Middlesex University

Access and participation plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

1. Assessment of performance

Approach

Our assessment of performance has given consideration to the OfS Access and Participation Plan (APP) dataset alongside an in-depth statistical analysis of internal data spanning the last five academic years. In accordance with OfS guidance, we undertook a complete gap analysis between underrepresented groups and other student groups across the student life cycle. We have taken into consideration the progress we have made over time in closing those gaps which was used as an evidence base when developing the plan. Our assessment of performance is focused on those areas where the statistical analysis has identified the most significant gaps or changes whilst being cognisant of the inherent challenges of identifying patterns within the data due to year-on-year variation. Our analysis has been complemented by external sector evidence and targeted analysis of specific cohort groups including a deep dive into the dynamics surrounding commuter students (many of whom possess characteristics relevant to this access and participation plan). In accordance with OfS guidance, we have analysed our data at depth across the whole student life cycle including further segmenting particular characteristics such as age, ethnicity and disability type, and applying our own statistical modelling on top of that already conducted by OfS. We are confident that this is the most detailed and nuanced analysis of disparities in student outcomes that we have undertaken to date. Our assessment of performance is supplemented by an internal report that provides a more detailed analysis of the data laying strong foundations for the targeting, development and future iteration of our interventions to achieve our strategic aim of ensuring equality of outcomes for all students.

We know that intersectionality is key to both understanding our students and ensuring they are supported to succeed. In 2018/19, at least 87% of our UK and EU students fell within at least one widening participation category[1] and many fall into more than one. For example, nearly one third of our students (32%) come from deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) and are the 1st generation in their household to enter higher education. As such, analysis of intersectionality is integrated into all stages of our assessment of performance and we have deliberately explored interaction effects in our statistical modelling to gauge the cumulative impact of multiple student characteristics.

This assessment of performance underpins our organisational focus on reducing disparities across student outcomes which sits at the heart of our latest Strategy, 'Transforming potential into success 2017-22'. Our Disparity Index KPI, a basket indicator which looks at gaps across continuation and progression to employment across a range of student characteristics, is one of our eight organisational KPIs and is regularly reported to our Board of Governors and Executive. This focus on disparities is also cascaded down to our programme and departmental-level data and used as part of annual quality and enhancement processes.

Access - All Groups

Middlesex University's entry profile for under-represented groups significantly exceeds national averages across numerous indicators. Within London, we favour the use of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) as a measure of the levels of deprivation experienced by our student intake. OfS data shows that we

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[1] Internally, we categorise a student as falling within a widening participation category if they meet one or more of the following criteria: home postcode is a deprived area as measured by being in IMD quintiles 1 and 2; low household income (below £25k); reported disability; BME/other ethnicity; mature (21+ years of age); home postcode is a low participation area as measured by being in POLAR3 quintiles 1 and 2.

have over 10% more students from the most deprived neighbourhoods (quintile 1) than exists in the national population of England (32.8% vs 22.1%). Furthermore, more than 6 in 10 (63.8%) of our 18-year old intake come from the two most deprived quintiles (1 and 2), a group that comprises just over 4 in 10 (42.4%) in the national profile.

Analysis of OfS data shows that for the 2017/18 intake, Middlesex had the highest percentage of students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) of any HE institution, with over half being eligible (51.7%). Middlesex was also highest in the sector for the 2016/17 intake. Internal data shows that 45% of our students are the first generation in their family to enter higher education (18/19 census, UK/EU students) and that more students from higher participation areas (POLAR3 quintiles 3-5) are actually from low income households (under £25k per annum) than high income households (81% compared to 19% for those students for whom data is available).

Regarding participation in HE as measured through POLAR, our results are heavily influenced by our position in London which has a profile of high participation rates. As such we are over-represented in the higher-participation quintiles (4 and 5) compared to the national average with OfS POLAR4 data on our 2017/18 18-year old intake showing that over two-thirds of our students (67.6%) fall into these quintiles compared to 43.3% nationally. Our largely London-focused entry profile combined with the capital's high participation rates means Key Performance Measure (KPM) 1 is challenging to address directly. As such we will continue to monitor our intake using a variety of measures including IMD, POLAR and household income.

Regarding ethnicity Middlesex reflects the diversity of London and is over-represented with regard to BAME ethnicities compared to the national breakdown. OfS data shows that over 70% (70.8%) of Middlesex's 18-year old intake in 2017/18 was BAME compared to a national profile of 16.1%. For this 'young' intake, Middlesex therefore has over 4 times the national average from BAME backgrounds. Data also shows that Middlesex has especially high proportions of students of Asian (37% compared to a national average of 8.2%) and Black (19.6% compared to a national average of 3.6%) ethnicity. Analysis of our internal trend data shows that BAME students are increasingly making up a higher proportion of our student body.

Nearly three in ten (28%) Middlesex students are 'mature' according to internal data from our 2018/19 census. This proportion has declined by 7% from 2014/15 with the fall spread evenly across mature student sub-groups.

Overall, 9% of our student population in 2018/19 had a registered disability which marks a slight decline from 11% in 2014/15. Segmenting this group shows that those with a reported learning difficulty are the biggest sub-group with 4% of the overall population in 2018/19 having this disability type.

The proportion of Middlesex students who are care leavers is relatively small at approximately 1% of the total population according to our internal 2018/19 census. In headcount terms this equates to 136 students, which is a significant increase on the 46 identified care leavers in the 2014/15 census. A recent report by the Centre for Social Justice[2] (published in May 2019) shows Middlesex to be amongst those universities with higher reported proportions of care leavers. Profile analysis shows that Middlesex students who are care leavers are more likely to be Black, female, mature (particularly over thirty years of age) and not have A-levels, which are important intersections in relation to our student success and progression measures.

Our recent analysis has sought to better understand additional student characteristics including their commute status. Our work, which has formed part of a collaborative multi-London institution project

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[2] Centre for Social Justice report: https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/12by24-Publication.pdf [Accessed 15.05.2019].

coordinated by London Higher, has shown that over three quarters (76%) of our UK students travel over 40 minutes to reach our campus and nearly two-thirds (65%) live in the parental or own home.

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Success - Non-continuation

OfS data relating to KPM 3 (non-continuation between most and least represented groups) shows that Middlesex University has no statistically significant gaps between these groups for both full-time and part-time students over the last five years. Our internal analysis shows that our challenges instead lie at the intersection of deprivation (IMD and household income), ethnicity and gender with qualification type and entry tariff both important additional factors. Regarding deprivation as measured through IMD, those from less deprived areas have better non-continuation outcomes than those from more deprived areas.

Focusing on deprivation alone masks a key intersection with gender. Whilst male and female students from less deprived areas have higher continuation rates, these rates decrease significantly for male students as levels of deprivation increase. In contrast, we do not see the same decline for female students. This corroborates a finding in the OfS dataset which shows a significant gap between male and female students in IMD quintiles 1-2 over three of the last five years. The five year trend and size of the gap is shown in the table 1.

Table 1: Gap in underperformance (non-continuation) of full-time male compared to female students from deprived areas over the last five years (source: OfS APP dataset)

Split	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
IMDQ12 Male v Female	-2.0%	-3.0%	-8.0%	-6.7%	-6.1%

The size and persistence of the gap means it has been selected as the focus of an institutional target (Section 2.1; Group 2).

The disparity also intersects substantially with ethnicity, which will be covered in section 1.2 and with entry qualification and tariff discussed in section 1.7.

