Access and Participation Plan

20/21-24/25 (variation 23/24)

Access and Participation Plan, variation 2023-24

INTRODUCTION

The University of Exeter is committed to the principle that everyone with the potential to benefit from higher education should have equal opportunity to do so. We believe that fair access to higher education is a fundamental enabler for social mobility, improving life opportunities and outcomes for individual students, while benefiting the economy and society as a whole.

Increasing equality of opportunity for students at all stages is a priority for this University. While we have made sustained improvements in the diversity of our student body, and have high rates of retention, attainment and progression, we know there is much more to do, particularly around access and in closing the gaps between different student groups. Widening Participation has been a long-term commitment for this University and under the leadership of our University Executive Board we have sought to be at the forefront of innovations now widely accepted as good practice, including early adoption of contextualised offer making; school sponsorship to support pupil attainment; collaboration with industry to create Degree Apprenticeships and provision for under-represented student groups.

This variation 2023-24 builds upon the significant progress made since the plan we submitted for 2020, especially in working to achieve a whole-provider approach to Widening Participation and Social Mobility which we deliver through our Success for All programme. A collaboration between academics, professional staff and students, Success for All drives institutional action to achieve our access and participation goals; progress equality, diversity and inclusion ambitions within our wider Education Strategy; and create an educational environment in which all students can realise their potential. In our 2020 plan we chose to maintain a focus on activity to support school attainment - as guided by our theory of change - to support fair access and as part of our commitment to skills development and capacity building within the South West region. Equally we have continued to focus on broadening our provision to meet learner needs through Degree Apprenticeships, our first Foundation provision, development of tiered technical qualifications via our South West Institute of Technology partnership and the development of other, non-traditional, courses.

Work towards equitable, high quality student outcomes has been actively progressing in tandem with significant efforts to build an inclusive educational environment supported by formal structures such as the Race Equality Charter [outcome awaited]. Progress made to date gives us confidence that we are well positioned to continue to meet this priority. We welcome the approaches taken by the Office to Students to encourage this University and the sector to be ambitious, transparent and evidence-led. We believe this plan is both considered and high-reaching, and most importantly will bring about positive outcomes for current and future students.

CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC AIMS

1.   Assessment of performance

The following assessment was conducted for our plan beginning 20/21. The data has not been updated for this variation and therefore <u>does not reflect progress against targets made to date</u>.

We are pleased to have achieved some success over recent years in increasing recruitment from under-represented and disadvantaged groups - particularly students from low participation

neighbourhoods, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students[1] and student with disabilities - but we recognise there is more to do. Around 17% of entrants are from the South West. They are more likely than all students to be mature, from a low income household, state school educated, or live in a low participation neighbourhood. Around 35% come from POLAR Q1 or 2, compared to 13.5% of our students from other areas. By comparison for example, students from London, are more likely to be younger, BAME and less likely to be from areas of low HE participation; although BAME students are more likely than their peers to be from areas of deprivation. Excluding state school, over 50% of our students have one or more indicators of disadvantage or under-representation and more than a fifth come from the poorest households (i.e. with incomes below £25k p.a.).

Our students are typically high-achieving, passionate and dedicated people who go on to excel academically and enjoy successful careers, but this isn't the case for everyone. We recognise we can go further to be more representative of the wider population for the benefit of the region and the diversity of graduates in the labour market. We can see from our own data that having secured their place to study with us, not all students may realise their potential. Our ambition is not only to attract applicants from diverse and under-represented groups to the University of Exeter but to retain them and support their success within an inclusive community.

1.1   Local context

The University's local region of Devon and Cornwall covers around 4,000 square miles and extends 180 miles from the Somerset border to the Isles of Scilly. Coastal and largely rural, the main population centres are Plymouth, Exeter and Torbay, which account for almost one third of the total population of around 1.7 million. While generally standards of living are good, the area contains pockets of deprivation, with 59 lower-layer super output areas (LSOAs) within the most deprived 10% of areas in England. These include 27 neighbourhoods in Plymouth (including Stonehouse among the 1% most deprived); 14 in Torbay; 17 in Cornwall; two in Exeter and two in North Devon. HEFCE's Gap Ward analysis shows the two counties have an average young participation rate in higher education of 31.9% compared with 41.6% for Greater London. Over 8% of wards within Devon and Cornwall fall into the lowest 20% of young people entering higher education in England.

The area includes 23% of England's coastal communities. Three of these – Torbay, Torridge and North Devon – are amongst the 10 worst local authority areas in the UK for lowest average pay, whilst Torridge has one of the country's highest unemployment rates[2]. The two counties have long associations with the military, particularly the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, and host major bases including Stonehouse, Chivenor, Lympstone and Raleigh.

We also serve a wider South West region, sharing borders with Somerset and Dorset. This area includes our nearest Opportunity Area of West Somerset, which is served by a single secondary school which we support through our regional NCOP and Realising Opportunities. The physical size and rural nature of our locality present challenges in delivering our outreach programmes and maintaining close relationships with our local schools. With driving times of between two and three hours between the edges of our local area and a lack of public transport links to rural communities, delivering multiple interventions to widely dispersed students require innovative approaches.

The area has low levels of ethnic diversity. The population of Cornwall, for example, is just 1.4% Asian/Asian British and 0.7% Black/Black British compared with a national average of 7.5% and 3.3% respectively. While the University is ethnically diverse, welcoming students from more than 150 different countries from around the world, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students make

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[1] Where we use the term BAME, we do so to reflect statistical terminology and the language used by the regulator and other bodies. Consultation with university stakeholders shows however that this term is problematic and does not reflect individual ethnic identities and may not be a preferred term for colleagues and students within the university to describe their own ethnic identity.

[2] Living on the Edge: Britain's Coastal Communities, Social Mobility Foundation, 2017

up a smaller proportion of the UK/EU cohort than the sector and Russell Group averages. We want to create a more diverse student community and are achieving this by extending our outreach into areas beyond the South West such as London and Birmingham.

As a leading employer, we contribute substantially to social mobility through job creation and generating income within the region and are active in supporting regional prosperity and communities through our Regional Skills and Community Strategies. An economic impact assessment in 2017, concluded the University contributed £777.8m of output and 7,805 FTE jobs in the Heart of the South West LEP and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly LEP areas in 2015/16, making an overall contribution to local GVA of £443.8m[3].

1.2 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access: We have made sustained improvements in the recruitment of students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4 LPN), rising from 12.7% (Q1/Q2) in 13/14 to an estimated 15.3% in 18/19. This compares to 36.9% within the 18-year-old population. We therefore endorse the key performance measure (KPM) for low participation as **PTA 1: Ratio of entrants who are from POLAR4 Q1&2 compared to Q4&5** in order to reflect our broader approach. Our aim is that the ratio of students from the lowest represented areas (Q1&2) compared to the highest (Q4&5) will grow to 1:3 by 2024/25. The majority of our fair access work is focused in the South West and we are encouraged that more than one-third of entrants from our local region are from POLAR4 Q1&2. We have set the ambitious target of achieving parity in representation between students in the least and most represented neighbourhoods from the South West, i.e. a 1:1 ratio between Q1 and Q5. **PTA 2: Ratio of entrants from the South West from POLAR4 Q1 compared to Q5**.

Analysis of internal admissions data shows that LPN Q1 students are disproportionately 'lost' at both offer and acceptance stages and we continue to explore the role of entry qualifications and intersections with other characteristics such as age and locality. We need to work across quintiles as POLAR is not a proxy for socio-economic disadvantage, for example 57% of our students in Q1 are from a low income household but so are 20% in Q5. While the proportion of POLAR Q1&2 students is increasing, the percentage of students from state school has remained steady and the percentage from low-income households has decreased. Meanwhile, POLAR is recognised as limited for certain parts of the country, such as London, a key catchment area for the University and a focus for our widening participation work. For these reasons we seek to include a target to help us focus on supporting students from state schools within the areas of most deprivation including parts of our own region, such as Cornwall, where IMD areas don't neatly map on to lower participation neighbourhoods**. PTA 3: Percentage of entrants from IMD 1&2 and state school** intends to help the effectiveness of our recruitment and outreach activities in targeting those from under-represented groups and from areas of deprivation.

Non-continuation: We have excellent rates of retention across our student population, with continuation rates at around 98%. Our LPN Q1 students experience a slighter lower continuation rate (94%). While not statistically significant for the University, we are keen to reduce this sustained gap and ensure that as we increase the proportion of students from low participation areas they are well supported and retained. We endorse (OfS) KPM3 as a target (**PTS 1: POLAR4 Q1 non-continuation gap v Q5**). We have noted there is a large crossover between IMD and POLAR and a similar non-continuation gap for IMD Q1 students. When deciding on the most appropriate target, we felt that POLAR was a better measure as it related to a larger number of students, met national priorities and was persistent. While we observed an increase in the gap for IMD students in 16/17,

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[3] The Economic Impact of the University of Exeter, Viewforth Consulting Ltd, 2017

we could not observe a trend. Our interventions will aim to be effective for both groups and we will continue to monitor the gap in non-continuation for IMD and revisit our targets if appropriate.

Degree outcomes: We have an excellent record of student attainment and have been successful in reducing the gap for between LPNQ1 and Q5 students in achieving Good Honours to 4ppt in 17/18. This is substantially below the sector average of 9ppt. There is a sustained awarding gap for IMD Q1, however intersectional analysis indicates that ethnicity is a primary factor, therefore this will be addressed under PTS 3.

Progression to employment or further study: We have been highly successful in reducing - and indeed reversing - the gap in graduate destinations between students from low participation neighbourhoods and their peers (from 7ppt in 14/15 to a reverse gap of -2ppt 16/17 for Q1&2 compared to Q3-5) outperforming the sector. This is attributed to a significant focus and additional investment in employability initiatives, support and internships for key groups. We recognise, however, that this has not been mirrored in the outcomes for our students with the lowest household incomes. Our analysis using the OfS toolkit and dataset for the evaluation of financial support analysis showed no significant difference to the control group for those with low household incomes, however students from the highest income households were more likely to gain a graduate destination and internal data continues to show a sustained gap particularly for those with income <£25k, who automatically qualify for an Access to Exeter bursary. We have therefore set a target **PTP1: Progression gap for students from the lowest household income (Access to Exeter bursary) v high income**.

1.3 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access: We have made considerable progressing in increasing the ethnic diversity of our UK cohort (rising from 7.2% in 13/14 to 10.9% in 17/18). The largest increase has been in Black or Black British students, who in 18/19 made up 17% of our ethnic minority entrants. A further 39% were of mixed ethnicity, 38% were Asian or Asian British, and 6% Arab or other ethnic origin. We acknowledge the proportion of Black students is still low when viewed in a national context but as 7% of 18-19yr olds in the South West are BAME and 13% in the South East[4] our progress is encouraging taking into account our main recruitment areas. Over the last two years we have expanded significantly our efforts increase BAME recruitment and specifically to work with BAME students who also meet WP criteria. We can see that these activities have made an impact and we continue to refine our approaches. We continue to work hard to increase our diversity and build on this trajectory which is reflected in **PTA 4: Percentage of BAME entrants**.

Non-continuation: The continuation gap for BAME students is better than the national average at 2ppt compared to 3ppt and is not statistically significant. However, this may be due to small numbers and is an area we will continue to monitor closely using new data dashboards being developed as part of an annual cycle of review.

Degree outcomes: The differing experiences of BAME ethnic groups is most evident in degree awards: there is a 20ppt gap for Black students achieving Good Honours (increasing from 10ppt in 13/14), compared to a 10ppt gap for Asian students (down from 15ppt in 13/14) and 5ppt for students from a Mixed BAME ethnic group (the same gap in 13/14). This reflects the national picture, where there is a 23ppt Black awarding gap and lesser gaps for Asian (11ppt) and Mixed (4ppt) ethnic groups. The target (**PTS 3. Black student awarding gap v White – OfS KPM4**) is focused on Black students where the gap is particularly pronounced. However, we recognise the evident Asian awarding gap and will continue to work on the overall BAME attainment gap to ensure that we address all areas of inequality. Internal analysis indicates that although figures vary due to small

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[4] 2011 Census

numbers, overall for both Asian and Black ethnic groups the gap is larger for men than women. In addition, the OfS dataset shows that the BAME awarding gap is twice as large for IMD Q1&2 students (17ppt) compared to Q3-5 (8ppt), which will help inform the design and delivery of our interventions. We are committed to making significant strides in reducing these gaps and learning from sector best practice and research in this crucial area.

Progression: Our BAME students enjoy better graduate outcomes then their white peers, including progression to further study**.** It is encouraging to see the progress which has been made compared with 12/13, when the gap was at 6ppt.

1.4 Mature students

Access: Our percentage of mature entrants has been relatively static over the last five years, ranging from a high of 6.2% in 14/15 to a low of 5.7% in 15/16. Internal figures indicate 18/19 will remain the same as 17/18 at 5.8%. This is below the sector average in 17/18 of 23.5% and is an area we have identified as a priority (**PTA 5. Percentage of mature entrants**). Recruitment varies across subjects and campuses. For example, there are a higher percentage of mature students in vocational courses such as Medicine and our Degree apprenticeships which are Exeter-based. We are aware of the challenges involved in increasing recruitment from under-represented groups in other areas such as the Humanities. Internal analysis has identified that mature students are much more likely to have qualifications other than recent A-levels, and our work here is particularly relevant in light of the national decline in mature students in higher education. For example, we are revising our Admissions and transition/induction policies and procedures to take into account the diversity of paths from which we draw our mature applicants. Mature students are more likely than their peers to have a disability, and over half of our mature entrants are from the South West.

Non-continuation: Despite having good retention rates in comparison to the sector, we are very aware that our mature students are less likely than their peers to continue into the second year. The gap, although subject to small numbers, is statistically significant and has been sustained over the past three years, dropping slightly to 9ppt in 16/17. This gap combined with our desire to increase mature student access has informed our target **PTS 2: Mature non-continuation gap**.

Degree outcomes: The awarding gap for mature students has declined over the past two years to 13ppt from a high of 23ppt. It is no longer statistically significant; however the gap is longstanding and remains significant at the national level (9.5ppt in 17/18) therefore this will continue to form part of our internal monitoring.

Progression: The percentage of both young and mature students entering graduate level destinations has increased year on year over the past five years, and we outperform the sector in this area. We are really encouraged to see that the gap between mature students and their peers has declined with 87% of mature students achieving graduate outcomes in 16/17 compared to 81.2% of young students.

