

Access and Participation Plan

20/21-24/25



Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

The University of Exeter is committed to the principle that everyone with the potential to benefit from higher education should have equal opportunity to do so. We believe that fair access to higher education is a fundamental enabler for social mobility, improving life opportunities and outcomes for individual students, while benefiting the economy and society as a whole. Increasing equality of opportunity for students at all stages is a priority for this University. While we have seen sustained improvements in the diversity of our student body, and high rates of retention, attainment and progression, we know there is much more to do, particularly around access and in closing the gaps between different student groups.

Widening Participation has been a long-term commitment for this University and under the leadership of our Vice Chancellor's Executive Group we have sought to be at the forefront of innovations now widely accepted as good practice, including early adoption of contextualised offer making; school sponsorship to support pupil attainment; and the development of learning analytics to help students manage their academic performance. More recently, we have invested in a Centre for Social Mobility, which we believe is a unique forum in which researchers and practitioners work together to achieve a common impact agenda. We are hopeful the evaluation toolkit developed by the Centre for the OfS together with its leadership of the evaluation capability support for National Outreach Collaborative Partnerships will help practitioners nationwide in developing effective interventions and that the Centre will continue to make valuable contributions to sector knowledge and practice in years to come. We welcome the approaches taken by the Office to Students to encourage this University and the sector to be ambitious, transparent and evidence-led. We believe this plan is both considered and high-reaching, and most importantly will bring about positive outcomes.

1. Assessment of performance

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

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

1.1 Local context

The University's local region of Devon and Cornwall covers around 4,000 square miles and extends 180 miles from the Somerset border to the Isles of Scilly. Coastal and largely rural, the main population centres are Plymouth, Exeter and Torbay, which account for almost one third of the total

population of around 1.7 million. While generally standards of living are good, the area contains pockets of deprivation, with 59 lower-layer super output areas (LSOAs) within the most deprived 10% of areas in England. These include 27 neighbourhoods in Plymouth (including Stonehouse among the 1% most deprived); 14 in Torbay; 17 in Cornwall; two in Exeter and two in North Devon. HEFCE's Gap Ward analysis shows the two counties have an average young participation rate in higher education of 31.9% compared with 41.6% for Greater London. Over 8% of wards within Devon and Cornwall fall into the lowest 20% of young people entering higher education in England.

The area includes 23% of England's coastal communities. Three of these – Torbay, Torridge and North Devon – are amongst the 10 worst local authority areas in the UK for lowest average pay, whilst Torridge has one of the country's highest unemployment rates¹. The two counties have long associations with the military, particularly the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, and host major bases including Stonehouse, Chivenor, Lymptone and Raleigh.

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

The area has low levels of ethnic diversity. The population of Cornwall, for example, is just 1.4% Asian/Asian British and 0.7% Black/Black British compared with a national average of 7.5% and 3.3% respectively. While the University is ethnically diverse, welcoming students from more than 150 different countries from around the world, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students make up a smaller proportion of the UK/EU cohort than the sector and Russell Group averages. We want to create a more diverse student community and are achieving this by extending our outreach into areas beyond the South West such as London and Birmingham.

As a leading employer, we contribute substantially to social mobility through job creation and generating income within the region and are active in supporting regional prosperity and communities through our Regional Skills and Community Strategies. An economic impact assessment in 2017, concluded the University contributed £777.8m of output and 7,805 FTE jobs in the Heart of the South West LEP and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly LEP areas in 2015/16, making an overall contribution to local GVA of £443.8m².

1.2 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

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

¹ Living on the Edge: Britain's Coastal Communities, Social Mobility Foundation, 2017

² The Economic Impact of the University of Exeter, Viewforth Consulting Ltd, 2017

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

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

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

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

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access: We have made considerable progressing in increasing the ethnic diversity of our UK cohort (rising from 7.2% in 13/14 to 10.9% in 17/18). The largest increase has been in Black or Black British

students, who in 18/19 made up 17% of our BAME entrants. A further 39% were of mixed ethnicity, 38% were Asian or Asian British, and 6% Arab or other ethnic origin. We acknowledge the proportion of Black students is still low when viewed in a national context but as 7% of 18-19yr olds in the South West are BAME and 13% in the South East³ our progress is encouraging taking into account our main recruitment areas. Over the last two years we have expanded significantly our efforts increase BAME recruitment and specifically to work with BAME students who also meet WP criteria. We can see that these activities have made an impact and we continue to refine our approaches. We continue to work hard to increase our diversity and build on this trajectory which is reflected in **PTA 4:**

Percentage of BAME entrants.

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

Attainment: The differing experiences of BAME ethnic groups is most evident in attainment: there is a 20ppt gap for Black students achieving Good Honours (increasing from 10ppt in 13/14), compared to a 10ppt gap for Asian students (down from 15ppt in 13/14) and 5ppt for students from a Mixed BAME ethnic group (the same gap in 13/14). This reflects the national picture, where there is a 23ppt Black attainment gap and lesser gaps for Asian (11ppt) and Mixed (4ppt) ethnic groups. The target (**PTS 3. Black student attainment gap v White – OfS KPM4**) is focused on Black students where the gap is particularly pronounced. However, we recognise the evident Asian attainment gap and will continue to work on the overall BAME attainment gap to ensure that we address all areas of inequality. Internal analysis indicates that although figures vary due to small numbers, overall for both Asian and Black ethnic groups the gap is larger for men than women. In addition, the OfS dataset shows that the BAME attainment gap is twice as large for IMD Q1&2 students (17ppt) compared to Q3-5 (8ppt), which will help inform the design and delivery of our interventions. We are committed to making significant strides in reducing these gaps and learning from sector best practice and research in this crucial area.

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

1.3 Mature students

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

Non-continuation: Despite having good retention rates in comparison to the sector, we are very aware that our mature students are less likely than their peers to continue into the second year. The

³ 2011 Census

gap, although subject to small numbers, is statistically significant and has been sustained over the past three years, dropping slightly to 9ppt in 16/17. This gap combined with our desire to increase mature student access has informed our target **PTS 2: Mature non-continuation gap**.

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

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

1.4 Disabled students

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

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

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

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

1.5 Care leavers

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

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

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

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

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

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

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

We recognise that whilst we understand some of the intersections there is still more work to do and we have found this approach helpful in refining our understanding. We note that although there is clear complementarity with the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, the national and University approach to Access and Participation does not include specific approaches around: sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity/paternity and religion and

belief. However these characteristics sometimes form an important part of our analytical and practical considerations around a particular issue e.g. the safeguarding agenda, student mental health and work to protect and support religion and belief.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

We are working with carers and starting to collect data from entrants from 17/18 on students estranged from their families and from 20/21 for children from military families. Internal intelligence suggests the latter group could be quite a significant size which is why we will introduce a formal data collection process in time for this plan. Entrant data for people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and refugees is collected from UCAS and we are developing our understanding here.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

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

- Diversity, fair access and inclusivity
- A whole student lifecycle approach
- Collaboration and partnership
- Evidence-based practice

2.1 Aims and objectives

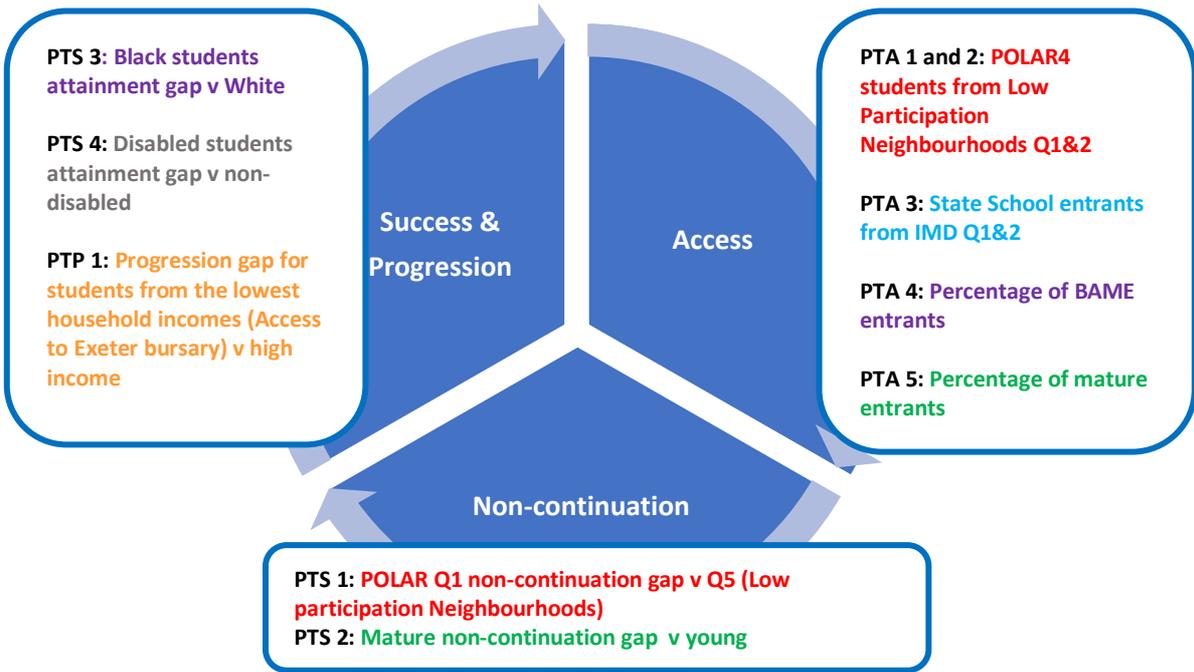
Our targets are designed to further our institutional ambitions around three strategic aims:

