University of East Anglia

Access and Participation Plan

2020/21 to 2024/25

Original May 2019
Update July 2022

Summer 2022 Update

The UEA Widening Access and Participation team has undertaken a series of general updates to this document as part of the Office for Students (OfS) Mass Variation Exercise. These include changes to terminology, improving the accessibility of our language, updates to the Governance of our plan, and updates on progress against the assessment of performance carried out in 2019.

We have then drawn out more detail related to the four new strategic priorities for the plan. Here we have both highlighted existing activity and included information regarding new developments which tackle the priorities. Below is a summary (including links to relevant sections of the plan):

Priority A: Accessible access and participation plans

Our approach
- We are maintaining the use of evidence to support our approaches through the plan, and we update this where new insight is available
- We have used accessible and inclusive language and layout throughout and produced a simple summary which complies with the OfS template. We have also worked with the Undergraduate Education Officer in the UEA Students' Union and with UEA Communication and Marketing colleagues who are experts in accessible and inclusive communications and speaking to a younger audience See Page 28-29

Priority B: Partnerships with schools and organisations to raise pre-16 attainment

Our approach
- We have enhanced our descriptions of current relevant outreach activity to draw out its impact in terms of attainment raising including:
  - UEA Staff Governors' network for schools and colleges See Page 17
  - Progressive Outreach Programmes and Direct Attainment Raising Programmes See Pages 19 and 23-24
  - Our significant partnership with social mobility charity, IntoUniversity See Page 18
  - Partnership working with our School of Education See Page 18
  - Existing and evolving partnerships with schools and colleges See Page 18
  - Forming a new partnership with Norfolk County Council to address county-wide attainment issues in English and maths See Page 24
- We maintain our commitment to working with the Uni Connect partnership including on the new strategic direction of attainment raising, collaborating on research and outputs wherever possible See Page 18
- We have made additional commitments to develop this work further based on evidence and evaluation – first step to be an evidence review in the next academic year to support the development of our new plan and our work with Uni Connect. The learnings from this will impact on our approach by 2023/24. See Page 18

Priority C: Access to higher education leads to successful participation and good graduate outcomes

Our approach
- Our current plan contains significant content addressing this priority, including outlining UEA's Inclusive Education Policy and targeted measures to support learning and wider student experience and opportunities See Page 14, 15 and 20-21
- We are undertaking significant activity to support a student lifecycle approach, including roles and activity taking place under UEA's access and participation action plans including:
  - Transition support for applicants from underrepresented backgrounds See Page 24
  - Inclusive and specific welcome and transitions activity and through the Student Information Zone See Page 25-26

- o Dedicated pastoral and learning enhancement support
- o Dedicated careers support
- o Lifecycle roles for mature learners and students with disrupted educational journeys

Priority D: Develop more flexible and diverse provision

Our approach

- Inclusion of a specific section outlining UEA's strategic approach to apprenticeships and growth and expansion to date. This draws out that our apprenticeship provision facilitates removing barriers to access and retention in traditional higher education (HE), including for mature students and for those where finance is a barrier
- A commitment to reviewing the intake and outcomes to our apprentices to inform the development of our next plan including from the perspective of learnings from the apprenticeship experience that inform our more traditional provision
- Inclusion of the strength of our partnership working with our local partners to assess the market needs and ensure a comprehensive offer in the region

1. Assessment of Performance

UEA carries out an ongoing assessment of our performance on widening access and participation measures for home undergraduate and teacher training students. We use a broad range of quantitative and qualitative insight including the OfS access and participation dataset, UK Performance Indicators (UKPIs) from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)[1], OfS student outcomes, data from The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)[2] and additional internal data for all stages of the student lifecycle to ensure we have rigorous analysis of full cohort information that considers UEA's specific context, our own student population and our role in the national picture. This includes examining the intersections of different student characteristics.

This section provides a summary of the current outcomes that have underpinned the development and focus of this strategic plan (based on undergraduate, home students). Key priorities are given below in purple and for those areas not identified as key priorities we commit to monitoring and acting at subject and/or institutional level if performance changes.

To ensure our ability to achieve the aims and targets of this plan, our action planning processes consider a broad range of contributory measures, including from targeted qualitative research and sector survey results (e.g., the National Student Survey, the UK Engagement Survey, the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey, Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO)); use data science approaches, including understanding of explained and unexplained gaps; and analyses granularity of data, including subject and course level. This will include ensuring we look at "hidden gaps" that occur for certain students but are not reflected in institutional data and that we are able to best design and target our interventions. We have also developed internal reporting allowing us to consider the numbers of applicants/students required to meet our aims

The following assessment of performance was undertaken at the design of UEA's current plan 2020/21 to 2024/25. However, we have conducted a follow up review of this section and added additional points (in blue) to summarise the current picture at UEA based on the most up to date data from OfS to provide updates on progress made in each area.

1.1 Higher Education Participation – POLAR4

East Anglia, particularly Norfolk, is an area with an above average concentration of participation of local areas (POLAR4) quintile one (Q1)[3] areas, with markedly lower than average participation rates for our local region; 31% and 36% progression rates respectively, with the England average being 40%. UEA notes its responsibility to support Q1 progression to HE in its primary catchment area.
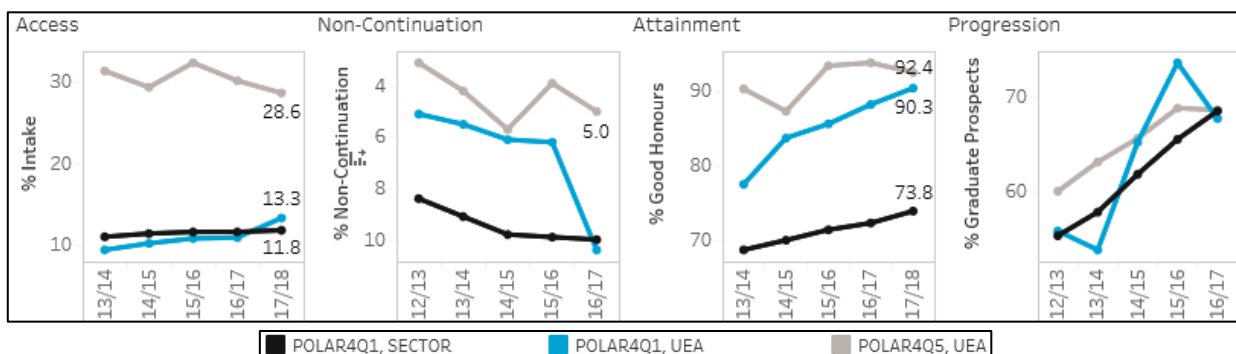

Figure 1: Gaps in access, non-continuation, attainment & progression for POLAR4 categories (OfS data)

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[1] The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects, assures, and disseminates data about higher education in the UK. UK Performance Indicators (UKPIs) are statistics which compare universities and colleges against benchmarks for various measures.
[2] The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) is a national exercise to assess excellence in higher education teaching.
[3] The participation of local areas (POLAR4) classification groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of young people who participate in higher education. POLAR4 classifies local areas into five groups - or quintiles - based on the proportion of young people who enter higher education. Quintile one shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile five shows the highest rate of participation.

Access – *UEA priority to continue improvement in performance to further our contribution to the national aim to eliminate the gap in entry rates between the most and least represented groups.*

- OfS data shows that our proportion of Q1 students is relatively in line with the sector average, with year-on-year improvements seeing UEA perform ahead of the sector in 2017/18. Comparison to our location-adjusted HESA UKPI benchmark is positive with UEA having recruited a higher percentage of Q1 students.
- We note that our internal data shows a slight decrease in Q1 intake for 2018/19.
- With more to do, we have seen the gap between Q1 and quintile five (Q5) recruitment closing over this time due to an increasing proportion of Q1 students (particularly between 2016/17 and 2017/18).
- Recent OfS data shows a slight dip in Q1 intake for 2018/19 bringing it back in line with the sector average. Since then, we have seen year-on-year improvements, and for 2020/21 UEA is ahead of the sector. Notably, our gap between Q1 and Q5 recruitment has closed further and at 13.5 percentage points is now the smallest it has been since the start of the current plan, highlighting the progress made during its implementation.

Success

a) **Non-continuation** – *UEA priority to maintain improvement in performance and contribute to the national aim to eliminate the gap between most and least represented groups.*

- In recent years, UEA has experienced a sizeable retention rate gap between Q1 and Q5, including a considerable widening in 2016/17 that saw UEA drop below the sector average for Q1 retention based on the OfS and HESA UKPI data sets.
- Review against our TEF4 benchmark for Q1&2 highlights no significant difference.
- UEA internal data shows considerable improvement in the retention of Q1 students in 2017/18, resulting in a complete closing of the gap at UEA that we will be working to maintain.
- Recent OfS data shows a sizeable improvement in retention of our students across the board, but particularly for Q1 students. For 2019/20, UEA is considerably ahead of the sector and our retention rate gap with Q5 students is back to 2 percentage points, the smallest it has been since the start of the current APP.

b) **Degree awarding rate (Upper Second-Class Honours and First-Class Honours)** – *UEA priority to maintain improvement in performance and eliminate the gap between most and least represented groups.*

- Since 2013/14, the POLAR4 Q1 degree awarding rate at UEA has improved year on year, resulting in a gradual closing of the gap. Over this time, UEA has consistently performed ahead of the sector average.
- Recent OfS data shows our degree awarding rate declined in 2018/19 (for both Q1 and Q5) but this has since improved again. Despite these fluctuations we have consistently remained ahead of the sector.

Progression to employment or further study

- In terms of progression to graduate level employment or study, Q1 students at UEA have generally outperformed Q5 students in recent years relating to the common subjects of study for these students. Comparison to the sector average and TEF4 benchmark shows a positive picture. Looking at progression to *any level* of employment or study, there is no significant difference in the rates for Q1 and Q5 students with almost all graduates positively progressing.
- Data from the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey shows that in 2017/18 and 2018/19, Q1 students at UEA continued to outperform Q2-5 students in terms of progression to positive destinations. Whilst this did decline slightly for both groups in this most recent year of data, a positive gap remains for Q1 students of approximately 4 percentage points.

1.2 Students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (Global Majorities) Backgrounds

The ethnicity profile of East Anglia, particularly Norfolk, is mainly White British (approx. 93%[4]). Proportions of our local population from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) backgrounds (approx. 10%) are significantly lower than for other parts of the UK and for England overall.
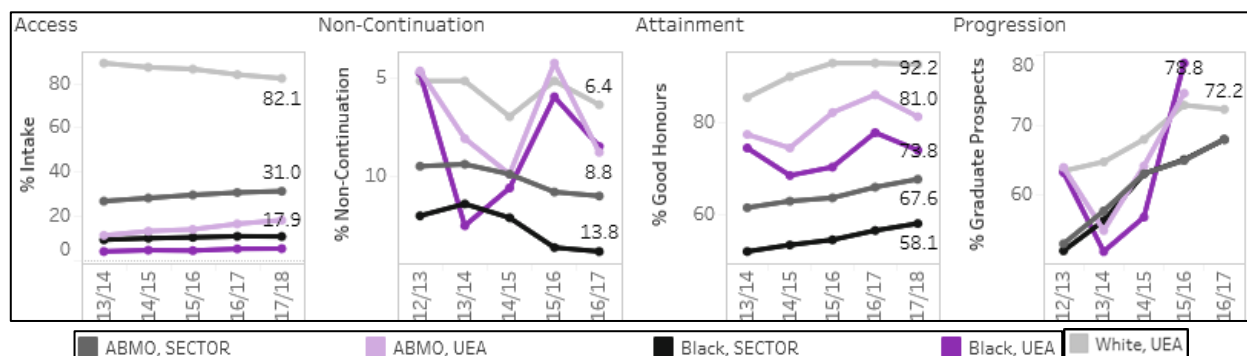

Figure 2: Gaps in access, non-continuation, attainment & progression for ethnicity categories (OfS data)

Access – *UEA priority to continue to increase the ethnic diversity of its student intake.*
- UEA has achieved a steady increase in its Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) student population over time. Our proportion of Black students specifically has, however, remained stable.
- Our internal UEA data shows a 24% increase in the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students between 2017/18 and 2018/19, resulting in a population proportion of 21%. This was partly driven by increased intake of Black African students (from 4.3% to 6.1%) relating to intake from London.
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) intake at UEA has, however, consistently been below sector average. This is true across almost all ethnicity subgroups.
- The ethnic diversity of our local area is a limiting factor here, but we will continue to work to ensure our Outreach strategy considers this a key priority and to be alive to the impact of changes in the geographic targeting of our recruitment.
- OfS data for 2020/21 entry shows a slight decrease in our proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) student population, and a very slight decrease in our proportion of Black students specifically. However, we note from our internal data that our proportions of both groups recovered again for 2021/22 entry, so overall, trends have remained stable.