1.5 Disabled students

Access: The percentage of our students declaring a disability has risen from 13.1% in 12/13 to 17.4% in 17/18, this is above the sector average. The largest grouping by impairment type is cognitive or learning difficulties (7.6% in 17/18), although the largest increase has been in those declaring a social or communication impairment or a mental health condition, which is congruent with the national picture. These shifts are accounted for in the structure and organisation of our wellbeing provision for students across the student lifecycle, especially at pre-entry. Internal figures show that the proportion of entrants who receive DSA is 5.8%, which is just over one-third of all those who declare a disability, compared to nearly half prior to changes in its scope. DSA is more common (more than 60% in receipt) for those who are Blind or visually impaired, have a social or communication impairment, or have two or more impairments. However, our support is not limited

to those who receive DSA. Students with a disability are more likely than their peers to be mature. Further analytical work is planned in the short-term to increase our understanding of the intersection between disability, disability type and other characteristics, at each stage of the student lifecycle with the view of using this evidence to inform delivery of support.

Non-continuation: Although our students presenting with a disability are still slightly less likely to continue into their second year of study, with a gap of 1ppt in 16/17 this is a reduction from 3ppt in 12/13, and only slightly higher than the sector average of 0.8ppt. Whilst numbers are small the gap is shown to be higher for those with mental health conditions, which we are addressing through our Wellbeing Services. Non-continuation has been similar or lower for those in receipt of DSA over the past four years.

Degree outcomes: Our students with a disability are slightly less likely to achieve Good Honours. There is a 3ppt gap which is similar to the sector average, however it does represent an improvement in performance as it has declined from a high of 6ppt in 2014/15. Whilst not showing as significant at the University this is a national performance measure (**OfS KPM 5**) **PTS 4: Disabled students degree awarding gap v non-disabled**, which we aim to practically eradicate. The gap is largest and has increased over the past two years for those with cognitive or learning difficulties (4ppt). Although we already have in place a robust approach to developing and implementing Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), further research and collaborative work between Wellbeing and Teaching colleagues to understand the needs of students with differing disabilities will be a factor in addressing this gap.

Progression: Students presenting with disability have good progression into graduate destinations, but there is a small gap when compared with their peers**.** The gap is larger for students with Mental Health conditions and we are keen to carry out further research to understand the issues they may face and how we can help address them. Whilst we outperform the sector for both students with and without disabilities entering graduate level destinations, further research is needed to inform practice to better support these students.

1.6 Care leavers

Access: We recruit a small number of care leavers each year and offer extensive provision and support including fee waivers, extended accommodation contracts and personalised support. We have carried out work to better understand the barriers faced by care leavers through the admissions process with the aim of widening access for this group. As part of a review of our policy and procedures we are assessing the definition we use with the aim of introducing a more inclusive definition for the start of this plan to allow us to support an optimum number of students with experience of care rather than only those entitled to fee waivers. We capture other institutional practices and contribute to policy discussions for this group via the NNECL national steering group and regional institutions group on which we sit.

Non-continuation: The University offers a generous package of support and in 2019 will be a signatory to the Care Leavers Covenant. Although in 17/18 all those in receipt of fee waivers did continue, this was based on a very small number and historically care leavers have been less likely than their peers to continue into the second year. We continue to evaluate impact.

Degree outcomes: In the most recent three of the past five years a lower percentage of care leavers have achieved Good Honours than their peers but it is encouraging that this gap has steadily narrowed.

Progression: The numbers who graduate are extremely small, so it is difficult to draw any conclusions, however over the past three years all care leavers who have graduated have progressed onto graduate destinations. It is difficult due to small numbers to assign significance to trends; however internal data is indicative of lower rates of continuation and degree attainment. We continue to work to increase the access, success, and progression of the groups that care leavers intersect with as well as improving our direct provision of support.

1.7 Intersections of disadvantage

Many of our students face multiple indicators of disadvantage, and some indicators are more likely to be associated (such as ethnicity and deprivation, or age and disability). By continuing to investigate the intersections between participation, IMD, ethnicity, age, disability and income we can more effectively focus our outreach and internal transition support. For example, understanding that the BAME attainment gap intersects with gender and is related to other gaps for students from lower participation or deprived neighbourhoods.

The OfS dataset shows that gender is highly related to degree outcomes – a lower percentage of male students achieve Good Hons (1st or 2.1), irrespective of POLAR or IMD. Analysis, using internal data, combining POLAR quintile, gender and ethnicity indicates ethnicity as the most influential factor: the lowest rates of Good Hons are for BAME male students from all quintiles. There are also awarding gaps for female BAME students from Q1 and 2. Whilst there are gaps for white male students compared to their female peers, there is no gap between males at Q1 or 5. This analysis is helping to inform our approaches to supporting attainment.

We recognise that whilst we understand some of the intersections there is still more work to do and we have found this approach helpful in refining our understanding. We note that although there is clear complementarity with the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, the national and University approach to Access and Participation does not include specific approaches around: sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity/paternity and religion and belief. However these characteristics sometimes form an important part of our analytical and practical considerations around a particular issue e.g. the safeguarding agenda, student mental health and work to protect and support religion and belief.

1.8 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

We are working with carers and have changed our registration processes to enable us to identify entrants who are estranged from their families and those from military families. Internal intelligence suggests the latter group could be quite a significant size which is why we will introduce a formal data collection process in time for this plan. Entrant data for people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and refugees is collected from UCAS and we are developing our understanding here.

2. Underlying principles

The University is committed to enabling social mobility through education. We aim to widen participation; raise pupil attainment; contribute to a strong regional skills base; and bridge gaps in retention, progression and success to ensure our students enjoy the best possible outcomes at University and as graduates. Our strategy continues to be based on the following principles:

1. Diversity, fair access and inclusivity
2. A whole student lifecycle approach
3. Collaboration and partnership
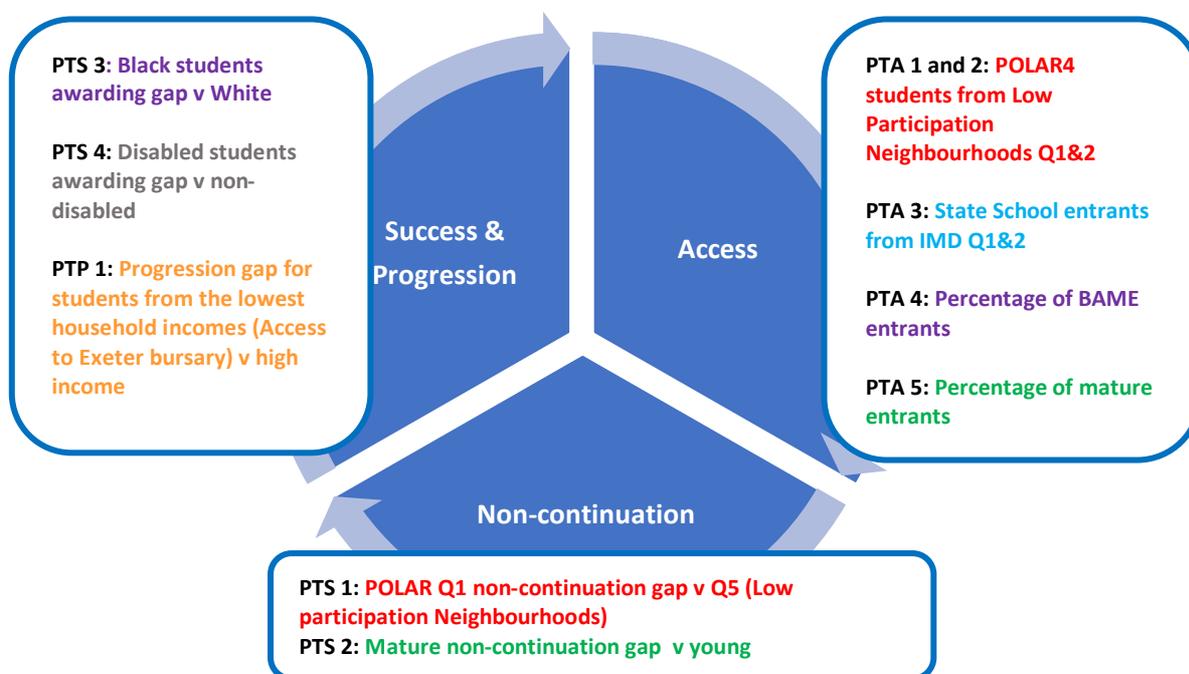4. Evidence-based practice

3. Aims and objectives

Our targets were set following an assessment of our performance and local context and are designed to further our institutional ambitions around three strategic aims:

Strategic aims	Objectives (to deliver the aims)	Measured by: Targets and milestones
Improve access to the University of Exeter and work collaboratively within our region to better understand and address barriers to social mobility	a. Support the attainment of learners, to enable them to progress to higher education b. Take a leading role within our region to build capacity, identify and address barriers, and work collaboratively on solutions c. Widen and diversify our applicant pool across key student groups and optimise conversion d. Encourage, support and prepare prospective students to enter higher education e. Work in partnership to extend our portfolio of non-traditional and flexible study routes	**PTA 1.** Ratio of entrants who are from POLAR4 Q1&2 v Q4&5 (target 1:3 from 1:4.7) (linked to OfS KPM 2) **PTA 2.** Ratio of entrants from the South West from POLAR4 Q1&2 v Q4&5 (target 1:1 from 1:1.5) (linked to OfS KPM 2) **PTA 3.** Percentage of entrants from IMD 1&2 and state school (target 13% from 11%) **PTA 4.** Percentage of BAME entrants (target 15% from 10.1%) **PTA 5.** Percentage of mature entrants (target 8% from 5.8%)
Address the causes of observable gaps in success and progression for key groups	a. Minimise the observed gaps in non-continuation rates between key groups by 2030 b. Minimise the observed gaps in attainment and achievement of graduate outcomes between key groups of students by 2030	**PTS 1.** POLAR4 Q1 non-continuation gap v Q5 (target 2.5ppt from 4ppt) (linked to OfS KPM 3) **PTS 2.** Mature non-continuation gap v young (target 7.5ppt from 9ppt) **PTS 3.** Black students' degree awarding gap v White (target 12ppt from 20ppt) (linked to OfS KPM 4) **PTS 4.** Disabled students' degree awarding gap v non-disabled (target 0.5ppt from 3ppt) (linked to OfS KPM 5) **PTP 1:** Progression gap for students from the lowest household incomes (Access to Exeter bursary) v high income (target 1.5ppt from 3.1ppt)
Enable an inclusive university culture where all can fulfil their potential	Build on national research and expertise in this area to deliver visible change within the next five/ten years to underpin strategic aims 1 and 2. We will measure this aim by a university-wide framework which will align with the strategic measures within our Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity strategy, to include: • Meeting the non-continuation and success targets above • Meeting internal targets and KPIs relating to all key groups and students with protected characteristics across the student life cycle • Achieving and sustaining key charter marks such as Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charter and Mental Health mark • Qualitative feedback	

4. Target groups

Our objectives and targets span a variety of target groups across all stages of the student lifecycle. The OfS dataset has confirmed the trends we had ourselves identified in extensive internal analysis so we can be sure that we are targeting our efforts effectively. The groups and targets identified are shown mapped to the relevant stages of the student lifecycle:

PTS 3: Black students awarding gap v White

PTS 4: Disabled students awarding gap v non-disabled

PTP 1: Progression gap for students from the lowest household incomes (Access to Exeter bursary) v high income

Success & Progression

Access

PTA 1 and 2: POLAR4 students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods Q1&2

PTA 3: State School entrants from IMD Q1&2

PTA 4: Percentage of BAME entrants

PTA 5: Percentage of mature entrants

Non-continuation

PTS 1: POLAR Q1 non-continuation gap v Q5 (Low participation Neighbourhoods)
PTS 2: Mature non-continuation gap v young

Some groups appear across the lifecycle more than once, such as mature students and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students, because our analysis has shown that these groups experience gaps in outcomes in relation to their peers across the student lifecycle and the key indicators.

5. Commitment to care-experienced students and under-represented groups

We are committed to supporting students from under-represented groups at both strategic and operational levels. Our Under-represented Students Working Group brings together colleagues from across the university to address the needs of many of the Office for Students' targeted under-represented student groups. This working group feeds directly to the Success for All Strategy Group and senior management, enabling intelligence, reporting, evaluation and strategy, and student voice, to actively affect decision making across the organisation. Members also sit on regional and national steering groups (e.g. supporting care leavers, military families, refugees and asylum seekers etc.) and can feed into national policy as needed and collaborate with local partners. Our plan does not include specific targets for under-represented groups, with the exception of mature students. This is both because the small numbers involved make numerical targets unhelpful, but also because often these student groups experience gaps rights across the student journey requiring a holistic and multi-faceted approach. While the impact of interventions may be statistically insignificant, they have huge and sometimes life changing consequences for the individuals involved. Instead, we have sought to work with external bodies and frameworks to guide good practice and encourage continuous development, while benchmarking our progress against other providers. We are a proud and early signatory of a number of kite marks and pledges including the Stand Alone Pledge, Care Leaver Covenant, NNECL Quality Mark and University of Sanctuary.

Our support for care leavers – which includes a full fee waiver - has been highlighted within a best practice case study by the Office for Students, and we continue to adapt and improve our provision in consultation with our care experienced students and contribute to sector developments through our roles on the NNECL national steering group. We are continually addressing how we can capture better data at entry and individual characteristics available via UCAS from 2023 entry will allow us to better identify and target support for particular student groups. We will continue to improve our monitoring and evaluation of support; to measure the impact, and to inform the development of future activity drawing on the 'Supporting access and student success for learners with experience of children's social care'[5] report as a base for our evidence review.

6. Diversity in Postgraduate Education

We are committed to progressing work to further understand the profile of our postgraduate taught and research population to identify if some of the characteristics and trends we see in our undergraduate population are perpetuated, including diversity and awarding gap trends. Concerns around equity of access, information, advice and guidance, financial support, mental health and support for disabled students are as relevant to our postgraduate students as we know they are for our undergraduate students. We work actively with the NEON Postgraduate group to consider diversity at postgraduate level and are taking our own internal analysis and national research findings forward through a Success for All working group focusing on access and participation in postgraduate study. This will consider the evidence to determine which areas require specific policy and practical action. Additionally, work to support fair admissions, improve student induction and transition, better support under-represented students, address degree awarding gaps, increase financial support, and embed inclusive teaching and curricula aim to support all students realise their potential, whatever their level of study.