Strategic aims	Objectives (to deliver the aims)	Measured by: Targets and milestones
1. Improve access to the University of Exeter and work collaboratively within our region and to better understand and address barriers to social mobility	a. Support the attainment of school pupils, particularly at GCSE and level 3, to enable them to progress to higher education b. Take a leading role within our region to build capacity, identify and address barriers, and work collaboratively on solutions c. Widen and diversify our applicant pool across key student groups and optimise conversion d. Encourage, support and prepare prospective students to enter higher education	PTA 1. Ratio of entrants who are from POLAR4 Q1&2 v Q4&5 (target 1:3 from 1:4.7) (linked to OfS KPM 2) PTA 2. Ratio of entrants from the South West from POLAR4 Q1&2 v Q4&5 (target 1:1 from 1:1.5) (linked to OfS KPM 2) PTA 3. Percentage of entrants from IMD 1&2 and state school (target 13% from 11%) PTA 4. Percentage of BAME entrants (target 15% from 10.1%) PTA 5. Percentage of mature entrants (target 8% from 5.8%)
2. Address the causes of observable gaps in success and progression for key groups	a. Minimise the observed gaps in non-continuation rates between key groups by 2030 b. Minimise the observed gaps in attainment and achievement of	PTS 1. POLAR4 Q1 non-continuation gap v Q5 (target 2.5ppt from 4ppt) (linked to OfS KPM 3) PTS 2. Mature non-continuation gap v young (target 7.5ppt from 9ppt)

	graduate outcomes between key groups of students by 2030	<p>PTS 3. Black students attainment gap v White (target 12ppt from 20ppt) (linked to OfS KPM 4)</p> <p>PTS 4. Disabled students attainment gap v non-disabled (target 0.5ppt from 3ppt) (linked to OfS KPM 5)</p> <p>PTP 1: Progression gap for students from the lowest household incomes (Access to Exeter bursary) v high income (target 1.5ppt from 3.1ppt)</p>
3. Enable an inclusive university culture where all can fulfil their potential	<p>Build on national research and expertise in this area to deliver visible change within the next five/ten years to underpin strategic aims 1 and 2. We will measure this aim by a university-wide framework which will align with the strategic measures within our forthcoming Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity strategy, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the non-continuation and success targets above • Meeting internal targets and KPIs relating to all key groups and students with protected characteristics across the student life cycle • Achieving and sustaining key charter marks such as Athena SWAN, Race Equality Chartermark and Mental Health mark • Qualitative feedback 	

2.2 Target groups

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



Some groups appear across the lifecycle more than once, such as mature students and BAME students, because our analysis has shown that these groups persistently under-perform in relation to their peers across the student lifecycle and the key indicators.

2.2.1 Commitment to care leavers and under-represented groups

We have had a package in place to attract and support care leavers for many years (aspects of which- such as our fee waiver- are sector leading) and we share and welcome the emphasis of the OfS in supporting students from other under-represented groups. This APP shows how we will incorporate proactive and substantial support at all stages of the lifecycle for all under-represented groups which span everything from capturing better data at entry (and improving our evidence base around emerging cohorts such as military families, travellers and asylum seekers); supporting transition via our tailored conference programme; and ensuring we can support student needs through appropriate packages of financial support (such as our estranged students and student carers bursaries) and other work to be piloted and evaluated such as a community initiative. We are also active participants and signatories of the Stand Alone Pledge.

For this APP, we intend to channel our strategic focus and resources for care leavers through our comprehensive and sector-leading Care Leaver Covenant (see link via our Care Leavers web pages) which is designed to ensure we are fully compliant- and where possible go beyond- the quality framework being piloted by NNECL (for which we have been a pilot institution). As well as maintaining excellent local links across Devon and Cornwall to run focused outreach activities, we continue to learn from sector best practice around care leavers, leading and contributing to sector developments through our roles on the NNECL national steering group and by being one of eight pilot institutions for the new NNECL quality mark.

2.2.2 Postgraduate students

We are keen to progress work to further understand the profile of our postgraduate taught and research population to understand if some of the characteristics and trends we see in our undergraduate population are perpetuated. We note that Research Councils are now taking a more active interest in the social mobility aspects of research, and that research programme applications are including a specific section asking how the University will ensure they widen participation with regards to intake if successful, for example. We are supportive of such moves and will continue to pursue this emerging issue. We would welcome OfS support and research to help progress this agenda e.g. through research, datasets and opportunities to align policy initiatives with other bodies such as Research England.

3. Strategic measures

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

3.1 Whole provider approach to social mobility

The University continues to make significant progress towards developing a holistic approach for supporting social mobility across the organisation and student life cycle. Our approach is informed by sector guidance such as the HEA framework for student access, retention attainment and progression at HE⁴ and the OFFA Whole Institution Approach toolkit⁵, which recommend joined up systemic approaches across the student life cycle. Our Access and Participation Plan has been developed at the same time as our new Education Strategy; and during the early stages of work to inform our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Wellbeing Action Plan; which will help align priorities and strategic approaches and infrastructure. We are fully aware that messaging within strategy documents is important, but what matters most is how those plans are translated operationally to affect change on the ground to the benefit of students. We will develop robust operational strands with clear lines of accountability, budgeting, strategic direction and reporting, to ensure that these highly complex and inter-linked series of actions are achieved successfully and collaboratively.

Measure	Current and future provision
Alignment of strategic plans	Our Access and Participation Plan has been developed at the same time as our new Education Strategy (2020); Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2019); and Wellbeing Action Plan (2019) which will help align priorities and strategic approaches. Involving extensive consultation with students and staff and drawing on the work of the Provost Commission to address inclusivity within our student and organisational structure, this planning framework will be underpinned by a robust operational plan and monitored through the relevant committees reporting to our Vice Chancellor's Executive Group, Council and Senate, with clear accountability.
Data, business intelligence and research are	We continue to make excellent progress in building a robust evidence framework to enable us to monitor performance and inform strategic decision making. Our WP, Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) and Business Intelligence (BI) teams have been working jointly to integrate data capture, monitoring and dashboards through our business intelligence system. These performance

⁴ Framework for student access, retention, attainment and progression in higher education, The Higher Education Academy, 2015

⁵ Understanding a whole institution approach to higher education, Office for Fair Access, 2017

used to inform decision making	dashboards will underpin our operational plans and governance. Working with colleagues in Registry, we will continue to extend the information we capture about our students when they enrol, so we can better monitor performance and deliver targeted interventions to key student groups including those with protected characteristics and under-represented groups. We will also seek to align our dashboards and reporting with our TEF, Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) and Learning Analytics reporting framework, to ensure we have a comprehensive picture of student experience to a granular level.
Whole life cycle approach	A significant amount of work has been carried out over the last two years to ensure we provide holistic support to students at the various stages of their journey into and through higher education and this will continue and become more robust during the duration of this plan. Following a systematic review of provision for students with diverse characteristics, considerable steps have been taken to join up provision across teams; fill gaps in support (e.g. for estranged student and carers); enhance our analytical capabilities and use of data; improve governance and share information systematically within academic colleges and professional services. This is driven via our governance structure for social mobility which includes cross-University representation, faculty groups, and a planning model addressing all stages of the student life cycle. Examples of our developing approaches include embedding teaching enrichment, tutoring, peer mentoring, skills development, transition, wellbeing and employability within outreach and fair access; development of our induction and transition programmes; joint initiatives between our Centre for Social Mobility and Education Incubator to research and disseminate good practice relating to teaching practice, the curriculum, contextual offer making, and transition; and joint development /execution of initiatives across teams to support specific student groups across all stages (e.g. mature, estranged, carers and care leavers).
Cross-university contribution to W/P	We have a network of W/P specialists and champions across the University who meet regularly within our governance structures and project teams, but also more informally through the Centre for Social Mobility and on a spontaneous basis to share information and support. We have specific W/P roles within recruitment, academic skills, wellbeing, and employability teams and within our academic faculties. This network of roles and support is ever-growing as we expand our circle of informal W/P champions across all areas and campuses within the University. Training and support for staff and students is also expanding with seminars, networking and research events run by the Centre, Education Incubator and Graduate School of Education. Linking up with our Q-Step Centre, College teams and Research Directorate, we are also developing a range of approaches to better embed widening participation within research e.g. via our academic and PhD training/development; research projects, dissemination of results and impact; and the creation of research-based placements for pupils/students from W/P groups. Recognition of W/P is built in to systems including our work allocation and staff reward systems.
Involvement of students and alumni	We take pride in the strong and collaborative relationships we have with our students. Our Student Guild and the Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union are involved in the development of this plan, are active members of our social mobility governance structure and have facilitated consultation to support this important agenda. Our students are also involved in the co-creation of research and initiatives to support widening participation e.g. through our Education Incubator; Centre for Social Mobility; Education Partners; Students as Change Agents and staff/student liaison committees. They participate in our annual Social Mobility Conference and are

	more widely involved in our EDI and Education structures. We also continue to strengthen relationships with our alumni to support widening participation, through the donation of time/expertise; career mentoring; work placements and funding.
Finance and resources	Finance and resources to support WP are allocated based on our implementation plan and monitored through our social mobility governance structure. This approach provides line of sight over expenditure and staffing to enable resources to be optimised for the benefit of our students.

