

University of East Anglia (UEA)

Access and participation plan (APP) 2025/26 to 2028/29

1 Introduction and strategic aim

UEA is highly respected nationally and internationally. A global university ranked among the best in the world, we are consistently within the top quartile of UK universities based on our research and teaching strengths. UEA's Royal Charter outlines our mission: for the public benefit, the advancement of education and research. We are committed to serving the needs of society and providing economic and social value across the twin themes of education and research.

Our Teaching Excellence Framework Silver status (TEF2023) confirms UEA's very high-quality teaching and we typically feature in the Top 30 of UK league tables. We are proud to be an inclusive place to learn and maintain an institutional commitment to social diversity enriching learning for all. Our graduates are successful – more than 84% are in positive employment destinations and many are leaders in their chosen field.

At our heart is a closely-knit, supportive and inclusive campus community of more than 17,000 students and 4,600 staff. Around 162,000 proud alumni give our community a global reach and our staff and students are part of some 30,000 people working and studying on the Norwich Research Park. People are respected and admired here not just because of who they are, or where they have come from, but because of what and how they contribute. As a University of Sanctuary, we are proud to welcome into our community people seeking safety and support.

Excellent education and experience for all our students is at the heart of UEA's institutional strategy for 2030. A UEA education is characterised by interdisciplinary opportunities and experiential learning approaches, leading to excellent graduate outcomes for students. Our campus and facilities deliver excellent support and co-curricular opportunities in a safe and supportive community. Students join us from diverse backgrounds, experience an inclusive curriculum and study environment, and leave us with the education and skills to progress and navigate a lifelong working and learning journey. We will continue to put students at the heart of what we do and enable change based on student feedback, exploring innovative new modes of delivery. The UEA Strategy 2030 has a headline commitment to widen access, participation and success. We are fully committed to serving the needs of our regional community and want to do everything we can to raise local aspirations and skills, to deliver economic advantage. We will enhance our widening participation activities to recruit more students from diverse backgrounds and deliver inclusive opportunities and support, enabling success for all throughout their learning journey.

UEA's APP 2019/20 to 2024/25 set out a series of strategic aims and objectives to take a whole institutional and cross student lifecycle approach to addressing access and participation gaps for students with specific characteristics. It has a particular focus on increasing access, success and progression for students from areas of lower higher education (HE) participation; closing the degree awarding gap for black students at UEA; increasing access to UEA and retention for mature students; ensuring success and progression for students who have declared a disability. During the lifetime of this APP we have made good progress against the majority of targets mapped to these objectives and where continued, more consistent and/or accelerated progress is needed we ensured renewed focus on equivalent commitments within this new APP. We have also paid close attention to emerging indications of risk of inequality of opportunity and make new commitments to ensure a targeted approach at the areas of most risk. Drawing on our robust evidence and evaluation approach we have been able to continue to increase our understanding of both the risks to equality of opportunity impacting these student groups and what works to address these risks in order to develop the effectiveness and likely impact of our approach, combining a focus of inclusive practice across the whole provider and bespoke approaches to address specific at risk student groups (annexes A and B provide more detail).

2 Risks to equality of opportunity

2.1 UEA assessment of performance

A robust and detailed assessment of performance was undertaken to identify initial risk indications which inform the development of the risks to equality of opportunity that our APP addresses. This is where our data shows us that some groups of students are experiencing risks to equality of opportunity at different points across the student lifecycle. Using a combination of internal data and externally verified data, we examined gaps and trends over the most recent four-year period for each metric. Our assessment identified 22 risk indications across the student lifecycle. By using the most recent data available internally and supplementing with OfS APP Dashboard data where not available, we were able to more accurately identify risks which are affecting students now and, therefore, are most likely to benefit from our interventions. We took into account scale of gap/difference to sector, persistence and growth in gap over time and reliability of finding in terms of data and base size.

A prioritisation exercise was then carried out to ensure our plan will focus on the most significant risks to equality of outcomes. There were eight risk indicators that we did not select to be the focus of our plan due to low data reliability/robustness (e.g. low base sizes, fluctuations in the data) or because intersectional analysis suggests that these gaps are driven more strongly by other factors which are included in our prioritised indicators. See Annex A for a full description of our process.

2.2 Risk indications

Following the process described above and in Annex A we have prioritised 14 risk indications (RIs).

Before arriving in higher education/UEA

- RI01: **Mature applicants** (21+ on entry) are less likely to receive an **offer** from UEA
- RI02: Applicants with a **BTEC qualification only** were less likely to receive an **offer**
- RI03: Lower than sector **intake** of students eligible for **free school meals** (FSM) at UEA
- RI04: UEA intake of **care experienced and estranged** (CEES) students remains low in proportion to the region

While at UEA or across the full lifecycle

- RI05: Lower **continuation** rates for students who studied a **BTEC qualification only**
- RI06: Lower **continuation and completion** rates for students from **ethnic minority backgrounds**
- RI07: Lower **continuation and completion** rates for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds using proxies such as **eligibility for free school meals** and intersecting with **male** students
- RI08: Lower **continuation and completion** rates for **mature** students
- RI09: Lower **completion rates** for **disabled students**, with largest gaps for students with mental health conditions or multiple impairments
- RI10: Lower **good honours** degree awarding rate (2.1 or 1st degree classification) for students **eligible for free school meals** at UEA intersecting with gender (male), declaring a disability, with additional financial pressures (including caring responsibilities) and care experienced and estranged students
- RI11: Lower **good honours** degree awarding rate (2.1 or 1st degree classification) for students from **ethnic minority backgrounds**, with the largest gap for black students
- RI12: Lower **good honours** degree awarding rate (2.1 or 1st degree classification) for students who studied a **BTEC qualification only**
- RI13: Lower rates for **progression** to graduate level employment or further study for students declaring a **mental health condition**, with **social or communication impairments** or with **multiple impairments**
- RI14: Lower rate for **progression** to graduate level employment or further study for students from lower socio-economic background using proxies such as **students eligible for free school meals** and intersecting with **male students**

2.3 UEA equality of opportunity risk register

Through an analysis of evidence, an understanding of our local context, a review of student insight and discussions with internal and external stakeholders, including student representatives, we have identified ten risks to equality of opportunity which are causing the risk indications above. See Annex A for our full analysis. The risks are listed below with a note of which risk indications each risk is contributing to:

Before arriving in higher education/UEA

R1 Barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment pre-HE: Potential students in our region may not have equal opportunity to develop knowledge, skills and/or attainment to access relevant post-16 and post-18 opportunities. This, therefore, risks equality of access to higher education (risk indications: 2 BTEC offer; 3 FSM intake; 4 CEES intake; 10 FSM degree award).

R2 Insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance pre-HE: Potential students in our region may not have equal opportunity to receive the information, advice and guidance during their educational journey that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, or to make informed choices about their higher education options. This, therefore, risks equality of access to higher education (risk indications: 1 mature offer; 2 BTEC offer; 3 FSM intake; 4 CEES intake; 5 BTEC continuation).

R3 Barriers to equality of application success: Applicants to UEA may not experience equality of outcome from the application process including lower likelihood of receiving an offer. For example, applicants may have different prior experience, and support, in navigating an interview process. This, therefore, risks equality of access to UEA (risk indications: 1 mature offer; 2 BTEC offer; 3 FSM intake; 4 CEES intake).

R4 Insufficient available choice of course type and delivery mode: Potential students in our region may be prevented from studying at UEA by the focus of our delivery on full time, level 6 courses delivered on campus. This, therefore, risks equality of access to UEA (risk indications: 1 mature offer; 2 BTEC offer; 4 CEES intake).

While at UEA or across the full lifecycle

R5 Barriers to sense of belonging in HE and at UEA: Potential and current UEA students may not develop a sense of belonging to UEA during their journey through decision making, admissions, transitions and study at UEA. Students may not feel that they belong in a higher education institution when they arrive at UEA. In addition, they may not develop a sense of belonging to UEA in general and to their School of study specifically to support the achievement of their academic potential. This could impact their confidence in deciding what they want to do post undergraduate study. This, therefore, risks equality of access to UEA and to student engagement and successful outcomes (risk indications: 2 BTEC offer; 4 CEES intake; 5 BTEC continuation; 6 black and mixed ethnicity continuation and completion; 7 FSM/male continuation & completion; 8 mature continuation & completion; 9 disabled completion; 10 FMS degree award; 11 black and mixed ethnicity degree award; 12 BTEC good honours).

R6 Mental health and wellbeing: Potential and current UEA students with mental health conditions (short term and longer term) are at greater risk of lower engagement in all elements of the living and learning university experience which could impact good outcomes. In addition, all students may be affected by low mental wellbeing at times during their time at UEA requiring additional support or adaptations to their academic experience. This, therefore, risks equality of access to UEA and to student engagement and successful outcomes (risk indications: 4 CEES intake; 6 black and mixed ethnicity continuation and completion; 7 FSM/male continuation & completion; 8 mature continuation & completion; 9 disabled completion; 10 FMS degree award; 11 – black and mixed ethnicity degree award; 13 mental health/social communication/multiple progression).

R7 Cost pressures: Ongoing increases in the basic cost of living may affect a UEA student's ability to engage in and successfully complete their course. This might mean they need to undertake more paid work, find it difficult to travel, or that the cost of living impacts their physical

and mental wellbeing. This, therefore, risks equality of student engagement and successful outcomes (risk indications: 1 mature offer; 3 FSM intake; 4 CEES intake; 7 FSM/male continuation & completion; 8 mature continuation & completion; 9 disabled completion; 10 FMS degree award; 13 mental health/social communication/multiple progression; 14 FSM/male/IMD progression).

R8 Insufficient support, advice and guidance: UEA students may not have equal opportunity to receive relevant support, advice and guidance that sufficiently reflects their specific circumstances reducing their ability to engage productively and gain the most from their experience to support positive outcomes. Students have a range of different needs, responsibilities and commitments as well as their education which leads to competing demands on personal resources, for example time and finance. This, therefore, risks equality of student engagement and successful outcomes (risk indications: 5 BTEC continuation; 6 black and mixed ethnicity continuation and completion; 7 FSM/male continuation & completion; 8 mature continuation & completion; 9 disabled completion; 10 FMS degree award; 11 black and mixed ethnicity degree award; 12 BTEC good honours, 13 – mental health/social communication/multiple progression, 14 – FSM/male/IMD progression).

R9 Barriers to engagement with experience and opportunities: UEA students may encounter barriers to engagement and participation in the full range of opportunities UEA provides including opportunities for international/work experiences. This, therefore, risks equality of opportunity to develop understanding, enhance self-awareness and undertake developmental opportunities. This may hinder their ability to develop the outlook of confidence, resilience and adaptability that enables them to succeed in their academic studies and progress to suitable and fulfilling graduate jobs and further study. This, therefore, risks equality of student successful outcomes (risk indications: 6 black and mixed ethnicity continuation and completion; 7 FSM/male continuation & completion; 8 mature continuation & completion; 9 disabled completion; 10 FMS degree award; 11 black and mixed ethnicity degree award; 13 mental health/social communication/multiple progression; 14 FSM/male/IMD progression).

R10 Insufficient representation: UEA student needs and experiences may not be represented in the design and delivery of living and studying at UEA. Design and delivery of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and the broader environment and communications may not consistently consider and represent the background and lived experience of underrepresented student groups. This, therefore, risks equality of access to UEA and to student engagement and successful outcomes (risk indications: 5 BTEC continuation; 6 black and mixed ethnicity continuation and completion; 7 FSM/male continuation & completion; 9 disabled completion; 11 black and mixed Ethnicity degree award; 12 BTEC good honours).

3 Objectives

We have identified six objectives across the student lifecycle which aim to address the risks to equality of opportunity listed above. Each objective may address a range of risks, and each risk may be addressed by a range of objectives. The risks each objective will address are included at the start of each intervention strategy in section 5.

Objective 1: Through attainment raising and outreach activity, UEA will increase the proportion of **students eligible for free school meals** in our region **accessing higher education** with the ultimate goal of achieving the sector average.

Objective 2: Through enhanced engagement with, and advocacy for, care experienced and estranged students (along with supporting services such as Norfolk County Council, virtual schools and third sector organisations), UEA will ensure that **care experienced and estranged students** have equal opportunity to **apply** to UEA.

Objective 3: Through inclusive admissions, marketing and application support, UEA will work to remove barriers to successful **outcomes to applications** from underrepresented student groups, including **mature students** and students with **vocational qualifications**.

Objective 4: Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of **continuation** and **completion**

for all students including **students declaring a disability, eligible for free school meals**, those with **vocational qualifications, black students** and **mature students**.

Objective 5: Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of good honours (2.1 or 1st degree classification) **degree award** for all students including for **students eligible for free school meals, black students or students of mixed ethnicity**, and **students with vocational qualifications**.

Objective 6: Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of **progression** to graduate level employment or further study for all students including for **students eligible for free school meals** and **students declaring a mental health condition, neurodiversity or with multiple impairments**.

We will address these objectives through a combination of specific activities outlined in our intervention strategies (see section 5) and through our whole provider approach.

4 Whole provider approach

This section details UEA's whole provider approach to addressing the risks to equality of opportunity we have identified above. Under each intervention strategy, we also describe how our whole provider approach contributes to achieving the specific objectives and associated targets.

UEA is committed to a whole provider approach to addressing risks to equality of outcomes that spans all aspects of the student lifecycle from pre-application to post graduation, encompassing academic, personal, social, and professional development. This approach is designed and appropriately resourced to address systemic and structural issues to inclusion and, therefore, underpins meeting all of the objectives in this plan. The strategic and policy commitments listed below are an important part of the university's commitment to the Equality Act 2010. The APP team work very closely with the university's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team in these areas.

Our whole provider approach is enabled by four key measures at a strategic and institutional policy level that span the student lifecycle, as well as an organisational-wide commitment to access and participation.

4.1 Inclusive Education Policy

This policy has been implemented across the university and is a reference point for developing inclusive practice in other policies and processes. The aim of the policy is to maximise the opportunity for success for all students while simultaneously emphasising the liberation of historically underrepresented or disadvantaged students. Achieving this aim requires removing systematic and cultural barriers and inequalities to participation, learning, engagement, and attainment/success. The UEA Inclusive Education Policy spans four interrelated elements:

- Inclusive curriculum – the content of what is taught and learning materials
- Inclusive assessment and feedback – the way student learning and attainment is measured, communicated, and enhanced
- Inclusive pedagogy – the way the content of the curriculum is taught
- Inclusive environment – the non-classroom experience.

4.2 Inclusive Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing Strategy

This strategy commits to inclusive approaches supporting equality of access for underrepresented groups to both UEA and higher education generally. The strategy's core objectives are to:

- Ensure all potential students, including those from underrepresented groups, are reached by UEA's recruitment and marketing approaches.
- Make UEA courses accessible to those with the potential to succeed and provide equal opportunities for successful applications and offers across our portfolio.

- Ensure admissions, recruitment and marketing strategies represent and champion the diversity of UEA's student body and local and regional recruitment markets.

Elements of this strategy include: partnerships and access agreements with local providers with high proportions of students from underrepresented groups; and diverse marketing campaign to raise knowledge and awareness of HE and position UEA as a trusted source of information for teachers and advisers and parents and carers. UEA is currently a member of the east region's Uni Connect partnership. This regional collaboration has enabled us to enhance our access work for local learners by showing them the full breadth of opportunity in the region. We are committed to continuing working collaboratively across the region to aid successful transitions into HE.

Key to our strategy is ensuring that students' prior achievement is reviewed in the context of their education experience. Through our contextual admission policy, students who may experience risks to equality of opportunity are provided a reduced offer to study at UEA. This is embedded throughout our outreach delivery and transition programmes, and student outcomes are monitored to inform any developments in our inclusive education policy to reflect our cohort. UEA works in partnership with local providers of further education (FE) and has existing arrangements to enable contextual admissions to UEA degrees from FE courses.

UEA is committed to providing varied and accessible routes into higher education. All four of our faculties have at least one integrated foundation year that supports students with the potential to succeed at UEA but with lower prior attainment than our main undergraduate cohort. UEA also has an expanding apprenticeship provision providing an excellent route for those who may not otherwise be able to study at university level. At the time of writing, apprenticeship provision consists of ten apprenticeship standards being delivered in six schools across three faculties and circa 800 apprentices are currently in learning (4-5% of UEA taught students). We are committed to continued growth of our apprenticeship provision. In 2024, UEA's apprenticeship provision received a 'Good' outcome from its first OFSTED inspection, with 'Good' for all five themes within the inspection. More than four out of every five of our undergraduate apprentices are over the age of 21 on starting their studies with us and almost a quarter join us from an area of the country with lowest likelihood to progress to higher education (POLAR Q1). Current data highlights that apprentices have equivalent or higher continuation rates than non-apprentice learners and that this is the case for all demographic splits. Throughout this APP, we include our apprentices when we refer to 'students'. In addition, launching in 2025/26, UEA will be offering a 4 year graduate entry medical course alongside our current five-year course, designed to recruit local graduates to help tackle health inequalities in our region and will start in the 2025/26 academic year. This will ultimately mean that we have courses designed to support mature students with a degree, and those without, to enter a relevant route for their educational background.

4.3 Holistic approach to student experience and opportunity

UEA works to systemically address specific points in the student lifecycle that can pose particular risk to student engagement and success through proactive design rather than reactive adaptation. We work to an ever-evolving map of student moments outlining the lived experience of our students and aim to adjust and enhance support and opportunity approaches to meet student need and mitigate risk to opportunity and positive outcomes. Examples of activity include: agile development of our student and careers information, advice and guidance and support teams; a whole institutional approach to student Welcome and induction; a student cost of living framework. Across this approach we work in collaboration with a range of external organisations.

4.4 Access and participation plan 2025/26 to 2028/29

This APP is designed in collaboration with departments across UEA and our student body to specifically address indications of risks of inequality of opportunity for undergraduate home students. It is supported by our APP budget and overseen by the APP Leadership Team through targeted action planning, regular monitoring of action and objectives that ensures, and utilisation of institutional mechanisms to influence structural changes.

4.5 Organisational-wide commitment to access and participation

UEA invests in expertise to deliver and evaluate our APP through dedicated staffing providing strategic leadership and evaluation and embedded expert practitioner roles across our Schools and Faculties and Professional Services. In addition, UEA is committed to ensuring inclusive practice and implementation of our APP is the responsibility of all staff; with awareness, consideration and activity embedded throughout our whole provider.

We ensure the impact of our APP through ensuring its objectives are represented in whole provider policy and strategies across the student lifecycle. Core examples include: outreach activity and inclusive approaches firmly embedded in our Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing Plan; UEA's Inclusive Education Policy is a core pillar of our overall Learning and Teaching Strategy; UEA's Employability Strategy, focused on embedding employability across the student journey, has addressing progression barriers for underrepresented students as a core aim; our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy underscores UEA's commitment to the promotion of wellbeing for all students through a whole university approach that embeds mental wellbeing in the teaching and learning context, both attitudinal and structural, recognising that wellbeing is necessary to students' capacity to learn and achieve their potential. UEA will be seeking the Student Minds Mental Health Charter Award during the lifetime of this APP.

Stakeholders from across the University are engaged in issues of equality generally and the successful delivery of our APP specifically. Through an integrated approach in strategy and operational planning processes for departments across UEA we ensure that plans build in an understanding of and response to risks to equality of opportunity for underrepresented students. This enables the embedding of relevant activity across the organisation. The implementation and impact of activities are overseen by our APP Leadership Team. While we recognise that the activities that are required to meet intervention strategies may change every few years, this underpinning approach will not.

Our high-level commitment is reflected in a range of strategic whole provider actions underpinning our APP which includes a Race Equality Steering Group, set up to tackle wider issues of student experience for students from racially diverse backgrounds and a University-wide approach recognising that all areas of the institution play a part in creating a culture promoting good mental health and wellbeing. In addition, we have reflected on the outcomes of sector and internal research highlighting the extent to which interactions with staff members and the diversity of staff profile are key variables in student retention, learning and success. Staff diversity and wellbeing are key in our UEA People Strategy which will be led by our Director of People and Culture.

Monitoring of equality of opportunity for UEA is robustly embedded in the University's governance structures, for example, every committee paper is required to consider equality, diversity and inclusion issues and risks. In addition, progress against our APP objectives and targets is governed and assured by relevant sub-committees and ultimately UEA's overall academic governing body, Senate. This is supported by steering groups addressing specific strategic issues including the Widening Participation Research Group and Inclusive Education Senior Leadership Team. APP strategic leadership team members are part of UEA's Student Education and Experience Executive ensuring that issues relating to student equity generally, and APP in particular, are considered at this Executive and reported directly when appropriate into the University's Executive Team.

5 Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

For each objective we provide: targets to achieve within the lifetime of this plan, noting the risks to equality of opportunity we need to mitigate to achieve the targets; the activities we will implement, the inputs and the outcomes the activities will achieve. If activities contribute to achieving another objective, we note this in the cross-intervention strategy (IS) column. We give an estimate of how much will be spent delivering the activities over the four-year plan. We also explain how our whole provider approach supports achieving the objective. Finally, we briefly summarise of the evidence which underpins our activities (see more in Annex B) and outline how we will evaluate our activities to ensure they are effective and impactful in meeting our objectives (see more in Annex B).

5.1 Intervention strategy 1: access to higher education

Objective 1: Through attainment raising and outreach activity, UEA will increase the proportion of students eligible for free school meals in our region accessing higher education with the ultimate goal of achieving the sector average.

Target PTA_1: Increase the proportion of UEA's yearly intake of students who are eligible for free school meals from a baseline of 12.4% to 17% by 2028/29.

Risks to equality of opportunity: R1 Barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment pre-HE; R2 Insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance pre-HE; R3 Barriers to equality of application success; R7 Cost pressures.

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
IS1-A1 Maths Excellence Fund partnership: East Maths Community A new programme funded by the Maths Excellence Fund and delivered in partnership with the Inspiration Trust. Maths enjoyment and attainment activity from years 7-13 for high attaining pupil premium eligible students. UEA led aspects will include KS4 and 5 maths tutoring, a post-16 'Preparing for Maths' programme, on campus event series and parent and community engagement.	1.2 FTE to coordinate and deliver activity, Activity costs including student tutor payments.	Students have increased enjoyment and engagement in maths and increased understanding of both maths pathways in higher education . This knowledge alongside increased subject knowledge will lead to increased attainment at GCSE and Level 3 , and in turn lead to more students making applications and accessing higher education .	IS5
IS1-A2 Programmes to raise student attainment Continue to deliver sustained programmes to improve subject knowledge, develop skills for academic success and support key transitions beginning from primary school. Including enhancing the scale and audience of our 'Make it Count' meta cognition programme (expanding to years 7 and 8) and sustained skills programmes for years 9-13 to develop skills for success and post-16 'Preparing for' programmes to contextualise subject knowledge and support HE applications. Deliver new targeted literacy support interventions for primary students from at risk groups	7.6 FTE for project design and delivery. Operational and administrative costs for project delivery Student ambassador costs	Through increased skills for success (autonomy, adaptability, critical thinking etc.), increased subject knowledge, and increased metacognition skills , students will have improved attitudes to learning and academic motivation . This will ultimately lead to increased attainment, and more students accessing higher education .	IS2, IS3, IS4, IS5
IS1-A3 Into University partnership (reviewed yearly) Continue to support two community learning centres (Norwich and Great Yarmouth) to enhance school-based interventions and provide opportunities to reach students from at risk group in	0.6FTE Partnership costs provided to Into to	Students will have opportunities to increase their skills, develop self-efficacy and self-belief , which lead to increased attainment and have the ultimate outcome of more	IS2, IS3, IS4

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
the community. Delivery includes academic support for students in years 3-13, sustained mentoring programmes and in-school activity to support knowledge and understanding of higher education.	support 2 centres,	students accessing higher education.	
IS1-A4 Collaboration with internal and external community/stakeholders Continue existing and develop new partnerships with members of the UEA community (e.g. schools and colleges - primary to post-16 and LA delivered provision) and our region to build social capital amongst students from at risk groups, enhanced with a new CPD offering. Deliver new parent and carer engagements to support young people in making informed decisions	2.6 FTE to manage relationships with stakeholders Operational costs for travel funds, CPD offer, grant funds and embedded parent & carer activity	Partner schools enabled to engage in progressive outreach programmes via additional resources. Teachers/advisers and parents/carers see UEA as a trusted source of information. Parents/carers have the skills and increased confidence to support young people.	IS2, IS3
IS1-A5 Targeted interventions to develop social capital and a sense of belonging in higher education Programmes of in-school and on campus activities for years 5-13 with a focus on knowledge and decision making (IAG), including applicant support, e.g. the Next Steps, Explore, Get Ahead and Get Ahead+ programmes. Develop a new free school meal eligible boys project, focusing on developing a sense of belonging in higher education.	5.1 FTE to design and deliver the programme. Activity costs Student ambassador costs	Students will have increased knowledge and awareness of HE and its benefits, and increased understanding of pathways. This will lead to increased capacity to make informed choices , and ultimately lead to more students accessing higher education. Participants will have increased confidence and motivation that higher education is for 'someone like me' , which will lead to more students accessing HE.	IS2, IS3

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £5,465,215

Whole provider approach: access to higher education

The design of this intervention strategy is bespoke to addressing the specific risks to equality of access to higher education for potential students eligible for free school meals. It is underpinned by inclusive approaches to address systemic or structural barriers to equality of access for all students including:

- UEA has a large, diverse **Student Ambassador Scheme** of over 500 students, including those with lived experience of risk to equality of opportunity. The role of student ambassadors as role models is a core principle of outreach design and delivery, with students supporting our activities through acting as tutors, leading workshops, developing resources and acting as a critical friend based on their prior experiences (addressing R2).

- UEA acknowledge the impact of cost across our intervention strategies and will continue to deliver an **individual travel fund** to support participation in university wide activities such as open days and interviews where this is a barrier (addressing R7).
- As part of our commitment as a civic university, and to fostering partnerships at a local and regional level, **the university's public engagement and events team** deliver a series of public engagement activities with enhanced opportunities for underrepresented groups. This includes school based events with high profile speakers, free access to events that would otherwise come at a cost to students and their families, and priority places for public events (addressing R1).
- UEA accept students via both the UCAS main cycle and offers a number of places through clearing. Acknowledging the opportunity this could provide to students who may experience risks to equality of opportunity, we deliver an **embedded inclusive clearing strategy** to ensure students have opportunities to access UEA after the main application cycle has ended. This includes both inclusive and targeted marketing and communications to highlight clearing opportunities and provide reassurance, additional touch points for students who express an interest and contact UEA, and support for local schools and colleges on supporting students to navigate the clearing process (addressing R1 and R3).

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Evidence shows that prior school attainment is one of the greatest barriers to access to higher education for students eligible for free school meals (Pickering, 2019). Our interventions will focus on increasing skills and attitudes related to attainment such as metacognition and self-efficacy, which are evidenced by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) toolkit to be impactful in raising attainment, particularly for disadvantaged learners. By adopting a partnership approach to schools (Dumay et al., 2013) we will also address other barriers such as the provision of information, advice and guidance and knowledge of the application process. See Annex B for further information and evidence.

Evaluation

We will evaluate core activities in this intervention strategy and share these findings as set out below. We will also examine the extent to which each activity contributes towards meeting the overall objective.