Success - Attainment

Analysis and comparison of the OfS and our internal data for both IMD and POLAR shows that attainment gaps do exist but that they are also intricately linked to intersections with ethnicity. Clear relationships are found across different ethnic groups but analysis of IMD reveals a specific disparity relating to those in IMD quintile 1. Table 2 below shows the gap between IMD Q1 and IMD Q2-5 over the last five years.

Table 2: Gap in attainment between full-time IMD quintile 1 and IMD quintiles 2-5 over the last five years (source: OfS APP dataset)

Split	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
IMD Q1 v IMD Q2345	-7%	-8%	-8%	-8%	-6%

There are significant intersections here with ethnicity and qualification type, which are the subject of their own institutional attainment targets. Students in IMD quintile 1 are more likely than those in other quintiles to have only BTEC qualifications (over 30% have only BTEC qualifications) and they are twice as likely to be of Black ethnicity as any other ethnicity (40% of IMD Q1 students are of Black ethnicity) and the least likely of all quintiles to be White. Looking across ethnic groups, 88% of students in IMD quintile 1 fall within one of the BAME groups. As a result, strategic measures designed to address gaps between ethnic groups will also have a significant impact on the disparity across IMD quintiles. Even so, due to

the persistence of this gap in relation to a specific quintile, it is included as a standalone institutional target.

Progression to employment or further study

Analysis of internal data shows a relationship between improved progression outcomes and IMD (and to a lesser extent household income) with those from more deprived areas doing worse. However, our statistical models revealed strong intersections between IMD and ethnicity and age with household income, qualification type and entry tariff also influential. As such, these findings will be outlined in section 1.2.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Success - Non-continuation

OfS data shows Asian students out-perform other ethnicities with internal data showing that White and Asian students perform similarly well and significantly better than students of Black or Other/unknown ethnicity. This also applies to both young and mature students when averaged over multiple years.

Our internal analysis has revealed that the intersection with gender is critical to understanding this dynamic and for this reason we are selecting two institutional targets around non-continuation which address this. The first, as already outlined in section 1.1 aims to reduce the gap in relation to deprivation and gender, and the second focuses on the ethnicity gap.

The OfS access and participation dataset shows there to be significant non-continuation gaps across ethnic groups. Averaged over five years, continuation rates are 88.7% for Asian, 86.6% for White, 86% for Other and 84.1% for Black – a gap of 4.6% from highest to lowest. The five year trend and size of the gap is shown in Table 3. This persistent gap is addressed through our institutional targets that seek to reduce the gap between Asian and White students and those of Black, Mixed or Other ethnicity (Target group 1; section 2.1). In accordance with OfS guidance we have further broken down ethnic groups in order to better understand dynamics relating to disparities. This has shown some small variations for Black ethnic sub-groups and relatively little for Asian sub-groups, although there are some more noticeable gender gaps for specific sub-groups.

Table 3: Gap in underperformance (non-continuation) of full-time Black, Mixed and Other ethnicities (BMO) compared to that of Asian and White (AW) students over the last five years.

Split	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
BMO v AW	-4.0%	-0.3%	-4.3%	-4.4%	-2.4%

Success Attainment - (KPM 4 – attainment of Black compared to White students)

Our analysis of the OfS data has corroborated statistical analysis of internal data, revealing significant gaps between ethnic groups in relation to attainment of good awards. This is directly relevant to OfS's Key Performance Measure 4 (KPM 4). The OfS data shows that the attainment gap between Black and White full-time and part-time 'all undergraduates' is statistically significant and has been for the five years of the dataset. OfS figures show the gap between Black and White students getting good degrees has varied between 17% - 23% for full-time students (Table 4) and 26% – 46% for part-time students over the last five years (although there has been an improvement from 43% - 26% over the last three years).

Table 4: Gap in underperformance (attainment) of full-time Black compared to White students (KPM4) over the last five years.

Split	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Black v White	-20%	-19%	-23%	-22%	-17%

Analysis of our performance against that of the sector shows that that even though Middlesex has a sizeable gap which needs to be addressed, the size of the gap is not amongst the most significant in the sector. For the most recent year available, Middlesex's gap was 6% smaller than that of the sector (17% compared to 23%). Reducing the current 17% gap is the focus of an institutional target with our performance (Section 2.1; Group 6) compared to sector being taken into consideration in relation to the reduction of unexplained and structural gaps.

To better understand the internal nature of the disparity and where to therefore target our strategic measures, we have run further statistical modelling to isolate the influence of structural and unexplained factors. We found that, of the structural factors we modelled, subject studied, level of deprivation and entry qualifications all have an impact on the size of the gap. However, of the total 17% gap, our models calculate that these structural factors are only responsible for around 7% leaving an unexplained gap of around 10%.

Our interrogation of the impact of structural factors has reconfirmed our previous analysis on the intersectionality of issues, particularly surrounding ethnicity, deprivation, entry qualification type and tariff. For example, we know that reducing the attainment gap between students with A-levels and students with BTECs will directly contribute to reducing attainment disparities across ethnic groups – realising our A-level vs BTEC attainment target should lead to a minimum 2% disparity reduction between White and Black students and the reality will likely be a much greater reduction.

Following OfS guidance we have also broken down the Black ethnic group into sub-groups to gain additional insights. This has shown that on average Black Caribbean students have better attainment outcomes than Black African students (a gap of 5.6% in the most recent year). Our analysis shows that these results intersect strongly with gender and are likely influenced by structural factors such as subject studied.

Whilst the gap in attainment outcomes of our Black students is most significant, our analysis has also shown disparities between White students and students of other ethnicities for both full-time and part-time modes of study. Table 5 below shows the disparity between students of Asian, Mixed and Other (AMO) and White students over the last five years.

Table 5: Gap in attainment of full-time Asian, Mixed and Other (AMO) ethnicity students compared to White students over the last five years (source: OfS APP dataset).

Split	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Asian, Mixed and Other (AMO) v White	-6.1%	-6.9%	-11.4%	-9.4%	-9.2%

Although not as substantial as the gap between Black and White students, the historical trend does show a persistent gap and for this reason it is supported by an institutional target. Given the differing scales of the gaps between ethnic groups and varying intersections, we have selected to use two complementary targets – one focused on Black students and the other on Asian, Mixed and Other students – rather than attempt to reduce this to a single BAME target.

Analysis of our part-time students shows that gaps exist across ethnic groups in this cohort. Data reveals that non-White part-time students have similar outcomes and for this reason they have been aggregated into an Asian, Black, Mixed and Other group. Table 6 below shows the disparity between this aggregated group and White students over the last five years.

Table 6: Gap in attainment of part-time Asian, Black, Mixed and Other (ABMO) ethnicity students compared to White students over the last five years (source: OfS APP dataset).

Split	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Asian, Black, Mixed and Other (ABMO) v White	-36%	-45%	-38%	-41%	-24%

It should be noted that population sizes are significantly smaller for the part-time student cohort when compared to full-time and this partially explains why percentages vary so much from year-to-year. For example, the number of students in the ABMO group in Year 5 was just 140 and only 40 in Year 3. Total numbers for the whole part-time cohort were 490 in Year 5 and 240 in Year 3. Even with the small associated numbers, the size of the disparity has made the gap the focus of an institutional target.

The part-time cohort has been the subject of additional statistical modelling to better understand the balance of structural and unexplained factors driving the disparity. The analysis has found that, in contrast to the full-time cohort, disparities between part-time students are much more likely to be the result of structural factors. In other words, the unexplained gap is considerably smaller.

For example, taking the 24% gap in the most recent year, our modelling found that approximately three-quarters of this is the result of structural factors including subject studied, entry qualification and tariff, age of students and IMD. This leaves an unexplained gap of only around 6%.