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[5] Styrnol et al, Evidence Review: Supporting access and student success for learners with experience of children's social care, TASO, 2021

STRATEGIC MEASURES

Our strategic measures have been developed in response to our analysis of our institutional and broader context and are informed by our own evaluation, academic research, identified best practice and sector guidance. These measures are complex, often overlapping, at differing stages of development, and warrant significant evidence and description in their own right. Within this planning framework however, the information we have provided can only be indicative, showing how the activities we are putting in place aim to achieve specific outcomes relating to our strategic aims and objectives, informed by evidence and ongoing evaluation. These will, of course, be subject to change as new evidence and research emerge affecting our approaches and priorities. We also acknowledge our ability to successfully implement the measures below are subject to external forces, such as Government reforms around fees and entry; the ongoing impact of the pandemic; market conditions and central funding and external support for regional partnerships.

1. Whole provider approach to social mobility

The University continues to make significant progress towards developing a holistic approach for supporting social mobility across the organisation and student life cycle. Our approach is informed by sector guidance such as the HEA framework for student access, retention attainment and progression at HE[6] and the OFFA Whole Institution Approach toolkit[7], which recommend joined up systemic approaches across the student life cycle. We implement our Access and Participation Plan through our Success for All programme. This involves over 150 colleagues from across Academic Faculties, Professional Services and student community taking work forward through a governance structure and working groups for action. We have been able to funnel the passion and commitment colleagues have for this work through specific work packages and associated resource to generate a momentum which is delivering visible change. For example, a working group on mature students (identified as priority in 2020) has built an action plan founded upon research best-practice and student feedback to generate improvements at all stages of the student lifecycle. In 2022 we published our institution's new 2030 strategy which sets out our mission to use the power of our education and research to create a sustainable, healthy and socially just future. This both reflects the importance of this agenda and helps align priorities and strategic approaches and infrastructure. We are fully aware that while messaging within strategy documents is important, what matters most is how those plans are translated operationally to make change on the ground to the benefit of students. We continue to develop robust operational strands with clear lines of accountability, budgeting, strategic direction and reporting, to ensure that these highly complex and inter-linked series of actions are achieved successfully and collaboratively.

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[6] Framework for student access, retention, attainment and progression in higher education, The Higher Education Academy, 2015
[7] Understanding a whole institution approach to higher education, Office for Fair Access, 2017

Measure	Current and future provision
Alignment of strategic plans	Our Access and Participation Plan was developed in tandem with our Education Strategy; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Vision and Wellbeing Action Plan. Subsequently access and participation have been identified as key priorities within the University's new 2030 Strategy. Governance is via our Success for All Strategy Group and underpinned by a robust operational plan and monitored through the relevant committees reporting to our University's Executive Board, Council and Senate, with clear accountability.
Data, business intelligence and research inform decision making	We continue to make excellent progress in building a robust evidence framework to enable us to monitor performance and inform strategic decision making. Our WP, EDI and Business Intelligence teams have been working jointly to integrate data capture, monitoring and dashboards through our business intelligence system. These underpin our operational plans and governance and we are being further aligned with approaches to the Quality Review and Enhancement Framework (QREF) and our Teaching Excellence Action Plans, TEF, and student data framework, to ensure we have a comprehensive picture of student experience to a granular level.
Whole life cycle approach	A significant amount of work has been carried out to ensure we provide holistic support to students at the various stages of their journey into and through higher education and this will continue and become more robust during the duration of this plan. Following a systematic review of provision for students with diverse characteristics, considerable steps have been taken to join up provision across teams; fill gaps in support (e.g. for estranged student and carers); enhance our analytical capabilities and use of data; improve governance and share information systematically within academic structures and professional services. This is driven via our governance for social mobility which includes cross-University representation, faculty groups, and a planning model addressing all stages of the student life cycle.
Cross-university contribution to WP	We have a network of WP specialists and champions who meet regularly within our governance structures and project teams, but also more informally through the Centre for Social Mobility and on a spontaneous basis to share information and support. We have specific WP roles within recruitment, academic skills, wellbeing, and employability teams and within our academic faculties. Training and support for staff and students is also expanding with seminars, networking and research events run by the Centre, Education Incubator, Success for All, and Graduate School of Education. Linking up with our Q-Step Centre, College teams and Research Directorate, we are also developing a range of approaches to better embed widening participation within research e.g. via our academic and PhD training/development; research projects, dissemination of results and impact; and the creation of research-based placements for pupils/students from WP groups.
Involvement of students and alumni	We take pride in the strong and collaborative relationships we have with our students. Our Student Unions are involved in the development of this plan, are active members of our social mobility governance structure and have facilitated consultation to support this important agenda. Our students are involved in the co-creation of research and initiatives to support widening participation e.g. through our Education Incubator; Centre for Social Mobility; Education Partners; Students as Change Agents and staff/student liaison committees. They are involved in our EDI and Education structures. We also continue to strengthen relationships with our alumni to support widening participation, through the donation of time/expertise; career mentoring; work placements and funding.
Finance and resources	Finance and resources to support WP are allocated based on our implementation plan and monitored through our social mobility governance structure. This approach provides line of sight over expenditure and staffing to enable resources to be optimised for the benefit our students.

## 2. Regional skills and working with partners to support attainment

Access remains the biggest priority for the university in terms of closing gaps in disadvantage and under-representation. Analysis suggests most of the socio-economic gap in HE participation in England can be explained by the fact that poorer students have lower levels of attainment at GCSE . Geographical context is also important. Our own region's success as a popular holiday destination masks very significant barriers for social mobility and prospects for its young people. In the South West attainment gaps between poorer pupils and their peers are the largest of all English regions at the end of both primary and secondary school. Recent research by the Centre for Social Mobility[8] shows that 40% of disadvantaged pupils in the region attained a standard pass in GSCE English and Maths in 2019 compared with almost 60% in inner London and just 17% of disadvantaged pupils went on to university in 18/19 - the lowest rate of all English regions – compared with 45% in the capital. A variety of recent studies indicate that the gaps between poorer students and their more affluent peers have widened still further during the pandemic, with these students most likely to experience higher levels of school disruption and learning loss.

We have maintained a focus on learner attainment, strategic work with schools and regional skills and we are supportive of the OfS' renewed focus for collaborative work in this space. This variation exercise allows us to rearticulate our areas of work and those for future action. The diagram (right) shows the various workstreams we identify under this attainment agenda.

2.1 Regional skills and levelling up

We are committed within our 2030 Strategy to take a leading role in supporting the prosperity and success of our region. The South West has the highest attainment gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers in the country at both primary and secondary school and the lowest rates of progression to higher education. We aim to build capacity within our region to address geographical inequalities by:

Research and capacity building - furthering our activities to understand the factors affecting social mobility in our area and how these barriers might be overcome by utilising research through our Centre for Social Mobility and ensuring the dissemination of findings and recommendations to local leaders to aid policy development and place-

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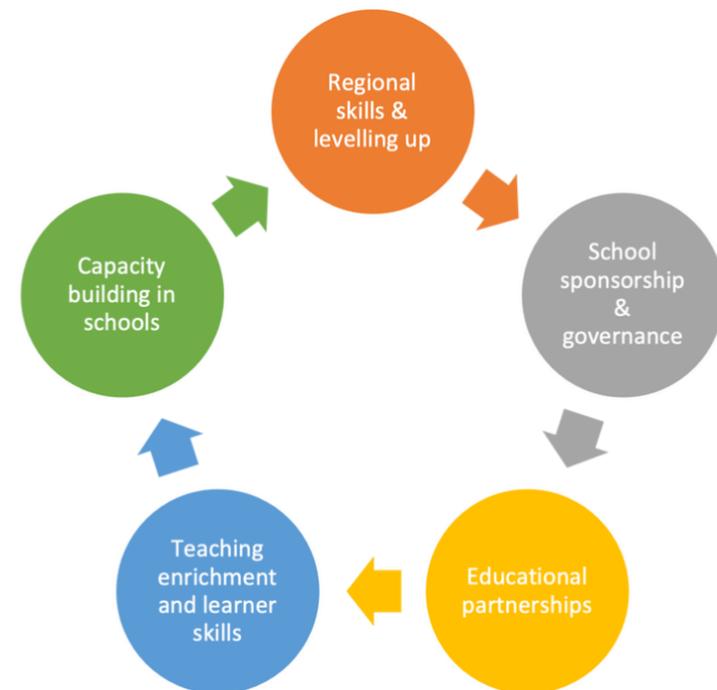
[8] & [9] Sim A. Elliot Major L., Social Mobility in the South West: Levelling up through Education, Centre for Social Mobility, 2022

based action. Building on the findings of the report Social Mobility in the South West[9], we will work with local partners to establish a South West Social Mobility Commission to help bring the region together to tackle systemic barriers to social mobility and lobby for inward investment.

Place-based partnerships - progressing place-based partnerships through Civic University Agreements to identify key priorities for local action and multi-agency approaches to developing and implementing solutions for pressing local problems. Our first agreement signed with Exeter city partners includes the creation of an Exeter Education Alliance in which educational partners across the city and surrounding area collaborate with the aim of creating an exemplar education ecosystem to support continuous professional development, social mobility and stimulate innovation. Addressing inequality is also a focus of our Civic University partnership in Cornwall. A further agreement is planned for Devon and Torbay. Meanwhile we continue to work closely with local partners in the region to identify areas of join-up, particularly around social mobility.

Educational routes addressing regional skills gaps - developing educational provision, qualifications and progression routes to address skills gaps within the region and help stimulate the economy. We will continue to work with our partners in the South West Institute of Technology, to build skills and regional expertise in digital, engineering and manufacturing technologies. This will involve a particular focus on the development of level 4 qualifications as part of a progression framework including T-levels, Higher Technical Qualifications and Degree Apprenticeships. A key strategic aim of the Institute will be to increase participation and achievement by under-represented and disadvantaged groups. This work and initiatives such as the skills escalator to increase capacity in data analytics across the region, are relevant to the broader social mobility agenda.

2.2 School sponsorship and governance

We have long been an advocate and leader in school sponsorship and governance to support pupil attainment and in recent years our portfolio has expanded to help ensure successful outcomes for learners across the region. We continue to bolster our coordination of support to schools and colleges in the region and will explore how we can provide structured coordination and simplified points of contact. Work in this area includes:

Exeter Mathematics School – we have been a sponsor of Exeter Mathematics School since 2014 and are actively involved in the curriculum and governance of the school. Designed to help able mathematics students from the region realise their full potential, the state-funded school is Ofsted outstanding. Around 20% of learners are from disadvantaged backgrounds and 25% have a learning difficulty / disability. We aim to support the School realise its ambitions to extend its catchment area and increase the volume of its student intake.

Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust – we are an active partner in this city-wide approach to support pupil attainment in Exeter which has led sustained improvements in school performance. The Trust comprises 11 academies and is responsible for the education of 7,000 children aged two to 16. Support for school leadership is a crucial aspect of this work through support from our Business School and its Centre for Leadership and colleagues from our Graduate

School of Education regularly work with the Trust to test and share research. The Trust is also an important partner within the new Exeter Education Alliance.

South West Institution of Technology – we are working through this partnership to help the South West become a leading region for digital, engineering and manufacturing technologies by providing excellent technical education to meet current and future skills requirements to drive economic prosperity. We will continue to work to extend the reach and impact of this partnership.

South Devon UTC – we are a partner in this specialist centre providing an employer-led curriculum to prepare young people for employment in the engineering, health and digital technology sectors

School Governors' Network – many of our staff are involved in the governance of schools across the region. We aim to develop a School Governors' Network to provide structured support and guidance for these staff and encourage broader engagement across our region.

2.3 Education partnerships

We work with a number of educational partners to extend our reach, support attainment and draw down specific expertise in working with learners and will continue to review the nature and efficacy of our partnerships during the course of this plan. Key partnerships include:

IntoUniversity - We have co-sponsored the South Bristol centre since 2016/17. The centre provides a higher education presence in in one of the region's most disadvantaged communities and works over the long-term with young people aged 7-18 and their families to support educational achievement and onward progression to higher education. Our purpose for partnering with IntoUniversity is to enable us to provide the type of sustained long-term support from early years onwards within a community setting likely to have most impact in raising attainment and we have seen a correlation between these interventions and higher attainment rates and participation in higher education.

Brilliant Club and SEREN Network - we have worked with the Brilliant Club for a number of years to support our work with schools, both within the South West and currently in Wales via our work to support the Welsh Government's SEREN initiative which aims to support academically able pupils, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, progress to high tariff universities. We are exploring how we might work with the Brilliant Club to support parents and families of disadvantaged learners within the South West become better equipped to help their children make informed choices and engage in their education.

Education Partnerships Scheme - we developed this scheme to formalise our relationship with participating schools and agree a plan of action to achieve mutually agreed objectives. The majority of these schools have high proportions of students meeting widening participation criteria, with interventions including information, advice and guidance, teacher CPD, teaching enrichment and other support. We will continue to expand and develop this scheme, particularly to strengthen our relationships with key further education colleges and explore options with individual partners around joint attainment raising initiatives.

Advancing Access - the programme enables teachers and advisers to engage with a range of CPD activities both online and in-person, leading to an upskilling of teachers which enables them to better support their students to progress to high-tariff universities. Schools which engaged with the programme between 2017 and 2020 saw sharper increases in application rates to Russell Group universities when compared to schools with similar characteristics which had not engaged[10]. Internal data analysis has revealed that more than half of all mainstream state schools (with a sixth form) and FE colleges in England have engaged with the programme since its inception. More than two-thirds of target schools have engaged. These schools have an above average proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals and also send fewer students to high-tariff universities than would be expected considering average levels of school attainment.

Next Steps South West – we continue to work within our Uni Connect partnership to provide high quality outreach to help learners make informed choices about their futures. We look forward to working within the partnership to widen the scope of this activity to include interventions designed with schools to support attainment. In the short term we will aim to jointly deliver our new HE bridging programmes to support learners in regional further education colleges, with Next Steps South West delivering impartial information, advice and guidance complemented by workshops, sessions and online materials developed by University of Exeter to provide study and soft skills support and prepare students for learning within a university environment.