IS1-A1 Maths Excellence Fund partnership: East Maths Community (E1)

Outcomes: Phase 1 - Implementation fidelity, reach/engagement, feasibility and perceived outcomes. Phase 2 - Impact on outcomes such as increased enjoyment and engagement in maths, improved subject knowledge and increased school attainment

Method of evaluation: Phase 1: implementation and process evaluation (type 1)

Phase 2: impact evaluation - analysis of outcomes for participating students to non-participant (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Outputs from Phase 1 will be published on the UEA website and potentially other sites from 2026/27 onwards, outputs from Phase 2 will be published from 2028/29 onwards

IS1-A2 Programmes to raise student attainment - Make it count (E2)

Outcomes: Increased metacognitive skills

Method of evaluation: Mixed methods approach (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Interim report from 2026/27 and final report from 2028/29. To be published on UEA outreach offer website; to showcase at relevant conferences and at network events (e.g. NERUPI, TASO)

IS1-A2 Programmes to raise student attainment - Skills programmes (E3)

Outcomes: Increased skills for success

Method of evaluation: Self-report survey using TASO ASQ scales (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Interim report from 2027/28 and final report from 2029/30. To be published on UEA outreach offer website; to showcase at relevant conferences and at network events (e.g. NERUPI, TASO)

IS1-A3 Into University partnership (E4)

Outcomes: Increased learning skills and attainment; develop self-efficacy and self-belief; increased knowledge of higher education

Method of evaluation: Quasi-experimental design and qualitative research into students' attitudes (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Annual report published on Into University website

IS1-A4 Collaboration with internal and external community/stakeholders - School partnership approach (E5)

Outcomes: Partner schools feel enabled to engage in progressive outreach programmes; teachers/advisers and parents/carers see UEA as a trusted source of information.

Method of Evaluation: Longitudinal quantitative research (Type 1 and 2)

Summary of publication plan: Final output published on UEA outreach offer website and partner websites from 2029/30 onwards. Potential for interim report

IS1-A4 Collaboration with internal and external community/stakeholders - Parent and Carer engagements (E6)

Outcomes: Parents/carers have the skills and increased confidence to support young people

Method of evaluation: Mixed methods approach (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Interim report from 2026/27 and final report from 2028/29. To be published on UEA outreach offer website; shared at partner events such as in-school parent events and activities with local authorities.

IS1-A5 Targeted interventions to develop social capital and a sense of belonging in HE - Free school meal eligible boys project (E7)

Outcomes: Increased confidence and motivation that higher education is for 'someone like me'

Method of evaluation: Lived experience research and case studies (type 1 and 2)

Summary of publication plan: Initial report for 2026/27, follow up report from 2028/29. To be published on UEA outreach offer website; to showcase at relevant conferences and at network events (e.g. NERUPI, TASO)

IS1 Intervention level evaluation (E8)

Outcomes: Increased attainment leading to greater access to higher education

Method of evaluation: Develop validated scale to measure skills (type 1), tracking against comparator (type 2), randomised control trial (type 3)

Summary of publication plan: Report from 2028/29. To be published on UEA outreach offer website; to showcase at relevant conferences and at network events (e.g. NERUPI, TASO)

5.2 Intervention strategy 2: access to UEA

Objective 2: Through enhanced engagement with, and advocacy for, care experienced and estranged students (CEES) (along with supporting services such as Norfolk County Council, virtual schools and third sector organisations), UEA will ensure that care experienced and estranged students have equal opportunity to apply to UEA.

Target PTA_2: Increase the proportion of UEA's yearly intake of students who are care experienced from a baseline of 1.2% to 1.7% by 2028/29.

We will monitor the intake of students who are estranged.

Risks to equality of opportunity: R1 Barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment pre-HE; R2 Insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance pre-HE; R3 Barriers to equality of application success; R4 Insufficient available choice of course type and delivery mode; R5 Barriers to sense of belonging in HE and at UEA; R6 Mental health and wellbeing; R7 Cost pressures.

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
IS2-A1 Sustained ‘Including Me’ programme Tailored ‘Including Me’ programme for students who have had disrupted journeys to and through HE in years 7-13. Includes tailored campus activities, student shadowing, application support and residential activities.	0.9 FTE for programme delivery. Operational and administrative costs. Student ambassador costs	Students will have increased knowledge and awareness of the benefits of HE . This will lead to students having increased capacity and confidence to make informed choices . This increased sense of belonging will ultimately lead to increased access to HE .	
IS2-A2 External stakeholder engagement and advocacy Collaboration with Local Authorities, virtual schools, third party organisations, and stakeholders who advocate for and support CEES students, including promoting ‘Including Me’ programme Facilitating knowledge exchange between UEA and professionals around higher education through charities and member networks (e.g. National Network for the Education of Care Leavers).	0.2 FTE to support co-ordination and representation Admin costs	Increased internal understanding of local potential cohorts of students , and risks to equality of opportunity that could impact these groups, through improved data quality and staff understanding . These will lead to professionals, community leaders and influencers viewing UEA as a trusted source of expert advice and advocacy . This will ultimately lead to advocacy for disclosing experience and the benefits for individual students and improve access to higher education .	IS4
IS2-A3 Tailored application and pre-arrival support Continue to deliver tailored interventions for care experienced and estranged students from the point of application, through to their arrival at UEA, including pre arrival communications and invites to transition to HE events, a named contact and opportunities to engage in various formats.	0.6 FTE to deliver activity, and support wider UEA colleagues	Students will have increased confidence and motivation that HE is for ‘someone like me’ and increased knowledge of student support , including financial support that is over and above what is provided by SFE. These will lead to increased sense of belonging , and students feeling their experiences and ambitions are represented in UEA’s admissions, recruitment and marketing. This will ultimately improve access to HE .	IS4

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
IS2-A4 Financial support Bursary See IS4. CEES students will be eligible for the higher level of UEA bursary, plus the UEA Hardship Fund and financial literacy advice and guidance will be promoted directly to all recipients of CEES Network email bulletins.	N/A	CEES students will be supported to have the financial means to fully engage with student experiences and opportunities , which will increase social self-efficacy and increase sense of belonging , making it more likely that students will feel confident in accessing and staying in HE .	IS5, IS6

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £446,038

Whole provider approach: access to UEA

The design of this intervention strategy is bespoke to addressing the specific risks to equality of access to UEA for potential students who are care experienced or estranged. It is underpinned by inclusive approaches to address systemic or structural barriers to equality of access for all students including:

- **Named expert contacts for key groups** that support students across the whole lifecycle. This includes widening participation officers and widening participation academic leads who work with students who might experience risks to equality of opportunity from pre-entry, to graduation. This approach supports a strong sense of belonging, and a feeling that students are welcomed and supported throughout their educational journey (addressing R2 and R5).
- We are committed to ensuring all internal stakeholders have an understanding of their future and current student cohorts, and how they may experience risks to equality of opportunity. Opportunities for **internal staff training and development, sharing of expertise and knowledge exchange** are facilitated by the APP Leadership Team and CHERRPS to ensure delivery across UEA is student centred and speaks to our diverse future and current cohorts (addressing R2 and R5).

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Research on the experiences of care experienced and estranged students report that they face many complex barriers when accessing higher education. We have integrated recommendations on best practice from National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL), Stand Alone and other reports as well as sector research, into the design of our Including Me programme (TASO, 2023) and our collaborative work with other organisations (Hauri, et. al, 2019). See Annex B for further information and evidence.

Evaluation

We will evaluate core activities in this intervention strategy and share these findings as set out below. We will also examine the extent to which each activity contributes towards meeting the overall objective.

IS2-A1 Sustained 'Including Me' programme - Full programme including transition activities and residential (E9)

Outcomes: Increased knowledge and awareness of the benefits of higher education; increased confidence and motivation that higher education is for 'someone like me'

Method of evaluation: Case studies (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Report from 2028/29. To be published on UEA outreach offer website; to showcase at relevant conferences and at network events (e.g. NERUPI, TASO)

IS2-A2 External stakeholder engagement and advocacy - Work with carers, social workers and other professionals (E10)

Outcomes: Increased internal understanding of local potential cohorts of students

Method of evaluation: Email surveys (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Report from 2028/29. To be published on UEA outreach offer website; to showcase at relevant conferences and at network events (e.g. NERUPI, TASO)

IS2 Intervention level evaluation (E11)

Outcomes: Increased internal understanding of local potential cohorts of students and risks

Method of evaluation: Rapid evidence review (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Shared internally through meetings with stakeholders, groups and training events from 2026/27

5.3 Intervention strategy 3: UEA offer making

Objective 3: Through inclusive admissions, marketing and application support, UEA will work to remove barriers to successful outcomes to applications from underrepresented student groups, including mature students and students with vocational qualifications.

Target PTA_3: Reduce the gap in application to offer making rate between mature students (21 or over on entry) and young students (under 21 on entry) from a baseline of 20pp¹ to 14.5pp by 2028/29.

Target PTA_4: Reduce the gap in application to offer making rate between students with a BTEC qualification only, and those with A levels only, from a baseline of 17.3pp to 10pp by 2028/29.

Risks to equality of opportunity: R1 Barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment pre-HE; R2 Insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance pre-HE; R3 Barriers to equality of application success; R5 Barriers to sense of belonging in HE and at UEA; R7 Cost pressures.

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
IS3-A1 Application support programmes Continue to deliver programmes of in-school and on campus activity to support post-16 decision making, understanding of pathways, applications and interview processes. Increased scale of tailored application and interview support, focussing on courses attracting higher numbers of mature students (e.g. Health Sciences and Medicine), with closer links to the student application journey and approaches to broader inclusive admissions and interviews. Mature potential student support programme, including information and guidance sessions, opportunities to visit campus, and application support.	3FTE for programme design and delivery Activity costs Student ambassador costs	Students will have increased knowledge and capacity to navigate HE and make informed choices and ultimately increase in successful applications to HE.	IS1

¹ pp refers to percentage point throughout this document

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
<p>IS3-A2 Inclusive admissions, recruitment and marketing</p> <p>Embedding widening participation targeting into our national school liaison and marketing approaches</p> <p>Review of current approaches to admissions, recruitment and marketing for BTEC and mature students to understand where these may be driving gaps in successful applications.</p>	<p>1FTE for programme design and delivery</p> <p>Activity costs of targeted activity and embedding into existing UEA programmes.</p>	<p>Staff will have increased understanding of the factors that influence offer making gaps for particular groups when prior attainment is accounted for.</p> <p>Students feel their experiences and ambitions are represented in UEA's admissions, recruitment and marketing which leads to an increase in sense of belonging. This will ultimately increase access to HE.</p>	IS2, IS3
<p>IS3-A3 Partnerships with post-16 providers to enable supported pathways</p> <p>Continue to deliver partnership agreements with local post-16 providers with high proportions of BTEC and Mature students, including supported pathways for Access to HE students through contextual admissions, tailored IAG provision from dedicated UEA staff, subject tasters and CPD to highlight pathways to and through HE.</p>	<p>1.7FTE for programme design and delivery.</p> <p>Activity costs of partnership activity and CPD</p> <p>Admin costs</p>	<p>Students have increased knowledge and awareness of the benefits of HE. This will lead to increased confidence in making informed choices, ultimately increasing successful applications to HE.</p> <p>School and college staff have increased understanding of the strengths of mature and vocational learners, and support student choices that match ambition and expectations.</p>	IS1
<p>IS3-A4 Supporting transition to higher education</p> <p>Continue to deliver sustained programmes of support for students from the point of application through to transition to higher education and arrival at UEA e.g. Get ahead+ programme</p>	<p>1.6FTE for programme design and delivery</p> <p>Admin costs</p> <p>Student ambassador costs</p>	<p>Students develop positive associations with HE leading to increased confidence and motivation that HE is for 'someone like me' and a greater sense of belonging. Ultimately leading to increase in successful applications to HE.</p>	IS1, IS4
<p>IS3-A5 Developing skills for higher education study</p> <p>Continue to deliver a series of skills-based programmes, providing students with examples of HE teaching and learning, and opportunities to build key skills for success, including a tailored mentoring programme for BTEC students to develop skills for HE, a series of synchronous and</p>	<p>3FTE for programme design and delivery</p> <p>Activity and admin costs</p> <p>Student ambassador costs</p>	<p>Increased skills for success (autonomy, adaptability, critical thinking etc.) and confidence in applying these to a HE setting. Through understanding of teaching and learning in HE and tools to support success, students will build study skills and increased</p>	IS4

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
asynchronous content focus on building confidence in applying skills, and a series of 'Preparing for' subject led programmes to build subject specific knowledge and competencies.		confidence that HE is for 'someone like me'. These will ultimately lead to increased successful applications to HE.	

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £2,887,699

Whole provider approach: UEA offer making

The design of this intervention strategy is bespoke to addressing the specific risks to equality of receiving an offer from UEA for potential students who are mature and students who have vocational qualifications. It is underpinned by inclusive approaches to address systemic or structural barriers to equality of offer receipt for all students including:

- Our **Inclusive Admissions Policy** will ensure that we monitor the qualification landscape and available pathways in light of level 3 qualification reform. Where BTEC qualifications are defunded or withdrawn due to overlap with T Level content we are committed to ensuring progression remains through our acceptance of T Levels and will monitor this intervention in the context of government policy changes. UEA is included in the Department for Education list of providers who accept T Level qualifications. We also plan to develop our policy to exercise greater flexibility within our admissions protocols in the context of both predicted grades and prior attainment, therefore maximising opportunity for students at risk (addressing R3).

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Evidence suggests that certain groups of students may face barriers to developing the skills needed to successfully apply to higher education, and may lack information, advice and guidance (IAG). Our activities therefore provide this IAG through a range of tailored activities and opportunities (Bennun, 2015). In line with the recommendation from Farini and Scollan (2019), we will be working in partnership with post-16 providers to provide supportive pathways into higher education. See Annex B for further information and evidence.

Evaluation

We will evaluate core activities in this intervention strategy and share these findings as set out below. We will also examine the extent to which each activity contributes towards meeting the overall objective.

IS3-A1 Application support programme - Application and interview support (E12)

Outcomes: Increased knowledge and capacity to navigate higher education and make informed choices

Method of evaluation: Quasi-experimental design (strong type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Shared internally with ARM colleagues from 2026/27; methodology to be shared with evaluation networks (e.g. NERUPI)

IS3-A3 Partnerships with post-16 providers to enabled supported pathways (E13)

Outcomes: Increased knowledge and capacity to navigate higher education and make informed choices; increased understanding among schools and college staff of target groups

Method of evaluation: Implementation and process evaluation (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Report from 2026/27, to be published on UEA and partners' website

IS3-A4 Supporting transition to higher education - Get Ahead+ Applicant support programme (E14)

Outcomes: Increased confidence and motivation that HE is for 'someone like me'; Increase in successful applications to HE

Method of evaluation: Pre- and post- survey (type 2), Quasi-experimental design using UCAS Outreach Evaluator (strong type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Shared internally with ARM colleagues in 2028/29; methodology to be shared with evaluation networks (e.g. NERUPI)

IS3-A5 Developing skills for HE study - Skills for HE study and Mentoring (E15)

Outcomes: Increased skills for success (autonomy, adaptability, critical thinking etc.; increased subject knowledge

Method of evaluation: Survey using validated scales (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Interim report from 2026/27 and final report from 2028/29. To be published on UEA outreach offer website; to showcase at relevant conferences and at network events (e.g. NERUPI, TASO)

IS3 Intervention level evaluation (E16)

Outcomes: Increased understanding of the factors that influence offer making gaps for particular groups

Method of evaluation: Qualitative research to understand application experiences (type 1), annual monitoring e.g. against action plans and school-specific gaps (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Shared internally with ARM colleagues annually; methodology to be shared with evaluation networks (e.g. NERUPI)

5.4 Intervention strategy 4: continuation and completion

Objective 4: Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of continuation and completion for all students including students declaring a disability, eligible for free school meals, those with vocational qualifications, black students and mature students.

Target PTS_1: Reduce the gap in continuation rate between students who entered with a BTEC qualification only and students who entered with A level qualifications only, from a baseline of 13.7pp to 6.6pp by 2028/29.

Target PTS_2: Reduce the gap in completion rate between mature students (21 or over on entry) and young students (under 21 on entry) from a baseline of 8.6pp to 3.6pp by 2028/29.

Target PTS_3: Reduce the gap in completion rate for students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability declared from a baseline of 5.9pp to 2.9pp by 2028/29.

Target PTS_4: Reduce the gap in completion rate between students eligible for free school meals and those not eligible from a baseline of 2pp to 1pp by 2028/29.

In addition, we will closely monitor the completion rates for disabled students with social or communication impairments and/or multiple impairments, to ensure this does not fall significantly and consistently below the rate for students with no declared disability. We will also closely monitor the completion rates for students of black and mixed ethnicities to ensure this does not fall significantly and consistently below the rate for white students.

Risks to equality of opportunity: R5 Barriers to sense of belonging in HE and at UEA; R6 Mental health and wellbeing; R7 Cost pressures; R8 Insufficient support, advice and guidance; R9 Barriers to engagement with experience and opportunities; R10 Insufficient representation.

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
<p>IS4-A1 New student support</p> <p>Enhance and co-ordinate focussed opportunities for students at risk to plan for and settle into life and learning at UEA through pre arrival induction programmes (e.g. our Get Ahead+ programme and mature student support), community activities for those living on campus through our Residential Life programme, learner community support through School based activities and socially (e.g. through BuddySU).</p>	<p>3 FTE staff delivery</p> <p>Activity costs</p>	<p>Students will have an increased knowledge of support available and increased skills and knowledge to make the transition to HE. This in turn leads to increased social self-efficacy and an increased sense of belonging, ultimately leading to increased student satisfaction which will lead to more students continuing and completing</p>	IS3
<p>IS4-A2 Financial support</p> <p>Provide an enhanced targeted financial support through the UEA bursary for students with a household income under £20,000 and for care experienced and estranged students + payments for a wider range of students experiencing financial hardship</p> <p>Enhanced provision of information, advice and guidance on managing finances and integrate across a range of resources/services</p>	<p>Bursaries to students</p> <p>Admin-istration of payment</p> <p>0.6 FTE financial guidance</p>	<p>Students at risk of cost pressures will have the financial means to fully engage with student experiences and opportunities, which will increase social self-efficacy and increase sense of belonging, ultimately leading to increased student satisfaction and more students continuing and completing</p>	IS2, IS5, IS6
<p>IS4-A3 Developing sense of belonging</p> <p>Continue specific co-created sense of belonging opportunities for groups of students to meet socially and learn about services (e.g. mature student network and Take 5) throughout the student lifecycle.</p> <p>Enhance and co-create communication to encourage more students to get involved with these initiatives.</p>	<p>0.9 FTE staff delivery</p> <p>6 part-time student interns</p> <p>Activity costs</p>	<p>Students from at-risk groups will have increased knowledge of support available and increased skills and knowledge to make the transition to HE. This in turn leads to increased social self-efficacy and an increased sense of belonging, ultimately leading to increased student satisfaction which will lead to more students continuing and completing</p>	IS5, IS6

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
IS4-A4 Peer academic support In specific Schools/programmes with higher numbers of students at risk, enhance the targeted promotion and development of opportunities to be mentored and to become a mentor through the University's peer learning and peer support schemes.	0.51 FTE staff co-ordination 1 part-time intern	Students will increase academic self-efficacy , which will lead to increased motivation on their courses and an increased sense of belonging . This will help increase engagement with the curriculum, increase attainment and ultimately lead to more students completing their degree	IS5

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £13,699,971

Whole provider approach: continuation and completion

The design of this intervention strategy is bespoke to addressing the specific risks to equality of continuation and completion for UEA students declaring a disability, eligible for free school meals, those with vocational qualifications and mature students. It is underpinned by inclusive approaches to address systemic or structural barriers to equality of retention for all students including:

- We take an inclusive approach to **student retention and transition** support across the student lifetime including our Welcome and Welcome Back weeks (to orientate students to their course and instigate a sense of belonging for all students), development and maintenance of School learner communities and authentic assessment design, support and feedback. Across 2023/24 and 2024/25, UEA are conducting a full strategic focus on student retention, led by our Associate Pro Vice Chancellor of Employability and Opportunities, with a core aim to further develop inclusive supportive approaches to student retention; the outcomes of this review will be implemented from the start of this APP (addressing R5, R8 and R9).
- Continued implementation of our **Inclusive Education Policy** including our commitment to ensuring that all students' learning experiences meets their needs. This includes clarity on their timetable and expectations of engagement, learning materials are accessible and flexible and help students prepare and follow up their learning and regular opportunities to feedback to teaching teams. These features of the learning experience are designed to remove barriers to engagement and to ensure consistency of the learning experience (addressing R8 and R9).
- Our supportive approach to **engagement monitoring** ensures proactive and early communication and wellbeing support for all students who are facing barriers, including relating to mental wellbeing, with engaging effectively with their course (addressing R6 and R9).
- Our **Student Services** providing wellbeing, student life and learning enhancement support, and our one-stop shop **Student Information Zone** ensures that staff are on hand to provide individualised information, advice and guidance. We collaborate with a range of third sector, NHS, Social Care, Council and Police services in providing mental health and wellbeing support to students (addressing R6 and R8).
- Our **Learning Enhancement Team** providing support in academic writing and study, maths and statistics, including individual and small-group tutorials, specialist SpLD tuition and neurodiversity screening service, regular drop-in events (such as the Study Café, Study Together and Maths Helpdesk), curriculum-integrated workshops and self-access study resources (addressing R8).

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Our literature review and internal data suggests that both continuation and completion (retention) are driven by personal/social as well as academic factors. Our activity prepares new students for university life and study which is important for retention (Thomas, 2012). Our peer academic support is a means for students to process information both about the university and the specific academic demands of their course, and our evaluation shows that participants have higher rates of continuation (TASO, 2024). For further evidence of how all these activities support outcomes, see Annex B.

Evaluation

We will evaluate core activities in this intervention strategy and share these findings as set out below. We will also examine the extent to which each activity contributes towards meeting the overall objective.

IS4-A1 New student support - Buddy(SU) (E17)

Outcomes: Increased skills and knowledge to successfully make the transition to HE

Method of evaluation: Self-report survey (Type 2), tracking of student outcomes (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Initial report from 2026/27 and follow up report with longer-term outcomes in 2028/29. To be published on UEA website and UEA SU website

IS4-A3 Developing a sense of belonging - Mature Students network (E18)

Outcomes: Increased knowledge of support available and increased sense of belonging

Method of evaluation: Qualitative research (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Final report from 2029/30 to be published on UEA website

IS4-A4 Peer academic support - Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) (E19)

Outcomes: Increased engagement with the curriculum; increased attainment

Method of evaluation: Quasi-experimental design (strong type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Final report from 2029/30 to be published on UEA website; potential for academic publication afterwards

IS4-A2 Financial support (E20)

Outcomes: Increased students continuing and completing

Method of evaluation: Quasi-experimental design (type 3)

Summary of publication plan: Final report from 2028/29 to be published on UEA website; potential for academic publication afterwards

IS4 Intervention level evaluation (E21)

Outcomes: Increased sense of belonging

Method of evaluation: Monitoring using student surveys (type 1), lived experience research (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Initial report from 2026/27 and follow up report from 2029/30, to be published on UEA website

5.5 Intervention strategy 5: degree awarding

Objective 5: Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of good honours (2.1 or 1st degree classification) degree award for all students including for students eligible for free school meals, black students or students of mixed ethnicity, and students with vocational qualifications.

Target PTS_5: Reduce the gap in good honours degree awarding rate between black students and white students from a baseline of 10.5pp to 4.5pp by 2028/29.

Target PTS_6: Reduce the gap in good honours degree awarding rate between students eligible for free school meals and students not eligible from a baseline of 4.8pp to 3.4pp by 2028/29.

Target PTS_7: Reduce the gap in good honours degree awarding rate between students who entered with a BTEC qualification only and students who entered with A level qualifications only, from a baseline of 25.4pp to 15.7pp by 2028/29.

In addition, we will closely monitor the degree awarding rates for students of mixed ethnicities to ensure this does not fall significantly and consistently below the rate for white students.

Risks to equality of opportunity: R1 Barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment pre-HE; R5 Barriers to sense of belonging in HE and at UEA; R6 Mental health and wellbeing; R7 Cost pressures; R8 Insufficient support, advice and guidance; R9 Barriers to engagement with experience and opportunities; R10 Insufficient representation.

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
IS5-A1 Student led School development Continue Student of Colour Ambassadors scheme in Schools with higher numbers of students at risk, working in partnership with staff and students to address local barriers to equality. Enhanced by improved integration with student representation systems	0.5 FTE staff co-ordinator c18 part-time interns	Students of Colour Ambassadors develop self-advocacy skills which enable staff to have an increased understanding of how to address students' needs, particularly how to increase sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy . These can lead to changes and improvements within Schools which contribute to decreasing the awarding gap	IS4
IS5-A2 Enhanced inclusive practice Enhance the targeted development and delivery of guidance and support for staff in specific Schools/programmes with at risk students on inclusive practice in learning, teaching and assessment as part of the University's Inclusivity Network	1.1 FTE staff delivery	Staff have increased understanding of how to work with and address the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. By implementing this into their practice, this can lead to changes and improvement which contribute to decreasing the awarding gap	IS4
IS5-A3 Learning enhancement Enhance the targeted development and delivery of tailored workshops embedded within specific degree programmes and modules with higher numbers of students at risk, developing context-specific academic practices, understanding of assessment criteria and standards etc	0.5 FTE staff delivery	Students are exposed to a range of learning environments and feel supported by staff to develop academically relevant skills which will increase academic self-efficacy and increase metacognitive strategies . This will lead to increased motivation and engagement with the curriculum which will impact upon attainment and ultimately their degree award	IS4

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £517,844

Whole provider approach: degree awarding

The design of this intervention strategy is bespoke to addressing the specific risks to equality of good honours degree awarding (2.1 or 1st degree classification) for UEA students eligible for free school meals, black students or students of mixed ethnicity and students with vocational qualifications. It is underpinned by inclusive approaches to address systemic or structural barriers to equality of access for all students including:

- Implementation of our whole institution **Curriculum Review Project** will enshrine the quality, coherence and inclusivity in the fabric of our approach to course design and delivery. The revised periodic curriculum review will ensure that the curriculum is representative and relevant

for all students particularly those students at risk. This will ensure that assessment is fair and accessible, with assessment practice designed with student effort in mind and at course level to address any issues of burden and intensity. Where possible students will be able to exercise choice in assessment topics and have a variety of modes of assessment (addressing R10).

- The curriculum review will be supported by our **Blended Learning Policy** (including our approach to lecture capture) and associated **Generative AI Policy**, together with our movement to **Blackboard Ultra** as our virtual learning environment, all of which provide a student-centred learning experience (addressing R8).
- Continued implementation of our **Inclusive Education Policy** through policy, staff training and developing a new approach to key performance indicators (KPIs) which is embedded in the overall strategy for Student Education and Experience (addressing R10).
- Our dedicated **Learning Enhancement Team** provide embedded and individualised support to all students to help them build confidence and develop practices in academic writing and study, mathematics and statistics through a wide range of self-study resources, drop-ins and workshops, and one to one tutorials (addressing R1 and R8).
- Our **Inclusive Library** puts student experience as central to all decision-making, developing services and policy by drawing on student feedback or actively engaging with student community through surveys and user experience activities. The Library provides a variety of study spaces to suit all student needs, which include a wellbeing space and private 'quiet' room available for all, and subject-specific library support embedded in the VLE and available both synchronously and asynchronously, as well as range of accessible services, e.g. a postal loan scheme or free book returns by courier. Specific campaigns are run such as Decolonise UEA Library seeking suggestions for items related to decolonisation and anti-racism and Campus Life book suggestions promoting items which will enhance student experience/wellbeing (addressing R6, R8, R9 and R10).