Success
a) Non-continuation – *Noting relationship to the degree awarding gap, UEA priority to ensure consistent equality in retention for students from ethnically diverse backgrounds including focus on continuing to improve retention for Black and mixed ethnicity students.*
- OfS data shows UEA outperforming the sector average for retention of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students.
- Fluctuating over time, retention of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students has generally been lower than that of White students. Comparing retention for Black and White students shows a consistently larger gap. TEF4 data highlight UEA retention of Black students as significantly below adjusted benchmark.
- Positively, our internal UEA data shows an improvement in retention of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students in 2017/18 and narrowing of gap to less than 1 percentage point. This also shows improvement in retention for Black students specifically, but that gap remains larger at 4 percentage points.

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[4] Link to information about Norfolk's population

- UEA data shows retention of Asian students as higher than for White students; an historic exception had been Asian-Pakistani students, however, dropout for this group has reduced in the two most recent years closing the gap to only 1 percentage point.
- Our numbers of mixed ethnicity students are growing year on year. Apart from an anomaly in 2015/16, retention of mixed students has generally been lower than that of White students, with a current gap of approximately 5 percentage points (gap based on OfS data).
- Recent OfS data shows that whilst there have been some fluctuations in the retention rate of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students and Black students specifically since 2016/17, overall there has been a sizeable improvement for both student groups. UEA has remained ahead of the relevant sector averages over this period.
- For 2019/20, our retention rate gap between Black students and White students is just 2 percentage points and, extremely positively, retention of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students is the highest it has been since the start of the current plan (and higher than for White students).

b) **Degree awarding (Upper Second-Class Honours and First-Class Honours)** – *UEA priority to continue to improve performance and to contribute to the national aim to eliminate the gap in degree outcomes between White students and Black students.*
- Degree awarding rates for students of different ethnicities at UEA are consistently well above the sector average over time and the gap in the good honours rate for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) and White students has been steadily decreasing for several years.
- Most notably, when comparing degree awarding rates for Black and White students at UEA, the gap has been consistently larger, for example, at 18 percentage points in 2017/18. UEA data shows marginally lower good honours rates for Asian students across all than for White students, however, degree awarding levels and indeed student numbers have fluctuated annually.
- It is notable that the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) gap widened in 2017/18 (to 11 percentage points) with more sizeable gaps opening for additional subgroups including some Asian subgroups. It is unclear at this stage whether this is an occurrence in a single year or a trend. Internal analysis indicates that it, at least in part, relates to a specific intake year onto a new foundation course rather than an ongoing issue. We will continue to monitor and if this gap persists for 2018/19 commit to developing relevant subgroup targets and related strategic measures.
- Recent OfS data shows our degree awarding rate has improved across the board since 2017/18. Degree awarding rates at UEA for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students and Black students specifically are now the highest they have been since the start of the current plan, and our students continue to outperform the sector averages.

Progression to employment or further study
- OfS and UEA internal data both show that the graduate prospects progression rate of UEA Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) and Black students is above sector in the two most recent years of available data.
- In terms of positive destinations, progression of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) and, specifically, Black students at UEA have improved considerably since 2013/14 and both groups have outperformed White students at UEA in recent years. UEA internal data shows that this outcome was maintained for 2016/17.
- Progression to positive destinations increased for students across all Asian subgroups in 2016/17 and was considerably higher than for White students. In fact, across almost all Asian subgroups, students have outperformed White students every year since 2014/15.
- Looking at progression to *any level* of employment or study reveals no significant differences between ethnicity subgroups for 2016/17.

- Data from the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey shows that in 2017/18 and 2018/19, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students at UEA continued to outperform White students in terms of progression to positive destinations; in the most recent year of data a positive gap remains for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students of approximately 7 percentage points.

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1.3 Mature Students

Since 2008, the East of England has consistently had one of the lowest entry rates[5] for 21 to 50-year-olds compared to other parts of the UK. Furthermore, UEA is in a region that has below average proportions of those aged 20 to 49 in its base population. As age increases so too does likelihood of students living at home while they study[6], which in turn increases the likelihood of students choosing their local institution. This makes recruitment of mature students to UEA more challenging. However, analysis of take up of Access to HE courses at local Further Education (FE) Colleges indicates modest scope for growth in our mature intake.
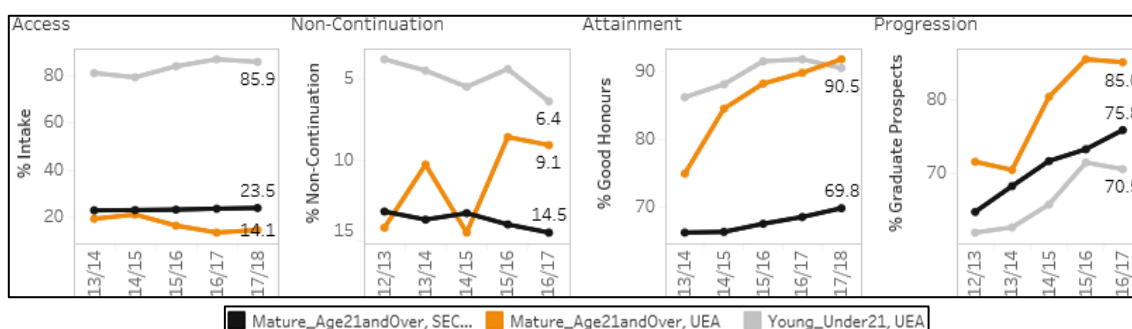

Figure 3: Gaps in access, non-continuation, attainment & progression for age categories (OfS data)

Access – *UEA priority to increase mature student intake focusing on local recruitment from FE.*
- It is important to note that the UEA data supplied by OfS currently includes mature students at our validated partner institution, Easton & Otley College (intake data for the College shows sizeable increases in the number of mature students in very recent years; this is not the case at UEA). The College was subsumed into City College Norwich on 1 January 2020 and so we expect their figures to no longer appear in our data for the 2020-21 return onwards.
- Internal UEA data in 2018 showed a gradual year-on-year decline in our proportion of mature accepts since 2014/15 and HESA data excluding partners highlights that UEA's proportion of mature students has fallen well below the sector average in recent years.
- Recent OfS data shows that despite very slight fluctuation, our overall proportion of mature students has remained stable since 2017/18 showing the impact of work undertaken to address the decline.

Success
a) Non-continuation – *UEA priority to close mature and young retention gap.*
- UEA generally performs above the sector for mature retention, particularly in recent years. Our internal figures (excluding partners) show slightly poorer retention for UEA than national datasets but UEA's retention rate remains above the sector average.
- However, based on the OfS dataset we can see that mature students at UEA have been consistently more likely than under-21s to drop out of their first year of study. TEF4 data indicate a relationship to part time study.
- Internal UEA data for 2017/18 shows a slight decline in mature retention and a widening of gap.
- Recent OfS data (2017/18 onwards) shows a sudden decline in mature retention, dipping to slightly below the sector average in 2018/19. Retention improved again considerably in

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[5] Entry rate is defined as proportion (entering HE) of the estimated base population.
[6] Link to UCAS report entitled: 'Admissions Patterns for Mature Applicants - 2017 Cycle'

b) Degree awarding (Upper Second-Class Honours and First-Class Honours) – UEA has seen a gradual annual improvement in the degree awarding rate for mature students since 2013/14. This has resulted in a complete closing of the gap with young students.

- UEA has performed considerably above the sector average on this metric every year for the last five years, contributing positively to mature attainment in the sector.
- Recent OfS data shows our degree awarding rate for mature students declined between 2017/18 and 2019/20, but this has since improved again. This did, however, result in the opening of a small gap when compared to under-21s at UEA. Despite these fluctuations, the degree awarding rate for mature students at UEA has consistently remained ahead of the sector average.

Progression to employment or further study
- In terms of progression to graduate destinations, mature students at UEA have outperformed under-21s considerably every year since 2012/13. For 2016/17, there is a sizeable positive gap of approximately 14 percentage points. This relates to the fact that a popular subject of study among mature students is nursing, which has extremely high employability rates.
- UEA has performed above the sector average for mature progression every year for five years.
- When considering progression to *any level* of employment or study, there is little difference by age.
- Data from the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey shows that in 2017/18 and 2018/19 mature students at UEA continued to outperform under-21s in terms of progression to positive destinations. In this most recent year of data, there is a sizeable positive gap of approximately 14 percentage points.

1.4 Students Declaring a Disability

Over the last 10 years, disability prevalence in the UK has increased steadily from 18% to 22% driven by working age adults and children. From the age of 15 upwards, disability is more likely to affect females than males. In addition, since 2014/15 there has been a steady increase in mental health disabilities, learning difficulties and social/behavioural difficulties. These trends all have implications for increasing HE participation for students with disabilities and related support needs.
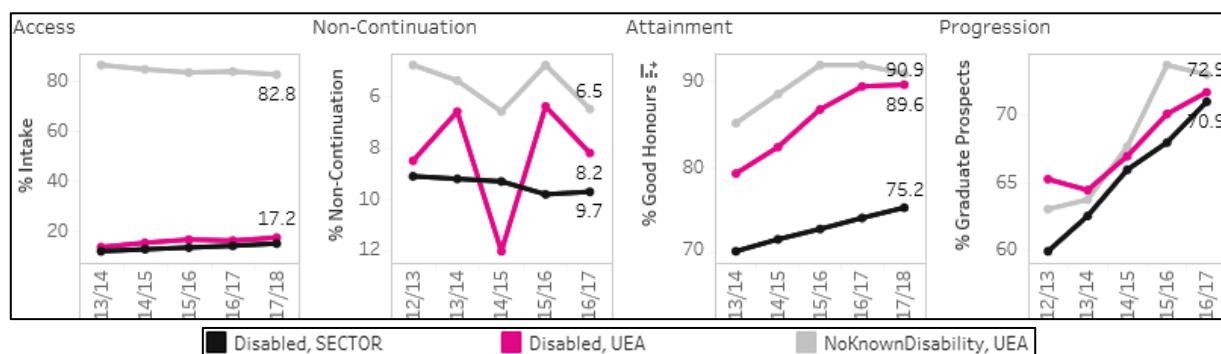
Figure 4: Gaps in access, non-continuation, attainment & progression for disability categories (OfS data)

Access
- The proportion of students declaring a disability in UEA's intake has consistently been slightly above the sector average since 2013/14.
- Internal UEA data shows a gradual decline in our proportional intake of students declaring a disability over time. Looking at the data by sub-group, the greatest decline over the five years has been in those with 'a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia'.

- However, data on the usage of services at UEA indicates that this does not tell the full story. We are aware of issues in how these intake figures are derived regarding lower reporting by applicants and the way our student records are overwritten when students declare a disability and/or are assessed after arriving at UEA. Work is underway to develop accurate management data to inform strategic planning to support potential and current students.
- Positively, recent OfS data shows a year-on-year increase in our proportional intake of students declaring a disability since 2017/18, consistently remaining above the sector average. At 23%, this is now the highest it has been since the start of the current plan.