Of these structural factors, subject studied has by far the biggest impact and contributes towards up to half of the overall disparity. We have internally investigated this dynamic and know that a significant driver in this area has been our Professional Practice provision (delivered through our previously named School of Work Based Learning), which had very positive attainment outcomes in the years of the OfS dataset but attracted a much higher proportion of White students. Given the small numbers in the overall part-time cohort, this had a more significant impact on the disparity in the OfS dataset than it would have had if it were full-time provision.

With over 70% of our part-time students being in the School of Health and Education, particularly in our nursing cohorts, we are aware of where and how we need to target our interventions within the University. We know many of our nursing students are somewhat atypical in terms of mode of study in that we teach many of them on a full-time basis but, as their programmes entail fewer than 24 weeks of academic study per year, they are officially classified by HESA and OfS as part-time students. As a result, our strategic measures and interventions will be tailored to our own internal dynamics and nature of our provision.

Our statistical modelling of structural factors has confirmed the influence of qualification type and tariff. Here the intersection with age creates different dynamics for part-time students in comparison to full-time students. For example, we have identified elsewhere the disparity between students with A-levels and students with BTECs and this is also a factor for part-time students. However, our mature students are much more likely to have neither A-level or BTEC qualifications yet they make up 60% of the part-time cohort, a much higher proportion than in the full-time cohort. What this has shown is that the issue of A-level or BTEC qualification type is a structural factor that is much more likely to affect our young part-time students.

Although we have not categorised it as a structural factor in our statistical models, we know that there is a significant intersection with gender for our part-time students. For both White and BAME part-time students, female students have better attainment outcomes than male students. However, more part-time White students are female (85%) than part-time BAME students (71%) and this influences the overall disparity.

Our statistical models show IMD to be an influential factor which reconfirms our justification for making it the subject of complementary targets and strategic measures. Analysis shows that part-time BAME students are over twice as likely to be from the most deprived areas compared to White students (42% of Black students are from IMD Q1 areas compared to just 16% of White students). White students are also three times more likely to be from the least deprived areas with 37% of White students living in IMD quintile 4-5 areas compared to just 11% of BAME students. This means level of deprivation as measured through IMD is a significant structural factor which influences our part-time cohort more than our full-time cohort.

Given the size of the unexplained gap and our thorough understanding of the structural factors influencing the gap, our target aims to both eliminate the unexplained gap and significantly reduce the structural gap.

Progression to employment or further study

Ethnicity and its intersections with IMD, gender and age are key areas for Middlesex University when it comes to progression to employment and forms a central part of our commitment to increasing diversity in the workplace. Both external OfS and internal data point towards significant disparities across ethnicities over the last five years of data but also show that we have substantially reduced those gaps more recently.

OfS data shows that over the last five years, White students have outperformed other ethnicities including Asian and Black students and that this relationship is statistically significant. However, analysis of the historical trend over the last five years shows that, whilst persistent gaps have remained at sector level, Middlesex has significantly reduced the gap in the most recent year for those graduating in 2017 (Year 5). Compared to the preceding year the gap between White students and those of other ethnicities (for the all undergraduate cohort) reduced from 19% to 0%, whilst the gap between White and Black students reduced from 23% to -1%, meaning that for the first time in five years Black students outperformed White students on progression to employment or further study. This compares to continuing gaps at sector level in Year 5 of 3.9% and 4.8% respectively.

Internal data and analysis support this significant reduction in disparities. Enhancing progression to employment or further study and reducing outcome disparities across student groups has been an important focus area for Middlesex University as part of its new Strategy and we expect that the improvements are a direct result of the added emphasis in this area. Nevertheless, we will continue to monitor disparities closely as the sector moves over to using results from the Graduate Outcomes survey and as LEO data is refined.

1.3 Mature students

Success - Non-continuation

OfS data shows that there has been a statistically significant narrowing of the gap in continuation between young and mature students over the last five years. In percentage terms, the gap for full-time all undergraduates has reduced from mature students underperforming against young students by 6.6% to now performing better by 0.3% (a shift of 6.8% when rounded).

This trend is corroborated by internal data and analysis which shows significant improvements for the cohorts aged 21-24 years and 25-29 years of age. Whilst internal analysis found a weak relationship between young students underperforming against those aged over 30 years of age, the majority of the reduction in disparity between young and mature can be explained by improvements for the 21-24 and 25-29 year old cohorts, rather than young students performing worse.

Success - Attainment

Our analysis of OfS data did not reveal any statistically significant attainment gaps between young and mature students, either at a general level or in relation to any specific mature sub-group. However, we continue to monitor any statistically significant gaps between age sub-groups.

Progression to employment or further study

Mature students do very well at Middlesex University when it comes to progression to graduate-level employment or further study. Internally we know that the high numbers of mature students in our School of Health and Education, who undertake courses aligned to particular professions such as nursing and teaching, contribute significantly to this dynamic.

OfS data shows that young students on average do not have as positive progression outcomes as mature students, and specifically when compared to a number of mature age brackets including those aged 26-30, 31-40 and 41-50 years of age. The mean gap in progression between young (16-20 year olds) and mature (21+ years) students over the last four years is 14% and this shrinks to 6% once the School of Health and Education is removed. Mature students therefore have considerably better progression outcomes than young students at the institutional level, even when the impact of Health and Education is excluded.

1.4 Disabled students

Success - Non-continuation

Analysis of OfS data revealed no statistically significant gaps or changes between students with a reported disability and those without. In line with OfS guidance, we analysed our internal data by different types of disability, using five years of data to overcome issues with small sample sizes. This revealed that some students with certain types of disability such as 'cognitive and learning' disabilities, did better on average than those without a reported disability. However, it also showed some disparities with students with 'mental health' disabilities in particular having significantly worse continuation rates. Analysis shows a gap of over 5% between those with a 'mental health' disability and students with other reported disabilities and those with no reported disability. This is corroborated in the OfS access and participation dataset.

Trend analysis, however, shows that despite having a persistent and significant gap for three of the last four years, Middlesex has made substantial progress in the most recent year – progress that has seen it eliminate the gap and outperform the sector. It will continue to be monitored closely to ensure improvements are sustained.

Success – Attainment

OfS data did not reveal any significant attainment gaps for students with disabilities over multiple years of the dataset. This observation was generally corroborated by internal data, although more detailed analysis into intersectionality did show a relationship in four of the last five years, where mature students with a reported disability underperformed against those without a reported disability.

In general the gap between reported/no reported disability for mature students increases with age – the gap being 4% for those aged 21-24 years, 8% for those aged 25-29 and 11% for those aged 30+ years. However, it should be noted that denominator populations become very small at this level of segmentation with only a couple to a few dozen falling into each category in each academic year.

Progression to employment or further study

OfS data shows no statistically significant gaps between the progression rates of students with a reported disability compared to those with no reported disability. This is corroborated by internal data and analysis

which shows that for the last three years, students with reported disabilities have performed as well as, if not better than those without reported disabilities.

1.5 Care leavers

Success - Non-continuation

Internal analysis revealed 181 students classified as care leavers over the last four academic years (2014-17) that can be tracked through Middlesex's internal measure of non-continuation. Over the four years, care leavers averaged 5.6% worse than the rest of the cohort. There are important intersections with other factors with many care leavers also falling into other disadvantaged groups such as not having A-levels and being of Black ethnicity. However, the fact that many are over 30 years of age – which is the best performing age group on continuation – means the poor outcome for care leavers can only be partially explained by the intersection with other measures of disadvantage. As a result this 'unexplained gap' will be monitored closely internally.

