

University of Bristol

Access and participation plan 2025-26 to 2028-29

Introduction and strategic aim

The University of Bristol believes in the transformative effect of higher education. We recognise the social, educational, and cultural benefits it confers to our students, and to society. We are proud to have been a pioneer in the field of widening participation, adopting an evidence-based approach to policy and practice. We are working hard to ensure that all students fulfil their potential and have examined culture, curricula, and structures where there is evidence of gaps in access, success, and progression.

The University of Bristol is a research-intensive, high-tariff institution based in the South West of England. We are a medium-sized, selective higher education provider, enrolling around 5500 UK-domiciled undergraduates each year. Our highest proportion of accepted applicants come from London and the South East. The University's education offer is taught across six faculties: Arts, Engineering, Health Sciences, Life Sciences, Science, and Social Sciences and Law. Most of our undergraduate courses carry standard entry requirements in the A*AA - AAA range. Our comprehensive contextual offer policy provides a grade reduction of up to two grades below standard entry requirements. The University of Bristol has a strong track record for 'typically outstanding' student outcomes and a 'typically high quality' student experience (OfS TEF, 2023). Our commitment to delivering high quality education and research is evidenced in our mission:

To make a positive impact locally, nationally, and globally by addressing society's greatest challenges through our distinctive education, innovative research and the value we place on excellence, inclusivity and partnership.

The second pillar of our 2030 strategy sets out how we will ensure this 'distinctive' education offer produces 'an inspiring education and transformative student experience'. To ensure all students benefit from this experience, we identify 'belonging' as an important enabler alongside providing 'support to thrive'. This approach recognises that 'all aspects of the university experience play a critical role in students' success and preparedness for their future'.

In recent years our student body has diversified; our ratio of POLAR4 Q5: Q1 students has narrowed from 13.5:1 in 2016 to 7:1 in 2023. However, despite this progress, we are clear that we have not yet realised our ambitions. We need to move further, faster to ensure that all those with potential are supported to access, succeed in and progress from our university. This plan recognises that our community has changed and addresses the needs of our current and future student body, rather than our historic student one. Our enhanced focus on student success does not detract from our continued commitment to improving equality of opportunity at the access stage. 'Expanding our efforts to diversify our learning community' is an overarching goal of our 2030 strategy in recognition that 'diversity is a source of strength, innovation and excellence'. We continue to identify persistent inequalities impacting disadvantaged groups and groups who are more acutely underrepresented across the Russell Group.

The strategic aim of our APP is to tackle the risks to equality of opportunity underlying the differential outcomes impacting identified student groups at the access, completion, attainment, and progression stages of the student lifecycle. By addressing our key risks, we aim to eliminate the inequities impacting different student groups at our own institution and, through partnership, in

higher education more broadly. We will employ this APP as a key tool in the development of a new university-wide strategy for equality of opportunity across the student lifecycle at the University of Bristol.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Access

There are low proportions of students from low socio-economic groups at UoB compared to the sector. Sector evidence suggests that low applicant rates from these groups to UoB is indicative of Risk 1 (knowledge and skills). Gaps in applicant achieved attainment are also visible in our met offer rate¹ analysis for these groups. The offer rate gap affecting UoB applicants from low socio-economic groups aligns with the EORR's finding that these groups are more likely to experience Risk 4 (application success rates). Offer rate gap analysis between UoB applicants' socio-economic status and parental experience of HE status signal that Risk 2 (information and guidance) is also a relevant risk for students from low socio-economic backgrounds (see Annex A). UoB commissioned research and insights from our APP Student Advisory Group indicate that prospective students from low socio-economic groups are likely to experience the perception and reality of Risk 10 (cost pressures), in turn contributing to Risk 3 (perception of HE), and perhaps more specifically the perception of UoB given our historic lack of diversity.

There are low proportions of Black students at UoB compared to the sector. We identify a variation of Risk 3 – the perception of our provider specifically – as the underlying risk contributing to low applicant rates from this group to UoB. The offer rate gap and met offer rate gap affecting UoB Black applicants aligns with the EORR's finding that this group is more likely to experience Risk 2 (information and guidance) and Risk 4 (application success rates). While applicant and intake rates for Asian students are on a positive trajectory, analysis of our admissions data suggests that the aforementioned risks affecting Black students may also be relevant to some groups from Asian backgrounds. We have therefore included Asian students as a target group in our access objectives but have not included an access target for this group based on our progress to date (see Annex A).

There are low proportions of mature students at UoB compared to the sector. As the EORR highlights, this group is likely to be affected by all identified pre-entry risks. Within this, we identify Risk 3 (perception of higher education) and Risk 5 (limited choice of course type and delivery mode) as the underlying risks contributing to declining UoB applicant rates from this group. Internal analysis suggest that a combination of risks is contributing to lower UoB offer rates for this group compared to young students including Risk 1 (knowledge and skills), Risk 2 (information and guidance), and Risk 4 (application success rates). UCAS End of Cycle Data (2023) highlights that across the sector, the number of UK main scheme applications received from applicants aged 21 and above has declined severely since 2021. Our access target for mature students recognises that maintaining a 5% proportional intake of mature students against the national backdrop of declining mature applications during a period of increasing selectivity at UoB will be ambitious. We recognise, however, that maintaining positive access rates for mature students will contribute

¹ Met offer rate refers to the proportion of applicants who have responded 'Firm' to a conditional offer that then go on to meet their offer conditions upon receiving their results. It excludes applicants that receive an unconditional offer from the outset, applicants that respond 'Insurance' and applicants that are accepted in spite of having missed their offer conditions.

positively to the student experience of current mature students and so we will continue to prioritise mature students as a key target group in our access work.

Completion

Students who declare a mental health condition have lower rates of degree completion at UoB than students who do not declare a disability. The EORR indicates that disabled students are likely to be affected by all identified on course risks. Within this we identify, Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), Risk 8 (mental health) as the underlying risks contributing to lower degree completion rates for students with declared mental health conditions.

Mature students have lower rates of degree completion at UoB than young students. The EORR indicates that this group is likely to be affected by all identified on course risks other than Risk 9 (ongoing impacts of coronavirus). Within this we identify Risk 6 (Insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support) and the additional risk of sense of belonging as the underlying risks contributing to lower degree completion rates for this group. UoB commissioned research and insights from our APP Student Advisory Group indicate that mature students are also likely to experience the perception and reality of Risk 10 (cost pressures) as a contributing factor. Mature undergraduates are more likely to declare a mental health condition and more likely to engage with our Mental Health Advisory Service which indicates that Risk 8 (mental health) is also a contributing factor for this group.

Our intervention strategies addressing completion rates for mature students and for students with mental health conditions have therefore been designed to be complementary.

Attainment

Mature students have lower rates of good degree attainment at UoB than young students. The EORR indicates that this group is likely to be affected by all identified on course risks other than Risk 9 (ongoing impacts of coronavirus). Within this we identify Risk 6 (Insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support) and the additional risk of sense of belonging as the underlying risks contributing to lower degree attainment rates for this group. UoB commissioned research and insights from our APP Student Advisory Group indicate that mature students are also likely to experience the perception and reality of Risk 10 (cost pressures) as a contributing factor. Mature undergraduates are more likely to declare a mental health condition and more likely to engage with our Mental Health Advisory Service which indicates that Risk 8 (mental health) is also a contributing factor for this group.

Global majority students have lower rates of degree attainment at UoB than white students. The EORR indicates that Black students, those of mixed or multiple heritage and those from other ethnic groups are likely to be affected by on-course risks including Risk 6 (Insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support) and Risk 8 (mental health). The EORR indicates that Asian students are likely to be affected by Risk 6 (Insufficient academic support) and Risk 7 (insufficient personal support). Informed by UoB commissioned research and insights from our APP Student Advisory Group we identify Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support) and the additional risk of sense of belonging as underlying risks contributing to lower degree attainment rates for global majority students.

Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have lower rates of degree attainment at UoB than students from higher socio-economic backgrounds. The EORR indicates that this group is

likely to be affected by all identified on course risks. Informed by UoB commissioned research, insights from our APP Student Advisory Group and our evidence base we identify Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), Risk 10 (cost pressures) and the additional risk of sense of belonging as underlying risks contributing to lower degree attainment rates for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Progression

Students who declare a mental health condition have lower rates of progression to postgraduate study and graduate employment than those who do not declare a disability. The EORR indicates that this group is likely to be affected by all identified on course risks. Within this we identify Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), Risk 8 (mental health), Risk 11 (capacity issues) particularly in relation to access to work experience, and Risk 12 (progression from higher education) as the underlying risks contributing to lower progression rates for this group.

Objectives

1. To increase the proportion of students from lower socio-economic groups enrolling at the University.
2. To increase the proportion of Black and Asian students enrolling at the University.
3. To maintain the proportion of mature students enrolling at the University.
4. To narrow the gap in completion rates between students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability.
5. To narrow the gap in completion rates between mature students and young students.
6. To narrow the attainment gap between mature students and young students.
7. To narrow the attainment gap between students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and students from higher socio-economic backgrounds.
8. To narrow the attainment gaps between global majority students and white students.
9. To narrow the gap in progression rates between students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability.

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

Intervention strategy 1: Access for low socio-economic groups and raising attainment

Objectives and targets

Objective: To increase the proportion of students from lower socio-economic groups enrolling at the University. Target PTA_1 and Target PTA_2.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 1 (knowledge and skills); Risk 2 (information and guidance); Risk 3 (perception of higher education); Risk 4: (application success rates); Risk 5 (limited choice of course type and delivery mode); Risk 10 (cost pressures).

Activity and description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
<p>(Existing activity) Outreach programmes for local students. Participants receive on-going support prior to enrolment and a guaranteed contextual/tailored offer. Annually:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to Bristol: 700 Year 12, 13 or mature students participate in academic sessions and IAG workshops, supported by current students. - Bristol Scholars: 80 Year 13 students nominated by their School as at risk of not meeting their full potential receive academic and transition support. 	0.8 FTE Access Practitioner; 0.2 FTE Access Manager; £380,000.	Increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE; increased confidence to successfully apply to HE; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	N
<p>(New activity) Partnership with Causeway Education – Undermatch pilot. This activity will identify key gaps in the application cycle for specific groups (e.g. students eligible for FSM) and target appropriate teacher CPD, IAG support and workshops to improve progression routes for these students.</p>	0.2 FTE Access Practitioner; £120,000.	Increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE; increased confidence to successfully apply to HE.	IS2
<p>(Expanded activity) UOB Virtual Project: 300 post-16 students nationally each year who identify as being from a lower socio-economic background. Students will access different strands of activity, including virtual content; tailored academic taster sessions and IAG workshops; and access to bespoke transitional activities and enhanced academic tutorials designed to improve KS5 attainment.</p>	0.6 FTE Access Practitioner; 0.1 FTE Access Manager; £260,000.	Increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE; increased confidence to successfully apply to HE; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	N
<p>(New and expanded activity) Contextual and guaranteed offers. We will extend eligibility for contextual offers to students living in IMD2019 Q1 postcodes. We will introduce a guaranteed offer for students eligible for free school meals.</p>	0.1 FTE Access Manager.	Increased applications to HE; increased application success rates for IMD Q1 and FSM eligible students.	N
<p>(Existing activity) Future Quest: Sustained collaborative programme with UWE Bristol. Targeting schools with high proportions of IMD2019 Q1 students across the Bristol City region, cohort-focused workshops will explore HE pathways, career options and student life and will provide tools to critically engage with future options.</p>	1 FTE Access Practitioner; £200,000 *UniConnect funding.	Increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE.	IS2
<p>(Existing activity) Partnerships: We will continue our attainment raising collaborations with local and national organisations. This strand of work includes: IntoUniversity Bristol East and South East Centres; South Bristol Youth – Unlocking potential; The Brilliant Club.</p>	0.3 FTE Access Practitioner; 0.1 FTE Access Manager; c. £1m.	Increased academic self-efficacy; increased confidence to succeed in HE; parent: increased positive attitudes towards HE.	N

(Existing and expanded activity) Advancing Access (AA) partnership and the Bristol Governors Network. Through AA we will continue to contribute to national teacher CPD, targeting schools and colleges in cold-spots or those with disproportionately lower levels of progression to selective universities when compared with attainment. We will enhance our work with local schools and colleges through a Bristol Governors Network, facilitating the placement of UOB staff as governors into local schools, supporting effective governance and increasing awareness of UOB widening participation activity locally.	0.1 FTE Access Practitioner; c. £24,000.	Improved school governance, decision-making and leadership; improved awareness of school governance and volunteer opportunities among UoB alumni and staff.	N
(Existing activity) University of Bristol Bursary – paid to eligible students with a household income of under £50,000, with the highest amount of bursary available to those from the lowest incomes. (Projected spend of £7.9m annually, with an anticipated £6m per year paid to students with HINC of >£25k).	Projected spend £24,000,000.	Increased applications to UOB; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	IS6

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£26,584,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Our evidence review and theory of change for this intervention strategy are available in Annex B.

Evaluation

Our evaluation plan for this intervention strategy is summarised below, with further detail on our approach available in Annex B.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Outreach programmes for local students.	Increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE; increased confidence to successfully apply to HE; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	Longitudinal tracking through HEAT (Narrative – type 1); tracking participants' UoB application and enrolment rates (Narrative – type 1); pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	Annual impact report(s) to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
UOB Virtual Project.	Increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE; increased confidence to successfully apply to HE.	Quasi-experimental research project (Causal – type 3).	Findings on our website by summer 2029.
Partnership with Causeway Education.	Increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE; increased confidence to successfully apply to HE; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	Exit match analysis of current cohort's choices, offers, acceptances, and destinations broken down by characteristics (Narrative – type 1).	UoB-funded WP partnerships impact report to be published on UoB website annually from Spring 2027.

Contextual and targeted guaranteed admissions.	Increased applications to HE; increased application success rates for IMD Q1 and FSM eligible students.	Tracking eligible applications and identifying applicants who might not have otherwise received an offer from UoB (Narrative – type 1).	Findings on our website from December 2027.
Future Quest.	Increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE.	Longitudinal tracking through HEAT (Narrative – type 1); pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	UoB-funded WP partnerships impact report to be published on UoB website annually from Spring 2027.
Partnerships: IntoUniversity Bristol East and South East Centres; South Bristol Youth – Unlocking potential; The Brilliant Club.	Increased academic self-efficacy; increased confidence to succeed in HE; parent: increased positive attitudes towards HE.	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2); Key Stage 4 Attainment Tracking through HEAT (Narrative – type 1).	UoB-funded WP partnerships impact report to be published on UoB website annually from Spring 2027.
Advancing Access (AA) partnership; Bristol Governors Network.	Improved school governance, decision-making and leadership; improved awareness of school governance and volunteer opportunities among UoB alumni and staff.	Advancing Access annual engagement report (Narrative – type 1); Qualitative research with governance stakeholders (Narrative – type 1); monitoring uptake of governor roles among UoB alumni and staff (Narrative – type 1).	UoB-funded WP partnerships impact report to be published on UoB website annually from Spring 2027.
University of Bristol Bursary.	Increased applications to UOB; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	Mixed-methods research report (Empirical – type 2).	Findings on our website annually from Spring 2027.

Intervention strategy 2: Access for Black and Asian students

Objectives and targets

Objective: To increase the proportion of Black and Asian students enrolling at the University. Target PTA_3.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 2 (information and guidance); Risk 3 (perception of higher education); Risk 4: (application success rates).

Activity and description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
(New activity) Partnership with Causeway Education for up to 75 offer-holders who identify as Black or mixed heritage. Students will participate in a series of academic tutorials designed to improve KS5 attainment in one core subject e.g. Maths.	0.2 FTE Access Practitioner; £100,000.	Increased academic self-efficacy; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	N

(Existing activity) Exclusive outreach programmes for students who identify as Asian, Black or of mixed or multiple heritage. Some participants are eligible for a guaranteed contextual offer and on-going support prior to enrolment. Each year we will deliver: - Insight into Bristol: 120 Year 12 students participate in a hybrid summer school. - Next Step Bristol: 250 Year 13 students participate in a programme of tailored virtual activities, co-delivered by current UOB students. - Destinations Conference: 100 Black Year 12 students attend activities delivered in collaboration with student societies.	1 FTE Access Practitioner; 0.2 FTE Access Manager; £500,000.	Increased sense of belonging; increased confidence to successfully apply to HE; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	IS1
(Expanded activity) Student partnerships and co-creation. This strand includes: - Belonging at Bristol: Content and belonging events created by current UOB global majority students, for UOB offer-holders from global majority backgrounds. - Funded partnerships with student cultural societies to contribute to the design and delivery of appropriate outreach activity. - Enhanced Student Advisory Group provide insight, challenge and an opportunity to co-create and evaluate outreach and inclusion activity.	0.5 FTE Access Practitioner; 0.1 FTE Access Manager; £40,000.	Increased sense of belonging; increased oversight into quality of activities; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	N
(Expanded activity) Programme of inclusive training and cross-departmental forums, designed to improve awareness of the experiences of underrepresented students and to enhance appropriate communication. This strand of work includes Active Outreach training (for staff delivering WP activities); cross-team collaborations e.g. Inclusive Writing Guide; and bespoke activity embedded into central events e.g. Diversity at Bristol in UOB Open Days; as well as Ambassador and staff training.	0.3 FTE Access Practitioner; 0.1 FTE Access Manager.	Increased positive engagement with HE staff; improved inclusive practice; increased oversight into quality of activities.	IS1

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£640,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Our evidence review and theory of change for this intervention strategy are available in Annex B.

Evaluation

Our evaluation plan for this intervention strategy is summarised below, with further detail on our approach available in Annex B.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Partnership with Causeway Education.	Increased academic self-efficacy; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	Tracking participants' UoB offer to enrolment rates (Narrative – type 1); pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	UoB-funded WP partnerships impact report to be annually from Spring 2027.
Exclusive outreach programmes for students	Increased sense of belonging; increased confidence to successfully apply to HE; increased	Longitudinal tracking through HEAT (Narrative – type 1); tracking participants' UoB application and enrolment rates (Narrative – type 1); pre/post	Annual impact report(s) to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.

who identify as Asian, Black or of mixed heritage.	application to enrolment conversion rate.	comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	
Student centred partnerships, influence, and co-creation.	Increased sense of belonging; increased oversight into quality of activities; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	Qualitative research with participants and co-creators (Narrative – type 1); tracking participants' UoB conversion and enrolment rates (Narrative – type 1); pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	
Programme of inclusive training and cross-departmental fora.	Increased positive engagement with HE staff; improved inclusive practice; increased oversight into quality of activities.	Qualitative research with participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre/ post in-session. • six months after training. (Empirical – type 2); inclusivity audit of outreach portfolio (Narrative – type 1).	Findings to be published in summer 2029.

Intervention strategy 3: Access for mature students

Objectives and targets

Objective: To maintain the proportion of mature students enrolling at the University. Target PTA_4.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 1: knowledge and skills; Risk 2: information and guidance; Risk 3: perception of HE; Risk 4: application success rates; Risk 5: limited choice of course type and delivery mode.

Activity and description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
(Existing activity) Guaranteed offers for suitably qualified Access to HE applicants; Access to HE entry requirements set at a contextual level.	0.1 FTE Access Manager.	Increased application success rates for Access to HE applicants.	N
(Expanded activity) Cert HE Foundation programmes (Arts and Social Sciences; Science, Engineering and Mathematics) for learners over the age of 21 with no prior qualifications. Both programmes combined to enrol a total of c.60 mature students p/a.	0.1 FTE Access Manager; £480,000.	Provide alternative, direct entry routes to UoB for mature students; increased student confidence to succeed in HE.	IS4
(Existing activity) Building up to Higher Education short course to support c.20 local prospective mature students not already in captive education per course iteration.	0.2 FTE Access Practitioner; £16,000.	Increased applications to Cert HE Foundation programmes from mature students; increased participant capacity to make informed choices about HE; increased participant confidence levels in academic skills.	N

(Expanded activity) Information, advice, and guidance (IAG) for Access to HE cohorts (c.400 students) and level 1, 2, and ESOL adult learners (c.200 students) in c.15 FE settings; IAG webinars for c.200 prospective mature student enquirers.	0.8 FTE Access Practitioner; £12,000.	Increased application success rates for mature applicants; increased participant capacity to make informed choices about HE and FE.	N
(Existing activity) Inclusive post-16 outreach programmes for c.50 local Access to HE mature students (Access to Bristol and Bristol Scholars).	See IS1.	Increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE; increased confidence to successfully apply to HE; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	IS1
(Existing activity) Targeted marketing campaigns to prospective mature students and tailored CRM to mature applicants.	0.2 FTE Access Practitioner; £160,000.	Increased applications and enrolments to UoB from mature students.	N

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£668,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Our evidence review and theory of change for this intervention strategy are available in Annex B.

Evaluation

Our evaluation plan for this intervention strategy is summarised below, with further detail on our approach available in Annex B.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Guaranteed offers; Access to HE entry requirements set at a contextual level.	Increased application success rates for Access to HE applicants.	Tracking Access to HE applications and identifying applications that might not have otherwise received an offer from UoB (Narrative – type 1).	Mature access intervention strategy impact report to be published on UoB website.
Cert HE Foundation programmes.	Provide alternative, direct entry routes to UoB for mature students; increased student confidence to succeed in HE.	Tracking mature student applications to Cert HE Foundation programmes and enrolment rates for completers onto UoB UG courses (Narrative – type 1); pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	
Building up to Higher Education short course.	Increased applications to Cert HE Foundation programmes from mature students; increased participant capacity to make informed choices about HE; increased participant confidence levels in academic skills.	As above.	
Information, advice, and guidance (IAG) provision.	Increased application success rates for mature applicants; increased participant	Longitudinal tracking through HEAT (Narrative – type 1); post-event evaluation surveys (Narrative – type 1).	

	capacity to make informed choices about HE and FE.		
Inclusive post-16 outreach programmes (Access to Bristol and Bristol Scholars).	Increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE; increased confidence to successfully apply to HE; increased application to enrolment conversion rate.	Longitudinal tracking through HEAT (Narrative – type 1); tracking participants’ UoB application and enrolment rates (Narrative – type 1); pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	
Targeted marketing campaigns and tailored CRM.	Increased applications and enrolments to UoB from mature students.	CRM monitoring analysis (Narrative – type 1).	

Intervention strategy 4: Completion for students declaring a mental health condition

Objectives and targets

Objective: To narrow the gap in completion rates between students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability. Target PTS_1.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), Risk 8 (mental health).

Activity and description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Enhance the capacity for proactive and targeted specialist interventions with clear clinical outcomes through our Mental Health Advisory Service. This includes additional support for transition into the university and between years of study.	3.4 FTE delivery staff.	Improved scores using Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation questionnaire (CORE34); improved continuation between years; improved degree completion rates; reduction in fitness to study processes.	N
Develop and implement a tiered approach to staff development, including enhanced disability awareness training for all staff, and specialist training, including mental health literacy, for targeted staff (including Senior Tutors, School Disability Co-ordinators, and pastoral leads in professional services).	1.4 FTE delivery staff; £60,000.	Increased knowledge amongst targeted staff (including Senior Academic Tutors, personal tutors and pastoral leads in professional services) about key mental health conditions; able to consider implications for their work; able to apply learning to their job role.	N
Transitions Days for students who declare a mental health condition. Pre-entry orientation visits including advice about Disability Services, study support, mental health and wellbeing support etc. Input from	0.3 FTE delivery staff; £36,000.	Increased knowledge and confidence to access the support available at UoB;	N

keys teams and an opportunity to meet current students (300 students attend).		increased confidence in accessing available support.	
Enhanced peer mentoring programme in which higher year students, support incoming students with the transition to University, including peer social connection, offering advice based on their experiences, and introducing mentees to relevant services.	1.5 FTE delivery staff; 0.1FTE management; £400,000.	Increased knowledge and confidence to access the support available at UoB; enhanced sense of connection and belonging.	IS5

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£496,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Our evidence review and theory of change for this intervention strategy are available in Annex B.

Evaluation

Our evaluation plan for this intervention strategy is summarised below, with further detail on our approach available in Annex B.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Enhanced specialist interventions	Improved scores using Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation questionnaire (CORE34); improved continuation between years; improved degree completion rates; reduction in fitness to study processes.	Analysis of CORE34 scores (Empirical – type 2). Non-random comparison of continuation and completion outcomes for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted students who participate in interventions Targeted students who did not participate in interventions Whole year group (Empirical – type 2); audit of fitness to study processes (Narrative – type 1).	Interim annual impact report to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026, followed by full annual reports from December 2027.
Disability and mental health training	Increased knowledge amongst targeted staff; Increased confidence and ability to apply knowledge to role.	Mixed methods research with participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre/post-training survey Follow-up survey six months after training. (Empirical – type 2).	Annual impact report(s) to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
Transitions Days	Increased participant knowledge of the support available at UoB; increased confidence in accessing available support.	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2); focus group with sample of participants during year 1 of their degree (Narrative – type 1); monitoring attendee engagement with UoB support services (Narrative – type 1).	
Enhanced peer mentoring programme	Increased knowledge and confidence to access the support available at UoB;	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2); tracking continuation data of participants (Narrative – type 1).	

enhanced sense of connection and belonging.		
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Intervention strategy 5: Completion and attainment for mature students

Objectives and targets

Objective: To narrow the gap in completion rates between mature students and young students; to narrow the attainment gap between mature students and young students. Target PTS_2 and Target PTS_3.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), Risk 10 (cost pressures), institution specific risk (belonging).

Activity and description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
(Expanded activity) Extended mature student transition and belonging programme including new and enhanced elements (approx. 100 students): tailored study and academic skills provision to support those returning to education; community building to support peer relationships between mature students; 1:1 coaching and student advocate-led events. A Mature Student Advisory Group will be established to co-create the programme.	1.2FTE delivery; 0.2FTE management time; £84,000.	Increased academic self-efficacy and course-related problem-solving; increased sense of belonging; increased understanding of academic expectations.	N
(New activity) Staff training and development in inclusive pedagogies informed by hackathon events with target groups of students. This will build on existing work in relation to decolonisation and inclusivity undertaken by Bristol Institute of Learning and Teaching.	See IS6.	Increased staff knowledge in the ways in which student identities and wider social inequalities can impact learning; increased implementation of pedagogies known to reduce outcome disparities; increased student voice in curriculum design and delivery.	IS6 & IS7
(Expanded activity) WP Research Internships programme providing paid internships for 30 students working alongside academic staff on research projects.	See IS7.	Increased academic self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies; increased sense of belonging; increased motivation and confidence for progression to postgraduate study.	IS6 & IS7
(New activity) A commuter student working group and faculty-level commuter student networks will co-create improvements to facilities and support for commuter students.	0.6FTE delivery staff; 0.1 FTE management; £36,000.	Increased sense of belonging; increased provision for UoB commuter students.	IS6

(New activity) Money advice support, money coaching service, self-serve resources, workshops, and induction programme.	See IS6.	Increased financial literacy; increased confidence and capability in managing finances; reduced concerns about managing finances at university.	IS6
(Existing activity) Peer Assisted Study Sessions to support students' academic transition to undergraduate study.	See IS6.	Increased academic self-efficacy and empowerment to engage in academic discussions; increased sense of course community and belonging.	IS6 & IS7
(Existing activity) Enhanced peer mentoring programme in which mature student mentors support incoming students with the transition to UoB, over an extended period.	See IS4.	Increased knowledge and confidence to access the support available at university; increased sense of belonging.	IS4
(Existing activity) Discipline-specific academic language and literacy (ALL) sessions targeted at UG programmes in Schools with high proportions of target students.	See IS6.	Increased understanding of academic expectations; increased academic self-efficacy; increased empowerment to communicate voice; increased sense of belonging.	IS6

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£120,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Our evidence review and theory of change for this intervention strategy are available in Annex B.

Evaluation

Our evaluation plan for this intervention strategy is summarised below, with further detail on our approach available in Annex B.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Extended mature student welcome, transition and belonging programme.	Increased academic self-efficacy and course-related problem-solving; increased sense of belonging; increased understanding of academic expectations.	Pre/post surveys and sample analysis (Empirical – type 2).	Annual impact report to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
Staff training and development in inclusive pedagogies	Increased staff knowledge in the ways in which student identities and wider social inequalities can impact learning; increased implementation of pedagogies known to reduce outcome disparities; increased student voice in curriculum design and delivery.	Mixed methods research with participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre/post-training survey. Follow-up survey six months after training. (Empirical – type 2). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of module evaluations (Narrative type 1). 	Interim annual impact report to be published on UoB website December 2026, followed by full annual reports from December 2027.

Expanded WP Research Internships programme providing paid internships working alongside academic staff on research projects.	Increased academic self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies; increased sense of belonging; increased motivation and confidence for progression to postgraduate study.	Mixed methods research with participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre/post-internship surveys. • Interviews throughout internship. (Empirical – type 2).	Interim annual impact report to be published on UoB website December 2026, followed by full annual reports from December 2027.
Commuter student working group and networks.	Increased sense of belonging; increased provision for UoB commuter students.	Inclusivity audit of UoB provision for commuter students; qualitative research with participants of working group (Narrative – type 1).	Annual impact report to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
Peer assisted study sessions.	Increased academic self-efficacy and empowerment to engage in academic discussions; increased sense of course community and belonging.	Pre/mid/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	
Enhanced peer mentoring programme.	Increased knowledge and confidence to access the support available at university; increased sense of belonging.	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2); tracking continuation data of participants (Narrative – type 1).	
Discipline-specific academic language and literacy (ALL) sessions.	Increased understanding of academic expectations; increased academic self-efficacy; increased empowerment to communicate voice; increased sense of connection and belonging.	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants, sample analysis (Empirical – type 2); longitudinal needs analysis (Narrative - type 1).	
Enhanced money advice and coaching support.	Increased financial literacy; increased confidence and capability in managing finances; reduced concerns about managing finances at university.	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2); tracking repeat uptake of hardship funding among participants (Narrative – type 1).	Initial report published December 2026, followed by participant data monitoring analysis from 2027 onwards.