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Research on the degree awarding gap points to this being driven by institutional factors such as underrepresentation and lack of inclusivity. Our activities therefore focus on institutional change through increased student representation (de Sousa, 2021) and enhancing our pedagogical practices (Dewsbury and Brame, 2019). We will also offer degree-specific workshops, embedded into the curriculum to be inclusive (Honick and Broadbent, 2016), which will support students' understanding of academic practices. See Annex B for further information.

Evaluation

We will evaluate core activities in this intervention strategy and share these findings as set out below. We will also examine the extent to which each activity contributes towards meeting the overall objective.

IS5-A1 Student led School development - Student of Colour Ambassadors (E22)

Outcomes: Increased student self-advocacy; staff have increased understanding of students' needs

Method of evaluation: Qualitative research (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Initial report from 2027/28 and follow up report from 2029/30. To be published on UEA website and UEA SU website

IS5-A2 Enhanced inclusive practice - Inclusivity Network (E23)

Outcomes: Staff have increased understanding of how to address students' needs

Method of evaluation: Staff feedback (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Initial report by end of 2026/27 and updated report in 2028/29, shared internally

IS5-A3 Learning enhancement (E24)

Outcomes: Increased academic self-efficacy; increase metacognitive strategies; increased attainment

Method of evaluation: Survey (type 2), quasi-experimental design (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Report from 2026/27 to be published on UEA website with potential for academic publication afterwards

IS5 Intervention level evaluation (E25)

Outcomes: Increased academic self-efficacy

Method of evaluation: Qualitative research (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Initially shared internally from 2026/27; methodology to be shared with evaluation networks (e.g. NERUPI) from 2026/27; would work with students to consider further publication from 2027/28 onwards

5.6 Intervention strategy 6: progression

Objective 6: Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of progression to graduate level employment or further study for all students including for students eligible for free school meals and students declaring a mental health condition, neurodiversity or with multiple impairments.

Target PTP_1: Reduce the gap in progression rate between students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability declared from a baseline of 9.9pp to 2.1pp by 2028/29.

In addition, we will closely monitor the progression rates for disabled students with social or communication impairments and/or multiple impairments, to ensure this does not fall significantly and consistently below the rate for students with no declared disability, plus the progression rates for students eligible for free school meals, to ensure this does not fall significantly and consistently below the rate for students not eligible for free school meals.

Risks to equality of opportunity: R6 Mental health and wellbeing; R7 Cost pressures; R8 Insufficient support, advice and guidance; R9 Barriers to engagement with experience and opportunities.

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
IS6-A1 Wellbeing trainers Continue to provide a range of prevention and early intervention activities ; enhance the focus of current inclusive activities to ensure they are offered in the right place and at the right time to create opportunities for students at risk from arrival to completion of their studies	2 FTE staff delivery	Students engage with IAG about wellbeing issues that impact academic study which increase their academic self-efficacy, increase cognitive strategies and lead to increased engagement with the curriculum. This leads to increased confidence in future success and ultimately progression to positive outcomes	IS4, IS5
IS6-A2 Reducing barriers to experiential learning Continue staff and resourcing dedicated to removing barriers faced by identified student group to consider and participate in short-term and longer-term Study Abroad options, enhancing peer sharing and the advising service (including 1-1 meetings, workshops and inclusive resources)	1 FTE staff delivery Grants to students	Students can access and engage with relevant opportunities that will increase social self-efficacy and increase self-reflection and articulation of skills , leading to increased confidence in future success and ultimately progression to positive outcomes	IS4, IS5

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross IS?
Enhanced work related placement support , with specialist staff working with students, academic staff and collaboratively with businesses to ensure students at risk thrive in placement opportunities, including those embedded in the curriculum	2.02 FTE staff delivery		
IS6-A3 Career service enhancement Enhance UEA Award by providing specialist and bespoke range of services for students at risk as well as targeted embedding of UEA Award into courses with disproportionate numbers of students at risk. Enhance Role Model programmes presenting lived-experience graduate success for students at risk by delivering expanded (more and different) activity and collaborating with local, regional and national programmes for enhanced participation of at risk UEA students	1.43 FTE staff delivery 0.83 FTE staff delivery Student Ambassador s	Students receive support to increase self-reflection and articulation of skills which will lead to increased confidence in future success and ultimately progression to positive outcomes .	IS4, IS5
IS6-A4 Empowering diverse graduate success Continue to develop our employability activities for students experiencing a mental health condition (and a social or communication impairment), with specialist staff supporting adaptation, disclosure and working rights. Deliver new Progression Partnership with local, regional and national organisations to collaboratively enhance our delivery of specialist support to bridge systemic gaps in early graduate success of students with disabilities, neurodiversity and with mental health conditions.	1.15 FTE staff delivery 1.11 FTE staff delivery Activity costs	Students will increase skills and knowledge to successfully make the transition out of HE, which will lead to increased confidence in future success and ultimately progression to positive outcomes	IS4, IS5

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £1,615,730

Whole provider approach: progression

The design of this intervention strategy is bespoke to addressing the specific risks to equality of progression for UEA students eligible for free school meals and students declaring a mental health condition, neurodiversity or with multiple impairments. It is underpinned by inclusive approaches to address systemic or structural barriers to equality of progression for all students including:

- Our award-winning **Careers Service** provides accessible and personalised information, advice and guidance for all students, apprentices and recent graduates including support that addresses the risk posed by cost of living (for example working in collaboration with employers to source part time work, summer employment, paid internships and sourcing graduate employment) (addressing R7, R8 and R9).

- As part of our **Curriculum Enhancement Project**, employability support, placement delivery and experiential learning will be embedded in teaching delivery and course level assessment strategies to normalise career thinking and preparation, which increases the likelihood of graduate success for all students (addressing R9).
- Our annual School/Faculty **employability planning process** requires inclusive approaches to be built in by design to all employability support initiatives. This means that the needs of all students, including in terms of content and practicalities of flexible delivery, are considered to ensure equality of reach and impact through the removal of barriers to engagement with the opportunities and experiences (addressing R9).

Summary of evidence base and rationale

There is evidence that students who engage in more opportunities to build graduate and employability capital (such as work experience) have better progression outcomes (TASO, 2022). However, certain student groups may face additional barriers to accessing these opportunities, so we will be enhancing both the opportunities available (Schepper et al., 2022), as well as reducing the barriers to them through specialist trained staff (Huber et al., 2016) and by improving wellbeing to increase engagement (Boulton et. al, 2019). See Annex B for further information.

Evaluation

We will evaluate core activities in this intervention strategy and share these findings as set out below. We will also examine the extent to which each activity contributes towards meeting the overall objective.

IS6-A1 Wellbeing trainers - wellbeing training (E26)

Outcomes: Increased academic self-efficacy; Improved wellbeing; Increased engagement with the curriculum

Method of evaluation: Qualitative research (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Initial report from 2027/28 and follow up report from 2029/30, to be published on UEA website

IS6-A2 Reducing barriers to experiential learning - Study Abroad (E27)

Outcomes: Increased social self-efficacy; increase self-reflection and articulation of skills

Method of evaluation: Pre and post survey (type 2); tracking of participants against comparator group (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Initial report from 2026/27 and follow up report from 2028/29, to be published on UEA website

IS6-A2 Reducing barriers to experiential learning - placement support (E28)

Outcomes: Increased social self-efficacy

Method of evaluation: Tracking (type 1), quantitative comparison (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Annual impact report from CCEN to be published on UEA website from 26/27

IS6-A3 Career service enhancement - UEA Award (E29)

Outcomes: Increase skills and knowledge to successfully make the transition out of HE

Method of evaluation: Pre and post survey (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Annual impact report from CCEN to be published on UEA website

IS6-A3 Career service enhancement - Role Model Work (E30)

Outcomes: Increase skills and knowledge to successfully make the transition out of HE

Method of evaluation: Qualitative research (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Annual impact report from CCEN to be published on UEA website from 26/27

IS6-A4 Empowering diverse graduate success - Employability activities for students with mental health condition (E31)

Outcomes: Increased skills and knowledge to successfully make the transition to HE

Method of evaluation: Tracking (type 1), qualitative research (type 2)

Summary of publication plan: Annual impact report from CCEN to be published on UEA website from 26/27

IS6-A4 Empowering diverse graduate success - Progression Partnership (E32)

Outcomes: Increased confidence in future success (post-HE)

Method of evaluation: Implementation and process evaluation (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Report from 2029/30 to be published on UEA website and partners' websites as appropriate

IS6 Intervention level evaluation (E33)

Outcomes: Increased progression to graduate outcomes

Method of evaluation: Quantitative research (type 1)

Summary of publication plan: Final report to be published from 2029/30.

6 Student consultation

Student consultation and collaboration is a key part of UEA's holistic approach to the student education and experience. We have engaged in student consultation during the APP development stage and will continue to after the APP is approved by the OfS in order to meaningfully influence both the design and delivery phases of the new APP.

During the design phase, we have engaged in student consultation in the following ways and adapted the emerging plan accordingly. The APP leadership team have been consulting and engaging with students from different backgrounds in our community through our embedded student voice survey, which enables us to understand differential student experience, especially when it comes to wellbeing. The learning from this source has influenced, and will continue to influence, our strategy to implement the Mental Health Charter as part of our whole provider approach. The APP team have regular catch ups with Students' Union staff in relation to co-created and jointly run projects such as the Students of Colour Ambassadors scheme. In this way our interventions have been shaped by student's need and planned collaboratively. Student feedback is enabled through School of study based Staff Student Liaison Committees and insight from these forums influences policy and decision making at School level and beyond. We also have a newly agreed data sharing agreement with the Students' Union which will help us establish insight from new spaces. From a policy and strategy point of view, students have had the opportunity to co-create and influence existing and continuing elements of the whole provider approach such as the Inclusive Education Policy. Policy and strategy is also subject to committee scrutiny, where there is student representation.

In addition to the activities set out above, the plan for student engagement once the APP is approved will include a range of measures including:

- Co-producing key activities in partnership with students, developing our capacity to collaborate and respond to student lived experience from the start of the implementation process.
- Involving students will be integral to our improved approach to evaluation of activities and intervention strategies, including in the design of evaluation methodologies as well as implementing evaluations and analysing findings.
- Embedding APP reviews and discussion with part-time and full-time officers in the Students' Union.
- APP leadership and university student communications team collaborating to seek student feedback on the implementation and evaluation findings of the APP via our existing Student Voice platforms.
- The APP Leadership and Student Voice Teams will develop approaches to seeking student voices in new spaces, for example the Students' Union building, to develop approaches to collecting student feedback during social events such as gigs and student society events. There will also be a focus on how to develop effective dialogue with groups of students whose voice is not usually heard.
- Our existing Student Voice initiative will develop its reach through engagement with students via our Blackboard VLE.

- The SU's own strategy has focus on under-represented and disadvantaged student groups and will share insight through our regular meetings to inform our planning, delivery and evaluation approaches.
- The implementation of other strategic priorities, for example the Mental Health Charter and the Inclusive Education Policy will also involve student engagement.

7 Evaluation of the plan

UEA is committed to using evidence and evaluation to shape its APP approach with critical reflection, ensuring we question our activities at all stages, facilitating continuous improvement in inclusive practice and the range of intervention strategies and their content. We take an integrated approach to evaluation, with a core Widening Access and Participation Evidence and Evaluation Team (WAPEET), supported by skilled insight, market research and data science colleagues, and supplemented by cross-institutional expertise, for example our Widening Participation Academic Leads embedded in Faculties.

WAPEET has established approaches to evaluating an extensive range of activity and will be drawing upon processes that have been tried and tested, as well as developing new methods during this plan. We have developed a range of internal tools and have experience in conducting robust evaluations already, and our strong relationship with the University's Research Ethics Committee and Data Compliance Team means we are able to move forward quickly on delivering evaluation projects. We are committed to using a broad range of data types to provide the most relevant evaluation of different programmes. Mechanisms for use of internal and external data, collection of mass participant data, survey responses and qualitative data are developed into a full schedule of available data. Over the lifespan of this plan, we will continue to remain alert to new insight sources.

We are committed to utilising a mixed methods approach to build a range of evidence which meets all three of the standards of evidence as set out by the OfS as appropriate (this is summarised above under each intervention strategy in Section 5).

The overall approach to evaluation is supported through a collaboration with UEA's Centre for Higher Education Research Policy, Practice and Scholarship (CHERPPS). Driven by joint working between the CHERPPS Director and APVC Student Inclusion, projects such as a recent successful tendered project with TASO on institutional data use are aimed at increasing the sector's knowledge and understanding of widening access and participation. In addition, we have contributed good practice examples on subjects such as mental wellbeing and research ethics to the TASO website, supporting both knowledge and evaluation skills. Supported by a shared Senior Research Associate we will increase the scale of our work with sector bodies to publish research on relevant topics, undertaken by our academic colleagues in a variety of subject areas.

7.1 Approach to designing our intervention strategy evaluations

Our evaluation team and practitioners have collaboratively developed an enhanced theory of change for each of the intervention strategies described in this plan. This is a map of how the desired change is expected to happen in our context that enables us to design activities and evaluations that truly measure the effectiveness and impact of our approach. This includes the required inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts of each activity, alongside rationale/assumptions and change mechanisms. We have followed guidance from TASO on the construction of these theories of change, both through engaging with their resources and through our participation in recent tender bids with TASO. We used a combination of frameworks such as Network Evaluation and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI), TASO's mapping, outcomes and activities tool (MOAT) and upcoming post-entry typology, in order to categorise activities/sub-types and to articulate appropriate outcomes for all of our activities. Our rapid evidence review (findings of which are referenced throughout Annex A and B) provided research and evidence which informed the rationale and assumptions underlying each theory of change. In this way intervention strategy design is underpinned by sector best practice and institutional evidence, which will then be evaluated to understand whether the initiative does result in positive impact.

We designed evaluations based on these theories of change to ensure that consideration of evaluation is embedded for all activities. Our approach will focus on evaluating outcomes for which we have less established evidence of impact. Many of our pre-existing activities have been robustly evaluated previously and already show positive impacts (more detail is provided in Annex B). Where there is newer activity, we are initially focusing on our short-term outcomes but will evaluate medium and long-term outcomes should these initial evaluation plans demonstrate potential and the activity continues. Taking intervention strategy one as an example (see section 5.1), most of our targeted interventions to develop potential student social capital and a sense of belonging in HE have already been evaluated and show that participants are reporting positive outcomes. The focus of our evaluation will, therefore, be on the newest activity, which is our free school meal eligible boys' project.

In this plan we have focussed on detailing our impact evaluation for the 'primary' outcomes for each activity, to ensure that evaluations have a clear scope and in order to avoid the risk of p-hacking (cherry picking from a range of potential positive outcomes). However, we will also conduct process evaluations that will allow us to evaluate secondary outcomes and pick up interim findings, which will help us build an understanding of not only the outcomes achieved but also what mechanisms led to that change and respond rapidly to keep on track for objectives.

7.2 Strengthening our approach

In the design of this APP, we utilised the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool to understand the strengths of our current approach and where we can improve our evaluation activity. The self-assessment indicated that we have advanced approaches in our strategic context for evaluation and a strong evaluation methodology embedded in our programme design of outreach activities. The assessment highlighted the need to strengthen our evaluation of activities supporting current students and that we should further develop our evaluation implementation and learning.

Building on our existing strengths, we will be strengthening our evaluation of on-course intervention activities through the design and development of a range of new evaluations and will disseminate our research and evaluation findings internally (as detailed in section 5) by the commencement of this plan. This will be achieved in collaboration between our dedicated Widening Access and Participation Team (WAPEET), our Planning department and our Centre for Higher Education Research Policy and Practice and informed by student consultation and collaboration. We will use a range of approaches to ensure practitioners can learn and respond to internal and sector-wide findings and support this with a strategic approach to upskilling practitioners in their evaluation understanding, skills and confidence in interpreting findings.

Across the lifetime of this plan, we also intend to undertake a whole provider contribution analysis to understand whether our on-course activities listed are leading and contributing to institutional outcomes. By utilising institutional data and management information collected from practitioners, we will be looking to understand whether our activities influence, effect or contribute towards our institution-level student outcomes and which activities have made an important contribution to the observed result. From this, we hope to understand which of our activities are making a difference and what conditions are needed to make this type of activity succeed. Our contribution analysis will support practitioners to confirm or revise their theories of change and understand whether we can plausibly conclude that their activities are making important contributions to higher level student outcomes.

We will also be developing further the evaluation of our whole provider approach, which takes into account our strategy for addressing risks to equality of outcomes that spans all aspects of the student lifecycle from pre-application to post graduation and encompasses academic, personal, social, and professional development. Our Inclusive Education Policy underpins our whole provider approach and thus, our approach to evaluating this aspect of our work will be led by a new set of inclusive education performance indicators (PIs). These link to UEA's overall Student Education and Experience key PIs that will be monitored through UEA governance and committees. In academic year 2024/25, the APP Team will work with consultants on developing a new set of KPIs, which will encompass all four areas of the inclusive education policy. These will be agreed through a formal governance process at UEA. In this way, our approach to evaluating our whole provider

approach is embedded. In addition, where there are new approaches to activities that contribute to our whole provider approach, or significant policy changes (for example our contextual admissions policy), we will evaluate and monitor the impact of these specifically.

7.3 Learning from evaluation to influence practice

UEA's APP evaluation approach will ensure that evaluation outcomes are fully utilised to determine whether each intervention strategy and its component activities are achieving intended outcomes and ensure that practitioners respond appropriately whether this be through expansion, maintenance, adjustment or redesign of interventions.

Learning from evaluation to influence practice is built into our APP intervention strategy approach; each project follows a clear cycle of planning, designing, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, reviewing, and reflecting. For example, WAPEET run evaluation outcome reflective workshops with practitioners and operate a regular news bulletin to update the broader community of practice on relevant evidence. We will be developing our internal dissemination and communication plan during the course of this plan to further engage stakeholders and the wider institution community.

We are also committed to sharing evaluation evidence with the sector. For external publication, our intention is to publish findings from evaluation projects at regular intervals, providing interim and follow up reports as appropriate. In the first instance these will be available on our website but we will be working with academic colleagues on other routes to publication for specific evaluation projects, such as in academic journals. We are active members of sector networks such as NERUPI, HEAT, NEON and regularly attend and present at their events to share our methodologies and contribute to learnings and best practice in the sector.

7.4 Monitoring

UEA will continue to monitor compliance with this plan and our progress towards its milestones and targets (including via the more detailed APP internal targets and milestones and our inclusive practice PIs) utilising the OfS APP dashboard, other sector data and internal reporting. We will also track individual participants on both our outreach and on-course activities to understand longer-term outcomes.

Development of reporting and prompt communication of progress is the responsibility of our dedicated WAPEET and overseen by our Head of Widening Access and Participation. Overall executive level responsibility for monitoring plan progress sits with our Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Education and Experience) who is supported by the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for Student Inclusion, and relevant committees which include representatives from UEA's Students' Union. This takes the form of standing annual agenda items monitoring progress towards our ultimate plan targets (as outlined in the targets and milestones section) and embedded reporting within broader internal monitoring reports where consideration of equality of opportunity is required. Worsening or flatlining progress against milestones triggers a review, drawing on our evidence and evaluation work and adjustment to theory of change and related intervention activity.

8 Provision of information to students

UEA is committed to providing clear and accessible information to both current and prospective students about the fees we will charge and the financial support we offer. We publish information on both areas on a dedicated part of our website (<https://www.uea.ac.uk/study/fees-and-funding/fees>), in printed materials for prospective students, via email through our enquirer and applicant engagement plan, and through synchronous delivery such as open days and our webinar series. Our bursaries are linked from this webpage to make them easy to find, including the full terms and conditions. Our bursary eligibility and amounts for home undergraduate students under this APP will be:

Eligibility	Value of bursary per academic year of study
£0 - £20,000 household income	£1,600
Care leaver	£3,000
Estranged	£3,000

Students do not need to apply for the UEA bursary; eligibility will be assessed using information provided by Student Finance England. Bursary support will be offered for no more than four years of undergraduate study (even if the course is longer, with foundation years counting as one year of study). Bursary payments are made in 3 instalments throughout the relevant academic year. Bursary recipients will receive support as per the terms and conditions that are in place at the time the student first enrolls with UEA, meaning they will know what support they will receive throughout their studies if they remain eligible.

Our Outreach Team deliver a comprehensive package of activities about student finance, fees and funding across our region, and ensure this is embedded in student recruitment activity through our Inclusive Admissions Recruitment and Marketing strategy. This includes student eligibility, the broad range of financial support offered by the university (e.g. scholarships) and who to contact if students are unsure on our fees or support. This activity extends to our work with teachers and advisers to ensure they are providing accurate and timely information to their students, and parents and carers to enable discussions at home and support informed decision making.

Our Student Life Advisers offer confidential non-judgemental advice to current students on finance, from student finance loans and funding to practical money management and financial confidence. The care experienced and estranged student network at UEA offers information on financial support to current students, and details of our bursary eligibility for new incoming students will be uploaded for UEA's provider page on the Propel website alongside our named contact for care experienced and estranged students.

We will ensure we provide information to UCAS and Student Finance England in a timely manner to ensure course information can be made available in good time and inform decision making.

We will publish our full Access and Participation Plan, as well as an accessible summary on our website, alongside previously submitted plans. These will be saved here: <https://www.uea.ac.uk/about/university-information/widening-participation>.

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

9.1 Assessment of performance - data and methodology

Assessment of performance approach

A robust and detailed assessment of performance was undertaken to identify initial 'risk indications' that inform the development of the risks to equality of opportunity that our APP addresses.

Metrics: For Access, the risk indications were derived from application, offer and acceptance rates and the proportions in UEA's yearly intake compared to sector and local averages. For On-Course, the risk indications were derived from 1st to 2nd year continuation, completion of a degree, the rate of good honours (2:1 or 1st class classification) awarding and progression to positive outcomes as defined by the Graduate Outcomes survey.

Student characteristics: Our assessment considered gaps in student and apprentices (named as students from this point) intake and outcomes among a range of student characteristics, including socio-economic characteristics (e.g. eligibility for free school meals) and demographic characteristics (e.g. ethnicity, disability). Where possible, characteristics were disaggregated, for example ethnicity sub-types and disability sub-types were examined both in aggregate and disaggregate form. In addition to using the Office for Students' Access and Participation Dashboard (OfS APP Dashboard), we analysed a broader range of student characteristics through utilisation of internal data to look at other underrepresented student groups. Our internal data is built using OfS specifications as outlined in the technical documents for the APP Dashboard, but it is based upon student self-declared characteristics collected from our Student Registration Task. This is an annual survey which UEA makes a condition of registration and, therefore captures, the fullest picture of students' self-declared characteristics. The Progression metric is based on the responses to the Graduate Outcomes survey but we also match to our internal student records, which then allows us to examine additional characteristics. We considered most student groups that are listed in the Office for Students Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) and have explained in section 1.B where this was not possible for certain groups.

Assessment: Using this combination of internal data and externally verified data, we examined gaps and trends over the most recent four-year period for each metric. Our assessment identified over a dozen risk indications across the student lifecycle. By using the most recent data available internally and supplementing with OfS APP Dashboard data where not available, we were able to more accurately identify risks which are affecting students *now* and, therefore, are most likely to benefit from our interventions. To account for statistical uncertainty, only risk indications where it was statistically significant to a 95% confidence interval were considered, except in cases where the base size was too small for significance testing. In these cases, we descriptively analysed the gap and included it where the gap was persistent over several years of data.

The table below summarises which sources of data we used for each student characteristic and metric. N/A indicates where data was not available:

	Applicati on to Offer Convers ion	Intake	Continu ation	Comple tion	Degree Awardin g	Progres sion
POLAR4	UCAS	Internal	Internal	OfS	Internal	Internal
TUNDRA	N/A	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS
IMD 2019	N/A	Internal	Internal	OfS	Internal	Internal
Age	UCAS	Internal	Internal	OfS	Internal	Internal
Sex	UCAS	Internal	Internal	OfS	Internal	Internal
Free school meal eligible	N/A	OfS	Internal	OfS	Internal	OfS
L3 Qualification	UCAS	Internal	Internal	N/A	Internal	Internal
Carer	N/A	Internal	Internal	N/A	Internal	N/A
Care Experienced	N/A	Internal	Internal	N/A	Internal	N/A
Estranged	N/A	Internal	Internal	N/A	Internal	N/A
Commuter	N/A	Internal	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ethnicity – disaggregated 4 ways	UCAS	Internal	Internal	OfS	Internal	Internal
Ethnicity – disaggregated by sub-group 15 ways	N/A	Internal	Internal	N/A	Internal	N/A
Disability - disaggregated	UCAS	Internal	Internal	OfS	Internal	Internal
Apprenticeships	N/A	Internal	Internal	N/A	Internal	N/A
Parent/Guardian	N/A	Internal	Internal	N/A	Internal	N/A
Service/Military Children	N/A	Internal	Internal	N/A	Internal	N/A
LGBTQ+	N/A	Internal	Internal	N/A	Internal	N/A
Intersection of POLAR4 quintile and sex	UCAS	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS
Intersection of POLAR4 quintile and age	UCAS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Intersection of POLAR4 quintile and L3 qualification	UCAS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Intersection of age and L3 qualification	UCAS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

	Applicati on to Offer Convers ion	Intake	Continu ation	Comple tion	Degree Awardin g	Progres sion
Intersection of POLAR4 quintile and ethnicity	N/A	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS
Intersection of POLAR4 quintile and sex	N/A	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS
Intersection of IMD and ethnicity	N/A	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS
Intersection of IMD and sex	N/A	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS	OfS

Characteristics examined in more detail

We have considered as many student characteristics as possible utilising available data, with reference to the OfS' EORR as well as our own internal research and understanding of groups which may face a risk to equality of opportunity.

Definitions of each student characteristic examined is below:

Characteristic	Definition
POLAR4	The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of young people who participate in higher education.
TUNDRA	TUNDRA is as above but focuses on state-school pupils only.
IMD 2019	The English Indices of Deprivation measure relative levels of deprivation in 32,844 small areas or neighbourhoods, called Lower-layer Super Output Areas in England. Each UK legal jurisdiction has its own IMD measure.
Age	Mature students are those who are over 21 years of age at the beginning of their undergraduate studies.
Sex	Male or Female
Free school meal eligible	Students who were eligible for free school meals in the last 6 years. Free school meals are granted to students whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits such as Universal Credit and are below a certain income threshold.
L3 Qualification	Students who have previously studied a vocational L3 qualification such as a BTEC or T-Level.
Care Experienced	Students who have previously been in local authority care.
Estranged	Students who are aged 24 or under and are not communicating with either of their parents or guardians.