3.2 Access measures

Access remains the biggest priority for the university in terms of closing gaps in disadvantage and under-representation. This is also the area over which we have least control, is most vulnerable to changes in policy and market forces, and in which a multiplicity of contributory factors affect the outcomes of individual students long before they start their first university application. This is not an excuse for inaction – we are absolutely dedicated to improvement - but it is important to acknowledge the complexities we face as an institution at the end of the students’ journey through the educational system. However bold high tariff institutions become in their admissions practices, this alone is not sufficient to materially redress the gaps in social disadvantage without a reduction in gaps between key groups when it comes to attainment at GCSE. We already work very actively within our region to support local schools to improve the outcomes of pupils – indeed 35.1% of our South West entrants are POLAR4 Q1/2 compared with 13.5% of our entrants from elsewhere - but we recognise there is more to do and better joining up across our region can only help to multiply impact.

This plan has been written at a time of uncertainty about the future of NCOP and the role of the Outreach Hub. We are committed to and support both these regional initiatives, and have considered how we can use our expertise and resources to support this partnership at the same time as being ambitious about the role we can take within the region to enhance capacity in a way which is sustainable, given the likelihood that both these initiatives may not be in place for a substantial period of time covered by this plan. We will therefore seek to **build capacity within our region** by increasing significantly our activities to understand the factors affecting social mobility in our area and how these barriers might be overcome and by creating a regional training hub through the Centre for Social Mobility for regional practitioners to increase knowledge and skills relating to evidence-based practice and evaluation. We will also work with our partners in the South West Institute of Technology, to build skills and regional expertise in digital, engineering and manufacturing technologies. This will involve a particular focus on the development of level 4 qualifications as part of a progression framework including T-levels and Degree Apprenticeships. A key strategic aim of the Institute will be to increase participation and achievement by under-represented and disadvantaged groups. While not delivered directly through this plan, this and initiatives such as the skills escalator to increase capacity in data analytics across the region, are relevant to the broader social mobility agenda.

Analysis suggests most of the socio-economic gap in HE participation in England can be explained by the fact that poorer students have lower levels of attainment at GCSE and Key Stage 5. We see this gap perpetuated within our own fair access programmes, which experience attrition between pre and post-16 progression as pupils fail to achieve our requirements relating to GCSE maths and English. The University has been progressive in its involvement in school sponsorship and governance as a means to encourage and support high standards of performance within the region. We are keen to explore how we can harness the expertise of the Exeter Mathematics School and work collaboratively to support mathematics attainment at GCSE more widely to the

benefit of a greater volume of students. In addition to the measures described, it is important to acknowledge the University's wider contribution to supporting schools both regionally and nationally e.g. delivering excellent standards of initial teacher training and continuous professional development in teaching and schools' leadership via our Graduate School for Education, translational research to support teaching excellence, school leadership and inclusion; and the broader involvement of our staff in the governance of local schools and community outreach.

We recognise we can have very little impact on pupil attainment through our own agency alone, in which repetitive contact with pupils is limited to at most a handful of interventions each year. We have piloted various approaches to pupil support but the evidence-base for their efficacy is variable and, in any event, these approaches are simply not scalable. We will therefore focus on a) **supporting those agencies most able to improve pupil attainment** via governance, sponsorship, research and joint working; b) optimising our own outreach with pupils to support attainment with a **focus on numeracy, teaching enrichment and essential skills** within a progression framework.

The significant changes we have made to our fair access provision have, within a short time span, improved significantly progression to HE and the University of Exeter amongst participants. For example, we have increased progression from the Exeter Scholars programme⁶ to undergraduate study here by around 25% percent within a year; while wider application rates to university is at 90% for male participants compared to the national average of 31.8%. We have robust evaluation in place and are continuing to improve the programme addressing issues such as pre-16 progression, attainment, essential skills and resilience, to achieve greater impact. When taking into account all the considerable access and outreach work implemented by the university, it is Exeter Scholars which has the strongest evidence-base for success and truly supports pupils from challenging socio-economic backgrounds. We will **improve and expand Exeter Scholars** in order to build on the significant gains already made, with a fresh focus on pre-16 provision and pupil attainment.

We have a good evidence-base that our collaborative programmes with Realising Opportunities and the Sutton Trust, Pathways to Law, are transformative in affecting student knowledge, behaviours and outcomes. We remain committed to these initiatives and seek to work collaboratively with these and other partners during the life of this plan, whilst also acknowledging that these initiatives contribute to a wider pool of students progressing to higher education generally, rather than to the University of Exeter specifically. Likewise, we remain the most active contributor to our local NCOP, Next Steps South West, although due to the short time-span of this initiative, we have yet to see evidence it has been successful in increasing the volume of Q1 students from the region entering HE. We will also contribute actively to the new Outreach Hub, although again, we have no assurances about the future and intended impact of the initiative at the time of writing. However we continue to see the other benefits of regional collaboration especially in learning from the experiences of the breadth of types of institutions in the larger SW region; joining up effectively with the LEPs in the region; careers provision; and regional skills planning which we would hope to retain over and beyond the duration of this plan. **Collaboration is identified as a key strategic measure, but the nature of this collaboration is likely to change during the life cycle of this plan.** The partnerships described are therefore indicative of our commitment, but may be fluid.

⁶ <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/>

We have some evidence to show our Exeter Links partnerships with local schools have some impact on progression to study at the University, but we need a more robust evidence base to understand which elements of this approach are having most impact. We intend to improve our evidence base, change our model to improve engagement from schools, and enhance provision to meet joint outcomes, particularly relating to pupil attainment. We plan a **national Educational Partnership scheme** with key schools, colleges and organisations both within and outside our region to secure engagement within a progressive framework, while supporting both prospective students and staff in a way which meets jointly agreed objectives.

Irrespective of the success of the initiatives outlined, we will not achieve diversity within in our own undergraduate population unless prospective students perceive our University as a viable option for them and as a place of learning where they will belong and feel welcome. We know from our own research that confidence levels amongst state school pupils, and especially those meeting WP criteria, are lower than their peers and that a research intensive university like ours may simply not be a consideration, despite their potential to succeed. Our approach to contextualised admissions has been successful in improving access for students from LPN Q1 and internal analysis indicates that students receiving contextualised offers achieve good grades and graduate outcomes. We also recognise that regardless of our admissions policy, unless a sufficient volume of under-represented students choose us as a viable option then we will not achieve the levels of diversity we seek. We will therefore focus our UK recruitment activities around four main strands: a) **portfolio development to provide flexibility and student choice**; b) diversification of our marketing and communications to **position the University as an accessible choice**; c) **reducing obstacles in our admissions process** via offer making and related support; d) **conversion and transition** activities.

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

3.1.1 Objective 1a: Support the attainment of school pupils, particularly at GCSE and level 3, to enable them to progress to higher education
Objective 1b: Take a leading role within our region to build capacity, identify and address barriers, and work creatively on solutions

Strategic aim	Barriers (underpinning research and assumptions)	Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)	Evaluation methodology	Activity outputs	Anticipated outcomes (linked to targets: PTA1; PTA2; PTA2)	Share and learn
<p>1. Improve access to the University of Exeter and work collaboratively within our region and to better understand and address barriers to social mobility</p>	<p>Analysis suggests most gap in HE participation in England can be explained by the fact that poorer students have lower levels of attainment at GCSE and Key Stage 5⁷</p> <p>Recent analysis by the Russell Group has shown the pool of POLAR LPN Q1 students achieving typical entry grades for high tariff institutions is just 6% nationwide.</p> <p>Essential life skills such as confidence, motivation, resilience and communication are associated with better academic outcomes</p>	<p>1. Build regional capacity</p> <p>a. Work with regional partners to better understand and address the contributory factors of social mobility within the region, drawing on expertise of our Centre for Social Mobility.</p> <p>b. Develop a 'regional development and knowledge exchange hub' for practitioners and other stakeholders via our Centre for Social Mobility.</p> <p>c. Explore partnership with Exeter Mathematics School to deliver joint outreach for students meeting WP criteria in mathematics with a focus on GCSE</p> <p>d. Explore opportunities to work with regional partners and major charities to develop a coordinated approach for social mobility for the region, including piloting approaches to access.</p> <p>2. School governance and performance</p> <p>a. Governance and sponsorship arrangements of primary and secondary schools within our region, to support the raising of school performance standards within the South West i.e. Exeter Mathematics School; Ted Wragg Trust; and South Devon UTC.</p>	<p>Evaluation will be built into a collaborative research project from the outset (a).</p> <p>Light touch evaluation via stakeholder consultation (b).</p> <p>Specific evaluation measures and/or research will be built in to any new initiative from the outset as per our evaluation strategy action plan, appropriate to the level of investment (c, d).</p>	<p>Form collaborative partnership and agreed framework for regional research, with related programme of testing interventions (a).</p> <p>Seminars, conferences, and other development events and support regional partners, share expertise and create opportunities for joint working (b).</p> <p>Numeracy project feasibility report and recommendations/ actions as appropriate (c).</p>	<p>Growing understanding of barriers to social mobility within the region and related interventions.</p> <p>Increased capacity within our region to support social mobility.</p> <p>Strong local partnerships and shared knowledge and expertise.</p> <p>Students achieve higher standards of numeracy</p> <p>Good standards of school performance and governance</p> <p>Appropriate support and programmes for FSM pupils</p>	<p>Regional practitioner network; NCOP; Centre for Social Mobility events; TASO</p> <p>MAT Schools partnerships; Local education forums building on opportunities already in place</p>