Intervention strategy 6: Attainment for low socio-economic groups

Objectives and targets

Objective: To narrow the attainment gap between students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and students from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Target PTS_4.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), Risk 10 (cost pressures), institution specific risk (belonging).

Activity and description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
(New activity) Enhanced welcome, transition and belonging programme including transition & study coaching. This will provide continuity from outreach programmes, tailored transition support in the first year and enhance community building. (approx. 200 students).	2.2 FTE delivery team; 0.3 FTE management time; £84,000.	Increased academic self-efficacy, metacognitive strategies and study strategies; increased sense of belonging; increased knowledge and confidence to access the support available at UoB.	N
(New Activity) Staff training and development in inclusive pedagogies informed by hackathon events with target groups of students. This will build on existing work in relation to decolonisation and inclusivity undertaken by Bristol Institute of Learning and Teaching.	See IS6	Increased staff knowledge in the ways in which student identities and wider social inequalities can impact learning; increased implementation of pedagogies known to reduce outcome disparities; increased student voice in curriculum design and delivery.	IS5 & IS7
(New activity) Money advice support, money coaching service, self-serve resources, workshops, and induction (approx. 3000 students).	4FTE delivery staff; 300 student ambassador hours; £16,000.	Increased financial literacy; increased confidence and capability in managing finances; reduced concerns about managing finances at university.	IS5
(New activity) A commuter student working group and faculty-level commuter student networks will co-create improvements to facilities and support for commuter students.	See IS5.	Increased sense of belonging; increased provision for UoB commuter students.	IS5
(Expanded activity) WP Research Internships programme providing paid internships for 30 students working alongside academic staff on research projects.	See IS7.	Increased academic self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies; increased sense of belonging; increased motivation and confidence for progression to postgraduate study.	IS5 & IS7
(Existing activity) Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) to support students' academic transition to undergraduate level study.	1.5FTE delivery staff; £880,000.	Increased academic self-efficacy and empowerment to engage in academic discussions; increased sense of course community and belonging.	IS5 & IS7
(Existing activity) Discipline-specific academic language and literacy (ALL) sessions targeted at UG programmes in Schools with high proportions of target students (approx. 1700 students).	1.1 FTE teaching staff.	Increased understanding of academic expectations; increased academic self-efficacy; increased empowerment to communicate voice; increased sense of belonging.	IS5 & IS7
(Existing activity) University of Bristol Bursary – paid to eligible students with a household income of under £50,000, with the highest amount of bursary available to those from the lowest incomes.	See IS1.	Reduced concerns about managing finances at UoB; Bursary recipients are able to engage as successfully with their course as those not eligible for financial support.	IS1

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy:

£980,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Our evidence review and theory of change for this intervention strategy are available in Annex B.

Evaluation

Our evaluation plan for this intervention strategy is summarised below, with further detail on our approach available in Annex B.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Enhanced welcome, transition and belonging programme.	Increased academic self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies; increased sense of belonging; increased knowledge and confidence to access the support available at UoB	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	Annual impact report to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
Staff training and development in inclusive pedagogies	Increased staff knowledge in the ways in which student identities and wider social inequalities can impact learning; increased implementation of pedagogies known to reduce outcome disparities; increased student voice in curriculum design and delivery.	Mixed methods research with participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre/post-training survey. • Follow-up survey six months after training. (Empirical – type 2). End of module evaluations (Narrative type 1).	Interim annual impact report to be published on UoB website December 2026, followed by full annual reports from December 2027.
Enhanced money advice and coaching support.	Increased financial literacy; increased confidence and capability in managing finances; reduced concerns about managing finances at university.	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2); tracking repeat uptake of hardship funding among participants (Narrative – type 1).	Initial report published December 2026, followed by participant data monitoring analysis from 2027 onwards.
Commuter student working group and faculty-level networks.	Increased sense of belonging; increased provision for UoB commuter students.	Inclusivity audit of UoB provision for commuter students; qualitative research with participants of working group (Narrative – type 1).	Annual impact report(s) to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
Expanded WP Research Internships programme.	Increased academic self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies; increased sense of belonging; increased motivation and confidence for progression to postgraduate study.	Mixed methods research with participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre/post-internship surveys. • Interviews throughout internship. (Empirical – type 2).	Interim annual impact report published on UoB website December 2026, followed by full annual reports from December 2027.

Peer assisted study sessions	Increased academic self-efficacy and empowerment to engage in academic discussions; increased sense of course community and belonging.	Pre/mid/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	Annual impact report(s) to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
Discipline-specific academic language and literacy (ALL) sessions.	Increased understanding of academic expectations; increased academic self-efficacy; increased empowerment to communicate voice; increased sense of belonging.	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants, sample analysis (Empirical – type 2); longitudinal needs analysis (Narrative - type 1).	Annual impact report(s) to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
University of Bristol Bursary.	Reduced concerns about managing finances at UoB; Bursary recipients are able to engage as successfully with their course as those not eligible for financial support.	Mixed methods research report (Empirical – type 2).	Findings on our website annually from Spring 2027.

Intervention strategy 7: Attainment for global majority students

Objectives and targets

Objective: To narrow the attainment gap between global majority students and white students. Target PTS_5.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), institution specific risk (belonging).

Activity and description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
(New activity) Build on Belonging@Bristol outreach activity to provide a programme of personal development, community building, and belonging events and workshops for c. 200 students once they join the University. This programme will be co-created with the Race Inclusion Advocates and will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> access to inspiring role models and speakers opportunities to develop social and professional networks opportunities to build confidence and skills to succeed safe spaces to engage in meaningful conversations about race and racism and share experiences. 	2FTE delivery staff; 0.2FTE management; £120,000.	Increased sense of belonging.	N
(Expanded activity) Race Inclusion Advocates programme, training and empowering 50 students to develop enhanced leadership skills and to co-create meaningful change in relation to race and ethnicity across the University. Advocates partner with staff in key strategic areas to co-create changes in practice	1FTE delivery staff; 0.2 FTE	Increased sense of belonging for Race Inclusion Advocates; increased empowerment to use voice; staff report increased understanding of	N

which improve the experience of global majority students more widely e.g. working with an academic school to contribute to decolonisation work, review processes, and/or improve support systems; working with student-facing services and teams to improve inclusivity, increase understanding of the needs of global majority students, and/or improve communications with students.	management; £120,000.	issues affecting global majority students; staff report changes to working practices.	
(New Activity) Staff training and development in inclusive pedagogies informed by hackathon events with target groups of students. This will build on existing work in relation to decolonisation and inclusivity undertaken by Bristol Institute of Learning and Teaching.	1 FTE delivery staff, 0.2FTE management, £20,000.	Increased staff knowledge in the ways in which student identities and wider social inequalities can impact learning; increased implementation of pedagogies known to reduce outcome disparities; increased student voice in curriculum design and delivery.	IS6 & IS6
(Expanded activity) WP Research Internships programme providing 6-week paid internships for 30 students working alongside academic staff on research projects.	0.3FTE delivery staff; 0.1FTE management; £180,000.	Increased academic self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies; increased sense of belonging; increased motivation and confidence for progression to postgraduate study.	IS5 & IS6
(Existing activity) Discipline-specific academic language and literacy (ALL) sessions targeted at UG programmes in Schools with high proportions of target groups of students.	See IS6.	Increased understanding of academic expectations; increased academic self-efficacy; increased empowerment to communicate voice; increased sense of belonging.	IS5 & IS6
(Existing activity) Peer assisted study sessions (PASS) to support students' academic transition to undergraduate level study. Training for PASS Leaders will include completion of the Union Black anti-racism training programme.	See IS6.	Increased academic self-efficacy and empowerment to engage in academic discussions; increased sense of course community and belonging.	IS6

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£440,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Our evidence review and theory of change for this intervention strategy are available in Annex B.

Evaluation

Our evaluation plan for this intervention strategy is summarised below, with further detail on our approach available in Annex B.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Programme of personal development, community building, and belonging events and workshops.	Increased sense of belonging.	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).; dosage-response analysis into participants' attainment and awarding outcomes (Empirical – type 2); qualitative research with co-creators (Narrative – type 1).	Annual impact report(s) to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
Expand the Race Inclusion Advocates programme.	Increased sense of belonging for Race Inclusion Advocates; increased empowerment to use voice; staff report increased understanding of issues affecting global majority students; staff report changes to working practices.	Interviews and pre/post comparison of survey data for Race Inclusion Advocates and staff engaged in the programme (Empirical – type 2).	
Staff training and development in inclusive pedagogies	Increased staff knowledge in the ways in which student identities and wider social inequalities can impact learning; increased implementation of pedagogies known to reduce outcome disparities; increased student voice in curriculum design and delivery.	Mixed methods research with participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre/post-training survey. • Follow-up survey six months after training. (Empirical – type 2). End of module evaluations (Narrative type 1).	Interim annual impact report to be published on UoB website December 2026, followed by full annual reports from December 2027.
Expanded WP Research Internships programme.	Increased academic self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies; increased sense of belonging; increased motivation and confidence for progression to postgraduate study.	Mixed methods research with participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre/post-internship surveys. • Interviews throughout internship. (Empirical – type 2).	Interim impact report to be published on UoB website December 2026, followed by full annual report from December 2027.
Discipline-specific academic language and literacy (ALL) sessions.	Increased understanding of academic expectations; increased academic self-efficacy; increased empowerment to communicate voice; increased sense of belonging.	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants, sample analysis (Empirical – type 2); longitudinal needs analysis (Narrative - type 1).	Annual impact report(s) to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
Peer assisted study sessions.	Increased academic self-efficacy and empowerment to engage in academic discussions; increased sense of course community and belonging.	Pre/mid/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2).	

Intervention strategy 8: Progression for students declaring a mental health condition

Objectives and targets

Objective: To narrow the gap in progression rates between students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability. Target PTP_1.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 7 (insufficient personal support), Risk 8 (mental health), Risk 11 (capacity issues), Risk 12 (progression from higher education).

Activity and description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
(Expanded activity) Careers guidance and coaching for disabled and neurodivergent students, with ringfenced and extended guidance appointments for students with mental health conditions. Includes referral routes from academic and student support services. Provision for all years of study, and post-graduation.	1.1 FTE Adviser; 0.4FTE Careers Consultant; 0.2FTE Management 0.5 admin support; £38,000.	Increased confidence in planning for future; increased progression rates to graduate study or employment; higher levels of graduate job satisfaction.	N
(Existing Activity) Partnership with EmployAbility to provide advocacy and advice for students with disabilities via ring-fenced one-to-one appointments	£12000 contract costs.	As above.	N
Proactive outreach campaign to support disabled and neurodivergent students, with a particular focus on those with a mental health condition, to access ring-fenced guidance appointments and engage with the Careers Service offer.	0.2FTE Careers Consultant; 0.5FTE admin support £22000.	Increased awareness of careers support at an earlier stage; increased levels of engagement from target cohorts.	N
(New activity) Cross-university careers and employability staff training and consultancy programme, supporting colleagues working with students with mental health conditions. Collaboration across student support services and academic student support provision to support success and progression for students with mental health conditions.	0.2FTE Careers Consultant.	Improved cross-institutional approach to supporting students with planning and preparing for future; students increasingly engaged in careers and employability activity within their academic school.	N
(Expanded activity) Increase the number of SME/city challenges and IKEEP internship programs available to students with mental health conditions, ring-fenced for middle and final-year students lacking work experience.	0.5FTE delivery staff; £188,000.	Increased confidence in skill development for students with mental health conditions. increased proportion of UoB students with mental health conditions accessing work experience.	N

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£260,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Our evidence review and theory of change for this intervention strategy are available in Annex B.

Evaluation

Our evaluation plan for this intervention strategy is summarised below, with further detail on our approach available in Annex B.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Targeted careers guidance and coaching.	Increased confidence in planning for future; increased progression rates to graduate study or employment; higher levels of graduate job satisfaction	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2); tracking of Graduate Outcomes survey responses (Type 1 – Narrative).	Annual impact report(s) to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
Partnership with EmployAbility.	As above.	Annual activity report will be provided by EmployAbility.	
Outreach campaigns.	Increased awareness of careers support at an earlier stage; increased levels of engagement from target cohorts.	Tracking activity uptake from target cohorts (Narrative – Type 1).	Short annual summary of activity published in October beginning 2026.
Cross-university staff careers and employability training and consultancy.	Improved cross-institutional approach to supporting students with planning and preparing for future; students increasingly engaged in careers and employability activity within their academic school.	Monitoring careers and employability activity within academic schools (Narrative – Type 1); mixed-methods research with sample staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre/post-training survey • Follow-up survey six months after training. (Empirical – type 2).	Annual impact report(s) to be published on UoB website beginning in December 2026.
Increase the number of SME/city challenges and IKEEP internship programs.	Increased confidence in skill development for students with mental health conditions. increased proportion of UoB students with mental health conditions accessing work experience.	Pre/post comparison of survey data for participants (Empirical – type 2); tracking activity uptake from target cohorts (Narrative – Type 1).	

Whole provider approach

The University of Bristol is committed to ensuring that students from all backgrounds are represented within our community and ensuring that all students thrive. Fostering equality, diversity and inclusion is a cross-cutting theme in our University Vision and Strategy 2030, with a clear commitment to embedding EDI in all our activities including promoting good relations, tackling prejudice, and promoting understanding.

To support these objectives, we have recently created the Student Opportunity sub-division with end-to-end oversight of the student journey. The Assistant Director for Diversity and Inclusion is responsible for delivery of this Plan and is situated within Student Opportunity, recognising that access and participation work is needed across the student lifecycle. Alongside this role sits an Assistant Director for Student EDI Strategy, ensuring synergy and alignment of our access and participation ambitions and our wider strategic objectives in relation to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Bristol's student body has diversified in recent years, despite a challenging landscape influenced by the Covid pandemic, an increasingly selective recruitment environment and the cost-of-living crisis. Over the last 4 years, our internal data evidences the proportion of our intake who identify as Asian has increased from 8.3% to 9.6%, ahead of our current milestone, and we have consistently met our milestones for reducing the gap in entry rates between POLAR4 quintile 1 and quintile 5 students. In our 23/24 intake, 1.1% of students identified as Care Experienced, compared to 0.4% in 19/20, and 3.2% of our student intake in 2023 identified as Black, representing the largest proportion of Black students joining the University since internal records commenced in 2016 when our intake of Black students was 1.6%.

Despite this significant progress, we must continue to actively question our culture and structures and work to create a truly diverse and inclusive institution which is reflective of the City of Bristol and surrounding area.

We believe in the cumulative and strategic benefits of working collaboratively with partners to achieve the best outcomes for students and consulted with local schools and colleges, existing and new partners on the shape of our APP during the development phase. Our 2023 Civic University Agreement highlights how we will formally strengthen our partnerships to tackle the entrenched inequalities in the City of Bristol, which include stark differences in educational outcomes for young people. In the South Bristol Ward of Hartcliffe and Withywood, the average Attainment 8² score in 2023 was 30.8%³. This is 14.1% lower than the Bristol average and over 30% lower than in the North Bristol Wards of Cotham, Redland and Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze.

In 2024, a collaboration between the Widening Participation and Civic teams and the School of Education launched the University of Bristol Governors Network which will enhance our relationships across Bristol and support attainment raising in schools. Our continued commitment to our local communities is evident through our Micro-campus in Barton Hill, a decile 1⁴ area and

² Attainment 8 measures pupils' performance in 8 GCSE-level qualifications, with extra weighting given to English and Maths). <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/11-to-16-years-old/gcse-results-attainment-8-for-children-aged-14-to-16-key-stage-4/latest/#:~:text=Data%20for%20the%202021%20to%202022%20school%20year%20shows%20that,was%2048.8%20out%20of%2090.0>

³ Hartcliffe and Withywood ward profile report (bristol.gov.uk)

⁴ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-and-mayor/statistics-census-information/deprivation>

one of the most deprived communities in England according to IMD2019. Our longstanding collaboration with IntoUniversity was recognised in the 2023 NEON Widening Access awards. We will retain impactful local partnerships whilst exploring innovative opportunities for collaboration, piloting an Undermatch project with Causeway Education to address systemic barriers to fair access.

Our sector leading approach to contextualised admissions was first piloted in 2009 and continues to evolve in recognition of the underlying social, environmental and economic factors that underpin students' opportunities to succeed. In 2022/23 we introduced a contextual offer for students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). Alongside this we piloted the introduction of a guaranteed offer for learners studying an Access to HE Diploma to support mature learners with non-traditional education backgrounds enrolling at the University. During the period of this Plan, we will introduce contextual offers for students living in IMD2019 Quintile 1 areas and will extend guaranteed offers to students eligible for FSM in recognition of the comprehensive evidence that this group of learners experience differential outcomes at KS4, KS5 and in progression into selective HE providers.

Providing flexible routes into higher education is key to universities being able to attract and support learners from underrepresented backgrounds or with varied qualifications. Our Gateway programmes facilitate entry into the highly competitive fields of Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Sciences for learners who meet widening participation criteria, such as those from Care Experienced backgrounds. Our Foundation in Arts and Social Sciences (Cert HE) and Cert Foundation in Science, Engineering and Maths are one-year introductory courses that prepare learners without formal qualifications for undergraduate level study, with participants directly progressing into related UG degrees at Bristol. We are currently reviewing and refreshing our pioneering part-time English Literature and Community Engagement degree, which has run since 2008. The aim is to continue reaching a variety of mature students and open the community engagement elements of the curriculum up to a broader range of students and subject areas.

A focus on ensuring fair access is integral to the roles of staff across the University. Each of our Faculties have dedicated senior academic representatives who drive the widening participation agenda across their Schools. Data is readily accessible and regularly scrutinised, helping to enhance our collective understanding of our current position and to facilitate a targeted approach to identifying gaps in access and the development of appropriate activity. Cross-team collaborations allow us to consider widening participation priorities across institutional activities, embedding themes within central recruitment activity such as our open day provision and enhancing our literacy with regard to engaging with marginalised groups through a range of training opportunities. We are committed to improving access to the University at all levels and have expanded our successful Access Postgrad outreach programme and fee waiver with the Participate Postgrad Scheme. We will build on this network of practice, complementing the new and emerging activities outlined in our intervention strategies with underpinning practice to support disadvantaged learners, such as through a submission to the NNECL Quality Mark⁵, evidencing our commitment to students from Care Experienced backgrounds across the student lifecycle.

Current students are engaged in formulating and supporting access and success activity across the lifecycle. Since 2019, we have evolved a programme of standalone student-led events into formal, paid partnerships with student societies, enabling us to routinely embed collaboration into

⁵ [National Network for the Education of Care Leavers \(nnecl.org\)](https://www.nnecl.org)

our access activity. Student partnership is instrumental in our student success work where student advocates and interns co-create our interventions and inform wider work across the institution. For further information, see our Student Consultation section. Looking ahead to the lifecycle of this Plan, we will further enhance our student partnership work by building on the success of our APP Student Advisory Group to formalise a space for our students to partner with us to inform and evaluate widening participation, success, and progression activity.

We have undertaken a significant review of our student funding package, informed by external research, to ensure that bursary support meets the needs of our students. This extends the understanding gained from the annual evaluation of our bursary package to help us critically analyse the impact of bursaries at each stage of the student journey. Informed by the findings we have streamlined the bursary package to help students understand how much they will receive and targeted more resource to students from the lowest income households. Alongside our core bursary we also offer key additional funding to specific groups of students with additional financial needs including Standalone bursaries for care leavers, estranged students and bereaved students; Sanctuary Scholarships; Futures Scholarships which include an annual cash bursary combined with support for employability opportunities, such as internships; and a travel bursary to support prospective students from low income households to attend interviews or offer holder days. In addition we have implemented a range of support designed to mitigate the impact of rising living costs on our students including offering subsidised meals on campus, and increasing accommodation support and hardship funding, as well as funding to support access to events and activities.

We are committed to ensuring that learning, teaching and assessment are inclusive and support all our students to achieve their full potential. Bristol's Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT) leads our work on inclusive pedagogy and the University's Curriculum Framework⁶ embeds belonging in the curriculum, supporting students from all backgrounds to thrive and succeed. The aims are to create space for dialogue, encourage students to build relationships which develop empathy, and build an inclusive environment in which students feel at ease expressing different perspectives contributing to a sense of belonging in the university community. BILT also leads on work to decolonise the curriculum⁷ through education development projects, workshops, discipline-specific resources, and the Future Learn course *Decolonising Education: from Theory to Practice*⁸ which has had almost six thousand enrolments to date. Design for all is a key priority in the *University Assessment and Feedback Strategy 2022-30*, which embeds principles of inclusivity from the start, requiring programmes to offer different varieties, choices, and topics of assessment which enable students to play to their strengths and minimise disadvantage. Students' backgrounds are seen as a valuable resource in teaching and assessment, with the result that students may demonstrate their understanding by drawing on their own experience.

The University first launched its Student and Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing strategies in 2018, as part of an institution-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing. The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy⁹ was updated in 2022 with commitments to developing new models of support, building on our proactive preventative activity, and enhancing our provision for students from underrepresented groups. We were one of the first universities to receive the University Mental Health Charter in 2022, demonstrating our commitment to good practice and continuous

⁶ [Curriculum Framework | Bristol Institute For Learning and Teaching | University of Bristol](#)

⁷ [Decolonising the curriculum | Bristol Institute For Learning and Teaching | University of Bristol](#)

⁸ [Decolonising Education: From Theory to Practice - Decolonial Theory Course \(futurelearn.com\)](#)

⁹ [student-mental-health-wellbeing-strategy.pdf \(bristol.ac.uk\)](#)

improvement in this area. One example of such improvements is the development of the Student Liaison Service. This is a collaborative project between University of Bristol, University of West England and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership. The Service will provide access to assessments, supporting the step-up or step-down of student experiencing significant mental distress, providing evidence-based interventions and liaison between the universities and local services, to ensure that the needs of students are considered. We intend to further develop our approach to preventative support by embedding learner analytics to enable us to proactively identify and provide support for those who need it.

We are committed to ensuring our university community is welcoming and inclusive for all our students. We have established the Inclusive Communities team in our residences to build community and provide opportunities for meaningful social connection for students from all backgrounds, recognising that loneliness and isolation can impact mental health and wellbeing, and that some groups of students may be at increased risk of isolation.

Our work to address the representation of Black students in the student body, and to close the awarding gap affecting global majority students, is embedded in our institutional commitment to anti-racism¹⁰, led by the Anti-Racism Working Group. This includes a commitment to diversifying our staff body and reviewing our policies. The recently announced Reparative Futures¹¹ programme is a £10 million investment aiming to tackle racial injustice and inequalities both within the University itself and in the local communities we work with. The programme will run over ten years and includes a commitment to sustaining the Black Bristol Scholarships programme for Black students undertaking undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study.

We are proud to be a University of Sanctuary within a City of Sanctuary and are committed to supporting our students affected by forced displacement. This includes financial support through our Sanctuary Scholarships but extends further to provide a framework of pastoral support provided by a dedicated member of staff.

The University signed the Stand-Alone Pledge and the Care Leavers Covenant in 2019/20 to formally demonstrate our commitment to estranged and care experienced students, through ongoing improvements and a structured framework of support, delivered by a named contact. Our work in this area is informed by close links with the Care Leavers and Estranged Students Network, to ensure student voice is key in shaping appropriate support and interventions at each stage of the student lifecycle.

In 2021 we established our Student Resolution Service to improve the support for students affected by unacceptable behaviour and encourage them to report incidents. We have also developed a community induction module which sets out our expectations of students across a range of areas of student life and have partnered with Santander to make their Union Black course available to all students, embedding this into essential training for our core peer support roles.

We routinely interrogate our progression and Graduate Outcomes data at institution, Faculty and School level, and refining our successful tiered approach to address inequalities in employment outcomes for under-represented groups. Our Flying Start programme provides introductory information and advice for students meeting widening participation criteria, whilst our proactive targeted provision to support students reaching their career goals includes our Bristol Mentors

¹⁰ [Anti-racism at the University of Bristol | About the University | University of Bristol](#)

¹¹ [Reparative Futures programme | About the University | University of Bristol](#)

Programme, which provides nine months of alumni mentoring and ring-fenced, paid internships with local employers. The positive impact of these interventions can be seen in the progression outcomes for key groups of students.

Student consultation

We believe that student involvement in the design and implementation of our plan is critical to the success of our APP. The lived experiences of our students provide valuable insight and challenge on our current and refreshed approach to improving equality of opportunity.

Representatives from Bristol SU have been active co-creators in the development of this APP. Two Bristol SU Sabbatical Officers (UG Education, and Equality Liberation, and Access) are members of the APP Steering Group which co-produced this plan. Their insights informed our APP financial support reforms which will see an increase in award for 'University of Bristol Bursary' recipients on the lowest incomes (IS1) and further investment in money advice (IS6).

In autumn 2023, Bristol SU Sabbatical Officers and UoB collaborated on establishing a paid APP Student Advisory Group (APPSAG). Our APPSAG comprised current undergraduate students from a range of backgrounds, including representation from mature students, local students, and students with characteristics typically underrepresented or experiencing inequalities in outcomes at UoB. The rationale behind establishing an APP Student Advisory Group was to work intensively with a smaller cohort of current students on a regular basis during the core development period of our APP (December 2023 – May 2024), facilitating opportunities to co-create aspects of the plan alongside seeking consultation.

In response to the prevalence of 'sense of belonging' in wave one plans, we consulted our APPSAG on the extent to which they felt this was a relevant risk at UoB. In 3500 words of consultation, students overwhelmingly identified sense of belonging as a risk to on-course success for multiple groups featured in the EORR. Insights informed by students' own diverse lived experiences were triangulated with findings from Bristol SU's 'Belonging, Connection, and Community' report¹² and research into the experience of our global majority students, to support the inclusion of 'belonging' as an institution-specific risk featured in our summary risks and related intervention strategies (IS5-7).

Across six workshops, our APPSAG contributed to the design of our other key risks and intervention strategies. Students identified disparities in the quality of IAG available to prospective students as a salient risk. We have since involved students in the redesign of UoB's WP webpage to improve the availability of IAG and the accessibility of our outreach offering.¹³ Students also identified differences in the perception of UoB versus other providers. As a result of this student insight, we adapted EORR Risk 3 in our summary risks to recognise that for some student groups, the perception of UoB specifically is the barrier. Students also provided substantial insight on the relationship between cost pressures and mental health, aligning with findings from UoB-commissioned research involving current student participants. Both student insights underpin our enhanced approach to money advice and increased investment in mental health (IS4). In instances where our APPSAG fed back negatively on proposed new APP activity, we listened and revised our approach. For example, we withdrew activities such as dissertation writing retreats to support on-course attainment following negative consultation and focused on areas where students responded positively.

Our APPSAG also co-designed a survey for student ambassadors to provide insight on UoB's APP (n=76 completed the survey). Respondents ranked EORR Risks 10, 1 and 2 as our most salient access risks and EORR Risks 10, 6, and 8 as our most salient on-course risks. Insufficient representation also emerged as a perceived risk. We will continue to configure this additional risk into our work on 'belonging'. The survey also asked students to rate the effectiveness of new degree success activities on a 5-point scale. In line with opinion on the salience of EORR Risk 10, enhanced money advice services scored highly; 71% of respondents perceived this to be 'extremely effective' or 'very effective'. Overall, students viewed new activities favourably. The survey also captured over 15,000 words of consultation on approaches to improved transition for UG 1st years and improved IAG for prospective applicants. Insights have been shared with leads to ensure they inform UoB's detailed internal plans.

We have a strong track-record of co-creating APP activity with students. One example of this in the access space is our Next Step Bristol project (IS2) which was designed with current students and Bristol SU Sabbatical Officers and is now co-delivered with current students. Student partnership is also at the heart of our student success work. For example, our Race Inclusion Advocates are trained and employed as student consultants; staff identify areas of inequity of experience for global majority students and propose relevant projects, working in partnership with Advocates to design meaningful change (IS7). More recently, we have also begun co-designing approaches to enhanced 'transition' (IS5-7) with our APPSAG. To date, members have designed a roadmap identifying critical provision and touchpoints which will continue to shape the operational detail of these interventions.

For the lifecycle of this plan, we will further enhance our student partnership work by building on the success of our APPSAG to formalise a space for students to partner with us to inform and evaluate access, success, and progression activity (IS2). We will do this by embedding a paid role for student contributors, formalising the APPSAG cohort by creating new, flexible work opportunities for these students. This Group will be integral to all stages of the implementation of the Plan, and will be involved in activity creation, evaluation and APP governance.

Evaluation of the plan

We have used the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool to reflect on our current position and to inform our approach to evaluating this APP. Across all five dimensions of the OfS evaluation self-assessment, we have identified areas where we can improve our practice. We have outlined below what we will do to strengthen those areas.