Success – Attainment and Progression to employment or further study

Small numbers combined with poor data coverage that has only improved in recent years presents challenges for statistical analysis of care leavers' attainment and progression rates. For example, in terms of attainment, only 44 students are identified in the denominator population of 4,837 (0.9%) for the two academic years of 2016 and 2017. Numbers for progression to graduate employment are even smaller and do not allow for statistical analysis at present.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

Success

Given the complex profiles of our students, much of the preceding analysis has already attempted to look at intersections across characteristics. However, our analysis of OfS and internal data has revealed key intersections to exist between ethnicity, deprivation (as measured through IMD) and gender. Qualification type and entry tariff also affect these relationships.

Non-continuation

In addition to the intersections already discussed, internal analysis highlighted dynamics around entry qualification type and entry tariff which are addressed in section 1.7. It also picked up some interaction effects for certain cohorts where the combined effects of characteristics were observed to have a greater impact than would be expected of the characteristics individually.

For non-continuation, the combination of being Asian and male had a cumulative impact beyond each respective characteristic when compared to males of other ethnicities and Asian females. In relation to our Level 3 Foundation Year, being Black and having BTEC entry qualifications was linked to poorer outcomes (compared to Black students with no BTECs and non-Black students with BTECs) whereas, being Asian and high IMD, Black with A-levels and Asian with A-levels were positive predictors of better continuation rates. Other key intersections highlighted in our analysis included links with household income, with a tendency for low income households to do worse, and entry tariff with young students with high tariff more likely to continue.

Attainment

Our analysis has highlighted numerous intersections regarding attainment which are built into the preceding sections.

Progression to employment or further study

Analysis of OfS and internal data shows strong intersections between IMD, ethnicity, age and gender. These are also influenced by and interact with qualification type, entry tariff and household income. Trend analysis of OfS data shows that being White and from a less deprived neighbourhood is a positive predictor of improved outcomes but that Middlesex's performance in the last of the five years in the dataset has largely bridged gaps in this area (with the gap between White and high IMD and other ethnicities and low IMD narrowing by 23%). Nevertheless, this will remain an area that Middlesex continues to prioritise and monitor closely in order to ensure progress is sustained.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

Commuter students

We have recently concluded a major investigation into commuter students, which has formed part of a collaborative multi-London institution project coordinated by London Higher. This has shown that over three quarters (76%) of our UK students travel over 40 minutes to reach our campus and nearly two-thirds (65%) live in the parental or own home.

Statistical interrogation has shown a significant relationship between travel time and non-continuation rates, albeit one that is complex and varies by student cohort. The relationship is more significant and linear for mature students with increases in travel time clearly linked to a deterioration in continuation rates. Analysis shows that mature students aged 21-24 years of age and commuting over an hour are a particular target group.

For young students, living within 20 minutes of campus is a clear and statistically significant positive indicator of improved continuation rates. For these students, proximity to campus overrides structural factors such as entry tariff and qualification type and virtually eliminates the gender gap. However, as travel time increases beyond 20 minutes disparities in continuation grow unevenly with male students, those of Black and Mixed ethnicity and those with low/middle tariff and/or BTEC qualifications doing noticeably worse.

The research has revealed complex intersections with geographies of deprivation and connectivity in London with those travelling between 60-80 minutes to reach campus being more likely to come from more deprived areas and have more complicated journeys. This is leading Middlesex to better understand the student experience of their journeys rather than just time or distance travelled and the impacts of other factors such as part-time work. Adequately supporting commuter students, whose characteristics intersect with many outlined in this plan, is an organisational priority for 2019-20 and will be supported by a comprehensive programme of work.

Students entering with BTEC qualifications

Our statistical modelling shows qualification type on entry to be highly significant in relation to student outcomes. For young students, possessing A-levels was a strong positive indicator and possessing BTECs was a strong negative indicator across the three key measures of continuation, attainment and progression to graduate employment. Using Middlesex's internal measure of continuation of Foundation Year and Year 1 students, data shows a gap of 8% with A-level students averaging 86.1% continuation over the last five years compared to 78.1% for those with BTECs (with those with a mix or neither falling in-between) (Table 4). In terms of the proportion of Middlesex students falling into each category, approximately a third have only BTECs, about a quarter have just A-levels, just under 10% have both and around 30% have neither (these students being predominantly mature).

Table 7: Gap in underperformance (non-continuation) of full-time students with BTEC qualifications compared to students with A-levels over the last five years.

Split	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
BTEC v A-levels	-6.5%	-6.5%	-6.7%	-9.1%	-8.0%

Entry qualification type intersects with ethnicity, IMD and gender with Middlesex students with BTECs more likely to be Black, male and from a deprived neighbourhood (specifically more likely to be from IMD quintiles 1-3). However, our statistical analysis has shown that even when age, gender and ethnicity are taken into account, those with A-levels still markedly outperform those with BTECs on continuation. To address this, improving the continuation rates of our students with BTEC qualifications is one of our institutional targets (section 2.1; Group 3).

Those with low entry tariff

Entry tariff is a significant predictor of performance across continuation, attainment and progression with those with higher tariff generally doing better. However this is complicated by the fact that our BTEC students have higher average entry tariff points, but do worse than those with A-levels across the three measures. This essentially works to dilute the strength of the relationship between high tariff points and better student outcomes.

Research by DECE[3] shows a clear relationship between students' best three reported A-level grades and their good awards attainment (which evidences the link between tariff and attainment) but our analysis shows that qualification type and particularly the inclusion of those with BTECs distorts these relationships. For example, our internal data for non-continuation shows that medium tariff students perform worse than those with low tariff – a result that can be attributed to the increased number of students with BTEC in the middle tariff category.

Gaps in good award attainment exist for both those with A-levels and BTECs, but the highest tariff BTEC students only just do better on average than low-tariff A-level students. Based on internal data, the attainment gap in 2017/18 between those with BTECs and those with A-levels was 17.5% (Table 5) and reducing this is an institutional target (Section 2.1; Group 4).

Table 8: Gap in underperformance (attainment) of full-time students with BTEC qualifications compared to students with A-levels over the last five years.

Split	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
BTEC v A-levels	-17.4%	-15.3%	-25.3%	-26.8%	-17.5%

Internal data for the 2015-17 academic years on progression to graduate employment or further study shows that gaps persist beyond graduation, with significant gaps within the A-level and BTEC cohorts. Those BTEC students with low entry tariff have particularly poor outcomes when it comes to gaining graduate employment and we will continue to monitor this once Graduate Outcomes is released.

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[3] Durham University Evidence Centre for Education (2019) Using contextualised admissions to widen access to higher education: a guide to the evidence base.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

2.1 Target groups

Group 1: Non-continuation of students of Black, Mixed and Other ethnicities, compared to that of Asian and White students (source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

Group 2: Non-continuation of male student from deprived areas (IMD 1-2) compared to female students from deprived areas (source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset). This, combined with target one, addresses the intersectionality between ethnicity, deprivation and gender.

Group 3: Non-continuation of students with only BTEC qualifications compared to those with only A-levels using Middlesex's internal measure of non-continuation (source: Middlesex internal data).