⁷ Vignoles, Anna and Murray, Neil (2016) Widening participation in higher education. Education Sciences, 6 (2).

and better prospects in the workplace. ⁸	<p>Low levels of knowledge amongst parents of WP pupils in comparison with peers⁹.</p> <p>Analysis and review of existing programme evaluation; stakeholder research and Findings of Parents as Influencers' of University ambition.</p> <p>The DfE has identified the need for cross-sector collaboration to raise pupil attainment, particularly in teaching, curriculum, leadership and targeted partnership activity.¹⁰</p>	<p>3. Pupil and family support</p> <p>a. Develop our pre-16 University of Scholars strand to increase focus on skills development and teaching enrichment to better support attainment and increase progression post-16 to the wider programme.</p> <p>b. Continue to develop and expand the delivery of our outreach strands relating to skills development (including literacy; mathematics; study skills; resilience); teaching enrichment (linked to curriculum); student-based tutoring and peer support.</p> <p>c. Develop our tools and information for parents/carers available via multiple online and offline channels.</p> <p>d. Continued collaboration with IntoUniversity at the South Bristol Centre to provide academic skills and related support through a robust progression framework, from primary age upwards. We will seek to expand this relationship to support a greater volume of pupils from target LPN and/or IMD areas.</p>	<p>school sponsorship arrangements (a).</p> <p>Evaluation frameworks are in place for IntoUniversity and UOE Scholars relating to knowledge, attitudes, behaviour with qualitative and quantitative measures, plus comparator group analysis. We will seek to improve/refine. Type 1/ 2/3 where possible (a, e).</p> <p>Our outreach evaluation includes pre and post intervention assessments plus monitoring (Type 1, 2). Will seek to improve with other measures such as school feedback and teacher observation. Utilise HEAT (a, b, c, d).</p> <p>Specific evaluation measures and/or research will be built in to any new initiative from the outset as per our evaluation strategy action plan, appropriate to the level of investment.</p>	<p>teaching enrichment and other initiatives (a).</p> <p>HE presence in the community providing academic skills support for c. 2,500 pupils and their families (a).</p> <p>Structured pre-16 progression programme for c. 250 Yr 9/10 pupils p.a. with activities to support academic achievement and related essential skills (a, b).</p> <p>Agreed package of year-appropriate interventions (Y9/10) with partner and WP target schools as agreed with school to support agreed objectives (a, b, d).</p> <p>Community-based academic /support programmes for pupils aged 7-17 (d).</p>	<p>Greater proportion of pupils achieving good GCSEs and level 3 grades</p> <p>Participants achieve learning outcomes and report improved motivation to study</p> <p>Participants achieve grade attainment and progression to HE v comparator groups.</p> <p>Parents / carers report improved knowledge/preparedness for HE.</p> <p>Higher proportion of Junior Scholars achieving good GCSEs. Increased pre-post 16 progression rate for Scholars.</p> <p>Improved confidence, achievement academic and enabling skills</p>	<p>e.g. South West Academic Trust)</p> <p>IntoUniversity network NEON; RGWP; Regional forums; TASO</p>
<p>4. Work with Educators</p> <p>a. Create and deliver a new Education Partnership scheme for engaged target schools regionally and nationally; with objective-led and context-appropriate support and engagement within a</p>	<p>New evaluation framework including monitoring, pre/post session assessment, informal/formal stakeholder feedback. Type 1, 2. Will explore feasibility</p>	<p>Education Partnership scheme including target schools in SW and in key national regions with programme of related support (a).</p>	<p>Stronger relationships with partner schools.</p> <p>Eligible pupils and teachers/HE advisors in partner schools improve knowledge/skills.</p>	<p>HE Advisors; Graduate School of Education; Partnership network;</p>		

⁸ Cullinane C, Montacute R, Life Lessons, Improving Skills for Young People, Sutton Trust, 2017

⁹ Parents as Influencers of University Ambition, Alterline, 2018

¹⁰ Schools that work for everyone, Department for Education, 2018

	<p>progression framework, to better support pupils, advisors and educators. Development of existing Exeter Links scheme.</p> <p>b. Expand our information and training resources to HE Advisors and teachers via HE conferences, online tools (e.g. utilising our membership to Advancing Access).</p>	<p>of RCT or other type 3 evaluation (a).</p> <p>Pre/post event evaluation of individual sessions, tracking /analytics. Type 1, 2 (b).</p>	<p>University organised HE Advisors IAG/CPD sessions. Provision of online tools and resources and engagement programme, currently via collaborative partnerships (b).</p>	<p>Teachers / HE advisors are better equipped to support and enable their pupils.</p>	<p>Exeter Links and Education Partners: RGWP, TASO</p>
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3.1.2 Objective 1c: Widen and diversify our applicant pool across key student groups and optimise conversion

Strategic aim	Barriers (underpinning research and assumptions)	Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)	Evaluation methodology	Activity outputs	Anticipated outcomes (linked to targets: PTA1-5)	Share and learn
<p>1. Improve access to the University and work collaboratively within our region and to better understand and address barriers to social</p>	<p>Importance of flexible learning options to attract students who do not traditionally participate in HE. ¹¹</p> <p>Importance of consistent and sustained interventions within a structured and coherent framework. ¹²</p> <p>Flexible outreach work, aligned with inclusive approaches to admissions, flexible curriculum design and inclusive and embedded</p>	<p>1. Flexible provision and programme development</p> <p>a. Extend the range of Degree Apprenticeship programmes available across a range of applied discipline areas in conjunction with the business and public sector.</p> <p>b. Collaborate with FE College partners to offer routes into honours study at the University e.g. Exeter College/Business collaboration.</p> <p>c. Explore the development of foundation or similar programmes to offer viable progression routes into subject areas at honours level which have been traditionally hard to reach for under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds (subject to business case and programme approval).</p>	<p>As per evaluation of our education offer. Type 1, 2 (a), c).</p> <p>Progression monitoring: Type 1, 2 where possible (b, c, d).</p>	<p>Expand from 82 the places to 224 currently offered (predicted course profile = 65% WP and 30% mature) (a).</p> <p>Progression of students from FE into target subjects (b).</p> <p>New programmes in place (c).</p> <p>Review of provision/options for part-time learners and related measures (d).</p>	<p>A more flexible portfolio to give prospective students more course and study choices which better fit their circumstances.</p> <p>Accessible progression routes for students from non-traditional backgrounds into honours study at UoE.</p>	<p>Periodic review and reflection within academic colleges and WP governance.</p>

¹¹Moore, J.; Sanders, J.; Higham, L. Literature Review of Research into Widening Participation to Higher Education. 2013.

¹² Torgerson, Carole, Gascoine, Louise, Heaps, Claire, Menzies, Victoria, Younger, Kirsty, Higher Education access: evidence of effectiveness of university access strategies and approaches, Sutton Trust and Durham University, 2014

<p>pastoral support, are needed to widen adult participation in HE study.¹³</p> <p>Contextualised admissions needs to be part of an integrated approach that encompasses support and outreach prior to higher education and continues throughout the student lifecycle or student progression within higher education into further study and employment.¹⁴</p>	<p>d. Explore options for making our portfolio more accessible for part-time learners.</p> <p>2. Fair access and outreach</p> <p>a. Grow substantially and refine our successful fair access programme, University of Exeter Scholars, to increase the volume of students progressing to the University of Exeter.</p> <p>b. Develop and implement fair access strands specifically to better meet the needs of mature students.</p> <p>c. Strengthen our relationships with the FE College network to better support preparation/recruitment and transition of student with Access and BTFC qualifications.</p> <p>d. Review and improve where possible our progression strand and related practical and financial support for care leavers, working in collaboration with local authorities, NINECL, Unite and others as appropriate to ensure they meet best practice principles.¹⁵</p> <p>e. Introduce more structured and targeted engagement with schools and colleges, both South West and nationally, to offer appropriate advice and guidance; skills development; teaching enrichment; employability and HE preparedness sessions; within an age-appropriate progression framework to students with the potential to succeed at the University of Exeter.</p>	<p>Evaluation frameworks (type 1 and 2) are in place for UOE Scholars relating to knowledge, attitudes, behaviour with qualitative and quantitative measures, plus comparator group analysis (a, b).</p> <p>We are enhancing evaluation of our work with schools, which will include analysis of a range of tracking, monitoring and other data combined with qualitative research and informal feedback. Type 1, 2 and review opportunities for type 3 (b, c, d, e, f).</p>	<p>Structured Yr9-13 progression framework based on best practice principles, with associated transition support. Progression baseline of c. 100 students annually, with aim to raise this to 150 (a).</p> <p>More mature students apply/convert to study at UOE (b).</p> <p>Advice and guidance programme for mature students with related FE College engagement (b, c).</p> <p>Extended admissions criteria for care leavers and improved programme of support based on research (d).</p> <p>New IAG and skills sessions, mapped on to Gatsby benchmarks and curriculum (a, c, e, f).</p> <p>Research and development of new approaches to move our practice forwards.</p>	<p>Increase in students progressing to Exeter and HE via UOE fair access schemes.</p> <p>Increase in students progressing to research intensive universities via Realising Opportunities.</p> <p>Higher proportion of target students achieving grades</p> <p>Increase in mature student recruitment.</p> <p>Improved access to UOE for students with experience of being in care.</p>	<p>Exeter Scholars Annual Report; NEON; HELQA; NINECL; Education Partners; Outreach Hub; TASO;</p>
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¹³ Understanding the impact of outreach on access to higher education for adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds: an institutional response, Office for Fair Access, 2017

¹⁴ Mountford-Zimdars, Anna, Moore, Joanna and Graham, Janet (2016) Is contextualised admission the answer to the access challenge? Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education, Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2016.