2.4 Teaching enrichment and learner skills

Over recent years we have changed the focus of our outreach and fair access provision to concentrate more explicitly on teaching enrichment and skills development to complement the curriculum and support learners in addition to providing good quality information, advice and guidance. Our current provision for example covers curriculum-linked topics across KS3, KS4 and KS5; academic skills and subject specific support via trained student ambassadors primarily for Yr 10-13 students; subject-specific skills development (e.g. lab skills, academic writing, interview skills and independent research). We will also look to utilise the expertise of our CareerZone Service through school pupil career coaching and linking this to the regional skills agenda.

Discipline-specific teaching enrichment – our work with schools includes discipline-specific interventions developed with academic colleagues to enhance knowledge or skills development linked to particular progression routes. The Devon Healthcare Hub for example is delivered via our College of Medicine and Health and was created to support the attainment of pupils meeting widening participation criteria in rural Devon schools. The Hub targets Year 12 students, studying Biology & Chemistry A level, with an interest in progressing to study Medicine, Medical Science and Nursing at university and aims to address learning gaps which may prevent them from achieving the necessary grades to follow this path. Eligible schools are invited to nominate interested students to take part in a longitudinal series of practical sessions through the school year, led by specialist academic staff from the Medical School with assistance from undergraduate student ambassadors. These practical sessions, often too intensive and costly for schools to run themselves, focus on key areas of A-Level curricula and are designed to provide practical insight into curriculum topics, as well as providing additional insight to show the practical applications of these topics from an undergraduate, clinical and research-linked perspective. Participating students not only get the chance to undertake these experiments in small groups with specialist academic oversight, just as they would as undergraduates, but they also gain insight into university

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[10] Evaluation of Advancing Access, Policy Institute, Kings College London, April 2021

campus and teaching spaces, teaching style, and have the invaluable opportunity to ask specific, personal questions of staff and students. Participants not only come away with greater academic insight, but also with a confidence in themselves, and their sense of belonging in a university setting.

Study skills and transition - specific inputs and resources are designed to support learners make the transition into higher education while developing skills supporting their current learning. We are developing this approach further with a series of bridging programmes supporting mature and young learners at a number of further education colleges within the region. The programme includes a variety of interventions including sessions developed by our Academic Skills team designed to enhance independent learning and study skills and will be taught within the academic timetable. We will seek to extend and refine this provision as appropriate in response to evaluation and stakeholder feedback.

University tutoring scheme - in response to the recent Social Mobility in the South West Report, we will pilot a university-tutoring project during 22/23 to inform future tutoring provision. The project, in partnership with the Ted Wragg Trust, aims to support Year 8 literacy. The project will be run as an extension to our Teaching for Learning credit-bearing module for current undergraduate students aiming to find out more about teaching. The students will deliver a specifically developed writing programme delivered over the course of a term to selected students requiring additional literacy support.

Research-led outreach development - in addition to our provision to support specific schools, colleges and partnerships , we are keen to explore further approaches which build on specific areas of research specialism within the Centre for Social Mobility. We will therefore seek to investigate approaches and interventions alongside strategic partners as follows: a) Explore approaches around specific provision to raise the attainment of children in care in the region, working with the Local Authorities and Virtual Headteachers; b) Support the capacity, reach and impact of research and practice for support of home educated young people, a growing and increasingly important but often forgotten group in traditional attainment and outreach approaches; c) Build on research to improve the engagement of working-class boys with fair access activity designed to inform choices, improve attainment and support progression.

2.5 Capacity building in schools

Our Graduate School of Education plays an important role in the training and professional development of teachers and education leaders and has particular research expertise in literacy, STEMM education, professional learning and special educational needs, disability and inclusive education. The Graduate School regularly works with school partners to test and trial research and identify opportunities for joint working to support pupil attainment and offers a wide range of continuous professional development to skill-up teachers and school leaders. We aim to explore how the Graduate School can further support the attainment of learners within the South West and support the performance of local schools. Areas of potential focus include:

- **Thinking Schools** – the University of Exeter is the only university in the country to operate an accreditation scheme for schools seeking to adopt the Thinking Schools Framework to support the learning of its pupils and self-reflective practice in teaching and leadership. The framework is based on a considerable body of research in thinking skills, metacognition, creativity and dialogue in education, and helps schools to adopt an ethos of enabling learning, self-reflection and improvement to address objectives such as improving attainment and supporting inclusion.

- **Special Educational Needs** – the Graduate School of Education is part of a consortium providing training to special educational needs coordinators. The training involves activity-based research involving SENCOs analysing and adopting problem solving approaches and interventions to address areas of underperformance within their own schools.

- **Retention of teachers** – the high turnover of teaching staff is a particular problem within the South West affecting learner experience and outcomes. The Graduate School is conducting a variety of research on methods to retain teaching staff including the use of experienced mentors to work with individual teachers to support with potential practical applications for schools in the South West.

- **Teacher training** – we aim to explore options to extend the knowledge and skills base of new teachers in supporting a diverse cohort of learners and specifically focus on the gaps in outcomes between students in receipt of free school meals and their peers.

THEORY OF CHANGE: OBJECTIVES 1a, 1b SUPPORTING ATTAINMENT AND TAKING A LEADING ROLE WITHIN OUR REGION TO BUILD CAPACITY					
Barriers (research and assumptions)	**Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)**	**Evaluation methodology**	**Activity outputs**	**Anticipated outcomes (linked to targets: PTA1; PTA2; PTA2)**	**Share and learn**
Analysis suggests most of the socio-economic gap in HE participation in England can be explained by the fact that poorer students have lower levels of attainment at GCSE and Key Stage 5[11] Recent analysis by the Russell Group has shown the pool of POLAR LPN Q1 students achieving typical entry grades	1. **Build regional capacity** a. Work with regional partners to better understand and address the contributory factors of social mobility within the region, drawing on expertise of our Centre for Social Mobility. b. Develop a 'regional development and knowledge exchange hub' for practitioners and other stakeholders via our Centre for Social Mobility. c. Work with our Exeter Educational Alliance partners to develop joined-up interventions to support social mobility, pupil attainment and stimulate innovation. d. Explore opportunities to work with regional partners and major charities to develop a	Evaluation will be built into a collaborative research project from the outset (a). Light touch evaluation via stakeholder consultation (b). Specific evaluation measures and/or research will be built in to any new initiative from the outset as per our evaluation strategy action plan, appropriate to the level of investment (c, d).	Form collaborative partnership and agreed framework for regional research and interventions, with related programme of testing interventions (a, d). Seminars, conferences, and other development events and support regional partners, share expertise and create opportunities for joint working (b). Partnership projects focused around skills and learning gaps identified by educational partners (c)	Growing understanding of barriers to social mobility within the region and related interventions. Joint action to tackle barriers to social mobility Increased capacity within our region to progress social mobility. Strong local partnerships and shared knowledge and expertise. Students make learning gains linked to partnership interventions	Regional practitioner network; NCOP; regional partner forums' Centre for Social Mobility events; TASO

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[11] Vignoles, Anna and Murray, Neil (2016) Widening participation in higher education. Education Sciences, 6 (2).

for high tariff institutions is just 6% nationwide. Essential life skills such as confidence, motivation, resilience and communication are associated with better academic outcomes and better prospects in the workplace.[12] Low levels of knowledge amongst parents of WP pupils in comparison with peers[13]. Analysis and review of existing programme evaluation; stakeholder research and Findings of Parents as Influencers of University ambition. The DfE has identified the need for cross-sector collaboration to	coordinated approach for social mobility for the region, including piloting approaches to access.				
	2. School governance and performance a. Governance and sponsorship arrangements of primary and secondary schools within our region, to support the raising of school performance standards and pupil attainment within the South West i.e. Exeter Mathematics School; Ted Wragg Trust; and South Devon UTC. b. Implement a University Schools' Governors Network to provide a framework for extending our informal support for schools and colleges within the region, share knowledge and good practice.	External audit and assessment via Ofsted Inspection is a thorough measure of whole school performance including governance and is therefore deemed sufficient in relation to our school sponsorship arrangements (a). Informal and qualitative feedback (b)	The university actively plays a part in governance of key schools and partnerships within the region. Academic staff and students play an active role as appropriate e.g. via involvement in curriculum, teaching enrichment and other initiatives (a).	Good standards of school performance and governance Appropriate support and programmes for FSM pupils and to close learning gaps	MAT Schools' partnerships; Local education forums building on opportunities already in place e.g. South West Academic Trust)
	3. Pupil and family support a. Develop our pre-16 University of Exeter Scholars strand to increase focus on skills development and teaching enrichment to better support attainment and increase progression post-16 to the wider programme. b. Continue to develop and expand the delivery of our outreach strands relating to skills development (including literacy; mathematics; study skills; resilience), teaching enrichment (linked to curriculum); student-based tutoring and peer support. c. Develop our tools and information for parents /carers available via multiple online and offline channels. d. Continued collaboration with IntoUniversity at the South Bristol Centre to provide academic skills and	Evaluation frameworks are in place for IntoUniversity and UoE Scholars relating to knowledge, attitudes, behaviour with qualitative and quantitative measures, plus comparator group analysis. We will seek to improve/refine. Type 1/ 2/3 where possible (a, e). Our outreach evaluation includes pre and post intervention assessments plus monitoring (Type 1, 2). Will seek to improve with other measures	HE presence in the community providing academic skills support for c. 2,500 pupils and their families (a). Explore development of a structured pre-16 progression programme via UoE Scholars for c. 350 Yr 10 pupils p.a. with activities to support academic achievement and related essential skills (a, b). Agreed package of year-appropriate interventions (Yr9/10) with partners and WP target schools as agreed with school to support agreed objectives (a, b, d, e).	Participants achieve learning outcomes and report improved motivation to study Participants achieve grade attainment and progression to HE v comparator groups. Parents / carers report improved knowledge/ preparedness for HE and engagement. Higher proportion of Junior Scholars achieving good GCSEs. Increased pre-post 16 progression rate for UoE Scholars. Improved confidence, achievement academic and enabling skills	IntoUniversity network NEON; RGWP; Regional forums; TASO

[12] Culinane C, Montacute R, Life Lessons, Improving Skills for Young People, Sutton Trust, 2017
[13] Parents as Influencers of University Ambition, Alterline, 2018

raise pupil attainment, particularly in teaching, curriculum, leadership and targeted partnership activity.[14]	related support through a robust progression framework, from primary age upwards. We will seek to expand this relationship to support a greater volume of pupils from target LPN and/or IMD areas. e. Explore options with partners to focus on attainment raising and skill development activity with looked after children in the region. f. Build on existing research through the Centre for Social Mobility in home education to support policy development, capacity building and place-based interventions	such as school feedback and teacher observation. Utilise HEAT (a, b, c, d). Specific evaluation measures and/or research will be built in to any new initiative from the outset as per our evaluation strategy action plan, appropriate to the level of investment (e, f).	Community-based academic /support programmes for pupils aged 7-17 (d). Information and resources to support progression of home educated students into HE.		
	4. Work with Educators a. Expand and refine our Education Partnership scheme for engaged target schools regionally and nationally; with objective-led and context-appropriate support and engagement within a progression framework, to better support pupils, advisors and educators. b. Expand our information and training resources to HE Advisors and teachers via HE conferences, online tools (e.g. utilising our membership to Advancing Access) and via our Graduate School of Education. c. Work with regional partners to apply the expertise and research strengths of our Graduate School of Education to supporting schools and colleges within the South West to enhance performance and learner outcomes.	New evaluation framework including monitoring, pre/post session assessment, informal/formal stakeholder feedback. Type 1, 2. Pre/post event evaluation of individual sessions, tracking /analytics. Type 1, 2 (b).	Education Partnership scheme including target schools and colleges in SW and in key national regions with programme of related support (a). University organised HE Advisors IAG/CPD sessions. Provision of online tools and resources and engagement programme, currently via collaborative partnerships (b).	Stronger relationships with partner schools. Eligible pupils and teachers/HE advisors in partner schools improve knowledge/skills. Teachers / HE advisors are better equipped to support and enable their pupils.	HE Advisors; Graduate School of Education; Partnership network; Exeter Links and Education Partners; RGWP; TASO

[14] Schools that work for everyone, Department for Education, 2018

3. Portfolio and non-traditional courses

We have a good track record of working with regional partners to develop flexible educational provision to support social mobility and meet the needs of local employers. We have ambitious plans to double our existing provision of non-traditional programmes by 2030 and are continually evolving our portfolio to meet a variety of learner needs. We aim to expand three specific areas of delivery as follows:

Degree apprenticeships - the University was an early adopter of degree apprenticeships combining employment with undergraduate or postgraduate level study within the context of a co-created programme designed to meet industry needs. Delivery began in 2016/17 and we now offer 14 apprenticeship programmes at Levels 4 - 7 with around 1,800 apprentices, providing routes into a variety of careers including engineering, digital skills, finance, management and healthcare. Rated Good by Ofsted for our provision in 2022, inspectors praised the University's commitment to placing degree apprenticeships as 'a core part of the academic offer'. The strategic intent for apprenticeship provision is to address national and regional productivity through the development of a highly skilled workforce, aligned to the needs of employers and in our areas of institutional expertise. Degree apprenticeships are selected and co-created with employers and continual employer and apprentice engagement ensures programmes are adapted to continually meet these needs. We have seen increased engagement with groups that are under-represented in higher education. Entry requirements are carefully considered including 'non-standard entry' approaches to some undergraduate programmes that are 'upskilling' adult workforces, for example with Diagnostic Radiographer and Chartered Manager, and programmes where the contextual offer on a standard degree programme is set as the entry criteria for school leavers. Apprentices coming from non-traditional routes are supported to progress rapidly and develop functional skills if needed following an assessment of existing competencies under the supervision of an Academic Mentor. The university has worked with regional partners to map progression routes that meet industry skills gaps, including the Data Analytics Skills Escalator with Exeter College of FE and Exeter City Council, and in which the creation of a South West Institute of Technology is pivotal. The SWIoT Curriculum Partnership is a validated degree partnership between Exeter College and the University of Exeter to deliver the L6 Data Scientist Degree Apprenticeship started in 2021. The university partners with investment bank JP Morgan on the Financial Services Professional programme to recruit school leaver apprentices from widening participation backgrounds through a national outreach programme. In addition to visiting schools and colleges JP Morgan supports candidates by offering additional support to applicants in receipt of free school meals. The University is also partnering on JP Morgan's SWITCH programme which recruits adult apprentices from ethnic minorities who are switching careers.

