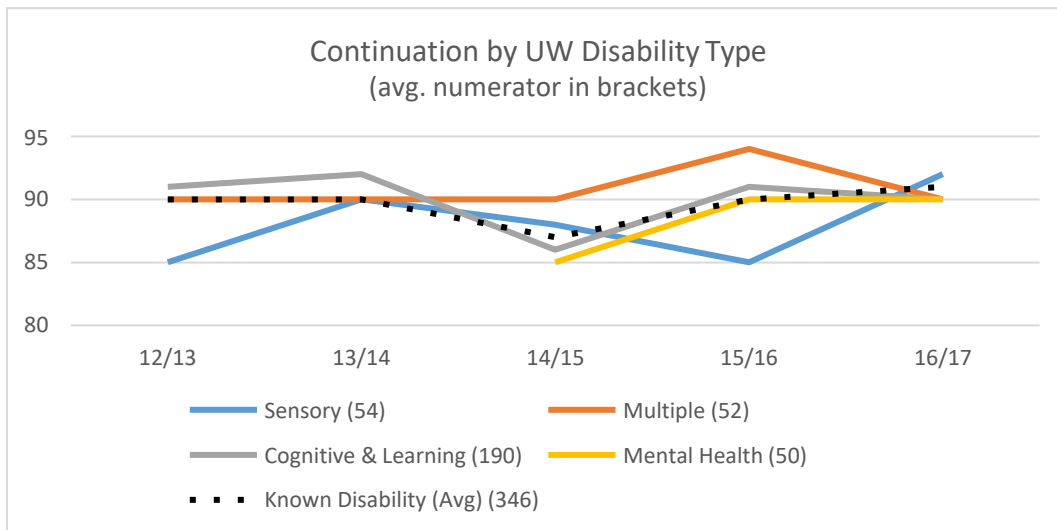
Disabled students account for 16.5% of the total measured population. In our analysis we have reviewed all stages of the lifecycle for disabled students and where we have available data we have disaggregated disability categories.

Access - Average no of students in category shown in brackets



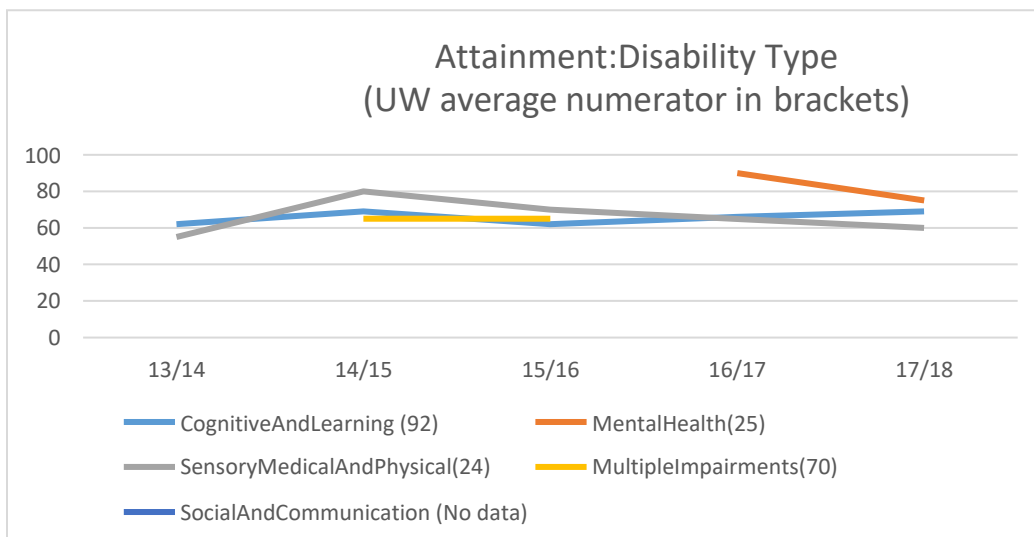
The largest proportion of disabled students accessing the university declare a cognitive or learning disability.