¹⁵ Principles to guide higher education providers on improving care leavers access and participation in HE, Department of Education, 2014

f.	Develop and pilot, new fair access initiatives in response to emerging research as appropriate, particularly within our local SW context and in collaboration e.g. via the Outreach Hub.				CASE; Relevant national forums
<p>3. Communications and marketing</p> <p>a. Build brand recognition and confidence in schools and colleges whose students have the potential to enter and succeed at the University of Exeter, through a programme of stakeholder engagement and targeted communications.</p> <p>b. Ensure diversity is fully represented and catered for within our information and marketing materials for prospective students, so students can find the information they need and feel they are welcome.</p>	Evaluation via a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures and market research, including user testing and qualitative feedback (a, b).	Integrated marketing communications plans and activities across multiple channels to increase awareness of the University as an institution which values and welcomes diversity and which presents an option (a, b).	Students perceive the University as a viable choice for them. Students perceive the University as a place which values diversity in which they will be welcome. Greater volume of eligible students applying to Exeter		
<p>2. Admissions practice</p> <p>a. Build on long-standing commitment to contextual offers we will seek opportunities to extend our contextualised offer policy to a broader range of students and circumstances; remove unnecessary barriers to admissions presented through the application process; ensure these policies are transparently and effectively communicated.</p> <p>b. Create a level playing field for students undertaking additional selection processes to ensure no one is inadvertently disadvantaged because of their circumstances e.g. preparation and travel support for Medical School interview processes.</p> <p>c. Invest in expert admissions and student support to provide tailored advice and guidance to students from non-traditional backgrounds throughout the application process</p>	Extensive internal analysis of admissions data and linked reporting combined with student surveys and feedback.	Admissions policy which takes contextual factors into account in the offer making process in order to extend the range of offers dependent on personal and education factors (a). Interview preparation and other support measures for eligible students as part of the recruitment programme (b). Tailored student support through the admissions process (a, b, c).	Students do not experience unnecessary barriers within the Admissions process. Students understand their context will be taken into consideration at application. Students receive best possible information to enable them to navigate the recruitment process. Larger proportion of students receive contextual offers. Larger proportion of students convert.	HELQA; NEON; TASO; RGWP	

3.1.3 Objective 1d: Encourage, support and prepare prospective students to enter higher education

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

**It is noted the majority of our partnerships (including those below) will be subject to renewal (or the in case of NCOP, termination) during the period of this plan. And, it is also acknowledged that new partnerships may be formed in response to changes in context.*

3.2 Success and progression measures

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

Disaggregating our continual processes of improvement, particularly linked to our Education, EDI and Wellbeing strategies, from those strategic measures specifically designed or likely to address observable gaps is difficult within the confines of this plan. We have no statistically significant gaps in graduate outcomes, for example (and are mindful of changing metrics affecting targeting and baseline measures) and yet we would seek to maintain effective practice in this area. Similarly, addressing gaps in relation to our disabled students is impossible to disaggregate from the development and efficacy of our wellbeing and accessibility services. Reference is therefore made to these activities but they are not outlined in any depth. Likewise students with complex needs such as care leavers, carers and estranged students, are not statistically significant when it comes to observing gaps in success and progression, but to omit them would not align with the strategic aims presented within this plan. We are highly ambitious when it comes to making sure all our students have the tools and support they need to succeed. We therefore include strategic measures relating to these groups, even though the small number of individuals affected are unlikely to impact on the targets within this plan.

It should be also be noted that many of our approaches, particularly to success and progression, are not solely restricted to students meeting WP criteria or indeed home/EU fee payers, but instead are whole institution responses for the benefit of all students – those relating to inclusivity and wellbeing, are prime examples. We will therefore employ a range of institutional improvements supplemented where appropriate by initiatives and programmes for specific target groups, when the evidence suggests it is appropriate to do so. The strategic measures described therefore focus on those activities identified to specifically address gaps relating to core groups and are underpinned by measures relating to building an inclusive student and university culture.

HEFCE's Causes in Different Outcomes report¹⁶ concluded that retention and success are best addressed by approaches which seek to develop supportive peer relations; meaningful interaction between staff and students; knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners; and an HE experience that is relevant to students' interests and future goals. It also identified the importance of effective transition as a contributor to successful outcomes. In addition, the Transforming Transitions project has been particularly helpful in broadening our understanding of the barriers faced by students as they transition from one educational setting into another. While this work focused on students with BTECs in particular, we feel many of the learnings are transferrable to the general population and to mature students taking access qualifications in particular. We have tested approaches as part of this project and also within our practice – for example, holding our first transition conference for students meeting certain WP criteria in 2018 – but the next step will be to **integrate best practice approaches to transition within our recruitment and enrolment processes**. Our approach to transition will be threefold: 1) working with schools and FE Colleges to better prepare prospective students as part of the preparation for HE; 2) specific interventions for key

¹⁶ Mountford-Zimdars, Anna, Sabri, Duna, Moore, Joanna, Sanders, John, Jones Steven, Higham, Louise, Causes of differences in student outcomes, HEFCE, 2015.

groups pre and post enrolment, where evidence suggests it is appropriate to do so; 3) integrated approaches to the benefit of all students within a structured process of induction.

Our own internal analysis shows a correlation between a student's performance in Year 1 and their final outcomes. We also experience a series of pinch points within the first year when students are more likely to discontinue. In addition to all the issues students face in the first year – being away from home, stress and anxiety about being within a new environment, establishing relationships and getting to grips with a new educational environment – we are fully aware that each student has differing levels of knowledge and confidence relating to the key competencies required by first year study. We therefore view the first year as critical in optimising student outcomes, particularly for those groups of students where gaps are in evidence. **We will focus on making sure that Year 1 is as effective as possible in enabling all students to succeed.** We anticipate our approach to Year 1 will concentrate on the following areas: 1) working with students to identify their learning needs and putting in place interventions to enable all students to meet minimum requirements of academic skill and IT literacy; 2) Reviewing and enhancing our Year 1 programme structures and modules to ensure they fully support students to build levels of competency to achieve successful outcomes in future years; 3) Focusing on how we can work with students to build resilience and better support wellbeing.

We recognise that funding pressures for low income students materially affect success and progression. Our Access to Exeter Bursary is intended to support retention for those students with the lowest household incomes and indeed our evaluation shows that students in receipt of the bursary are as likely to continue as their peers. The bursary is automatically issued to students based on information disclosed to Student Finance England and other funding bodies. We currently have two levels of award depending on income bracket. The payment threshold and funding levels are reviewed annually following evaluation. Information is shared with students online, through admissions' communications and within our prospectus. Information about our current financial package can be found at www.exeter.ac.uk/undergraduate/money/scholarships. As this is reviewed annually to ensure incremental funding pressures and evaluation are taken into account, it would not be appropriate to indicate future years of provision within this plan. The present level of award however will be at the very least be maintained unless there are substantial changes to way in which universities are funded or evaluation indicates a change of approach is required.

In addition to the Access to Exeter Bursary, we provide a range of support for eligible WP students such as paid internships and access to funds to support employability and access to student societies for example. Enabling funding and practical help for students without family can make the difference between staying at university and dropping out. In addition to full tuition fee waivers for care leavers, we offer accommodation bursaries and extended accommodation contracts for these students and have additional bursary support for estranged students and student carers. These funds are issued based on need with the aim of supporting retention. Using hardship and enabling funds to remove specific pressures and pinch points remains an important strategic measure and one which will we continue to evaluate and adjust accordingly.

As TEF-Gold rated educators with an Ofsted-rated excellent Graduate School of Education, we understand that learners have differing needs, learning styles and competencies and that good teaching practice addresses this diversity to enable all students to succeed. Inclusive teaching practice is a plank of our academic training and an important strand of the work undertaken by our Education Incubator to test pedagogical practice and innovation. We also take on

board the findings of the NUS and UUK report on the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Attainment Gap¹⁷ and aim to learn from recent work undertaken by Kingston and UCL universities, relating to the importance of diversity within the curriculum as part of efforts to reduce our attainment gap.

We therefore propose curriculum design and inclusive teaching practice as key strategic measures in closing observable gaps in attainment, particularly in relation to BAME students. Our approaches will focus on: 1) implementing best practice approaches to review and adjust our curriculum to improve diversity and representation of a broader range of experience and expertise; 2) implement systematic approaches to building knowledge and skills to enhance inclusive teaching practice.