Foundation years - we are recruiting to our first STEM programmes with foundation year for 22/23. The aim has been to provide a route for under-represented students who have potential succeed but do not meet the high level of maths ability required by our STEM portfolio to progress into a variety of BSc programmes including mathematics, engineering and natural sciences. The foundation year will provide intensive study in mathematics alongside discipline-relevant study, while also building the knowledge, familiarity, peer support and social capital to support transition and ongoing success. The programme has been welcomed by partners and is on course to meet its first year target with all offers made to students meeting a variety of widening participation criteria. We will double the places available on these programmes by 23/24 and will continue to learn from this pilot. We will also consider whether this approach can be extended to provide progression routes into other areas of study.

Online learning and micro-credentials – we will continue to develop a suite of flexible online learning and short course options with Future Learn across a range of subjects including climate change and health care. The courses include accredited short programmes specifically addressing professional CPD e.g. falls prevention for physiotherapists or addressing postnatal depression for health care professionals. Courses meet a variety of specific skills needs identified by employers and also enable learners to experience university level study in a variety of subjects which is both affordable and flexible.

THEORY OF CHANGE: OBJECTIVE 1e DEVELOPING FLEXIBLE STUDY AND PROGRESSION ROUTES					
Barriers (research and assumptions)	**Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)**	**Evaluation methodology**	**Activity outputs**	**Anticipated outcomes (linked to targets: PTA1-5)**	**Share and learn**
Importance of flexible learning options to attract students who do not traditionally participate in HE. [15] Foundation years provide opportunities to develop social, cultural and bridging capital as well as networks and relationships	1. **Flexible provision and programme development** a. Extend the range of Degree Apprenticeship programmes available across a range of applied discipline areas in conjunction with the business and public sector. b. Collaborate with FE College partners to offer routes into honours study at the University e.g. Exeter College/Business collaboration. c. Build on the learnings from our new STEM programmes with foundation year, assess the success of these programmes in supporting the access and success of disadvantaged student, extend the places available and explore extensions of this approach into other subject areas. d. Explore options for making our portfolio more accessible for part-time learners.	As per evaluation of our education offer. Type 1, 2 (a, c). OfSted inspection outcomes (a) Progression monitoring. Type 1, 2 where possible (b, c, d).	Double provision of places on traditional programmes by 2030) (a). Progression of students from FE into target subjects (b). New programmes in place (c). Review of provision/options for part-time learners and related measures (d).	A more flexible portfolio to give prospective students more course and study choices which better fit their circumstances. Accessible progression routes for students from non-traditional backgrounds into honours study at UoE. Employers gain skilled employees with abilities matched to their requirements.	Periodic review and reflection within academic colleges and WP governance. Conferences and sector forums to share good practice.

4. Fair access, widening participation and recruitment

In addition to our fair access targets, our Council has challenged the University to improve its intake from the state sector and has set internal targets supported by an action plan and steering group which includes Council membership. This work complements widening participation while take a broader school-based approach to access, success and building an inclusive university culture.

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[15]Moore, J.; Sanders, J.; Higham, L. Literature Review of Research into Widening Participation to Higher Education. 2013.

The significant changes we have made to our fair access provision have, within a short time span, improved significantly progression to HE and the University of Exeter amongst participants. For example, we have more than tripled the number of students progressing annually from the University of Exeter Scholars programme[16] to undergraduate study here since the scheme stated while the proportion of students successfully achieving places at high tariff institutions is significantly higher than their comparator group. The programme for around 1,000 pupils from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds supports students to make informed choices about their future and go on to university. Exeter Scholars engages with Year 10-13 pupils providing advice and guidance, skills sessions, academic input and on campus experiences. The national pathway has a specific focus on supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students who meet a range of widening participation criteria. The scheme also supports students once they enrol at Exeter with a package of pastoral, financial and practical benefits. Although delivered entirely online due to Covid, we continued to expand both participation and impact. During 21/22, 430 Scholars achieved university places with 191 progressing to undergraduate study at Exeter. Of these 54% achieved AAA or higher. Meanwhile of our first graduate cohort 94% achieved 2:1 or a first class honours. We have robust evaluation in place and are continuing to improve the programme addressing issues such as pre-16 progression, attainment, essential skills and resilience, to achieve greater impact. When taking into account all the considerable access and outreach work implemented by the university, it is Exeter Scholars which has the strongest evidence-base for success and truly supports pupils from challenging socio-economic backgrounds. We will continue to **improve and expand Exeter Scholars** in order to build on the significant gains already made. Extensions include a pathway for mature students and both face to face and online provision to help support a broader and more diverse student-base. We have a good evidence-base that our collaborative programmes with Realising Opportunities and the Sutton Trust, Pathways to Law, are transformative in affecting student knowledge, behaviours and outcomes. We remain committed to these initiatives and continue to work collaboratively with these and other partners during this plan, whilst also acknowledging that these initiatives contribute to a wider pool of students progressing to higher education generally, rather than to the University of Exeter specifically.

We have restructured our access work within the South West region with a particular focus on strengthening our relationships with further education colleges, supporting mature learners and joining-up our work to support levelling up and learner attainment. Likewise, we remain the most active contributor to our local Uni Connect, Next Steps South West and continue to extend our collaboration. We continue to see the broader benefits of regional partnership especially in learning from the experiences of the breadth of types of institutions in the larger SW region; joining up effectively with the LEPs in the region; careers provision; and regional skills planning which we would hope to retain over and beyond the duration of this plan. **Collaboration is identified as a key strategic measure,** but the nature of such collaboration continue may change, therefore the partnerships described are therefore indicative of our commitment but may be fluid.

We have continued to engage proactively with schools and colleges through the pandemic, swiftly switching all outreach, recruitment and fair access activity online. Our Discover University online platform provided a variety of interactive tools, resources, sessions and information for learners, families and carers and teachers with twice weekly evening information and advice sessions running throughout. We also worked in partnership with other Russell Group and regional partners to support learners online and delivered directly to schools via virtual classrooms. Despite the disruption of Covid, we were able to launch the first phase of our **national Educational Partnership scheme** with key schools, colleges and organisations both within and outside our region. We will continue to extend this scheme to schools and colleges with high proportions of disadvantaged to help to secure engagement within a

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[16] https://www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/

progressive framework, while supporting both prospective students and staff in a way which meets jointly agreed objectives. We continue to review and adapt our provision post-pandemic responding to the needs of schools for hybrid forms of delivery. We also continue to work in partnership to extend our reach and achieve economies of scale and keep these under review. We have worked with the SEREN network in Wales for a number of years, largely working to support students from under-represented backgrounds progress to high tariff universities. We were also a founder member of the Elephant Group, which was formed to improve progression rates of mainly disadvantaged ethnically diverse students into high performing universities.

Irrespective of the success of the initiatives outlined, we will not achieve diversity within in our own undergraduate population unless prospective students perceive our University as a viable option for them and as a place of learning where they will belong and feel welcome. We know from our own research that confidence levels amongst state school pupils, and especially those meeting WP criteria, are lower than their peers and that a research-intensive university like ours may simply not be a consideration, despite their potential to succeed. Our approach to contextualised admissions has been successful in improving access for students from LPN Q1/Q2 and IMD Q1/2 and internal analysis indicates that students receiving contextualised offers achieve good grades and graduate outcomes. We have expanded our use of contextual offers to take into account whether students come from areas of high deprivation and have seen intersections between these students and eligibility for free school meals. We will continue to review the efficacy of contextual offers and refine our approaches as more individualised data becomes available through UCAS. External market research indicates that knowledge of contextual admissions is low, particularly amongst those groups of students most likely to be eligible. We recognise that regardless of our admissions policy, unless a sufficient volume of under-represented students choose us as a viable option then we will not achieve the levels of diversity we seek. We will therefore focus our UK recruitment activities around three main strands: a) diversification of our marketing and communications to **position the University as an accessible choice**; b) **reducing obstacles in our admissions process** via offer making and related support; c) **conversion and transition** activities.

The strategic measures described focus on those activities identified to specifically address observable gaps relating to core groups and are underpinned by measures relating to building an inclusive culture. More details about intended measures and related activities are included in the tables below which we have attempted to present within a theory of change framework. It should be noted that some activities may change, informed by research and evaluation.

THEORY OF CHANGE: OBJECTIVE 1c WIDEN AND DIVERSIFY OUR APPLICANT POOL AND OPTIMISE CONVERSION					
Barrier's research and assumptions)	Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)	Evaluation methodology	Activity outputs	Anticipated outcomes (linked to targets: PTA1-5)	Share and learn
Importance of flexible learning options to attract students who do not traditionally participate in HE. [17]	1. **Fair access and outreach** a. Grow substantially and refine our successful fair access programme, University of Exeter Scholars, to increase the volume of students progressing to the University of Exeter.	Evaluation frameworks (type 1 and 2) are in place for UoE Scholars relating to knowledge, attitudes, behaviour with qualitative and quantitative measures,	Structured Yr10-13 progression framework based on best practice principles, with associated transition support. Progression baseline of c. 100 students annually,	Increase in students progressing to Exeter and HE via UoE fair access schemes. Increase in students progressing to research	Exeter Scholars Annual Report; NEON; HELOA; NNECL; Education Partners; Outreach Hub;

[17]Moore, J.; Sanders, J.; Higham, L. Literature Review of Research into Widening Participation to Higher Education. 2013.

Importance of consistent and sustained interventions within a structured and coherent framework.[18] Flexible outreach work, aligned with inclusive approaches to admissions, flexible curriculum design and inclusive and embedded pastoral support, are needed to widen adult participation in HE study. [19] Contextualised admissions needs to be part of an integrated approach that encompasses support and outreach prior to higher education and continues throughout the student lifecycle or student progression within higher education into further study and employment.[20]	b. Develop and implement fair access strands specifically to better meet the needs of mature students. c. Strengthen our relationships with the FE College network to better support preparation/recruitment and transition of student with Access and BTEC qualifications. d. Review and improve where possible our progression strand and related practical and financial support for care leavers, working in collaboration with local authorities, NNECL, Unite and others as appropriate to ensure they meet best practice principles.[21] e. Continue to develop structured and targeted engagement with schools and colleges, both in the South West and nationally, to offer appropriate advice and guidance; skills development; teaching enrichment; employability and HE preparedness sessions; within an age-appropriate progression framework to students with the potential to succeed at the University of Exeter. f. Develop and pilot, new fair access initiatives in response to emerging research as appropriate, particularly within our local SW context and in collaboration with partners.	plus comparator group analysis (a, b). We are enhancing evaluation of our work with schools, which will include analysis of a range of tracking, monitoring and other data combined with qualitative research and informal feedback. Type 1, 2 and review opportunities for type 3 (b, c, d, e, f).	with aim to raise this to 150 (a). More mature students apply/convert to study at UoE (b). Advice and guidance programme for mature students with related FE College engagement (b, c). Extended admissions criteria for care leavers and improved programme of support based on research (d). New IAG and skills sessions, mapped on to Gatsby benchmarks and curriculum (a, c, e, f). Research and development of new approaches to move our practice forwards.	intensive universities via Realising Opportunities. Higher proportion of target students achieving grades Increase in mature student recruitment. Improved access to UoE for students with experience of being in care.	TASO;
	3. Communications and marketing a. Build brand recognition and confidence in schools and colleges whose students have the potential to	Evaluation via a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures and market research,	Integrated marketing communications plans and activities across multiple channels to increase	Students perceive the University as a viable choice for them.	CASE; Relevant national forums

[18] Torgerson, Carole, Gascoine, Louise, Heaps, Claire, Menzies, Victoria, Younger, Kirsty, Higher Education access: evidence of effectiveness of university access strategies and approaches, Sutton Trust and Durham University, 2014

[19] Understanding the impact of outreach on access to higher education for adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds: an institutional response, Office for Fair Access, 2017

[20] Mountford-Zimdars, Anna, Moore, Joanna and Graham, Janet (2016) Is contextualised admission the answer to the access challenge? Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education, Routledge, Taylor and Francis. 2016.

[21] Principles to guide higher education providers on improving care leavers access and participation in HE, Department of Education, 2014

enter and succeed at the University of Exeter, through a programme of stakeholder engagement and targeted communications. **b.** Ensure diversity is fully represented and catered for within our information and marketing materials for prospective students, so students can find the information they need and feel they are welcome.	including user testing and qualitative feedback (a, b).	awareness of the University as an institution which values and welcomes diversity and which presents an option (a, b).	Students perceive the University as a place which values diversity in which they will be welcome. Greater volume of eligible students applying to Exeter	
1. Admissions practice a. Build on long-standing commitment to contextual offers we will seek opportunities to take a more nuanced approach to our contextualised offer policy to take into account a broader range student circumstances as they become available via UCAS; remove unnecessary barriers to admissions presented through the application process; ensure these policies are transparently and effectively communicated. b. Create a level playing field for students undertaking additional selection processes to ensure no one is inadvertently disadvantaged because of their circumstances e.g. preparation and travel support for Medical School interview processes. c. Invest in expert admissions and student support to provide tailored advice and guidance to students from non-traditional backgrounds throughout the application process	Extensive internal analysis of admissions data and linked reporting combined with student surveys and feedback.	Admissions policy which takes contextual factors into account in the offer making process in order to extend the range of offers dependent on personal and education factors (a). Interview preparation and other support measures for eligible students as part of the recruitment programme (b). Tailored student support through the admissions process (a, b, c).	Students do not experience unnecessary barriers within the Admissions process. Students understand their context will be taken into consideration at application. Students receive best possible information to enable them to navigate the recruitment process. Contextual offer making effectively supports the recruitment of WP students. Larger proportion of students convert.	HELOA; NEON; TASO; RGWP