Characteristic	Definition
Ethnicity – disaggregated 4 ways	Broad ethnicity categories of white, Asian, black and mixed.
Ethnicity – disaggregated by sub-group 15 ways	Following the UK government's <u>agreed list of ethnic groups</u> .
*Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boatmen (GRTSB)	Students who identify in ethnicity categories Gypsy or Irish Traveller or Roma.
Disability - disaggregated	Students who have reported a disability. Disability includes a long standing illness or health condition, a specific learning difficulty, blind or serious visual impairment, deaf or serious hearing impairment, mental health condition, physical impairment or mobility issues.
*Commuter	First year students whose home address matches their term time address.
*Young Carer	Students who had or have caring responsibilities for another adult such as a disabled parent.
*Apprenticeships	Students on degree apprenticeship courses.
*Parent/Guardian	Students who are a parent/guardian for children under the age of 18.
*Service/Military Children	Students whose parent/guardian were in the armed forces.
*Students reporting a sexual orientation of lesbian, gay, bisexual or other (LGBTQ+)	Self-reported sexual orientation provided at registration.

** The characteristics indicated by an asterisk above were not found to have any risk indications which appear in our data, meaning either that the underrepresented group was performing at the same or a higher rate than comparator group or that the base size at UEA was too small to reliably infer any risk indications. We have, therefore, not referenced these in our analysis or risk indications. However, we will continue to monitor outcomes closely during the lifetime of our APP to enable agile response.*

We were not able to examine data regarding the following characteristics which are referenced in the EORR for the following reasons:

Characteristic	Reason for data unavailability
Children in need	This data is not currently collected by UEA or publicly available
No parental experience of higher education	This data is not currently collected by UEA or publicly available
Students reporting their gender identity not the same as the sex registered at birth	UEA collects this data through its registration task, however the wording of the question is under review and the data quality is not currently reliable enough
Students identifying as Gypsy, Traveller, rowmen, boatmen or showmen	UEA collects this data but the numbers are too small (< 5) even in aggregate and are therefore suppressed
Religious affiliation/identification	UEA collects this data through its registration task, however the wording of the question is under review and the data quality is not currently reliable enough
Socioeconomic background (NS-SEC)	This data is not currently collected by UEA or publicly available

Starting with students for 2023/24 entry, we now record data on additional characteristics through our student registration task including:

- Asylum seeker and refugees
- Free school meals
- Contextual admissions entrants

From 2024/25 onwards, we will be able to understand continuation and stage performance for the above characteristics. From 2025/26, we will be able to track good honours awarding rates.

Furthermore, we are looking into how we can collect data on children in need, no parental experience of higher education and special educational needs through partnership work with schools and HEAT recording.

We do not intend to collect religious affiliation/identification data at a formal level, but we would instead look to support students who self-identify with particular at-risk religious affiliations, such as those who engage with a related religious society.

We also do not intend to systematically collect socioeconomic background data and will look to use other categories such as household income and free school meals eligibility as a proxy.

Assessment of performance methodology in more detail

Access metrics: we considered pre-entry students in terms of the UEA applications to offer and offer to acceptances conversion rates and intake rate and undertook an assessment of risks in our local area. We found that across student characteristics underrepresented student groups were *more likely* to accept an offer from UEA than comparator. This evidences that UEA's risk indications are found at the offer-making stage of the HE application journey. In terms of intake, we compared our intake figures against the sector and local figures to understand where UEA's student body is underrepresented.

On course metrics: our research and literature review indicated that continuation and completion are similar metrics in terms of underlying causes and so the analysis considers both metrics in

tandem. This allowed us to make up for gaps in our data availability, for example, where a group does not have completion data because it is not available on the OfS APP dashboard, we will be able to use continuation as an early sign that they will also have lower completion rates. For attainment, we examined our internal good honour awarding rates to understand student attainment and identify where there were degree awarding gaps. Lastly, we considered progression to positive graduate level outcomes (as reported by the Graduate Outcomes survey) and noted where there were statistically significant gaps in outcomes.

Assessment of performance data protection

UEA collects data in accordance to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Our full privacy statement can be found online [here](#). The data for this Assessment of Performance is used 'to produce statistics to help us understand changes in our student population to help us ensure policies and practices do not disadvantage minority groups (equal opportunities monitoring)'. The lawful basis for the use of data for this assessment of performance is 'To comply with the law'. Our policy states that we will share data with official custodians of education data, funding councils and other government bodies, including the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, which is a part of Jisc), UCAS, DfE, ESFA, the Office for Students (OfS) and its agents, and Ofsted. Furthermore, we state that UEA must, statutorily, provide student statistical data to OfS and its agencies and this includes student characteristic data.

Data collected via our Student Registration Task is covered by the above data privacy policy. Additionally, our internal data reporting suppresses figures that pertain to less than 10 students. No personal data is included in this assessment of performance.

9.2 Selection and prioritisation of risk indications

Our assessment of performance initially identified 22 risk indications for consideration. In summary, the thresholds for consideration took into account scale of gap/difference to sector, persistence and growth in gap over time and reliability of finding in terms of data and base size.

A prioritisation exercise was then carried out to ensure our plan will focus on the most significant risks to equality of outcomes. Eight risk indications were not selected to be the focus of our plan due to low data reliability/robustness (e.g. low base sizes, fluctuations in the data) or because intersectional analysis suggests that these gaps are driven more strongly by other factors which are included in our prioritised indicators.

A full and detailed description of how each risk indication included in our APP was derived is provided in the next section and summarised in the table below:

Code	Description	Rationale for inclusion
RI01	Mature applicants (21+ on entry) are less likely to receive an offer from UEA	Gap is large, persistent and is not explained by entry qualification or tariff
RI02	Applicants with a BTEC qualification only were less likely to receive an offer	Gap is large, persistent and is not explained by subject/course choice
RI03	Lower than sector intake of students eligible for free school meals at UEA	Intake is low in proportion to the region, has not grown over time and is low compared to the sector average
RI04	UEA intake of care experienced and estranged students remains low in proportion to the region	Intake is low in proportion to the region and has not grown over time

Code	Description	Rationale for inclusion
RI05	Lower continuation rates for students who studied a BTEC qualification only	Continuation gap is large, persistent and growing, and the gap is substantial enough that it cannot be fully explained by intersections with other characteristics
RI06	Lower continuation and completion rates for students from ethnic minority backgrounds. (Internal UEA data indicates continuation gap for the Asian-Pakistani sub-group. OfS data on completion shows that black students and students of mixed ethnicity are less likely to complete their course.)	Gaps for continuation and completion are large and growing for certain sub-groups, though fluctuations in base sizes means it is not necessarily persistent
RI07	Lower continuation and completion rates for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds using proxies such as eligibility for free school meals and intersecting with male students	Gaps for continuation and completion are large and persistent
RI08	Lower continuation and completion rates for mature students	Continuation gap is narrowing but still large and persistent; the size of the completion gap fluctuates year on year, likely relating to random variation, but is persistent and large on average
RI09	Lower completion rates for disabled students, with largest gaps for students with mental health conditions or multiple impairments	Gaps for specific disability sub-groups are large and persistent
RI10	Lower good honours degree awarding rate (2.1 or 1 st degree classification) for students eligible for free school meals at UEA intersecting with the following characteristics facing the same risks to equality of opportunity; gender (male), declaring a disability, with additional financial pressures (including caring responsibilities) and care experienced and estranged students	Gap is large and persistent across all these groups, with some gaps growing and others remaining steady
RI11	Lower good honours degree awarding rate (2.1 or 1 st degree classification) for students from ethnic minority backgrounds, with the largest gap for black students	Gap is large, persistent and growing with the largest gap for black students
RI12	Lower good honours degree awarding rate (2.1 or 1 st degree classification) for students who studied a BTEC qualification only	Gap is large and persistent, with gaps found in the 8 courses which have the large proportions of BTEC students, accounting for 80% of UEA's BTEC cohort
RI13	Lower rates for progression to graduate level employment or further study for students declaring a mental health condition, with	Gaps for specific disability sub-groups are large and persistent, such as for students with a mental health condition and

Code	Description	Rationale for inclusion
	social or communication impairments or with multiple impairments	students with social or communication impairments or with multiple impairments
RI14	Lower rate for progression to graduate level employment or further study for students from lower socio-economic background using proxies such as students eligible for free school meals and intersecting with male students	Gaps are relatively small but persistent; most recent year of data shows gaps are growing for this group

The rationale for not focusing on the selected risk indications is given below:

Description	Rationale
Students from lower HE progression areas using measures such as POLAR/TUNDRA are less likely to receive an offer from UEA and intake is below sector averages	Analysis showed that this is driven by other intersections with mature and qualification type
Students from ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to receive an offer from UEA	This gap is narrowing and intake proportion has been increasing
Lower continuation rates for students with Aspergers Syndrome or other autism spectrum disorder	There is a small base size and gap fluctuates so we are not confident in this being a systemic issue
Lower continuation and completion rates for male students	Analysis showed that this is driven by intersections with other measures such as socio-economic background
Lower completion rates for students from lower HE progression areas using measures such as POLAR/TUNDRA	Analysis showed that this is driven by intersections with other measures such as socio-economic background
Lower good honours degree awarding rate for students who are young carers, care experienced or estranged	Base sizes are very low so gaps fluctuate, and this outcome intersects with other characteristics that we have identified as risk indicators meaning that the risks to equality of opportunity are already addressed in our approach
Lower rate for progression to graduate level employment or further study for male students	The gap is likely explained by intersection with socio-economic background
Lower rate for progression to graduate level employment or further study for students from mixed ethnic backgrounds	Base sizes are very low and gaps fluctuate too much to be a reliable indicator of a risk to equality of opportunity

9.3 Development of UEA equality of opportunity risk register

Methodology

In reference to the Sector EORR, we developed our own UEA Equality of Opportunity Risk Register to capture the underlying risks that are driving the risk indications we identified. This was developed through a robust process to unpick the underlying factors that may be leading to certain groups having differential outcomes including: UEA internal stakeholder engagement with expert practitioners; a rapid evidence review which examined the sector and UEA literature and research; a holistic student insight review of UEA student feedback and lived experience reporting.

Rapid evidence review: We mapped our risk indications to corresponding risks, using a rapid evidence review methodology to ensure this was evidence-based. The rapid evidence review methodology (sometimes known as a rapid literature review) was adapted from use cases in health sciences and social policy. The Practical Guide from the World Health Organisation (2017), definitions provided by Smela et al. (2023), as well as the methodology detailed in TASO's rapid evidence review (2023), were key sources in developing and implementing a robust method. Our rapid evidence review involved the research team carrying out systematic searches on a subset of academic journals and publishers, which ultimately led to the selection of 79 unique sources of evidence included in this review to answer the two research questions. Careful steps were taken to ensure the robustness of our approach and mitigate the risk of bias through the use of multiple researchers, agreed criteria and procedures, and the addition of an administrator for final checks. Included sources were critically reviewed and findings were noted against each risk indication, which were then summarised into a fuller internal paper.

RQ1. What could be the factors leading to or causing the risk indications at UEA?

RQ2. What types of interventions show evidence and potential to mitigate these risk indications?

For this annex, we only include the content from the paper relating to RQ1. Content relating to RQ2 can be found in Annex B.

Holistic student insight review: To supplement the research literature, we have cross-referenced this with insights derived from UEA's student body through a robust rapid review of our Holistic Student Insight including:

- The undergraduate student results from over three years of the UEA Student Pulse weekly survey covering a variety of aspects of student life considered by splits relating to the relevant student characteristics.
- Qualitative comments, providing depth of insight into the student lived experience, collected from students through informal channels (advise and guidance routes) and more formal student feedback channels (including Student Pulse qualitative comments, Welcome focus groups with new UEA UG students early in their first terms evaluating the impact of UEA welcome transition activity, comments left anonymously on our We're Listening platform).

Selection and prioritisation of risks

Through this methodology we established a long list of factors contributing to our identified risk indications which were grouped into thematic risks. These were then reviewed with a broad range of stakeholders and practitioners across UEA to test that they reflected the expert understanding of our student lived experiences, as well as with UEASU representatives. Further development was then undertaken reflecting on this input and to ensure that the risks were focussed on areas within the University's sphere of control i.e. that we can effectively address the risk. A decision was taken to not identify the disruption to education journeys caused by the Covid-19 pandemic as a stand-alone risk but rather to understand this as an exacerbating factor in the impact of all other risks.

Ref	Risks	Description
R1	Barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment pre-HE	Potential students in our region may not have equal opportunity to develop knowledge, skills and/or attainment to access relevant post-16 and post-18 opportunities. This, therefore, risks equality of access to higher education.
R2	Insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance pre-HE	Potential students in our region may not have equal opportunity to receive the information advice and guidance during their educational journey that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, or to make informed choices about their higher education options. This, therefore, risks equality of access to higher education.
R3	Barriers to equality of application success	Applicants to UEA may not experience equality of outcome from the application process including lower likelihood of receiving an offer. For example, applicants may have different prior experience, and support, in navigating an interview process. This, therefore, risks equality of access to UEA.
R4	Insufficient available choice of course type and delivery mode	Potential students in our region may be prevented from studying at UEA by the focus of our delivery on full time, level 6 courses delivered on campus. This, therefore, risks equality of access to UEA.
R5	Barriers to Sense of Belonging in HE and at UEA	Potential and current UEA students may not develop a sense of belonging to UEA during their journey through decision making, admissions, transitions and study at UEA. Students may not feel that they belong in a higher education institution when they arrive at UEA. In addition, they may not develop a sense of belonging to UEA in general and to their School of Study specifically to support the achievement of their academic potential. This could impact their confidence in deciding what they want to do post undergraduate study. This, therefore, risks equality of access to UEA and to student engagement and successful outcomes.
R6	Mental health and wellbeing	Potential and current UEA students with mental health conditions (short term and longer term) are at greater risk of lower engagement in all elements of the living and learning university experience which could impact good outcomes. In addition, all students may be affected by low mental wellbeing at times during their time at UEA requiring additional support or adaptations to their academic experience. This, therefore, risks equality of access to UEA and to student engagement and successful outcomes.
R7	Cost pressures	Ongoing increases in the basic cost of living may affect a UEA student's ability to engage in and successfully complete their course. This might mean they need to undertake more paid work, find it difficult to travel, or that the cost of living impacts their physical and mental wellbeing. This, therefore, risks equality of student engagement and successful outcomes.
R8	Insufficient support, advice and guidance	UEA students may not have equal opportunity to receive relevant support, advice and guidance that sufficiently reflects their specific circumstances reducing their ability to engage productively and gain the most from their experience to support positive outcomes. Students have a range of different needs, responsibilities and commitments as well as their education which leads to competing demands on personal resources, for example time and finance. This, therefore, risks equality of student engagement and successful outcomes.
R9	Barriers to engagement with experience and opportunities	UEA students may encounter barriers to engagement and participation in the full range of opportunities UEA provides including opportunities for international/work experience. This, therefore, risks equality of opportunity to develop understanding, enhance self-

Ref	Risks	Description
		awareness and undertake developmental opportunities. This may hinder their ability to develop the outlook of confidence, resilience and adaptability that enables them to succeed in their academic studies and progress to suitable and fulfilling graduate jobs and further study. This, therefore, risks equality of student successful outcomes.
R10	Insufficient representation	UEA student needs and experiences may not be represented in the design and delivery of living and studying at UEA. Design and delivery of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and the broader environment and communications may not consistently consider and represent the background and lived experience of underrepresented student groups. This, therefore, risks equality of access to UEA and to student engagement and successful outcomes.

9.4 Full assessment of performance and outcomes

Pre-entry

Progress against APP 2020/21 to 2024/25

In our APP 2020/21 to 2024/25, we acknowledged that UEA's primary catchment area of East Anglia, and particularly Norfolk, were areas with an above average concentration of geographical areas with low rates of access to higher education (POLAR4 quintile one areas). Our target was to admit more students from the neighbourhoods where young people are least likely to participate in higher education and to reduce the ratio between POLAR Q1 and Q5 students to 1.5:1. The most recent OfS dashboard shows that we have seen an increase in our number of POLAR Q1 students over time; a steady decrease of our ratio from 2.8:1 in 2016/17 to 2.2:1 in 2021/22. As of 2021/22, UEA remains ahead of the sector in terms of our POLAR Q1 intake. Internal data indicators show that we have continued to improve the ratio to 1.7:1 for 2023/24 entry.

We also committed to admitting more undergraduate students aged 21 and over (mature) by recruiting from local access courses. Internal tracking of our intake of mature students from our target courses shows steadily increased from 19.9% in 2016/17 to 24.9% in 2021/22, though it remains below our target of 36%. Note that during the lifetime of the APP a new FE college opened up in the region and many mature students now attend that college and progress to UEA; however, as it is not listed as a target course, we are not able to account for these students in our targets.

Therefore, overall, our intake of POLAR Q1 and mature students has increased over the last 5 years, though we acknowledge that further accelerated progress is needed. Furthermore, we believe that intake only tells us the final step in the Access journey and through examination of our local context as well as our application/offer/acceptance rates, we have been able to identify a number of new risk indications for this plan.

Applications to offer conversion

Using data from UCAS, we compared data from student groups underrepresented in higher education to comparators to identify any gaps in UEA's offer-making to particular groups. We examined the general trend of the gap and prioritised risk indications that were consistent and persistent in all years of data.

The figures given below are the latest 4-year averages and are calculated by comparing the conversion rates (the % of applications who convert from Application to Offer). Those figures quoted are for identified consistent and persistent gaps i.e. those in all years and that did not show positive improvement over that time.

Student Characteristic	Application to Offer Conversion
POLAR4 Q1	9.4pp gap
Mature	28.6pp gap
BTEC Only	17.3pp gap

Next we undertook intersectional analysis to better understand the underlying drivers of the risk indication.

Intersection between POLAR4 and age: POLAR Q1 Under 21s and Q2-5 Under 21s have similar high conversion rates. POLAR Q1 Over 21 and Q2-Q5 Over 21 have significantly lower conversion rates. This suggests the lower conversion is driven by the Age characteristic.

Intersection between POLAR4 and L3 qualification: POLAR Q1 A level and Q2-5 A levels have similar high conversion rates. POLAR Q1 BTEC and Q2-5 BTEC have significantly lower conversion rates. This suggests the lower conversion is driven by having studied only BTEC qualifications.

We, therefore, derived that the gap between POLAR4 Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 students is driven by the intersection with Age and holding a BTEC qualification.

Intersection of age and L3 qualification: For mature students, those with different qualification types convert at similar rates. This suggests the type of qualification does not significantly affect the conversion rate of Mature students and the gap is not driven by a particular qualification type. Mature students' conversion rises in proportion to their tariff band, but in every tariff band they are less likely to convert than Under 21s.

We, therefore, derived that the gap between mature and young students was being driven by impacts relating to age, rather than just the type of qualifications they were applying with.

This led us to identify two risk indications related to UEA's offer-making: RI01 and RI02.

RI01 - Mature applicants (21+ on entry) are less likely to receive an offer from UEA

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: The factors which lead to mature applicants having a lower rate of success in the application process to higher education relate to differences in their educational and student journeys prior to HE. The Office for Fair Access (2017) reported that mature students can face 'ad hoc and unpredictable student journeys' and different applicants may experience differences in the level of support received depending if they are supported by a particular institution or not (Bennun, 2015). Mature students' prior educational journeys may also have influenced their self-conceptualisation as a student, with a struggle between hope and negative expectations based on past education experiences (Farini and Scollan, 2019).

The level of information, advice and guidance is often inadequate for mature students and there is a lack of personalised support particularly on financial matters (Office for Fair Access, 2017). Students also described having to proactively reach out for information rather than being targeted or receiving it automatically (Bennun, 2015).

It is also important to note that mature students intersect with many other characteristics and often experience additional challenges such as family pressures, time poverty, long commutes to educational establishments and household responsibilities which may mean they are more likely to be seeking part-time study (Hope and Quinlan, 2020).

Contextual insight:

In 2021, UEA commissioned AdvanceHE to understand the barriers that particular groups (POLAR, ethnic minority and mature students) might face during the application process, focusing

on specific demographic groups who applied to courses in Health Sciences. In Phase 1, participants in the research identified barriers such as a lack of data availability, staff engagement and flexibility, unsuitable interview questions, lack of tailored information to specific groups, and in some cases marginalisation during the interview process. After implementing a range of recommendations, Phase 2 of the research took place in 2023 and found that many of these issues had been addressed. However, participants in the second round of research identified some perceived potential information, advice and guidance barriers still present indicating further action UEA can take to address equality of opportunity. Whilst this research focused on Health Sciences courses and specific demographics, we might infer that similar barriers exist for other underrepresented characteristics applying to courses employing interviews as part of their application processes. We also commit to undertaking further enquiry into the experiences of other identified groups (such as applicants who studied BTEC qualifications) to ensure accuracy of our understanding and approach.

Risks to equality of opportunity: The main risk was identified as insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance, including the lack of specifically tailored information for mature students' circumstances (UEA Risk 2). Mature students also face barriers to equality of application success due to differences in how well supported they are to navigate admissions processes (UEA Risk 3) and may also be prevented from studying in their preferred delivery mode such as part-time courses (UEA Risk 4). Their additional responsibilities may also result in additional cost pressures (UEA Risk 7).

Strength of evidence: Whilst there were only a few sector studies on the exact mechanisms which may lead to mature students' having lower application success rates, these were generally robust and highlighted the lived experiences of mature students with deep and full qualitative accounts.

RI02 - Applicants with BTEC qualifications only were less likely to receive an offer

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: As in RI05, there are both structural factors with the constitution of BTEC/vocational courses, which may lead to students being less prepared for successfully applying to higher education, and socioeconomic factors, which disproportionately affect vocational learners. Structural factors include: vocational qualifications convey less social capital needed for later success within the culture of HE (Bovill, 2013); assessment practices on BTECs not adequately preparing students due to a focus on passing over proficiency (Carter, 2015); vocational courses may be better at developing wider skills like creative thinking and presentation, but less on academic-related skills such as essay writing when compared to A level (Joy, 2017).

It is likely these structural factors then carry through and present as disadvantages in the admissions to higher education process. Research referenced how vocational qualifications were not achieving parity of esteem with A levels, among not only HE providers (Woodfield et al., 2013) but also other student peers studying A levels (Joy, 2017). This lack of parity could be addressed through partnership agreements, which may lead to 'better understanding by HE tutors of the needs of vocational students' (Woodfield et al., 2013). The negative attitudes from peers also had a knock-on effect on vocational students' confidence which impacted the strength of their applications (such as for courses with interviews or auditions where they may feel intimidated by peers prior to their own performance) and their subsequent sense of belonging within HE (Joy, 2017). This could lead to students with vocational qualifications being less likely to receive an offer than students with A level qualifications where there is competition for offers.

Socioeconomic factors include: vocational students are more likely to be from lower socioeconomic groups or BME backgrounds, as well as being more financially constrained (Joy, 2017); vocational students are more likely to want flexible pathways such as part-time courses due to personal circumstances (Woodfield et al., 2013).

Contextual insight: Approximately 25-30% of students studying Level 3 qualifications in Norfolk and Suffolk are taking vocational qualifications such as BTECs. In 2019, we ran a BTEC student

experience study internally at UEA which concurred with much of the wider sector research on vocational students. In terms of the reasons why BTEC students had chosen to take vocational qualifications, they included: not achieving the grades to take A levels, not wanting to take exams, wanting to focus on a singular subject or one which was only offered as a BTEC qualification. Around half of BTEC students reported that they had not received good guidance on how to complete the UCAS application process and had navigated the system with little support.

Risks to equality of opportunity: Overall the risks we identified as leading to a lower offer rate for vocational students are: less opportunity to develop the same academic skills as A level students (UEA Risk 1); may receive less information, advice and guidance on applying to HE (UEA Risk 2); lower levels of social capital and knowledge of the HE application process (UEA Risk 3); may face barriers to application success in terms of prior interview experience (UEA Risk 3); experience a lower sense of belonging in HE due to inequalities of social capital (UEA Risk 5); and may have less choices in their future pathways by the lack of flexibility in course type and delivery mode (UEA Risk 4).

Strength of evidence: Overall, sector evidence about vocational learners was weak and much literature was out-of-date, perhaps reflecting a focus away from vocational learners in both educational spheres and widening participation priorities (after AimHigher and related projects which ended in 2010/11). The strongest evidence was mostly qualitative and based on students' self-reported perceptions of the value and barriers to being a vocational learner. It is also difficult to ascertain how the admissions processes of HEIs may be disadvantaging vocational learners, as views and understanding of the issue from academics and university staff are very mixed.

This has led us to agree the following objective 3:

Through inclusive admissions, marketing and application support, UEA will work to remove barriers to successful outcomes to applications from underrepresented student groups, including mature students and students with vocational qualifications.

Intake

Using a mixture of internal and OfS data, we were able to compare the average intake percentage from the last 4 years and examine the overall trend to understand whether UEA's intake is diversifying with positive results showing increases in intake from a wide range of underrepresented groups.

The majority of UEA students are from East Anglia (Norfolk and Suffolk). To better understand how representative our intake is, we compared intake proportions by student characteristic to regional and sector figures.

We found that UEA's percentage of students eligible for free school meals was low compared to the percentage at all English higher education providers (19.2%). It was also low compared to the percentage eligible in Norfolk (22.7% in state-funded secondary schools) and Suffolk (21.4% in state-funded secondary schools). Our proportion has remained steady over time suggesting that more work is needed to grow this proportion to be more representative of both the region and the sector.

UEA's intake of care experienced students has been increasing (whilst estranged students remains steady) but they remain a proportionally small cohort. Figures from the local authorities (Norfolk County Council, 2017) show that Norfolk and Suffolk have approximately 2000 care leavers each year between the ages of 18 to 24. It is not possible to estimate the number of estranged students in the region as students are not classified officially as estranged until entering HE. According to Student Loan Company (2023) data, UEA's intake of care experienced and estranged students is slightly higher than average for the sector.

This has led us to identify the following two risk indications related to UEA's intake: RI03 and RI04.

RI03 - Lower than sector intake of students eligible for free school meals at UEA

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: The strongest factor affecting free school meal eligible students' progression to university is prior school attainment (Pickering, 2019), with disadvantages in schooling starting from early years where disadvantaged students are more likely to experience services with worse Ofsted ratings (Gambaro et al., 2015) and also experience a worse transition between primary and secondary school (Alterline, 2023). Attainment is also strongly correlated to socioeconomic status and the attainment gap for free school meal eligible pupils can be seen here as a proxy indicator of class (Alterline, 2023).

Free school meal eligible students' attainment is positively correlated with having both high aspirations and expectations which is significantly influenced by parental expectations (Khattab, 2015). Furthermore, intention to progress to HE is also associated with parents' education, talking to parents about school work, choice of subjects in school and the effect of school work on future employment, which were positively correlated with students' cultural capital (Davies et al., 2014). Free school eligible students may lack exposure to certain forms of cultural and/or social capital (Alterline, 2023) such as receiving less knowledge about subjects they could study in HE, what types of course they could take, qualifications and grades needed, the student experience and how their decisions may lead to future careers (CFE Research, 2023).

Free school meal eligible students also experienced greater barriers to learning during COVID-19 such as limited or no contact with teachers or being required to help other family members whilst learning from home (CFE Research, 2023). The attainment gap has further increased since the pandemic and the subsequent cost-of-living crisis which has led to issues such as students being hungry, lacking clothing, higher school absences and requiring more specialist services (Alterline, 2023).