Group 4: Attainment of students with only BTEC qualifications compared to those with only A-levels (source: Middlesex internal data)

Group 5: Attainment of full-time students from IMD quintile 1 compared to those in IMD quintiles 2-5 (source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

Group 6: Attainment of full-time Black students compared to White students (KPM4) (source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

Group 7: Attainment of full-time Asian, Mixed and Other students compared to White students (source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

Group 8: Attainment of part-time Asian, Black, Mixed and Other (ABMO) students compared to White students (source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

2.2 Aims and objectives

This section of the plan sets out the University's ambition towards equality of opportunity and outcomes for all students and focuses on the key target groups identified in our assessment of performance. The Middlesex University Strategy 2017-2022 sets out our mission of 'transforming potential into success'. Our plan sets out to ensure equality across the student life cycle and is informed by our assessment of performance. We aim to maintain our performance in terms of access and progression and to reduce disparities in continuation and attainment which form the main focus of the plan. This will be achieved through the following objectives:

Objective 1: To eliminate the non-continuation gap between Asian/White students and those of Black/mixed/Other ethnicities by 2028-2029.

Objective 2: To eliminate the non-continuation gap between low IMD female and male students by 2028-2029.

Objective 3: To eliminate the non-continuation gap between students entering University with A Levels and those with BTECs by 2028-2029.

Objective 4: To eliminate the good honours attainment gap between students entering University with A Levels and those with BTECs by 2030-2031.

Objective 5: To eliminate the good honours attainment gap between students from IMD Q1 and those from IMD Q2-5 by 2030-31.

Objective 6: To eliminate the good honours attainment gap between white and BAME students by 2030-31.

The objectives within this section focus on non-continuation and the attainment gap between particular underrepresented groups and take into account the extensive intersectionality existing between the target

groups given that 87% of our students belong to one or more underrepresented groups. They are ambitious but grounded in our understanding of where unexplained gaps exist and our evaluation of how they can be closed. In setting our targets we have statistically analysed our internal data, modelled the intersectionality of target trajectories, corroborated results against sector evidence such as the OfS access and participation dataset and TEF split metrics, considered the influence of structural factors through our benchmarked, comparator and sector performance, and ensured alignment and integration with our other organisational targets. In all cases a reduction in the disparity is associated with the target group improving its outcomes rather than any worsening of the outcomes for their counterparts. For objectives 1 and 2 this will include monitoring non-continuation for IMD Q1/2 females, IMD Q1/2 Asians and IMD Q1/2 White students and addressing any issues with the way the target is operating should outcomes for these groups worsen. Although the assessment of performance identified no significant gaps within our student access or progression to employment stages of the student life cycle, the University remains committed to maintaining performance in these areas. In line with our strategic plan, we will continue to invest and embed wider interventions aligned to access and progression as outlined in our 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan.

3. Strategic measures

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

The Middlesex University Strategy 2017-2022 sets out our mission of 'transforming potential into success'. Our institutional approach is underpinned by a set of core values putting students first so that they are at the heart of everything we do and we have a culture that is centred on working together to achieve more, ensuring everyone is treated with respect. The University is proud of its long-established reputation in widening participation and our strategic aims are aligned to an inclusive whole student lifecycle approach developed in partnership with staff and students. We provide a diverse range of access pathways and improve student outcomes through the right choice of course and courses that are designed to prepare students for the world of work.

A signature feature of our approach to learning and teaching is practice-based pedagogy, which informs all our activities from professional development to building design. How we use our students' diversity is central to this, from the extent to which we use peer-to-peer learning to co-curricular initiatives such as our Language and Culture exchange that engages hundreds of our students in teaching each other languages, leveraging the potential of our multi-lingual student community. Our overarching approach is grounded in our theory of change with our interventions aimed at reducing differences in outcomes related to students' backgrounds and prior attainment which is central to our developing innovative pedagogic practice and student support drawing on our evaluation of what works and wider evidence base from across the sector.

Our Strategy is linked to a series of Enabling Plans that are informed by our internal data, the evaluation of interventions and engagement with the external evidence base. Grounded in our theory of change the Enabling Plans model the anticipated impact of our interventions and test our assumptions about how change will occur. An emphasis is placed on student and staff perspectives and experiences, with our framework aiming to build a shared understanding within the University community about the focus and purpose of the activities we undertake. It looks to increase shared ownership of our Strategy through ongoing communication amongst stakeholders which is informed by ongoing monitoring, pre-planned evaluations and integrated opportunities for learning. For example, our Staff Conference in 2019 was focused on 'Shaping our Future', and our Annual Learning & Teaching conference entitled 'Learning for life – meaningful assessment for the changing world of tomorrow' provides opportunities to engage and contribute to our Strategy going forward.

Alignment with other strategies

Implementation of the Middlesex University Strategy 2017-2022 is operationalised through a series of Enabling Plans that are integrated with local-level annual team plans. Our overarching aims are achieved through our Enabling Plans which are further clustered into specific action plans aimed at reducing differential outcomes across the student life cycle adopting theory of change principles. This approach has been successful with the implementation of the Retention Action Plan leading to a 4.2% improvement in continuation for the 2016/17 starting cohort. Likewise, the Employability Action Plan has led to a significant improvement in progression (see section 1). Building on this success, a Wellbeing Action Plan was introduced in 2018/19 focusing on promoting wellbeing and specific interventions with an emphasis on supporting students with mental health disabilities. An additional 'Closing the Gap' Action Plan has been developed that unifies our evidence informed strategic measures into a single overarching plan which will be introduced from the start of the 2020-21 and will enable us to achieve the longer-term objectives as set out in this plan.

The targets and objectives set out in this plan are aligned across our internal policies and processes, including the University's Equality Objectives and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 which are overseen by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee. To strengthen existing governance and processes, we established a Diversity Advisory Board whose membership includes external experts, University and Students' Union representatives and a member of the governing body. The Board reviews and shapes the University's approach to reducing disparities as well as ensuring development of diversity as a signature Middlesex strength.

Middlesex University became the first UK university to be awarded the UK Investor in Equality and Diversity (UKIED) Corporate Gold/Embedded Charter Mark in 2018 in recognition of our robust and extensive equality and diversity framework which the assessors found to be meaningfully embedded across the University's practices and processes. The final report highlighted that there was "overwhelming and compelling evidence, particularly in relation to students, that Middlesex University is genuinely committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within all elements of the learner experience."

The strategic approach and interventions within our 2021-2025 Access and Participation Plan extend beyond the life of the Middlesex University Strategy 2017-22. The University is committed to the delivering the strategic measures laid out in this plan which will be at the heart of our new University Strategy after 2022.

Strategic measures

This section outlines the key strategic measures and initiatives we will implement in order to reduce disparities in non-continuation and good honours attainment for students from BAME and lower socioeconomic groups. Our overarching theory of change approach is summarised in figure 1 with additional illustrative logic chains provided for each individual strategic measure. The strategic measures are aligned to our objectives and are predominantly universal due to 87% of our students falling into one or more target groups as well as given the high degree of intersectionality that exists. Our plan highlights how we will shift towards more targeted interventions as we improve the way we collect, evaluate and track data to gain a better understanding of what works. The measures are informed by sector wide practices that work and we provide indicative timelines for how these measures will be implemented over the duration of the 5-year plan.