THEORY OF CHANGE: OBJECTIVE 1d ENCOURAGE, SUPPORT AND PREPARE PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS TO ENTER HIGHER EDUCATION					
Barriers (research and assumptions)	**Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)**	**Evaluation methodology**	**Activity outputs**	**Anticipated outcomes (linked to targets: PTA1-5)**	**Share and learn**
NSSW annual report and evaluation. Realising Opportunities evaluation demonstrating progression to Research Intensive Institutions and HE more generally. Pathways to Law/Sutton Trust evaluation and reports indicating progression rates to HE.	**1. Collaborate to achieve best value and optimise impact*** a. Work in partnership with other HE providers, schools and Colleges in the South West and nationally to encourage the progression of students to HE e.g. through Next Steps South West and Outreach Hub. b. Contribute to Realising Opportunities, a collaboration of research-intensive universities working with shared objectives to support the OfS in eliminating the national gap in entry rates at higher-tariff providers between the most and least under-represented groups. RO also contributes to our own strategic aim to improve access to UoE. c. Review and formulate new partnerships as appropriate to best support the objectives within this plan.	Next Steps South West is subject to its own APP and related evaluation strategy (a). RO is underpinned by robust evaluation, undertaken by independent evaluators, which is a theory of change model using narrative, empirical research and causality evaluation types to evidence impact. Type 1, 2/3 (b). Existing partners are requested to provide robust evaluation against agreed objectives. An evaluation plan is one of the agreed outputs of the Elephant Group scheme for example (c).	Implement Next Steps South West programme and contribute to Outreach Hub ensuring regional impact (a). Deliver Realising Opportunities programme to support progression to research intensive universities (b). Implement learnings from collaborations with the Sutton Trust (Pathways to Law) and Brilliant Club (c). Implement learnings from regional pilot partnerships with The Elephant Group in London, and SEREN network in Wales (c).	Contribute to proportion of LPNQ1 students from local area progressing to HE. Contribute to pool or WP students progressing to research intensive universities. Proportion of RO students* who are tracked into HE who will access a research intensive university (RIU) within two years of becoming 'HE ready' and completing their Post-16 studies, rising from 42% to 54% over period of plan (agreed partnership collaborative target).	Participation in NSSW forums. Regional Centre for Social Mobility events. Partnership and scheme annual reports and dissemination events

5. Securing good quality and equitable outcomes for students

Achieving the very best for our students in terms of retention, attainment and graduate outcomes is at the heart of our provision and education strategy. While we have some observable gaps between key students' groups, our success and progression rates are good compared to the sector and the actions to support this are very much core to our educational provision. Disaggregating our continual processes of improvement, particularly linked to our Education,

EDI and Wellbeing strategies, from those strategic measures specifically designed or likely to address observable gaps is outcomes is difficult within the confines of this plan due to the interdependencies between access and participation, student experience, mental health and wellbeing, diversity and inclusion. Many of our approaches, particularly to success and progression, are not solely restricted to students meeting WP criteria or indeed home/EU fee payers, but instead are whole institution responses for the benefit of all students – those relating to inclusivity and wellbeing, are prime examples. We will therefore employ a range of institutional improvements supplemented where appropriate by initiatives and programmes for specific target groups, when the evidence suggests it is appropriate to do so. The strategic measures described therefore focus on those activities identified to specifically address gaps relating to core groups and are underpinned by measures relating to building an inclusive student and university culture.

HEFCE's Causes in Different Student Outcomes report[22] concluded that retention and success are best addressed by approaches which seek to develop supportive peer relations; meaningful interaction between staff and students; knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners; and an HE experience that is relevant to students' interests and future goals. It also identified the importance of effective transition as a contributor to successful outcomes. In addition, the Transforming Transitions project has been particularly helpful in broadening our understanding of the barriers faced by students as they transition from one educational setting into another. Our own internal analysis shows a correlation between a student's performance in Year 1 and their final outcomes. We also experience a series of pinch points within the first year when students are more likely to discontinue. In addition to all the issues students face in the first year – being away from home, stress and anxiety about being within a new environment, establishing relationships and getting to grips with a new educational environment – we are fully aware that each student has differing levels of knowledge and confidence relating to the key competencies required by first year study. We therefore view the first year as critical in optimising student outcomes, particularly for those groups of students where gaps are in evidence. This has particularly been the case for our students during the pandemic.

We understand that learners have differing needs, learning styles and competencies and that good teaching practice addresses this diversity to enable all students to succeed. Inclusive teaching practice is a plank of our academic training and an important strand of the work undertaken by our Education Incubator to test pedagogical practice and innovation. We have also taken on board the findings of the NUS and UUK report on the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Attainment Gap[23] and aim to learn from recent work undertaken by Kingston and UCL universities, relating to the importance of diversity within the curriculum as part of efforts to reduce our degree awarding gap. We consider curriculum design and inclusive teaching practice as key strategic measures in closing observable gaps awarding gaps, particularly in relation to students of colour and students with disabilities. Within the framework provided by the Success for All Governance Structure, the University of has adopted a three-strand approach to addressing gaps in outcomes between students from different demographic groups and backgrounds as follows:

i)   **Systemic developments to promote and embed inclusive education practice:**

The Inclusive Education Working Group leads on developing and embedding inclusive education within policies, practice and procedures to help address institutional factors negatively affecting awarding gaps. Work includes:

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[22] Mountford-Zimdars, Anna, Sabri, Duna, Moore, Joanna, Sanders, John, Jones Steven, Higham, Louise, Causes of differences in student outcomes, HEFCE, 2015.

[23] Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #ClosingtheGap, NUS and UUK, 2019

- Developing a **Transformative Education Framework** with inclusive education, racial and social justice and sustainability as core strands. The framework aims to make sure all students and staff feel welcomed and valued; the University collectively examines and where necessary challenges traditional norms to achieve greater equity including in the context of academic assessment and awards; inclusive language and practice in all teaching and learning contexts; students are supported to achieve good mental health and wellbeing; and forward-looking, sustainable approaches are adopted. Experience and best practice are being shared internally and externally through a Transformative Education Seminar Series.

- The University's on-line **Education Toolkit** provides a wealth of information, tools and resources for academic staff to help them adopt inclusive approaches within their practice. The toolkit provides clear and easily accessible guidance covering all aspects of teaching practice from curriculum development, teaching methods, alternate assessments, challenging behaviours, role models and signposting students to specific support. Resources for the toolkit have been developed with student partners within project-work funded by our Centre for Social mobility. It also benefits from expertise and resources developed in partnership with our highly active Exeter Decolonisation Network which involves academic colleagues across academic disciplines across the University.

- The University's Annual Module Reviews, Teaching Excellence Actions Plans and Teaching Excellence Monitoring meetings, which form part of its **Quality Review and Enhancement Framework**, in tandem with our College Success for All Groups provide a framework for addressing awarding gaps at discipline level. These mechanisms provide the opportunity for regular analysis and review of discipline-level data to inform local interventions to address awarding gaps and related factors within the context of the Transformative Education framework. They are informed by new developments in data provision and associated awareness raising, including live Module Reports that enable Module Convenors to see and respond to gaps in attainment between different demographic groups at a much more granular level. We welcome the emphasis given by the OfS on strengthening the link between Access and Participation and Quality and Standards. In the last two years we have sought to move beyond an approach focused solely on Academic Standards to develop a holistic approach as part of an annual cycle of review, culminating in our Degree Outcomes statement. We have taken steps to align our business intelligence, monitoring processes, and improvement plans to help evidence-led decision making to optimise outcomes for all students. We facilitate this through management information and governance (e.g. ensuring Business Intelligence analysts work across Quality and APP data) and ensuring our senior leadership team oversee and align these agendas through governance and steering groups. For example, all analysis pertaining to the impact of our No Detriment policy in 2019/20[24] included considerations of those student groups aligned to access and participation target groups and we ensured that the work and its development included colleagues from across our relevant teams.

- We will seek to develop a new project to **empower academic tutors to better support students from diverse backgrounds**. We have steadily improved information, resources and signposting and are piloting new approaches within some of our academic disciplines. We will explore further

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provision of training and support.

ii)   Development of best practice approaches to induction and transition

Ensuring students are well supported as they transition into higher education and throughout their first year is critical not just to enabling them to realise their academic potential but also in supporting wellbeing and continuation. The University's Transition and Induction Working Group is focused on putting in place good practice frameworks and interventions to support all students, but with a particular focus on those from under-represented students who experience the largest gaps in outcomes in comparison with their peers. Work includes:

- Establishing **best practice principles for a structured transition** process starting pre-arrival, moving through the initial induction period and extending throughout students' first term and beyond. The principles and related provision focus on a number of areas including: ensuring inclusivity and accessibility are paramount; identifying leadership at academic level; using the pre-arrival period to share information and help inform student expectations; actively working to reduce information overload; engaging students as active participants; working to foster a sense of community and belonging; and helping students to establish early and effective connections with their Academic Personal Tutors.

- **Transition and Induction Coordinators** have been created in each College to support and share structured and consistent approaches to effective induction and transition across the University. Coordinators meet on a fortnightly basis to share good practice, discuss common issues and work to collectively implement the university's core principles for transition and induction.

- Design and delivery of a new suite of online, **college-level pre-arrival courses**. These provide students with an opportunity to introduce themselves and connect with their peers. Members of academic staff and student mentors are encouraged to engage and contribute to discussions to help build the sense of community and enthusiasm. Most include topics such as preparing for arrival at university; learning environment and approach to teaching, learning and assessment; support services and peer support schemes; university values and culture; and what to expect during the first few weeks. Around 6,000 students, more than half of all entrants took part in 20/21 and evaluation is now helping to inform improving for the coming year.

- The University's **Enhanced Transition programme** has been designed to provide extra support, signposting and access to peer networks to under-represented students to ensure they have the best possible start to their university studies. All offer holders meeting specific widening participation criteria (e.g. mature and disabled students) along with those from non-traditional routes are invited to participate in a range of workshops and follow-up activity beginning before Freshers' Week. The programme is designed to build confidence in accessing academic skills and discipline-specific support in addition to information and services to help grow resilience and support integration. A specific strand of activity is also available specific for students with neurodiverse conditions.

iii) Enhanced and targeted support for students, particularly those within groups most likely to experience gaps in outcomes

The University has appointed a dedicated Associate Academic Dean for Students (Racial Equality and Inclusion) who leads our Inclusive Education Working Group. The Group has established a network of **Racial Equality and Inclusion Academic Leads** to provide support for students wishing to raise any concerns relating to racism or discrimination during the course of their studies both within the University and on placement within the community. The Leads, who have received training on the challenges faced by ethnic minority students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, meet regularly as a group to share good practice. In addition to helping to create a safe and supportive environment, the leads play an important role in promoting awareness and commitment to inclusivity issues amongst students and staff within their academic disciplines.

The Working Group together with colleagues in Wellbeing and Education are collaborating on a new project to review the existing support provided through Individual Learning Plans for students with **disability, specific learning difficulties and long-term health issues** with the aim of moving towards a universal design framework in which reasonable adjustments are anticipated and embedded within the curriculum wherever possible. Specific areas of work will also focus on developing approaches and resources to support students with neurodiversity conditions.

Our Mature Student Working Group conducted research and consultation leading to a series of recommendations to put in place **interventions to support mature students** throughout their journey with the University to help close gaps in access, retention and degree outcomes. Investment has been made in a variety of support pre and post arrival and the Working Group continues to work with colleagues from across the University to improve support for commuter students, address timetabling challenges and support student experience.

Peer engagement is an important tool in supporting students, particularly from under-represented or marginalised background to provide both educational and pastoral support. The University has **expanded its Peer Mentoring Scheme** and schemes specifically supporting students meeting widening participation criteria, pairing students with peer mentors providing personalised support. Specific peer mentoring schemes are in place for mature students, care leavers and estranged students, Deaf and hard of hearing students, Disabled students and Sanctuary Scholars. We also have a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic peer mentoring group in the College for Medicine and Health. The University's Study Zone was created to provide **individualised learning support for students** to address gaps in attainment. Support is prioritised for students from widening participation backgrounds and those groups most likely to experience degree awarding gaps.

6. Progression to graduate outcomes

While our students achieve good graduate outcomes with no statistically significant gaps between key groups, we are keen to retain a target and will focus on students from the lowest household incomes from our Access to Exeter recipient group. We have clearly had success in our employability measures given our track record and the data here but will seek to gain a better understanding of related impact to inform future practice. We also acknowledge that our current analysis is based on Destination of Leavers from Higher Education data and that new longitudinal data will be coming on stream during the timespan of this plan which may alter significantly our conclusions and prioritisation. We have therefore set a target in relation to graduate destinations six months after graduation, but when new data is available would seek confirmation about the use of this metric in relation to target-setting and whether it may be appropriate to reconsider this measure.

7. Financial support

We recognise that funding pressures for low income students materially affect success and progression. Our **Access to Exeter Bursary** is intended to support retention for those students with the lowest household incomes and indeed our evaluation shows that students in receipt of the bursary are as likely to continue as their peers. The bursary is automatically issued to students based on information disclosed to Student Finance England and other funding bodies. We currently have two levels of award depending on income bracket. The payment threshold and funding levels are reviewed annually following evaluation. Information is shared with students online, through admissions' communications and within our prospectus. Information about our current financial package can be found at www.exeter.ac.uk/undergraduate/money/scholarships. As this is reviewed annually to ensure incremental funding pressures and evaluation are taken into account, it would not be appropriate to indicate future years of provision within this plan. The present level of award however will be at the very least be maintained unless there are substantial changes to way in which universities are funded or evaluation indicates a change of approach is required. In addition to the Access to Exeter Bursary, we provide a range of support for eligible WP students such as paid internships and access to funds to support employability and access to student societies for example. Enabling funding and practical help for students without family can make the difference between staying at university and dropping out. In addition to full tuition fee waivers for care leavers, we offer accommodation bursaries and extended accommodation contracts for these students and have additional bursary support for estranged students and student carers. These funds are issued based on need with the aim of supporting retention. Using hardship and enabling funds to remove specific pressures and pinch points remains an important strategic measure and one which will we continue to evaluate and adjust accordingly.

We have bolstered and improved our provision of hardship funds through a new **Success for All fund** which is benefitting all students across all forms of study and provides a one-stop-shop to access a range of financial support including IT bursaries, DSA contribution, diagnostic assessment support, emergency bridging support and ongoing help to overcome financial hardship. This distributed around £2.2m in 21/22 with recipients reporting impacts including prevention of homelessness, continued ability to student and reduced stress and anxiety. Our approach to hardship has provided a financial safety net to students through the pandemic and cost of living crisis and we continue to monitor the fund to ascertain its impact and value to students. Students from a low socio-economic or under-represented student backgrounds qualify for a fast-tracked application system ensuring funds reach those most in need in a timely way. Oversight of all our bursary and hardship provision is overseen by our Success for All financial support working group and annual evaluation is conducted and reviewed to inform our policies and budget.