Contextual insight: Although Norfolk and Suffolk overall have a lower proportion of free school meal eligible pupils than the national average, there are specific areas with significantly higher than average proportions of free school meal eligible pupils, in some cases double the national average such as in Cobholm and Marsham (DfE, 2022). Free school meal eligible pupils in Norfolk and Suffolk have higher absence rates and lower attainment which is persistent throughout their education. In the Early Years, only 51% of free school meal eligible pupils reach a good level of development; Norfolk students are 20 percentage points behind their peers and in Suffolk, 19 percentage points behind their peers. By KS2, 34% of free school meal eligible pupils in Norfolk and 39% of free school meal eligible pupils in Suffolk reached expected standards in reading, writing and maths. This is 24 percentage points behind their peers in Norfolk and 23 percentage points behind their peers in Suffolk. These gaps are similar to that observed nationally, at 22 percentage points. For KS4 attainment, the average attainment 8 score of free school meal eligible pupils in Norwich was 33 and in Suffolk this was 31. This was 11.5 and 12.1 respectively lower than their peers, meaning that Norfolk's gap was on par with the national average but Suffolk's was slightly wider. For A levels, the Average Point Score (APS) at A level for free school meal pupils in Norfolk was 28.51 and in Suffolk was 25.64, creating a gap of 4.63 and 6.6 respectively between free school meal eligible pupils and their peers. The gap in Norfolk is similar to that observed nationally, however, Suffolk's gap is larger than the national gap.

Risks to equality of opportunity: The factors that might lead to UEA having a low intake of students eligible for free school meals are identified as: lower attainment (UEA Risk 1); lack of parental experience of HE as well as fewer conversations about education and future aspirations (UEA Risk 2); and lower levels of social capital and knowledge required to navigate the HE application process (UEA Risk 3). Cost pressures might also affect students' applications such as not having the finances to attend open days, travel for a wide range of interviews or even to afford the application fee (UEA Risk 7).

Strength of evidence: The risk factors that affect free school meal eligible students are well documented but complex, incorporating both educational disadvantage as well as being interlinked with wider societal issues such as underfunding in disadvantaged areas ('Education is not a cheap solution to economic disadvantage', Gorard and Siddiqui, 2019). There is a lack of understanding in the literature of the lived experience of free school meal eligible pupils and a lack of appreciation or understanding of issues outside of education (Alterline, 2023). There is a growing evidence base

for interventions that have shown positive impact on pupils' attainment, such as interventions found in the Education Endowment Foundation toolkit.

This has led us to agree the following objective 1:

Through attainment raising and outreach activity, UEA will increase the proportion of students eligible for free school meals in our region accessing higher education with the ultimate goal of achieving the sector average.

RI04 - UEA intake of care experienced and estranged students remains low in proportion to the region

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: Sector research emphasises the highly intersectional and complex needs of both care experienced and estranged students (Styrnol et al., 2021; Harrison, 2019). Having often taken alternative pathways, this may present additional barriers to their entry into higher education which might overlap with other student characteristics; they are more likely to be mature, from ethnic minority backgrounds and have non-A level qualifications (Young and Lilley, 2023). Care experienced students often have had additional challenges and there is a complex relationship between care and special educational needs (Harrison, 2019). It is suggested that care experienced students receive insufficient and inconsistent support when looking to apply for university, with differences in social workers' attitudes and understanding of university; they also reported feeling unsupported by their school or colleges (Young and Lilley, 2023). Care leavers and estranged students are also particularly financially vulnerable as they often lack financial support from family members and experience high initial costs in setting up a new home and to afford essentials (Smith, 2023).

Our rapid evidence review findings were reinforced by research from UCAS insight in collaboration with the Unite Foundation. Research into the 2022 cohort found that care experienced students' journeys to HE are often longer and non-linear, and may have lower prior attainment at the point of application. Specific guidance about going to HE as a care experienced student is inconsistent (60% of students surveyed stated receiving no specific guidance), and students were both positive about their expectations of, and highly motivated by individual support whilst at HE. The reports called on HE providers for 'closer engagement with the networks and individuals that care-experienced students trust for information and advice', and holistic strategies that 'recognise the impact of educational disruption'. (UCAS, 2023)

Risks to equality of opportunity: We identified that it is likely that care experienced and estranged students face a multitude of risks due to the highly complex and varying nature of prior educational experiences and intersectionality. Therefore, this group is likely to be at risk of having experienced barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment (UEA Risk 1); insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance from all sources including schools and social workers (UEA Risk 2); barriers to equality of application success due to prior educational experiences (UEA Risk 3); insufficient available choice of course type and delivery mode due to concentrations in subject choice (UEA Risk 4); barriers to developing a sense that higher education is a 'place for someone like me' (sense of belonging) (UEA Risk 5) with potential mental health and wellbeing impact (UEA Risk 6); lack financial support from home (UEA Risk 7).

Strength of evidence: The strength of evidence was mixed, perhaps reflecting the limitations of the data available for this group of students and discrepancies in different data sets (Harrison, 2019). This is especially the case for estranged students as identification of these students before they are officially recorded once in HE is extremely difficult. Greater sector-level collaboration on the collection of data for monitoring outcomes might help to alleviate issues of small base sizes through aggregation. There were also fairly limited qualitative studies on the lived experiences of these students, again potentially reflecting difficulties in engaging with sufficient numbers in the education sector especially prior to university.

This has led us to agree the following objective 2:

Through enhanced engagement with, and advocacy for, care experienced and estranged students (CEES) (along with supporting services such as Norfolk County Council, virtual schools and third sector organisations), UEA will ensure that care experienced and estranged students have equal opportunity to apply to UEA.

Post-entry students

Progress against APP 2020/21 to 2024/25

Progress against APP 2020/21 to 2024/25 UEA continues to outperform the sector in student retention. Overall, UEA's continuation rate in 2019/20 was 96.2% compared to 91.4% in the sector. When students discontinue their studies, UEA collects internal data to monitor the reasons for non-continuation.

In our previous APP, we committed to reducing the rate of non-continuation for black and mixed ethnicity students and eliminating this gap by the end of 2024/25. We have made good progress in this regard, and the gap between white and black students has narrowed to 1pp in 2019/20 and there is a positive gap between white and mixed ethnicity students of 2pp. Whilst there appears to be a positive gap of 2pp between Asian and white students, further disaggregation using internal data shows that the Asian-Pakistani and Asian-Bangladeshi groups have even lower continuation rates than black students. Students from ethnic minority groups were most likely to drop out for reasons of academic failure but were more likely to cite financial reasons for dropping out when compared to white students.

UEA is committed to improving performance and eliminate gaps in degree outcomes between different groups of students. Recent OfS data shows our degree awarding rate has improved across the board since 2017/18.

In our last APP, we committed to contribute to the national aim to eliminate the gap in degree outcomes between white students and black students. Degree awarding rates at UEA for black, Asian and minority ethnic students and black students specifically are now the highest they have been since 2017/18, and our students continue to outperform the sector averages. We also committed to eliminate the gap in degree outcomes between students who have and have not declared a disability. Overall, the good honours rate of 87.1% average from 2017/18 to 2021/22 is much higher than the overall sector average.

Continuation and completion

Whilst UEA's continuation rates are high for the sector, we identified some gaps for certain groups which indicate that they were facing a risk to equality of opportunity. The table below shows the most considerable recent four-year average gaps where the trend shows a persistent or growing gap and base size was reliable for analysis.

Characteristic	Continuation Gap	Continuation Gap Trend
TUNDRA Q1	3.0pp	Narrowing
IMD 2019 (Q1)	3.0pp	Growing
Age (21+)	2.6pp	Narrowing
L3 Qualification (BTEC)	9.2pp	Growing
Asian-Pakistani	6.4pp	Growing
White/black African	2.6pp	Narrowing
White/black Caribbean	1.2pp	Steady

The OfS APP dashboard was utilised to analysis completion data for the available characteristics showing the four-year average gap and a description of the trend.

Characteristic	Completion Gap	Completion Gap Trend
POLAR Q1	3.8pp	Steady
TUNDRA Q1	3.7pp	Narrowing
IMD 2019 (Q1)	7.4pp	Fluctuating
Age (21+)	9.4pp	Fluctuating
Sex (Male)	2.3pp	Steady
Free school meals	3.7pp	Narrowing
Black	2.2pp	Growing
Mixed ethnicity	2.6pp	Steady
Disability - 2-way	2.8pp	Narrowing
Mental health condition	5.4pp	Steady
Multiple impairments	5.4pp	Steady
Social or communication impairment	2.4pp	SUPP

Analysis showed similar trends for completion gaps for many of the same characteristics who face continuation gaps; particularly highlights it for students from black and mixed ethnicity backgrounds, for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (using proxies such as POLAR/TUNDRA, IMD and free school meal eligible) and for students with certain disabilities such as mental health conditions or multiple impairments. On this basis, we have combined these risk indications and taken a whole student lifecycle approach to the risks to equality of continuation and completion.

This led us to identify the following five risk indications related to UEA's non-continuation and non-completion rates: RI05, RI06, RI07, RI08, RI09.

RI05: Lower continuation rates for students who studied a BTEC qualification only

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: As in RI02, there are both structural and socioeconomic factors which may mean students who previously studied a vocational qualification are less prepared for study at higher education but that adequate support with social and cultural adaptation to HE could lead to outcomes on par with other students (Bovill, 2013). Whilst students who studied vocational qualifications are more likely to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the rates of non-continuation are higher yet for BTEC students (Kelly, 2017) and students from a low socioeconomic background are at a small additional disadvantage from having taking BTECs (Dilnot et al., 2019). This lack of preparedness is particularly pronounced at the beginning of courses with students expressing a jump in workload (Shields and Mosardo, 2015) and lack of preparedness for independent study (Shields and Mosardo, 2015; Katartzi and Hayward, 2020). Swinton (2020) notes that a sense of belonging is a key factor in retention and factors such as a perceived sense of hierarchy between qualification types (Shields and Mosardo, 2015) and a fear of being accepted by peers (Katarzi and Hayward, 2020) may lead to a lower sense of belonging. Academics and tutors may be less familiar with vocational students prior learning due to small cohorts (Shields and Mosardo, 2015) which may then hamper their ability to support these students and unwittingly contribute to the sense of hierarchy.

UEA holistic student insight review findings: In 2019, UEA engaged a Senior Research Associate to conduct a BTEC Student Experience Study. The study aimed to understand the experiences of undergraduate students who had entered the University of East Anglia (UEA) with BTEC qualifications or with a mix of BTEC and A level qualifications, as well as a smaller comparator group with A level qualifications. Data gathered by the University over several years prior had revealed that, by Level 3 entry qualification type, BTEC-qualified students were least likely to complete their first year, Research and sector data also indicated that BTEC-qualified students are at greater risk of drop-out, and more likely to come from other characteristic groups under-

represented in higher education (HE). Yet whilst there was some awareness within the University about these issues, and data to show the scale of the problem, there was a lack of evidence and understanding of the reasons behind it. A mixed-methods research study was, therefore, conducted in order to try to understand the experiences of BTEC-qualified students at UEA, particularly in relation to their transition, engagement, and retention, and to try to identify possible ways to improve their experience: analysing existing data held by UEA and gathering qualitative data through in-depth interviews with staff and students. Key findings included that student experience and success is influenced by a range of factors, some of which are complex and intersecting. In terms of risk to equality of continuation and completion, key findings included: perceived negative reactions towards BTEC on arrival at university; difficulties asking for help and lack of confidence were recurring and interlinked themes, which seemed to affect BTEC-qualified students in particular; some BTEC-qualified students reported feeling unprepared for aspects of university study including independent learning, exams, academic writing, and referencing. In addition, staff acknowledged that staff generally knew little about students' prior educational experiences and what this might mean for teaching and assessment practices.

When UEA students discontinue from their studies a lead reason for this is recorded. This provides us with some indication of what the reason for non-continuation was. We analysed where there were significant differences in the reasons for non-continuation (i.e. not the most common reason, but where reasons differed from the average distribution). This indicated that for students who studied a vocational qualification, there was no particular significant reason for non-continuation indicating that both personal reason and academic reasons create risk for this group.

Risks to equality of opportunity: The factors identified in leading to UEA having lower continuation rates for students who studied a vocational qualification include: insufficient support, advice and guidance both prior to arriving at university and whilst at university (UEA Risks 2 and 8); barriers to sense of belonging (UEA Risk 5); and students' needs not being fully understood and therefore reflected in curriculum, pedagogy, teaching and assessment practices (UEA Risk 10).

Strength of evidence: Whilst there was sector research that demonstrated there was a gap in continuation rates for vocational students, these studies were dated and mostly of a quantitative-only nature. Some more recent qualitative studies have been done which have largely focused on the lived experiences and self-reported barriers that vocational learners face in higher education. Sector studies that focus on continuation specifically were very limited but our understanding is enhanced through the specific research carried out by UEA on this issue. The research paints a consistent picture of the barriers faced by vocational learners across the HE sector and at UEA specifically.

RI06: Lower continuation and completion rates for students from ethnic minority backgrounds

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: The studies consistently highlight the negative student experiences reported by students from ethnic minority backgrounds (often aggregated as BME or BAME in the studies) as having an impact on continuation and completion rates. Students report experiences of racism (Wong et al., 2021), dissatisfaction with teaching and assessment (Millward and Ferreira, 2023; Kauser et al., 2021); and a poor sense of belonging which then affects their mental health (Arday et al., 2021). This experience seems to have a negative impact on both academic and social spaces, with feelings of learning spaces being exclusionary (Arday et al., 2021) but also social spaces with other students being negatively impacted by stereotypical beliefs (Hyun-Joo Lim, 2021).

The research also warns against deficit models of thinking, noting for example that there was no difference in the growth mindsets of white versus BME students (Gagnon, 2020) or in their engagement with academic support services (Panesar, 2017).

UEA holistic student insight review findings: Our internal student insight reports that student groups who do not see others with similar lived experiences to them in both the student and staff

populations, struggle to feel that they can be themselves in this environment. Certain student groups (including students from ethnic minority backgrounds) whose difference with the wider UEA population can feel more evident to them, have reported feeling less that they can be themselves at UEA than other students over the time the Student Pulse has been running (since September 2021). Students who report feeling less that they can be themselves at UEA are also less likely to report feeling confident in their ability to handle university life. This can then increase students' anxiety about their performance (academic and otherwise) and their sense of isolation.

In addition, when UEA students discontinue from their studies a lead reason for this is recorded. This provides us with some indication of what the reason for non-continuation was. We analysed where there were significant differences in the reasons for non-continuation (i.e. not the most common reason, but where reasons differed from the average distribution). This indicated that for students from ethnic minority background it was more likely to be due to academic reasons (which suggests this is also linked to the degree awarding gap).

Risks to equality of opportunity: The most prominent risk appears to be related to students' sense of belonging as a result of negative social and academic experiences in higher education (UEA Risk 5); this has a knock-on impact on students' mental health and wellbeing (UEA Risk 6). Students also note that whilst they may reach out for support, advice and guidance, this is often insufficient and not tailored to their dissatisfaction with teaching and learning practices (UEA Risk 8) which might be due to a lack of representation particularly among staff (UEA Risk 10). Students' negative experiences, including lack of inclusion, may also have impacted their engagement with various experiences and opportunities (UEA Risk 9).

Strength of evidence: There is strong evidence from the lived experiences of students and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds to suggest their university experience is not equal to their white peers and it is theorised this then leads to inequitable outcomes.

RI07: Lower continuation and completion rates for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds using proxies such as eligibility for free school meal and intersecting with male students

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: There was very limited research on the factors that specifically lead to lower continuation and completion rates for student from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It is likely to be related to factors which also lead to lower degree attainment (see Risk Indication 10). Theories about retention often relate to levels of social and academic capital, resilience and the availability of support (Cotton, 2017) which are all factors which students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may experience differently to their peers.

One study reviewed suggested that male students were less likely to express a need for requiring academic support services and were then less likely to proactively seek help which may be related to gender-influenced attitudes and behaviour (Brown, 2020). Further research might want to examine whether this is due to structural factors such as a lack of representation within higher education support services (which are often female-dominant) and institutions not proactively anticipating students' needs or reaching out with offers of support.

UEA holistic student insight review findings: In recent insight from UEA, students identified as bursary recipients, IMD Q1 and POLAR Q1, report higher instances of stress throughout their university experience than other students, particularly in terms of academic work, family or caring responsibilities, and money. These students also generally report lower confidence in their own skills and ability to manage university life, although they also report a similar level of resilience to other students.

In terms of finances, these student groups report similar confidence in their ability to manage money to other students yet respond more negatively in terms of actually having enough money to manage/engage with university life. Unsurprisingly, bursary recipients also report being more aware of their financial help options.

A Wonkhe article, based on the UUK '100 faces' campaign, goes some way to exploring the challenges students from non-traditional backgrounds face, with a focus on first-generation students (which is often associated with lower socio-economic backgrounds). It shows a lack of support offered to these students from their families, with anecdotal accounts of parents being 'disappointed' when their children attend university rather than joining a trade. This in turn leads to students feeling higher pressure to perform academically, and as such the wider pastoral and social benefits of university life are missed out on, in favour of focusing on work. Other factors which are reported to affect these students are a lack of understanding and/or preparation for university due to a lack of adults in their life who have similar experiences, meaning they are at a disadvantage from the beginning of their course (Blake and Holloway, 2024).

Following from this, within the Student Pulse these groups of students generally report a lower sense of belonging than other students, particularly in terms of making friends and connections while studying. As stated above, they also tend to report feeling more stressed about their academic work. Although these students generally report a more positive experience with personal advisors than other students, this may be representative of a higher need for support due to a lack of support from outside the university.

Risks to equality of opportunity: Evidence shows that this group experiences risks related to general issues of retention including barriers to sense of belonging (UEA Risk 5), impacts on mental health and wellbeing (UEA Risk 6), cost pressures (UEA Risk 7), insufficient support, advice and guidance (UEA Risk 8), barriers to engagement with experience and opportunities (UEA Risk 9) and insufficient representation particularly in support services (UEA Risk 10).

Strength of evidence: There was very little sector research specifically looking at the retention of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds using any of the proxies including IMD or free school meal eligibility, or among male students. Specific UEA student insight relating to the risks enhances our understanding.

RI08: Lower continuation and completion rates for mature students

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: The studies point to personal and social factors being the reported cause of mature students leaving their courses, in contrast to academic reasons. Mature students report challenges in balancing their university course with other responsibilities such as family, caring responsibilities and part or full-time employment (Brown, 2021; Alterline, 2023) which also affected their finances. This can often be related to prior educational experiences, employment history and family dynamics which affect students' identities and aspirations (Busher and James, 2019). They are less likely to engage with campus spaces and other opportunities such as extracurriculars, often due to commutes and their other responsibilities, which then hinders their sense of belonging (Alterline, 2023). Mature students reported how this had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing which was the most common reason cited for leaving their course (Alterline, 2023). Whilst mature students valued the social experience less than young students, many still reported not getting the experience they wanted which led them to consider leaving (Alterline, 2023).

UEA holistic student insight review findings: UEA student insight suggests that mature students in particular report notably more negatively than younger students in terms of making friends (except for opportunities on their course) and feeling a part of a community of staff and students at UEA (Student Pulse, sense of belonging). When asked where they find friends at UEA, particularly towards the beginning of the academic year, students mostly mention their accommodation and any clubs or societies (Welcome focus groups, 2023 and 2024). This highlights a disadvantage in this area for student groups with less access to these routes for connection with their peers, such as mature students – these students generally have no opportunity to find new friendships within their living situations, and external responsibilities/priorities limit the amount of time they can spend on society activities.

When asked in the Student Pulse about their ability to engage in wider activities and opportunities at UEA, mature students report feeling less able to engage than younger students. These students

often state that they feel 'out of place' in activities or events which are targeted towards younger students and wish for activities specifically engineered towards students with their demographic.

In addition, when UEA students discontinue from their studies a lead reason for this is recorded. This provides us with some indication of what the reason for non-continuation was. We analysed where there were significant differences in the reasons for non-continuation (i.e. not the most common reason, but where reasons differed from the average distribution). This indicated that for mature students it was more likely to be due to personal reasons such as health and caring responsibilities.

Risks to equality of opportunity: Mature students may be at risk of not developing a strong sense of belonging (UEA Risk 5) due to experiencing both cost (UEA Risk 7) and time pressures which impact their ability to engage with experiences and opportunities (UEA Risk 9). The need to balance additional responsibilities was also reported to have an impact on students' mental health and wellbeing (UEA Risk 6) and students reported not receiving sufficient academic support given their circumstances (UEA Risk 8).

Strength of evidence: There were relatively few sector studies which focused on the retention of mature students, but the ones that did were generally strong with rich qualitative insights into the lived experience of mature students. Insight into the mature student experience at UEA enhances our understanding.

RI09: Lower completion rates for disabled students, with largest gaps for students with mental health conditions or multiple impairments

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: Studies point to a multitude of barriers that disabled students face in their higher education experience when compared to non-disabled peers, which all add up to a need to expend additional effort to achieve the same outcomes (Brewer et al., 2023). Disabled students find it more difficult to engage with and fully participate in teaching and learning activities (ibid; Hector, 2020). Furthermore, studies showed that students in the sector were dissatisfied with the highly bureaucratic processes involved in accessing support and reasonable adjustments, such as the need to provide evidence and repeatedly having to seek out support (Brewer et al., 2023; Hector, 2020). They report long waiting times to receive the support they are entitled to as well as inconsistencies in how this support is provided, particularly compared to experiences from prior educational settings (Brewer et al., 2023). Disabled students also reported facing difficulties in establishing social relationships and experiencing prejudicial views from other students (Brewer et al., 2023).

This has a knock-on effect on students' mental health and wellbeing, as well as their financials, as they have more time constraints and fewer opportunities to pursue employment (Brewer et al., 2023). The lack of funding for access to this support exacerbated mental health problems and the mental health support which is accessible to these students (Robertson et al., 2022).

UEA holistic student insight review findings: Across a range of UEA student insight, respondents have repeatedly alluded to mental health and wellbeing as being one of the major reasons they may withdraw from their course. This can be a lack of wellbeing resulting from difficulty with other aspects of university life (such as academic work and finances), or from personal issues which affect their ability to devote time to their work. When they have been experiencing negative mental wellbeing, most times their academic work is the first thing students state as having been affected, through lack of concentration or ability to focus on their work.

Wellbeing also has effects on other risk factors and aspects of university life – specifically when asked about anything that has affected their sense of belonging at UEA, or that might be limiting their ability to engage in wider activities and opportunities at UEA, students commonly quote their wellbeing as a critical factor (Student Pulse Qualitative comments).

Risks to equality of opportunity: Our evidence review indicated that disabled students experience a range of risks to their student experience which compound and are interrelated. They face additional difficulties in accessing teaching and learning as well as other opportunities

available to students (UEA Risk 9), which may be due to a lack of representation in the delivery of teaching and learning (UEA Risk 10). Students may experience barriers to their sense of belonging due to the stigma and prejudicial beliefs about disabled students (UEA Risk 5). The support, advice and guidance available may be stymied by bureaucratic processes that then increases the burden on disabled students (UEA Risk 8). All of these then impact on their mental health and wellbeing (UEA Risk 6) and incur additional financial pressures (UEA Risk 7).

Strength of evidence: There were a small number of sector studies focusing on the lived experiences of disabled students but these were consistent with each other and provided rich, qualitative accounts. There were also some promising impact evaluations which support the idea that additional support services based on evidence may have a positive impact on student outcomes including completion rates. Our understanding is further enhanced through consistent student insight on the lived experience of disabled students and the impact of wellbeing at UEA.

This has led us to agree the following objective 4:

Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of continuation and completion for all students including students declaring a disability, eligible for free school meals, those with vocational qualifications, black students and mature students.

Degree awarding

In terms of degree awarding, we have identified the following gaps and analysed the proportion of those achieving a 2:1 or 1st class degree and the gap between underrepresented student groups and comparators. The gaps identified as a focus are provided in the table below along with a description of the overall trend from the most recent 4 years' of data.

WP Characteristic	GH Gap	GH Gap Trend
POLAR Q1	4.1pp	Steady
TUNDRA Q1	5.4pp	Growing
IMD 2019 (Q1)	8.2pp	Growing
Sex (Male)	4.5pp	Steady
Free school meals	6.6pp	Narrowing
L3 Qualification (BTEC)	20.5pp	Steady
Carer	5.1pp	Steady
Estranged	17.7pp	Steady
Ethnicity - 2-way	7.8pp	Steady
Asian	7.5pp	Steady
Black	12.5pp	Growing
Mixed ethnicity	2.9pp	Steady
Other	SUPP	SUPP
Disability - 2-way	2.9pp	Steady
A specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia	4.6pp	Steady
Aspergers Syndrome/Other ASD	4.2pp	Growing
Mental health condition	2.2pp	Steady

We noted there were gaps for a number of underrepresented student characteristics that serve as proxies for lower socioeconomic status such as free school meal eligibility and IMD. Our research also indicated that this was related to risks such as cost and time pressures and less capacity to engage with activities which may enhance academic outcomes.

We also noted that the gap for students from ethnic minority backgrounds was still present and that further work was needed to close this gap, hence we have re-committed to this in our new APP.

This has led us to identify the following two risk indications related to UEA's good honours awarding rate: RI10 and RI11.

RI10: Lower good honours degree awarding rate (2.1 or 1st degree classification) for students eligible for free school meals at UEA intersecting with IMDQ1, gender (male), declaring a disability, with additional pressures (including caring responsibilities) and care experienced and estranged students

Factors leading to this Risk Indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: Whilst studies did not explicitly look at undergraduate students who had previously been eligible for free school meals, they instead used other classifications of disadvantage, such as coming from an area of deprivation or definitions of low socioeconomic status. Studies consistently noted that students from disadvantaged backgrounds had lower degree attainment and were less likely to achieve a good honours degree. Studies identified that this was correlated to prior attainment (Smith and White, 2015; Budd, 2016) and arriving at university with differentials in social capital (Crawford, 2014). Differences in social capital can manifest in being less able to 'play the game' (Budd, 2016) and differences in their experience of networking with peers such as feeling like a minority (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2015). The likelihood of being awarded a good honours degree was associated with curricula and learning practices, relationships between staff and students (a sense of belonging) and the extent to which students feel supported and encouraged; students from disadvantaged backgrounds were less satisfied with these aspects than their peers (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2015).

For those with additional caring responsibilities such as student parents, it is likely that the additional constraints on their time is having a negative impact on their degree attainment (Mulrenan et al., 2023). These students were also more likely to face financial challenges which impacted engagement (Mulrenan et al., 2023). Some student groups such as care experienced and estranged students were also more likely to experience stress and anxiety through reminders of past trauma, which may be exacerbated by financial constraints in the case of estranged students (Bland and Blake, 2019); this increases their likelihood of dropping out as well as poor performance on degree.

There is evidence that recent educational disruption as a result of COVID-19 may have further exacerbated attainment gaps for disadvantaged students. Disadvantaged students were found to be less engaged with online teaching and assessment which then impacted their overall attainment. This was likely to be a factor of digital poverty, a higher likelihood of illness, financial insecurity and difficulties studying at home (Summers et al., 2023).

UEA holistic student insight review findings: Internal student insight suggests that some student groups using the proxy characteristics of POLAR Q1, mature and students with a disability, tend to respond more negatively than other students, in terms of having the finances to be fully comfortable (to last them the term, and to fully engage with university life).