Success

a) **Non-continuation** – *Commitment to monitor closely the experience of disabled students at UEA and ensure action is taken to address barriers to completion, especially considering the close relationship with degree awarding rates.*

- Retention rates for disabled students at UEA compare positively with the sector average and TEF4 adjusted benchmarks.
- Methodological differences in capturing disabled status and in how dropout is calculated cause a discrepancy in the outcomes indicated by our internal UEA data and by the OfS dataset.
- Our internal data shows an improvement in retention for students declaring a disability, closing the gap against students not declaring a disability in both 2016/17 and 2017/18. Almost all subgroups have seen an improvement in retention in recent years, particularly students on the autism spectrum. For 2017/18, students who declared a specific learning difficulty or autism were more likely to complete their first year than those not declaring a disability.
- We are not complacent regarding the non-continuation gap highlighted by the OfS data set, especially as this reflects more narrative data from UEA staff in student support roles.
- OfS data from 2016/17 onwards shows initial further decline in retention of students with a disability and some slight widening of the retention rate gap with students who have not declared a disability. However, a considerable improvement in 2019/20 resulted in UEA's highest retention rate for students who have declared a disability since the start of the current plan, with the gap almost closing. UEA retention for students declaring a disability has remained consistently above the sector average over this time.

b) Degree awarding (Upper Second-Class Honours and First-Class Honours) – *UEA priority to continue to improving performance and contribute to the national aim to eliminate the gap in degree outcomes between students who have and have not declared a disability.*

- Overall, the proportion of UEA students who have declared a disability awarded good honours degrees has been considerably above the sector average in each of the last five years, contributing positively to this sector-wide priority.
- UEA has seen an overall improvement in the degree awarding rate for students who have declared a disability since 2013/14 – whilst there has consistently been a gap when compared to students who have not declared a disability, this has narrowed significantly.
- This upward trend can be seen across most disability subgroups, including those declaring a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, and those declaring a mental health problem.
- In 2020/21, students declaring a disability were as likely to be awarded a good honours degree as their counterparts who had not declared a disability. UEA's degree awarding rate for students who have declared a disability has consistently remained ahead of the sector.

Progression to employment or further study – *UEA priority to improve performance in terms of progression of disabled students to graduate level destinations.*

- Overall, the rate of progression of UEA students who have declared a disability to graduate destinations has been slightly higher than the sector every year between 2012/13 and 2016/17.
- However, OfS and internal data indicate a slightly lower rate of progression to graduate destinations for disabled students at UEA in comparison to students without disabilities. Indeed, our internal data shows a slight decline and widening of the gap in 2016/17.

- Recent declines occur across sub-groups, including autistic students and those with a mental health condition, where the gap is widest.
- When looking at progression to *any level* of employment or study, proportions are considerably higher for disabled (all sub-groups) *and* non-disabled, with no significant gap in recent years.
- We will be utilising data from internal systems and surveys to better understand the point of origin and reasons for these gaps in 2019/20.
- Data from the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey shows that in 2017/18 students who have declared a disability at UEA outperformed students who have not declared a disability in terms of progression to positive destinations. However, in 2018/19, progression rates declined for both groups, resulting in the opening of a small progression rate gap (3 percentage points) so this remains a priority area for action.

1.5 Care Leavers

The number of care leavers joining UEA has been growing annually. This rose from 11 in 2015/16 to 23 in 2017/18. Despite small numbers, HESA data (a bespoke dataset purchased annually to benchmark our care leaver data against sector and local regions) shows that retention and degree awarding rates for care leavers at UEA are strong. We are currently performing above the upper quartile of institutions on these metrics. We commit to developing data to assess progression for care leavers through using historic Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey data and careers questions in our registration task in 2019/20 and this will continue as part of our analysis of the Graduate Outcomes survey.

- HESA data indicate that our numbers of care leavers have continued to grow in recent years, up to 30 for academic year 2020/21. Our internal performance data shows that retention and degree awarding rates for care leavers in 2020/21 continue to be strong.

1.6 Intersections of Disadvantage

Over the last year, we have been working to better understand the trends caused by intersectionality between demographic, educational and disadvantage indices through developments in our internal data capability. We have also reviewed the OfS dataset for the intersectionality between ethnicity and gender and indicators of disadvantage to ensure we understand the key issues we need to consider in our action planning. We particularly note:

- Proportional intake of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) POLAR4 Q1 & 2 students has been growing steadily but is still below the sector average. Recent OfS data shows that we have made good progress in growing our proportional intake of these students, from 3.5% in 2016/17 to 6% in 2020/21. However, we continue to see a gap when compared to the sector average.
- Declining retention rates of White POLAR4 Q1&2 students is noted in designing approaches to further improve retention for students from lower participation areas. Positively, recent OfS data shows an improvement in retention of this group, from 9% dropout in 2017/18 down to 5% in 2019/20.
- Progression for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) POLAR4 Q1&2 students specifically has been considerably lower than progression for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) POLAR4 Q3-5 students. *(No update available in the OfS progression data, or from our internal data.)*
- When looking at gender, performance is almost always poorer for males than females; at both institutional and subject level male performance is an intersectional factor in creating performance gaps for other characteristics. Ensuring reach to, and engagement with, potential and current male students is a significant consideration in our action planning. Recent OfS data shows improvements in retention and attainment for males at UEA, particularly with attainment,

The role of prior educational experience and how this intersects with our target groups forms a significant element of our approach to addressing access and participation gaps. Analysis reveals:

- Notable trends for POLAR4 Q1 and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students (BTEC) and mature students (Access) to be more likely to enter UEA with non-A level qualifications.
- UEA students with BTEC or Access qualifications are considerably less likely to complete their first year than students with A levels. BTEC students are less likely to achieve an Upper Second-Class Honours or First-Class Honours degree.
- BTEC and Access students were, however, more likely than those with A levels to progress to positive destinations in both 2015/16 and 2016/17.

1.7 Other Groups Who Experience Barriers in Higher Education

Processes are now in place to collect data, including via questions in the annual registration task completed by our students and from The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)[7]; and to ensure that existing data is accurate and usable. During 2019/20 we will be developing our internal data capability to analyse performance by the following groups:

- Those with caring responsibilities (including students with children)
- Those who commute to UEA
- Those who are estranged from their parents
- Those who are from military families
- Individuals for whom English is a second language
- Refugees.

During the lifetime of this plan insight will be used to continue to develop and evaluate appropriate support measures. We have also reflected on OfS dataset findings for students from the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile 1 (Q1)[8] that indicate potential areas for action in terms of access, continuation and degree awarding rate. As we have not previously assessed our performance in terms of IMD, we now need to take time to understand this in both our local context and in terms of potential action to ensure that we take a robust and effective approach to addressing any gaps. For example, through reviewing our Outreach target schools in terms of IMD profile and understanding internal trends in IMD performance by subject and other intersections of disadvantage. This work is already underway, and we commit to putting in place relevant targets and strategic measures for the start of 2020/21.

Since the start of the plan, we have progressed our internal data capability in relation to the above and we now have the above groups built into our key metrics and engagement reporting as standard. These are monitored closely as part of our Inclusive Education Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

2. Strategic Aims and Objectives

2.1 Overview

We have drawn on the following to develop an ambitious and credible set of aims, objectives, and targets to ensure equality of opportunity for all, across the student lifecycle:

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[7] The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is an independent charity providing information, advice, and admissions services

[8] Indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) is a measure of relative deprivation for small, fixed geographic areas of the UK. IMD classifies these areas into five quintiles based on relative disadvantage, with quintile 1 being the most deprived and quintile 5 being the least deprived

- Our assessment of performance – concentrating on where we have the largest gaps in terms of key metrics by characteristic at both institutional and subject level.
- An understanding of UEA's strategic context and the potential impact of this on widening access and participation including, for example, where we are likely to see potential changes in our intake from underrepresented groups and/or there is risk for gaps in success and progression based on policy and process developments.
- Geographical and UEA context including where we can have the largest impact on the national picture, considering our location, market, and student profile.
- Reflecting on our long-term aims and making realistic but ambitious progress within five years.
- Understanding of the contributory factors in the cause and closing of these gaps and UEA's performance on these; drawing on sector and UEA evidence base to create a needs analysis of UEA and where we have weaknesses to address.

2.2 Target Groups, Aims and Objectives

We have set the following strategic aims and objectives to address access and participation gaps for students with specific characteristics.
- Increasing access to HE generally, and UEA specifically, for **students from areas of lower higher education participation** and a whole lifecycle approach to support retention, success, and progression for these students at UEA.
- Increasing access to UEA for **specific Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majority) students** and a whole lifecycle approach to close the degree awarding gap for Black students at UEA.
- Increasing access to UEA for **mature students** and supporting the student experience to level the playing field in terms of retention and success.
- Supporting the whole student lifecycle for **students who have declared a disability,** particularly in terms of ensuring success and progression. Focus on supporting autistic students, students with mental health problems, and students with learning difficulties.

Related to these targets are our commitments to increase understanding and support for students with disrupted journeys to/through HE. We will develop targets, aims and objectives by the end of 2020/21 based on data being gathered and analysed for the first time in 2019/20 (see 1.7).
- Increasing understanding of, and support for, **students who experienced disruption in their education** including having been in local authority care and/or from military families.
- Increasing understanding of, and support for, **students with different educational backgrounds** including non-A level qualifications or significant breaks from education
- Increasing understanding of, and support for, **students facing additional pressures** including estrangement from parents, being parents and/or having other caring responsibilities.

Fully outlined in our Targets and Investment plan, we have redesigned all our widening access and participation targets including replacing all input targets with stretching but credible outcome and impact targets moving towards our longer term aims. These predict differing rates of progress based on a combination of historical rate of progress and the level of development of our related strategic measures.
- With our Outreach approach developed, our milestones reflect steady annual increases in our proportional intake of young POLAR4 Q1 students working towards eliminating the gap in entry rates between the most (Q5) and least represented (Q1) groups by 2030-31.
- Access to HE agreements with local Further Education Colleges (FECs) will be in place by 2020. We predict steady annual increases in intake of mature students from local Access to HE courses aiming for 36% of participants attending UEA by end of this plan halting the downward trend in our mature intake.

- Building on existing activity and progress, we predict annual improvements to close the retention gaps between mature and young students by 2025/26 and between Black and White and mixed ethnicity and White students by 2024/25.
- We predict slow initial but accelerating movement on closing degree awarding gaps. This allows for both new inclusive and targeted measures to be put in place and for these to have impact on degree awarding rates. For example, this includes consideration of the time lag inherent in approaches put in place from the first year of study having impact on the good honours metric. This also reflects the implementation of our new Inclusive Education Policy which starts in summer 2019 with developments occurring across the next two academic years. Overall, we aim to close degree awarding gaps between Black and White students by 2027/28, between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students by 2024/25 and between disabled and non-disabled students by 2022/23.
- Noting the need for us to develop a better understanding of the reasons for the gaps and implement appropriate measures along with the time lag on this metric, we predict slow initial but accelerating progress on closing the gap in progression to graduate level employment or further study for students who have declared a disability generally and those with mental health problems specifically by 2026/27. (Based on DLHE data so indicative of the progress we want to make; adjustments will be made using HESA Graduate Outcomes survey data).
- We have focused on ultimate outcomes to measure the high-level impact of our widening access and participation strategy. To address the inherent time lag in moving these metrics, reflect on different needs and speeds of progress for intersectional characteristics and evaluate the impact of our strategy and activity, this will be supported by a larger number of intermediate outcome and contributory measures identified through an action planning process centred on the development of full evidence-based theories of change for each target; baselines will be set by the start of this plan (by end 2019/20). Using pre and post methodologies we have developed Outreach impact measures assessing the impact of our activity on the behaviour/attitudes towards HE of participants, the HE skills developed through our activity, an access to HE target for UEA Outreach participants using the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT)[9], attendance and engagement targets using internal student data, and careers and student satisfaction targets based on student surveys. We have undertaken a large amount of work to model different measures of impact and have settled on a methodology that works for the UEA Outreach offer. To ensure a robust approach (particularly considering the impacts of Covid-19), we are now working on gathering three years' worth of data before setting a baseline for these measures. There has also been a great deal of learning in how to implement the HEAT database with a large team, and we now have adequate data to begin creating a baseline measure for HE progression. Final targets will be included in our plan for 2024/25-2027/28.

3. Strategic Measures

3.1 Whole Provider Strategic Approach

Overarching principles

UEA's whole provider approach is built on a set of preconditions necessary to achieve our goals
- **Institutional commitment to social diversity, enriching learning for all**.
- **Avoidance of a deficit model** - commitment to an inclusive institutional culture. Focus on institutional adaptations to ensure equality of outcomes.
- Understanding what needs to change and what works through a **robust evidence and evaluation** strategy that underpins all strategy and activity. We have adopted the Network for

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[9] The Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) is a database that helps us understand how effective Outreach activities are

Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI)[10] Evaluation Framework which sets clear objectives across five key aims (based on developing 'capitals'[11]) and for each Key Stage (KS) and student lifecycle stage. All evaluation is tested against the NERUPI Framework objectives to allow comparison and impact assessment.