THEORY OF CHANGE: OBJECTIVE 2a MINIMISE THE OBSERVED GAPS IN CONTINUATION RATES BETWEEN KEY GROUPS					
Barriers (underpinning research and assumptions)	Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)	Evaluation methodology	Activity outputs	Anticipated outcomes (linked to targets: PTS1; PTS2; PTS3; PTS4)	Share and learn
	1. Transition and Year 1	Pre and post event evaluation relating to knowledge, confidence, propensity to	Academic skills pilot and linked research	Students have information they need to optimise successful transition.	Education Conference;

Fostering a sense of belonging lies at the heart of retention and success [25]. The evidence suggests that retention and success are best addressed by approaches which seek to develop: supportive peer relations; meaningful interaction between staff and students; knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners; and an HE experience that is relevant to students' interests and future goals[26]. Key transition points require particular attention. Transition activities should be seen as part of a continuum that includes pre-entry activities and first year engagement. Generic features of successful pre-entry interventions include: providing information; informing expectations; developing academic skills; building social capital; and nurturing a sense of belonging[27] Mental health issues have a particularly negative impact on	a. Continue improvements in our work with schools and colleges to prepare and support our own offer-holders and their peers about the move to University e.g. via delivery of skills, information and other relevant sessions. b. Development and delivery of academic skills sessions in target schools to support preparedness for HE. This aims to pilot approaches and will be led by a practitioner within our Centre for Social Mobility alongside professional services. c. Continue to improve advice and information for students with a diverse range of needs and information requirements throughout the offer stage and pre-registration supported by improvements in customer relationship management. d. Continuation and enhancement of transition initiatives targeted at those groups of students who experience higher drop-out rates (including care leavers, students with BTECs, estranged students and carers). Pre-Freshers transition support is a core component of our offer to mature students and those on fair access programmes; and student with ASD and other disabilities. e. Investigate and address, where possible, the patterns and causes of early drop-out rates i.e. between acceptance and December census date, so we can prevent early	engage etc; to be combined with tracking and student feedback after 12 months. Type 1 and 2 (a, b, d). Web/CRM analytics combined with tracking of engagement levels. Type 1, 2 (c). Evaluation processes to be built in to project design (e, f, g).	project delivered in partner schools (b). Transition conference / events and support for Scholars and other key groups (c, d, e) Mature students' academic skills provision and pre-arrival peer programme (c, d, e). Specific familiarisation / preparation for student with ASD building on work done to date (c, d, e). Structured induction processes to support integration (d). Student needs assessment and related interventions (g). Review of first year programme structures and core modules via a best practice framework (h).	Students have opportunities to build support networks. University is better able to address underlying causes of non-continuation. Higher levels of engagement with support services by key groups. School pupils are better prepared for progression to HE. Students have a structured introduction to core skills and competencies through a variety of teaching/ assessment methods drawing on best practice.	Education committee structure; External conferences; Research reports; Teaching/ education networks; TASO

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[25] Mountford-Zimdars, Anna, Sabri, Duna, Moore, Joanna, Sanders, John, Jones Steven, Higham, Louise, Causes of differences in student outcomes, HEFCE, 2015.

[26] Mountford-Zimdars, Anna, Sabri, Duna, Moore, Joanna, Sanders, John, Jones Steven, Higham, Louise, Causes of differences in student outcomes, HEFCE, 2015.

[27] Moore, J.; Sanders, J.; Higham, L. Literature Review of Research into Widening Participation to Higher Education. 2013.

learning and engagement, with implications for retention.[28] Internal analysis which clearly demonstrates the link between first year attainment and degree outcomes. Financial support evaluation which shows no negative impact for those receiving the Access to Exeter bursary (ATE). Wider research and literature in this area.	attrition (not current reflected within sector-wide continuation). f. Develop robust induction processes for students to set expectations; identify and plug knowledge/skills gaps; and integrate student/academic community. Building on pilot projects run through Transforming Transitions and approaches trialled by our Business School and through our Education Incubator. g. Develop and introduce a training needs/academic skills assessment available to all students with relevant tools and support to better prepare all students for their studies, irrespective of their previous educational experience h. Review and develop our first year provision to better support the development of key competencies.				
	2. Student financial support a. Maintain (and continue to evaluate) the Access to Exeter bursary on an annual basis using OfS toolkit. b. Use toolkit to conduct analysis of the hardship fund and other related funds to assess impact and efficacy. Pull findings together into an annual review. c. Monitor the performance (and take up of hardship for example) of the >£25k - <£42k group to keep abreast of trends which may require specific solutions in the future d. Specific research with our student unions to understand interplay with part-time work and explore	Annual evaluation of ATE, hardship fund and other funds as part of annual review (see evaluation strategy section) (a, b, c). Specific research (type 1 and 2) around part-time work and study 'cliff-edge' in terms of interplay with positive outcomes (d).	Smooth delivery of ATE to all eligible at point of entry to university (a). Greater communications and optimise take-up of other financial support especially hardship fund and estranged student and carers funds (c). Greater understanding of the impact income	Optimum retention of students in receipt of financial support Allow students to fully participate in the wealth of opportunities on offer to support success and progression outcomes and wider social mobility aims	TASO, NASMA

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[28] What Works? Student Retention and Success, HEA

	the options for a wider research project with South West institutions. e. Invest in tailored financial support and advice for those students facing particular hardship and difficulty due to their personal circumstances, such as estrangement, care experience or caring responsibilities		and work has on student attainment and success. Feeding that back into practice: criteria, process and scope of financial support package working with student unions(d).	

THEORY OF CHANGE: OBJECTIVE 2b MINIMISE OBSERVED DEGREE AWARDING GAPS AND GAPS IN GRADUATE OUTCOMES BETWEEN KEY GROUPS					
Barriers (research and assumptions)	**Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)**	**Evaluation methodology**	**Activity outputs**	**Anticipated outcomes (linked to targets PTS1; PTS2; PTS3; PTS4; PTP1)**	**Share and learn**
The design of the curriculum, its content, and the teaching and learning practices used to deliver it can have a significant impact on the way that students from different backgrounds and ethnicities respond to their course and lecturers and tutors[29] Academic programmes and high-quality student-centred learning and teaching must be a primary focus for effective student retention and success[30] Sector-wide increase in numbers of applicants disclosing mental health problems; increase in demand for mental health support at university; combined with rise in complexity and comorbidity of mental health problems	**1. Curriculum, teaching and educational support** a. Adopt best practice approaches (e.g. Kingston Curriculum Framework and UCL Curriculum Health Check) and findings of our Hidden Curriculum research, to review and address the diversity of representation within our curriculum, particularly regarding race and ethnicity. b. Develop systemic approaches to ensure our teaching methods are inclusive and support multiple learning styles, taking into account a diverse student cohort with varied learning needs. c. Consolidate improvements in our structured personal tutoring system and practices, supported by learning analytics to ensure students receive early and appropriate interventions. d. Better understand the relationship between engagement with learning and support, attainment and non-continuation, to help formulate appropriate interventions, especially for key groups experiencing gaps in outcomes. e. Continue to research and adopt best practice approaches to support a diverse learning community through our Education Incubator.	Specific evaluation approaches will be put in place to support our plans to support BAME attainment including monitoring, qualitative and quantitative measures. Type 1 and 2 (a, b, c, d, e, g).	Process of curriculum review (a). Integration of practice within TQA and module review and approval to create sustainable approaches (b). Best practice framework for programme and module enhancement (b). Training, toolkit, engagement to promulgate inclusive teaching (c, d). Continued development of My Progress and associated personal tutoring support Tailored academic skills support and provision (c, d). Study Zone and related initiatives to improve	Students can fully engage with a curriculum which they perceive the curriculum as relevant to them. All students benefit from a curriculum which encourages discourses on diversity. Higher levels of engagement with personal tutoring system. Students have the skills they need to excel in their studies. Better engagement with learning and related support by those students who need support the most.	Education Conference; TASO; NEON; HELOA; NUS

[29] Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Attainment at Universities, NUS and UUK, 2019
[30] Thomas L, What Works? Student Retention & Success Summary Report. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Hefce, HEA and Action on Access, 2012

alongside other impairments. [31] The curriculum should address the employability of students from under-represented groups in four ways: awareness; access to relevant work experience; confidence, self-esteem and aspiration of; and familiarity with the labour market plus related skills[32] Correlation between outward mobility and improved academic and employment outcomes; particularly for disadvantaged and black and minority ethnic students, who are underrepresented in mobility[33]	f. Continue to improve advice and information available for academic and professional services staff to enable them to signpost relevant services and interventions to support students in key groups. g. Consolidate our approach to improving the accessibility of educational and academic support e.g. via our student hubs and Study Zone initiatives.		accessibility of academic skills support (g).		
	2. Wellbeing and student support a. Develop whole institution approach to wellbeing to reduce causation factors and build resilience across impairment type and the student lifecycle, including pre-entry where possible. To be implemented through a new Wellbeing Strategy and implementation framework to be launched in 2020. b. Evaluate and consolidate our approaches to peer support based on the considerable best practice developed to date including our effective breakfast club programme.	Type 1 to be put in place with specific projects to be evaluated via type 2.	Implementation of Wellbeing action plan (a) Effective peer support programmes in place for key student groups and disciplines as appropriate (e.g. mature students) (b).		
	3. Progression, employability and mobility a. Strengthen evaluation of our employability and internships support for key groups to better understand contribution to short-term and longitudinal graduate outcomes. b. Subsidise internships and related measures for students meeting specific household income and other groups as appropriate based on observable gaps in progression.	Aim to enhance current monitoring approaches to type 1 and 2 for some programmes (a, b, c, d, e) UpReach own evaluation framework and associated reporting structure. Type 1.	Subsidised placements for students meeting priority WP criteria on A2I, Global Leaders, and Professional pathways programmes (a). Intensive employability support via Rise initiative run through	Students have access to a range of internship and work experience opportunities. Students are able to engage with a variety of international experiences. Students have access to employer networks to build social capital.	TASO; AGCAS; Regional forum

[31] 'Understanding provision for students with mental health problems and intensive support needs' HEFCE July 2015)

[32] Thomas, Liz and Jones, Robert, Embedding employability in the context of widening participation, The Higher Education Academy, 200
[33] Richards, Nadine, Lowe, Rosalind and Hanks, Catriona, Gone international: mobility works 2014-15, Go International and Universities UK International, 2017

			our partnership with UpReach (a, b). Intensive employability support for key groups through 1:1 consultancy (c). Research findings and related measures	Students acquire work skills through the curriculum. Students progress at equal rates into postgraduate study.	
	c. Bespoke employability consultancy for students within priority groups to supplement our full range of employability provision. d. Explore and develop alternatives to traditional field trip and study abroad formats (e.g. through emerging technologies) to improve accessibility for and engagement by students whose personal circumstances may prohibit engagement with these optional but enriching experiences. e. Research and analysis to better understand the barriers faced by students from low income households to inform related strategies and interventions.				

8. Enable an inclusive University culture where all can fulfil their potential

There is one uniting theme which underpins all our strategic measures to support access, success and progression: inclusion. We will not attract students unless they feel welcome; we will not retain them unless they feel they belong; and they will not realise their potential, unless they are fully nurtured to do so. We have set this as a specific objective, to give it the prominence it requires as an action in signalling our intent and the importance we place on this, not just as a means to an end but because of the strength of student and staff commitment to be a truly inclusive institution where all are welcome and can thrive. For the purposes of this plan, it is difficult to split out the significant programme of work to support equality, diversity and inclusion, led by our Provost Commission and inclusivity structures, for the benefit of all students, to those measures which will specifically help address observable gaps in student outcomes. As with wellbeing, this is a cross-cutting measure affecting all. For the purpose of this plan, **we signal our commitment to wide scale programmes of change including those, such as working to achieve the Race Equality Charter,** which will entail reviews of our staffing practices and policies, training, reporting procedures. These are not covered in any detail in this plan – but are relevant to everything we are trying to achieve, and we are therefore in complete alignment with the university's new EDI strategy and associated work streams and operational detail. Instead we have included specific measures which fall more narrowly under the remit of our social mobility governance namely 1) **analysis and research to better understand the experiences of key groups within the University to inform strategies and decision making** in relation to inclusive practice and 2) specific **initiatives designed to support students with protected characteristics** based on sector-research and good practice.

THEORY OF CHANGE: OBJECTIVE TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITY CULTURE					
Barriers (research and assumptions)	Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)	Evaluation methodology	Activity outputs	Anticipated outcomes (linked to all targets PTA1-5; PTS1-4 and PTP1)	Share and learn
Success in reducing differentials links to institutions' willingness and capacity to be more inclusive. Positive interventions include creating a sense of belonging, building social capital, enhancing the student experience, and developing more wide-ranging learning and teaching initiatives[34]

The culture of an institution is identified as an important factor in relation to the attainment of students from BAME backgrounds and has a strong association with students' sense of belonging. Crucially, this includes an awareness of the issues affecting students from different ethnic backgrounds.

Taking into account research as emerges e.g. UUK/NUS report 2019.[35] | 1. **Students with protected characteristics / disrupted education**

a. Work effectively across the organisation to ensure joined up practices and policies to provide a whole student journey approach to supporting students with protected characteristics. This will be driven through our social mobility structures in consultation with student groups.

b. Research and consultation to better understand the experiences of students with specific characteristics within our University to help co-create improvements to our practices to ensure they are fully inclusive.

c. Continued and enhanced provision of advice, practical and financial support for specific groups of students facing complex challenges including care leavers, student carers, estranged students and asylum seekers. | Monitoring and qualitative feedback.

Monitoring and user impact evaluation. Type 1, 2 | Implementation of support measures in response to consultation (a).

Joined up provision across University services and student unions' student support (c).

Specific support packages for students with complex needs (c). | Students are fully supported throughout their time at University.

Students with no family support are able to access a higher level of support from the University to help them realise their potential | Regional networks; Dissemination of best practice Staff and student networks and consultation; TASO |
| | 2. **Inclusive institutional and student culture and practices**

a. Further analysis to fully understand the picture of attainment for our BAME students to inform a larger work plan. Work with students and staff to identify and address barriers through an evidence-based change programme within a good practice framework to achieve and/or maintain externally audited endorsements of its inclusive practices e.g. Race Equality Charter; Athena Swan Gold; Mental Health Charter; Two Ticks Scheme.

b. Achieve and retain good practice standards recognised through national schemes to support key groups e.g. Stand Alone Pledge, Armed Forces Pledge, Social Mobility Pledge, Care Leavers Covenant. | Review of the work plan and framework elements bringing together emerging findings; feedback and other indicators e.g. NSS as part of a type 1 approach. | Specific support programme for students with protected characteristics (a, b).