Over time, students have repeatedly raised finances as a barrier to achievement for assorted reasons, with this increasing along with the increasing cost of living in the UK. The biggest impact on their outcomes that students are reporting surrounding finances, is from an increase in the number who are undertaking part-time paid work alongside their studies in order to mitigate the effects of increasing cost of living. Across the sector, students are reporting increasingly that it is no longer possible to finance university life solely with government loans – this is even more striking for students who have less financial support, such as mature or estranged students, or those who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Johnson and Westwood, 2023). UEA-specific results also show a similar picture, with more students reporting undertaking part-time work in recent years (Student Pulse, Part-time work). Through multiple feedback mechanisms (Cost of Living Student Drop-ins, Student Pulse) students have stated that this increase in paid work can result in difficulties with time management, making them worry about achieving the grades they need to.

Students also state that worrying about finances affects their wellbeing and sense of belonging at UEA, which then affects their ability to perform academically as they would like to (Student Pulse,

Wellbeing comments). In addition to raising their stress levels and subsequent wellbeing, students have reported that the social aspects of university life are the first things to be limited when their budget is too low, which then affects their ability to connect with their peers. A similar effect is seen within students who do find part-time work however – these students often report a significant reduction in free time alongside both academic work and employment, meaning they are still unable to engage in the social aspects of university life (Wilkins and Hardy, 2023)

Risks to equality of opportunity: Overall, the factors that might lead UEA to have lower good honours degree awarding rates for FSM students were identified as including: prior attainment from earlier stages of education (UEA Risk 1); barriers to sense of belonging due to differentials in social capital and feeling less supported in this respect (UEA Risks 5 and 8); personal circumstances meaning they are more likely to experience issues related to mental health and wellbeing (UEA Risk 6), financial pressures (UEA Risk 7) and then this impacting on their ability to engage fully with university experiences (UEA Risk 9).

Strength of evidence: As noted above, none of the sector research specifically referenced students with previous eligibility of free school meals but instead used different classifications of disadvantage. This might potentially limit how applicable these risk factors are to this sub-group of students, and there are assumptions about how prior educational experiences might carry forward into higher education. UEA student insight relating to this Risk Indicator helps to enhance our understanding.

RI11: Lower good honours degree awarding rate (2.1 or 1st degree classification) for students from ethnic minority backgrounds, with the largest gap for black students

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: The degree awarding rate gap for ethnic minority students, particularly black students, is well researched. Many of the same factors appear in the literature as for Risk Indication 6 (on continuation and completion rates for ethnic minority students). One quantitative study noted that only half of the under-attainment can be attributed to differences in entry qualifications and suggests, therefore, the other half might be attributable to teaching and learning practices (Richardson, 2013). This coheres with students' reports of teaching and learning practices not being inclusive: finding it difficult to relate to course content (Seuwou et al., 2023), the way courses are delivered and assessed (Cramer, 2021) and a lack of autonomy in the way courses are taught and choosing subjects of interest (Marandure et al., 2024).

Students reported that this pressure to fit into dominant cultural norms affected their academic performance (Bunce et al., 2019; Marandure et al., 2024). Students also reported a range of unbelonging experiences (Marandure et al., 2024), feelings of isolation (Bunce et al., 2019) and experiences of racism and microaggressions (Seuwou et al., 2023) which all negatively impacted their mental health and wellbeing.

Furthermore, the lack of BAME staff representation led to a lack of academic role models and academic support staff who understood the challenges faced by students from ethnic minority backgrounds (Seuwou et al., 2023). This lack of BAME staff also hampers studies into staff attitudes as in the case of Richardson (2013).

UEA holistic student insight review findings: In 2018/19, UEA participated in a sector collaboration research project with expert researchers at Alterline Research exploring the lived experience of black students across their whole educational journey through qualitative methods including life-story interviews and reflective journals. This has provided a wealth of insight that underpins UEA's ongoing approach to addressing the degree awarding gap. Key insights included: experience of prejudice and microaggressions during their educational journey creating a feeling of 'other' to those around them; the positive and motivating impact of 'being taught by someone who felt culturally and ethnically familiar;' the significance of being facilitated in developing an academic identity; students coming to a white majority institution reported experiencing 'a kind of cultural starvation that hindered the development of a sense of belonging and connection to campus' and sometimes 'struggle to find common ground and shared interests' with peers on arrival at

university; some respondents reported feeling that ‘their curriculum was lacking in different perspectives.’

Within the recent results from UEA’s Student Pulse survey, students from ethnic minority backgrounds have been notably less likely to feel that they have the right life skills, and regularly report more negatively in terms of feeling like they can be themselves at UEA. These students also have reported feeling less like the material used in their teaching is suitable to them.

Risks to equality of opportunity: Our evidence review indicates that students from ethnic minority backgrounds may experience risks related to their sense of belonging (UEA Risk 5), which then impacts their ability to engage with other experience and opportunities (UEA Risk 9) or to receive relevant support, advice and guidance (UEA Risk 8). This has a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing (UEA Risk 6). It is likely this stems from a lack of representation (UEA Risk 10).

Strength of evidence: There is a significant amount of sector and UEA evidence that all consistently notes the institutional factors and teaching and learning practices which lead to this degree awarding gap.

RI12: Lower good honours degree awarding rate (2.1 or 1st degree classification) for students who studied a BTEC qualification only

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: As in RI02 and RI05, the same factors which lead to lower continuation rates may also be contributing to lower good honours degree awarding rates highlighting the importance of a student lifecycle approach. BTEC student performance has improved over time at low and medium-tariff universities, which may reflect these institution’s efforts to support these students and suggests deficit model thinking against BTEC students may be unwarranted (Kelly, 2017). Assessment practices come up as a recurring theme in the research, with students who studied a vocational qualification being less familiar with exams and single points of assessment (Kelly, 2017; Anderson, 2019) which may disadvantage them on courses with traditional assessment modes. Vocational students may not have been exposed to the style of teaching of learning present in HE, such as a constructivist style of learning (Black, 2022). This all leads to an ‘unnatural’ fit between vocational students and the pedagogical styles they are used to (Shields and Mosardo, 2015) and were prepared for by their prior qualifications (Gill, 2016). Furthermore, staff had mixed views on how much they know and should know about students’ prior experiences which may lead to differentials in how students are supported (Anderson, 2019).

UEA holistic student insight review findings: In 2019, UEA engaged a Senior Research Associate to conduct a BTEC Student Experience Study. The study aimed to understand the experiences of undergraduate students who had entered the UEA with BTEC qualifications or with a mix of BTEC and A level qualifications, as well as a smaller comparator group with A level qualifications. Data gathered by the University over several years prior had revealed that, by Level 3 entry qualification type, BTEC-qualified students were the least likely to achieve a 2:1 or First in their degrees. Yet whilst there was some awareness within the University about these issues, and data to show the scale of the problem, there was a lack of evidence and understanding of the reasons behind it. A mixed-methods research study was, therefore, conducted to try to understand the experiences of BTEC-qualified students at UEA, particularly in relation to their transition, engagement, and retention, and to try to identify possible ways to improve their experience and close the attainment gap: analysing existing data held by UEA and gathering qualitative data through in-depth interviews with staff and students. Key findings included that student experience and success is influenced by a range of factors, some of which are complex and intersecting. In terms of risk to equality of degree award, key findings included: difficulties asking for help and lack of confidence were recurring and interlinked themes, which seemed to affect BTEC-qualified students in particular; some BTEC-qualified students reported feeling unprepared for aspects of university study including independent learning, exams, academic writing, and referencing. In addition, staff acknowledged that staff generally knew little about students’ prior educational experiences and what this might mean for teaching and assessment practices.

Risks to equality of opportunity: Our evidence review indicates that factors that may underpin a risk of lower good honours degree awarding rate for students who studied a vocational qualification include: barriers to sense of belonging (UEA Risk 5); insufficient support, advice and guidance whilst at university (UEA Risk 8); and students' needs not being fully understood and, therefore, reflected in curriculum, pedagogy, teaching and assessment practices (UEA Risk 10).

Strength of evidence: There was strong evidence to suggest that students who studied a vocational qualification had lower degree attainment across the sector and the research was consistent in the key factor being vocational courses having a different pedagogical style which did not prepare students as well for higher education. UEA specific insight enhances our understanding of this in our context.

This has led us to agree the following objective 5:

Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of good honours (2.1. or 1st degree classification) degree award for all students including for students eligible for free school meals, black students or students of mixed ethnicity, and students with vocational qualifications.

Progression

UEA Graduate Outcomes data indicates that for most underrepresented student groups rates of progression into positive outcomes are greater than comparator groups. The table below shows those areas where we identified considerable and consistent gaps and emerging areas of concern.

WP Characteristic	GO Gap	GO Gap Trend
POLAR Q1	1pp	Consistently positive but negative gap in most recent year
TUNDRA Q1	0.8pp	Fluctuating
IMD 2019 (Q1)	1.3pp	Negative gaps except in 2019
Sex (Male)	1.8pp	Persistent and consistent gap
Free school meals	2.9pp positive	Consistently positive but negative gap in most recent year
Aspergers Syndrome/Other ASD	10.5pp	Persistent gap but small base size
Mental health condition	7.8pp	Persistent and consistent gap
Two or more impairments and/or disabilities	5.4pp	Fluctuates due to small base size

We noted that students with certain disability sub-types such as Aspergers Syndrome/Other ASD, mental health conditions and multiple impairments showed a persistent negative gap in their graduate outcomes.

Furthermore, characteristics that serve as proxies for lower socioeconomic backgrounds had some small gaps such as POLAR, TUNDRA and IMD. We have also noticed that the most recent year of data indicates that some negative gaps might be opening for students eligible for free school meals.

This has led us to identify the following two risk indications related to UEA's graduate outcomes RI13 and RI14.

RI13: Lower rates for progression to graduate level employment or further study for students declaring a mental health condition, with social or communication impairments or with multiple impairments

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: The social model of disability espouses that whether a person with an impairment is disabled depends on the physical and social barriers that they encounter (Equality Challenge Unit, 2014). When it comes to graduate employment opportunities, students with impairments may be unable to access them due to negative employment attitudes including not being aware of or making reasonable adjustments to application processes as well as in the workplace (Equality Challenge Unit, 2014). Students with disabilities may, therefore, require specialist support that is underfunded and lacking in university careers services (Allen and Coney, 2021) or if it does exist, students are unaware of it (AdvanceHE, 2021).

Graduate employment is positively linked to prior work experience, but students with disabilities have a lower uptake of opportunities such as a Work Placement Year; this may be due to barriers and difficulties to accessing work placements though further exploration is needed (Divan et al., 2022). It is suggested that disadvantaged students' low participation in Work Placement Years is related to a number of factors, including having fewer contacts to help with getting a placement, in addition to the financial implications of taking low paid or unpaid opportunities (Brooks and Timms, 2023).

Furthermore, whilst students with autism spectrum disorders may be high attaining and perform academically on par with peers, they may face barriers with the social side of educational and employment environments (Chown et al., 2017).

UEA holistic student insight review findings: At UEA, the Careers Registration Task forms part of the Start of Year Registration process completed by all students annually and asks a number of careers and employability focussed questions. UEA has now been running the Careers Registration Task for over five years giving us a long-standing data set. From their Careers Registration responses disabled students report lower career confidence and lower levels of planning and having the confidence to achieve their plans than those who don't report a disability. Looking at 2021/22 to 2023/24, there is a -6pp gap in disabled students feeling confident in their skills and experience. Similarly, disabled students have a -6pp negative gap in having future plans and feeling prepared to achieve them. At UEA Students are able to access specialist advice and guidance on discussing reasonable adjustments with employers and disclosing disability, and they are also able to access careers services for three years after graduation. However the labour market for students does not offer the same level of support, with graduate employers reporting that there is an increasing need for support for their student and graduate recruits in terms of their mental health. Students are also reporting that their companies are not increasing their mental health support, highlighting a transition gap for students as they enter the graduate labour market (ISE Student Development Survey, 2024).

Risks to equality of opportunity: The main risk is evidenced as the need for specialist support, advice and guidance (UEA Risk 8). Students also appear to experience barriers to taking up certain experiences and opportunities (UEA Risk 9) including relating to cost pressures (UEA Risk 7). This also lends evidence to the risk on mental health and wellbeing (UEA Risk 6) leading to lower engagement and requiring additional support.

Strength of evidence: Whilst there was a recognition of lower graduate employment for students with disabilities or impairments in sector literature, there was a general sense that more research needed to be done to understand and explore the factors and barriers affecting disabled graduates. Most of the sources used here were grey literature and reports which various third-sector organisations had commissioned, with a focus on exploring the views of careers professionals. There was a lack of high quality qualitative studies which explored the lived experiences of disabled students. UEA insight into the experience of our students enhanced our understanding.

RI14: Lower rate for progression to graduate level employment or further study for students from lower socio-economic background using proxies such as students eligible for free school meal and intersecting with male students

Factors leading to this risk indication:

Sector literature rapid evidence review findings: The lower rate of progression may be a factor of employer discrimination and barriers to their experience from earlier in the pipeline. Graduates from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have different social and cultural capitals that are not recognised or valued by employers, with graduates from higher socioeconomic backgrounds appearing to engage in more activities that are attractive to employers or employers have in common (Schepper et al., 2022). Participation in extracurricular activities is also positively associated with graduate outcomes regardless of academic performance (Griffiths et al., 2021) but other studies show that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face barriers which negatively affect their access to and engagement in extracurriculars (Mulrenan et al., 2023; Divan et al., 2022). For example, students from a working class background were less likely to secure a work placement than middle-class students (Divan et al., 2022).

UEA holistic student insight review findings: Students develop employability experience which supports their progression often primarily through part-time jobs and internships, however, many students will be undertaking this work not to gain employability skills but to support funding their studies and families in an increasingly difficult economic situation due to cost of living. From the UEAs Careers Registration responses (a survey undertaken by all students as part of the University's start of year registration process) students from a Polar Q1 background are less likely than students from Polar Q2-5 to report taking part in employability enhancing experience over the previous 12 months. Ensuring students are given the opportunity to reflect on the benefits this type of work and the skills they are developing which will contribute to their longer-term career plans and aspirations is one of the ways that the careers service supports students. However, for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds there is a clear and consistent negative gap in students engaging with the events, appointments, initiatives and resources made available by the careers service. Over the last five years there has been a gap between Polar Q1 students and Polar Q2-5 students ranging from -2pp to -6pp.

For students transitioning into the graduate labour market from University, there is even less awareness from employers of the importance of socio-economic background and the effect on a graduates' career progression. In recruitment to the graduate labour market, over a quarter of employers have no targets for recruitment in terms of diversity, whilst a third have targets but do not collect or access data enabling them to track progress against targets, when it comes to socio-economic background this is not focussed on by employers in the same way as they might for gender or ethnicity (ISE Student Recruitment Survey, 2023).

Risks to equality of opportunity: The main risk to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds is evidenced to be related to their engagement with experience and opportunities, or rather the types of experiences they choose to engage with (UEA Risk 9). This may be due to cost pressures limiting their access to these experiences (UEA Risk 7) as well as not receiving support, advice and guidance on how to improve their employment prospects (UEA Risk 8).

Strength of evidence: There were strong quantitative studies and literature reviews which support the idea that graduates from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may hold different capitals that disadvantage them in progressing to graduate employment. There could be more qualitative studies which examine the lived experience of these graduates. UEA insight into the experience of our students enhanced our understanding.

This has led us to agree the following objective 6:

Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of progression to graduate level employment or further study for all students including for students eligible for free school meals and students declaring a mental health condition, neurodiversity or with multiple impairments.

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

10.1 Methodology

After identifying our areas of risk and objectives (see Annex A for details on this process) and targets, we set out to better understand what interventions and types of activity had evidence-based potential that might address the risks and underlying risk factors. Our initial review of the evidence base was conducted as part of our rapid evidence review (RER) (see Annex A for more information on this process) in particular our findings from the second research question:

RQ2. What types of interventions show evidence and potential to mitigate these risk indications?

This review was carried out by research roles at UEA rather than those involved in delivery to work to avoid confirmation bias impacting the findings. It was shared with stakeholders and practitioners at UEA, who were then asked to consider the evidence and identify different tiers of activity to address our identified risks to equality of opportunity (again this approach was designed to avoid bias towards selection of existing activity rather than adding or enhancing approaches to best meet the evidence of what works):

- Proven existing practice – initiatives already in place with robust evaluative outcomes evidencing required impacts
- Enhancement practice – initiatives already in place or to some degree tested with some evidence of required impact but where enhancement, including improved reach to the specific student characteristics identified as at risk, is required
- New practice – where gaps in our approach were evidenced based on the RER outcomes

An intervention strategy for each objective was created which grouped activity under common outcome measures. Across all tiers specific consideration was given to whether activity required a whole provider approach (e.g. inclusive practice led systemic or structural change) and/or bespoke activity (e.g. tailored or targeted activity reach to specific at-risk student characteristics) with our intervention strategies ensuring that they cover both aspects to ensure robust and persistent mitigation to risks to equality of opportunity, with the ultimate combined aim of addressing our objectives and targets.

Intervention strategies and theories of change

Each intervention strategy is underpinned by an enhanced theory of change. These are living documents, created in collaboration with practitioners, which detail the intermediate outcomes that might lead to the desired change i.e. achieving our objectives. For pre-entry focused theories of change, we used a combination of the Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) [mapping outcomes and activities tool](#) (MOAT) and Network Evaluation and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI) [framework](#) to identify relevant outcomes. For post-entry, we used TASO's draft post-entry typology (due to be published in Summer 2024). Both were supplemented by practitioner expertise. We further enhanced these by discussing possible change mechanisms and assumptions that underpin our logic models. These theories of change will continue to evolve and iterate as we develop further understanding through sector and internal insight and learning over the lead up and lifetime of our APP.

Sources of evidence

As well as our initial review, we looked for more specific evidence to rationalise our choice of activities within each intervention strategy. We used a combination of academic research, UEA student insight and previous evaluations of the activity (or similar) which is summarised in the tables below.

10.2 Evidence and rationale for intervention strategies

In this section, for each intervention strategy (IS), we outline the objectives and risks we need to address. We then summarise the sector evidence about activities that contribute to addressing the risks. The evidence for each element of our intervention strategies is outlined, alongside the intended outcomes of the intervention strategy to show clearly the logical links to addressing risk.

Intervention strategy 1: access to higher education

Objective 1: Through attainment raising and outreach activity, UEA will increase the proportion of students eligible for free school meals in our region accessing higher education with the ultimate goal of achieving the sector average.

Target PTA_1: Increase the proportion of UEA's yearly intake of students who are eligible for free school meals from 12.4% to 17% by 2028/29.

Activities are designed to address the following risks to equality of opportunity: R1 Barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment pre-HE; R2 Insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance pre-HE; R3 Barriers to equality of application success; R7 Cost pressures.

Initial review of evidence base:

Our rapid evidence review picked up on the following interventions that are evidenced as supporting access to higher education for students eligible for free school meals: attainment raising work (Pickering, 2019); metacognition and self-regulation interventions (Education Endowment Foundation, 2024); a partnership approach with schools (Alterline, 2024) including improving the role of teachers in providing encouragement as well as information, advice and guidance (Alcott, 2017); supporting families and parents to uphold high expectations (Khattab, 2015) and increase how much students talk to their parents about school work and future choices (Davies et al., 2014); outreach work which increases social capital (Johnson et al., 2020).

IS1-A1: Maths Excellence Fund partnership: East Maths Community

Description: A new programme funded by the Maths Excellence Fund and delivered in partnership with the Inspiration Trust. The Maths Excellence Fund was launched in June 2023 by its founding donors, XTX Markets and The Hg Foundation. The Fund is being overseen by Purposeful Ventures, which will administer the grants, and manage the delivery and evaluation of programmes. Maths enjoyment, engagement and attainment activity from years 7-13 for pupil premium eligible students (the pupil premium grant is funding to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in state-funded schools in England)². UEA led aspects will include KS4 and 5 maths tutoring, a post-16 'Preparing for Maths' programme, on campus event series and parent and community engagement.

Outcomes: Students have increased enjoyment and engagement in maths and increased understanding of both maths pathways in higher education. This knowledge alongside increased subject knowledge will lead to increased attainment at GCSE and Level 3, and in turn lead to more students making applications and accessing higher education.

Rationale and evidence:

The Maths Excellence Fund has been established to support schools to improve student attainment and progression in maths from ages 11 to 16 and 16 to 18, increasing the number of students who are on track to succeed in A level maths and beyond. The East Maths Community will be delivered by Inspiration Trust and University of East Anglia and funding has been allocated for five academic years starting in September 2024. The Fund draws on the Maths Excellence Pathways report, published by XTX Markets and the University of Nottingham in 2023. The programmes each comprise a combination of activities including:

² Pupil premium: overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

(i) Teacher and curriculum development

As the quality of teaching is one of the most important factor in how well young people learn and succeed, professional development (PD) – improving teaching – is an effective way for teachers and school leaders to make a difference in children's learning (Rauch and Coe, 2019).

(ii) Externally provided interventions (e.g. tutoring, enrichment)

Evidence from the Education Endowment Fund's (EEF) Teaching and Learning Toolkit suggests that one-to-one tuition can accelerate learning by up to five months and small group tuition by up to four months. Although the impact of tutoring is positive on average, this is not true for all studies (EEF, 2021a; EEF, 2021b) and there is a large amount of unexplained variation between the results (EEF, 2024).

(iii) Collaboration between schools and teachers

Research suggests that professional collaborative activities might have a positive effect on student achievement (Borko, 2004; Dumay et al., 2013; Goddard et al., 2010; Lee and Smith, 1996; Louis et al., 2010). Collaboration can aid teacher development because peers typically share similar language, culture, and knowledge about challenges, which allows them to offer emotional or informational help (Sims et al., 2021).

IS1-A2: Programmes to raise student attainment

Description: Continue to deliver sustained programmes to improve subject knowledge, develop skills for academic success and support key transitions beginning from primary school. Including enhancing the scale and audience of our 'Make it Count' meta cognition programme (expanding to years 7 and 8) and sustained skills programmes for years 9-13 to develop skills for success and post-16 'Preparing for' programmes to contextualise subject knowledge and support HE applications. Deliver new targeted literacy support interventions for primary students from at risk groups.

Outcomes: Through increased skills for success (autonomy, adaptability, critical thinking etc.), increased subject knowledge, and increased metacognition skills, students will have improved attitudes to learning and academic motivation. This will ultimately lead to increased attainment, and more students accessing higher education.

Rationale and evidence:

Our Outreach team will run a variety of attainment-raising programmes, starting from primary school. These targeted programmes will work with students most at risk of having low attainment outcomes including students eligible for free school meals. At KS2, students in Norfolk and Suffolk are consistently achieving results below the national average; this continues through to KS4 attainment. As Pickering (2019) notes, 'the attainment of FSM students at GCSE is still their biggest barrier to higher education' and this is one of the Office for Students' key priorities.

Our attainment-raising programmes are based on evidence of what works with a focus on developing metacognitive skills and other soft skills which support attainment. The EEF (2024) suggests that metacognitive programmes can be worth the equivalent of an additional +7 months' progress. Make It Count has been designed in collaboration with Structural Learning who has developed a toolkit which enables practitioners and learners to better understand the processes of learning and to develop their skills for learning with a metacognitive approach. This project aims to equip learners with a range of tools that will enable them to better access the curriculum challenges they face.

We will be working with Year 9 – 13 students to develop skills for success: adaptability, autonomy, communication, critical thinking, leadership and research. Our Outreach team have created a skills curriculum, which breaks down skills into building blocks and 'I can...' statements that learners can easily understand and will enable tracking of progress. Research shows there are positive relationships between attainment and other soft skills, such as academic self-efficacy (Schneider and Preckel, 2017). We intend to evaluate our skills curriculum by understanding the correlations between these skills and attainment.

Our post-16 'Preparing for' programmes will then support students to contextualise their subject knowledge by focusing it towards particular subject areas. For example, 'Preparing for Medicine,' supports specific underrepresented student groups to make competitive applications to Medicine courses, such as by improving their attainment scores on pre-entry examinations like the UCAT or BMAT. In 2022/23, our UCAS Outreach Evaluator report noted that the number of participants on 'Preparing for' programmes who applied to medium-tariff universities was 'very significantly high' when compared to a control group.

Literacy will also be a focus for new projects. Nationally, 73% of KS2 pupils reach the expected standard in reading, but only 68% of those in Norfolk do (3pp gap); 71% reach the expected standard in writing, but only 64% in Norfolk do (7pp gap). This suggests there is a need for literacy-focused interventions in UEA's local area. We will therefore be developing an evidence-based literacy programme (for example, Gorard (et. al., 2015) evaluated a literacy catch-up programme and found it provided an effect size of +0.24 in test scores).

IS1-A3: Into University partnership (reviewed yearly)

Description: Continue to support two community learning centres (Norwich and Great Yarmouth) to enhance school-based interventions and provide opportunities to reach students from at risk group in the community. Delivery includes academic support for students in years 3-13, sustained mentoring programmes and in-school activity to support knowledge and understanding of higher education.

Outcomes: Students will have opportunities to increase their skills, develop self-efficacy and self-belief, which lead to increased attainment and have the ultimate outcome of more students accessing higher education.

Rationale and Evidence:

Into University focuses on early, sustained intervention which emphasises attainment and is delivered locally with rigorous impact measurement. Norwich and Great Yarmouth were chosen as locations based on the level of deprivation, with many LSOAs in the bottom 10% nationally (by IMD, IDACI and Education, Skills and Training Index). Our two Into University centres work with over 1,000 free school meal-eligible pupils each year, as well as those with household income under £25,000, 16-19 bursary, care experienced young people, social housing, refugee, and young carer (though free school meal eligible pupils make up the majority).

The Into University model has been found to improve students' attitudes to learning with students reporting improvement in key skills, self-efficacy and self-belief (Into University, 2023). Furthermore 61% of Into University students progress to higher education, which is higher than the benchmark of 45% (Into University, 2023).

By sponsoring these two centres, UEA is able to support both attainment and progression to higher education for significant numbers of students in our local area.

IS1-A4: Collaboration with internal and external community/stakeholders

Description: Continue existing and develop new partnerships with members of the UEA community (e.g. schools and colleges - primary to post-16 and LA delivered provision) and our region to build social capital amongst students from at risk groups, enhanced with a new CPD offering. Deliver new parent and carer engagements to support young people in making informed decisions.

Outcomes: Partner schools enabled to engage in progressive outreach programmes via additional resources. Teachers/advisers and parents/carers see UEA as a trusted source of information. Parents/carers have the skills and increased confidence to support young people.

Our work to address attainment and support students eligible for free school meals also involves key influencers and stakeholders. We will continue to work in partnership with our local community and schools.