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

3.2.1 Objective 2a: Minimise the observed gaps in continuation rates between key groups by 2030

Strategic aim	Barriers (underpinning research and assumptions) Fostering a sense of belonging lies at the heart of retention and success ¹⁸ . The evidence suggests that retention and success are best addressed by approaches which seek to develop: supportive peer relations; meaningful interaction between staff and students; knowledge, confidence and identity as	Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work) 1. Transition and Year 1 a. Continue improvements in our work with schools and colleges to prepare and support our own offer-holders and their peers about the move to University e.g. via delivery of skills, information and other relevant sessions. b. Development and delivery of academic skills sessions in target schools to support preparedness for HE. This aims to pilot approaches and will be led by a	Evaluation methodology Pre and post event evaluation relating to knowledge, confidence, propensity to engage etc; to be combined with tracking and student feedback after 12 months. Type 1 and 2 (a, b, d). Web/CRM analytics combined with tracking of engagement levels. Type 1, 2 (c).	Activity outputs Academic skills pilot and linked research project delivered in partner schools (b). Transition conference / events and support for Scholars and other key groups (c, d, e) Mature students' academic skills provision and pre-	Anticipated outcomes (linked to targets: PTS1; PTS2; PTS3; PTS4) Students have information they need to optimise successful transition. Students have opportunities to build support networks. University is better able to address underlying causes of non-continuation.	Share and learn Education Conference; Education committee structure; External conferences; Research reports; Teaching/ education networks; TASO
2. Address the causes of observable gaps in success and progression for key groups						

¹⁷ Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #ClosingtheGap, NUS and UUK, 2019

¹⁸ Mountford-Zimdars, Anna, Sabri, Duna, Moore, Joanna, Sanders, John, Jones Steven, Higham, Louise. Causes of differences in student outcomes, HEFCE, 2015.

<p>successful HE learners; and an HE experience that is relevant to students' interests and future goals¹⁹.</p> <p>Key transition points require particular attention. Transition activities should be seen as part of a continuum that includes pre-entry activities and first year engagement. Generic features of successful pre-entry interventions include: providing information; Informing expectations; developing academic skills; building social capital; and nurturing a sense of belonging²⁰</p> <p>Mental health issues have a particularly negative impact on learning and engagement, with implications for retention.²¹</p> <p>Internal analysis which clearly demonstrates the link between first year attainment and degree outcomes.</p> <p>Financial support evaluation which shows no negative impact for those receiving the Access to Exeter bursary (ATE). Wider research and literature in this area.</p>	<p>practitioner within our Centre for Social Mobility alongside professional services.</p> <p>c. Continue to improve advice and information for students with a diverse range of needs and information requirements throughout the offer stage and pre-registration supported by improvements in customer relationship management.</p> <p>d. Continuation and enhancement of transition initiatives targeted at those groups of students who experience higher drop-out rates (including care leavers, students with BTECs, estranged students and carers). Pre-Freshers transition support is a core component of our offer to mature students and those on fair access programmes; and student with ASD and other disabilities.</p> <p>e. Investigate and address, where possible, the patterns and causes of early drop-out rates i.e. between acceptance and December census date, so we can prevent early attrition (not current reflected within sector-wide continuation).</p> <p>f. Develop robust induction processes for students to set expectations; identify and plug knowledge/skills gaps; and integrate student/academic community. Building on pilot projects run through Transforming Transitions and approaches</p>	<p>Evaluation processes to be built in to project design (e, f, g).</p>	<p>arrival peer programme (c, d, e).</p> <p>Specific familiarisation / preparation for student work done to date (c, d, e).</p> <p>Structured induction processes to support integration (d).</p> <p>Student needs assessment and related interventions (g). Review of first year programme structures and core modules via a best practice framework (h).</p>	<p>Higher levels of engagement with support services by key groups.</p> <p>School pupils are better prepared for progression to HE.</p> <p>Students have a structured introduction to core skills and competencies through a variety of teaching/assessment methods drawing on best practice.</p>	
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¹⁹ Mountford-Zimdars, Anna, Sabri, Duna, Moore, Joanna, Sanders, John, Jones Steven, Higham, Louise, Causes of differences in student outcomes, HEFCE, 2015.

²⁰ Moore, J.; Sanders, J.; Higham, L. Literature Review of Research into Widening Participation to Higher Education. 2013.

²¹ What Works? Student Retention and Success, HEA

		<p>trialled by our Business School and through our Education Incubator.</p> <p>g. Develop and introduce a training needs/academic skills assessment available to all students with relevant tools and support to better prepare all students for their studies, irrespective of their previous educational experience</p> <p>h. Review and develop our first year provision to better support the development of key competencies.</p>				TASO, NASMA
		<p>2. Student financial support</p> <p>a. Maintain (and continue to evaluate) the Access to Exeter bursary on an annual basis using OfS toolkit.</p> <p>b. Use toolkit to conduct analysis of the hardship fund and other related funds to assess impact and efficacy. Pull findings together into an annual review.</p> <p>c. Monitor the performance (and take up of hardship for example) of the >£25k - <£42k group to keep abreast of trends which may require specific solutions in the future</p> <p>d. Specific research with our student unions to understand interplay with part-time work and explore the options for a wider research project with South West institutions.</p> <p>e. Invest in tailored financial support and advice for those students facing particular hardship and difficulty due to their personal circumstances, such as estrangement, care experience or caring responsibilities</p>	<p>Annual evaluation of ATE, hardship fund and other funds as part of annual review (see evaluation strategy section) (a, b, c).</p> <p>Specific research (type 1 and 2) around part-time work and study 'cliff-edge' in terms of interplay with positive outcomes (d).</p>	<p>Smooth delivery of ATE to all eligible at point of entry to university (a).</p> <p>Greater communications and optimise take-up of other financial support especially hardship fund and estranged student and carers funds (c).</p> <p>Greater understanding of the impact income and work has on student attainment and success. Feeding that back into practice: criteria, process and scope of financial support package working with student unions(d).</p>	<p>Optimum retention of students in receipt of financial support</p> <p>Allow students to fully participate in the wealth of opportunities on offer to support success and progression outcomes and wider social mobility aims</p>	

3.2.2: Objective 2b: Minimise the observed gaps in attainment and achievement of graduate outcomes between key groups by 2030

Strategic aim	Barriers (underpinning research and assumptions)	Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)	Evaluation methodology	Activity outputs	Anticipated outcomes (linked to targets PTS1; PTS2; PTS3; PTS4; PTP1)	Share and learn
<p>2. Address the causes of observable gaps in success and progression for key groups</p>	<p>The design of the curriculum, its content, and the teaching and learning practices used to deliver it can have a significant impact on the way that students from different backgrounds and ethnicities respond to their course and lecturers and tutors²²</p> <p>Academic programmes and high-quality student-centred learning and teaching must be a primary focus for effective student retention and success²³</p> <p>Sector-wide increase in numbers of applicants disclosing mental health problems; Increase in demand for mental health support at university; combined with rise in complexity and comorbidity of mental health problems</p>	<p>1. Curriculum, teaching and educational support</p> <p>a. Adopt best practice approaches (e.g. Kingston Curriculum Framework and UCL Curriculum Health Check) and findings of our Hidden Curriculum research, to review and address the diversity of representation within our curriculum, particularly regarding race and ethnicity.</p> <p>b. Develop systemic approaches to ensure our teaching methods are inclusive and support multiple learning styles, taking into account a diverse student cohort with varied learning needs.</p> <p>c. Consolidate improvements in our structured personal tutoring system and practices, supported by learning analytics to ensure students receive early and appropriate interventions.</p> <p>d. Better understand the relationship between engagement with learning and support, attainment and non-continuation, to help formulate appropriate interventions, especially for key groups experiencing gaps in outcomes.</p> <p>e. Continue to research and adopt best practice approaches to support a diverse learning community through our</p>	<p>Specific evaluation approaches will be put in place to support our plans to support BAME attainment including monitoring, qualitative and quantitative measures. Type 1 and 2 (a, b, c, d, e, g).</p>	<p>Process of curriculum review (a). Integration of practice within TOA and module review and approval to create sustainable approaches (b). Best practice framework for programme and module enhancement (b). Training, toolkit, engagement to promulgate inclusive teaching (c, d). Continued development of My Progress and associated personal tutoring support</p>	<p>Students can fully engage with a curriculum which they perceive the curriculum as relevant to them. All students benefit from a curriculum which encourages discourses on diversity. Higher levels of engagement with personal tutoring system. Students have the skills they need to excel in their studies. Better engagement with learning and related support by</p>	<p>Education Conference; TASO; NEON; HELLOA; NUS</p>

²² Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Attainment at Universities, NUS and UUK, 2019

²³ Thomas L, What Works? Student Retention & Success Summary Report. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Hefce, HEA and Action on Access, 2012