To drive improvements in equality of opportunity, the University of Bristol will increase its investment in evaluation and research for the period 2025-26 to 2028-29. We will reinvest a further 0.25% of HFI into evaluation and research during this period. We will expand our existing evaluation and data insights function to strengthen our overall evaluation and reporting output across the student lifecycle. We have identified a need to establish an evaluation oversight group with a clear reporting line to an APP monitoring group. We anticipate that a formalised evaluation oversight structure will also support with establishing protocols that ensure evaluation is properly and consistently resourced.

While our self-assessment identified that there were good opportunities for practitioners to have conversations about evaluation on a regular basis, further work is required to ensure all delivery staff understand the importance of evaluation and robust data collection. To enhance our existing

culture of evaluation, we will embed Evaluation Champions across APP countable teams. Colleagues who become Evaluation Champions will support with developing a culture in which the importance of evaluation is recognised, facilitating further opportunities for staff members to engage in honest reflection on the effectiveness of their activities. We are piloting a new monitoring and evaluation support framework which aims to establish a more consistent approach to evaluation planning across all activities.

We have undertaken a skills audit of delivery staff to identify training needs related to planning and reporting methods, monitoring and data analysis, programme development, and technical skills. This has informed individual and team-wide evaluation training in preparation for this next APP iteration. There is further work we must do to identify a skills base or expertise among academic staff for undertaking evaluation of APP activities beyond our financial support package.

All activities in our APP portfolio have defined objectives which can be measured and evaluated. Our programmes draw on the existing evidence of the impact of activities; however, we recognise that we have not yet meaningfully contributed to this sector evidence base. While we have defined deliverables across all programmes, our approach to measuring outcomes and impacts needs to be more robust for student success activity. To date, our institutional focus has been on widening access. As such, we are more confident employing success measures focused on impact in access than in student success where we will need to better evidence specific outcomes and improve our setting of targets and benchmarks. Significant work has been undertaken to date ensure that evaluation is specified during the planning stages of activities.

We have identified a need to formalise our approach to evaluation plans to better evidence the alignment between our evaluation and programme activities. To support us link our activities to outcomes, we have ensured theories of change underpin all our access and success activity and have an ambition to achieve the same for relevant progression activity. We engage with research literature to understand the effectiveness of access and participation programmes and underpin all our theories of change with relevant evidence bases. For the theories of change underpinning our APP intervention strategies, we have conducted corresponding evidence reviews (see Annex B). There is further work we can do to ensure students are active co-creators in the review and development of our theories of change. We are working towards schematising our type 2 empirical evaluation output across access initiatives and introducing type 2 evaluation into the student success space. Our investment in evaluation and research will further support the development of type 3 causal evidence.

We have robust data collection processes including appropriate data sharing agreements in place for access initiatives. This allows for measurement of individualised change in addition to cohort analyses. These data collection processes are less coherent in the student success space and will be addressed as a priority. Across our APP portfolio, we will develop an agreed research protocol that engages with our institutional ethical approval process. We have identified this as one of our key strategic evaluation challenges.

In an access context, we have established tracking methodologies that track the outcomes of our participants over time. We use the HEAT longitudinal track function for participants across all activities, and in-cycle internal admissions monitoring to track applicants who participated on an intensive access programme for more nuanced tracking functions. We will develop equivalent practice in student success.

We are increasing our use of sector standard tools such as TASO's Access and Success Questionnaire (ASQ) as part of our effort to ensure our staff understand the limitations of self-reported data and the importance of employing validated scales. We have also used TASO's Mapping Outcomes and Activities Tool to define the outcomes we plan to evaluate across various intervention strategies. We will develop our capacity to undertake risks analysis for our evaluations.

To develop the quality of impact reporting, we will need to provide further training for access and success practitioners to equip them to reflect on the limitations of different research designs. Our existing mixed method approach to evaluation across the APP portfolio will be further enhanced by facilitating increased opportunities for practitioners to undertake more qualitative approaches. Regarding access activities, we plan to adopt a more sophisticated approach to triangulating our evaluation findings from different sources including parents and carers, building on best practice demonstrated by some of our third sector partners.

Internal mechanisms for sharing the findings from APP evaluations are currently limited. We have identified this as an immediate priority for our operational Evaluation Action Group to address. Work in this area will also complement conversations around clarifying internal expectations regarding how different evaluation findings should be used moving forward in an impact (rather than process) context. Related to this, we have identified a need to introduce more robust systematic mechanisms which ensure evaluation results inform year-on-year improvements for all relevant activities.

In collaboration with the sector, we are exploring effective ways to share our evaluation results externally. We support the idea of a sector-wide APP evaluation repository and look forward to contributing to this. As part of the Russell Group Widening Participation Evaluation Forum, we are engaging with a subgroup of this forum who are examining different approaches to evaluation publication. As this work progresses, we will adopt recommendations relevant to our context.

Provision of information to students

The University of Bristol is committed to providing clear, transparent, and up-to-date information for prospective students.

Publication of the plan

- Our Access and Participation Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29 will be published online on our dedicated [access and participation plan policies webpage](#).
- A summary plan will be published on this webpage alongside the full plan.
- An archive of our historical access and participation plans and access agreements are available on the same webpage.

Fee information and financial support

- Prospective students are provided information on fees on our [fees and funding webpage](#).
- Tuition fees for each degree course are listed in our [online course finder](#).
- Details of our current financial support offer are published on our [student finances webpages](#). This information covers eligibility criteria for bursaries and scholarships and the level of financial support students from underrepresented groups will be offered in each year of their studies.

- Information on tuition fees and financial support will also be made available to UCAS and to the Student Loan Company (SLC).

University of Bristol Bursary

To be eligible for the University of Bristol Bursary you must be:

- a full-time UK undergraduate student currently domiciled in the UK
- or a part-time UK undergraduate student currently domiciled in the UK who started your studies on or after 1 August 2020.

In addition, you must:

- be eligible for Home tuition fees;
- have applied to your regional funding provider for means-tested support;
- have been assessed to have a household income of £50,000 or less.

Students who are not eligible for bursary:

- students undertaking a second undergraduate degree;
- students undertaking a paid or unpaid year in industry (in the UK or abroad) as part of their degree;
- students on any year of their course where they are **entitled to NHS funding**
- students who are registered as 'exams only'.

Award-band structure (from 25/26):

Household Income	Award Value
£0 - £10k+	£2,500
£10k - £20k	£2,000
£20k - £30k	£1,500
£30k - £40k	£1,000
£40k - £50k	£500

Hardship Fund

You can only apply for the fund if you are a fully registered University of Bristol student.

You must also:

- be in financial difficulty that puts you at risk of withdrawing from university
- have access to less than £100 across all bank accounts
- if you are a home student, receive the government maintenance loan (unless exempt).

The fund is available to:

- undergraduate
- postgraduate taught/research
- home and EU/international fee-paying students.

The fund will not accept applications from pre-sessional, visiting, or exchange students.

Available assistance

The fund offers a choice of applying for a £50 food voucher or the standard cash award (where eligible).

Standard cash award

If eligible for an award, there are three possible awards available:

- Level 1: £250
- Level 2: £500
- Level 3: £750

Applications to the fund are considered according to the eligibility criteria:

Level 1

Level 1 awards are available to applicants who declare that they are in financial difficulty and can prove access to less than £100. This is after income (from part-time work, scholarships, bursaries, or other sources) and reasonable expenses for the term.

Level 2

Level 2 awards are available to applicants who are taking reasonable steps to reduce their financial problems but remain in difficulty. This can include:

- working a part-time job for a reasonable number of hours per week
- using a considerable amount of an interest-free student overdraft.

Alternatively, applicants may have:

- excessive debt
- placement related costs
- a health problem preventing their ability to work a part-time job.

Home students must have applied for, and received, the UK government maintenance loan (unless exempt). International Students must prove that they have made 'reasonable financial provision' before starting their course.

Level 3

Level 3 awards are only available to applicants who are in full-time study and meet at least one of the following criteria:

- have dependent children
- have caring responsibilities
- are in receipt of the Bristol Standalone Bursary
- are presently homeless

Access to advice and guidance

To ensure all students can make informed decisions we will communicate relevant information at our recruitment events including open days and offer holder days, school visits and WP events, and through our interactive online prospectus and dedicated Enquiries channels.

Annex A: Further information and analysis relating to the identification and prioritisation of key risks to equality of opportunity

Introduction

We have used the Office for Students (OfS) access and participation data dashboard to inform the following analysis which assesses our performance for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups at all lifecycle stages.

- For access, the latest academic year corresponds to 2021-22.
- For continuation, the latest academic year corresponds to 2020-21.
- For completion, the latest academic year corresponds to 2017-18.
- For attainment, the latest academic year corresponds to 2021-22.
- For progression, the latest academic year corresponds to 2020-21.

In addition to OfS access and participation data, we have also used internal admissions data and UCAS End of Cycle data (2023) to help us identify additional indications of risk across the student lifecycle.

Access

Approach

Where relevant, we have benchmarked our access performance for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups against the performance of 'All registered English higher education providers'.¹² As a high tariff provider, we have also benchmarked our access performance against the performance of the Russell Group.¹³ The Russell Group averages included exclude UoB.

In addition to analysing OfS access and participation data, we have undertaken an indications of risk exercise using more recent internal admissions data. This exercise examines applicant rates, and gaps in offer rates, firm response rates and met offer rates for different groups.¹⁴

Regarding the EORR, we acknowledge that Risk 1 (knowledge and skills) and Risk 4 (application success rates) are the likely underlying risks that are contributing to offer rate gaps and met offer rate gaps. Our context as a highly selective provider with high entry requirements exacerbates these two risks specifically.

¹² 'All registered English higher education providers' is a provider group included in the OfS access and participation data dashboard.

¹³ This includes only English Russell Group providers (data available in the OfS access and participation data dashboard).

¹⁴ Met offer rate refers to the proportion of applicants who have responded 'Firm' to a conditional offer that then go on to meet their offer conditions upon receiving their results. It excludes applicants that receive an unconditional offer from the outset, applicants that respond 'Insurance', and applicants that are accepted in spite of having missed their offer conditions.

Socio-economically disadvantaged groups

a. Students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

Intake

Table 1a: UoB percentage intake of students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) at any time in the six years up to the completion of Key Stage 4, and those not eligible.

Split	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
FSM eligible	6.1%	7.3%	8.2%	8.9%	8.2%	7.1%	8%
Not FSM eligible	93.9%	92.7%	91.8%	91.1%	91.8%	92.9%	91.9%

While the number of UoB entrants eligible for FSM remained static between 2019 and 2021 (rounded numerator, 260), the proportion of FSM entrants dropped 1.8pp from 8.9% in 2019 to 7.1% in 2021 as our undergraduate population increased. In 2021, our 4-year average intake of FSM entrants was 8%, 4.4pp below the equivalent average of all other English Russell Group providers. This compares to a 4-year average of 19.2% for all registered English higher education providers.

Additional indications of risk¹⁵

The proportion of UoB FSM eligible applicants in 2023-24 was 6.5%.

Table 1b: UoB access indications of risks by Free School Meal status for the 2023-24 entry year.

	Offer rate gap	Firm response rate gap	Met offer rate gap
FSM eligible v not FSM eligible	7.8pp	-0.4pp	21.4pp

In the 2023-24 entry year, there was a moderate offer rate gap affecting FSM eligible applicants; 49.8% of FSM eligible applicants received an offer compared to 57.6% of applicants not eligible. In 2023-24, the University introduced contextual offers for this group which includes a scoring boost in the admissions assessment process. This may explain why the offer rate gap for this measure of socio-economic disadvantage is less pronounced than what we see for IMD2019 Q1 applicants (table 2c).¹⁶ Firm response rates for the 2023-24 entry year signal that FSM eligible applicants are as likely as their comparator group to make UoB their firm choice. In 2023-24, there was a large proportion of FSM eligible offer-holders who had also participated on an intensive outreach programme at UoB. The targeted conversion activity we prioritise for offer-holders who have participated on an intensive outreach programme may have contributed to the positive conversion rates we note for this disadvantaged group. The large met offer rate gap affecting FSM eligible applications is a concern. We will need to develop our data maturity for FSM and monitor this specific indication of risk to ensure we adopt an informed approach to tackling the underlying risks.

Relevant intersections

¹⁵ We have internal admissions data related to Free School Meal status from UCAS for the 2023-24 entry year only.

¹⁶ We do not currently include the IMD2019 measure in our contextual admissions criteria, though a proportion of applicants in IMD2019 Q1 will likely meet other eligibility criteria.

We have examined offer rates by applicants' FSM status and ethnicity. As figures 1a and 1b show, White applicants experience higher offer rates than Asian and Black applicants regardless of their socio-economic grouping.

Figure 1a: UoB offer rate by applicants' FSM status and ethnicity (White/ Asian).

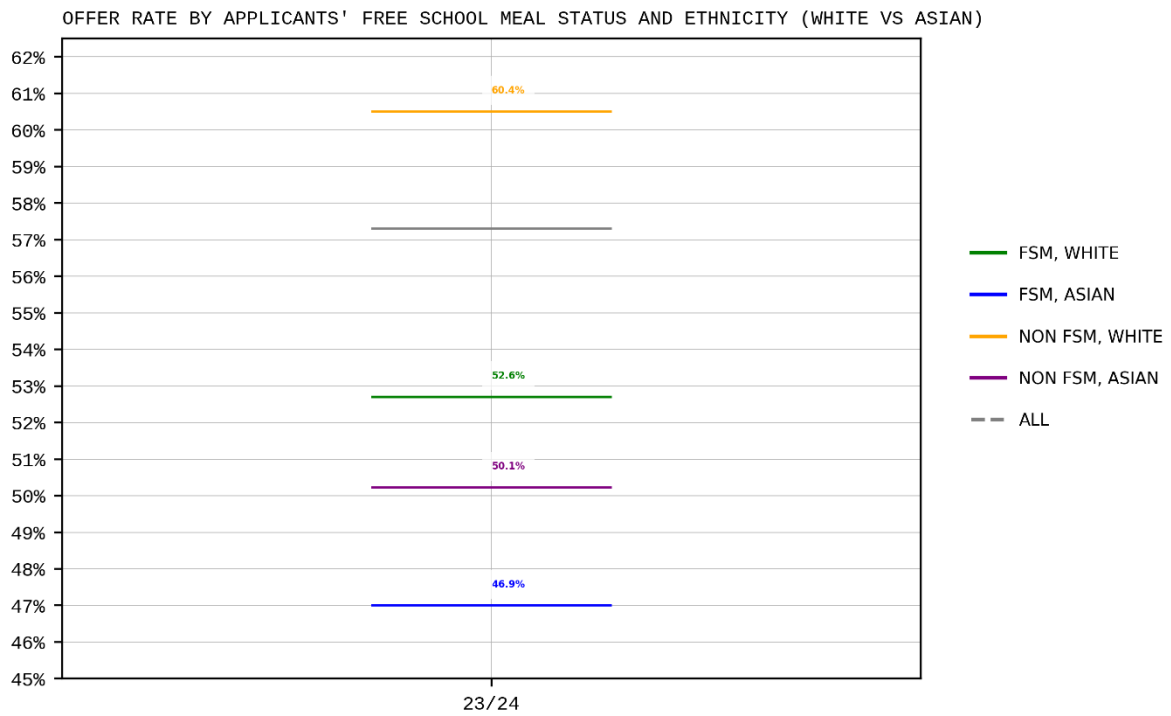
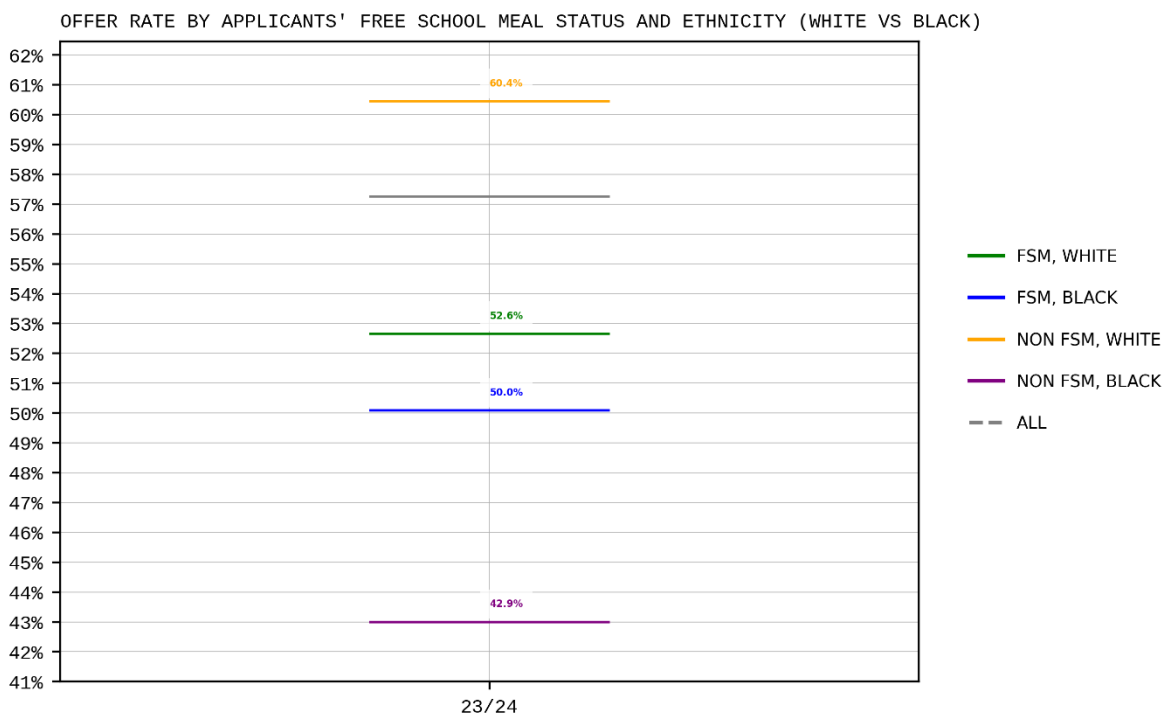


Figure 1b: UoB offer rate by applicants' FSM status and ethnicity (White/ Black).



BASED ON INTERNAL DATA

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL // STUDENT RECRUITMENT INSIGHT

Target

We have included a target to increase our intake of students eligible for Free School Meals. Please see PTA_2.

b. Students from socio-economically deprived areas (IMD2019)¹⁷

Intake

Table 2a: UoB percentage intake of students by IMD quintile.

Split	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
IMD Q1	3.8%	4.9%	5.1%	5.9%	5.9%	5.8%	5.7%
IMD Q2	10.5%	10.9%	11.6%	11.5%	12.4%	12.2%	11.9%
IMD Q3	19.5%	18.8%	20.6%	20.6%	19.7%	19.7%	20.1%
IMD Q4	27.1%	27.1%	25.2%	26.6%	25.1%	26.2%	25.8%
IMD Q5	39.1%	38.3%	37.5%	35.4%	36.9%	36.2%	36.5%

In 2021, the 4-year average gap between students from IMD Q5 and Q1 entering UoB was 30.8pp, 10.7pp higher than the equivalent gap for all other English Russell Group providers. This compares to a 4-year average of -1.6pp for all registered English higher education providers. To date, we have not focused on IMD as a measure of disadvantage and acknowledge that our 2021 4-year average of IMD Q1 entrants (5.7%), is significantly below the equivalent for all registered English higher education providers (21.8%).

Additional indications of risk

¹⁷ All references to IMD hereafter refer to the IMD2019 metric.

The proportion of UoB IMD Q1 applicants has remained static since 2020-21.

Table 2b: Proportion of UoB applicants from IMD Q1.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	4-year avg
IMD Q1 applicants	10.3%	10.2%	10.2%	10.5%	10.3%

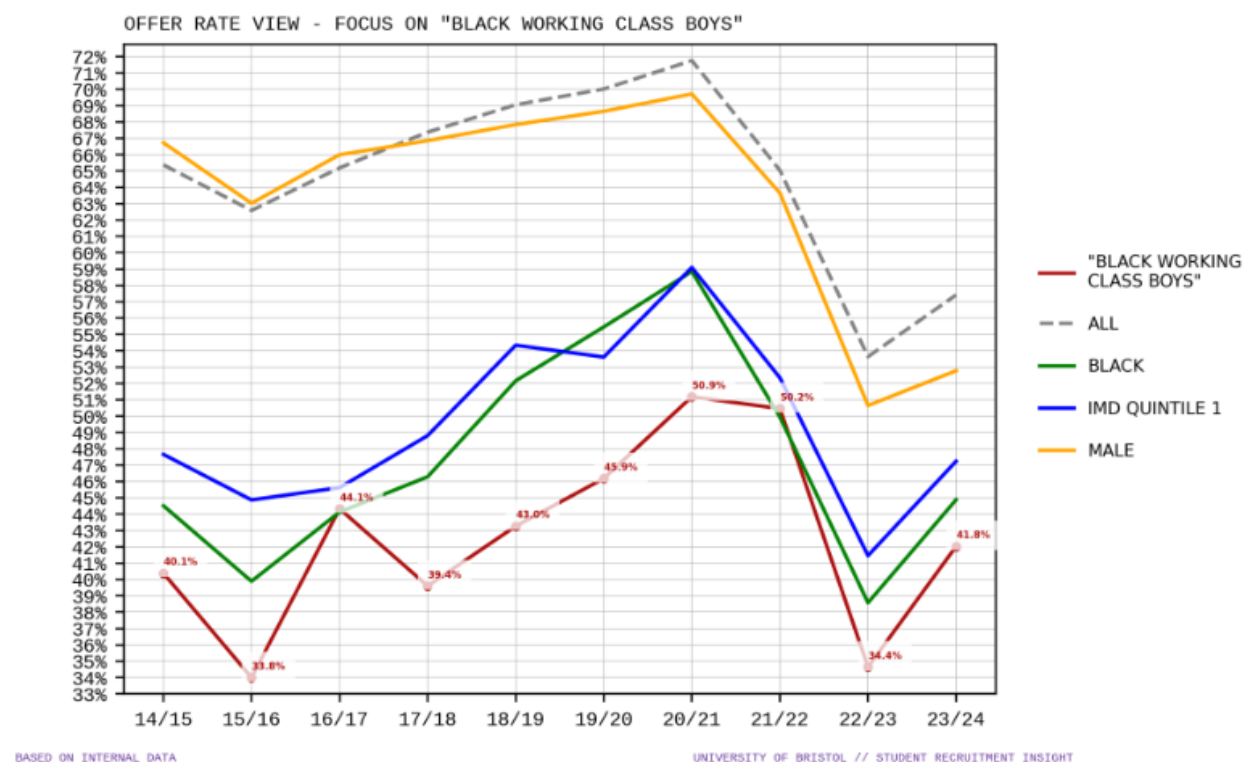
Table 2c: UoB access indications of risks by IMD quintile.

	Offer rate gap		Firm response rate gap		Met offer rate gap	
	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg
IMD Q1 v IMD Q5	13.5pp	16.2pp	2.5pp	3.4pp	18.3pp	15.4pp

Relevant intersections

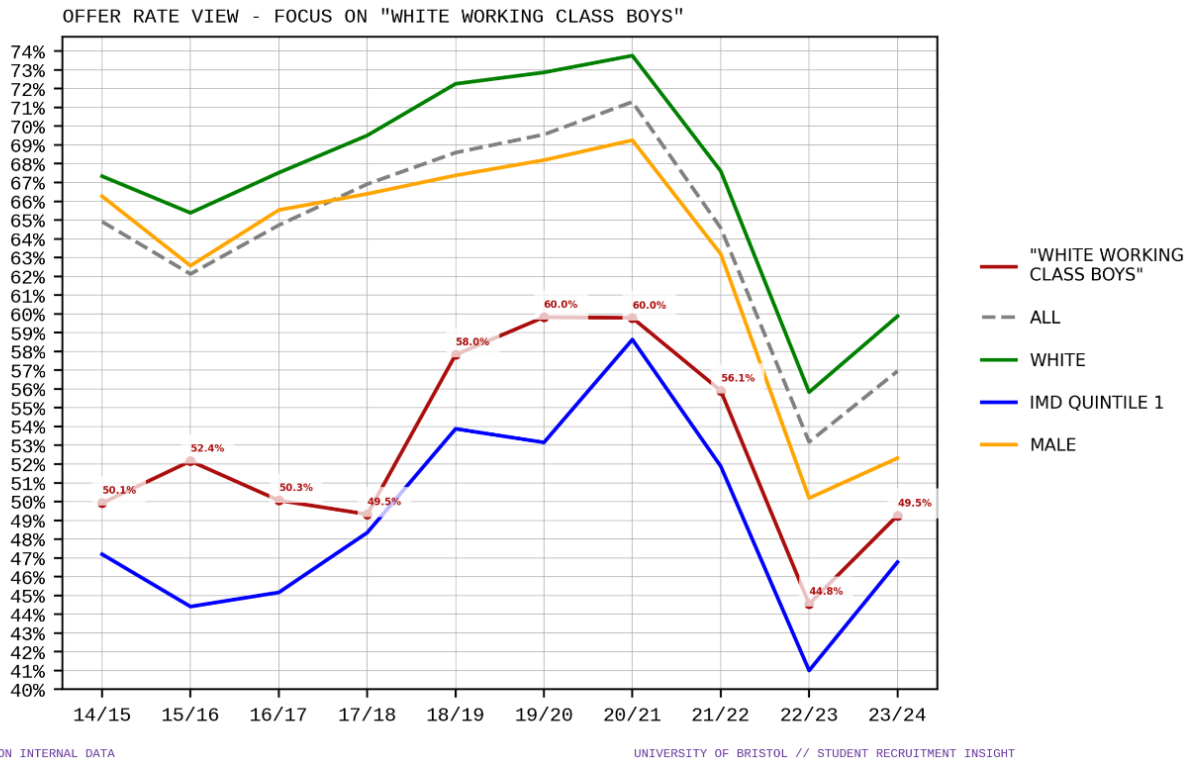
Offer rates by applicants' IMD quintile and sex reveal that IMD Q1 males consistently achieve the lowest offer rates of all groups. Further intersectional analysis highlights that Black IMD Q1 males experience lower offer rates than White IMD Q1 males at UoB.¹⁸

Figure 2a: UoB offer rate view – focus on “Black Working-Class Boys”.



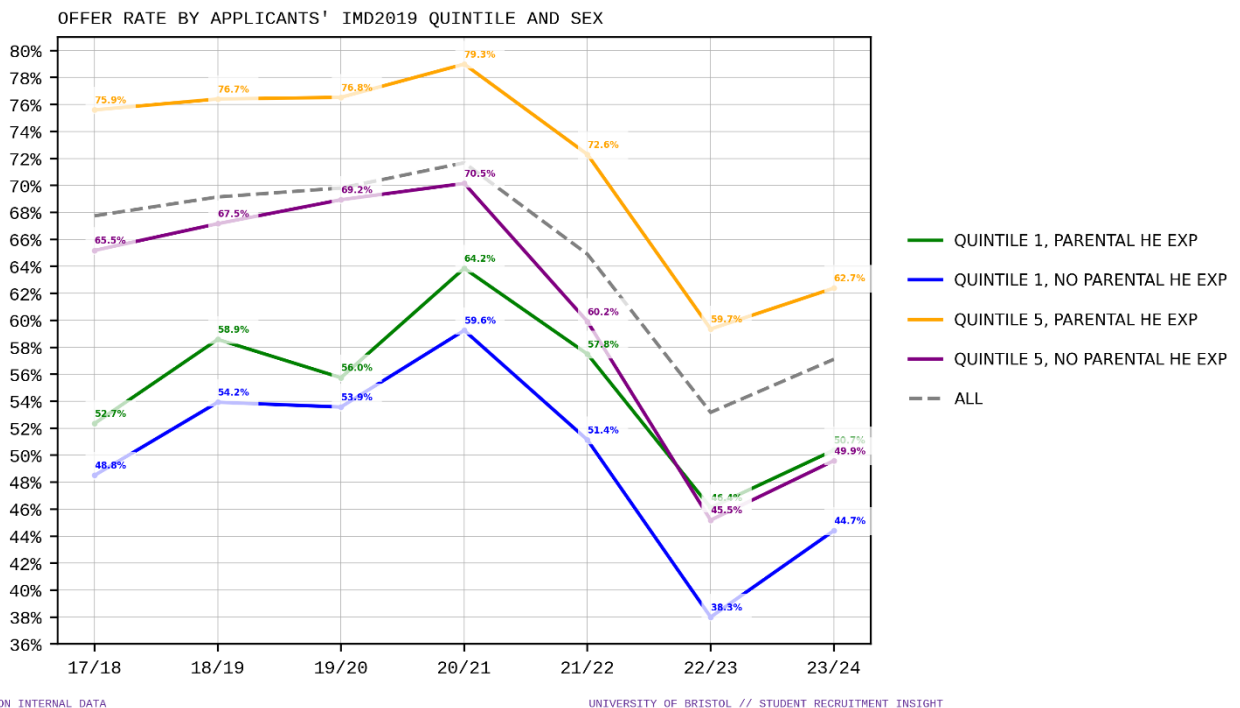
¹⁸ It should be noted that analysing intersections of three characteristics, particularly characteristics known to be under-represented, often leads to small sample sizes and trends should therefore be interpreted with additional caution.

Figure 2b: UoB offer rate view – focus on “White Working-Class Boys”.