The strategic measures build upon a strong foundational evidence base gained from the evaluation of initiatives introduced through previous Access Agreements and Access Participation Plans. For example, we will expand and build on the successful measures within our Retention Action Plan that led to a 4.2% improvement in continuation for the 2016/17 starting cohort and narrowed the gap between male and female students as well as BAME/other and white students (see section 1). University wide strategic measures are based on theory of change modelling informed by evidence of underlying drivers such as BTEC qualifications and commuter status. The plan is underpinned by a more detailed theory of change

modelling document that outlines key change assumptions, logic and impact of activities and the evaluative approach which will be undertaken. The strategic measures are supported by additional local initiatives that address specific disciplinary contexts and needs. Our strategic measures focus on the success stage of the student life cycle, however, we remain committed to maintaining performance in areas where our assessment of performance identified no significant gaps and will continue to invest in and embed wider access and progression interventions as outlined in our 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan.
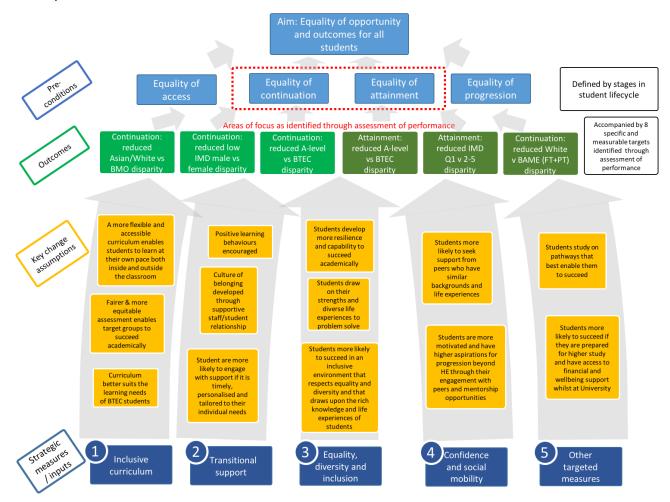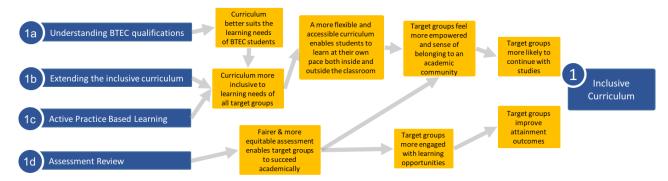
Figure 1. Overarching Theory of Change logic model for the Middlesex University Access and Participation Plan.

Strategic Measure 1: Inclusive Curriculum

Interventions and activities are designed to primarily impact outcomes for objectives 1, 3, 4 and 6.

1a. Better understanding BTEC qualifications

Key change assumption: Students benefit from a curriculum and teaching methods that are adapted to the learning needs of those entering with vocationally orientated qualifications.

Our assessment of performance identified that students entering University with only BTEC qualifications do significantly less well than students with A-levels or other qualifications. We are working in partnership with our FE strategic partner the Capital City College Group (the largest FE colleges group in London) to build a better shared understanding of the reformed BTEC qualifications and the transitional support students need when entering higher education. This shared understanding is disseminated through a range of forums including our Annual Learning and Teaching Conference. In 2019-20 we will pilot peer observation opportunities between the Group and University so that academic staff understand methods of teaching and the knowledge and skills students entering with BTEC qualifications have. This understanding will help refine and develop the way we support the transition of students entering with BTEC qualifications from 2020-21 in order to reduce the continuation and attainment gap. We will further develop and refine this approach from 2020-21 informed by practices from across the sector (e.g. HEPI report on reforming BTECs[4]) and will contribute to the ongoing national consultations about the proposed T-level vocational qualifications and are following these developments so that we can support the transition of such students into degree level study. Our approach will be evaluated through a synthesis of peer observation exercises between Middlesex and Capital City College Group and through engagement with external good practice.

1b. Extending the inclusive curriculum

Key change assumption: Students benefit from more accessible and inclusive learning resources allowing them to learn flexibly at their own pace.

The inclusive curriculum project was initiated in 2017-18 and is now embedded across all programmes of study. This work was informed by Professor Liz Thomas (consultancy) leading to the development of a set of threshold standards to ensure learning resources are accessible, embed diversification principles and support learning both before and after timetabled learning sessions. This work will be extended through the introduction of a Diversity Tool Kit (see intervention 3b below) and will be further enhanced in 2019-20 by the introduction of Technology Enhanced Learning Threshold Standards which will be embedded across all programmes by 2021-22. The standards will be reviewed annually to respond to the rapidly changing digital landscape and drawing on our evaluative evidence base of what works both internally and across the sector. The new standards focus on making learning more flexible, enabling students to learn at their own pace outside the classroom. The standards directly respond to student feedback and are informed by our research into the needs of our commuter students and address target group gap reduction for students who are often time poor due to the complex lives they lead (section 1.7). Embedding of the threshold standards across our programmes of study will be supported from 2019-20 by trained Student Digital Champions who work in partnership with academics to create more accessible and engaging learning resources. An initial mixed methodology evaluation of the standards will be undertaken in 2020-21 and a full evaluation of impact in 2022-23.

1c. Active Practice Based Learning

Key change assumption: Students from vocational educational backgrounds benefit from a wider range of active learning opportunities.

The University Strategy 2017-22 sets out the vision 'to engage our students in active, practice-based learning with teaching enriched by research and innovative practice that creates highly employable graduates'. A key objective in developing innovative pedagogic practice is to reduce differences in outcomes related to students' backgrounds and prior attainment. Our theory of change model predicts this approach will contribute to a narrowing of the non-continuation and attainment gap between BTEC and A-level students as it is more inclusive of the prior knowledge and skills of students entering with
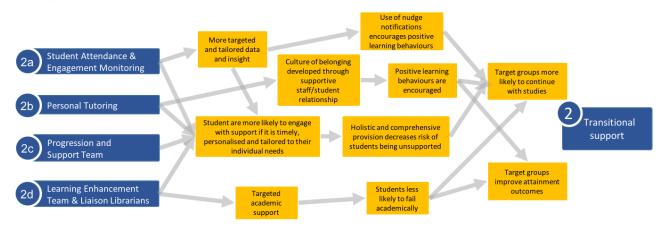
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[4] HEPI Report (2017) 'Reforming BTECs: Applied General qualifications as a route to higher education'

vocationally-orientated qualifications. In 2018-19 our Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement developed a tool kit of signature pedagogies designed to support academics embed active, practice based learning within their teaching. We are also exploring how learning space design can facilitate active practice based pedagogies which will inform our estates strategy going forward. We will continue our ongoing case study research evaluation led by the Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement as part of an embedded approach of sharing best practice. Cumulative impact evaluation will be undertaken every two years (2020-21 and 2022-23) with the potential to incorporate an appreciative enquiry component.

1d. Assessment Review

Key change assumption: Fairer and more equitable assessment practices enable BAME students and those entering with BTEC qualifications to succeed academically.

In 2019-20 the University will initiate a comprehensive review of assessment processes and practices informed by SUMS Consulting. The review will focus on reducing the success gaps for our target student groups leading to the development of measures that include: University wide adoption of anonymous marking to address perceptions of marking bias particularly amongst BAME students; a review of assessment scheduling with a focus on spreading the assessment load over the academic year to reduce assessment anxiety particularly amongst students with mental health disabilities; shorter reassessment period with more focused support for students who have to retake assessments (disproportionally affects our target student groups); a shift towards active, practice based assessment practices which support students with more vocational entry qualifications such as BTECs. Outcomes of the review will be implemented from 2019-20 through to 2021-22. We will undertake an initial implementation evaluation in 2020-21, a findings review in 2021-22, and a full impact evaluation in early 2023-24. Evaluation will comprise numerical analysis for causal links and process evaluation of new practices and will involve qualitative analysis in partnership with students.

Strategic Measure 2: Transitional Support

Interventions and activities are designed to primarily impact outcomes for objectives 1, 3, 4 and 6.

2a. Student Attendance and Engagement Monitoring

Key change assumption: Students who receive early, targeted and personalised support will adopt positive learning behaviours and will be more resilient in overcoming barriers they may face.