<p>alongside other impairments.²⁴</p> <p>The curriculum should address the employability of students from under-represented groups in four ways: awareness; access to relevant work experience; confidence, self-esteem and aspiration of; and familiarity with the labour market plus related skills²⁵</p>	<p>Education Incubator.</p> <p>f. Continue to improve advice and information available for academic and professional services staff to enable them to signpost relevant services and interventions to support students in key groups.</p> <p>g. Consolidate our approach to improving the accessibility of educational and academic support e.g. via our student hubs and Study Zone initiatives.</p>		<p>Tailored academic skills support and provision (c, d).</p> <p>Study Zone and related initiatives to improve accessibility of academic skills support (g).</p>	<p>those students who need support the most.</p>	
<p>Correlation between outward mobility and improved academic and employment outcomes; particularly for disadvantaged and black and minority ethnic students, who are underrepresented in mobility²⁶</p>	<p>2. Wellbeing and student support</p> <p>a. Develop whole institution approach to wellbeing to reduce causation factors and build resilience across impairment type and the student lifecycle, including pre-entry where possible. To be implemented through a new Wellbeing Strategy and implementation framework to be launched in 2020.</p> <p>b. Evaluate and consolidate our approaches to peer support based on the considerable best practice developed to date including our effective breakfast club programme.</p>	<p>Type 1 to be put in place with specific projects to be evaluated via type 2.</p>	<p>Implementation of Wellbeing action plan (a)</p> <p>Effective peer support programmes in place for key student groups and disciplines as appropriate (e.g. mature students) (b).</p>		
	<p>3. Progression, employability and international experience</p> <p>a. Strengthen evaluation of our employability and internships support for key groups to better understand contribution to short-term and longitudinal graduate outcomes.</p> <p>b. Subsidise internships and related measures for students meeting specific household income and</p>	<p>Aim to enhance current monitoring approaches to type 1 and 2 for some programmes (a, b, c, d, e)</p> <p>UpReach own evaluation framework and associated</p>	<p>Subsidised placements for students meeting priority W/P criteria on A21, Global Leaders, and Professional pathways programmes (a).</p>	<p>Students have access to a range of internship and work experience opportunities. Students are able to engage with a variety of</p>	<p>TASO, AGCAS, Regional forum</p>

²⁴ 'Understanding provision for students with mental health problems and intensive support needs' HEFCE July 2015)

²⁵ Thomas, Liz and Jones, Robert, Embedding employability in the context of widening participation, The Higher Education Academy, 200

²⁶ Richards, Nadine, Lowe, Rosalind and Hanks, Catriona, Gone International: mobility works 2014-15, Go International and Universities UK International, 2017

		<p>other groups as appropriate based on observable gaps in progression.</p> <p>c. Bespoke employability consultancy for students within priority groups to supplement our full range of employability provision.</p> <p>d. Explore and develop alternatives to traditional field trip and study abroad formats (e.g. through emerging technologies) to improve accessibility for and engagement by students whose personal circumstances may prohibit engagement with these optional but enriching experiences.</p> <p>e. Research and analysis to better understand the barriers faced by students from low income households to inform related strategies and interventions.</p>	reporting structure. Type 1.	<p>Intensive employability support via Rise initiative run through our partnership with UPReach (a, b).</p> <p>Intensive employability support for key groups through 1:1 consultancy (c).</p> <p>Research findings and related measures</p>	<p>international experiences.</p> <p>Students have access to employer networks to build social capital.</p> <p>Students acquire work skills through the curriculum.</p> <p>Students progress at equal rates into postgraduate study.</p>	
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3.3 Enable an inclusive University culture where all can fulfil their potential

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

Strategic aim	Barriers (underpinning research and assumptions)	Planned activities to deliver (programmes of work)	Evaluation methodology	Activity outputs	Anticipated outcomes (linked to all targets PT A1-5; PTS1-4 and PTP1)	Share and learn				
3. Enable an inclusive University culture where all can fulfil their potential	Success in reducing differentials links to institutions' willingness and capacity to be more inclusive. Positive interventions include creating a sense of belonging, building social capital, enhancing the student experience, and developing more wide-ranging learning and teaching initiatives ²⁷ The culture of an institution is identified as an important factor in relation to the attainment of students from BAME backgrounds, and has a strong association with students' sense of belonging. Crucially, this includes an awareness of the issues affecting students from different ethnic backgrounds. Taking into account new research as it emerges e.g. UUK/NUS report 2019. ²⁸	1. Students with protected characteristics / disrupted education a. Work effectively across the organisation to ensure joined up practices and policies to provide a whole student journey approach to supporting students with protected characteristics. This will be driven through our social mobility structures in consultation with student groups. b. Research and consultation to better understand the experiences of students with specific characteristics within our University to help co-create improvements to our practices to ensure they are fully inclusive. c. Continued and enhanced provision of advice, practical and financial support for specific groups of students facing complex challenges including care leavers, student carers, estranged students and asylum seekers. 2. Inclusive institutional and student culture and practices a. Further analysis to fully understand the picture of attainment for our BAME students to inform a larger work plan. Work with students and staff to identify and address barriers through an evidence-based change programme within a good practice framework to achieve and/or maintain externally audited endorsements of its inclusive practices e.g. Race Equality Charter; Athena Swan Gold; Mental Health Charter; Two Ticks Scheme.	Monitoring and qualitative feedback. Monitoring and user impact evaluation. Type 1, 2	Implementation of support measures in response to consultation (a). Joined up provision across University services and student unions' student support (c). Specific support packages for students with complex needs (c).	Review of the work plan and framework elements bringing together emerging findings; feedback and other indicators e.g. NSS as part of a type 1 approach.	Specific support programme for students with protected characteristics (a, b). Work packages identified through work to achieve charter marks and EDI plans (a, b).	Students are fully supported throughout their time at University. Students with no family support are able to access a higher level of support from the University to help them realise their potential	Barriers to equality and diversity are fully understood, with measures and interventions in place. Students with protected characteristics continue, achieve	Regional networks; Dissemination of best practice Staff and student networks and consultation; TASO	Internal communications; Staff inclusivity networks; Staff training HR policies; TASO; HERAG

²⁷ Mountford-Zimdars, Anna, Sabri, Duna, Moore, Joanna, Sanders, John, Jones Steven, Higham, Louise, Causes of differences in student outcomes, HEFCE, 2015.

²⁸ Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #ClosingtheGap, NUS and UUK, 2019

		<p>b. Achieve and retain good practice standards recognised through national schemes to support key groups e.g. Stand Alone Pledge, Armed Forces Pledge, Social Mobility Pledge, Care Leavers Covenant.</p>			<p>and progress at a similar level to their peers. Students and staff feel the University values diversity. Students and staff across all groups feel they belong which fosters a greater sense of community. Diversity is apparent at all levels of our staffing structures.</p>	
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4. Evaluation

4.1 Our self-assessment of evaluation

We have had some type 1 and 2 evaluations in place for our programmes for some time such as our Exeter Scholars programme which has yielded some useful insights, and had started implementing the recommendations of OFFA's 'standards of evaluation'. We regularly take account of and take up opportunities to contribute to the national evidence base and policy narratives (e.g. performance of BTEC students, BAME attainment gap, contextual admissions, Care Leavers' Quality Mark etc). We have found the evaluation self-assessment process very useful and timely. It has helped us to clearly identify the areas where we are more secure and those requiring further improvement. It is clear from scoring we have most elements of the five dimensions in place and are 'emerging' in our practice, but they are not comprehensive across all areas. The self-assessment has informed the action plan below and we will re-assess annually with the aim of **becoming secure across most dimensions of the assessment by 2025**. The action plan summarises 'emerging practice' drawn from the five dimensions so we can easily identify the work streams which require immediate action. All are concerned with **building and securing the capacity and processes of the university** so we are robustly evaluating our work across Access, Success and Progression to achieve continuous improvement and, crucially, ensure we deliver on our objectives.

4.2 Key actions for 2020-2025

1. Awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Share self-assessment findings and evaluation strategy with all relevant internal groups b. Specific engagement with Programme managers and Heads of Service to ensure commitment to evaluation is in place across all APP activities.
2. Governance and management mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish evaluation governance as part of our wider WP governance framework so that we create the time and expertise for this group to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ oversee and receive updates on planned evaluation and progress of projects in train ➤ provide challenge and accountability as part of an annual cycle of review b. Establish a reporting mechanism through all teams and their associated programmes upwards into [said] WP Governance c. Build a systematic annual review cycle clearly aligned to WP governance structure to allow teams to plan their evaluation and reporting points effectively.
3. Planning processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop an evaluation specification template for all to use, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ enable opportunity to reflect existing literature (research base for project and evaluation) ➤ identify objectives, deliverables and outputs/outcomes for the work linked to the overarching Theory of Change presented in the plan ➤ list evaluation resources (in place and required) ➤ provide a project plan for evaluation with key reporting dates ➤ Plan for dissemination, learning from and sharing evaluation findings ➤ Risk analysis and mitigation b. Ensure this process links in with governance group - sounding board and challenge c. Navigate challenge of bringing in 'new' evaluation to existing programmes - prioritise programmes to build evaluation into to get preliminary results and build momentum.
4. Skillsets and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conduct an evaluation skills audit across Access, Success and Progression Professional Service colleagues b. Utilise the expertise/resources/tools within the Centre for Social Mobility as part of a co-ordinated package of support c. Make available training and support for colleagues e.g. with completing the evaluation specification template and knowledge of research design techniques (and limitations of different methodological approaches).

5. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assess and build in evaluation costs as part of programme budgets b. Ensure colleagues have access to online resources/toolkit to support them
6. Ethics and data sharing protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish an ethical approvals process for APP evaluation b. Review and amend our institutional approach to data approvals, tracking and research as part of a new ethics approach for both evaluation and programme delivery
7. Data systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review and improve data tracking systems (over time) especially for Success and Progression programmes (look at utilising HEAT or other internal systems) b. Develop and provide training for programme managers around quantitative data techniques where the skills audit show this is lacking
8. Dissemination of evaluation findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to utilise opportunities to share findings internally (via teams and governance structure) as well as with a wider internal audience e.g. Centre for Social Mobility conferences/workshops, Education conference etc b. Use Centre for Social Mobility and other connections to share findings externally e.g. using member organisations such as AGCAS, NEON, HELOA, AMOSSHE c. Establish 1) an internal process (via governance structure) to distribute University of Exeter evaluation findings up to TASO 2) receive and distribute relevant resources from TASO to relevant academic and professional service staff within the university.