To examine whether EORR Risk 2 (information and guidance) is linked to low offer rates for IMD Q1 applicants, we have intersected IMD quintile by parental experience of HE status. IMD Q1 applicants with no parental HE experience are consistently shown to have lower offer rates than all other groups (figure 2c). This suggests that this group may be experiencing unequal access to information and guidance which supports progression to highly selective providers.

Figure 2c: UoB offer rate by applicants’ IMD quintile and parental experience status.



Target

We have included a target to increase our intake of IMD Q1 students. Please see PTA_1.

Low progression to higher education

a. POLAR4

Intake

Table 3a: UoB percentage intake of students by POLAR4 quintile.

Split	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
POLAR4 Q1	3.8%	4.6%	5.5%	6.0%	7.0%	6.9%	6.4%
POLAR4 Q2	6.7%	8.4%	9.2%	10.5%	9.5%	11.2%	10.1%
POLAR4 Q3	12.4%	11.6%	12.7%	13.1%	12.6%	12.7%	12.8%
POLAR4 Q4	20.5%	18.4%	19.4%	20.3%	19.9%	19.8%	19.8%
POLAR4 Q5	55.6%	56.9%	53.2%	50.1%	51.0%	49.4%	50.8%

In our previous APP, we set a target to reduce the ratio in entry rates for POLAR4 Q5: Q1 students from 10:1 to 6:1 by 2024-25. The latest available data in the OfS A&P Data Dashboard (2021, 7.2:1) and our own internal data shows that we are delivering against our agreed milestones.

Table 3b: UoB 2020-21 to 2024-25 POLAR4 ratio APP milestones v achieved.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Yearly milestone set out in APP	10:1	9:1	8:1	7:1
Achieved POLAR4 Q5:Q1 ratio	7.3:1 (OfS access and participation data)	7.2:1 (OfS access and participation data)	7.8:1 (internal admissions data)	7.1:1 (internal admissions data)

Additional Indications of risk

Table 3c: Proportion of UoB applicants from POLAR4 Q1.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	4-year avg
POLAR4 Q1 applicants	8.3%	8.5%	8.7%	8.6%	8.5%

While we have not significantly increased the proportion of applicants from POLAR4 Q1, we have almost halved the offer rate gap between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 applicants from 15.2pp in 2020-21 to 7.8pp in 2023-24 during a period of increased selectivity at UoB.

Table 3d: UoB access indications of risks by POLAR4 quintile.

	Offer rate gap		Firm response rate gap		Met offer rate gap	
	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg
POLAR4 Q1 v Q5	7.8pp	12.2pp	-0.8pp	-0.1pp	12.6pp	8.8pp

b. TUNDRA

Intake

Table 4a: UoB percentage intake of students by TUNDRA quintile.

Split	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
TUNDRA Q1	4.4%	6.0%	7.2%	7.4%	7.9%	7.8%	7.6%
TUNDRA Q2	9.5%	9.4%	11.0%	11.4%	11.1%	12.9%	11.7%
TUNDRA Q3	16.0%	14.6%	17.6%	18.2%	17.5%	16.6%	17.4%
TUNDRA Q4	24.0%	24.8%	22.4%	23.6%	23.3%	23.2%	23.1%
TUNDRA Q5	46.1%	45.2%	41.8%	39.4%	40.2%	39.5%	40.2%

To date, we have focused on POLAR4 as our key metric for low progression to higher education. Despite not having used TUNDRA in our targeting, we have halved our ratio of TUNDRA Q5: Q1 entrants since 2016 (2016 ratio 10.5:1; 2021 ratio 5.0:1). Our 2021 4-year average access ratio between students from TUNDRA Q5: Q1 remains larger than the equivalent for all registered English higher education providers (5.3:1 vs 2.5:1).

Additional Indications of risk

Table 4b: Proportion of UoB applicants from TUNDRA Q1.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	4-year avg
TUNDRA Q1 applicants	8.8%	9.2%	9.2%	8.9%	9%

Table 4c: UoB access indications of risks by TUNDRA quintile.

	Offer rate gap		Firm response rate gap		Met offer rate gap	
	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg
TUNDRA Q1 v Q5	4.9pp	9.4pp	-1.6pp	-2.2pp	10.3pp	6.1pp

We have not included TUNDRA or POLAR4 targets in our new plan. Our strategic resource will instead divert to improving access for lower socio-economic groups. This is because we identify FSM eligible students and IMD Q1 students as being more at risk of the pre-entry risks to equality of opportunity identified in our plan. We will, however, continue to monitor our intake of POLAR4 Q1 and TUNDRA Q1 entrants and consider embedding both low progression to higher education measures in our outreach eligibility criteria.

Ethnicity

a. Asian, Black, Mixed or Other ethnic groups (ABMO)

Intake

Table 5: UoB percentage intake of students by ethnic group.

Ethnic group	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
Asian	6.3%	6.9%	7.1%	7.6%	8.5%	8.8%	8.0%
Black	1.8%	2.3%	2.2%	2.7%	3.2%	2.2%	2.6%
Mixed	5.5%	5.7%	6.2%	6.5%	6.8%	7.4%	6.8%
Other	1.4%	1.4%	1.0%	1.2%	1.5%	1.6%	1.3%
White	84.9%	83.7%	83.6%	82.1%	80.0%	80.0%	81.3%

In 2021, 20% of our entrants belonged to Asian, Black, Mixed or Other ethnic groups (ABMO) with a 4-year average of 18.7%. This compares to a 4-year average of 33.3% for all registered English higher education providers. Our 4-year average is 14.7pp below the equivalent average for all other English Russell Group providers.

b. Asian ethnic group

Intake

Our 2021 4-year average intake of Asian entrants (8%) is 7pp below the equivalent average for all registered English higher education providers and 11.2pp below the equivalent average for all other English Russell Group providers.¹⁹ We have made consistent progress against our current APP target to increase our intake of Asian students to 9.5% by 2024-25.

Table 6a: UoB 2020-21 to 2024-25 Asian APP milestones v achieved.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Yearly milestone set out in APP	7.5%	8%	8.5%	9%
Achieved Asian intake	8.5% (OfS access and participation data)	8.8% (OfS access and participation data)	9.1% (internal admissions data)	9.6% (internal admissions data)

Additional Indications of risk

Table 6b: Proportion of UoB Asian applicants.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	4-year avg
Asian	12.7%	12.5%	13.1%	14.6%	13.2%

Table 6c: UoB access indications of risks by grouped ethnicity (Asian/ White).

	Offer rate gap		Firm response rate gap		Met offer rate gap	
	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg
Asian v White	10.3pp	10.1pp	3.1pp	3.8pp	13pp	13.3pp

¹⁹ The distribution across the Russell Group is noticeably broader for this group than for other categories. Removing London-based institutes from the calculation reduces the RG average from 19.2% to 12.1%.

Relevant intersections

We have examined met offer rates by applicants' socio-economic status and ethnicity (White/Asian). Asian applicants from the lowest socio-economic groups consistently achieve the lowest met offer rates of all identified intersected groups (figures 6a and 6b). White applicants are also shown to achieve higher met offer rates than Asian applicants regardless of their socio-economic grouping.

Figure 6a: Met offer rate by applicants' IMD quintile and ethnicity (White/Asian).

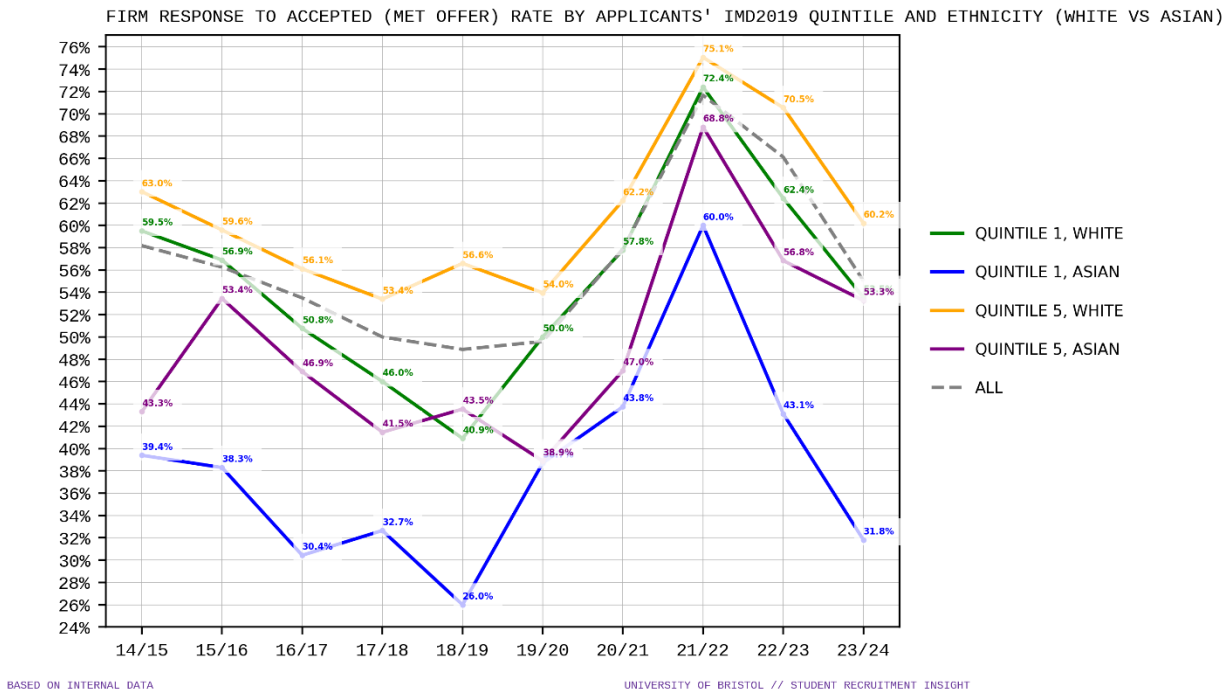


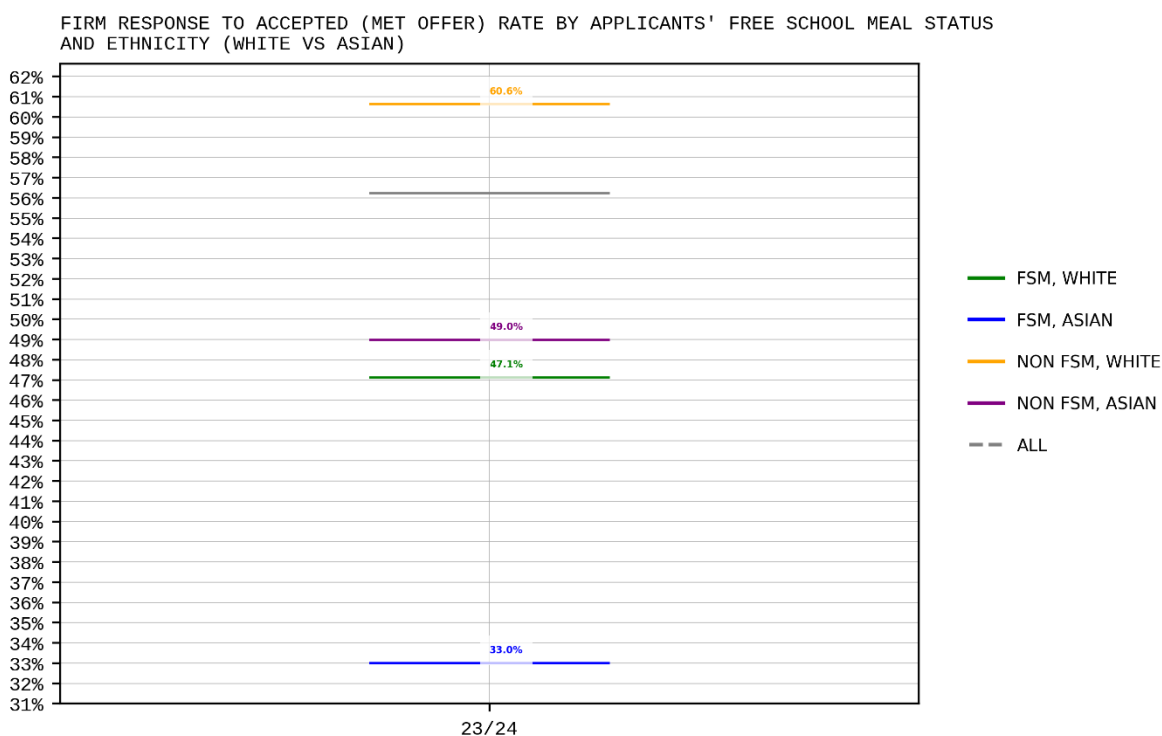
Figure 6b: Met offer rate by applicants' FSM status and ethnicity (White/ Asian).

We have not included a target to increase our intake of Asian students based on the consistent progress that we have made against our current APP target and the positive trajectory visible in our applicant rates for this group. Our ethnicity data shows that we will need to reconcentrate our efforts on improving access for Black students, an area where we have not made equivalent progress, and which will require increased strategic activity. To ensure continued progress regarding our intake of Asian students, we have opted to include this group in our access objectives. This approach recognises the progress that we have made and the need to continue activity which contributes positively to UoB being an inclusive destination of choice for Asian applicants (Risk 3, perception of HE).

c. Black ethnic group

Our 2021 4-year average intake of Black entrants (2.6%) is 7.8pp below the equivalent average for all registered English higher education providers and 2.8pp below the equivalent average for all other English Russell Group providers. We have struggled to make consistent progress against our current APP target to increase our intake of Black students to 4.8% by 2024-25.

Table 7a: UoB 2020-21 to 2024-25 Black APP milestones v achieved.



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	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Yearly milestone set out in APP	2.8%	3.3%	3.8%	4.3%
Achieved Black intake	3.2% (OfS access and participation data)	2.2% (OfS access and participation data)	2.8% (internal admissions data)	3.2% (internal admissions data)

Additional Indications of risk

The proportion of UoB Black applicants has fluctuated in recent years, though data for our most recent entry year reveals our highest proportion of Black applicants since internal records commenced in 2006 when our intake of Black students was 1.6%.

Table 7b: Proportion of UoB Black applicants.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	4-year avg
Black	5.1%	4.3%	4.9%	5.3%	4.9%

Table 7c: UoB access indications of risks by grouped ethnicity (Black/ White).

	Offer rate gap		Firm response rate gap		Met offer rate gap	
	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg
Black v White	15.5pp	16.7pp	-3.2pp	0.7pp	26.4pp	25.1pp

Relevant intersections

We have examined met offer rates by applicants' socio-economic status and ethnicity (White/ Black). Black applicants from the lowest socio-economic groups consistently achieve the lowest met offer rates of all identified intersected groups (figures 7a and 7b). White applicants are also shown to achieve higher met offer rates than Black applicants regardless of their socio-economic grouping.

Figure 7a: Met offer rate by applicants' IMD quintile and ethnicity (White/ Black).

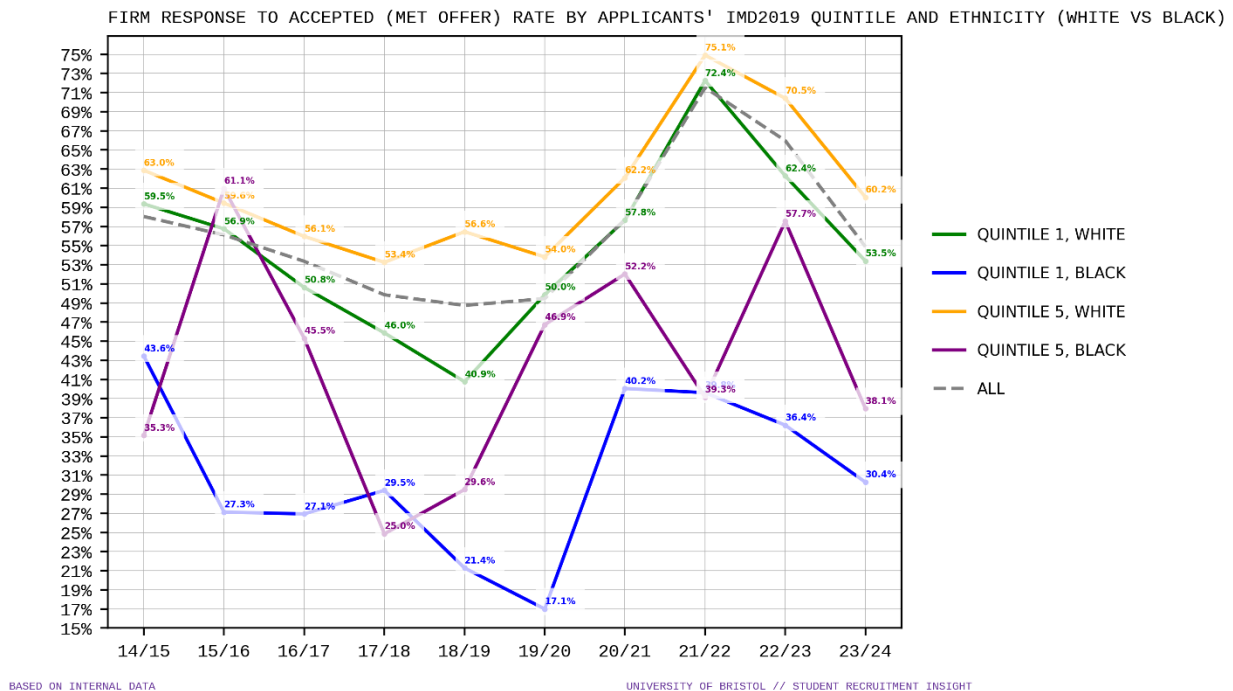
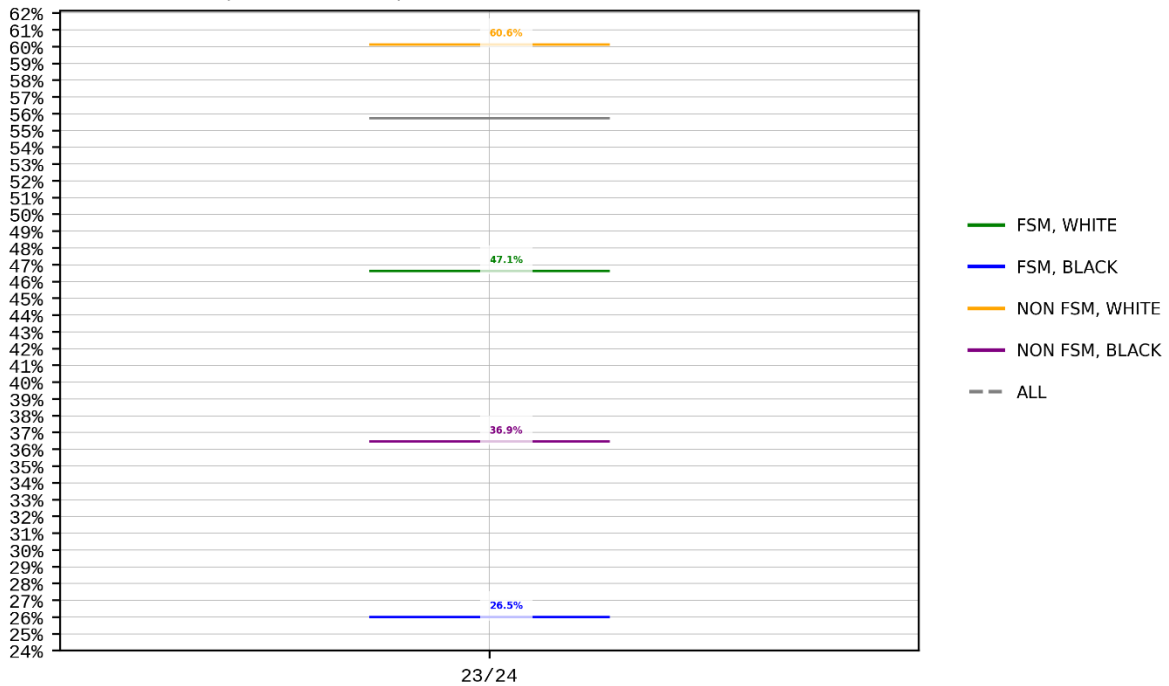


Figure 7b: Met offer rate by applicants' FSM status and ethnicity (White/ Black).

FIRM RESPONSE TO ACCEPTED (MET OFFER) RATE BY APPLICANTS' FREE SCHOOL MEAL STATUS AND ETHNICITY (WHITE VS BLACK)



BASED ON INTERNAL DATA

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Target

We have included a target to increase our intake of Black students. Please see PTA_3.

We identify a variation of Risk 3 – the perception of our provider specifically – as contributing to lower applicant rates from this group to UoB. Despite this, the evidence from the past 3 cycles is that we are successfully increasing the proportion of our applicant pool who identify as Black. We will accelerate this progress, building on successful outreach activity but realigning the focus of programmes such as the Destinations Conference to exclusively engage with students from Black backgrounds.

The met offer rate gap affecting UoB Black applicants aligns with the EORR's finding that this group is more likely to experience Risk 4 (application success rates). We intend to reduce this gap and will pilot new activity in partnership with Causeway education to support improved met offer rates for students from Black backgrounds.

We anticipate these strands of activity will enhance our ability to successfully attract Black applicants to Bristol. However, we recognise that applicant perceptions are shaped in part by student experience. In parallel to our continued ambition to improve access to Bristol for Black applicants, our focus will be on improving the experience and sense of belonging for Black students within our student body. As highlighted in IS7, we will be expanding our Belonging at Bristol outreach programme to encompass transitional activity and belonging events for current Black students.

As an institution we recognise that inequality in global majority students' access to and success in higher education are manifestations of wider structural and social inequities. We are committed to the long-term transformational change required to dismantle systemic, cultural, and individual forms of racism wherever they exist. This goes beyond the interventions committed to in our Access and Participation Plan and includes our institutional anti-racism action plan and the £10m investment in the Reparative Futures programme which aims to tackle racial injustice and

inequalities both within the University itself and in the local communities we work with, over the next 10 years. Work of this nature will take time to demonstrate significant results in addressing racial inequality. We have therefore set our target at a level which we believe to be ambitious but realistic in this wider context.

Age

Intake

Table 8a: UoB percentage intake of students by age.

Split	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
Mature (21 and over)	5.3%	5.7%	5.4%	5.5%	6.0%	4.7%	5.4%
Young (under 21)	94.7%	94.3%	94.6%	94.5%	94.0%	95.3%	94.6%

In 2021, our 4-year average intake was 5.4% compared to a 4-year average of 27.7% for all registered English higher education providers. Our 4-year average is 0.7pp below the equivalent average for all other English Russell Group providers. We have struggled to make consistent progress against our current APP target to increase our intake of mature students to 8% by 2024-25.

Table 8b: UoB 2020-21 to 2024-25 mature APP milestones v achieved.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Yearly milestone set out in APP	6%	6.5%	7%	7.5%
Achieved mature intake	6% (OfS access and participation data)	4.7% (OfS access and participation data)	3.9% (internal admissions data)	5.2% (internal admissions data)

Additional Indications of risk

Table 8c: Proportion of UoB mature applicants.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	4-year avg
Mature (21 and over)	6.4%	5.9%	5.4%	5%	5.7%

Table 8d: UoB access indications of risks by age.

	Offer rate gap		Firm response rate gap		Met offer rate gap	
	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg
Mature (21 and over) verses Young (21 and under)	27.2pp	32.4pp	-15.2pp	-16.1pp	-23.2pp	-15.6pp

Despite reducing the offer rate gap affecting mature applicants by over 10pp in the last four years, we continue to see a significant offer rate gap affecting this group. To explore whether EORR Risk 2 (information and guidance) is linked to low offer rates for this group we examined application reject reasons. Findings suggest that this group is experiencing unequal access to information and guidance regarding admissions requirements.

Relevant intersections

We have examined offer rates by applicants' age and sex. Female mature applicants are less likely than all other identified intersected groups to receive an offer from UoB. We have also examined offer rates by applicants' age and ethnicity. White mature applicants are more likely to receive an offer than mature applicants from Black and Asian backgrounds.

Target

We have included a target to maintain a 5% proportional intake of mature students. Please see PTA_4.

UCAS End of Cycle Data (2023) highlights that across the sector, the number of UK main scheme applications received from applicants aged 21 and above has declined severely since 2021. The number of accepted mature students was down 3.9% across the sector in 2023 compared to 2022. This trend looks set to continue - on the 2nd February 2024, after the UCAS Equal Consideration Deadline, applications made by mature students across the sector were down 5.2% compared to 2023.

Sector data also shows that mature applicants are already much less likely to apply to high tariff providers than medium or low tariff and that mature applications to high tariff providers have fallen since 2021 at roughly the same pace as the rest of the sector. Our access target for mature students recognises that maintaining a 5% proportional intake of mature students against the national backdrop of declining mature applications during a period of increasing selectivity at UoB will be ambitious. We recognise, however, that maintaining positive access rates for mature students will contribute positively to the student experience of current mature students and so we will continue to prioritise mature students as a key target group in our access work.

In addition to assessing admissions data and sector trends relating to declining mature student intakes, we have also reflected on the challenges that our programme portfolio presents in relation to attracting and meeting the needs of prospective mature students. Access to HE's 'Key Statistics 2022-23' highlight that the highest proportion of Access to HE accepted applicants went on to study Nursing and Midwifery (24%), Allied Health (13%), and Health and Social Care (10%) in higher education²⁰. These subject areas are not offered at the University of Bristol with the exception of a small Dental Hygiene and Therapy programme which attracts and enrolls positive numbers of mature students. We recognise therefore that our ability to attract suitably qualified prospective mature students studying the Access to HE pathway, is limited by our context.

We are proud to be part of a small group of Russell Group providers who are maintaining a strategic focus on access levels for mature students. As part of our commitment to mature applicants we have introduced a guaranteed offer policy for suitably qualified Access to HE applicants, and we ensure our Access to HE offers are set at a level equivalent to our contextual offer. This helps to ensure we can attract and support as many of these learners as possible. Our continued investment in our sector-leading Foundation provision will provide appealing alternative pathways for prospective mature students with non-traditional education backgrounds in an extremely competitive undergraduate admissions landscape. We will expand the number of places available on our Cert HE Foundation Programme in Science, Engineering and Maths.

²⁰ "Access to HE: Key statistics 2022-23", [Statistics \(accesstohe.ac.uk\)](https://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/statistics)

Disability

Intake

Table 9a: UoB percentage intake of students by self-reported disability status.

Split	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
Disability reported	11.0%	11.3%	12.6%	14%	13.8%	19.7%	15.2%
No disability reported	89.0	88.7	87.4	86.0	86.2	80.3	84.8

In 2021, our 4-year average intake of students reporting a disability was 15.2% compared to a 4-year average of 16.7% for all registered English higher education providers. Our 4-year average is 0.4pp below the equivalent average for all other English Russell Group providers. There was a particularly sharp uptick of entrants declaring a disability in 2021-22 at UoB, evidenced by a 5.9pp increase on 2020-21. Our 2021 intake of students declaring a disability was 1.8pp above the equivalent for all registered English higher education providers.

Table 9b: UoB percentage intake of students by self-reported disability type.

Declared disability	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Cognitive or learning difficulties	5.2%	5.7%	5.4%	6.0%	5.5%	6.8%
Mental health condition	2.4%	2.4%	3.4%	4.0%	4.3%	7.5%
Multiple impairments	1.6%	1.8%	2.1%	2.5%	2.2%	3.0%
Sensory, medical, or physical impairment	1.4%	1.1%	1.3%	1.1%	1.2%	1.8%
Social or communication impairment	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%	0.7%
No disability reported	89.0%	88.7%	87.4%	86.0%	86.2%	80.3%

Between 2016-17 and 2020-21, the cognitive or learning difficulties disability type was the largest grouping at UoB. In 2021-22 we saw a sharp increase in intake from students declaring a mental health condition, with this grouping consequently overtaking all groups. Between 2020-21 and 2021-22, entrants declaring a mental health condition increased by 74%.

Indications of risk

In line with national trends, the proportion of UoB applicants self-reporting a disability has increased significantly in the last four years.

Table 9c: Proportion of applicants self-reporting a disability.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	4-year avg
Disability reported	11.6%	12.2%	15.1%	19.6%	14.6%

Table 9d: UoB access indications of risks by disability status.

	Offer rate gap		Firm response rate gap		Met offer rate gap	
	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg	2023-24	4-year avg
Disability reported v no disability	-1.2pp	-0.3pp	-2.2pp	-4.9pp	2.8pp	-0.6pp

Offer rate and firm response rate trends are in favour of applicants with a reported disability. There is also a less meaningful met offer rate gap affecting students reporting a disability verses students with no disability. We have not included an access target related to disability.

Association Between Characteristics (ABCS)

We have used the Association Between Characteristics (ABCS) measure to benchmark our access performance against the sector. At UoB, the absolute gap in 2021-22 between Q5 and Q1 was 34.4pp. This compares to 27.8pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Our targets which aim to increase enrolments from FSM eligible students, IMD Q1 students, and Black students should support further reduce the access gap between ABCS Q5: Q1 entrants. Please see PTA_1, PTA_2, and PTA_3.