- **Collective action and collaboration** across departments at UEA and between UEA and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), FECs and other organisations.
- A **focus on a bedrock of inclusive policy and practice** that is then supported by targeted approaches for particular groups when necessary and effective.
- **Targeting of activity to be needs-based, drawing on evidence and understanding of shared journeys to and through Higher Education** (i.e., based on shared information and support needs not simply demographic characteristics).
- **A strategic focus on understanding and addressing contributory factors** and how these build into a full theory of change[12] to achieve longer term aims in closing gaps.
- **A cohesive focus on the whole lifecycle –** measures to address access, success and progression are not distinct but rather part of a progressive journey. For example, much of the activity to address HE retention, success and progression needs to be embedded from a young age as part of our Outreach offer.
- **Understanding that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution.** We will implement a wide range of institutional developments and strategic measures. There are many complementary measures, both inclusive and targeted exclusive, needed to close the gaps across the student lifecycle.

Our whole institutional approach
UEA is committed to a whole institutional approach to widening access and participation that spans all aspects of the student journey, including academic, personal, social, and professional development; engaging with all staff and services to address systemic issues to ensure equality of opportunity.[13]

Whole institutional understanding and buy-in is ensured through embedded governance across the student lifecycle with our Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing Executive, Student Experience Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee, Council and Senate all tasked with oversight of the experience and outcomes of students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups and the impact of our Access and Participation Plan in addressing gaps. This is supported by steering groups addressing specific strategic issues including the Widening Participation Research Group and Foundation Year Working Group.

UEA invests in meeting its aims and objectives through dedicated staff providing strategic leadership to develop, implement and evaluate our plan:
- Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Student Inclusion – University-wide academic leadership and expertise on teaching and learning issues
- Head of Outreach and Head of Widening Access and Participation - strategy development, investment, tactics, and activity undertaken across the lifecycle
- Widening Access and Participation Evidence and Evaluation team – implementing our Widening Participation Evidence and Evaluation strategy to ensure that all strategy, investment, and activity is evidence led and evaluated

The implementation of strategic measures is undertaken by expert embedded roles:

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[10] The Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI) is an organisation that supports its members to evaluate widening access and participation work, and to share insights with other members.

[11] A capital can be defined as any asset that can improve life chances

[12] A theory of change is a description of why a particular way of working will be effective, showing how change happens in the short, medium, and long term to achieve the intended impact.

[13] Thomas, Liz, *Understanding a Whole Institution Approach to Widening Participation* (Offa, 2017).

- An established Outreach team (40 staff by start 2020/21) in our Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing (ARM) Division delivering progressive programmes to address the key barriers to HE identified within the NERUPI Framework
- A team of ten Widening Participation Academic Officers (WPAOs) embedded in Faculties developing subject-specific measures to address priorities across the student lifecycle
- Embedded roles in our Students' Union (SU), Study Abroad Team, Student Services, Careers Service, Information Compliance Team and Planning Division, focusing on specific areas of activity
- Student lifecycle roles for key Strategic groups – mature students and students with disrupted educational journeys (care experienced, estranged and refugees and asylum seekers) to reflect the ongoing needs of these student groups

These roles ensure a clear line of responsibility for widening access and participation across UEA, and that resource is available to ensure action is taken across the outcomes of this plan:
- Maintaining a two-way dialogue on widening access and participation across the institution
- Championing best practice across the student experience to widen access and participation
- Ensuring consideration of underrepresented students is part of all relevant policy and practice through positions on committees and executives at institutional and departmental level

In addition, UEA is committed to ensuring widening access and participation is the responsibility of all staff; with awareness, consideration and activity embedded throughout planning and strategy:
- As a central element of an enhanced planning model (currently being developed) including building regimes to inform decision making that model the potential impact of policy and procedure on outcomes for different student types
- Embedding widening participation into the development of institutional tactical approaches to support students, including the development of our data led student engagement approach
- Whole institutional input into, and delivery of, inclusive education and access and participation activity; from our Commercial, Library, and Information Technology divisions, through Student and Careers Support, to each School of Study
- The Widening Access and Participation management team meets regularly with management of each division and runs awareness raising sessions with teams, leading to development of inclusive and targeted approaches
- Ongoing activity to raise understanding across schools of study of student profile and performance by characteristics to ensure commitment to closing retention, attainment and progression gaps through the development and evaluation of specific interventions

Alignment with other strategies
UEA's Vision for 2030 commits to: "live and breathe fairness in everything we do while promoting diversity and ensuring equality." Reflecting this, our UEA Plan 2016-2023 places considerable emphasis on celebrating the diversity of our communities including commitment to proactively working to achieve equality, dignity, and respect through embedding key values in our curricula and implementing strategies for widening access and participation to ensure that UEA courses are open and welcoming to outstanding students from diverse backgrounds. Our next five-year plan is soon to be developed and will, again, place emphasis on equality of student support and experience. Commitment to widening access and participation is a pillar of strategic planning across the student lifecycle:
- Our ARM Plan takes a cross-team working model to both embed Outreach activity and encourage inclusive approaches across marketing, recruitment, admissions, alumni, and communications strategies
- UEA's Inclusive Education Policy (IEP) is a core pillar of our Learning and Teaching Strategy
- UEA's Employability Strategy focuses on embedding employability across the student journey; addressing progression barriers for underrepresented students is fundamental in the planning and aims of this strategy

- Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022 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 (HEA, 2017). This strategy commits to promoting a culture in which mental health problems are understood, recognised, and not stigmatised. The strategy is being reviewed in 2022 and an interim strategy 2023–2025 will be developed in line with wider UEA strategic planning. A new five-year strategy will then be produced to align with the next UEA Plan

This high-level commitment is reflected in a range of strategic actions underpinning our APP:
- Race equality and good outcomes for students are tackled though our action plan to close attainment gaps, alongside a taskforce led by the Vice Chancellor and activities related to decolonisation and inclusion
- UEA's commitment to Advance HE's Race Equality Charter[14] and framework laid out in the Universities UK (UUK)[15] / the National Union of Students (NUS)[16] *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: #closingthegap* report[17]
- A University-wide approach recognising that all areas of the institution play a part in creating a culture promoting good mental health and wellbeing
- 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 and learning and success. Staff diversity and wellbeing are closely linked to the objectives of this plan under our Director of People and Culture

UEA launched its apprenticeship provision (as the education provider) in February 2018 with two apprenticeship standards - Registered Nurse (Level 6) and Senior Leader (Level 7) - and an Apprenticeship team consisting of one Apprenticeship Manager. At the time of writing, apprenticeship provision consists of eight apprenticeship standards being delivered in five schools across three faculties, with two further apprenticeships in the final stages of development for delivery in the coming academic year. The apprenticeship team has grown to 7 full time equivalent (FTE), and since September 2020, academic leadership of apprenticeship provision has been formally included in the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Partnerships & Apprenticeships role. Student numbers undertaking apprenticeships have grown steadily over the last five years with some 600 students currently studying and approximately 200 graduates. We are committed to continued growth of our apprenticeship provision. Our apprenticeship provision supports UEA's widening access and participation aims as the courses offer an excellent route for those who may not otherwise be able to study at university level. More than two-thirds of our apprentices are over the age of 24, making this an excellent study route for mature learners. We will be undertaking a broader analysis of the demographics of students studying on our apprenticeship programmes, including deeper analysis of success measures.

UEA has a long and successful history of partnership working and has validated awards delivered by a diverse range of institutions including FECs and NHS Trusts. UEA's provision now covers more than 2,000 students across eight providers. The University's Academic Partnerships provision supports UEA's widening access and participation goals through creating opportunities for access to higher education for many students for whom the traditional model of a three-year campus-based university degree is not feasible for a variety of reasons, including mature learners returning to education around family and work commitments. UEA's partners are well placed to

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[14] Advance HE is a charity that aims to improve higher education for staff, students, and society. Advance HE's Race Equality Charter supports institutions to identify barriers standing in the way of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic staff and students. It encourages institutions to develop initiatives and solutions for action.

[15] Universities UK (UUK) is a member organisation which represents 140 universities across the UK

[16] The National Union of Students provides support to students and students' unions in the UK

[17] This is a link to a Universities UK and National Union of Students report entitled: 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities'

support these students through to successful completion of their programmes through approaches such as smaller class sizes and additional sessions focused on academic and study skills for those who have not engaged with formal education for a significant period.

UEA continues to make significant contributions to regional economic development and employers' skill requirements through supporting the development of key programmes at partners which are often focused on level 4 and 5 provision. Going forward, UEA will be working with its partners to support them in exploiting the opportunities presented through initiatives such as Higher Technical Qualifications, micro-credentials, and higher and degree apprenticeships to provide opportunities for a more diverse range of students to access higher education.

Careful consideration has been given to aligning the aims and measures of our Access and Participation Plan, Equality and Diversity Strategy and our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Our Access and Participation Plan activity supports the achievement of UEA's wider equality and diversity aims, including through shared monitoring and evaluation. Our equality and diversity and widening access and participation staff work in partnership on analysis of performance and steering related and complementary activity. A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out, finding all protected characteristics to be positively impacted by this strategic plan, noting the commitments made to ensure granularity of ethnicity and disability is considered in action planning.

Working collaboratively
We note the vital importance of collective responsibility and collaborative action from HE providers in working to improve social mobility.[18] UEA is a key member of our community with buy-in from the city for our UEA Vision. We will continue to work with HE providers locally, across the wider east region and nationally to ensure a shared understanding of gaps in provision, learnings from best practice and scope for collaborative action across the student lifecycle.

Since 2017 UEA has had a network to promote and support school governorship for university staff and students. This network has supported local priority outreach schools in filling governor vacancies as well as enabling Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to include UEA Trustees. We currently have more than 52 places on governing and MAT boards in the region, and engagement with governing continues to increase. Regular meetings have included representatives from Outreach, schools, trusts and the local authority enabling UEA school governors to develop their skills and seek peer support; and Outreach staff and governors to share useful information about each other's work.

We host and participate in an increasing number of collaborative outreach activities with local FE and HE providers including joint working with the Norwich University of the Arts on residentials for care experienced children. The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, located on the UEA campus, has a strategic commitment to expanding and improving facilities for learning to ensure that programmes equip young people, families, and teachers with the confidence to return to the UEA campus independently.

UEA is a member of the east region's UniConnect partnership, known locally as the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (neaco). A partnership of the five HEIs and eight FECs in East Anglia, it is the largest outreach project ever created in the region. The collaboration between the Norfolk Higher Education Providers (HEPs) has been a particular strength and we will continue to take an active role in supporting this partnership including sharing practice and resources. We will continue to deliver our joint widening access and participation/neaco outreach offer with schools across Norfolk and North Suffolk. As funding for neaco outreach reduces, we will ensure we embed the most impactful neaco work into the UEA outreach offer, ensuring positive legacy

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[18] Bridge Group, *Inspiring Policy: Graduate Outcomes and Social Mobility* (2016)

from neaco. We will also ensure UEA's outreach offer is included in neaco's signposting service and take care not to duplicate work on strategic engagement. During 2022-23 we will collaborate with neaco on a shared attainment-raising plan that will meet the needs of the schools we are working in. We hope this will include joint research with our School of Education, but our final approach with neaco is still to be confirmed. We will be ready for delivery in the 2023-24 academic year.

Each year we provide scholarships for our MA Educational Practice and Research course for teachers working in the 50+ schools on our outreach target list. Successful recipients undertake a range of modules which broaden their thinking and explore pedagogy and educational research topics of interest. The recipients' dissertation module must be undertaken in a topic related to improving attainment of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. An evaluation is underway which will test the impact of the course both on the individual teachers' skills and on changes they manage to effect back in school, the outcomes of which will shape our offer of the scholarship for 2023-24.

In 2021 we opened our first IntoUniversity Centre in Norwich. The second centre, based in Great Yarmouth, is due to open in late 2022. These centres provide academic support, mentoring and opportunities for pupils in Year 3 upwards from the most disadvantaged areas, basing that support right in the heart of the community. IntoUniversity is a well-established social mobility charity with more than 25 centres around the UK. Their track record in supporting pupils to progress into HE and on raising attainment is well established. Our collaboration with them is being pushed further for the Great Yarmouth site where we will be joined by Trinity College Cambridge in a three-way partnership.

The UEA Outreach team has developed strategic partnerships with several key schools and colleges in Norfolk. These partner schools/colleges have been selected due to the very large proportion of pupils from disadvantaged and underrepresented student groups and include a University Technical College (UTC), Sixth Form College and Secondary School. Through these we have developed enhanced offers covering mentoring, subject support, general outreach activities and access to UEA facilities and resources. Each partnership is bespoke to meet the needs and challenges faced by the institution in supporting pupils to progress to HE. As an example, we are offering maths tutoring support in two partner colleges to address attainment issues in collaboration with the London Mathematical Society and their KS5 Levelling Up scheme. During the coming years we will strengthen these partnerships with greater emphasis on building study skills for success and utilising the learning and best practice from the Norwich and Ipswich Opportunity Area outcomes.