Work packages identified through work to achieve charter marks and EDI plans (a, b). | Barriers to equality & diversity are fully understood, measures and interventions in place.

Students with protected characteristics continue, achieve & progress at similar level to peers.

Students and staff feel the University values diversity.

Students and staff across all groups feel they belong which fosters a greater sense of community. | Internal comms; Staff inclusivity networks; Staff training HR policies; TASO; HERAG |

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[34] Mountford-Zimdars, Anna, Sabri, Duna, Moore, Joanna, Sanders, John, Jones Steven, Higham, Louise, Causes of differences in student outcomes, HEFCE, 2015.

[35] Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #ClosingtheGap, NUS and UUK, 2019

9. Approach to evaluating the impact of our work

9.1 Overview and action plan

Evaluation is a crucial part of the activities we run to widen access to higher education and support students to succeed. We use the insights we gain from evaluation to shape the provision we offer by: a) basing activities to the existing knowledge and evidence; b) continuously improving programmes to meet the needs of prospective and current students; c) Understanding the impact that our activities have had on people's educational journey; d) Informing investment decisions based on an understanding of what works. We aim to have a robust evaluation strategy in place for each activity that we do which focuses not only on a single outcome (such as whether a participant in an activity went on to higher education or not) but also short to medium outcomes (such as whether a participant in an activity increased their knowledge, confidence or academic skills, for example). This helps us to understand not only what works, but how and why. We apply a wide variety of methods to evaluate our activity including longitudinal tracking of educational progress through the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) and other quantitative analysis via UCAS benchmarking and Strobe data; surveys and focus groups; and analysis of internal metrics, such as degree performance. Often, a mixed-methods design is used. Our activities and evaluation results are overseen by the University's Success for All governance structure and we will establish a dedicated evaluation steering group who will review our evaluation practice and processes around dissemination, external scrutiny and publication via our Success for All webpages and other avenues.

Since our 2020 our focus has been on empowering delivery teams to undertake evaluation as a key integrated component of programme delivery, across all elements of our student lifecycle. 'Building and securing the capacity and processes of the university' was established as our key strategic objective when we undertook the self-assessment for evaluation (using the toolkit provided by the OfS, developed by the University of Exeter). We have added substantially to our central capacity and take a supportive, facilitative approach to evaluation practice ensuring that it can feed into impact, strategy and funding considerations. We are on track to deliver the evaluation strategy set out in our 2020 plan ahead of our 2025 target and we review our progress against the toolkit on an annual basis to measure progress in our evaluation practice. We have increased the volume and quality of data available for monitoring and evaluation. HEAT is now widely used by widening participation and outreach teams, and much work has been undertaken to ensure that data inputting is accurate and good quality. The team are using HEAT's reporting capability in their monitoring and evaluation, which is an area we will continue to grow. In addition, we have launched the Management Information hub; this is a series of data reports that show the institution's performance against targets and is available to all staff. We have also refined our approach to ethics and data protection policy. We continue to work towards the objective of building a culture of evaluation to enable evidence-informed delivery. Our updated evaluation plan shows how we intend to work towards this goal, including steps to making our findings more accessible.

PRIORITIES	ACTIONS
Governance and management mechanisms	a. Establish a cycle of reporting incorporating a process of review and dissemination of findings. b. Establish a central evaluation steering group, involving academics from our Centre for Social Mobility, to scrutinise evaluation practice, ensure quality and identify gaps as well consider publication and dissemination c. Ensure evaluation findings are received by Success for All working groups so that we create the time and expertise for groups to: • oversee and receive updates on planned evaluation and progress of projects in train • provide challenge and accountability as part of an annual cycle of review

	• Learn from evaluation as part of programme planning where evaluation findings may influence budgetary decisions. • Disseminate and share good practice, including publication

Skillsets and development	a. Roll out a suite of tailored resources to enable all APP-funded projects to plan evaluations effectively, supported centrally.
	b. Utilise the expertise/resources/tools within the Centre for Social Mobility to:
	   • Use expertise of centre to provide consultation on evaluation methodology
	   • Use research pursuits of the centre to pilot innovative interventions (e.g. possible selves
	c. Enhance our inferential and multivariate data analysis capability in the central team to enable type 2 and 3 approaches

Evaluation type	a. Implement type 1 evidence across all APP funded programmes following evaluation plan template. b. Identify and cultivate organic growth in type 2 evidence collection c. Explore opportunities for type 3 approaches, preferably as part of a collective, co-ordinated approach with partners.
Scrutiny, dissemination of evaluation findings and learning from practice	a. Continue to utilise opportunities to share findings internally as well as with a wider internal audience through our Success for All lunchtime briefing series and through other university conferences and workshops. b. Ensure sector best-practice is reviewed by working groups and incorporated into project development where possible. c. Ensure all evaluations are published on our Success for All webpages d. Establish a programme of support and scrutiny with other HE Providers, via our mission group as well as regionally.

9.2 Evaluation of financial support

We have used the OfS financial support toolkit for the past five years to conduct an annual review and evaluation of the impact and efficacy of our main financial support package, the Access to Exeter bursary (ATE) awarded to students with household incomes under £25,000. The evaluation has consistently shown the ATE package is 'about right' in terms of design, reach to target students, student success outcomes and interplay with other considerations such as part-time work. The University has responded to qualitative feedback to enhance the package of support available. The evaluation is overseen by our Success for All financial support working group and over the reporting period 2020-2025 we are committed to evaluating the Access to Exeter bursary , our hardship fund and the estranged students and carers fund using the toolkit and other evaluative methods.

9.3 Centre for Social Mobility

Evidence-led practice and applied research are support through the Centre for Social Mobility[36], which gives us opportunities to both utilise and shape the academic discourse in this area aided by leading subject experts such as our Director (Research) Associate Professor Anna Mountford-Zimdars, Professor of Social Mobility Practice, Professor Lee Elliott-Major and Dr Neil Harrison. Areas of enquiry within the Centre informing our practice have included post-covid recovery, capacity-building within our region, support for home educated students, transition and induction and contextual offers. Meanwhile our internal small bids scheme has tested and developed approaches to inclusive education, decolonising the curriculum, improving progression and supporting

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[36] https://www.exeter.ac.uk/socialmobility/

transition. Within the period of this plan, our commitment and ambition for the Centre will see us: 1) Engage in meaningful, practical and countable research outputs which will help us in delivering against our targets as well benefit the academic and practitioner community (via scholarly publications, the TASO and dissemination events; 2) Work collaboratively to shape approaches to large challenges and in helping to ensure staff are trained and confident in research methodologies (as identified in our self-assessment action plan above); 3) Help us to become regionally and sector-leading in our approach to academic and practitioner collaboration, ensuring that our research helps us to deliver impactful work to deliver against national challenges. We are passionate about providing opportunities for practitioners to come together to co-learn and co-create solutions and we will be doing this firstly at a regional level with national opportunities to follow later in the reporting period.

10. Student Engagement

We have engaged with students during the development of this plan, implementation of our Success for All programme and variation exercise. Our Student Guild in Devon and Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union in Cornwall have been represented at each stage of development via our governance and committee structures for social mobility, education and race equality. We have run regular consultation sessions with students at our Streatham and Penryn campuses through our Success for All Student Forum, which specifically seeks the views of students from under-represented group or with specific characteristics. Students have been involved in a number of working groups including in opportunities to share updates with senior staff, including conferences. In addition, we have taken into account the findings of student surveys and focus groups relating to various aspects of the student journey; specific research into financial support; and informal feedback from specific student groups involved in the Provost Commission, and policy development groups considering provision for estranged students, carers and mature students. We have taken the opportunity to engage with external consultations such as the NUS round table events on the attainment of Black students. Our engagement with students has informed our thinking and interventions within this plan, for example:

- the University's covid response and the development of mitigations to support all students but particularly those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups
- guiding our thinking around diversity and inclusion and how to engage students in working to build an inclusive student culture
- identifying barriers facing mature students and co-developing related actions
- reviewing access to hardship funds
- improved communication and signposting about support and facilities available to key student groups
- development of inclusive education practice

Students will continue to be involved via our governance structures and specific consultations and research where we have a number of specific initiatives and project planned. In particular we intend a series of research projects to better understand and address the obstacles faced by students with particular characteristics within our own university and local context, such as the interaction of part-time work and study and lifestyle with attainment and outcomes as well as the take up of opportunities across the institution including student representation, societies and success and progression initiatives. We also plan to enhance the opportunities to capture student voice by setting up a student panel, drawn from across the student body and act as a platform for feedback, support and challenge on our policies and initiatives; a forum for related training, development and data sharing; and where new ideas and research can be co-developed and disseminated.

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER STUDENTS' GUILD

THE FALMOUTH & EXETER STUDENTS' UNION

Access and Participation Plan
Statement of Support from the Students' Unions of the University

The Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union and University of Exeter Students' Guild.

"The Students' Unions of the University have been a critical part of the thinking and preparation and are entirely in support of this plan and have been fully engaged in the process of creating it. We feel that the plan addresses the critical actions that the University must take to ensure that it continues to address the inequalities that exist within the current student community and provide that future students can truly explore their potential at Exeter.

We are under no illusions on the size of the challenge and are committed to working in partnership with the University and play our part to ensure that the full student life cycle is designed to help all students make the most of their time at Exeter. We are particularly focused on creating greater synergy between the formal and informal education spaces, celebrating the individual and collective voices of our members, thereby ensuring they feel that they truly belong at the University of Exeter.

Additionally, as Students' Unions we are keen to work with the University to provide the student voice on the delivery of the plan and ensure that students are embedded throughout the process to ensure the creation of initiatives that support the needs of our membership. "

Access and participation plan
Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: University of Exeter

Provider UKPRN: 10007792

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	BMBS Cohort 5	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT		£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year		£1,850
Erasmus and overseas study years		£1,385
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	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
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 Exeter

Provider UKPRN: 10007792

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 (£)	£4,468,538.25	£4,508,242.20	£4,575,155.85	£4,575,155.85	£4,575,155.85
Access (pre-16)	£1,787,415.30	£1,803,296.88	£1,830,062.34	£1,830,062.34	£1,830,062.34
Access (post-16)	£2,234,269.13	£2,254,121.10	£2,287,577.93	£2,287,577.93	£2,287,577.93
Access (adults and the community)	£446,853.83	£450,824.22	£457,515.59	£457,515.59	£457,515.59
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£5,151,884.73	£5,280,681.84	£5,412,698.89	£5,548,016.36	£5,686,716.77
Research and evaluation (£)	£600,000.00	£605,000.00	£610,000.00	£615,000.00	£620,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£49,650,425.00	£50,091,580.00	£50,835,065.00	£50,835,065.00	£50,835,065.00
Access investment	8.5%	8.5%	8.4%	8.4%	8.3%
Financial support	10.4%	10.5%	10.6%	10.9%	11.2%
Research and evaluation	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Total investment (as %HFI)	19.3%	19.4%	19.5%	19.7%	20.0%

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Exeter

Provider UKPRN: 10007792

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 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To reduce the gap in participation in HE for students from underrepresented groups	PTA_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Ratio of entrants from POLAR4 quintile 1&2 vs 4&5 (relates to KPM2)	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	1:4.7	1:4.5	1:4.2	1:3.8	1:3.4	1:3.0	First degree, full-time or apprenticeship, young only
To reduce the gap in participation in HE for students from underrepresented groups	PTA_2	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Ratio of entrants from the South West from POLAR4 quintile 1 vs 5 (relates to KPM2)	No	Other data source	2018-19	1:1.5	1:1.4	1:1.3	1:1.2	1:1.1	1:1.0	First degree, full-time or apprenticeship, young only, from Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset
To reduce the gap in participation in HE for students from state school and areas of deprivation	PTA_3	Other	Percentage of entrants from IMD Q1&2 and state school	No	Other data source	2018-19	11.0%	11.5%	11.75%	12.0%	12.5%	13.0%	First degree, full-time or apprenticeship, young only
To reduce the gap in participation in HE for students who are BAME	PTA_4	Ethnicity	Percentage of BAME entrants	No	The access and participation dataset	2018-19	10.1%	11.0%	11.5%	12.5%	13.5%	15.0%	First degree, full-time or apprenticeship only
To reduce the gap in participation in HE for students who are mature	PTA_5	Mature	Percentage of mature entrants	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	5.8%	6.5%	6.8%	7.2%	7.6%	8.0%	First degree, full-time or apprenticeship only
	PTA_6												
	PTA_7												
	PTA_8												

Table 2b - Success

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To reduce the non-continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	POLAR4 Q1 non-continuation gap v Q5 (relates to KPM3)	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	4ppt	3.75ppt	3.5ppt	3.25ppt	3ppt	2.5ppt	First degree, full-time or apprenticeship, young <21 only
To reduce the non-continuation gap for mature students	PTS_2	Mature	Mature v Young non-continuation gap	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	9ppt	9ppt	8.75ppt	8.5ppt	8ppt	7.5ppt	First degree, full-time or apprenticeship only
To reduce the attainment gap for students from BAME groups (specifically black)	PTS_3	Ethnicity	Black students attainment gap v White (relates to KPM4)	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	20ppt	18.5ppt	17ppt	15.5ppt	14ppt	12ppt	First degree, full-time or apprenticeship only
To reduce the attainment gap for students with a disability	PTS_4	Disabled	Disabled students attainment gap v non-disabled	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	3ppt	2.5ppt	2ppt	1.5ppt	1ppt	0.5ppt	First degree, full-time or apprenticeship only
	PTS_5												
	PTS_6												
	PTS_7												
	PTS_8												

Table 2c - Progression

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To reduce the progression gap for students from low income households	PTP_1	Low income background	Progression gap for students from the lowest household incomes (Access to Exeter bursary) v high income	No	Other data source	2015-16	3.1ppt	2.8ppt	2.5ppt	2.2ppt	1.9ppt	1.5ppt	First degree, full-time or apprenticeship only
	PTP_2												
	PTP_3												
	PTP_4												
	PTP_5												
	PTP_6												
	PTP_7												
	PTP_8												