Continuation

Approach

We have benchmarked our continuation performance for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups against the performance of 'All registered English higher education providers' by comparing our 4-year average with the sector 4-year average.²¹

Socio-economically disadvantaged groups

a. Students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
FSM eligible	96.6%	96.4%	95.2%	94.7%	96.8%	95.6%	95.7%
Not FSM eligible	97.9%	97.9%	96.9%	97.4%	98.5%	97.4%	97.6%

Our data shows a very small gap between continuation rates of students eligible for Free School Meals over the years and those who are not eligible, with the two groups consistently around 2pp apart, with the largest gap 2.7pp in 2018 and a gap of 1.8pp in the most recent year. The number of students eligible for Free School Meals has more than doubled from 119 in 2015 to 251 in 2020. However, the group is still small and little statistical significance arises. Our 4-year average continuation gap between students eligible for Free School Meals and those who were not eligible was 1.9pp compared to a 4-year average of 5pp for all registered English higher education providers.

b. Students from socio-economically deprived areas (IMD2019)

	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21

²¹ 'All registered English higher education providers' is a provider group included in the OfS access and participation data dashboard.

IMD Q1 and Q2	97.2%	95.7%	95.4%	95.1%	97.4%	95.4%
IMD Q3, Q4 and Q5	97.6%	98.0%	97.0%	97.9%	98.2%	97.2%

The number of students from IMD Q1 and Q2 has nearly doubled in the last six years, from 561 in 2015-16 to 1010 in 2020-21. When combined, there is a small gap in continuation rates between Q1 and Q2, compared to Q3, Q4, and Q5, with students from Q1 and Q2 slightly less likely to complete their first year. The largest gap was in 2018-19 at 2.8pp but narrowed to 1.8pp in the most recent year.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
IMD Q1	96.1%	93.7%	92.2%	94.1%	97.3%	94.8%	94.8%
IMD Q2	97.6%	96.5%	96.9%	95.5%	97.5%	95.7%	96.3%
IMD Q3	97.1%	97.5%	96.6%	97.6%	98.2%	96.6%	96.6%
IMD Q4	97.3%	97.7%	97%	97.8%	98.1%	96.7%	96.7%
IMD Q5	98.1%	98.4%	97.2%	98.2%	98.4%	97.9%	97.9%

Although gaps are very small when quintiles are combined, students from Q1 consistently perform the lowest, and Q5 consistently the highest. The largest gap between these two groups was 4.7pp in 2016-17, although this slowly decreases to 1.1pp in 2019-20. However, the most recent year of data in 2020-21 showed a gap of 3.1pp. Our 4-year average continuation gap between Q1 and Q5 was 3.1pp compared to a 4-year average of 8pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Low progression to higher education

a. TUNDRA

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
TUNDRA Q1	96.1%	95.8%	94.0%	95.1%	98.4%	96.1%	96%
TUNDRA Q2	96.8%	97.2%	97.0%	96.4%	97.5%	97.4%	97.1%
TUNDRA Q3	96.9%	98.4%	98.4%	97.5%	98.6%	96.4%	97.6%
TUNDRA Q4	98.0%	98.0%	96.9%	98.1%	98.2%	97.8%	97.8%
TUNDRA Q5	99.0%	98.6%	97.2%	98.3%	98.7%	97.9%	99%

The data shows that TUNDRA Q1 students have consistently lower continuation rates than Q5 students. The largest gap was in 2017-18 and 2018.19 at 3.2pp. The smallest gap was 0.3pp in 2019-20. The gap in the most recent year of data stood at 1.8pp. Our 4-year average continuation

gap between Q1 and Q5 was 3pp compared to a 4-year average of 3.4pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Ethnicity

	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
Asian	98.4%	98.6%	96.8%	97.2%	98.1%	97.6%	97.5%
Black	[DPH]	96.3%	96.1%	95.1%	97.7%	95.3%	96%
Mixed	[DPH]	95.4%	98.1%	98.2%	97.1%	98.1%	97.9%
Other	[DPH]	[DPH]	[DPH]	[DPH]	[DPH]	95.9%	97.9%
White	97.3%	97.7%	96.7%	97.4%	98.1%	96.8%	97.2%

Continuation rates for different ethnic groups are similar and gaps are very small. Black students appear to have the lowest continuation rates with the latest year of data showing a 95.3% continuation rate and a 96% four-year average continuation rate. However, this means a continuation rate gap of only 1.5pp between Black and white students for 2020-21, and a 1.2pp 4-year average gap compared to a 4-year average of 5.4pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Age

	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
Mature (21 and over)	89.3%	88.8%	90.8%	94.0%	94.2%	89.1%	91.9%
Young (under 21)	98.0%	98.1%	97.2%	97.6%	98.3%	97.4%	97.6%

A comparison between mature students and those under 21 shows a gap in continuation rates between the groups, with lower continuation rates for mature students in all years. Mature student continuation rates have been improving since 2016-17 with an overall narrowing of the gap from 8.7pp difference in 2015 to 4.1pp in 2019. The gap increased to 8.3pp in 2020. Disabled mature students and male mature students appear to have been particularly affected by this drop-in continuation rates. However, our internal continuation data suggests this is a one-year anomaly and the mature continuation gap will narrow again in 2022/23. Our 4-year average continuation gap between mature students and young students was 5.7pp compared to a 4-year average of 8.7pp for all registered English higher education providers.

There is virtually no difference in continuation rates between young global majority students and young white students. However, both white and global majority mature students are less likely to complete their degree than young students, and white mature students have the lowest completion rates in five out of the six most recent years, although it should be noted that the number of mature global majority students is very small.

We have not included a target to improve continuation rates for mature students. Instead, we have included a target to address completion rates, recognising that mature students can have a less straightforward journey through their degree. By focusing on completion we anticipate a wider impact on positive outcomes for this group of students overall.

Disability

	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
Disability reported	96%	95.4%	95.7%	95.2%	96.2%	93.8%	95.2%
No disability reported	97.7%	97.8%	96.9%	97.7%	98.4%	97.3%	97.6%

A comparison between disabled and non-disabled students shows a five-year trend of slightly lower continuation rates for students with a disability. This gap has remained at roughly 2pp in previous years, although the difference increased in 2020 to 3.5pp. There has also been an increase in students declaring a disability each year (580 in 2018, 679 in 2019, and 745 in 2020).

Our 4-year average continuation gap between reporting a disability and those with no disability was 2.4pp compared to a 4-year average of 0.8pp for all registered English higher education providers.

The number of students with mental health conditions has increased steadily over the last five years and they are now the second largest group of disabled students at the University of Bristol. Continuation rates for students with a mental health condition are lower compared to students who do not declare a disability, albeit with some fluctuation. The largest gap is 8.8pp in 2018, with the smallest gap 2.4pp in 2017. This gap stands at 5.6pp in the latest year of data.

We have not included a target to improve continuation rates for students who declare a mental health condition. Instead, we have included a target to address completion rates, recognising that this group of students can have a less straightforward journey through their degree due to the impact of their mental health conditions, and that supportive periods of suspension may be beneficial to their mental health and overall success. By focusing on completion we anticipate a wider impact on positive outcomes for this group of students overall.

Association Between Characteristics (ABCS)

We have used the Association Between Characteristics (ABCS) measure to benchmark our performance against the sector. At UoB, the absolute continuation gap in 2020-21 between Q5 and Q1 was 7.5pp. This compares to 14.8pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Completion

Approach

We have benchmarked our completion performance for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups against the performance of 'All registered English higher education providers' by comparing our 4-year average with the sector 4-year average.²²

Socio-economically disadvantaged groups

a. Students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	4-year avg
FSM eligible	[DPH]	95.7%	92.9%	93%	97%	92%	93.7%

²² 'All registered English higher education providers' is a provider group included in the OfS access and participation data dashboard.

Not FSM eligible	97.4%	97.4%	96.8%	97.3%	98.2%	97.3%	97.4%
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There has been a steady increase in the number of students eligible for Free School Meals starting at the University over the last 6 years, from 66 in 2012 to 162 in 2017. In all years where data is reported for both groups, there is a gap in favour those not eligible. However, the gap is very small in 2015-16 and 2016-17. The gap widened again in 2017-18 and we will continue to monitor this to see whether this wider gap persists. Our 4-year average completion gap between students eligible for Free School Meals and those who were not eligible was 3.7pp compared to a 4-year average of 7.8pp for all registered English higher education providers.

b. Students from socio-economically deprived areas (IMD2019)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
IMD Q1 and Q2	92.6%	94.4%	92.9%	95.5%	96.3%	95.6%
IMD Q3, Q4 and Q5	97.1%	96.9%	96.9%	97.0%	97.3%	96.3%

The number of students from IMD Q1 and Q2 has steadily increased in the last six years, from 439 in 2012-13 to 701 in 2017-18. When combined, there is a gap between Q1 and Q2, compared to Q3, Q4, and Q5, with students from Q1 and Q2 less likely to complete their degree. The largest gap was in 2012-13 at 4.5pp, although this has narrowed in the last three years and in the most recent year of data, 2017-18, was 0.7pp.

In 2012/13 there was a completion gap of 6.1pp between male students from Q1 and Q2 who had the lowest completion rates compared with female students from Q3, Q4 and Q5 who had the highest. This had narrowed to 1.5pp by 2017/18 when completion rates by IMD and sex were converging.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	4-year avg
IMD Q1	89.5%	91.3%	89.4%	93.8%	92.8%	93%	92.3%
IMD Q2	93.7%	95.7%	94.5%	96.2%	97.6%	96.8%	96.4%
IMD Q3	95.2%	95.9%	96.7%	95.8%	96.2%	94.5%	95.8%
IMD Q4	97.3%	96.3%	96.9%	96.5%	97.5%	97.2%	97.1%
IMD Q5	97.9%	97.8%	96.9%	97.9%	97.7%	96.6%	97.3%

When comparing all quintiles, students from IMD Q1 consistently perform the lowest, and Q5 consistently the highest. The largest gap was in 2012 at 8.4pp, and the smallest gap was the most recent year of data, at 3.6pp. The gap has not been statistically significant for the last three years. Our 4-year average completion gap between Q1 students and Q5 was 5pp compared to a 4-year average of 10.5pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Low progression to higher education

a. TUNDRA

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
TUNDRA Q1	96.1%	96.2%	93.8%	95.5%	96.3%	92.1%	94.2%
TUNDRA Q2	94.4%	98.4%	96.0%	95.5%	96.3%	96.6%	96.1%
TUNDRA Q3	96.5%	95.9%	96.9%	96.8%	98.5%	98.0%	97.5%
TUNDRA Q4	97.2%	97.4%	97.4%	97.8%	97.7%	97.3%	97.5%
TUNDRA Q5	98.2%	97.4%	97.5%	98.0%	98.4%	97.6%	97.9%

There has been a consistent but small gap between TUNDRA Q1 and Q5 over the last six years. Although this gap has not obviously been increasing or narrowing, the last year of data in 2020-21 showed a 5.5pp gap, with Q1 students less likely to complete their degree. Our 4-year average completion gap between Q1 students and Q5 was 3.7pp compared to a 4-year average of 4.8pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Ethnicity

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	4-year avg
Asian	98%	[DPH]	96.2%	97.9%	98.1%	96.7%	97.2%
Black	[DPH]	[DPH]	93.5%	92.5%	[DPH]	96.9%	95.4%
Mixed	97.3%	95.3%	96.9%	98.1%	95.7%	93.3%	95.9%
Other	[DPH]	[DPH]	[DPH]	[DPH]	[DPH]	95.2%	97.6%
White	96.5%	96.7%	96.3%	96.7%	97.2%	96.4%	96.6%

Overall, completion rates for students from different ethnic groups have remained relatively similar since 2012, with most groups close to overall completion rates for that year. When comparing Black students with their White counterparts, the data show slightly lower completion rates for Black students (for example a gap of 2.8pp in 2013 and 2014, and 4.1pp in 2015). However, none of these gaps were statistically significant, due to the small numbers of Black students, and the data has shown higher completion rates for Black students compared to White students in 2016 and 2017. Black students have the lowest 4-year average completion rate but the gap between Black and white students is still small at 1.2pp compared to a 4-year average of 7.6pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Age

Mature students	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	4-year avg

Mature (21 and over)	82.1%	86.4%	85.1%	85.8%	84.5%	81.5%	84.2%
Young (under 21)	97.3%	97.3%	97.0%	97.4%	97.8%	97.1%	97.3%

There is a clear disparity in degree completion rates between mature students and those under the age of 21, with mature students less likely to complete their degree. This gap was 10.8pp in 2013 and has widened each year since, showing as 15.6pp in 2017. This gap is significant across all years – the relatively large sample sizes, and large gap in completion rates, allows us to conclude with certainty that age is associated with lower degree completion rates. Our 4-year average completion gap between mature students and young students was 13.1pp compared to a 4-year average of 9.8pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Relevant intersections

Mature students who are also disabled have had lower rates of degree completion than mature students with no disability however this gap closed in 2017-18 when degree completion for these groups converged. However, the gap in completion rates between disabled mature students and disabled young students was 14.4pp in 2017/18, and 15.9pp between disabled mature students and non-disabled young students in the same year. Examination of our internal data shows that mature students (13.1%) are almost twice as likely as young students (7.3%) to declare a mental health condition.

There is virtually no difference in completion rates between young global majority students and young white students. However, both white and global majority mature students are less likely to complete their degree than young students. White mature students had previously had the lowest completion rate but this converged completion rates for mature global majority students in 2017/18.

Target

We have included a target to narrow the gap in completion rates between mature students and young students. Please see PTS_2.

Disability

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	4-year avg
Disability reported	95.0%	94.6%	92.4%	93.6%	94.6%	93.6%	93.6%
No disability reported	96.8%	96.9%	96.7%	97.1%	97.4%	96.5%	96.9%

Students who declare a disability are slightly less likely to complete their degree than students without a disability. The number of students declaring a disability has increased each year, meaning that while the gap is small, it is statistically significant. The largest gap was 4.3pp points in 2014 and, although this has since decreased with the most recent year of data showing a small gap of 2.9pp. Our 4-year average continuation gap between disabled students and those with no disability was 3.3pp compared to a 4-year average of 2.2pp for all registered English higher education providers.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	4-year avg
Cognitive or learning difficulties	98.1%	98.1%	94.2%	96.1%	97.3%	95.3%	95.7%

Mental health condition	[low]*	[DPH]	83%	82.8%	90.7%	87.3%	86.8%
Multiple impairments	93.1%	88.6%	92.0%	93.2%	92.6%	94.8%	93.3%
No disability reported	96.8%	96.9%	96.7%	97.1%	97.4%	96.5%	96.9%
Sensory, medical or physical impairment	[DPH]	82.9%	92.3%	92.9%	93.2%	93.8%	93%
Social or communication impairment	[low]	[low]	[low]	[low]	[low]	[low]	[DPH]

*Low numbers so not reported, in line with OfS reporting protocols.

Disaggregating by disability type shows notably lower completion rates for students with a mental health condition. The largest difference for this group is 21.8pp in 2012 although the number of students in that graduating cohort who declared a mental health condition was extremely small. This narrowed to 5pp in 2013 but had not continued decreasing over time and is statistically significant. The most recent year of data in 2017/18 shows a 9.1pp gap. It is worth noting that number of students with a declared mental health condition is relatively low although it has increased fivefold between 2012 and 2017 and has continued to increase since, however the base years are the students' entry years. The gap in the most recent year of data stood at 1.8pp. Our 4-year average completion gap between students who declare a mental health condition and those with no disability was 10.1pp compared to a 4-year average of 5.3pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Numbers of students with multiple impairments and sensory, medical or physical impairments also have lower rates of completion, but gaps are smaller, and the group sizes are too small to be significant.

Target

We have included a target to narrow the gap in completion rates between students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability. Please see PTS_1.

Association Between Characteristics (ABCS)

We have used the Association Between Characteristics (ABCS) measure to benchmark our performance against the sector. At UoB, the absolute completion gap in 2017-18 between Q5 and Q1 was 18.3pp. This compares to 23.7pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Attainment

Approach

We have benchmarked our attainment performance for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups against the performance of 'All registered English higher education providers' by comparing our 4-year average with the sector 4-year average.²³ For groups with the greatest attainment gaps we have also explored the correlation of tariff entry points with degree attainment as an additional indicator of risk.

²³ 'All registered English higher education providers' is a provider group included in the OfS access and participation data dashboard.

Socio-economically disadvantaged groups

a. Students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

	2016/17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
FSM eligible	78.9%	92.4%	85.6%	89.5%	85.8%	83.9%	85.9%
Not FSM eligible	92.2%	92.9%	93.4%	95.0%	95.4%	92.4%	93.9%

There is a persistent gap affecting those who were eligible for Free School Meals standing at 8.5pp in most recent year. This has been statistically significant for the last two years. The gap narrowed to only 1pp in 2017-18 but widened again from 2018-19 onwards. Our 4-year average attainment gap between students eligible for Free School Meals and those who were not eligible was 8.2pp compared to a 4-year average of 11.6pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Male students who were eligible for Free School Meals have lower rates of attaining a good degree in five out of the last six years, while female students who were not eligible for Free School Meals have the highest rate in five out of the last six years. Group sizes for those eligible for Free School Meals are relatively small, limiting the validity of the data. However, the gap between male eligible students and male non-eligible students was 11.1pp in 2021/22. Between female eligible and male eligible students the gap was 9.5pp in the same year, in favour of female eligible students.

Target: We have not included a target relating to degree attainment for Free School Meals eligible students. Economic status is a key aspect of IMD, so we have included a target to address degree attainment rates between IMD Q1 students and IMD Q5 students instead, expecting this to have a broader impact on students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

b. Students from socio-economically deprived areas (IMD2019)

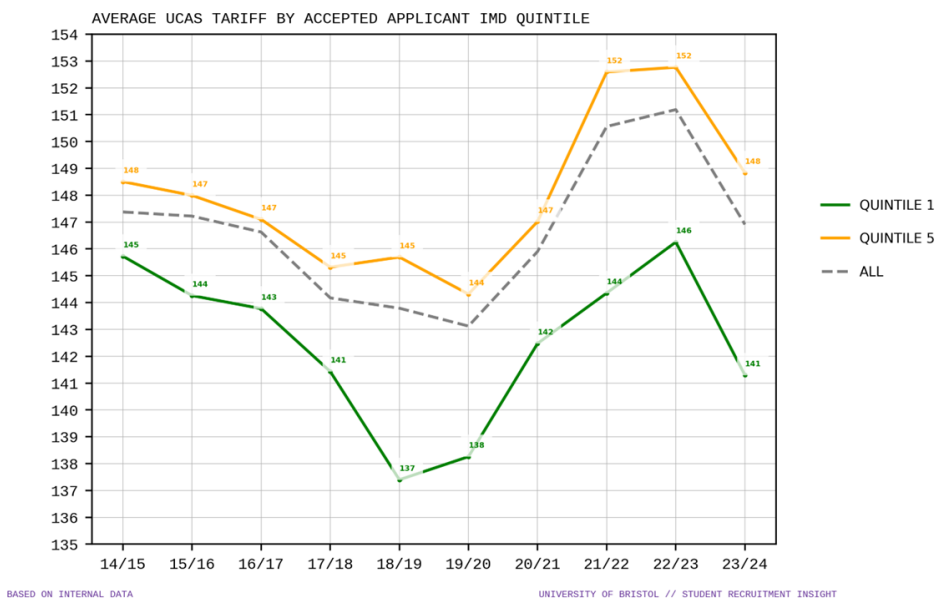
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
IMD Q1	76.4%	87.1%	85.7%	90.3%	87.9%	79.7%	85.6%
IMD Q2	90.5%	90.9%	87.8%	90.7%	94.2%	92.4%	91.5%
IMD Q3	92.6%	91.1%	92.2%	94.2%	93.6%	92.9%	93.2%
IMD Q4	92.4%	92.6%	93.2%	96.1%	96.2%	93.1%	94.7%
IMD Q5	93.3%	93.5%	94.4%	95.4%	95.9%	93.3%	94.8%
Gap between IMD Q1 & Q5	16.9pp	6.4pp	8.7pp	5.1pp	8pp	13.6pp	9.2pp

Students from IMD Q1 have had the lowest attainment rate in each of the last five years, while students from Q5 have had the highest attainment rate over the same period, other than in 2019/20 when Q4 students' attainment was higher than Q5 by 0.5pp. The gap affecting Q1 is statistically significant. Good progress was made in improving Q1 attainment rates between 2016-2020, closing the gap between Q1 and Q2 in 2019/20. Attainment rates fell for all IMD quintiles in 2021/22 but the greatest drop was 8.2pp for Q1 students between 2020/21 and 2021/22. The gap between Q1 and Q5 students stood at 13.6pp in favour of Q5 in 2021/22. The gap between Q1&2

combined and Q3-5 was 4.6pp in 2021/22. Similar to the pattern observed with Free School Meal eligibility, male students from Q1&2 are least likely to graduate with a first or 2:1 and female students from Q3&5 are most likely. The gap between these groups was 12pp in 2021/22.

Our 4-year average attainment gap between students from Q1 and students from Q5 was 9.2pp compared to a 4-year average of 16.9pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Additional Indications of Risk



Students from IMD Q1 consistently have lower average entry tariff points than Q5, with Q5 entry tariff consistently above the average for the cohort. The difference between Q1 and Q5 was 7 tariff points on average in 2023/24. When average tariff points and IMD quintile are mapped against degree attainment there is a correlation of entry tariff with degree attainment, with higher entry tariff generally being associated with higher attainment, although most students still get good outcomes.

IMD Q1 students still have lower attainment than other quintiles even when the entry tariff points are the same, suggesting that entry tariff is not the sole factor affecting attainment, and that socio-economic status and other aspects of students’ experience are also relevant. Notably this pattern changes at the highest entry tariff where Q1 students with 168 tariff points on entry slightly outperform Q5 students. However, numbers are small so limited conclusions can be drawn from that data point alone.

Target

We have included a target to narrow the gap in degree attainment rates between IMDQ1 students and IMDQ5 students. Please see PTS_4.

Low progression to higher education

a. TUNDRA

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
TUNDRA Q1	92.7%	89.2%	93.7%	92.7%	93.6%	89.1%	92%
TUNDRA Q2	92%	91.8%	91.9%	95.6%	93.5%	92.7%	93.4%

TUNDRA Q3	89.7%	92.9%	93.4%	93.5%	95.1%	90.9%	93.2%
TUNDRA Q4	93.3%	92.7%	93%	94.6%	95.5%	93.6%	94.2%
TUNDRA Q5	92.8%	93.4%	93.3%	95.7%	95.7%	93.7%	94.6%
Gap between Q1 and Q5	0.1pp	4.2pp	-0.4pp	3pp	2.1pp	4.6pp	2.6pp

There was a gap between TUNDRA Q1 and Q5 in favour of Q5 in 4 out of 6 most recent years. Attainment rates fell for all TUNDRA quintiles in 2021/22 but the greatest drop was for Q1 students. The gap between Q1 and Q5 students stood at 4.6pp in favour of Q5 in 2021/22.

Our 4-year average attainment gap between students from Q1 and students from Q5 was 2.6pp compared to a 4-year average of 5.8pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Ethnicity

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Asian	84.7%	81.6%	85.9%	89.2%	90.2%	82.6%
Black	65.9%	85.5%	75.8%	89.0%	83.8%	86.7%
Mixed	88.0%	90.6%	89.5%	91.9%	94.3%	87.9%
Other	83.3%	85.4%	85.4%	87.2%	91.2%	83.3%
White	93.1%	93.2%	93.8%	95.2%	95.4%	93.4%

White students consistently have the highest rate of attaining good degrees over the last six years compared to all other ethnic groups. Mixed heritage students consistently have the next highest rate of attainment of good degrees over the last six years. Gaps affecting Asian and mixed heritage groups were statistically significant in the most recent year whilst Black and 'other' groups were too small for the gaps to be of statistical significance. Overall, Asian and 'other' ethnic groups attainment was improving until the most recent year, albeit with some small fluctuations. Whilst the trendline for Black students' attainment of good degrees shows an overall improvement over the last six years, this group had the lowest attainment rates in three years out of six, and have the lowest attainment in both two-year and four-year aggregated data. All ethnic groups other than Black students saw a drop in attainment rates in 2021-22 while Black students' attainment increased by 2.9pp in that year.

Comparing the awards made to white students with those from other ethnic groups shows the following gaps:

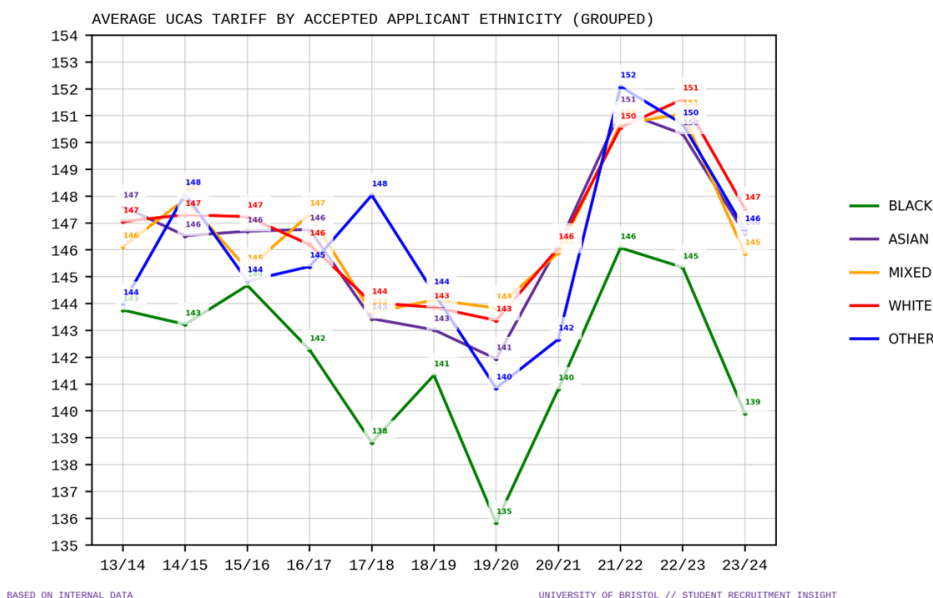
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
Asian compared with white	8.4pp	11.5pp	7.9pp	6pp	5.1pp	10.8pp	7.6pp
Black compared with white	27.2pp	7.7pp	18pp	6.1pp	11.6pp	6.7pp	10.3pp
Mixed heritage compared with white	5.1pp	2.5pp	4.3pp	3.3pp	1.1pp	5.5pp	3.6pp

Other ethnicities compared with white	9.7pp	7.8pp	8.4pp	7.9pp	4.2pp	10pp	8.2pp
Aggregated data: white compared with all ethnicities other than white.	8.9pp	7.1pp	7.8pp	5.1pp	4.3pp	8.1pp	6.4pp

Our 4-year average attainment gap between Asian and white students was 7.6pp compared to a 4-year average of 8.6pp for all registered English higher education providers. Our 4-year average attainment gap between Black and white students was 10.3pp compared to a 4-year average of 20.2pp for all registered English higher education providers. For mixed heritage students the 4-year average attainment gap was 3.6pp compared to a 4-year average of 3.8pp for all registered English higher education providers, and for other ethnicities this stood at 6.4pp compared to a 4-year average of 11.1pp for all registered English higher education providers. When data is aggregated, the 4-year average gap between white students and all ethnicities other than white was 6.4pp compared to a 4-year average of 11.3pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Students from minority ethnic groups who were also eligible for Free School Meals are less likely to graduate with a first or a 2:1 than students from minority ethnic groups who were not eligible for Free School Meals or white students who were eligible for Free School Meals. The gap between white students who were not eligible for Free School Meals and non-white students who were eligible stands at 15.6pp in 2021/22.

Additional Indicators of Risk



On average Black students enter the University with lower tariff points than other ethnic groups, although there is some variation in the size of the difference. The difference between the average tariff points for Black and white students was 8 points in 2023/24. When average entry tariff points and ethnicity are mapped against degree attainment there is a correlation between entry tariff and degree attainment, with higher entry tariff generally being associated with higher attainment. However, global majority students still have lower attainment than white students even when the entry tariff points are the same, and Black students have lower attainment for their entry tariff than other global majority groups. This suggests that entry tariff is not the sole factor affecting attainment, and that other aspects of students' experiences are also contributing which is in line with the findings of our internal research (see Annex B).

Target

We have included a target to narrow the gap in degree attainment rates between global majority students and white students. Please see PTS_5.

Age

	2016/17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
Mature (21 and over)	83.6%	79.4%	79.8%	86.6%	87.7%	81.7%	8.39%
Young (under 21)	92.3%	92.6%	93%	94.7%	94.9%	92.3%	93.7%

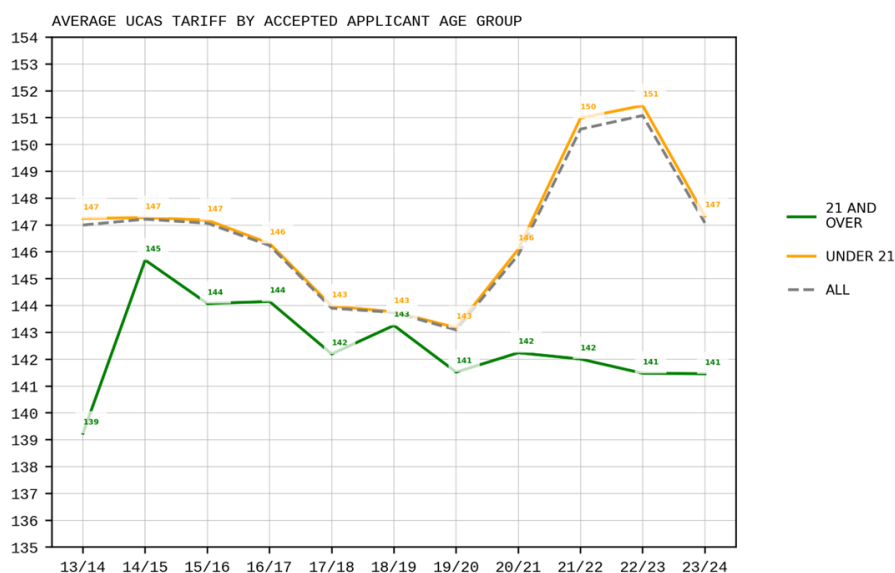
Attainment rates for mature students have been consistently lower for mature students over the last six years, with the gap being consistently statistically significant. Mature students' attainment rates improved between 2017 and 2021, narrowing the gap to 7.2pp in 2020-21. While attainment rates fell for both young and mature students in 2021-22, the drop was greater for mature students meaning that the gap increased to 10.6pp in 2021-22.