Evidence and rationale:

We know that teachers are key influencers when working with pre-entry students. Alcott (2017) finds that 'teacher encouragement has the greatest influence on those students most likely to be on the margin for university attendance.' Ward et al. (2013) found significant positive effects of a school partnership that involved a combination of additional training provided to school staff and academic enrichment support programmes. Our CPD and other offer to schools is based on sustained stakeholder engagement and understanding of the schools' needs. Teacher feedback collected between 2019 to 2023 was unanimously positive about the trust between UEA and teachers/advisers: 'The school considers the UEA to be reliable and credible regarding the information and advice given about higher education and we as staff are very confident sharing this information with our students and teachers. UEA is an internationally recognised university with decades of experience in providing high quality education and we are very fortunate to be able to work with them on outreach projects such as this.' (Teacher Feedback, 2022/23)

Parents are also key influencers. Khattab (2015) found that high parental expectations can significantly contribute to school achievement and future educational behaviour. Parental education is also associated with access to university, graduate premia and cultural capital (Davies et al., 2014). Parents and carers of potential students from groups underrepresented in higher education are more likely to support whatever decision their young person makes. This is often because the young person is seen as the 'educational expert' within the family (Canovan and Luck, 2016) and aspirations for their young person is often shaped by their own frame of reference and experiences with higher education, or lack of experience. For these reasons, parents and carers can feel ill-equipped to support their young people, and therefore trust them to make their own decisions. Our parent/carer activities therefore focus on providing accurate and current HE information through a range of resources and events and the use of parent/carer ambassadors. Evaluation to date shows the positive impact of our approach, which we will continue to enhance through this APP. For example, for our 2023/24 sessions so far we have measured the knowledge levels of parents and carers before and after the sessions to capture the impact of the activity on their ability to support their young people with GCSE revision at home. The average knowledge level of participants increased from 2.64 to 4.13 out of 5 during the one-hour session. 88% of the attendees agreed they would be able to use the information and guidance at home with their young person.

IS1-A5: Targeted interventions to develop social capital and a sense of belonging in higher education

Description: Programmes of in-school and on campus activities for years 5-13 with a focus on knowledge and decision making (IAG), including applicant support, e.g. the Next Steps, Explore, Get Ahead and Get Ahead+ programmes.

Develop a new free school meal eligible boys project, focusing on developing a sense of belonging in higher education.

Outcomes: Students will have increased knowledge and awareness of HE and its benefits, and increased understanding of pathways. This will lead to increased capacity to make informed choices, and ultimately lead to more students accessing higher education. Participants will have increased confidence and motivation that higher education is for 'someone like me', which will lead to more students accessing HE.

Rationale and evidence:

As well as attainment-focused work, our Outreach team will also run a range of targeted interventions which develop social capital and a sense of belonging in HE as these are also associated with progression to higher education, particularly for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds such as those eligible for free school meals. Davies (et al., 2014) highlights the powerful role of cultural capital in educational outcomes and access to university. Johnson (et al., 2020) argues that effective outreach work ought to foster social capital in order to prepare students for future outcomes including access to higher education and graduate progression.

Our information, advice and guidance (IAG) and application support activities are planned using the NERUPI framework (2021) and aim to develop students' knowledge and awareness of the

benefits of higher education, as well as develop students' capacity to navigate higher employment and make informed choices. IAG can have 'a small positive impact on students' aspirations/attitudes, and sometimes on HE participation' (TASO, 2022). TASO's evidence toolkit also found that IAG is most successful when tailored and starts early, which is why we work in partnership with schools to design our IAG offering and start sustained, ongoing interventions with pupils from Year 5 onwards. Activities might include campus visits, such as through our Explore programme, which HEAT research (2020) found was associated with a higher likelihood of entering HE.

Nationally girls are more likely than boys to meet the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined – 62% of girls compared with 56% of boys (6% gap). In Norfolk and Suffolk this gendered difference is also present, but the gap is larger: 9% in Norfolk and 7% in Suffolk. Our project targeting free school meal-eligible boys in schools draws upon evidence from a similar project at Arts University Bournemouth (Blower and Rainford, 2023) and will use student ambassadors as role models (Kozman, 2018) with the aim of developing a sense of belonging with educational institutions including school and university. Participants will also focus on imagining their future possible selves, identify and value their skills and consider barriers they might face in school.

Intervention strategy 2: access to UEA

Objective 2: Through enhanced engagement with, and advocacy for, care experienced and estranged students (CEES) (along with supporting services such as Norfolk County Council, virtual schools and third sector organisations) UEA will ensure that care experienced and estranged students have equal opportunity to apply to UEA.

Target PTA_2: Increase the proportion of UEA's yearly intake of students who are care experienced from a baseline of 1.2% to 1.7% by 2028/29.

We will monitor the intake of students who are estranged.

Activities are designed to address the following risks to equality of opportunity: R1 Barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment pre-HE; R2 Insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance pre-HE; R3 Barriers to equality of application success; R4 Insufficient available choice of course type and delivery mode; R5 Barriers to sense of belonging in HE and at UEA; R6 Mental health and wellbeing; R7 Cost pressures.

Initial review of evidence base:

Our rapid evidence review picked up on the following recommended interventions: interventions which involve effective collaboration between universities, local authorities and virtual schools (Styrnol et al., 2021); wider use of data across the sector to support in monitoring outcomes (Harrison, 2019; Ellison, 2023); a greater understanding of care experienced and estranged students' lived experiences and how to build inclusive environments for them (Child and Marvell, 2023); and outreach initiatives such as summer programmes, financial support and year-round accommodation to encourage care experienced and estranged students to consider university (Young and Lilley, 2023).

IS2-A1: Sustained 'Including Me' programme

Description: Tailored 'Including Me' programme for students who have had disrupted journeys to and through HE in years 7-13. Includes tailored campus activities, student shadowing, application support and residential activities.

Outcomes: Students will have increased knowledge and awareness of the benefits of HE. This will lead to students having increased capacity and confidence to make informed choices. This increased sense of belonging will ultimately lead to increased access to HE.

Rationale and evidence:

Care experienced students are significantly less likely to attend HE than their non-care experienced peers (National Network for the Education of Care Leavers, 2017). Estranged

students are likely to lack the family support network that would normally be there to help decision-making, and may also have financial concerns (UCAS, 2023).

Including Me, therefore, supports CEES students with accessing information about university support, particularly financial and accommodation support, through campus visits and individual support sessions. The residential aims to build students' sense of belonging with university, as TASO's evidence toolkit (2023) suggests that residential and summer schools 'may have a small positive effect on self-reported applications to HE, as well as the mechanisms hypothesised to mediate the relationship between attending a summer school and progression to HE (i.e., self-efficacy relating to HE, compatibility of HE with social identity, and perception of practical barriers to HE)'. Our evaluation from 2022/23 showed that CEES students who attended campus visits showed a statistically significant positive increase of 31.9pp on questions related to social and academic capital. For those who attended the residential, there was a statistically significant positive increase of 13.5pp on questions related to sense of belonging in higher education. Respondents were positive about their experience: 'I didn't know anything about university before I came here but now I know how things work there I know what the accommodation looks like what subjects or topics am I looking for how do I keep my fitness while am in my education.' (CEES residential participant, 2022). We will, therefore, continue to run this programme and aim to increase the reach of our pre-entry activities to support even more care experienced and estranged learners.

IS2-A2: External stakeholder engagement and advocacy

Description: Collaboration with Local Authorities, virtual schools, third party organisations, and stakeholders who advocate for and support CEES students, including promoting 'Including Me' programme. Facilitating knowledge exchange between UEA and professionals around higher education through charities and member networks (e.g. National Network for the Education of Care Leavers).

Outcomes: Increased internal understanding of local potential cohorts of students, and risks to equality of opportunity that could impact these groups, through improved data quality and staff understanding. These will lead to professionals, community leaders and influencers viewing UEA as a trusted source of expert advice and advocacy. This will ultimately lead to advocacy for disclosing experience and the benefits for individual students and improve access to higher education.

Rationale and evidence:

Since 2020, we have been implementing the recommendations from the reports *Battling the Odds: Pathways to University from Care* (Sheffield University and Leverhulme Trust, 2019), *New Starts: The challenges of Higher Education without the support of a family network* (Unite Foundation and Stand Alone, 2015) and *Care Experienced Consultation* (Greater Manchester Higher, 2020).

An online survey of young people and professionals undertaken by the charity Become found that 'local authorities were patchy in their advocacy for higher education, that there was too little information available (especially for front-line staff) and that some young people lack confidence to extend their education' (The Who Cares? Trust, 2012). Hauri, Hollingworth and Cameron (2019) report that care leavers benefit from good communication and inter-professional working and information sharing with a range of organisations such as local authorities, virtual schools and other stakeholders. The NNECL Mapping EORR and Care Experience (2023) document therefore recommends 'training and information for foster carers and local authority/virtual school staff' as a way to tackle risks around students not having equal opportunity to receive information and guidance. This is further backed by TASO's evidence review (2021) which found that in successful collaborations, staff and carers reported better support in going to university, relevant information sharing and ultimately, this benefited care experienced students.

IS2-A3: Tailored application and pre-arrival support

Description: Continue to deliver tailored interventions for care experienced and estranged students from the point of application, through to their arrival at UEA, including pre arrival

communications and invites to transition to HE events, a named contact and opportunities to engage in various formats.

Outcomes: Students will have increased confidence and motivation that HE is for 'someone like me' and increased knowledge of student support, including financial support that is over and above what is provided by SFE.

These will lead to increased sense of belonging, and students feeling their experiences and ambitions are represented in UEA's admissions, recruitment and marketing. This will ultimately improve access to HE.

Rationale and evidence: The single large longitudinal study in the UK (Jackson et al., 2005) identified a number of recurring problems affecting care leavers and the transition period prior to starting higher education: lack of information and guidance; low expectations and little encouragement from social workers; reluctance by the local authority to provide financial assistance with the logistics and costs of moving to university. Furthermore, care experienced students described how their school or college had underprepared them for the step-change of starting university, particularly around workload and independent learning (Cotton et al., 2014). Recommendations from Hauri, Hollingworth and Cameron (2019) are that designated staff at prospective HEIs provide clear and accessible information about the support available to care experienced students at the point of application. This is supported by TASO's evidence review (2021) which finds value in having a single point of contact and found that providers who had this were correlated with higher progression and success rates. Our named contact for care experienced and estranged students therefore answers queries pre-arrival and offers opportunities to engage with a range of preparatory information.

IS2-A4: Financial support

Description: CEES students will be eligible for the higher level of UEA bursary, plus the UEA Hardship Fund and financial literacy advice and guidance will be promoted directly to all recipients of CEES Network email bulletins.

Outcomes: CEES students will be supported to have the financial means to fully engage with student experiences and opportunities, which will increase social self-efficacy and increase sense of belonging, making it more likely that students will feel confident in accessing and staying in HE.

Rationale and evidence:

The OfS' EORR states that nationally, cost pressures are more likely to affect estranged, care experienced, mature, eligible for free school meals and disabled students (Office for Students, 2023). Sector best practice recommends that we offer a care leaver bursary and simplify the process of claiming additional funding by advertising how and when funds can be accessed (Sheffield and Leverhulme, 2019). We will continue to automatically offer the higher rate UEA bursary to students considered care experienced and estranged by Student Finance England in recognition of the additional barriers and cost pressures that this group faces. In 2023/24, in response to a specific survey our CEES students suggested that there was a need for general additional funding and learning financial skills. Therefore, we also promote and highlight other financial support such as our hardship fund and financial literacy information directly via our CEES network email bulletins.

Intervention strategy 3: UEA offer making

Objective 3: Through inclusive admissions, marketing and application support, UEA will work to remove barriers to successful outcomes to applications from underrepresented student groups, including mature students and students with vocational qualifications.

Target PTA_3: Reduce the gap in application to offer making rate between mature students (21 or over on entry) and young students (under 21 on entry) from a baseline of 20pp to 14.5pp by 2028/29.

Target PTA_4: Reduce the gap in application to offer making rate between students with a BTEC qualification only, and those with A levels only, from a baseline of 17.3pp to 10pp by 2028/29.

Activities are designed to address the following risks to equality of opportunity: R1 Barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment pre-HE; R2 Insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance pre-HE; R3 Barriers to equality of application success; R5 Barriers to sense of belonging in HE and at UEA; R7 Cost pressures.

Initial review of evidence base:

Interventions that have been evidenced as support mature learners in their applications include: providing supportive pathways by working with mature applicants and engage with influences including further education colleges and workplaces (Farini and Scollan, 2019; Bennun, 2015; Office for Fair Access, 2017); better signposting of information or personalised and targeted contact prior to application with tailored information including invitations to mature open days (Bennun, 2015); peer mentoring schemes that match new mature students with experienced mature students (Hope and Quinlan, 2020).

Interventions to support students with vocational qualifications include: exposure to role models such as student ambassadors (Burgess et al., 2018); partnership working between FE and HE providers to facilitate progression to HE (Woodfield et al., 2013); outreach schemes to foster a sense of belonging in HE (Baker, 2019); and better provision of information, advice and guidance (Joy, 2017).

IS3-A1: Application support programmes

Description: Continue to deliver programmes of in-school and on campus activity to support post-16 decision making, understanding of pathways, applications and interview processes. Increased scale of tailored application and interview support, focussing on courses attracting higher numbers of mature students (e.g. Health Sciences and Medicine), with closer links to the student application journey and approaches to broader inclusive admissions and interviews. Mature potential student support programme, including information and guidance sessions, opportunities to visit campus, and application support.

Outcomes: Students will have increased knowledge and capacity to navigate HE and make informed choices and ultimately increase in successful applications to HE.

Rationale and evidence:

The evaluation from our Post-18 Pathways project 2021/22 showed that after attending a IAG talk, over 80% participants agreed that they understood how to write a personal statement, what different pathways were available, the finance options available and the types of courses and HEIs available to them.

Focussing in Health Sciences and Medicine where we see that offer-making gaps are greatest we will continue to implement a series of recommendations from an AdvanceHE commissioned review of the whole application cycle (i.e. from the application stage through to an offer). The research makes recommendations for embedding inclusive practice into the School of Health Sciences' student recruitment practices, processes and systems, which is being implemented through a cross institutional action plan.

Our early evaluations of projects to support potential applicants to Medicine or Pharmacy showed that participants significantly increased their knowledge of the interview process and overall preparedness of interviews. Further development of this activity will be informed by a 2023/24 quasi-experimental evaluation of these projects.

For mature students, our activities will predominantly focus on students undertaking Access to HE qualifications at three local further education colleges, with activity planned in across the applicant lifecycle. Additional focus will be placed on decision-making and conversion support to mitigate some of the challenges caused by the cost of living crisis (MillionPlus, 2022), to ensure ample representation of this demographic is available to support informed decision-making.

IS3-A2: Inclusive admissions, recruitment and marketing

Description: Embedding widening participation targeting into our national school liaison and marketing approaches. Review of current approaches to admissions, recruitment and marketing for BTEC and Mature students to understand where these may be driving gaps in successful applications.

Outcomes: Staff will have increased understanding of the factors that influence offer making gaps for particular groups when prior attainment is accounted for. Students feel their experiences and ambitions are represented in UEA's admissions, recruitment and marketing which leads to an increase in sense of belonging. This will ultimately increase access to HE.

Rationale and evidence:

We have chosen to adopt a school-based targeting approach in order to meet both our widening participation and recruitment objectives, as described by Benson-Egglington (2021): '[school-based targeting is an] inclusive approach to targeting, which allows the team to work with the greatest number of students possible, interpret[ing] national policy in a way that meets the needs of the institution's market position'.

We will be continuing to review current approaches to admissions, recruitment and marketing for BTEC and Mature students, in line with Universities UK's Admissions Code of Practice (2022) which states that 'Universities and colleges should consistently review equality of opportunity. Where inequality in access remains evident, universities and colleges should explore causes and ensure appropriate steps are put in place to address any issues.' In 2021 and 2023, UEA commissioned AdvanceHE to understand the experience of applicants to Health Science courses from groups that may not experience equality of application outcome. This found that mature students highly valued tailored support through the admissions process, support with interview preparation and dealing with queries. One participant said of the support: '*It was tailored, but they made it quite clear that they weren't trying to get you to join that university, it was just to make sure you've had a general overview of what mature student facilities were available.*' The research identified areas of focus to further improve the interview and application process for mature students, including increased communication with applicants, enhanced staff engagement and training, reviewing the delivery of interviews and tailored support during the admissions process.

IS3-A3: Partnerships with post-16 providers to enable supported pathways

Description: Continue to deliver partnership agreements with local post-16 providers with high proportions of BTEC and Mature students. Partnerships will include supported pathways for Access to HE students through contextual admissions, tailored IAG provision from dedicated UEA staff, subject tasters and CPD to highlight pathways to and through HE.

Outcomes: Students have increased knowledge and awareness of the benefits of HE. This will lead to increased confidence in making informed choices, ultimately increasing successful applications to HE. School and college staff have increased understanding of the strengths of mature and vocational learners, and support student choices that match ambition and expectations.

Rationale and evidence:

Various reports recommend that universities provide supportive pathways by engaging with influencers, including further education colleges (Farini and Scollan, 2019; Bennun, 2015; Office for Fair Access, 2017), which can support mature learners. Our partnerships with post-16 providers have been designed in collaboration with the providers, offering bespoke provision to each partner. Evidence of impact is shown through robust and impartial evaluations. For example, our recent evaluation (by external agency Alterline) of our partnership with East Norfolk Sixth Form College, noted that the main benefit of the partnership for the College was it provided 'the ability to listen to student voice and provide the right opportunities for students'.

IS3-A4: Supporting transition to higher education

Description: Continue to deliver sustained programmes of support for students from the point of application through to transition to higher education and arrival at UEA e.g. Get Ahead+ programme

Outcomes: Students develop positive associations with HE leading to increased confidence and motivation that HE is for 'someone like me' and a greater sense of belonging. Ultimately leading to increase in successful applications to HE.

Rationale and evaluation:

Our Get Ahead programme works with students after applying, including interview support and supporting them with their next steps such as understanding how to make firm and insurance choices, knowing what services are available and understanding student finance including budgeting. The emphasis on student finance in Get Ahead has been developed in response to the cost of living crisis, noting that 1 in 5 students had considered dropping out of university for financial reasons (OfS, 2023). The OfS brief reported that students' awareness of the financial support available to them was varied. Using UCAS Outreach Evaluator to compare participants' outcomes with a control group, Get Ahead has a significantly high impact on offers to medium tariff group universities. It also has significantly lower acceptances to lower tariff groups whilst higher for medium tariff, which may suggest participants are shifting from a lower to medium tariff university.

Our 2022/23 evaluation of Get Ahead+ showed promising type 2 evidence, with pre and post surveys showing statistically significant positive increases in habitus-related questions, and a particularly large increase of students reporting that they know where to access support. Additionally, through UCAS Outreach Evaluator, we found that the proportion of participants on our Get Ahead+ programme who are accepted to university was 'very significantly high' compared to a control group.

IS3-A5: Developing skills for higher education study

Description: Continue to deliver a series of skills-based programmes, providing students with examples of HE teaching and learning, and opportunities to build key skills for success, including a tailored mentoring programme for BTEC students and partnership institutions to develop skills for HE, a series of synchronous and asynchronous content focus on building confidence in applying skills, and a series of 'Preparing for' subject led programmes to build subject specific knowledge and competencies.

Outcomes: Students will gain increased skills for success (autonomy, adaptability, critical thinking etc.) and confidence in applying these to a HE setting. Through understanding of teaching and learning in HE and tools to support success, student will build study skills and increased confidence that HE is for 'someone like me'. These will ultimately lead to increased successful applications to HE.

Rationale and evidence:

A BTEC student experience study at UEA (2019) found that BTEC qualified students felt unprepared for aspects of university study including independent learning, exams, academic writing and referencing. Other research into BTEC experiences in higher education noted difficulties with: adjusting to exams and independent learning (Al Meselmani et al., 2018; Lawson et al., 2018; Koziello, 2018; Gartland and Smith, 2015), academic literacy and academic writing (Lawson et al., 2018; Koziello, 2018). Mentoring will connect BTEC students who have potential to progress to HE study, to others from similar backgrounds. Having a UEA student mentor, with a similar BTEC background, would provide role models who can demonstrate that higher education is a place for them. Our skills-based programmes targeted at BTEC learners will also support students to increase their familiarity with teaching and learning at a HE level and develop their confidence to apply these skills.

Our student experience study also noted that BTEC learners were more careers motivated than students who had only studied A levels. Our 'Preparing for' subject-specific programmes are available in a number of vocationally aligned courses such as medicine and pharmacy. This will

provide BTEC learners with subject-specific skills and knowledge and support them with applications to these competitive courses.

Intervention strategy 4: Continuation and completion

Objective 4: Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of continuation and completion for all students including students declaring a disability, eligible for free school meals, those with vocational qualifications, black students and mature students.

Target PTS_1: Reduce the gap in continuation rate between students who entered with a BTEC qualification only and students who entered with A level qualifications only, from a baseline of 13.7pp to 6.6pp by 2028/29.

Target PTS_2: Reduce the gap in completion rate between mature students (21 or over on entry) and young students (under 21 on entry) from a baseline of 8.6pp to 3.6pp by 2028/29.

Target PTS_3: Reduce the gap in completion rate for students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability declared from a baseline of 5.9pp to 2.9pp by 2028/29.

Target PTS_4: Reduce the gap in completion rate between students eligible for free school meals and those not eligible from a baseline of 2pp to 1pp by 2028/29.

In addition, we will closely monitor the completion rates for disabled students with social or communication impairments and/or multiple impairments, to ensure this does not fall significantly and consistently below the rate for students with no declared disability. We will also closely monitor the completion rates for students of black and mixed ethnicities to ensure this does not fall significantly and consistently below the rate for white students.

Activities are designed to address the following risks to equality of opportunity: R2

Insufficient provision of information, advice and guidance pre-HE; R5 Barriers to sense of belonging in HE and at UEA; R6 Mental health and wellbeing; R7 Cost pressures; R8 Insufficient support, advice and guidance; R9 Barriers to engagement with experience and opportunities; R10 Insufficient representation.

Initial review of evidence base:

Evidenced interventions to support continuation for vocational students focused on aiding the transition into higher education. A cross-sectional study found that BTEC students were much less likely to attend induction events (Murtagh et al., 2015). Online courses prior to arrival may be a good alternative to induction events (Anderson, 2019). There was very limited impact evaluation of interventions designed to support learners with vocational backgrounds, so suggested interventions are mostly theoretical or based on process evaluation only. This points to a need for more impact-focused evaluation for student retention and success interventions, which we will contribute to through our evaluation plan and ensure we develop our approach in response to the evidence provided.

Other studies note the importance of supporting mature students to develop strong and supportive social relationships particularly with other students (Busher and James, 2019; Alterline, 2023).

Evidence of effective interventions to support retention of students with disabilities mostly centre around increasing the access, availability and lowering the cost of support available to them (Brewer et al., 2023; Hector, 2020). Harley (2023) provides evidence of a transition programme which has helped to improve students' experiences and led to an increase in seeking formal support, which has led to greater retention and completion. To tackle mental health issues, Robertson et al. (2022) suggest that psychological and mindfulness-based interventions (including cognitive behavioural therapy and peer support) have the strongest evidence base.

For students eligible for free school meals, theories about retention often relate to levels of social and academic capital, resilience and the availability of support (Cotton, 2017), which may all be factors that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may experience differently to their peers. One study suggested that male students were less likely to express a need for requiring

academic support services and were then less likely to proactively seek help which may be related to gender-influenced attitudes and behaviour (Brown, 2020). To increase help seeking behaviours, educators should reinforce that needing help is expected in the course of learning (Brown, 2020). Universities should also make changes to how services are marketed, with alternative ways for students to engage such as online anonymous question forums (Brown, 2020).

Our internal student insight found that although students generally report having found friends at UEA early on in each academic year, there is usually a notably less positive response when they are asked whether they have made the types of friends they would like to make (Student Pulse, sense of belonging). Students are also less likely to feel that they have had the opportunity to make friends on their course than at UEA in general – which is of particular note for student groups who have less chance to make friends through other routes. When asked where they find friends at UEA, particularly towards the beginning of the academic year, students mostly mention their accommodation and any clubs or societies (Welcome focus groups, 2023 and 2024). This highlights a disadvantage in this area for student groups with less access to these routes for connection with their peers, such as mature students – these students generally have no opportunity to find new friendships within their living situations, and external responsibilities/priorities limit the amount of time they can spend on society activities. Mature students in particular report notably more negatively than younger students in terms of making friends (except for opportunities on their course) and feeling a part of a community of staff and students at UEA (Student Pulse, sense of belonging).

IS4-A1: New student support

Description: Enhance and co-ordinate focussed opportunities for students at risk to plan for and settle into life and learning at UEA through pre arrival induction programmes (e.g. our Get Ahead+ programme and mature student support), community activities for those living on campus through our Residential Life programme, learner community support through School based activities and socially (e.g. through BuddySU).

Outcomes: Students will have an increased knowledge of support available and increased skills and knowledge to make the transition to HE. This in turn leads to increased social self-efficacy and an increased sense of belonging, ultimately leading to increased student satisfaction which will lead to more students continuing and completing.

Rationale and evidence:

Our transition projects aim to support incoming, new and current UEA students to understand the support that is available at UEA and provide opportunities to socialise with others and build relationships with other students. Our approach will ensure the reach and tailoring of this approach to student groups identified as at risk. A lack of preparedness for university study, misconstrued expectations surrounding the university experience, and the lack of a sense of belonging to the university community, are all common factors that can lead to a student withdrawing from university study (Thomas, 2012; O’Keefe, 2013; Turner, 2017). Hence it is important to support students at critical points such as transition, as well as throughout the student lifecycle.

Get Ahead+ is a programme for UEA offer holders who experience risks to equality of opportunity. In 2022/23, pre- and post-surveys indicate statistically significant positive increases in habitus-related (sense of belonging) items. The greatest area of impact was knowing more about wellbeing and learning support. Participants were positive about Get Ahead+: ‘The atmosphere was nice and comfortable, allowing me to take in information without feeling especially anxious, and everyone I spoke to (staff and ambassadors) were all very helpful and considerate.’ (Get Ahead+ participant, 2022/23)

Research also finds that mature students often feel isolated or struggle with university due to external challenges that include childcare, work and managing more complex financial challenges (MillionPlus, 2018). Briggs (et. al, 2012) finds that mature students particularly welcome individualised guidance including around the practicalities of travel, childcare and entitlement to financial support. Our activities for mature applicants are specifically tailored to their needs, ensuring they find their sense of belonging through useful information and guidance as well as a

range of social activities and opportunities. In a 2023/24 evaluation, we ran a focus group for students who had joined the mature student network. Key findings were that students felt that their experience of UEA had either met or exceeded their expectations and were unanimously positive about how the mature student network was run by a single point of contact who understood their circumstances. Students also noted, however, that they found it took longer to settle in and build relationships with others, so appreciated having access to activities later in the year and through to their 2nd and 3rd years; our transitions activities, therefore, do not stop at the arrivals stage and run throughout a students' time at UEA.

We use a mixture of both staff and student advisors in our Residential Life programme as supportive university systems can enable socialisation and adaption, with both student guides and staff coordinators providing different ways for new students to digest information (Briggs et. al., 2012).

A peer mentoring relationship supports new students' integration into university, with studies showing positive impacts on levels of wellbeing and retention (Collings, Swanson and Watkins, 2014). Mentoring can also improve students' transition to university and makes it less likely for students to consider leaving the university (Lunsford et. al, 2017). Both studies support the BuddySU project and our planned approach to ensure its reach to student groups identified as at risk of inequality of continuation and completion.

IS4-A2: Financial support

Description: Continue to provide targeted financial support through the UEA bursary for students with low household income and for care experienced and estranged students. Additional access to funds for a wider range of students experiencing financial hardship. Enhanced provision of information, advice and guidance on managing finances and integrate across a range of resources/services.