The University invested in a new attendance and engagement system in 2019 to simplify the way attendance is recorded and provide a more sophisticated learner analytics platform. This work builds on the knowledge gained from our previous Engagement Dashboards which tracked and analysed student engagement data identifying students at risk of disengaging from their studies. The new system builds on the sector leading work of Nottingham Trent University and provides students and staff with data on academic engagement both through attendance and their online engagement with learning resources and University services. The system is designed to help students understand how well they are engaging

with their studies and will enable students to self-monitor their progress by comparing their engagement with other students within their cohort. A pilot in 2019-20 will inform the University wide roll out of the system from 2020-21.

The new student dashboards will provide personal tutors and relevant student support services with more detailed information about a student's engagement with their learning enabling more personalised support to be given. The system is also integrated with our mobile MDXApp and allows personalised notifications to be targeted at specific groups of students based on their engagement profile. We will evaluate how such notifications can 'nudge' students towards positive learning behaviours and to encourage them to seek the help and support they may require.

The new system will collate both demographic and student engagement data providing a more robust and detailed evidence base for monitoring, evaluating and learning how our success measures impact on the target group gap reduction. The evaluation is supported by two dedicated Data Analysts within the Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement who also provide training and support to academics. A pilot evaluation will be undertaken in early 2020-21 with a full mixed methodology impact evaluation late 2021-22. A wider cross-functional evaluation of transitional support will be undertaken in 2022-23.

2b. Personal Tutoring

Key change assumptions: Students are more likely to engage with support when tutors have a better understanding of their expectations, experiences and anxieties; students feel a greater sense of belonging and are less likely to drop out if they establish relationships with key academic staff.

The University introduced a systematic University-wide Personal Tutoring Scheme in 2017-18 providing support to undergraduate students across all levels of study. The full implementation of the new Student Attendance and Engagement Dashboard from 2020-21 will enhance the scheme by enabling tutors to more easily identify students most in need of support and to more easily refer students to appropriate central support services. We continue to review the scheme annually and refine and expand the comprehensive support and training provided to tutors throughout the duration of the plan. This includes training on how to engage hard to reach students, supporting students with mental health disabilities, personal development/wellbeing and employability support. From 2020-21 we will also pilot a pre-arrival self-assessment survey to understand new students' expectations, experiences and anxieties which will be shared with their personal tutor enabling more effective support to be provided right from the start of term. Through the capture of more detailed information we plan to monitor and evaluate annually using a mixed methodology focusing on how the personal tutoring scheme contributes to the target group gap reduction allowing us to build on evidence based practices that work. Personal Tutoring will be included in the wider cross-functional evaluation of transitional support to be undertaken in 2022-23.
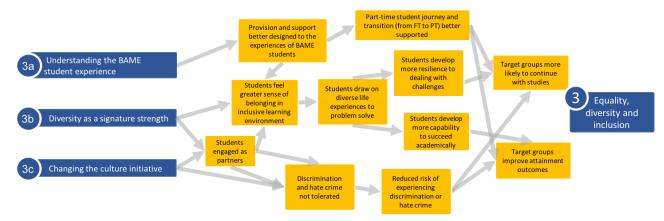
2c. Progression and Support Team (PST)

Key change assumption: Students with complex support needs are less likely to drop out and will succeed when provided with intensive targeted support coordinated across support services.

A dedicated Progression and Support Team provides a high-level of support to students who are experiencing challenging times in their lives or are struggling to engage with their studies. Such students are more likely to fall into one of our target student groups. The Progression and Support Advisors actively provide intensive 1-to-1 student support working closely with other professional services, Personal Tutors and programme teams. The new Student Attendance and Engagement Dashboard will enable students in need of enhanced levels of support to be more easily identified. We will also explore the experience of students who transfer from full-time to part-time study due to changes in life circumstances which often leads to poor attainment outcomes. From 2020-21 we plan to capture more detailed demographic information about students supported by the Progression and Support Team and types of interventions provided which will be evaluated through an annual beneficiary assessment as part of continual improvement of the service. This will inform the way we target support to our target student groups from 2021-22.

2d. Learning Enhancement Team and Liaison Librarians

Key change assumption: Students will engage with and benefit from academic skills support when it is embedded within the curriculum and tailored specifically to their needs.

The Learning Enhancement Team (LET) and Liaison Librarians within the Library and Student Support service provide academic skills support to students through workshops, one-to-one appointments and by contributing to programme delivery. We continue to invest in the support provided by the team and plan to collect more comprehensive data to better understand the students accessing the service from 2020-21. Research shows that students from our target groups are less likely to seek face-to-face support[5]. In 2018-19 we reviewed our self-service online support and plan to expand this provision going forward. The team will continue to work with programmes to embed bespoke academic skills development within the curriculum offered at the time of need. This will ensure that all students have access to and are aware of the central support in place to help them succeed. The team piloted offering additional 1-to-1 support in the weeks leading up to assessment re-sits and plan to extend this approach. We are aware that lack of maths skills can be a barrier to many students. This year we launched a Maths Help centre providing additional drop in support for all students. This initiative was supported by an academic from the Department of Design Engineering and Mathematics working alongside Student Learning Assistants as well as numeracy specialist lecturers in the LET. The pilot service received positive feedback and during 2019-20 and we plan to evaluate the impact of this support on our target student groups in more detail. From 2019-20 the Learning Enhancement Team and Liaison Librarians will also work with academic departments to build a stronger understanding of the support required by students entering with BTEC qualifications and from 2020-21 will develop further resources specifically designed to bridge the knowledge and skills gap. We will carry out statistical/numerical evaluation of student outcomes by intervention type from 2020-21 and qualitative assessment/engagement with academic Faculties to evaluate the impact of bridging materials from 2021-22.

Strategic Measure 3: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Interventions and activities are designed to primarily impact outcomes for objectives 1 and 6.

3a. Understanding BAME student experience

Key change assumption: Students are more likely to succeed if we are able to understand and address the barriers they face.

Our assessment of performance identified significant gaps in attainment for full-time and part-time BAME students. This gap is also persistent across the sector with many studies looking at the underlying causes and a growing evidence base of interventions which can help close this gap[6,7]. At Middlesex, we have extensive quantitative data analysis examining where we have explained and unexplained structural gaps

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[5] HEFCE Report (2015) 'Causes of differences in student outcomes'
[6] HEFCE Report (2015) 'Causes of differences in student outcomes'
[7] UUK/NUS Report (2019) 'Closing the Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment gap'

but we have limited qualitative research exploring the lived student experience of BAME students. In 2018-19 we undertook a pilot research project to explore how inclusive and accessible our student engagement practices are for students of colour. The research was part of a national The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) project and was carried out in partnership between the Students' Union and the University and the findings have informed changes introduced to our student representation system from 2019-20. From 2020-21, we intend to extend our qualitative research looking at other aspects of the full-time and part-time BAME student experience. One focus of research will be exploring the experience of our Health and Education students who make-up around 70% of our part-time cohort. Findings from our research will be used to further enhance and extend initiatives aimed at addressing barriers to success. Research will comprise a mixed methodologies approach with qualitative research undertaken in partnership with the Students' Union.

3b. Diversity as a signature strength

<u>Key change assumption</u>: Students are more likely to succeed if they experience a sense of belonging within an inclusive learning environment that draws on their strengths and diverse life experiences to creatively solve problems enabling them to overcome barriers they may face.