Continuation



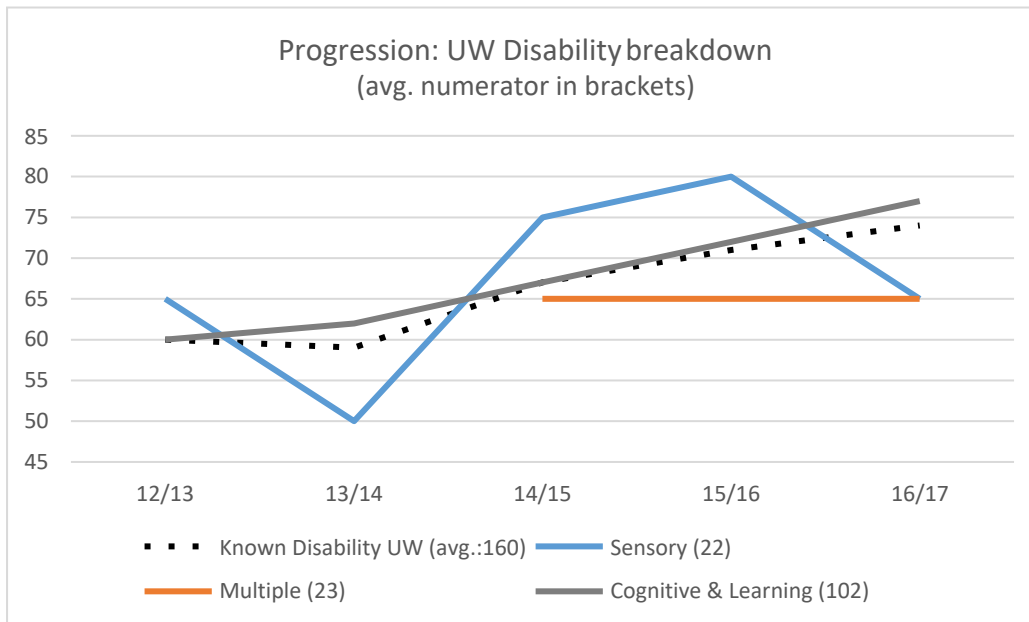
Disabled students across all categories of disability continue at a similar rate slightly above the non-disabled population (88%)

Attainment



The data for attainment of disabled students by disability category is incomplete. We have reviewed the available data. There are some material gaps in attainment between the disaggregated groups however the numbers are very small and as a percentage of the whole population; less than 1% of learners.

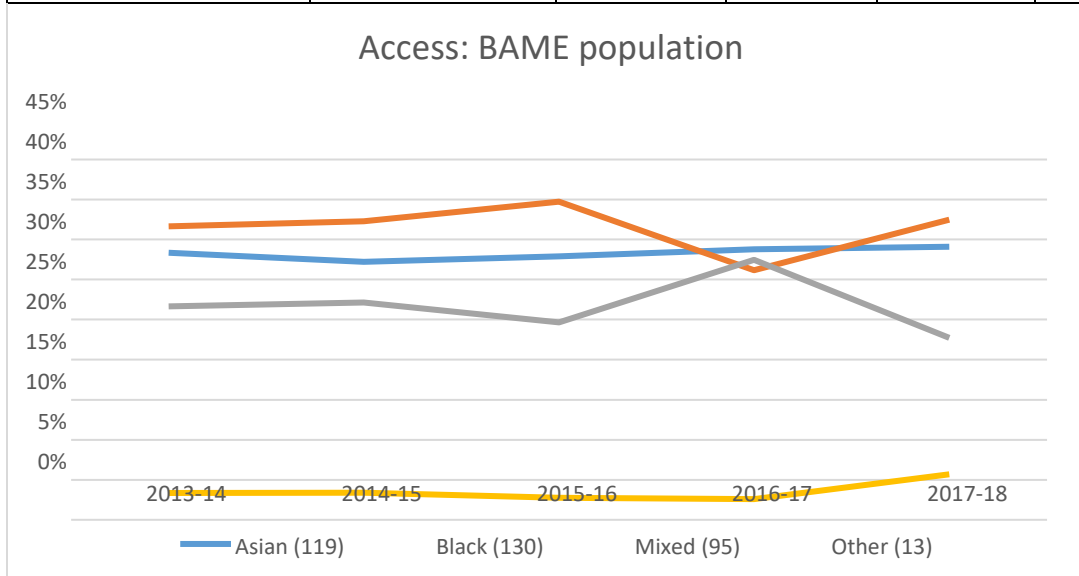
Progression



Disabled student progression is marginally lower than that of the general student population (74% and 76%). The disaggregated data demonstrates some material gaps between the disability categories. With some enduring gaps and one worsening gap. These numbers are small and make up less than 1% of the total population.