Outcomes: Students at risk of cost pressures will have the financial means to fully engage with student experiences and opportunities, which will increase social self-efficacy and increase sense of belonging, ultimately leading to increased student satisfaction and more students continuing and completing

Rational and evidence:

Through this APP, UEA is continuing to offer a robust financial support package to students, enhanced in value and eligibility reach. Internal analysis of the impact of our 2019/20 to 2024/25 bursary approach using a discontinuity regression model suggested that there was some but only limited direct impact on continuation, good honours and positive destination' (Harvey, 2020). However, qualitative research with students suggested that financial support has a substantial indirect effect on student outcomes through the mechanisms of supporting academic engagement through the reduction of need to work alongside studies, increasing academic/social/cultural capital, improving sense of belonging and improving mental wellbeing through the reduction of stress. This concurs with research undertaken by the University of York which says 'there is strong evidence to suggest that bursaries have an impact on students' continuation - either 'levelling the playing field' or increasing continuation rates. This is due to intermediate factors such as part-time work, wellbeing and sense of belonging.' (Burchell, 2023). Other research provides compelling accounts of how bursaries supported students' to fully participate in higher education through enabling participation in extracurriculars (Harrison, 2018).

A range of student insight at UEA, indicates unequal awareness of financial support options and knowing where to go to seek financial help. We, therefore, will accompany our financial support package with the provision of information, advice and guidance on managing finances.

Financial hardship funds differ from other sources in that they are generally aimed at unexpected financial difficulties and emergencies, and therefore to avoid negative outcomes. Evaluation of their hardship fund by Sheffield Hallam (Donnelly, 2021) shows that 67% of its hardship fund recipients used it to pay for 'essential living costs', 51% for 'devices and IT equipment', 45% identified 'books and study materials' and 45% to enjoy 'a more comfortable life while studying'. Students also noted that the hardship fund was the difference between being able to continue studying or not, with 68%

ranking this as 'very important'. Our UEA qualitative research (Alterline, 2023) also supported this, noting that students at a crisis point had received support through the hardship loan, free food, or with an extension on fee/accommodation payment dates which directly contributed to their decision to stay. This may in part explain the very low numbers of students citing finances as a reason for non-continuation, hence why we will continue to offer financial support.

IS4-A3: Developing sense of belonging

Description: Continue specific co-created sense of belonging opportunities for groups of students to meet socially and learn about services (e.g. mature student network, Take 5) throughout the student lifecycle. Enhance and co-create communication to encourage more students to get involved with these initiatives.

Outcomes: Students from at-risk groups will have increased knowledge of support available and increased skills and knowledge to make the transition to HE. This in turn leads to increased social self-efficacy and an increased sense of belonging, ultimately leading to increased student satisfaction which will lead to more students continuing and completing.

Rationale and evidence:

Studies note the importance of supporting mature students to develop strong and supportive social relationships particularly with other students (Busher and James, 2019; Alterline, 2023). Our evaluation of the mature students' network through a focus group found that participants valued having a single point of contact and someone to coordinate the mature student community. Mature students also appreciated the value of social activities more after arriving at UEA and noted that it could take longer for them to build a sense of belonging; our activities therefore extend across the whole lifecycle rather than just at the beginning.

Research shows that the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education differs from their peers: students with disabilities invested more time to meet the demands of their studies and participated in fewer social and extra-curricular activities (Sachs and Schreuer, 2011). Take Five creates safe, supported spaces for students who may be experiencing social isolation to experience activities with others and improve wellbeing. Respondents to a post-activity survey said that Take Five had increased their sense of community and helped to lessen their feelings of isolation and loneliness. The current scheme promotes inclusivity, community-building and support by having student-run and led social activities, designed to engage students with specific hobbies and interests. The drop in and non-committal nature of this activity has had particular appeal to students who may be experiencing social isolation, students with low wellbeing or with certain disabilities.

IS4-A4: Peer academic support

Description: In specific Schools/programmes with higher numbers of students at risk, enhance the targeted promotion and development of opportunities to be mentored and to become a mentor through the University's peer learning and peer support schemes.

Outcomes: Students will increase academic self-efficacy, which will lead to increased motivation on their courses and an increased sense of belonging. This will help increase engagement with the curriculum, increase attainment and ultimately lead to more students completing their degree.

Rationale and evidence:

Peer learning aims to support underrepresented students via student-led, active learning mentoring to support transition in the first year as well as longer term student outcomes such as continuation, completion, good degree outcomes and progression. It supports students to process the significant amounts of information (both curricular and non-curricular) that students receive as part of induction and throughout their first year. Peer learning is key to this due to the shared experience between peer mentors (typically second and third year students) and mentees.

Research from the pilot of our Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme has shown that students of marginalised backgrounds have strongly benefited from the PAL scheme as it provides them a supportive tool to adapt and familiarise with a new academic and/or cultural environment. The

evaluation of our peer learning scheme under TASO's Institutional Data Use project (due to be published Summer 2024), also found evidence that participating in PAL supports first year student outcomes. It found that PAL engagement had significant, positive effects for all primary outcomes articulated in the study; engagement, continuation to the next level of study and end of stage grades. There was also some evidence that PAL participation particularly supports underrepresented students for end of stage grade and continuation. From these strong foundations, we will be working to ensure the bespoke reach of PAL to student groups at risk of inequality of continuation and completion.

Intervention strategy 5: Degree awarding

Objective 5: Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of good honours (2.1 or 1st degree classification) degree award for all students including for students eligible for free school meals, black students or students of mixed ethnicity and students with vocational qualifications.

Target PTS_5: Reduce the gap in good honours degree awarding rate between black students and white students from a baseline of 10.5pp to 4.5pp by 2028/29.

Target PTS_6: Reduce the gap in good honours degree awarding rate between students eligible for free school meals and students not eligible from a baseline of 4.8pp to 3.4pp by 2028/29.

Target PTS_7: Reduce the gap in good honours degree awarding rate between students who entered with a BTEC qualification only and students who entered with A level qualifications only, from a baseline of 25.4pp to 15.7pp by 2028/29.

In addition, we will closely monitor the degree awarding rates for students of mixed ethnicities to ensure this does not fall significantly and consistently below the rate for white students.

Activities are designed to address the following risks to equality of opportunity: R1 Barriers to developing knowledge, skills and attainment pre-HE; R5 Barriers to sense of belonging in HE and at UEA; R6 Mental health and wellbeing; R7 Cost pressures; R8 Insufficient support, advice and guidance; R9 Barriers to engagement with experience and opportunities; R10 Insufficient representation.

Initial review of evidence base:

For students from ethnic minority backgrounds, interventions generally focus on reforming institutional cultures to foster a greater sense of belonging (Bunce et al., 2019; Marandue et al., 2024; Seuwou et al., 2023). Our literature review highlighted recommendations to look at academic and pedagogical reforms such as fair assessment practices, greater autonomy by enhancing curriculum diversity and encouraging students to express their identities (Bunce et al., 2019) in order to recognise the cultural capital of students from ethnic minorities as they are (Seuwou et al., 2023). Interventions will need to be designed with representation in mind and working collaboratively with students (Andrews et al., 2023). There is little evidence on the kinds of interventions that might improve these outcomes, but a general consensus around the need to enact institutional and strategic level changes to increase inclusivity rather than interventions aimed at individuals or targeted outcomes.

As the lower good honours degree awarding rate for students eligible for free school meals is a continuation of educational disadvantages that have accumulated through the student journey, it has been suggested that attainment raising interventions at an earlier stage (e.g. pre-university) would have a positive impact on future university outcomes (Crawford, 2014). Interventions at the university level might involve creating a sense of belonging, building social capital and wider learning and teaching initiatives which improve students' learning and boost their engagement with higher education (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2015). Other inclusive teaching practices such as exploring what makes a successful on campus or blended university experience should also look at improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups (Summers et al., 2023).

Research also found that BTEC students were less likely to attend induction events and this had a knock-on impact on their attainment in their degree; targeting with proactive interventions such as

peer-learning, mentoring, tutoring and general psychosocial interventions may improve outcomes. Alternative provision of induction information may also reduce the disparity (Murtagh et al., 2016). Alternative and inclusive methods of assessment such as more formative assessments or continuous assessment practices may also support students with less familiarity with exam-based summative assessments (Kelly, 2017).

Academic stresses are linked to wellbeing. Our internal student insight reports that throughout the past few years, some student groups (students with a disability, commuting students, students from a POLAR Q1 area) have consistently reported lower wellbeing than other students (Student Pulse, Wellbeing). Academic work has also been one of the two stress factors students have been most likely to report impacting their daily lives, over the past few years, along with money. Managing time and mental health and wellbeing are also reportedly stressful aspects of university life for students – students most commonly state that these factors affect their ability to live and work as they would like. Therefore, effecting the learning environment is key to supporting students' attainment at UEA.

IS5-A1: Student led School development

Description: Continue Student of Colour Ambassadors scheme in Schools with higher numbers of students at risk, working in partnership with staff and students to address local barriers to equality. Enhanced by improved integration with student representation systems.

Outcomes: Students of Colour Ambassadors develop self-advocacy skills which enable staff to have an increased understanding of how to address students' needs, particularly how to increase sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy. These can lead to changes and improvements within Schools which contribute to decreasing the awarding gap.

Rationale and evidence:

An example of a student-led scheme's impact was from University of Birmingham which has used BME ambassadors to provide diverse student perspectives on curriculum reform (de Sousa, 2021). The University of Cambridge has also run a participatory action research project which has also resulted in some tangible outputs such as a Black Advisory Hub (Cambridge, 2022).

Our Theory of Change for this scheme aims to have Student of Colour Ambassadors exercise a range of leadership and representation skills to identify problems in their academic experience and raise awareness of these through school/faculty channels. The intent is for schools to act upon this feedback and enact change which will support students of colour. We anticipate this will lead to improved and more inclusive curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices. We will be evaluating our Students of Colour Ambassador scheme starting from 2024/25 to understand the impacts on both the SOCA's and the academic staff and schools involved in this scheme and will adjust/enhance our approach in response.

IS5-A2: Enhanced inclusive practice

Description: In specific Schools/programmes with higher numbers of students at risk, enhance the targeted development and delivery of guidance and support for staff in on inclusive practice in learning, teaching and assessment as part of the University's Inclusivity Network.

Outcomes: Staff have increased understanding of how to work with and address the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. By implementing this into their practice, this can lead to changes and improvement which contribute to decreasing the awarding gap.

Rationale and evidence:

We know that pedagogy, sense of belonging and academic achievement is intricately linked: 'pedagogical practices that improve sense of belonging and self-efficacy help reinforce a classroom climate that is inclusive' (Dewsbury and Brame, 2019). Our own student insight finds that students with a lower sense of belonging often report being more worried than their peers about their performance or grades. Evaluation of Kingston's Inclusive Curriculum Framework (2020) argues that 'staff development for academic and professional staff is needed to create a deeper understanding of the needs of our diverse student body'.

IS5-A3: Learning enhancement

Description: Enhance the targeted development and delivery of tailored workshops embedded within specific degree programmes and modules with higher numbers of students at risk, developing context-specific academic practices, understanding of assessment criteria and standards etc.

Outcomes: Students are exposed to a range of learning environments and feel supported by staff to develop academically relevant skills which will increase academic self-efficacy and increase metacognitive strategies. This will lead to increased motivation and engagement with the curriculum which will impact upon attainment and ultimately their degree award.

Rationale and evidence:

Evidence shows that students from certain backgrounds such as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, those eligible for free school meals and those who previously studied BTEC qualifications may have had less exposure to university styles of teaching, learning and assessment. For example, BTEC students were found to have less familiarity with exam-based summative assessments than students who had studied A levels (Kelly, 2017). A meta-study found that academic self-efficacy is moderately correlated with academic performance (Honicke and Broadbent, 2016) and another paper found that academic self-efficacy and academic motivation both predict academic performance (Dogan, 2017).

Wernersbach (et. al, 2014) evaluated a study skills courses and found that it can be effective in increasing levels of academic self-efficacy. However, accessing academic support services can be stigmatising, so embedding academic skills into the curriculum is considered more inclusive (Goldingay et. al, 2014). Our tailored workshops are therefore embedded within specific degree programmes/modules. They will support students to increase their academic self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies by learning about context-specific academic practices and increase their understanding of assessment criteria and standards.

Intervention strategy 6: Progression

Objective 6: Through increased consistency of inclusive practice and tailored removal of barriers to engagement, opportunities and support, UEA will ensure equality of progression to graduate level employment or further study for all students including for students eligible for free school meals and students declaring a mental health condition, neurodiversity or with multiple impairments.

Target PTP_1: Reduce the gap in progression rate between students who declare a mental health condition and students with no disability declared from a baseline of 9.9pp to 2.1pp by 2028/29.

In addition, we will closely monitor the progression rates for disabled students with social or communication impairments and/or multiple impairments, to ensure this does not fall significantly and consistently below the rate for students with no declared disability, plus the progression rates for students eligible for free school meals, to ensure this does not fall significantly and consistently below the rate for students not eligible for free school meals.

Activities are designed to address the following risks to equality of opportunity: R6 Mental health and wellbeing; R7 Cost pressures; R8 Insufficient support, advice and guidance; R9 Barriers to engagement with experience and opportunities.

Initial review of evidence base:

Our literature review highlighted a range of recommendations that indicate that institutions should offer more opportunities for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to appear more attractive to employers and build connections. For example, through bridging activities to strengthen links between graduates and the labour market, including direct contact with employers via job fairs, paid internships or collaborations with employers (Schepper et al., 2022). However, there was a lack of well-evidenced interventions which led to positive graduate outcomes specifically.

In UEA's Early Careers Survey, students who had declared a disability reported feeling less prepared for work (44%) than those not declaring a disability (30%). The survey showed that work experience can help students and graduates feel more work ready, as those who undertook some form of work experience felt more prepared for a job (69%) than those without any (56%). The research emphasises the need to provide tailored and bespoke interventions for students with different types of disabilities as the barriers faced by students with autism are different than for other impairments (Chown et al., 2017). To support students with disabilities to navigate employment opportunities, careers services could provide specialist and additional advice on employers' legal duties and their entitlements (Equality Challenge Unit, 2014). Careers staff might also communicate and support employers to reflect on their own employment practices to ensure inclusivity (Equality Challenge Unit, 2014).

IS6-A1: Wellbeing trainers

Description: Reflecting that a whole student lifecycle approach is needed to underpin progression for students who declare a mental health condition, neurodiversity or with multiple impairments, we will continue to provide a range of prevention and early intervention activities; enhance the focus of current inclusive activities to ensure they are offered in the right place and at the right time to create opportunities for students at risk from arrival to completion of their studies.

Outcomes: Students engage with IAG about wellbeing issues that impact academic study which increase their academic self-efficacy, increase cognitive strategies and lead to increased engagement with the curriculum. This leads to increased confidence in future success and ultimately progression to positive outcomes.

Rationale and evidence:

The number of students who disclose a mental health condition to their university has increased significantly (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2017) and this is also the case at UEA. The Office of Students' EORR has also emphasised that many students may have mental wellbeing related difficulties that are not formally diagnosed or treated, or they may not report mental health difficulties. We, therefore, take a more holistic approach by considering *wellbeing* as a whole and offer opportunities that promote wellbeing at an early stage and throughout all students' journeys. We believe that activities taking a holistic approach to wellbeing will particularly support students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds such as those eligible for free school meals due to the correlations between socioeconomic status and subjective wellbeing (Tan et. al, 2020).

Studies have shown that there is a positive and reinforcing interaction between student wellbeing and academic engagement, and students who are engaged with learning tend to be engaged with all learning activities and systems (Boulton et. al, 2019). This is backed by our internal insight with UEA students reporting that academic work has been one of the major stress factors most likely to impact their daily lives. Managing time and mental health and wellbeing are also reportedly stressful aspects of university life for students – students most commonly state that these factors affect their ability to live and work as they would like. There is a clear link between wellbeing, academic self-efficacy and ultimately participation in other activities such as employment-enhancing placements. Boulton (et. al, 2019) suggests that 'increasing engagement increases academic performance, which in turn increases wellbeing, which then increases engagement'.

Employers hold different views on the importance of grades when recruiting, but educational attainment still remains a 'first-past filter' for many employers (Small et. al, 2017); hence it is important that students remain engaged in their studies in order to complete their degree and remain competitive in the labour market. When asked about anything that is limiting their ability to engage in wider activities and opportunities at UEA, students commonly quote their wellbeing as a critical factor. Hence, addressing wellbeing will also enable more students to engage in the employability activities listed below.

Our wellbeing trainers run a programme of workshops that are offered to academic Schools and scheduled across all years of study. Evidence suggests that strong relationships and a sense of connectedness in school communities are important for fostering subjective well-being (Graham et. al, 2015).

IS6-A2: Reducing barriers to experiential learning

Description: Continue staff and resourcing dedicated to removing barriers faced by identified student group to consider and participate in short-term and longer-term Study Abroad options, enhancing peer sharing and the advising service (including 1-1 meetings, workshops and inclusive resources). Provide enhanced work-related placement support, with specialist staff working with students, academic staff and businesses to ensure students at risk thrive in placement opportunities including those embedded in the curriculum.

Outcomes: Students can access and engage with relevant opportunities that will increase social self-efficacy and increase self-reflection and articulation of skills, leading to increased confidence in future success and ultimately progression to positive outcomes.

Rationale and evidence:

Evidence shows that students who take up study abroad opportunities gain a variety of life and career skills, including increased confidence and tolerance, flexibility and adaptability, communication and collaboration skills as well as language skills (British Council, 2015a). Furthermore, research has found that students that spend some time abroad achieve better degrees, are more likely to find a graduate job and have higher starting salaries compared to students who do not take up the opportunity (Universities UK, 2022). However, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to take up short-term study abroad as they are more risk averse to spending longer periods of time abroad (Universities UK International, 2017).

Students who get an opportunity to work in industry or employment for a short period of time had better graduate outcomes (TASO, 2022). Research by Universities UK (2023) cited the importance of work experience and some institutions in the study had implemented a mandatory work experience element across courses to help develop social skills. Increasing the confidence of graduates was also seen as central, particularly for those from low socio-economic backgrounds. By enhancing our placement support, we aim to have more students access opportunities which will increase their confidence in their future success.

Graduate employers look for a range of qualities, attributes and skills when recruiting, including those with excellent communication skills, emotional intelligence, work experience and demonstrated leadership (Small et. al, 2017). Employers have also over the last 5 – 10 years increasingly valued soft skills. These experiential learning opportunities help students to develop a range of attributes and skills, such as social self-efficacy, self-reflection and articulation, which are valued by employers and will support students to progress to graduate employment (Succi and Canovi, 2019).

IS6-A3: Career service enhancement

Description: Enhance UEA award by providing specialist and bespoke range of services for students at risk as well as targeted embedding of UEA Award into courses with disproportionate numbers of students at risk. Enhance Role Model programmes presenting lived-experience graduate success for students at risk by delivering expanded (more and different) activity and collaborating with local, regional and national programmes for enhanced participation of at risk UEA students.

Outcomes: Students receive support to increase self-reflection and articulation of skills which will lead to increased confidence in future success and ultimately progression to positive outcomes.

Rationale and evidence:

Our UEA Award certifies students' achievements and provides a framework for students to record activities which contribute to their employability. The UEA Award helps students reflect on the skills they gain and increases motivation to participate in a range of employability-enhancing activities. As part of the UEA Award, students may record participation in work experience placements, volunteering, internships and other activities associated with graduate employment. Research shows that the activities promoted through the UEA Award can lead to a range of positive outcomes: work experience placements were associated with a higher likelihood of securing graduate level work and higher starting salaries (Brooks and Youngson, 2014); volunteering can

not only enhance employment and postgraduate prospects but also aid personal development (Barton et. al, 2017); internships can prepare students for employment and serve as an important pipeline to graduate employment (Helyer and Lee, 2014). We will be strategically promoting the UEA Award and the importance of taking part in these employability activities on courses with higher proportions of target students and working to remove potential barriers to participation, which should result in a greater uptake of these activities which can increase students' confidence and graduate progression.

Our role model work is based on the premise that students at risk of inequality of graduate outcomes may respond better to activity that showcases students from a similar background: 'it appears that students from disadvantaged groups benefit greatly from case studies of graduates from the same groups who have succeeded professionally' (TASO Toolkit, 2022). Mentoring or role modelling has been shown to have positive effects on 'student's career adaptability, career optimism and career self-efficacy levels' (Kanten, 2017). Furthermore, there are specific benefits to matching students with mentors of similar demographic characteristics (Lundsford, 2017).

IS6-A4: Empowering diverse graduate success

Description: Continue to develop our employability activities for students experiencing a mental health condition (and a social or communication impairment), with specialist staff supporting adaptation, disclosure and working rights. Deliver new Progression Partnership with local, regional and national organisations to collaboratively enhance our delivery of specialist support to bridge systemic gaps in early graduate success of students with disabilities, neurodiversity and with mental health conditions.

Outcomes: Students will increase skills and knowledge to successfully make the transition out of HE, which will lead to increased confidence in future success and ultimately progression to positive outcomes.

Rationale and evidence:

Sector literature and UEA student insight highlights that the key barriers for students with a disability progressing to graduate level employment or further study are lower rates of participation in extracurricular opportunities that build employability capital e.g. work experience (Hector, 2020) as well as insufficient, or difficulty, developing social capital to build professional relationships and networks with potential employers (Pesonen et. al, 2022). Furthermore, 37% of disabled people report that they do not feel confident about getting a job (Leonard Cheshire, 2020). Our employability activity, therefore aims to address the barriers identified in Morina and Biagiotti's (2022) systematic review which recommends: widening access to meaningful work experience opportunities, champion inclusive-by-design careers provision, increasing understanding of recruitment and workplace adjustments, encouraging self-advocacy and confidence to disclose their disability, increasing awareness and participation in Careers services and facilitating better social inclusion and understanding in the workplace. We will have specialist staff to support students with disabilities as it is important to have sensitised, informed and trained staff who know how to offer specific advice to students with disabilities (Huber et al., 2016).

The new Progression Partnership will be a partnership of local, regional and national organisations with the aim of collaboratively enhance our delivery of specialist support. The aim is to work to address employer discrimination: 19% of employers are less likely to hire a disabled person due to perceived barriers (Leonard Cheshire, 2021) and stigma is still a contributing factor to the under-employment of people with mental health conditions (Brouwers, 2020). Furthermore, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds also experience employment discrimination with employers not recognising the capitals they bring (Schepper et al., 2022). Collaborations can have benefits for both UEA students and for employers, as it can allow them to identify and attract graduates, reform selection practices on performance rather than preconceived notions of capital and have a better understanding of graduates' quality irrespective of the type or frequency of activity done (Schepper et al., 2022). Research that shows how the value of soft skills to employers has changed over time but is not aligned with how students or universities think, demonstrates the need for both employers and higher education institutions to work in partnership and pro-actively develop employment-ready graduates (Succi and Canovi, 2019).

11 Annex C: Targets, investment and fees

To be added by OfS with information from the fees, investment and targets document when an access and participation plan is published.

12 Annex D: Bibliography

This is reference list for all the materials we reviewed in the development of our APP, many of which are referenced throughout the document.

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Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: The University of East Anglia

Provider UKPRN: 10007789

Summary of 2025-26 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflation statement:

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree		N/A	9250
Foundation degree		N/A	9250
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT		N/A	9250
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year		N/A	1385
Turing Scheme and overseas study years		N/A	1385
Other	*	N/A	*

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

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

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree		N/A	6750
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

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

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

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: The University of East Anglia

Provider UKPRN: 10007789

Investment summary

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

Notes about the data:

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

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

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

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

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

Table 6b - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£2,802,000	£2,880,000	£2,960,000	£3,019,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£3,290,000	£3,611,000	£3,886,000	£4,221,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£901,000	£927,000	£956,000	£930,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£1,328,000	£1,362,000	£1,396,000	£1,422,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£1,284,000	£1,322,000	£1,362,000	£1,391,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£190,000	£196,000	£202,000	£206,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£2,802,000	£2,880,000	£2,960,000	£3,019,000
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment (as % of HFI)</i>	8.3%	8.1%	8.2%	8.3%
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment funded from HFI (£)</i>	£2,704,000	£2,780,000	£2,859,000	£2,922,000
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)</i>	£98,000	£100,000	£101,000	£97,000
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£2,927,000	£3,241,000	£3,508,000	£3,836,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£363,000	£370,000	£378,000	£385,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£3,290,000	£3,611,000	£3,886,000	£4,221,000
Financial support investment	<i>Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)</i>	9.8%	10.2%	10.8%	11.6%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£901,000	£927,000	£956,000	£930,000
Research and evaluation investment	<i>Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)</i>	2.7%	2.6%	2.7%	2.5%

[illegible]

	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
Reduce the percentage point gap in continuation rate between undergraduate home students who entered with a BTEC qualification only and students who entered with A level qualifications only	PTS_1	Continuation	Other	Other (please specify in description)	Other (please specify in description)	Reduce the percentage point gap in continuation rate for students with BTEC qualification only compared to students with A level only qualifications, from 13.7pp to 6.6pp by 2028/29. Characteristic not available on APP dashboard so uses UCAS qualification data linked to internal continuation data. Baseline & milestones reflect year of entry; baseline uses most recent year for 2020/21 entrants. Milestones accelerate to reflect new area of work & time needed for curriculum change to be implemented	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2020-21	Percentage points	13.7	9.1	8.6	7.6	6.6
Reduce the percentage point gap in degree completion rate between undergraduate home students (21 or over on entry) and young students (under 21 on entry)	PTS_2	Completion	Age	Mature (over 21)	Young (under 21)	Reduce the percentage point gap in continuation rate for mature students compared to young students from a baseline of 8.6pp to 3.6pp by 2028/29. Baseline & milestones reflect year of entry. Baseline year chosen is most recent year of data available on APP dashboard. Milestones accelerate in progress reflecting the rate of progress in previous APP regarding continuation of mature students and accounts for increasing intake requiring interventions to scale	No	The access and participation dashboard	2017-18	Percentage points	8.6	8.1	7.1	5.6	3.6
Reduce the percentage point gap in degree completion rate between undergraduate home students who have declared a mental health condition and students with no declared disability	PTS_3	Completion	Reported disability	Mental health condition	No disability reported	Reduce the percentage point gap in continuation rate for students who declare a mental health condition compared to students with no declared disability from a baseline of 5.9pp to 2.9pp by 2028/29. Using APP dashboard data. Baseline & milestones reflect year of entry. Baseline year chosen is most recent year of data available on APP dashboard. Milestones show steady progress due to likely increase in declarations over time and a need to put in place structural & bespoke interventions.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2017-18	Percentage points	5.9	5.5	4.7	3.9	2.9
Reduce the percentage point gap in degree completion rate between students eligible for free school meals and students not eligible for free school meals	PTS_4	Completion	Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)	Eligible	Not eligible	Reduce the percentage point gap in completion rate for students eligible for free school meals from a baseline of 2pp to 1pp by 2028/29. Increased gap on baseline due to increase in our FSM intake between the baseline year and first milestone, so using 4 year average of most recent data from APP dashboard. Baseline & milestones reflect year of entry. Milestones accelerate due to new target requiring development of interventions & aim to increase intake requiring interventions to scale further.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2017-18	Percentage points	2.0	3.2	2.8	2.0	1.0

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Table 5e: Progression targets

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