UEA is a lead institution on a project bid to the European Union Erasmus+ fund to address the issue of participation gaps in the uptake of international experience. In summer 2020, we hosted (virtually) the conference of the Foundation Year Network and continue to be an active network member. In addition, a widening access and participation-funded UEA staff member is the founding Co-Director of the sector-wide Association for Academic Outreach.

We work collaboratively with other institutions and research organisations on projects to evidence and evaluate our approach, including as contributors to sector events and groups such as the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON)[19] Impact and Evaluation working group. Following on from participation in a research project with agency Alterline and other HEIs into the life stories of Black students, we will continue to work with participating institutions to learn from outcomes of action taken.

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[19] The National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) is a professional organisation which supports those involved in widening access to higher education.

Our theory of change and strategic measures
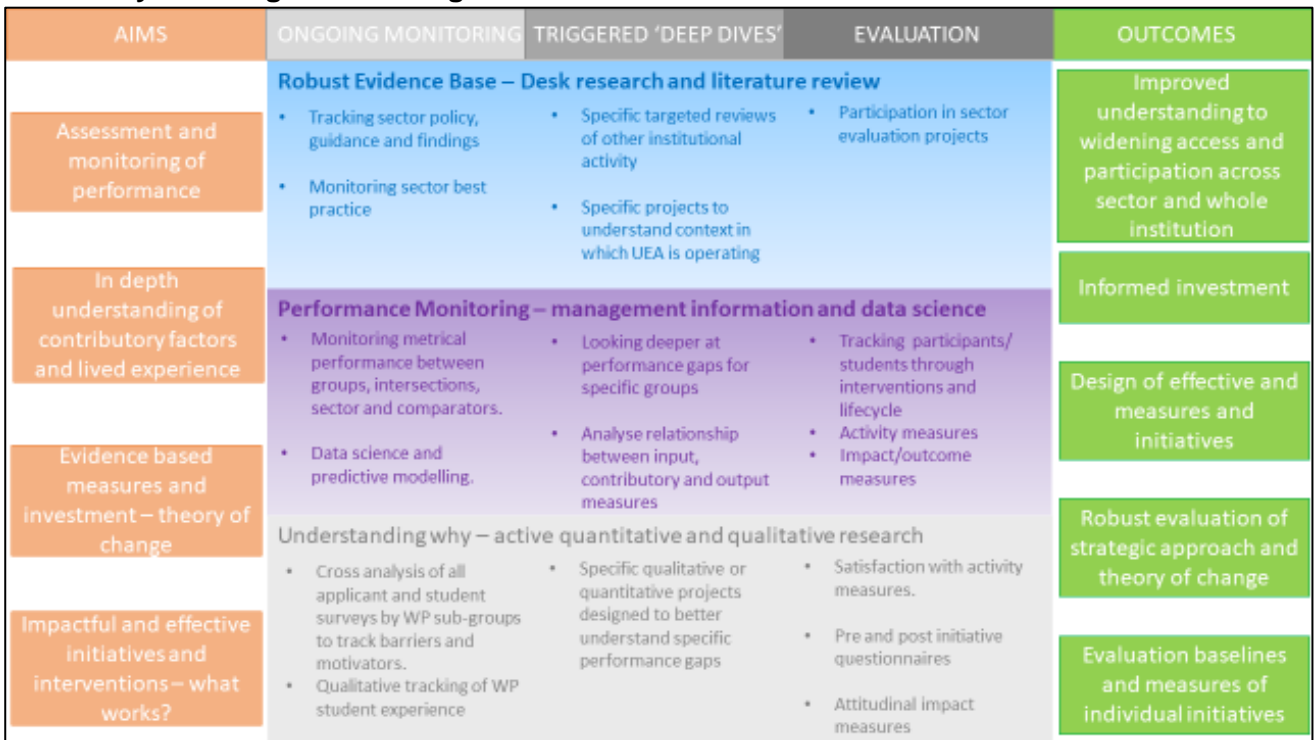
Figure 6: UEA Access and Participation Evidence Base
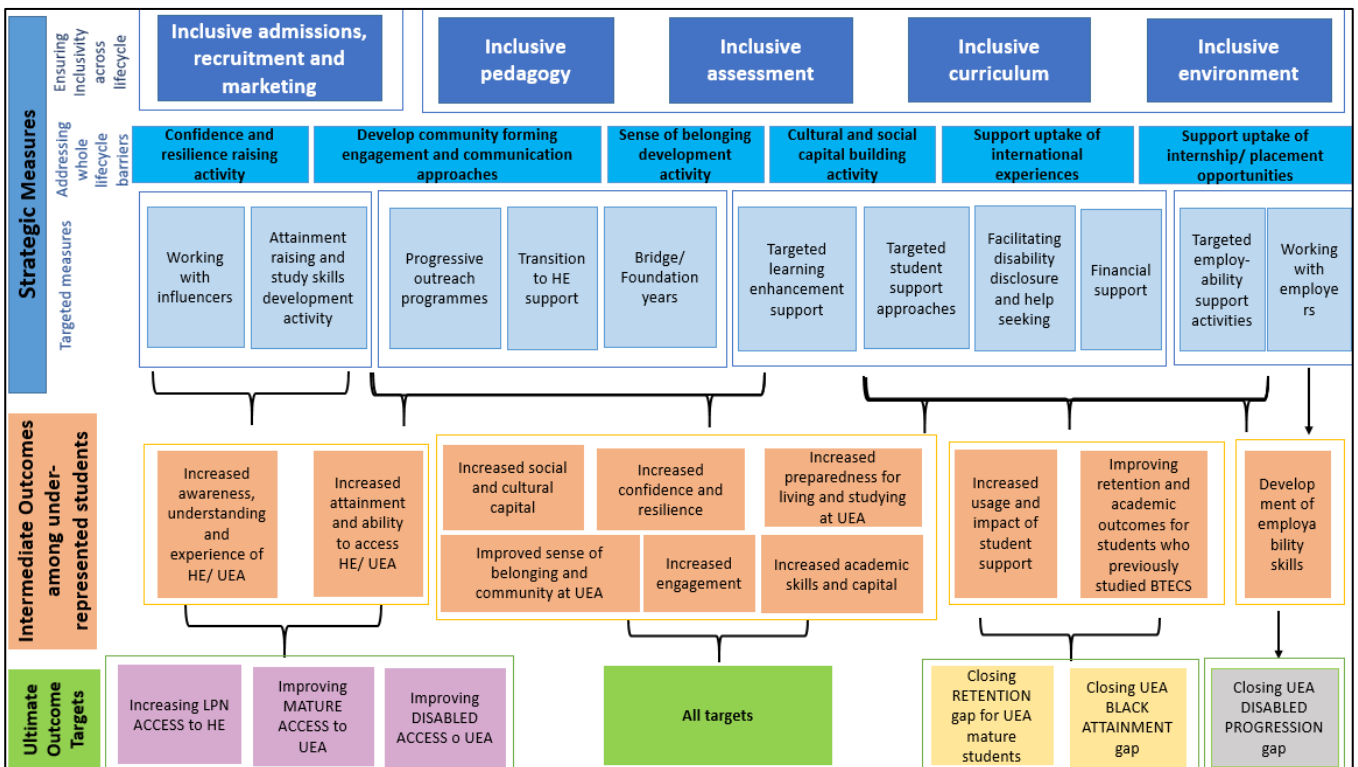
Figure 7: UEA strategic level theory of change diagram

UEA is firmly focused on widening access and participation being a product of both academic achievement and personal wellbeing; our approach is based on an understanding of the broad range of influences and pressures and how these can vary for students from different backgrounds. Our approach is continually evolving based on the most up-to-date evidence base and evaluation outcomes (Figure 6).

As the foundation of our plan, UEA has developed an overarching strategic level theory of change (Figure 7) outlining the interrelated strategic measures required to support intermediate outcomes

that lead to closing our performance gaps. Under each strategic measure will be a range of inclusive and targeted initiatives. Steering groups for each of our ultimate target aims will use the most up-to-date evidence to develop, and keep under review, detailed theory of change-based action plans ensuring the robustness of the causal links between what we do and the intermediate outcomes and ultimate impacts we are looking to achieve. Based on progress made in recent years, much of our work will continue to invest in and develop existing approaches but in some areas, where faster progress is needed, we are committed to developing new approaches. The following section provides detail on the aims of our inclusive and targeted strategic measures, the robust links of these to our intermediate and ultimate outcomes, and examples of some of the input activities that will be the basis of these strategic measures.

Foundational measures ensuring inclusivity at all stages of the student lifecycle
Inclusive Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing – Removal of systemic barriers to successful application to UEA to increase diversity including by HE participation, ethnicity, and age.

We have worked with ARM colleagues to develop an Inclusive ARM Strategy which includes:
- Inclusive approaches to home, undergraduate marketing campaigns
- Geo-targeting within recruitment and marketing activity
- A commitment to the UUK Fair Admissions Code of Practice
- Use of an external consultancy to review recruitment and admissions practices for our health courses to ensure inclusivity of approach. Findings of this review will influence admissions processes for September 2023 entry onwards
- Additional conversion activity for applicants from underrepresented groups
- Introduction of a University-wide contextual admissions scheme, utilising UCAS multiple equality measure (MEM)[20] data. This will be piloted in the 2022-23 admissions cycle with full rollout for the 2023-24 cycle Access to HE agreements with local FECs – a programme of curriculum, application and admissions support for mature students considering UEA courses.
- Access UEA Schemes – offering subject-specific programmes of activity for underrepresented students to develop capitals, plus admissions support for those considering UEA courses. Support is continued once at UEA, including the opportunity to receive scholarships, work placements and mentoring
- A strong commitment to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) recruitment working towards a proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students at UEA that reflects the profile of East Anglian institutions within the next eight years. This sets an ambitious target within our local context. We have worked closely with national charities to develop this work, including a mentoring programme with students in London, and have used geo-targeted marketing to aid national recruitment.

Applicants are tracked and the intake profile of UEA is monitored annually to assess the impact of these measures. To date we have observed steady increases in POLAR4 Q1, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) and mature students progressing to UEA. This success will continue to be reviewed and progressed for 2023-24.

Inclusive Education Policy
UEA has an Inclusive Education Policy, with a related implementation plan and embedded evaluation. We believe that inclusive practice is at the heart of effective education. 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. In addition, some of these barriers for disabled students should be addressed through reasonable adjustments, a provision of the Equality Act (2010) for

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[20] The multiple equality measure (MEM) combines different factors (area, income background, school sector, sex, and ethnic group) into a single measure of equality.

people living with disabilities. Reasonable adjustments are an important mechanism and complementary to this policy.

The UEA Inclusive Education Policy has four interrelated elements set out below:
1. Inclusive Curriculum – the content of what is taught and learning materials
2. Inclusive Assessment and Feedback – the way student learning and attainment is measured, communicated, and enhanced
3. Inclusive Pedagogy – the way the content of the curriculum is taught
4. Inclusive Environment – the non-classroom experience

The policy was approved by Learning and Teaching Committee in Academic Year 2021/22 and will next be reviewed in Academic Year 2024/25.

Measures addressing key barriers to widening participation are built into a broad range of inclusive and exclusive activity across the student lifecycle
<u>Supporting development of a sense of belonging and reducing isolation whilst building confidence and resilience</u> – Foundational in addressing equality of experience aims across the student lifecycle through removal of a highly impactful barrier to engagement. Component in addressing retention and success gaps for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities), disabled and mature students.

'*Students' sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class. More than simple perceived liking or warmth, it also involves support and respect for personal autonomy and for the student as an individual.*' [21] Narrative evidence from local schools and research with outreach participants highlight anxiety around belonging as a barrier to HE progression. Sector and internal research have also consistently shown that a strong sense of belonging is at the heart of retention and academic success. UEA research shows the issue heightened for underrepresented students, particularly mature, disabled, and Black students.

Furthermore, sector literature on addressing differential outcomes frequently highlights the impact of learner identity, confidence, and resilience as a key compounding factor. Fear of failure, self-doubt and feeling overwhelmed are comment themes in interviews with students at risk of dropout or who have left the institution.