Access: BAME population (Average population in brackets)

Access BAME students	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Asian (119)	33%	32%	33%	34%	34%
Black (130)	37%	37%	40%	31%	38%
Mixed (95)	27%	27%	25%	32%	23%
Other (13)	3%	3%	3%	3%	6%



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

Provider name: University of Worcester

Provider UKPRN: 10007139

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,250
First degree	Extended Degree (Integrated Masters)	£9,250
Foundation degree		£9,250
Foundation year/Year 0		£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE		£9,250
Postgraduate ITT		£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year		£925
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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	Halesowen College 10002852	£9,250
First degree	Herefordshire, Ludlow, and North Shropshire College 10003023	£9,250
First degree	Iron Mill Education Limited 10045793	£9,250
First degree	Somerset County Council 10005959	£9,250
First degree	The National Childbirth Trust 10009715	£9,250
First degree	Westcountry Schools Trust 10057945	£9,250
Foundation degree	Birmingham Metropolitan College 10006442	£9,250
Foundation degree	Coleg Gwent 10008912	£9,250
Foundation degree	Halesowen College 10002852	£9,250
Foundation degree	Herefordshire, Ludlow, and North Shropshire College 10003023	£9,250
Foundation degree	Iron Mill Education Limited 10045793	£9,250
Foundation degree	Somerset County Council 10005959	£9,250
Foundation degree	The National Childbirth Trust 10009715	£9,250
Foundation degree	Westcountry Schools Trust 10057945	£9,250
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	Halesowen College 10002852	£9,250
CertHE/DipHE	Herefordshire, Ludlow, and North Shropshire College 10003023	£9,250
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	Halesowen College 10002852 - Diploma in Education and Training. The diploma in education and training is neither a CertHE or DipHE. It is a stand-alone qualification consisting of 60 credits at level 4 and 60 credits at level 5.	£9,250

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£6,935
Foundation degree		£6,935
Foundation year/Year 0		£6,935
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE		£6,935
Postgraduate ITT		£6,935
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	Diploma in Education and Training	£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	Halesowen College 10002852	£6,935
First degree	Herefordshire, Ludlow, and North Shropshire College 10003023	£6,935
First degree	Somerset County Council 10005959	£6,935
First degree	The National Childbirth Trust 10009715	£6,935
First degree	Westcountry Schools Trust 10057945	£6,935
Foundation degree	Birmingham Metropolitan College 10006442	£6,935
Foundation degree	Halesowen College 10002852	£6,935
Foundation degree	Herefordshire, Ludlow, and North Shropshire College 10003023	£6,935
Foundation degree	Iron Mill Education Limited 10045793	£6,935
Foundation degree	The National Childbirth Trust 10009715	£6,935
Foundation degree	Westcountry Schools Trust 10057945	£6,935
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*

HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	Halesowen College 10002852	£6,935
CertHE/DipHE	Herefordshire, Ludlow, and North Shropshire College 10003023	£6,935
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	Halesowen College 10002852 - Diploma in Education and Training	£6,935

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Worcester

Provider UKPRN: 10007139

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
Total access activity investment (£)	£1,179,169.00	£1,186,950.00	£1,197,606.00	£1,202,680.00	£1,202,342.00
Access (pre-16)	£280,977.00	£282,832.00	£285,370.00	£286,580.00	£286,499.00
Access (post-16)	£521,815.00	£525,258.00	£529,974.00	£532,219.00	£532,070.00
Access (adults and the community)	£229,370.00	£230,883.00	£232,956.00	£233,943.00	£233,877.00
Access (other)	£147,007.00	£147,977.00	£149,306.00	£149,938.00	£149,896.00
Financial support (£)	£349,364.00	£351,339.00	£354,044.00	£355,333.00	£355,247.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£258,090.00	£259,793.00	£262,125.00	£263,236.00	£263,162.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£21,507,530.00	£21,649,440.00	£21,843,795.00	£21,936,345.00	£21,930,175.00
Access investment	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%
Financial support	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%
Research and evaluation	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%
Total investment (as %HFI)	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%