Mature students from global majority backgrounds who are aged 21 or over consistently have the lowest degree attainment, and white students aged under 21 have the highest degree attainment. The gap in attainment rates between these two groups stood at 24.4pp in 2021/22. The gap between white mature students and global majority mature students attaining a good degree stood at 14.3pp in the same year. Mature student numbers are low with only 24 global majority mature students in that graduating cohort which does affect the level of fluctuation in the data.

Male mature students make up around half of the graduating cohort of mature students each year but are less likely to attain a good degree than either female mature students or young students. The gap between male and female mature students attaining a first or 2:1 was 5pp in 2021/22. The gap between male mature students and male young students was 10.3pp in the same year.

Our 4-year average attainment gap between mature students and young students was 9.8pp compared to a 4-year average of 10.2pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Additional Indications of Risk



Mature students consistently have lower entry tariff points than young students. The difference between mature and young students was 6 tariff points on average in 2023/24. It is likely that this is, at least to some extent, affected by the proportion of mature students entering with Access qualifications which generally have a maximum tariff score of 144²⁴. When average tariff points and mature status are mapped against degree attainment there is a correlation of entry tariff with degree attainment, with higher entry tariff associated with higher attainment. However, mature students still have notably lower attainment than young students even when the entry tariff points are the same, suggesting that entry tariff is a factor, but not the sole factor affecting attainment.

Target

We have included a target to narrow the gap in degree attainment rates between mature students and young students. Please see PTS_3.

Disability

The number of disabled students graduating from the University has almost doubled over the last five years. A comparison between disabled and non-disabled students shows a trend of slightly higher attainment rates for students who did not declare a disability, although disabled students slightly outperformed non-disabled students in 2018/19. The gap in the most recent year is 3.2pp in favour of students who did not declare a disability. While small, this gap was statistically significant in the most recent year of data, but not in the previous year. Our 4-year average attainment gap between disabled students and students with no disability was 1.9pp compared to a 4-year average of 1pp for all registered English higher education providers.

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	4-year avg
Cognitive or learning difficulties	92.0%	89.0%	92.9%	91.5%	92.6%	91.3%	92.1%
Mental health condition	82.6%	86.8%	95.1%	90.1%	94.5%	88.5%	91.5%
Multiple impairments	89.4%	88.4%	91.7%	94%	94.2%	85.1%	90.6%
No disability reported	92.2%	92.6%	92.5%	94.8%	94.9%	92.5%	93.7%

²⁴ UCAS Tariff - Gateway Qualifications

Sensory, medical or physical impairment	94.1%	89.2%	94.4%	92.2%	93.1%	91.4%	92.7%
Social or communication impairment	[low]*	[low]	[low]	[low]	[low]	[low]	88.3%

*Less than 23 students in the denominator so not reported, in line with OfS reporting.

Students with cognitive and learning difficulties are the largest group of disabled students at the University of Bristol. Their attainment rates are broadly in line with students with no disability, with a very small gap in favour of non-disabled students in most years. The gap between this group and students who did not declare a disability stood at 1.2pp in 2021/22.

The number of students with mental health conditions has increased steadily over the last five years and they are now the second largest group of disabled students at the University of Bristol. Comparing students who declare a mental health condition with those with no disability over the last five years shows some fluctuation. In 2018-19 students with mental health conditions had higher overall attainment than those with no disability, and in 2020/21 the gap was only 0.3pp in favour of students who did not declare a disability. In the other three years the gap was in favour of students with no disability, standing at 4pp in 2021/22. Overall, the data suggests that attainment rates are converging, albeit with some fluctuation.

Students with sensory, medical and physical disabilities or multiple impairments are relatively small groups with attainment rates broadly in line with the aggregated disability data. There is a gap of only 1.1pp affecting students with sensory, medical and physical disabilities. There is a gap of 7.4pp affecting students who declare multiple impairments in the 2021-22 data, however numbers are small and in the previous three years attainment for this group has been broadly in line with students with no disability. Our 4-year average attainment gap between students with multiple impairments and students with no disability was 3.1pp compared to a 4-year average of 0.2pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Numbers of graduating students with social or communication impairments are extremely small leading to considerable volatility in the data and are not reported here, in line with OfS data protocols. Our 4-year average attainment gap between students with social or communication impairments and students with no disability was 5.4pp compared to a 4-year average of 5.2pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Progression

Approach

We have benchmarked our progression performance for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups against the performance of 'All registered English higher education providers' by comparing our 4-year average with the sector 4-year average.²⁵

Socio-economically disadvantaged groups

a. Students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
FSM eligible	84.4%	75.2%	70%	80.1%	77.1%

²⁵ 'All registered English higher education providers' is a provider group included in the OfS access and participation data dashboard.

Not FSM eligible	80.8%	78.3%	81.9%	83.4%	81.2%
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There is a small gap in progression rates between students who were eligible for Free School Meals at KS4 and those who weren't, although this is not consistent and has not been statistically significant in the last three years. For the 2017/18 cohort, the gap was 3.6pp in favour of those who were eligible for Free School Meals. Progression rates for that group dropped to a low of 70% for the 2019/20 cohort before improving again. In 2020/21 the progression rate for those eligible for Free School Meals improved and stood at 80.1% narrowing the gap to 3.3pp in favour of those not eligible for Free School Meals.

Relevant intersections

Free School Meal eligibility and sex	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
FSM eligible female	82.9%	73%	75.2%	80.8%
FSM eligible male	86.8%	80%	63.5%	79.1%
Not FSM eligible female	79.4%	77.1%	81.7%	80.5%
Not FSM eligible male	82.6%	80.1%	82%	87%

In the most recent year of data there is a gap of 6.1pp between male students who were eligible for Free School Meals and male students who were not eligible. This gap does not exist between female eligible and non-eligible students and progression rates are converging.

Free School Meal eligibility and ethnicity	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
FSM eligible non-white	86.8%	76.5%	76.3%	81.1%
FSM eligible white	82.9%	74.2%	64.4%	78.6%
Not FSM eligible non-white	86.6%	83%	81.4%	84.3%
Not FSM eligible white	79.7%	77.5%	81.9%	83.2%

Global majority students who were not eligible for Free School Meals have the highest progression rates in three out of four years, with a gap of only 0.5pp in favour of white non-eligible students in 2019-20. White students who were eligible for Free School Meals saw a notable drop in progression in 2019-20 when a gap of 17.5pp opened up between eligible and non-eligible white students and of 11.9pp between white and non-white students who were eligible for Free School Meals. However, rates appear to be converging again in 2020/21, although small gaps remain between white students who were eligible for free school meals and other groups.

When Free School Meal eligibility is combined with both sex and ethnicity data the group sizes become extremely small, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn. The data does suggest that white male students who were eligible for Free School Meals experienced the lowest progression outcomes in 2019/20, although this appears to be converging with other groups in 2020/21.

b. Students from socio-economically deprived areas (IMD2019)

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21

IMD Q1 and Q2	78.4%	78%	81%	80.8%
IMD Q3, Q4 and Q5	81.7%	77.7%	82%	83.4%

There is a very small gap of 2.6pp in favour of Q3-5 in 2020/21. In 2018/19 this was 0.3pp in favour of Q1-2. When broken down further there is no significant difference between Q1 and Q5 and no statistical significance.

Our 4-year average progression gap between students from Q1 and students from Q5 was 0.7pp in favour of Q1 compared to a 4-year average of 10.3pp in favour of Q5 for all registered English higher education providers.

Low progression to higher education

a. TUNDRA

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
TUNDRA Q1	77.9%	79%	80.8%	84%	80.8%
TUNDRA Q2	81.5%	79.5%	75.7%	83.1%	79.8%
TUNDRA Q3	81.8%	75.9%	82%	85.4%	81.3%
TUNDRA Q4	79.9%	76.3%	82.4%	84%	80.7%
TUNDRA Q5	82%	78.4%	83.3%	82%	81.4%

Q1 and Q4 have identical progression rates in 2020/21. Q5 has the lowest rate in that year and Q3 the highest. The gap between Q5 and Q3 is 3.4pp, and the gap between Q1 and Q5 is 2pp in favour of Q1.

Our 4-year average progression gap between students from Q1 and students from Q5 was 0.5pp compared to a 4-year average of 6.5pp in favour of Q5 for all registered English higher education providers.

Ethnicity

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
Asian	88.2%	87.5%	83.2%	82.8%	85.3%
Black	89.8%	84%	81.2%	80.2%	83.3%
Mixed	81.1%	74.4%	83.1%	84.2%	80.8%
Other	88.9%	73.1%	77.4%	[DPH]	83.2%
White	80.7%	77.3%	82.1%	83%	80.8%

*NB the number of students who declare an ethnicity included in 'other' is <35 per year which contributes to the volatility in that data.

Overall, progression rates for different ethnic groups have been converging over recent years. No gaps were statistically significant in the last two years. In the 2020/21 cohort there was only 0.2pp

between progression rates for Asian and white groups in favour of white students. In the same year students of mixed heritage had higher progression rates than white students by 1.2pp. 'Other' ethnic groups had the highest progression rate in 2020/21 although the data is suppressed for data protection reasons. There is notable fluctuation as this group had the lowest progression rate in two out of four years, so this is not a consistent pattern. The gap in progression rates between Black and white students was 2.8pp in favour of white students in 2020/21. However, Black students had higher progression rates than white students for two out of the last four years, with a gap of <1pp in the remaining year.

When data is aggregated, the 4-year average gap between white students and all ethnicities other than white was 2.4pp in favour of global majority students compared to a 4-year average of 3.2pp in favour of white students for all registered English higher education providers.

Age

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
Mature (21 and over)	83.2%	82.7%	82.6%	72.9%	80.7%
Young (under 21)	81.5%	77.7%	82.2%	83.4%	81.2%

Mature students have consistently had higher rates of progression than younger students until the most recent set of data, where a gap of 10.5pp appears in favour of younger students. This gap is not statistically significant. Our 4-year average progression gap between mature students and young students was 0.5pp compared to a 4-year average of 0.3pp in favour of mature students for all registered English higher education providers.

Relevant intersections

Age and sex	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Mature (21 and over) female	88.7%	82.5%	87.4%	69.3%
Mature (21 and over) male	77.4%	83%	77.4%	80.6%
Young (21 and under) female	80.1%	76.6%	82.4%	82.4%
Young (21 and under) male	83.2%	79.2%	82%	84.8%

The drop in progression rates for mature students particularly affected female mature students in 2020/21, while the other three groups appear to be converging in the same year. The gap between male and female mature students stood at 11.3pp in 2020/21 and between female mature and younger students at 13.1pp in the same year.

Age and disability	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Mature (21 and over) disabled	72.3%	80.8%	71.9%	73.3%
Mature (21 and over) no disability	86.9%	83.3%	87%	72.6%

Young (21 and under) disabled	76.1%	72.6%	79.7%	81.6%
Young (21 and under) no disability	82.1%	78.5%	82.6%	83.8%

Disabled mature students' progression rates were lowest for two years out of four. Young disabled students had the lowest progression rate in 2018/19 and mature students with no disability had the lowest progression rate in 2020/21. Mature students who did not declare a disability had the highest rates of progression from 2017 – 2020 but this dropped by 14.3pp in 2020/21. To an extent, progression for disabled and non-disabled mature students converged in the most recent year, as did progression rates for young students with and without a disability.

Ethnicity and age	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Mature (21 and over) non-white	92.3%	90%	85.7%	67.4%
Mature (21 and over) white	80.1%	79.8%	81.3%	76.2%
Young (21 and under) non-white	85.2%	80.5%	82.2%	84.7%
Young (21 and under) white	80.7%	77.2%	82.1%	83.3%

The most recent year of data shows a noticeable decline in progression rates for non-white mature students compared to both white mature students (8.8pp) and students under the age of 21. This group had the highest progression rates of all groups for three years prior to 2020/21. Progression rates by age and ethnicity had almost converged in 2019/20 data. However, a gap of 17.3pp between non-white mature students and non-white students under the age of 21 is observable in 2020/21. The gap between non-white mature students and white students under the age of 21 is 15.9pp. The drop in progression appears to affect mature students more widely and is further discussed.

Disability

Comparing progression data for disabled and non-disabled students shows a narrowing of the gap in progression rates between disabled students and non-disabled students from 6.7pp in 2017-18 to 2.7pp in favour of non-disabled students in the 2020-21 cohort, compared to 2.1pp for the sector in that year. The gap was not statistically significant for the last two years. Our 4-year average progression gap between disabled students and students with no disability was 4.3pp compared to a 4-year average of 2.1pp for all registered English higher education providers.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year avg
Cognitive or learning difficulties	76.0%	73.8%	84.5%	81.5%	79.2%
Mental health condition	66.7%	66.2%	70.7%	77.3%	71.4%
Multiple impairments	80.1%	74.5%	74.8%	81.9%	77.8%

No disability reported	82.3%	78.7%	82.8%	83.5%	81.8%
Sensory, medical or physical impairment	88.7%	81.6%	86.5%	89.4%	96.4%
Social or communication impairment	[low]*	[low]	[low]	[low]	70.3%

*The number of students who declare a social or communication is <15 per year so this data has been suppressed in line with OfS reporting protocols.

Disaggregating by disability type shows that progression rates for all disability types are increasing and converging although the denominators are small. Students with sensory, medical or physical impairments have the highest progression rate of any group in three of the last four years.

Comparing students who declare a mental health condition with all students who do not declare a mental health condition shows a gap of 6.1pp in favour of students who have not declared a mental health condition in the 2020/21 cohort. This has narrowed considerably since 2017/18 when the gap was 15.2pp. Our 4-year average progression gap between students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability was 10.4pp compared to a 4-year average of 4.7pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Examining the intersection of ethnicity and mental health declarations shows that white students who declare a mental health condition have been the group with lowest progression rates over the last four years compared to non-white students who declare a mental health condition, and all students who have not declared a mental health condition. Non-white students who declared a mental health condition had the highest progression rate in 2020/21 at 89.3%. The progression rate for white students who declare a mental health condition is improving but in 2020/21 the gap between white and non-white students who declare a mental health condition still stood at 14.2pp in favour of non-white students.

Target

We have included a target to narrow the progression gap for affecting students who declare a mental health condition, compared to students with no disability. Please see PTP_1.

Association Between Characteristics (ABCS)

We have used the Association Between Characteristics (ABCS) measure to benchmark our performance against the sector. At UoB, the absolute progression gap in 2021-22 between Q5 and Q1 was 2.7pp. This compares to 17.3pp for all registered English higher education providers.

Annex B: Further information that sets out the rationale, assumptions and evidence base for each intervention strategy that is included in the access and participation plan

Evaluation

For each intervention strategy, we have included a corresponding evaluation plan. As outlined in these plans, each intervention strategy will be evaluated using a range of methodologies to generate quantitative and qualitative results. Across all eight evaluation plans, we include a commitment to produce type 1 (narrative) and type 2 (empirical) standards of evidence. For IS1, we also plan to pilot type 3 (causal) evaluation; it is expected that this will involve a quasi-experimental design.

For relevant intervention strategies, we will continue to use practical evaluation resources such as TASO's Mapping Outcomes and Activities Tool to assist in the planning and evaluation of new and

evolving activities. We are also committed to using sector standard tools such as validated scales to ensure that we are drawing insights from good-quality data. This in turn should contribute positively to the overall quality of our evaluations. Our evaluation findings will inform the review of our activities and contribute to the sector evidence base of 'what works'.

As a member of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) Service, with presence on the HEAT steering group, we are committed to collaboratively evaluating the efficacy of widening participation interventions. Our participation in the South West Evaluation Forum and Russell Group Widening Participation Evaluation Forum provides further opportunities for our colleagues to develop their knowledge and skills in evaluation. As members of TASO's sector network and FACE's APPSIG, we engage in opportunities related to knowledge and research exchange. The output of the research branch of the Brilliant Club and Sutton Trust informs our approach to evidence-led initiatives.

Evaluation of Student Funding Package

On an annual basis, our funding package is currently evaluated through research carried out by the Personal Finance Research Centre at the University of Bristol. Findings are published annually²⁶.

In line with the expectations set out as part of the OfS Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit, our current approach recognises that offering bursaries to students on lower incomes is a major part of our APP strategy; since 2016/17, we have commissioned an annual assessment of the impact of this scheme.

In preparation for this APP submission, we also commissioned external mixed-methods research carried out by Savanta. The aim of this evaluation was to supplement our internal findings through additional research (mixed-methods) with current and prospective students.

For the duration of our new Plan, we will continue to conduct annual evaluation on the effectiveness of our funding package through research carried out by the Personal Finance Research Centre at the University of Bristol. We will supplement this with additional focused research, using tools such as the Interview Tool available through the OfS Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit, to ensure a mixed-methods approach to understanding the impact of our funding package.

As outlined in our Evaluation of the Plan section, we have identified a need to establish an APP Oversight Group. We have since agreed that governance of our funding package including its evaluation will sit with this group to ensure appropriate oversight and scrutiny.

Rationale, assumptions and evidence base

In addition to underpinning each intervention strategy with a Theory of Change (ToC), we have also ensured that each activity within our intervention strategies has a ToC. For the intervention strategy ToCs included in this annex, we have used TASO's core ToC template to help illustrate the causal mechanisms by which the activities included are expected to achieve their outcomes. Included in each intervention strategy ToC is a summary of the assumptions at play. We have also

²⁶ www.bristol.ac.uk/geography/research/pfrc/themes/financial-exclusion-poverty/access-to-education/student-support/

conducted an evidence review for each intervention strategy to ensure that we adopt an evidence-led approach to addressing the key risks to equality of opportunity identified in our plan.

IS1: To increase the proportion of students from lower socio-economic groups

Research by TASO suggests that multi-intervention outreach activities which include varied sessions are more effective in supporting students to progress to higher education (HE) than one-off events. They also note a drop-off in efficacy for programmes that ran longer than 5-6 sessions. 37% of young people in the South West of England enter higher education compared to 42% across England (Office for Students, 2021). There is evidence from the Russell Group that universities are well-placed to support cohorts in their cities and regions and that this can have a 'profound impact on the progression of individual groups of learners within the local community' (Russell Group, 2020). There is a demonstrable need for us to maintain effective programmes like Access to Bristol and Bristol Scholars within our local communities.

Findings by The Sutton Trust show that disadvantaged students (here measured by eligibility for Free School Meals) with high academic potential often underperform in the school system and have lower rates of progression to university and to highly selective universities (The Sutton Trust, 2023). Achievement at GCSE is a strong predictor of progression to HE yet disadvantaged students are less likely to achieve the GCSE grades required to attend selective universities (Boliver, Gorard et al., 2017). There is a persistent participation gap between FSM and non-FSM students, and those FSM-eligible students who do progress to HE are much less likely to attend a selective institution (Pickering 2019). We will develop our Virtual Project to support students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This multi-strand programme will draw from best practice from existing UoB programmes and activity across the sector, combining impactful outreach designed to increase participants' capacity to make informed decisions about higher education with targeted academic tutorials designed to improve KS5 attainment. This provision will stretch beyond Year 13, offering transitional activity during the first year at UoB.

Disadvantaged students are also less likely to positively envisage their future options (The Sutton Trust, 2023). Despite their high grades, 21% of disadvantaged high attainers in this study agreed with the statement 'people like me don't have much of a chance in life' compared to 10% of other high attainers. When asked about what they were most likely to be doing in two years' time, disadvantaged high attainers were 10 percentage points less likely to report that they think they will be studying compared to other high attainers (Ibid). These self-perceptions can negatively impact disadvantaged students' confidence to successfully apply to HE. Additionally, lack of knowledge about higher education and a lack of practical support in decision-making can impact negatively on the confidence of under-represented students and undermine their expectations that they can fulfil their ambitions (Russell Group, 2020). A significant focus of this intervention strategy is on increasing disadvantaged students' capacity to make informed decisions about HE and confidence to successfully apply to HE. Our partnership with Causeway Education will employ a data-driven approach to identifying and eliminating disparities in access to HE, identifying students from lower socio-economic backgrounds who are at risk of 'undermatch' (defined as 'where students attend universities that are less selective than might be expected, given their academic credentials' (Campbell, Macmillan & Wyness, 2019), and offering targeted IAG and teacher CPD to effect change to progression routes).

Evidence shows that a contextualized approach to admissions represents a crucial mechanism by which to achieve fairer access for disadvantaged learners (Boliver et al., 2017). Mountford-Zimdars

& Moore (2020) highlight the body of evidence for the practice of making contextual offers as well as demonstrating that recipients of these offers achieve as well as their peers entering on standard offers. Evidence demonstrates that since 2018, 90.9% of contextual offer holders have received a good degree (2:1 or 1st) on average, compared to 91.1% of standard offer holders (University of Bristol, 2023). In 2023, we introduced contextual offers for students eligible for Free School Meals. We will maintain and refine our contextualized admissions policies in line with evolving data, introducing a contextual offer for students whose home postcode is in an IMD Q1 area, and guaranteed offers for students eligible for FSM.

Evidence highlights that activities which seek to help raise attainment and provide support for students at post-16 level can have a profound impact on recruitment at an individual university, but the effect can be even greater in widening access to other selective institutions (Russell Group, 2020). In recognition of this and of the above link between academic attainment and opportunity for progression to HE, we will maintain our partnerships with third sector organisations, The Brilliant Club and IntoUniversity. Prioritising educational attainment within the city of Bristol, we will also continue to sponsor South Bristol Youth to deliver their Unlocking Potential programme which seeks to improve oracy and self-confidence to increase attainment and progress in school. Our partnership with the University of the West of England will contribute to increased capacity to make informed decisions about HE across our City region. Through these collaborations, we will contribute to the progression of disadvantaged and under-represented groups to HE across the sector. We will also contribute to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers, careers, and advisers as part of our Advancing Access partnership, equipping them with the information needed to inform their learners about pathways into Russell Group institutions. Our ongoing investment will help drive improvements in the refinement of school and college targeting.

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IS2: To increase the proportion of Black and Asian students enrolling at the University.

In the past two admissions cycles, we have enhanced our conversion activity for global majority students. During this time, there has been a correlating increase in the firm response rate (FRR) for students who identify as Black such that it is above the UoB FRR average. Despite this, the lower met offer rate for Black students has contributed to a lower application to enrolment rate when compared to the UoB average. As identified in our indications of risk exercise, at UoB there is a gap of 25.1pp in the 4-year average met-offer rate between White and Black students. This lower met offer rate is compounded for Black students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In the 2023-24 cycle, the met offer rate for Black FSM-eligible students was 26.5%, 10.4pp lower than the met-offer rate for Black, non-FSM students and 20.6pp lower than the met-offer rate for White FSM-eligible students. The met offer rate for Black students from IMD Q1 areas was 30.4%, 7.7pp lower than the met offer rate for Black students from IMD Q5 areas and 23.1pp lower than the met offer rate for White students from IMD Q1 areas.

There is insufficient evidence as to why the met offer rate for Black students is lower than for other ethnic groups, but it could be impacted by inaccurate A-Level predictions. Research from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills found that 51.7% of all predicted A Level grades were accurately predicted. By contrast, when disaggregated by ethnicity, only 39% of grades were accurately predicted for Black applicants. This group had the highest over- and under-prediction rates, at 53.8% and 7.1% respectively. Accurate predictions provide the best opportunity for an applicant to successfully meet their offer terms. Our Causeway Education Undermatch pilot (IS1) will intersect with the IS2 target cohort and offer an opportunity to enhance teacher awareness of the progression route of their students while also addressing systemic concerns which can contribute to both undermatch and lower met offer rates.

Findings from The Sutton Trust suggest that small group extra tuition is proven to raise attainment and can result in students gaining 4-5 months of additional progress (The Sutton Trust, 2024). Discrepancies remain in access to tutoring (The Sutton Trust, 2023), and the reduction in funding for the government's national tutoring programme (NTP) will likely exacerbate this. Students with the potential to attain highly at maths A Level and progress to maths dependent degrees can underachieve due to confidence, or a gap between their A Level experience and the demands or approach of the degree level subject (Nuffield Foundation, 2018). This experience may be vastly different as, for example, only 44% of secondary maths teachers have a maths degree (Ibid.). Having a 'good' teacher has been shown to have an important impact on pupil attainment and this is particularly marked in mathematics (Burgess, 2015). Our KS5 attainment activity with Causeway Education is designed to support an improvement in the met offer rate of Black heritage students with A Level Maths/ Further Maths requirements included in their offer.

In recent years our collaborations with current students have supported our development of a series of outreach activities exclusively for global majority students, which enhance understanding of university, and which specifically focus on sense of belonging within the cohort. A sense of belonging is positively associated with academic success (Walton and Cohen, 2011 and Gopalan and Brady, 2020). Students in higher education who have a greater sense of belonging are more likely to have higher motivation, more academic self-confidence, higher levels of academic

engagement and higher achievement (Pedler, Willis & Nieuwoudt, 2022). There is evidence that role models were found to have a significant effect on the chances of students successfully applying to university and that this effect was greater for applications to selective universities (Sanders et al., 2018).

As previously highlighted, TASO evidences multi-intervention outreach activities as more effective in supporting students to progress to higher education (HE) than one-off events. There is evidence for effectiveness of residential programmes alongside other interventions such as mentoring, tutoring and application support as well as contextual applications (NFER, 2018). We will maintain our exclusive outreach programmes for students who identify as Asian, Black or of mixed heritage. These interventions include academic taster sessions, appropriate IAG and admissions benefits are co-delivered with current UOB global majority students, providing relatable role models to participants to increase sense of belonging. Programmes designed to work with underrepresented students and support them in their progression to higher education can significantly increase entry rates to high tariff universities as well support academic attainment (Barkat, 2019).

UUK and NUS (2019) recommend that HEIs create opportunities for staff and students to come together and discuss issues around race and racism. They encourage institutions to utilise their students as experts; to co-design solutions to begin to tackle systemic inequality and ultimately positively change institutional culture. The case for student centred partnership includes, but is not limited to, designing and delivering engaging student learning experiences; but also developing a sense of community and belonging among the partnered students themselves (Healey et al., 2014). There is a demonstrable need for us to maintain avenues for student-centred partnerships and we will expand our forums for co-creation and delivery across the access and inclusion space, with particular emphasis on engaging with global majority students.

In parallel to this strand of work we will work collaboratively across UOB to deliver a programme of inclusive training and cross-departmental forums for staff engaging with underrepresented students. UUK and NUS (2019) suggest that institutions should consider whether development opportunities or programmes are needed to ensure confidence in speaking about race. There is a vital need for universities to “actively foster an institutional culture which is genuinely inclusive and which genuinely values diversity” (Boliver, 2018). Increasing the confidence and effectiveness with which staff engage with underrepresented students, including those from racially minoritised backgrounds, is crucial to ensuring that prospective global majority students have positive interactions with UOB across the student journey. This strand of work will cut across a wide range of audiences including WP practitioners, academic colleagues, professional services staff and student workers and will be co-designed and delivered by colleagues with responsibility for students access and success such that it intersects with IS7.

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IS3: To maintain the proportion of mature students enrolling at the University.

Providing flexible routes into higher education is key to universities being able to attract more mature learners (Million Plus, 2018). Evidence also shows that programme offers must meet the needs of mature learners to support HE uptake among this group (Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO), 2021). Maintaining our Cert HE Foundation programmes, designed to provide an alternative entry route into undergraduate study for mature students with

non-traditional education backgrounds, is therefore a significant focus of this intervention strategy. Increasing the visibility of this type of entry route and other opportunities for university-based learning for mature students is crucial to ensuring adult learners perceive higher education as accessible to them (Butcher, 2020). We will therefore maintain our investment in targeted marketing strategies which promote the uptake of our Cert HE Foundation programmes to prospective adult learners.

Attracting and supporting learners with non-traditional qualifications supports the recruitment of mature students who are more likely than young students to undertake non-traditional pathways into higher education (Office for Fair Access (OFFA), 2015). Of the various non-traditional qualifications available, the Access to HE Diploma is recognised for its high uptake of learners who are over 25 years of age (OFFA, 2015). The Access to HE Diploma is an effective enabler for mature student participation in higher education, in turn contributing positively to universities' widening participation agendas (Farmer, 2017). To support the pipeline of mature learners with non-traditional education backgrounds enrolling at the University against the backdrop of an increasingly competitive admissions landscape, we will maintain our 'guaranteed offer' admissions benefit for Access to HE Diploma applicants. There is strong evidence that mature students are more likely to experience compound disadvantage and be from underrepresented groups (OFFA, 2017). To further support application success rates for this group, we will maintain our Access to HE entry requirements at an equivalent contextual level.