The team have closely monitored the impact of the pandemic on student experience and outcomes looking at both internal data and insight from the sector, for example from the Disabled Students' Commission.

Understanding that UEA's student body is made up of distinct groups, each with different life experiences and backgrounds, and with different aspirations for their time at UEA is thus a central pillar of UEA's strategic theory of change for widening access and participation. We aim to create an academic and social environment where every student can integrate to support all aspects of the student journey including access to HE and retention as well as improving academic attainment. Based on robust research and aiming to create a greater sense of belonging for students from underrepresented backgrounds and improved student networks of support, we are invested in the development of a community-forming communications and engagement approach that will have a significant role to play in improving the perception and reality of the student experience from prospective student through to graduation. Our approach here draws on experience in the public and voluntary sector that shows communication approaches based on

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[21] Goodenow (1993b) cited in Professor Liz Thomas, *Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change – Final Report from the What Works? Student Retention & Success Programme* (2012) Paul Hamlyn Foundation, HEFCE, HEA, Action on Access

identifying the underlying drivers of misunderstandings between groups can create practical ways to change perceptions and behaviours and help people to identify with their new surroundings, establish connections and find their place in their community. UEA launched a new approach to Welcome for undergraduate students in 2020 and continues to enhance and develop our Welcome experience to ensure that it supports all new students, and specifically those from underrepresented groups, to be able to say, 'I have found UEA communities I belong to' and 'I've met fellow students I identify with'. Our Student Education and Experience Executive is committed to a project to further develop opportunities across a holistic transitions journey for UEA students.

We will continue to implement inclusive and targeted measures across the student lifecycle to enhance sense of belonging and confidence; reflecting on the relational nature of belonging based on interaction between students, teachers and peers[22] to increase: understanding of diversity across interactions with all staff and students, representation of different student types across all aspects of the student experience and support the development of 'counterspaces'[23] by/for specific student groups. We will invest in dedicated roles in the UEA Students' Union and Student Support Service to build social community and peer support networks. We have also expanded our Wellbeing Training team with a specific focus on delivering potential and current student initiatives that build confidence and resilience across our outreach, transition, and student support work. Our successful Take Five project that takes a student-led approach to developing a culture of wellbeing and inclusion continues to offer both face-to-face and online opportunities for student sense of belonging. Impact is measured by monitoring qualitative and quantitative research with potential and current students.

Supporting development of social and cultural capital – Reducing deficits in the development of capitals across the student journey is key to addressing differential outcomes including those in relation to progression to employment. Sector research highlights the considerable impact of social and cultural capitals on decision making regarding progression to HE and student experiences and outcomes (e.g., students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to participate in a period abroad and, therefore, miss this opportunity to develop social and cultural capital). Mobile students were more likely than non-mobile students to be employed six months after graduating with related impact on earnings.[24]

Utilising the NERUPI framework we will continue to design lifecycle-spanning strategic measures to support underrepresented students in the development of these capitals, including progressive outreach; exclusive opportunities for target groups to benefit from placement opportunities pre-arrival, during foundation years and undergraduate study; and closing gaps in take up of curricula and extra-curricular fieldwork and placement opportunities.

UEA has identified Study Abroad and Placement in Industry experiences as key strategic routes to developing social and cultural capitals. We invest in specific roles and activity in our Study Abroad and Placement and Internships teams to target closing engagement gaps. Approaches include our Employability and Opportunities fund and the development of additional flexible and short opportunities. We continue to work to embed experiential learning, learning through doing, and context into our curriculum and we continue to monitor uptake of capital-building opportunities and impact on participants.

Targeted support measures to address specific barriers at points in the lifecycle
Progressive outreach programmes – Targeted activity to facilitate increased HE participation for local students from underrepresented groups. We work with more than 60 schools and colleges across Norfolk and North Suffolk from primary age to post-16 and mature students. Schools and colleges are targeted based on the proportion of pupils from disadvantaged and underrepresented

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[22] Ibid

[23] Counterspaces are spaces (physical or virtual) which offer individuals from marginalised groups opportunities to gather, and share and discuss their lived experience

[24] Bridge Group, *Inspiring Policy: Graduate Outcomes and Social Mobility* (2016)

student groups. Utilising the NERUPI evaluation framework and robust theory of change models, our sustained and progressive programmes of work will address locally identified barriers to HE:

- Social and academic capital – the opportunity to find out information about HE, experience HE, and learn about making informed decisions for the future
- Habitus – activity which builds a sense of belonging in HE using role models, mentoring, and targeted interventions
- Skills capital – building the skills for success in HE and study skills to aid attainment
- Intellectual capital – activity which shows the broader context of learning and shows how subjects are studied in HE

Each programme is Key Stage-specific and meets one or more of the NERUPI capitals above. Programmes include cohort-wide activity plus supplementary activities for targeted individuals to provide additional support. In doing so we ensure all pupils gain HE-related capital, plus those who will benefit most gain intensive support.

This entirely redeveloped outreach offer is objective and evidence led, and is focused on impacting pupils' behaviour and skills development. We will continue to hone the offer through 2023-24 to deliver the most impactful outreach activity for our participants.

Our outreach communications strategy and age-specific resources will encourage ongoing interaction; strong relationships with key influencers (parents, teachers) will build further sense of belonging with UEA. All activity is mapped against the NERUPI framework and evaluated against its objectives. In addition, we deliver targeted outreach programmes for specific strategic outreach groups including:

- Students of Black heritage
- Students with disrupted educational journeys such as those who are care experienced, estranged from their families or who are refugees or asylum seekers
- Adult learners
- Students of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller backgrounds

Outreach attainment-raising programmes - Targeted activity to remove the attainment barrier to HE participation for students from local areas of lower participation.
'No matter how much support is provided to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, they will not get into university unless they reach the required academic standards.'[25] The theory of change model associated with achieving better grades is complex, and takes in elements of cultural capital-building, confidence-inspiring and motivation-raising, as well as practical skills in terms of time management and exam management. We developed our own English and maths tutoring for KS3 and 4 pupils during the Covid-19 period to support schools in closing learning gaps. A full review of this work during the 2022-23 academic year, working collaboratively with the UniConnect partnership neaco, will shape what direct attainment-raising activity we will offer for 2023-24. We are also in conversation with Norfolk County Council to explore how collaborating may tackle Norfolk-wide attainment issues such as early years language development and reading skills, and GCSE English and maths outcomes. Our attainment-raising offer for 2023-24 will provide a combination of revision support, and broader study skills development such as metacognition, critical thinking, and reflective practice. We will continue to use teacher networks, and insights from the Norwich Opportunity Area to shape our offer, co-develop resources and training, and share best practice.

Transition support – Removing significant barriers to support equality of retention, and success for students with lower exposure to HE and/or increased support needs.
'The first few months at university can play a disproportionate role in shaping the overall experience of HE... Not all applicants are well prepared. There are some significant disparities

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[25] TeachFirst, *Beyond Access: Getting to University and Succeeding There* (2017)

between what they assume life is like at university, and what it is actually like for most students.' [26]
Despite making excellent progress against our retention targets for Black and mature students, we remain vigilant and continue to increase investment in preparedness across age groups, including a comprehensive programme for UEA applicants from underrepresented backgrounds to help prepare them for HE both academically and socially, and to address specific issues identified by some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) groups. For 2023 this will continue to grow to include those made a new contextual offer through our new UEA-wide scheme. We continue to develop our outreach communications plan to provide additional support and information for underrepresented groups during the transition from enquirer to entrant.
Across the lifespan of this plan, we continue to invest in impactful transition measures including ensuring the specific needs of underrepresented students are considered and addressed through institutional and local Welcome approaches and our Students' Union Buddy Scheme, buddy(su)[27]. Tracking student engagement, and impact evaluations always inform our work.

Academic support – Providing tailored academic support to address attainment gaps.
Sector and internal research clearly identify both perceived and actual gaps in the skills required by HE study as highly impactful on retention and attainment. UEA students from diverse backgrounds participating in our qualitative tracker study revealed that fear of failure, caused by not knowing what was expected of them, was a key drop-out risk factor. For many this was due to struggling to adapt to independent study and for others to lack, or perceived lack, of specific academic skills that had gone unsupported/underdeveloped. Analysis of performance metrics by student characteristic and interrelated factors highlight specific retention and attainment gaps and strengths for students entering with different prior education experience and attainment.
UEA offers bridge/introductory courses in specific subjects and continues to enhance our foundation year course offering. These courses provide a strong platform, giving students a variety of key study skills that will enable them to excel as undergraduates. We will continue to have a dedicated academic role working on support for underrepresented groups on our foundation programmes including the development of study skills module for 2020/21.
We continue to invest in the capacity of our Learning Enhancement team to address issues of academic skills development for specific in-need groups of underrepresented students through embedded and dedicated support and peer assisted learning.
Internal management information and research highlight the importance of working with specific schools of study to address specific needs and skills gaps. For example, building on research and pilot projects conducted in 2018/19, we continue to develop inclusive curricula and pedagogy and specific support for students who have previously studied BTEC qualifications; and targeted initiatives in schools of study where the POLAR4 Q1, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities), and disabled degree awarding and/or stage mark gaps are significant.
We evaluate the impact of activities by tracking students through their time at UEA, including utilising cross analysis of stage mark by characteristic and participation in interventions.

Pastoral support – Addressing support factors impacting directly and indirectly on retention.
UEA's Student Information Zone (SIZ) is a one-stop-shop for all student enquiries. Based on research into the enquiries SIZ staff can manage without the need for referral on to other services, a SIZ advisor training matrix has been created, training for which starts in July 2022 with a view to further upskilling the advisors and increasing the percentage of queries that can be resolved within one interaction with the student. In addition to information and advice, the SIZ offers thematic drop-ins with a range of internal departments and external stakeholders. The 'visiting specialists' are allocated desk space in the main area of the SIZ and students are invited to drop in to ask questions in a clinic-style provision. This has created daily hubs of practitioners concerned with the same or similar agendas and while this has primarily been to offer a more holistic service to students, it has also been reported that this has been nourishing and engaging for the team members themselves

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[26] Unite, *Reality Check: A report on university applicants' attitudes and perceptions* (2017), Unite Students and HEPI.

[27] buddy(su) is a peer-support scheme designed to help those new to UEA settle in quickly and meet like-minded people.

who have been able to better network and meet colleagues working in a similar field. Additionally, the SIZ hosts events, often to collaborate with the SU on a range of wellbeing and health-related topics. Ongoing investment in additional staff in areas where there is high underrepresented student need, including in our Student Wellbeing and Student Engagement teams, ensures a proactive, effective, and accessible service for in-need students. We will continue to use all available data to monitor and evaluate the impact of the SIZ and will remain alert to any new issues as they arise. UEA runs a weekly 'Pulse' survey allowing the agile tracking of student wellbeing, experience, and sentiment.

We are considering our approach to embedded pastoral support as part of our ongoing review of student wellbeing, and the outcomes of this review will be in place within the lifespan of this plan. Noting our priorities in terms of students with mental health problems and the wealth of research highlighting low rates of disclosure of mental health problems[28], particularly among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (global majorities) students and White working class males, we have undertaken significant work to reduce this limiting factor on the institution's ability to offer appropriate support; including ongoing implementation of a number of approaches to encourage disclosure (including addressing gaps in the communication pipeline with students and between departments) and to provide support through different media to complement our face-to-face approach. We continue to closely monitor disclosure and help-seeking rates.

The consistently higher dropout rate for mature students indicates specific systemic issues - with student satisfaction data highlighting lower satisfaction in key practical course factors such as organisation, timetabling and being able to contact staff when needed.

During the pandemic we started to develop a new approach to monitoring student academic engagement. This approach is based on a range of robust data measures which indicate students at risk from becoming disengaged with their studies. Development continues.

We will continue to work across the institution to address these issues and monitor related student satisfaction rates. As an example, for 2023-24 we aim to have worked with a Research Associate to have developed a toolkit to support participation and diverse teaching methods which support students from non-traditional educational backgrounds (namely Access to HE and BTEC/T-Level) in Health Science subjects.