4.3 Evaluation of financial support

We have used the OfS financial support toolkit for the past two years to conduct an annual review and evaluation of the impact and efficacy of our main financial support package, the Access to Exeter bursary (ATE) awarded to students with household incomes under £25,000. The evaluation has consistently shown the ATE package is 'about right' in terms of design, reach to target students, student success outcomes and interplay with other considerations such as part-time work. As such the ATE will remain largely unchanged. The evaluation is overseen by our APP Management group and over the reporting period 2020-2025 we are committed to the following actions:

1. Annual evaluation of the ATE, our hardship fund, excellence scholarship and (as it grows in scale) the estranged students and carers fund using the toolkit. Amalgamate individual findings together into an annual review which can be the catalyst for further refinement.
2. Continue to monitor the outcomes and understand more fully the economic considerations and challenges affecting students in the >£25,000 - £42,000 (SLC 'low household income threshold') group (which will have an impact on our understanding of the barriers facing successful outcomes for this group).
3. Engage in research to understand the interplay between student studies, social and wellbeing factors and part-time work (where evidence suggests there may be a 'cliff-edge' where work over eight hours a week may negatively affect success) and work with partners including the Student Guild and the Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union to review and revise our part-time policy accordingly.

4.4 Our collaborative approach

We value opportunities to work collaboratively as demonstrated by our 2018 launch and ongoing investment in our Centre for Social Mobility²⁹, which gives us opportunities to both utilise and shape the academic discourse in this area aided by leading subject experts such as our Director (Research)

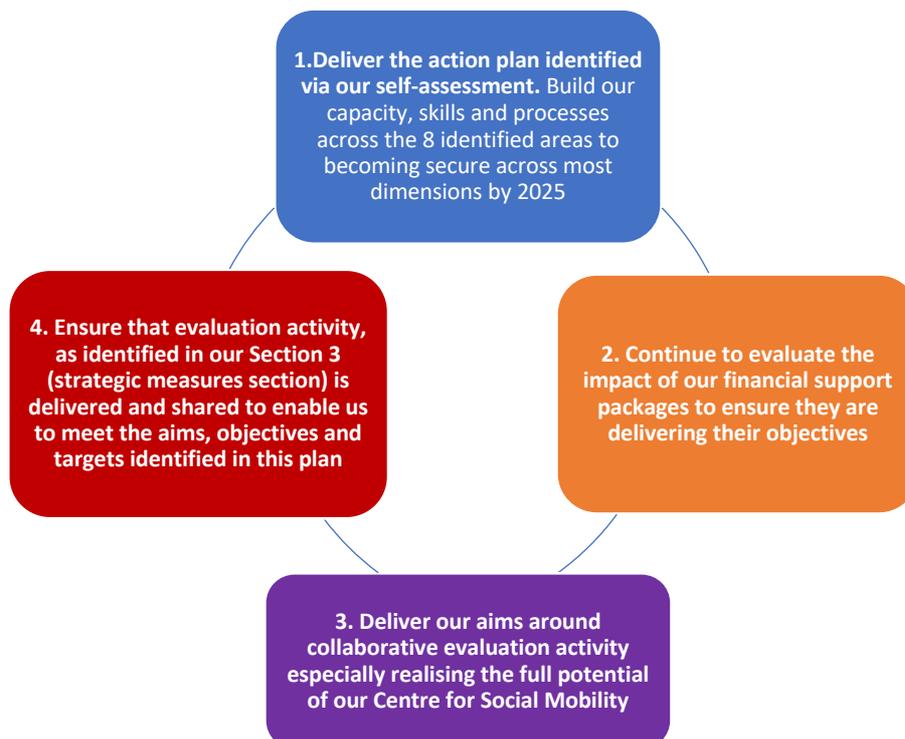
²⁹ <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/socialmobility/>

Associate Professor Anna Mountford-Zimdars and Professor of Social Mobility Practice, Lee Elliott-Major. Within the period of this plan, our commitment and ambition for the Centre will see us:

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

4.5 Evaluation strategy:

This plan presents a step-change in embedding evaluation as part of our approach to access and participation. Under section 3 we have presented suggested types of evaluation for our major packages of work as part of a Theory of Change framework which reflect both evaluation programmes in train and those which will come on board, including ideas for further research in conjunction with our Centre for Social Mobility. We are committed to robust evaluation and continuous improvement and are motivated by the potential our findings will have in refining our own and sector practice to benefit students more widely. We look forward to engaging with the wider research and evaluation base via the TASO (EIX) and we are excited about the potential our own Centre for Social Mobility has to contribute to and help shape our national debate and evidence base. To these ends our evaluation strategy is built around delivering these four pillars:



5. Student consultation

We have engaged with students during the development of this plan and the Success for All strand of our aligned Education Strategy 2020. Our Student Guild in Devon and Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union in Cornwall have been represented at each stage of development via our governance and committee structures for social mobility, education and race equality. In addition, we have run a series of consultation sessions with students at our Streatham and Penryn campuses and students have been involved in a number of working groups involved in developing the Education Strategy. Students have had the opportunity to make their views known via various online forums. In addition, we have taken into account the findings of student surveys and focus groups relating to various aspects of the student journey; specific research into financial support; and informal feedback from specific student groups involved in the Provost Commission, and policy development groups considering provision for estranged students, carers and mature students. We have taken the opportunity to engage with external consultations such as the NUS round table events on the attainment of Black students.

Our engagement with students has informed our thinking and interventions within this plan, for example:

- guiding our thinking around diversity and inclusion and how to engage students in working to build an inclusive student culture
- co-developing research around student engagement with enrichment opportunities and the interaction with part-time work
- reaching a wider base of students via a student panel to align with our Guild Equalities Council
- reviewing access to hardship funds
- improved communication and signposting about support and facilities available to key student groups
- investigating different approaches at our shared campus in Cornwall, due to differences in culture, student make-up and logistics

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

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER
**STUDENTS'
GUILD**

 **THE FALMOUTH & EXETER
STUDENTS' UNION**

Access and Participation Plan

Statement of Support from the Students' Unions of the University

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

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

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

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

In addition to our specific governance structure for social mobility, targets and associated performance are monitored via our performance management and education governance structures including Teaching Excellence Monitoring meetings, which scrutinise differential performance at discipline level. We are also developing new business intelligence tools and related dashboards so progress can be monitored at a discipline, College and institutional level as business as usual. Implementation and monitoring will be assisted via a full operational plan with key milestones and related performance measures, reporting through associated governance structures, with final reporting and accountability through the Vice Chancellors' Executive Group, Senate and Council. This plan details where we are committed to undertaking annual reviews of initiatives (e.g. Exeter Scholars, financial support package) which will be taken to our governance groups as part of an annual cycle of review.

8. Provision of information to students

The University will provide clear and accurate information about fees, funding and admissions practice via a variety of channels including: our prospectus; our Undergraduate Study and Student Finance websites; direct communications via our Admissions and Student Recruitment teams; face-to-face communications at HE fairs, pre-applicant open days, offer-holder open days and other

events including finance workshops and advice surgeries in schools; enquiry handling through our Admissions and Student Finance teams; publication of key information sets; presentations and online resources for teachers. We will also be providing more targeted information for students and parents via our customer relationship platform and via social media tools including Facebook Live events and digital ambassadors.

We will continue to provide and improve targeted information through appropriate channels and formats for specific disadvantaged and under-represented groups to encourage engagement in outreach, provide tailored information through the application process and to optimise take-up of support, advice and opportunities during their studies. Information is available to students via our Student Information Desk and student hubs which have improved access to education support. We will continue to work with our student unions to provide financial and related support and a frontline advice service for students. We have improved information provision for students meeting a variety of WP criteria online and also set up systems and processes to advise specific students groups including those who are estranged from their families or who have caring responsibilities. Improving our communications is very much a priority for us and we plan further work to understand how we can improve student engagement in the wide range of support available to help individuals realise their potential.

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,250
First degree	BMBS Cohort 5	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT		£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year		£1,850
Erasmus and overseas study years		£1,385
Other	*	*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Targets and investment plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Exeter

Provider UKPRN: 10007792

Investment summary

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

Note about the data:

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

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£4,468,538.25	£4,508,242.20	£4,575,155.85	£4,575,155.85	£4,575,155.85
Access (pre-16)	£1,787,415.30	£1,803,296.88	£1,830,062.34	£1,830,062.34	£1,830,062.34
Access (post-16)	£2,234,269.13	£2,254,121.10	£2,287,577.93	£2,287,577.93	£2,287,577.93
Access (adults and the community)	£446,853.83	£450,824.22	£457,515.59	£457,515.59	£457,515.59
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£5,151,884.73	£5,280,681.84	£5,412,698.89	£5,548,016.36	£5,686,716.77
Research and evaluation (£)	£600,000.00	£605,000.00	£610,000.00	£615,000.00	£620,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

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