TASO's review of evidence on supporting access and student success for mature learners (2021) suggests that there is some positive impact associated with transition-focused pre-entry interventions for this group, especially those which are delivered flexibly. Drawing on best practice from the sector, including outreach for mature learners by the University of West London (Office for Students (OfS), 2020), we will develop our pilot 'Building Up to Higher Education' pre-entry short course which aims to support prospective adult learners develop their academic skills to support future participation in higher education. While the evidence is limited, TASO's review (2021) also highlights that information, advice, and guidance (IAG) interventions for mature students may be helpful in supporting this group navigate the unfamiliar world of higher education. We will continue to offer a range of tailored IAG interventions for prospective mature students at different stages of the pre-application journey in a variety of settings. Our work will extend to adult learners undertaking level 1, level 2, and ESOL studies who may be engaged in a less linear pathway to higher education.

Ensuring that mature students have the same opportunities as young students to participate in HE has seen the development of improved outreach targeting for mature students through initiatives such as Uni Connect and Discover Uni (OfS, 2021). We will continue to develop our outreach targeting to support local mature students participate in our inclusive post-16 outreach programmes which aim to increase participants' capacity to make informed choices about HE.

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IS4: To narrow the gap in completion rates between students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability.

The prevalence of mental health conditions peaks in young adulthood (Whiteford et al, 2013) and there is some evidence that university students experience a higher level of mental health problems than their peers in the community (Cvetkovski et al., 2012; Stallman, 2010). This is reflected in our institutional data which shows that the number of UK students at the University who declare a mental health condition has increased by over 300% over the last ten years – significantly higher than the sector increase over that period which was over 180% (Hubble & Bolton, 2021).

Transition into higher education is a time of particular stress for many students and can affect levels of both psychological distress and broader wellbeing (Cage et al, 2021) as students can find it challenging to adjust to university life (Gall, Evans & Bellerose, 2000). While there is limited robust research to indicate which mental health interventions have a demonstrable impact on retention rates for students with a mental health condition. There is evidence that mental health difficulties are associated with negative outcomes in higher education including lower academic performance and increased risk of non-completion (Eisenberg, 2009; Hysenbegasi, 2005; Unite, 2016). There is also evidence that psychological interventions with a trained professional have a positive impact on mental health (TASO, 2022). Such interventions can be difficult for students to access due to high demand and long waiting lists for NHS services (UUK, 2018). Despite the effectiveness of such interventions, only a third of HEI students with mental health problems proactively request support from university counselling services in the UK (Macaskill, 2012).

Without formal support or intervention, students are at risk of further deterioration with potential negative impacts for both their health and their university success.

At its' core, our intervention strategy increases capacity to deliver targeted professional mental health support through the Mental Health Advisory Service. The service provides high quality clinical interventions for students with mental health difficulties. This support will include a focus on proactively offering support during the critical transition period into university study, when many students are moving away from home, potentially moving from child to adult services, and will be geographically removed from any clinical support they have previously been able to access (UUK 2018).

There is also growing evidence that loneliness can have a negative impact on mental health, and is associated with the onset of depression and other common mental health problems (Mann 2021; Richardson 2017). Specialist mental health provision will therefore be supplemented by peer support, and by the delivery of activities intended to build community and belonging with target groups known to be at increased risk of experiencing isolation (see Intervention Strategies 5, 6 & 7).

Academic staff can play a key role in identifying and supporting students who are experiencing mental health difficulties but may not always recognise symptoms in their students (Mackaskill 2013; Spear et al 2021), report not having the knowledge or skills (Gulliver, Farrer, Bennett, & Griffiths, 2019; Spear, Morey, & van Steen, 2021) and may not be well prepared to support them (Spear et al 2021).

Increased staff understanding of mental health issues is positively associated with staff feeling more confident to help students who have mental health conditions (Gulliver et al., 2019). We will therefore develop a tiered programme of staff training to increase disability awareness and mental health literacy (Cage et al, 2021; TASO, 2022; Thorley, 2017; UUK, 2020) across the staff body. We anticipate that empowering staff in key relevant roles with greater knowledge and understanding, within the existing framework of roles and boundaries, will help promote a compassionate community (UUK 2020) and facilitate increased connections to the services where appropriate (Gulliver et al., 2019).

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IS5: To narrow the gap in completion rates between mature students and young students; to narrow the attainment gap between mature students and young students.

Mature students are more likely to contemplate withdrawing from their course than their younger counterparts (Webb and Cotton, 2018), with many finding integrating into higher education and overcoming of social, academic, and financial barriers to be more challenging (Mallman and Lee, 2014, Hart, 2023). Mature students are more likely to have characteristics associated with disadvantage and under-representation in higher education (Hubble and Bolton, 2021), and often withdraw for reasons external to the course and institution, such as family or financial problems (McGivney, 2004).

Enhanced mature student community building is a key focus of our intervention strategy, through mingles, student advocate-led events, and an extended mature student welcome and transition programme. Mature students report a limited sense of belonging and connection to peers, academics and the wider university community (Hayman et al., 2024), and they are more likely to experience a degree of social exclusion (Reay et al., 2010) and isolation during their first year at university (Hayman et al., 2024). This lack of social integration can lead to feelings of isolation which can impact negatively on student outcomes (Thomas, 2012), with those who perceive too few opportunities to engage with fellow students more likely to consider withdrawal from their course (Webb and Cotton, 2018).

Research has demonstrated inclusive learning environments in terms of curricula, teaching, learning and assessments have a positive effect on student experience and outcomes. A systematic review of studies which included nearly two million students (Schneider and Preckel, 2017) which concluded student attainment is strongly linked to the design and delivery of teaching methods and curricula. Academic self-efficacy of students is also an important factor linked to retention and student success (Reilly et al., 2021), and our intervention strategy is focussed on developing this for mature students. Only 7% of foundation/undergraduate mature students feel 'very confident' in their academic skills at the University of Bristol (Hart, 2023). Mature students returning to education after a long time away may take longer to adjust to learning and to master the standards and practices required in an unfamiliar academic culture, feeling anxious about their ability to cope intellectually with the challenges of higher education, and feeling less well informed about things like workload, teaching and assessment (McVitty & Katy Morris, 2012). There is some evidence that transition programmes and information, advice and guidance interventions may be helpful in giving mature students the information and guidance necessary to navigate the unfamiliar world of higher education (TASO, 2021). Our Building up to Bristol Course for mature students aims to help students understand the academic expectations of university study, read critically and reflect on their learning, and develop writing styles and processes for a variety of academic contexts.

To support students to take their place as part of an academic community, we will target discipline-specific academic language and literacy sessions at undergraduate programmes in Schools with high proportions of mature students. This intervention will aim to increase understanding of academic expectations, particularly in assessment & feedback, and academic self-efficacy and empowerment to communicate voice. Research suggests undergraduate students' participation in research is associated with gains in self-efficacy (Hurtado et al, 2008), higher levels of retention and higher marks (Jones et al, 2010, Bowman et al, 2017). There is some evidence that the benefits are greater for students from underrepresented groups (Kuh, 2008). Although much of the evidence to date is from the US higher education system, there is sufficient evidence to suggest this may be beneficial in the UK. We will target our WP Research Summer internships at mature students, giving middle-year students hands-on experience of research.

Mature students often describe feeling unsupported by university staff (Read et al., 2003), and Australian studies have highlighted that mature students are generally unaware of institutional support services that exist to support their overall learning experience (Heagney & Benson, 2017). Previous research into mature students' experiences of support at the University of Bristol recommended a 'go-to' person specifically for mature students who understands various issues mature students may have, acting as a first point of contact to signpost students to relevant support within the University, and promote wider understanding of mature student issues amongst staff across the University (Bennun, 2014). Our intervention strategy outlines that our dedicated

contact for mature students will offer 1:1 coaching for mature students, with results from America indicating that academically at-risk students who participate in coaching have increased attainment and lower withdrawal rates (Capstick et al., 2019).

More openness about financial struggles and more support with managing finances may be of value for mature students (McVitty & Katy Morris, 2012). Research at the University of Bristol has highlighted that finances are one of the biggest challenges faced by mature students, and increasing tailored communications to signpost students to financial support available will help to address this issue (Bristol SU, 2023). The independent review into our financial support package indicates that students are increasingly interested in developing financial knowledge, accessing advice and guidance to help with financial problems, learning how to manage a budget and in receiving holistic financial support. We will target our new 'Managing your money' induction programme, online self-service content, and sustained 'Money-Matters' workshops to mature students to promote their financial health and wellbeing.

Mature students are more likely to be commuter students (Thomas, 2020), either for financial reasons or because of other commitments outside their studies. In addition to reviewing our funding package and providing enhanced money advice and coaching we will develop commuter student networks to provide a sense of community and connection for commuter students, and a commuter student working group to lead on development work for this growing and evolving group of students.

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IS6: To narrow the attainment gap between students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and students from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

The number of students from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds progressing to the most selective institutions has increased significantly over recent years (Turhan & Stevens), however inequalities in access and outcomes persist (Crawford 2014).

There is a broad agreement that a negative relationship between academic attainment and lower socio-economic status exists (Sirin, 2005; Micklewright and Schnepf, 2007; van Ewijk and Slegers, 2010), however this relationship is complex and affected by the measure of socio-economic status that is used (Perry et al 2017). Indeed, there is limited agreement amongst researchers about the conceptual definition of socio-economic status itself (Sirin, 2005). Household or parental income and parental occupation are suggested as being amongst relevant factors (Perry et al 2017), which to some extent correlate with the English Indices of Deprivation.

Entitlement to free school meals is also widely used but this is an imperfect proxy for socio-economic status (Hobbs and Vignoles, 2007) since determination of eligibility is vulnerable to mistakes, and therefore potentially problematic (Perry et al 2017). There is evidence of a relationship between eligibility for free school meals and the likelihood of students graduating with a first or 2:1 (Crawford 2014), although studies tend to explore this correlation using free school meal eligibility at a school population level, rather than for individual students (Perry et al, 2017). We will therefore use IMD as a more robust measure in target-setting and measuring progress.

Research has demonstrated inclusive learning environments in terms of curricula, teaching, learning and assessments have a positive effect on student experience and outcomes. A systematic review of studies which included nearly two million students (Schneider and Preckel, 2017) which concluded student attainment is strongly linked to the design and delivery of teaching methods and curricula. We will therefore include interventions which focus on supporting programme teams to implement inclusive pedagogic approaches within their teaching.

Academic attainment prior to higher education is an important factor in helping to explain both the likelihood of young people attending HE and their performance once they are there (Smith and Naylor, 2001a; Gayle et al., 2002; Galindo-Rueda et al., 2004; Chowdry et al., 2013), with lower academic attainment in school associated with lower socio-economic status (Hirsch, 2007). This is observed in our institutional data with students from IMDQ1 having lower average UCAS tariff points on entry than those from IMDQ5. However, further analysis suggests that, while many students with lower tariff points on entry do well, where students from Q1 and Q5 enter the University with the same tariff points, Q1 students have lower degree attainment on average. More work is needed to understand the relationship between entry tariff and degree attainment at Bristol but this suggests that academic skills and self-efficacy are a key area to address.

There is some evidence that students of lower socio-economic status tend to rate their academic self-efficacy lower than those of higher status (Perry et al, 2017, MacPhee et al, 2013) possibly partly due to the impact of prior attainment on both self-efficacy and subsequent attainment (Thompson et al, 2022). Academic self-efficacy consistently has the strongest correlation with higher education attainment in meta-analyses (Thomson et al, 2022).

We will therefore employ interventions which are intended to strengthen students' academic self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to complete academic tasks. One example is through the expanded partnership with the Brilliant Club, which provides transition coaching with a focus on academic self-efficacy. Coaching has been shown to have a positive impact for students, improving their academic self-efficacy, sense of control over their work, their confidence and their sense of balance and focus (Lancer & Eatough 2020). Another example is our academic language and literacy programme designed to build student's academic self-efficacy and support them to take their place as part of an academic community. Evaluation to date shows that this activity is effective in improving academic self-efficacy and we will publish results beginning December 2026.

There is a growing body of evidence that university students who report a stronger sense of belonging to their institution show greater persistence in their studies (Hausmann et al., 2007) and have higher academic achievement (Walton & Cohen, 2007). This can be particularly impactful for students from underrepresented backgrounds (Thomson et al, 2022).

Belonging is often defined as being the degree to which students feel a sense of connection through supportive relationships with their peers, meaningful interactions with staff, confidence in their identity as successful learners, and experiences which are relevant to their interests and future goals (Lotkowski et al., 2004, Thomas, 2012).

Research conducted by Bristol Students Union in partnership with the University found that students who self-identified as working class described feeling excluded from a prevailing upper and middle-class culture and pre-existing personal connections, which affects their sense of belonging at the University (Law et al, 2022). Whilst it is important not to conflate self-reported social class with more rigorous measures of socio-economic status, there is reason to believe this is important enough to address, given the potential impact on degree outcomes. Belonging will therefore be another key theme in our intervention strategy. One dimension of this is the development of a new extended transition programme from pre-entry through the first year (Brooman and Darwent, 2014), co-created with students (Turhan and Stevens, 2020). This will include activities aimed at building community and cohort peer connections (Blake et al, 2022), as well as enhancing students' preparedness for independent study.

UUK highlight the importance of inclusivity as a protective factor in relation to student mental health and wellbeing (UUK, 2022). They identify students from low-income backgrounds, care experienced students and commuter students amongst those who face unequal challenges to their mental health in higher education and are at risk of additional stresses from cost pressures due to their economic circumstances (UUK, 2022). We will continue to provide enhanced frameworks of support for care experienced students, estranged students, and students affected by forced displacement. Commuter students are more likely to be from lower socio-economic groups (Thomas, 2020). In addition to reviewing our funding package and providing enhanced money advice and coaching we will develop commuter student networks to provide a sense of community and connection for commuter students, and a commuter student working group to lead on development work for this growing and evolving group of students.

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IS7: To narrow the attainment gap between global majority students and white students.

Our institutional research highlights that, for most Black and Asian students, their ethnicity was something that they were aware of as having a significant impact on their university experience. Across the last APP cycle, the University of Bristol has made progress in increasing the number of Black and Asian home students attending the University. We have also narrowed the awarding gap affecting Black students from 27.2pp in 2016-17 to 6.7pp in 2021/22. However, across higher education institutions and the University of Bristol, there is still a notable gap in the attainment of global majority students in comparison to white students. Research across the sector suggests that multiple factors contribute to the awarding gap. This is reflected in our institutional research where feedback from students highlighted that students believed that 'awarding gaps' were largely due to systemic barriers within the university and society that were pervasive throughout all levels of education (University of Bristol 2021). Our intervention strategy is therefore focused on improving the sense of belonging global majority students feel at university, improving academic and personal support, and increasing representation across all areas of the University.

Some studies have highlighted that there is a link between students feeling a sense of belonging while at university, and achieving academic success (Robertson, Cleaver, and Smart, 2019). When global majority students have a greater sense of belonging at university, that tends to be associated with greater motivation, higher academic self-confidence, increased levels of academic engagement, and improved academic performance (Pedler, Willis, & Nieuwoudt, 2022). There is also sector data that shows that, when students' sense of belonging increases, it enhances their likelihood of persisting from the first year to the second year of their studies (Burke, 2019). Our institutional data shows that Black students at the University of Bristol are the group least likely to

feel like they belong at university, which may explain why historically the biggest gap in our awarding gap is between Black and white students. Our institutional research also shows that Asian students at the university are the most likely to feel isolated, which may partly explain the awarding gap between Asian and white students (University of Bristol, 2021). Given this, the University will prioritise ensuring that university services and support are designed to increase Black and Asian students feeling a greater sense of belonging at the university.

UUK and NUS (2019) recommend institutions to utilise their students as experts and involve them in co-creating solutions which begin to tackle systemic inequality and contribute to changing institutional culture. There is evidence that such an approach can also contribute to an improved sense of community and belonging for the partner students themselves (Healey et al., 2014). Our Race Inclusion Advocates are central to our work in this area. We will therefore expand the team of advocates to increase the impact across the University and engage them as active partners in designing and delivering new activity to enhance global majority students' sense of belonging.

Across the sector, institutions have struggled to make meaningful progress in closing the ethnicity awards gap. However, evidence shows that progress has been made when institutions consider all elements of the learning experience including teaching practice, curriculum, and assessment (TASO 2023). Within the University, it was suggested that global majority students can find it difficult to engage with their course or lecturers and that academics were not always understanding of their point of view. Student feedback highlighted that academic challenges were linked to a lack of belonging, where students who felt they did not fit in might skip or miss out on learning opportunities or struggle to access support (University of Bristol, 2021). Another institutional report highlighted that many students felt that they couldn't be 'completely themselves' in their course, which impacted their engagement (Bristol SU, 2017). Together, this suggests that feeling a sense of belonging on a course has a link to attainment, and efforts to improve the sense of belonging in courses could reduce the awarding gap. While there is limited data across the sector that directly links diversifying the curriculum to reducing the awarding gap, some of our institutional research found that students in both STEM subjects and Arts and Social Sciences didn't enjoy 'the whiteness of their curriculum' and that the lack of diverse perspectives has an impact on their engagement in their course (Bristol SU, 2017). Given this, the university will prioritise improving support for global majority students on their courses, diversifying course curricula, and developing community-building initiatives within schools and faculties. Universities that have prioritised diversifying their curricula have seen improvements in global majority student satisfaction, motivation, and connection with course content.

However, research highlights the importance of not just focusing on course content, but also on assessments, including type, frequency, and student preparedness, in order to reduce awarding gaps (Cramer, 2021). Research has also demonstrated inclusive learning environments in terms of curricula, teaching, learning and assessments have a positive effect on student experience and outcomes. This includes research focused on global majority student attainment (Amos and Doku, 2017) and a systematic review of studies which included nearly two million students (Schneider and Preckel, 2017) which concluded student attainment is strongly linked to the design and delivery of teaching methods and curricula. We will therefore increase our provision of staff development in inclusive teaching methods and designing inclusive curricula, working with whole programme teams. In addition, some factors related to assessment are also addressed through our University Assessment and Feedback Strategy 2022-30.

Sector data also suggests that racial inequalities experienced by global majority students at university are a contributing factor to the attainment gap (UUK & NUS, 2019). Creating an institutional culture, where students feel welcome has an impact on the awarding gap as well (NUS, 2011). Our institutional research highlights that students reported experiencing direct racism and racist microaggressions from both fellow students and staff, which often harmed their mental health (Bristol SU, 2017). Our research also suggests that Black and Asian students experience wellbeing difficulties specifically related to their ethnicity and that nearly half of global majority students find it quite difficult to maintain their wellbeing at university (Bristol University, 2021). Evidence suggests that mental health difficulties are associated with negative outcomes in higher education, including lower academic performance (Eisenberg et al., 2009; Hysenbegasi et al., 2005; Unite, 2016).

Given this, the university will prioritise improving pastoral support for global majority students and ensuring that there is a robust and considerate process for supporting students who are victims of racial harassment. There is some evidence that culturally sensitive initiatives, or interventions targeted at certain groups of students can have a positive impact on student success (Jackson, Capper, Blake, 2023). The university will continue to prioritise training staff as research highlights the importance of cultural competence in enhancing the academic experiences and outcomes of Black students in UK universities (Health et al., 2019).

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IS8: To narrow the gap in progression rates between students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability.

There is an increasing amount of evidence to suggest more students and graduates are experiencing increased levels of mental health challenges, and this is affecting students' chances of securing a positive graduate outcome. Data from the 2020/21 Graduate Outcomes Survey shows a 4.1% outcomes gap between those with a mental health condition and those without a disability across English Higher Education Providers, and a 4.7% gap over the last four years of Graduate Outcomes results. At the University of Bristol, this is a 6.2% gap for the 2020-21 survey and a 10.4% gap over the last four years of results ([Access and participation data dashboard](#)). Furthermore, in both 2019/20 and 2020/21, autistic graduates and graduates with mental health conditions were amongst the groups least likely to report taking a job because it fitted into their career plan, following their first degree (Toogood, 2024).

Our last Access and Participation plan included a target to reduce the progression gap for disabled students and the targeted interventions implemented under that plan have enabled us to make good progress in that area enabling us to build on this approach further in order to address the gap in progression outcomes which persists for students who declare a mental health condition.

A recent report from AGCAS (Toogood, 2024) recommends that HEIs should review their long-term employability support for recent graduates to help mitigate any additional barriers to

successful graduate transition and prioritise support for disabled graduates to prevent the compounding of existing inequalities of outcome. UUK suggests that students and employers indicate the need for universities to take a similarly structured approach to prepare students for employment and further study, as they might for the transition into and through university (UUK, 2022).

A 2019 review by the Institute for Employment Studies (Williams, 2019) includes the following recommendations:

- a holistic approach covering all students, and involving shared responsibility across the provider
- collaboration within providers between core disability services and across all staff groups
- balancing inclusive approaches with tailored support for individuals
- encouraging disclosure across the student lifecycle
- focusing on mental health and wellbeing

The Advance HE Disabled student commitment (2023) recommends:

- Careers and employment guidance acknowledges the barriers that may be experienced by disabled students, and emphasis and consideration are given to the positive attributes and skills that disabled students will have developed during their time at university.
- The relationships built with employers include recognition of opportunities for disabled students and graduates.
- Disability specific support in preparation for employment and the recruitment process is provided.
- Employability activities are referenced whilst on course and embedded throughout the student lifecycle.

The TASO report into reducing gaps in employment (Ramaiah, 2022) demonstrates some insight into evidence of interventions which affect graduate outcomes. Whilst not explicitly referencing students/graduates with mental health conditions it provides some evidence to indicate that work experience can have a positive effect on graduate outcomes, particularly if delivered in smaller bite-sized chunks throughout a course of study, and if those graduates are supported to communicate effectively about their experiences. IAG and career counselling is shown to have a positive impact, with helping students' knowledge and readiness for navigating the job market and post graduate education opportunities.

In the 2024 Shaw Trust report into employability for disabled graduates they highlight many of the following factors as being barriers for students with disabilities:

- Many graduates with disabilities prioritised their needs for inclusive employers over exploring their career options and preferences.
- Work experience and placements allow students to ascertain early on if their skills and aptitudes are aligned to a chosen field or whether to broaden their career goals.
- Students with established disability identities may find it difficult to develop an identity of themselves as a professional. It is suggested that support for students and graduates focussed on prompting them to focus on their skills and value they may bring to an employer.
- Awareness of disability specific careers support is often cited as being a barrier, with some worried about stigmatisation around seeking support, especially support related to their access needs.
- Graduates were happiest with support when it allowed them to connect with specific work experience opportunities and sector-relevant contacts and mentors.

- Graduates who received specialist support reported feeling well-supported during interviews and job applications, especially when advisors recommended specific strategies for addressing disability-related topics.

A meta-analysis, combining findings from 55 papers on Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) interventions, indicates a consistent body of evidence supporting a positive correlation between these interventions and the recipients' capacity to make informed and effective career choices. (Whiston et al., 2017).

Effective career planning is closely linked to positive outcomes for graduates, encompassing both employment and continued education. Studies reveal that possessing a well-defined career plan stands out as the most crucial factor influencing whether graduates secure positions in professional or managerial roles, as opposed to non-professional roles (Shury et al, 2017).

Proactively reaching out to students to inform them about available support services has been shown to have a beneficial impact on student outcomes. Those who actively participate in support services demonstrate higher retention rates and achieve superior educational outcomes in comparison to their peers who do not utilize such services (Burke, 2019).

Studies show a strong association with better graduate outcomes for students who have engaged in work experience²⁷.