Employability support – Targeted approaches to address progression gaps.
UEA CareerCentral is committed to ensuring that its activity and services support all students to fulfil their career ambitions after graduation by embedding an inclusive whole-lifecycle approach to support. The service's established programmes and careers activity is fully inclusive of its diverse student users, and is developed in consultation with staff and students from across the university. We fund several staff roles and events, as well as helping to establish effective online structures that support students with varying needs and characteristics to fulfil their potential. Established initiatives such as the UEA Award encourage students to engage in impactful employability opportunities, providing tailored support and reflection of skills and experiences, including skills gained due to personal experiences or characteristics such as a disability. The Mentoring and Careers Ambassador programme includes representatives from a diverse range of backgrounds and characteristics.
In addition to the core programmes and initiatives that are designed to be fully inclusive for all students, we continue to work with careers experts at UEA to focus on addressing gaps in use of services and the take up of impactful employability opportunities for students from underrepresented groups, with a specific focus on reducing the progression gap for clients with a disability and clients from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The introduction of a Progression Coordinator role in summer 2021 has allowed the service to prioritise its support for disabled clients and clients with mental health conditions. This role acts as a bridge between the Careers and Student Support Services, in particular opening a direct communication channel with UEA's

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[28] Unite, *Reality Check – A report on university applicants' attitudes and perceptions* (2017), Unite Students and HEPI

Disability Advisers and Wellbeing Training Team to enhance the level of support students receive from these services and provide a more collaborative approach to support.

Research into graduate outcomes for students with disabilities highlights that 'disabled students don't know how and when to disclose a disability and need guidance on this' and that 'students often don't know what sorts of recruitment or workplace adjustments they can or should ask for, and they can be too anxious or scared to be able to negotiate and advocate for themselves'.[29] CareerCentral currently supports clients with a disability by offering information and guidance around reasonable adjustments on its website and during one-to-one appointments. However, working collaboratively with colleagues in Student Support Services, CareerCentral is preparing to enhance this support by offering one-to-one guidance appointments specifically for the purposes of discussing reasonable adjustments and practical ways of managing a disability or mental health condition during the recruitment process and in the workplace. To further enhance this one-to-one support for students and graduates, CareerCentral is also a Next Generation Inclusive University Partner with leading disability employment specialists EmployAbility, providing a direct consultancy service for CareerCentral staff on disability-specific adjustments, as well as an adjustments advocacy service for vulnerable students who require additional support during the recruitment process.

CareerCentral continues to offer financial support and activities for students and graduates from specific underrepresented groups. Its newly established WeCan programme of events aims to address potential employment barriers for all students and graduates, but with specific emphasis on representing clients with disabilities and mental health conditions, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and with Black heritage. This series of events involves alumni speakers from specific underrepresented groups and UEA's Student's Union to reach current students in its Peer Support Networks. The service's ongoing Development and Opportunities Fund aims to improve employability outcomes by providing financial support for home-fee undergraduate students from underrepresented groups to help them access extracurricular activity which builds capital and is transferrable in the workplace.

To further its understanding of the progression barriers faced by students and graduates from underrepresented groups, CareerCentral uses sector research and best practice, as well as conducting its own research in collaboration with students, including a series of funded internships. The internships have provided UEA with intelligence and guidance that it will continue to use to inform policy, develop initiatives and ensure an inclusive approach to graduate success.

Financial support – Facilitating equality of opportunity to a student experience related to success. Analysis of the impact of UEA's financial support approaches to date indicate an indirect impact on retention based on supporting engagement for the most in-need students, but none for those with higher income. Financial support, therefore, plays a role in our theory of change: addressing gaps in the ability of underrepresented students to benefit from an equivalent experience of HE to their more advantaged peers e.g., where lack of funds is a barrier to students benefitting from elements underpinning success such as developing social and cultural capital.

We continue to build our evaluative understanding of the impact of UEA bursaries on addressing differential student outcomes and experience, and to ensure we understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis on student experience.

Whilst we do so we will maintain our bursary approach to allow time for robust evaluation to inform our approach.

Recipient	Amount
Household income £16,000 or less	£1,300
Household income £16,001 – £20,000 and from POLAR4 Q1 postcode	£800
Care leavers and estranged students	£2,500

Figure 9: Bursaries for new entrants 2020/21 to 2024/25

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[29] Policy Connect and the Higher Education Commission, *Arriving at Thriving: Learning from Disabled Students to Ensure Access for All* (2020)

The financial support detailed in Figure 9 is provided for no more than four years of study even if a course is longer, with foundation years counting as one year of study. Recipients can choose the type of support: fee or accommodation waiver, or cash payment.

UEA is committed to robust impact evaluation of financial support. We will model potential approaches to financial support moving away from traditional bursaries to 'active' financial support, ringfencing funds for eligible students to spend on specific elements of the student experience that have proven impact on success and progression. Thorough testing and consultation are essential to development, so we plan to resubmit this plan if/when we have a robust approach.

3.2 Student Consultation

Formal student representation in access and participation planning

Student representation in terms of widening access and participation falls within the remit of UEA Students' Union's Undergraduate Education Officer, and Welfare, Community & Diversity Officer. Through membership of our Student Experience; Learning and Teaching; and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committees, they have contributed to the development of this plan and are involved in its implementation and evaluation. Input that has been actioned has included the strategic focus on rapid development of understanding and action to close the Black attainment gap and commitment to tighter monitoring of implementation as outlined in section 3.4.

Through this membership, officers are involved in cross-institutional reviews enabling them to feed into decisions that impact widening access and participation across the student lifecycle. Our Code of Practice on Student Representation ensures students are represented at school and faculty level and can contribute to the management and enhancement of their programmes. All our schools are engaged with the Advance HE Athena Swan Charter[30] with 17 of our 21 schools holding Athena Swan awards. All schools have a formal Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee which includes student representation. The remaining schools are on track to obtain awards by the end of 2022. We also have student representation on our formal Race Equality Charter Working Group which is supporting the university's submission to Race Equality Charter in 2024. The Access All Areas Group involves staff and students looking at broad accessibility across our campus and making recommendations for improvements. Students can use their contribution in all these groups to support their work towards the UEA Award[31]. UEA's widening access and participation management team have regular meetings with relevant SU officers, including leading to the co-creation of UEA's Inclusive Education Policy, and work with the SU to embed understanding of UEA's student profile and issues related to specific underrepresented students into induction training for student representatives.

Specific meaningful consultation on the drafting and implementation of UEA's Access and Participation Plan

Our widening access and participation management team attended meetings with SU Council and Officers (including roles specifically related to underrepresented student groups) to present a summary of our strategic and operational plans to address performance gaps. Attendees were provided with the summary in advance to enable consultation with students from a range of backgrounds. These discussions have provided a broader understanding of issues to be addressed in the implementation of the IEP, including regarding access and use of teaching and study spaces for disabled students. We will continue to work collaboratively with student representatives on the implementation of our plan through student representation on key working groups linked to our aims and measures.

The wider student voice in access and participation evidence and evaluation

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[30] The Advance HE Athena Swan Charter aims to support gender equality within higher education and research.

[31] The UEA Award gives students recognition for a range of activities, both academic and extra-curricular, that help develop skills and attributes for life and employment.

UEA will continue to undertake a wide range of specific quantitative and qualitative research with prospective and current UEA students to increase our understanding of widening access and participation issues, and evidence and evaluate our approach. We will also continue to gather student feedback and views through regular all-student institutional surveys and focus groups and, where possible and appropriate, integrate analysis by different student characteristics into this broader activity. UEA students are at the heart of all the evidence and evaluation informing our approach. Examples of action based on these analyses have included significant developments of pre-arrival and induction communications and activity to address the needs of different student types and addressing operational barriers to mature student engagement.

3.3 Evaluation Strategy

Our evaluation strategy spans all levels of widening access and participation activity to ensure a clear understanding of the impact of our whole approach. Learnings from completing the OfS Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool inform the development of our strategy.

Support for evaluation within institutional culture
UEA is committed to using evidence and evaluation to shape its widening access and participation approach in terms of the expansion, maintenance, adjustment, redesign or termination of strategic measures and individual initiatives. Critical reflection ensures we question our activities at all stages, facilitating continuous improvement in inclusive practice and the range of exclusive programmes and their content.
UEA takes a whole provider approach to the evaluation of the impact of widening access and participation strategy and activity; structures and opportunities are in place across the institution to implement robust approaches and discuss evaluation outcomes. An evaluation culture is embedded. We are committed to an annual review of our evaluation strategy to ensure continuous improvement. Evaluation is overseen by our widening access and participation management team and supported by our WP Research Group, where professional and academic colleagues discuss research and evaluation insight and facilitate collaborative working.

Data strategy, resources, skills, and expertise
UEA has a dedicated WP Evidence and Evaluation team (WPEET) of skilled insight, market research and data analysis/science staff responsible for the delivery of our WP Evidence and Evaluation strategy with proportionate investment. In terms of the university's structure, this team is positioned separately (within our Finance, Planning and Governance Division) rather than being located directly within teams implementing strategy and initiatives. This independence enables the team to be impartial and objective when carrying out impact evaluation and reporting outcomes. We are committed to increasing independent evaluation and are exploring approaches such as peer review. We are also committed to continuing to share our learnings with the sector. Furthermore, we draw on cross-institutional expertise including using the skills of our WPAOs and broader academic community, and recruiting specific skill sets as required internally or via outsourcing to expert agencies. Aspects of evaluation skills are included in the recruitment criteria of all widening access and participation, and outreach-related roles to ensure support for evaluation. All relevant staff have considerable opportunities for professional training and upskilling, including attending relevant sector events. We are committed to conducting an ongoing skills audit and making further investment as needed.
We ensure that all our evaluation methodologies are approved by UEA's Information Compliance and Data Protection team and University Research and Ethics Committee.
We have developed action planning processes for all levels of activity with embedded evaluation planning. Our formal evaluation plans detail the data sources and/or data collection methods to be used, including clear and specific timelines for collection or availability of data, and roles and responsibilities. All evaluation methodologies are relevant and appropriate to the nature of the intervention itself, considering factors including sensitivity of topic, level of anonymity of

participants and potential for reactivity effects. Our completion of the self-assessment tool highlighted a lack of systematic consideration of risks within evaluation design; we will be working to improve this through increased piloting of approaches and cognitive testing of questionnaires (to take place in summer 2022).

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 data sources including, for example, utilising attainment data from the schools we engage with as part of our evaluation.

The standards of evidence and evaluation types achieved

A key strand of UEA's approach to evidencing and evaluating its widening access and participation approach is to embed this analysis across all student management information and market research design and analysis. Dedicated resource in our Business Intelligence Unit (BIU) has implemented cross analysis regimes of all key high-level student metrics and student surveys. This team also undertakes qualitative research to inform our approach. Outcomes form a strong evidence base and provide a specific indicator to be tracked as part of our evaluation.

WPEET is rolling out proportionate evaluations for all current UEA widening access and participation activity across the student lifecycle, measuring behavioural and attitudinal change, and based on both narrative and empirical evidence to ensure we have evidence of impact in our own context. This is continually reviewed and developed across its lifespan. We continue to explore appropriate circumstances for us to use experimental methods, using a control or comparison group to understand causal effects. We commit to developing this capability using our BIU and academic expertise across the lifespan of this plan. For example, in summer 2022, for the first time we will be recording unsuccessful summer school applicants in HEAT. This will enable us to look at long term outcomes of those who did participate in the summer school against a comparison group of those who didn't.

All evaluations assess impact on intermediate objectives and ultimate aims considering:

a. <u>Appropriate methodologies</u>
- Tracking and monitoring participants
    - o All relevant UEA outreach activities are input into HEAT. Evaluation of late interventions in terms of their impact on a participant's progression into HE is starting. We will continue to track data around more long-term interventions across the lifetime of this plan and develop processes for tracking outreach and student-facing intervention participants through their journey
    - o We are making considerable progress in tracking outreach participant outcomes from initial engagement, through to their journey at UEA (where relevant). A detailed reporting dashboard for this data is in production (as of summer 2022). Similar work has begun to increase our tracking for student-facing interventions, through the development of a reporting dashboard to present a wide range of performance and engagement KPIs and PIs.
- Monitoring change in behaviour or response through existing metrical and survey data sets. Since the start of the plan, we have broadened our suite of internal reporting including, for example, data on a range of student engagement measures, and a weekly 'Taking the Pulse' student survey covering a broad range of academic and non-academic themes. All data can be viewed by school, faculty, and inclusivity group
- Pre and post questionnaires – used to measure change in specific factors and effectiveness of activity. We have built, and are user testing, a bank of impact measure questions mapping to NERUPI aims to allow cross comparison and overall assessment of the effectiveness of our strategy

- Qualitative discussions – bespoke focus groups and in-depth interviews are used where this is the most appropriate methodology, or as a third touch point to assess the longer-term impact

b. Proportionality – We will be categorising our activities to target evaluation resources most effectively by considering criticality in terms of ultimate aims, age of activity (i.e., untested or established), activity size and targeting, availability of participant data and existing evidence, programme complexity, and investment level. We deploy a range of evaluation levels from light touch polling to in-depth pre and post surveying, focus groups and tracking participant data. We have developed a tiering system to allow proportional and prioritised allocation of evaluation resource across our outreach and student-facing interventions.

c. Audience – We seek feedback from a broad range of audiences to gain multiple perspectives about a programme's impact on young people – for example those of parents, teachers and student ambassadors working at events.

Use of evidence and evaluation to inform programme design

Project design is underpinned by sector best practice and institutional evidence to evaluate the likelihood of the initiative resulting in a positive impact. We have developed clear theory of change models for all programmes and activities tied to our aims and objectives, ensuring that we are clear on the outcomes we expect to see. Theory of change explanations are firmly embedded into all project and evaluation plans.

At the programme design stage, the project lead meets with the WPEET for an evaluation planning meeting. All new programmes are mapped to the NERUPI framework, and the evaluation plan is designed to measure the impact in relation to each of the specific aims and objectives identified in the framework. Programme design at UEA is an iterative process. The overall cycle which all projects follow ensures that evaluation findings are fully reflected upon after each iteration, and these learnings are fed back into the project plan and used to inform future practice.

Interpreting results, understanding the impact, and using and sharing findings

Each project follows a clear cycle of planning, designing, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, reviewing, and reflecting. This final stage includes consideration of lessons learnt from the previous cycle, and specific actions to be implemented next time if impact has been less than expected. Analysis is conducted by a team of skilled professionals. With extensive experience in designing and implementing project evaluations, data analysis, interpretation, and communication of findings, the WPEET ensures that interpretation is objective and accurate, and that any conclusions or claims consider the limitations of the research design, and the quality and robustness of the data which has been generated. Findings relate directly to the NERUPI aims and objectives identified at the outset so there is a clear assessment of whether the expected programme outcomes have been met. Any areas for improvement are highlighted and specific recommendations for action made in relation to these. Project leads are then required to update their formal project plans, ensuring that evaluation findings translate into innovations in practice.

The sharing of evaluation findings follows a multi-pronged collaborative approach that engages both project leads and wider stakeholders and ensures learning from the findings:

- Sector and institutional evidence, gathered through a systematic process, is made available via a searchable Zotero library and regular summaries to ensure we remain up to date with the literature on what works. We publish a bimonthly ebulletin with the aim of keeping staff across the institution connected and up to date with university and sector research, insight, news, and events relating to widening access and participation across the student lifecycle
- Strategic review – all data collected during individual project evaluations are displayed through a series of one-stop interactive dashboards. This allows us to visualise and report evaluation findings at individual project level and aggregated for our entire offering. It also allows cross analysis by a range of factors, including project, school, demographic, and NERUPI aim
- Individual programme review – a written summary is delivered to the project lead

- Evaluation impact workshops – wrap-up and planning discussion workshops

We are committed to sharing evaluation findings externally and informing best practice across the sector, including not just 'what works' but, just as importantly, what we find doesn't work. We will be exploring options for how to do this most effectively. Current ideas include publishing findings on our website or contributing them to a centrally held repository in the sector.

As well as participating in sector conferences and events, UEA academics, widening access and participation practitioners, and WPEET all take up relevant opportunities to present work in this area and we are committed to increasing this activity over the lifespan of this plan. For example, we continue to share our evaluation expertise by presenting at sector events on our evaluation strategy and approach. In addition, we are committed to working with The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO)[32]. For example, during 2021 we partnered with TASO and seven other HE providers in a randomised controlled trial to understand the impact and effectiveness of summer schools in the sector. In addition, we continue to engage with TASO and NERUPI events, webinars, and resources to ensure that our internal evidence and evaluation toolkit is always up to date.

Evaluation of financial support

UEA is committed to ongoing monitoring, evaluation and modelling of our approach to financial support to ensure that spend in this area continues to be impactful and proportionate. We undertake an annual review assessing impact and potential enhancements or alternatives:

- Undertaking a range of analyses comparing bursary recipients and non-bursary recipients including looking at key metrical measures and analysing surveys of student experience
- Using the OfS toolkit to conduct statistical analysis of the impact of previous financial support packages at UEA on retention, success, and progression
- Addition of questions to regular student surveys, and our qualitative project following students through their first year, which uses some questions from the OfS toolkit

We are commissioning an external research agency to help us understand the cost and financial implications of living and studying at UEA. This will ensure the student voice is at the heart of our evaluation.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The university undertakes to monitor compliance with this plan and our progress towards milestones (including via the more detailed internal targets and milestones) with live reporting. Development of reporting and prompt communication of progress is the responsibility of our dedicated WPEET and overseen by our Head of Widening Access and Participation. Overall 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). Worsening or flatlining progress against milestones triggers a review, drawing on our evidence and evaluation work and the redevelopment of an evidence-based action plan that may, dependent on findings, include adjustment to theory of change, addition or adjustment to strategic measures, and/or change to activity.

In addition, our Head of Widening Access and Participation works to ensure that plan targets are embedded into the university's impact monitoring regimes to ensure our whole institutional approach to widening access and participation. For example, monitoring against underrepresented

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[32] The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) aims to eliminate equality gaps in higher education by promoting evidence-based approaches.

student group outcomes is included in all governance of student outcomes, and closing the Black attainment gap as a core KPI in the Teaching Excellence Plans developed by each of our Schools of study.

3.5 Provision of information to students

The *Reality Check* report[33] highlights several areas where more could be done by institutions to align expectations with reality, including better pre-arrival information around contact time, student welfare and support services, and financial literacy and budgeting. We recognise the importance of ensuring prospective students, especially those from underrepresented groups, have access to information to make decisions about higher education. We provide this information across a range of sources, from hard copy information leaflets, to emails and webpages.

UEA is committed to publishing clear and accessible information for existing and prospective students in terms of the fees we intend to charge and the details of the financial support we offer. This includes eligibility criteria, and the level of financial support students from underrepresented groups will be offered in each year of their studies. We will publish fee and financial support information in a dedicated section of our website as part of our content for undergraduate students. We will ensure we provide timely and accurate information to UCAS and Student Finance England so they can populate their course databases in good time. We will continue to ensure that students receive accurate information about the implications of any policy/funding changes. This is a link to a UEA webpage providing information on fees.. This is a link to a UEA webpage providing information about bursary support.

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[33] Unite, *Reality Check: A report on university applicants' attitudes and perceptions* (2017), Unite Students and HEPI.

Access and participation plan
Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: The University of East Anglia

Provider UKPRN: 10007789

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£6,935
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	City College Norwich 10004772	£6,935
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: The University of East Anglia

Provider UKPRN: 10007789

Investment summary

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

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

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£2,514,132.90	£2,939,415.82	£3,243,870.79	£3,286,065.95	£3,279,244.15
Access (pre-16)	£1,430,541.62	£1,672,527.60	£1,845,762.48	£1,869,771.53	£1,865,889.92
Access (post-16)	£962,912.90	£1,125,796.26	£1,242,402.51	£1,258,563.26	£1,255,950.51
Access (adults and the community)	£98,051.18	£114,637.22	£126,510.96	£128,156.57	£127,890.52
Access (other)	£22,627.20	£26,454.74	£29,194.84	£29,574.59	£29,513.20
Financial support (£)	£4,248,360.00	£3,998,660.00	£3,844,160.00	£3,861,260.00	£3,869,060.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£941,466.77	£968,532.64	£971,782.38	£980,998.25	£985,228.85

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£37,080,905.00	£39,174,810.00	£40,706,335.00	£41,107,705.00	£41,107,955.00
Access investment	6.8%	7.5%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%
Financial support	10.6%	9.4%	8.6%	8.6%	8.6%
Research and evaluation	2.5%	2.5%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
Total investment (as %HFI)	19.9%	19.3%	19.0%	19.0%	19.0%

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: The University of East Anglia

Provider UKPRN: 10007789

Targets

Table 2a - Access

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To improve the ration of participation in HE for students from areas of lower higher education participation Q1 V Q5	PTA_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Ratio intake to UEA for POLAR4 Q5:Q1 students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	2.2:1	1.9:1	1.8:1	1.7:1	1.6:1	1.5:1	Due to the developed nature of our Outreach approach, our milestones reflect steady annual increases in our proportional intake of young POLAR4 Q1 students working towards eliminating the gap in entry rates between the most (Q5) and least represented (Q1) groups by 2030-31.
To reduce the gap in participation in HE for students from underrepresented groups	PTA_2	Mature	Progression to UEA from Access to HE courses at local FECs (Using data on size of local HE courses provided by FECs and UEA feeder school data)	No	Other data source	2018-19	24.8%	28%	30%	32%	34%	36%	Access to HE agreements with local FECs will be in place by 2020 so we predict steady annual increases in intake of mature students from local Access to HE courses. We aim to have 36% attending UEA by the end of this plan halting the downward trend in our mature intake
	PTA_3												
	PTA_4												
	PTA_5												
	PTA_6												
	PTA_7												
	PTA_8												

Table 2b - Success

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To reduce the attainment gap for students from areas of lower higher education participation	PTS_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Percentage point gap in good honours attainment (1st and 2:1)between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	2.1	2.1	1.7	1.3	0.8	0	Allowing time for measures to be robustly developed and have impact, we predict slower initial movement on closing attainment gaps but with acceleration in the latter years of this plan to close the attainment gap between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students by 2024/25. This reflects the inherent time lag in measuring the impact of attainment raising activity as part of outreach and foundation/early UG years and the time required for full implementation of our Inclusive Education Policy.
To reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_2	Ethnicity	Percentage point gap in good honours attainment (1st and 2:1) between white and black students.	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	18.5	18.5	15.5	12.5	9.5	5.5	Allowing time robustly developed measures to have impact, we predict slower initial movement but with acceleration in the latter years and subsequent plan to close the attainment gap between Black and White students by 2027/28. This reflects the inherent time lag in measuring the impact of attainment raising activity as part of outreach and foundation/early UG years, the impact of transition and sense of belonging and the time required to implement Inclusive Education Policy.
To reduce the non- continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_3	Ethnicity	Percentage point gap in non- continuation between white and black students.	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	2.1	1.6	1.1	0.6	0.1	0	Building on existing activity and progress, we predict annual improvements to close retention gap between black and white students by 2024/25
To reduce the non- continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_4	Mature	Percentage point gap in non- continuation between young and mature students.	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	2.7	2.2	1.7	1.2	0.7	0.2	Building on existing activity and progress, we predict annual improvements to close retention gap between mature and young students by 2025/26
To reduce the non- continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_5	Ethnicity	Percentage point gap in non- continuation between white and mixed ethnicity students.	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	4.6	3.6	2.6	1.6	0.6	0	Building on existing activity and progress, we predict annual improvements to close retention gap between mixed ethnicity and white students by 2024/25
	PTS_6												
	PTS_7												
	PTS_8												

Table 2c - Progression

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)

To reduce the progression gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTP_1	Disabled	Percentage point gap in progression to graduate level employment and further study between between disabled and non-disabled students (Baslines and milestones are based on year of graduation)	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	1.4	1.4	1.2	1	0.8	0.5	Noting the need for us to develop a better understanding of reasons for gaps, suitably robust approaches and the inherent time lag on this metric we predict slow initial but accelerating progress. We aim to close the progression gap between disabled and non-disabled students by 2026/27. This target is based on DLHE data so indicative of the progress we want to make but adjustments will be make using Graduate Outcomes data).
To reduce the progression gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTP_2	Disabled	Percentage point gap in progression to graduate level employment and further study between between students with mental health issues and non-disabled students (Baselines and milestones are based on year of graduation)	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	13.6	13.6	12.6	10.6	7.6	4.6	Noting the need for us to develop a better understanding of reasons for gaps, suitably robust approaches and the inherent time lag on this metric we predict slow initial but accelerating progress. We aim to close the progression gap between students with mental health issues and non-disabled students by 2026/27. This target is based on DLHE data so indicative of the progress we want to make but adjustments will be make using Graduate Outcomes data).
	PTP_3												
	PTP_4												
	PTP_5												
	PTP_6												
	PTP_7												
	PTP_8												