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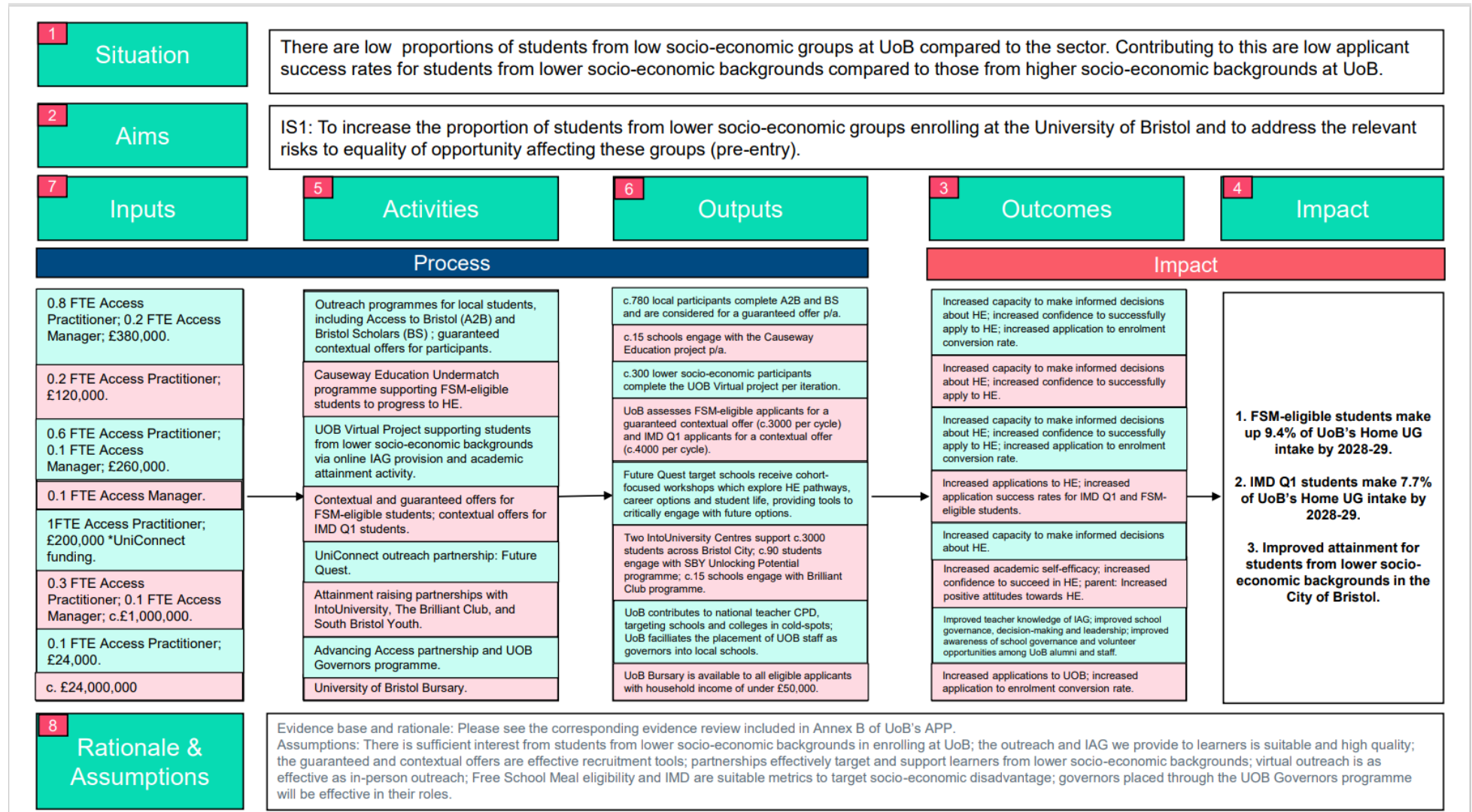
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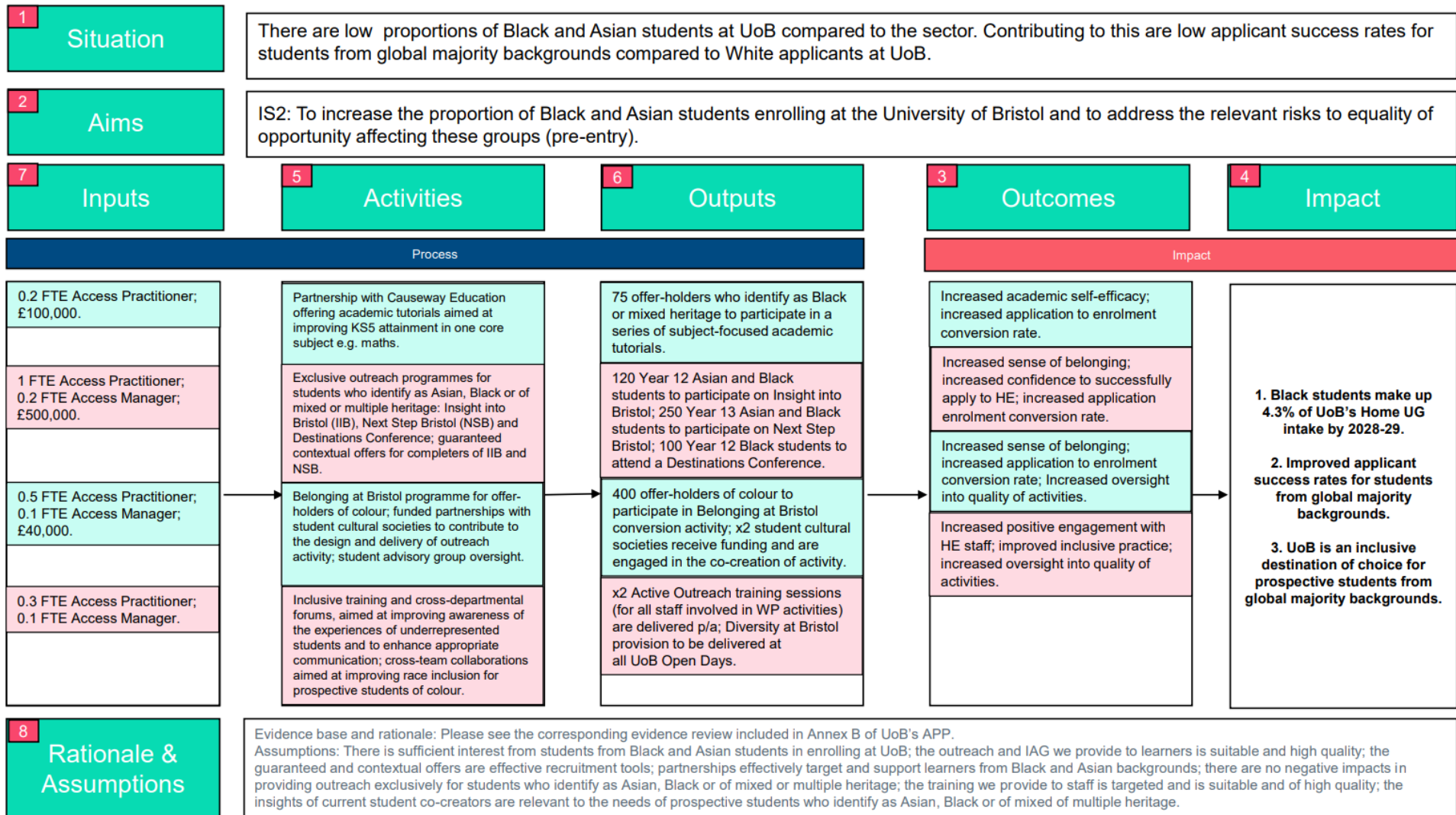
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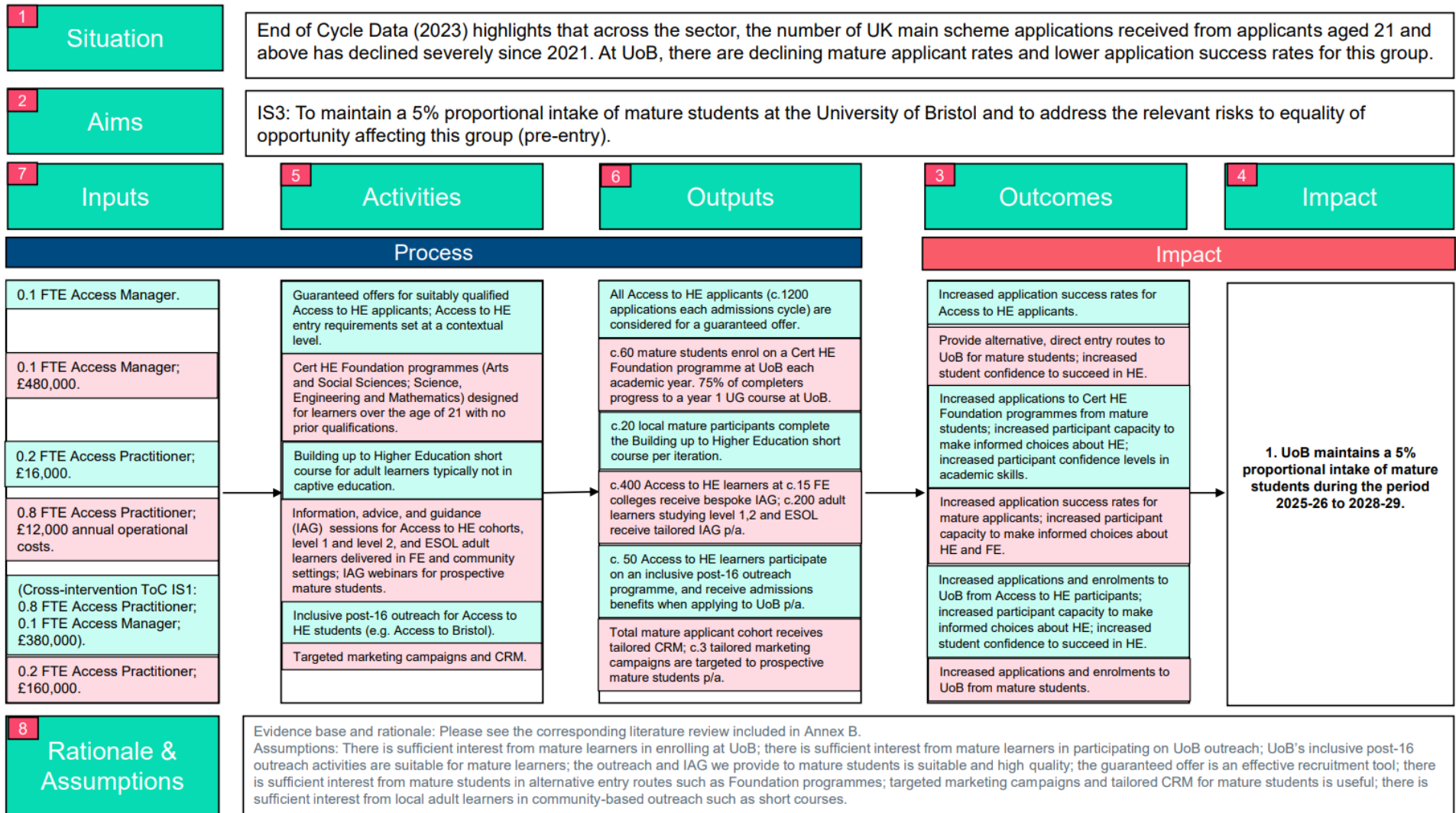
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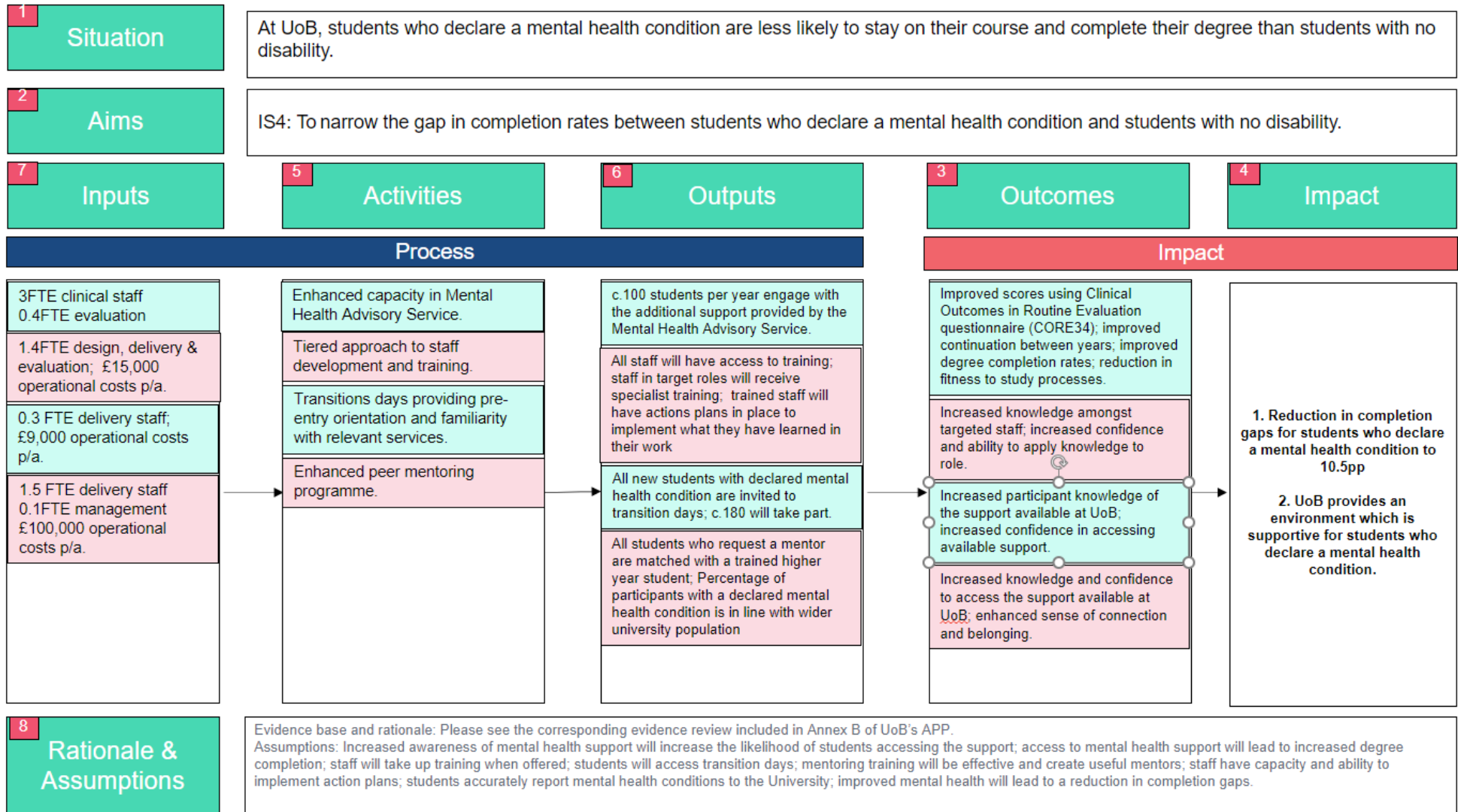
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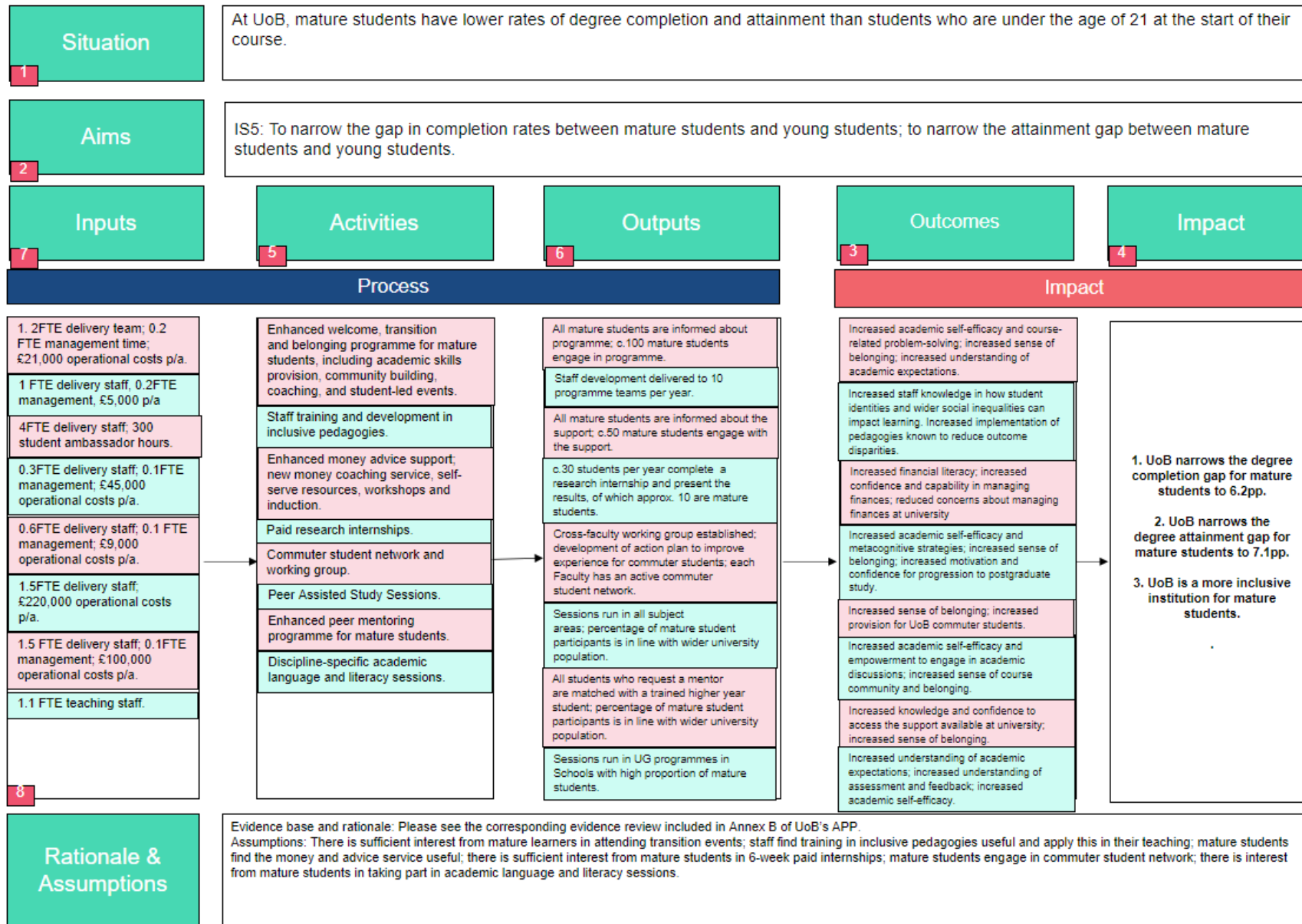
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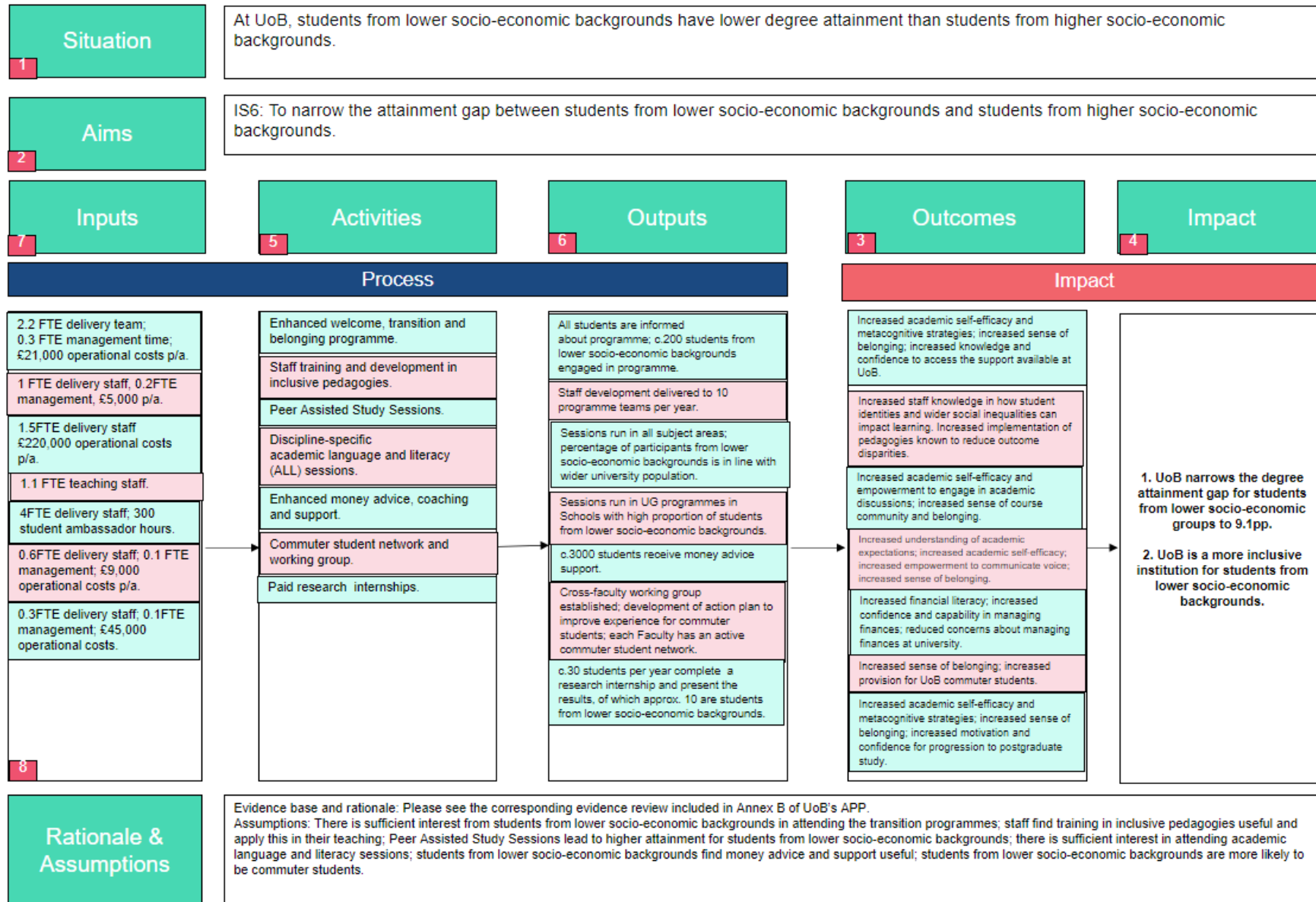
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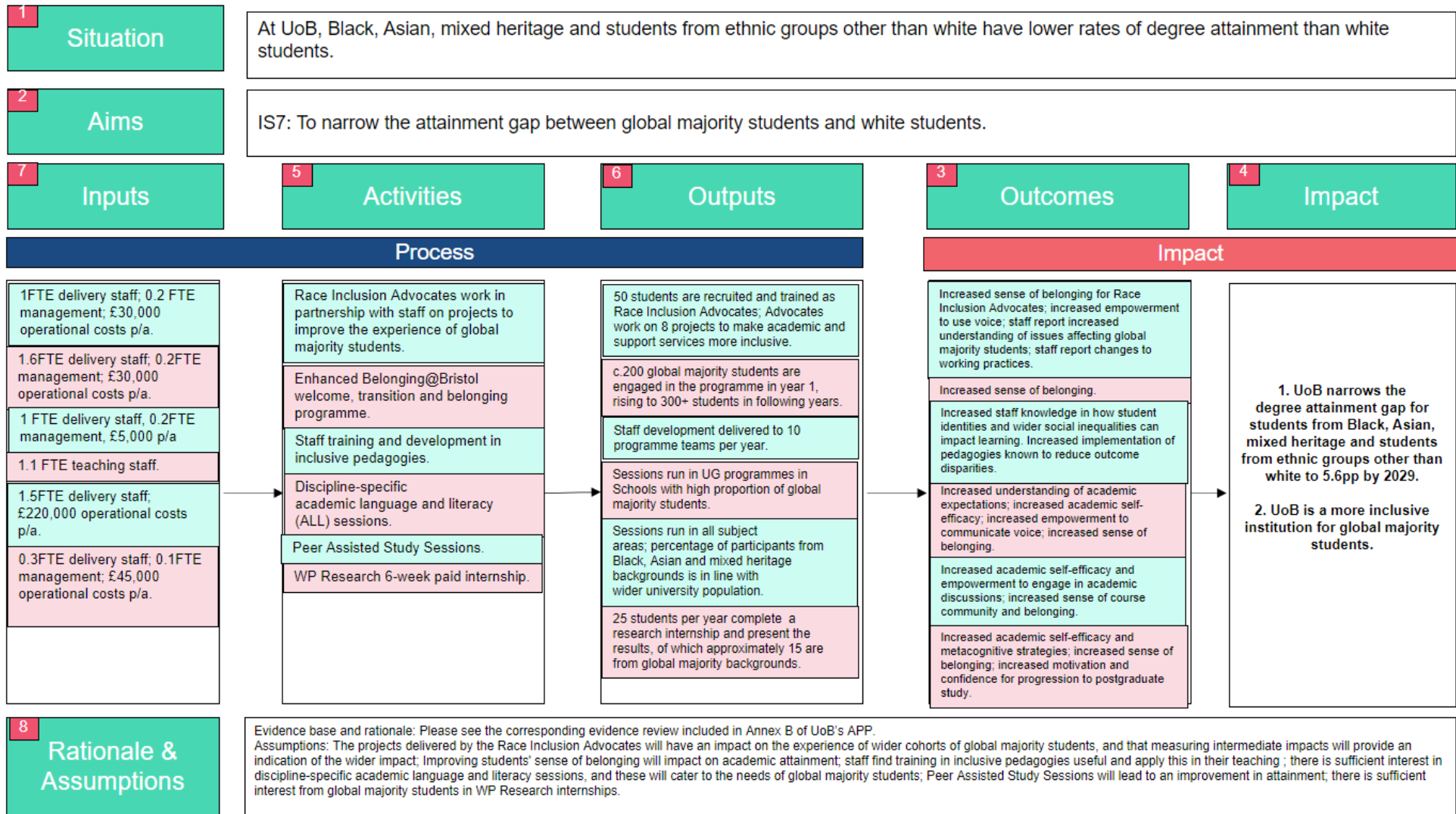
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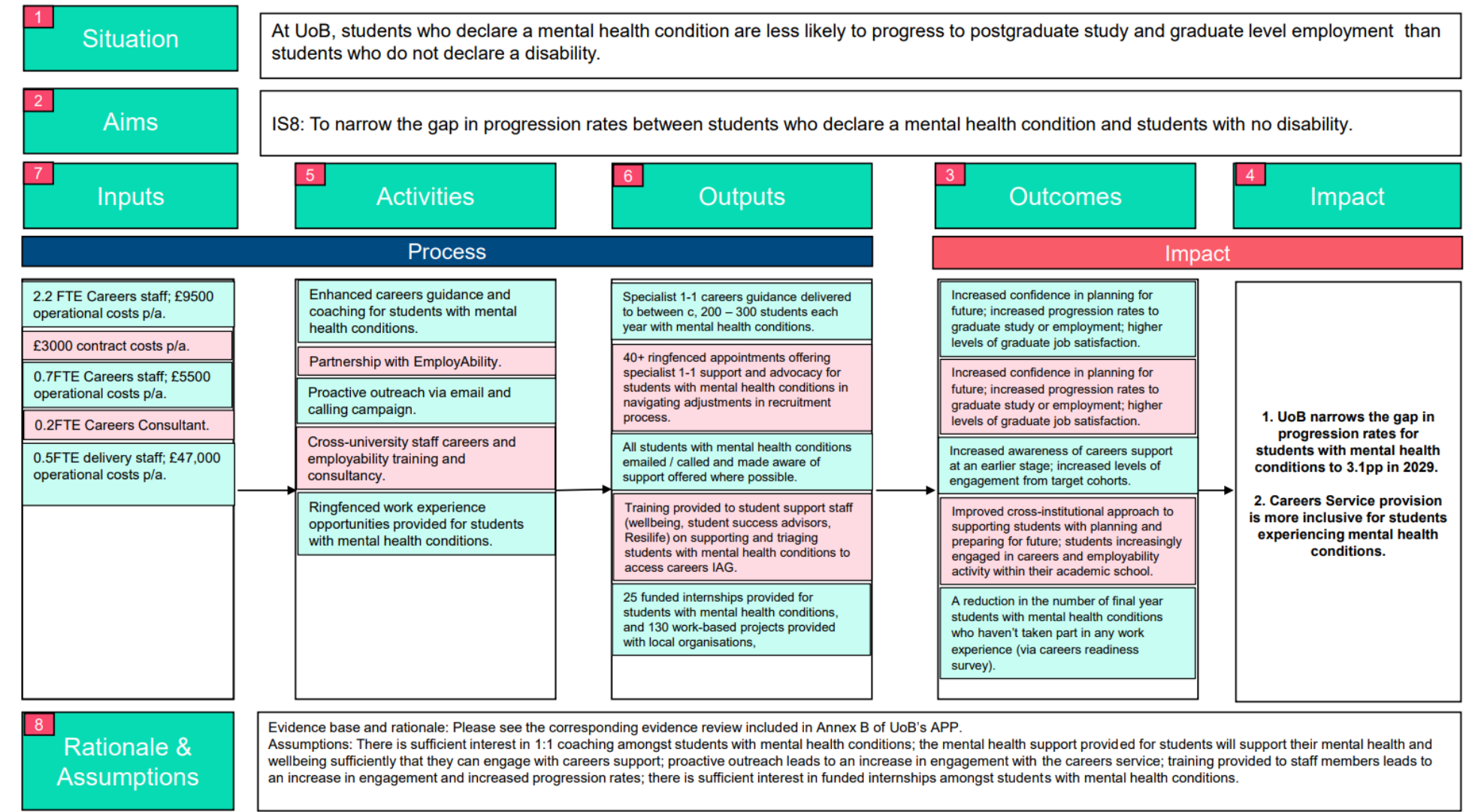
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Theory of change IS7



Theory of change IS8



Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University of Bristol

Provider UKPRN: 10007786

Summary of 2025-26 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflation statement:

The University of Bristol's home undergraduate tuition fees for 2024/25 are currently set at £9250 for the majority of our programmes. This is in line with the upper limit allowed by the government. If the government lifts the limit it is likely that the University will raise fees to reflect this. Students who enrol in 2025/26 and other years covered by this APP should be aware that their fees in subsequent years could rise in line with the Government's maximum permitted increase.

Table 3b - Full-time course fee levels for 2025-26 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	Post 2027/18 starters	N/A	9250
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	Clinical Gateway	N/A	9250
Foundation year/Year 0	Foundation in Arts & Social Sciences and in Science, Engineering & Maths	N/A	6300
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	PGCE School Direct	N/A	9250
Postgraduate ITT	PGCE Standard	N/A	9250
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	Erasmus and overseas study year	N/A	1385
Sandwich year	Sandwich course	N/A	1385
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 3b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2025-26

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Table 4b - Part-time course fee levels for 2025-26 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	English Literature & Community Engagement	N/A	4100
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2025-26

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University of Bristol

Provider UKPRN: 10007786

Investment summary

A provider is expected to submit information about its forecasted investment to achieve the objectives of its access and participation plan in respect of the following areas: access, financial support and research and evaluation. Note that this does not necessarily represent the total amount spent by a provider in these areas. Table 6b provides a summary of the forecasted investment, across the four academic years covered by the plan, and Table 6d gives a more detailed breakdown.

Notes about the data:

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

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

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

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

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

Table 6b - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£1,392,000	£1,391,000	£1,399,000	£1,401,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£8,585,000	£8,580,000	£8,629,000	£8,640,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£370,000	£369,000	£371,000	£372,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£325,000	£324,000	£332,000	£334,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£712,000	£712,000	£712,000	£712,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£355,000	£355,000	£355,000	£355,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£1,392,000	£1,391,000	£1,399,000	£1,401,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment (as % of HFI)	2.8%	2.8%	2.8%	2.8%
Access activity investment	Total access investment funded from HFI (£)	£1,292,000	£1,291,000	£1,299,000	£1,301,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£7,881,000	£7,876,000	£7,921,000	£7,931,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£34,000	£34,000	£35,000	£35,000
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£670,000	£670,000	£673,000	£674,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£8,585,000	£8,580,000	£8,629,000	£8,640,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)	17.4%	17.4%	17.4%	17.4%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£370,000	£369,000	£371,000	£372,000
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University of Bristol

Provider UKPRN: 10007786

Targets

Table 5b: Access and/or raising attainment targets

Aim [500 characters maximum]	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
Increase the proportion of IMD quintile 1 students to 7.7% by 2028-29. This target applies to our full-time undergraduate UK-domiciled student cohort.	PTA_1	Access	Deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivations (IMD))	IMD quintile 1	N/A	N/A	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	5.8	6.3	6.8	7.2	7.7
Increase the proportion of FSM eligible students to 9.4% by 2028-29. This target applies to our full-time undergraduate UK-domiciled student cohort.	PTA_2	Access	Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)	Eligible		N/A	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	7.1	7.7	8.3	8.8	9.4
Increase the proportion of Black students to 4.3% by 2028-29. This target applies to our full-time undergraduate UK-domiciled student cohort.	PTA_3	Access	Ethnicity	Black		N/A	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	2.2	2.7	3.3	3.8	4.3
Maintain a 5% intake of mature students for the duration of this plan. This target applies to our full-time undergraduate UK-domiciled student cohort.	PTA_4	Access	Age	Mature (over 21)		UCAS End of Cycle Data (2023) highlights that across the sector, the number of UK main scheme applications received from applicants aged 21 and above has declined severely since 2021. We see this also reflected in our own data for 22-23. Our access target for mature students recognises that striving to maintain a 5% proportional intake of mature students against the national backdrop of declining mature applications during a period of increasing selectivity at UoB will be ambitious.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	4.7	5	5	5	5
	PTA_5														
	PTA_6														
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
Narrow the gap in completion rates between students declaring a mental health condition and students with no reported disability to 6.2pp by 2028-29. This target applies to our full-time undergraduate UK-domiciled student cohort.	PTS_1	Completion	Reported disability	Mental health condition	No disability reported	N/A	No	The access and participation dashboard	2017-18	Percentage points	9.2	8.5	7.7	7.0	6.2
Narrow the gap in completion rates between mature students and young students to 10.5pp by 2028-29. This target applies to our full-time undergraduate UK-domiciled student cohort.	PTS_2	Completion	Age	Mature (over 21)	Young (under 21)	N/A	No	The access and participation dashboard	2017-18	Percentage points	15.6	14.3	13.1	11.8	10.5
Narrow the attainment gap between mature students and young students to 7.1pp by 2028-29. This target applies to our full-time undergraduate UK-domiciled student cohort.	PTS_3	Attainment	Age	Mature (over 21)	Young (under 21)	N/A	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage points	10.6	9.7	8.9	8	7.1