Our diverse student body encompasses different identities and abilities bringing ideas that can be used to solve problems. We continue to develop diversity as a signature strength of the Middlesex learning experience and work in partnership with the Students' Union to achieve this. The embedding of diversity within the curriculum is supported through a Diversity Tool Kit developed by the University's Diversity Lead. The toolkit was developed in 2019 informed by research into students' preferred teaching and learning methods and approaches, what they regard as the barriers to their learning, and what would motivate them to want to learn. The toolkit will be piloted in 2019-20 and will be disseminated further through the University's participation in the 'EDI in the Curriculum Collaborative Project' facilitated by Advance HE. Following an initial case study evaluation, we intend to roll out the tool kit across the University from 2021-20 to support academics to further embed diversification of the curriculum principles across all of our programmes of study. We will monitor and evaluate the impact of the tool kit and associated resources using a mixed methodology approach focusing on how this contributes to our target group gap reduction and will refine our approach based on learning from what works and best practice from across the sector as presented in the 2019 UUK/NUS report on closing the Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment gap.
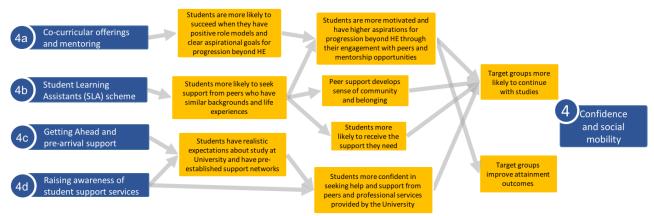
3c. Changing the Culture Initiative

<u>Key change assumption</u>: Students are more likely to succeed in an inclusive learning environment where discrimination and hate crime are not tolerated and they feel empowered to report incidents which may affect them.

As part of our strategy for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work we undertook a 'Changing the Culture Initiative' to tackle gender-based violence, harassment and hate crime. These issues disproportionally affect our target student groups and are recognised across the sector as an important factor affecting student success. The initiative comprises an array of projects including the development of a centralised reporting system, the delivery of staff safeguarding training, and a range of awareness-raising activities.

During 2017-19 we piloted two projects entitled 'No Home for Hate' and 'Building Bridges' funded through successful HEFCE Catalyst proposals (£100K match-funding) which set out to embed a response to UUK's 2016 'Changing the Culture' report. The project adopted a well-established client-led brief model with over 400 students within the Media Department participating in the projects. The projects gave students the freedom to use their own language and creative methods, producing project work as part of their programme of study which included merchandise designs, campaign plans, promotional materials and short films. Student project work from the last two years has been used for a range of purposes: featured in University wide social media campaigns; to enable a more-timely response to current events, such as a 'high-profile' incident of hate crime; to provide the academic community with resources to facilitate important discussions around expected behaviours during University Welcome and Programme induction events and Hate Crime Awareness week. The work was also showcased externally at national

conferences with AMOSSHE and UUK and led to commissioned work for the students, with for example the MET police, Barnet Council and the Violent Crime Prevention Board. In 2018-19 the 'Building Bridges' project brought together university stakeholders and community partners invested in working more collaboratively on these issues. From 2019-20 we plan to extend this approach to other aspects of the student experience and will monitor and evaluate the project specifically looking at the impact on reported hate crime on our specific target student groups throughout the duration of the plan. Evaluation will be undertaken on a project-by-project basis and will include quantitative analysis of impact on key indicators, beneficiary assessment on core cohorts and case study/appreciative inquiry of good practice.

Strategic Measure 4: Building confidence and social mobility

Interventions and activities are designed to primarily impact outcomes for objectives 2 and 5.

4a. *Co-curricular offerings and mentoring*

Key change assumption: Students are more likely to succeed when they have positive role models and clear aspirational goals for progression beyond HE.

We will continue to expand our co-curricular offerings aimed at building the confidence and social capital of our students. We have established a successful Language and Culture Exchange and piloted an Emerging Professional Programme from 2018-19 onwards. The latter programme offers a blended suite of extra-curricular activities aimed at further developing core employability skills while supporting students to identify, reflect and confidently articulate their wider values including their: social and cultural capital; lived experiences; values and aspirations. We are also expanding opportunities for our target group students through collaborations such as: Elevation Networks, an Afro-Caribbean alumni network that focuses on positive role modelling, leadership and confidence building; internship and mentoring programmes with Ministry of Justice / Civil Service aligned to their Diversity and Social Mobility Action Plan specifically engaging students from BAME and other widening participation backgrounds. This builds on the sector wide evidence that mentoring programmes and BAME employee networks are an effective way of building confidence and social capital[8]. We will monitor and evaluate bi-annually the impact of these on target group gap reduction and further extend our offerings particularly in expanding role models and mentoring opportunities for male students. This will comprise multi-case study comparative evaluation of the multiple mentoring schemes with a synthesis of findings presented.

4b. Student Learning Assistants (SLA) scheme

Key change assumption: Students are more likely to seek support from peers who have similar backgrounds and life experiences.

There is growing evidence from across the sector that peer support inside and outside the classroom offers particular benefits to our students whose educational histories and learning styles vary significantly. Middlesex University runs a large student peer-assisted learning scheme which aims to support and

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[8] CIPD Report (2017) 'Addressing the Barriers to BAME Employee Career Progression to the Top'

enhance student engagement, retention and success. The Student Learning Assistants (SLA) scheme piloted in 2009-10 and is now universally adopted across the University. This established initiative was commended in our provider level Teaching Excellence Framework in 2017 and provides SLAs themselves with additional skills preparing them for progression into employment. The University will continue to invest in the SLA scheme which has expanded to over 300 students since 2017. We plan to further expand the scheme from 2019-20 to 2024-25 including to increase the proportion of male and BAME SLAs who can act as role models to our target student groups. We will continue to enhance the support provided to SLAs including diversity training and how to sign-post students to central support services as our internal evidence shows that students from our target groups are less likely to directly seek help from our professional support services. More in depth monitoring, evaluation and learning of the SLA scheme is planned in 2020-21 to understand the factors driving improved student success and to understand the impact on specific target groups of students to inform our approach going forward. This will use a mixed methodology quantitative and qualitative evaluative approach. A full statistical investigation of causal links between SLAs and student outcomes will be undertaken alongside surveys, semi-structured interviews and focus groups with SLAs, beneficiary students, Students' Union and Faculty staff.

4c. Getting ahead and pre-arrival support

<u>Key change assumption</u>: Students who have realistic expectations and pre-established support networks are more likely to succeed.
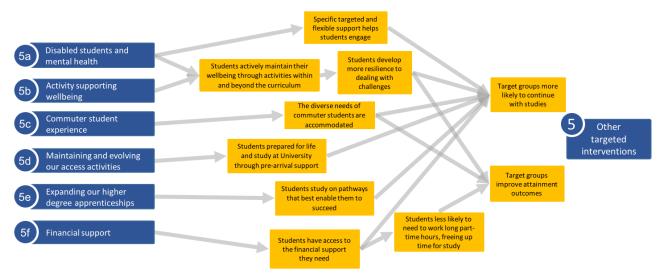
Student journeys onto our programmes of study are varied and often complex with students entering with differing levels of knowledge and skills. A high proportion of students are first-in-family to go to University and so often do not have the support networks who are familiar with life at University. To support student transition into life at University we continue to expand the range of resources and activities we offer such as the one-day "Getting Ahead' workshop held a couple of weeks before students start their programme of study which was piloted in 2018-19. The workshop provides an opportunity for new students to understand life at University, share their hopes and fears, raise awareness of the wide range of support available and provide an opportunity to make friends and establish networks with other new students. The workshops also provide an opportunity to promote Community Guides developed by the Students' Union providing practical advice targeted at specific student groups such as Commuter Students and Parents & Carers. Based on evaluation of the pilot schemes we will expand the range of opportunities for students to engage with the University prior to starting their programme of study from 2020-21. This will include piloting summer schools and workshops facilitated by the Learning Enhancement Team to prepare students for University life as well as providing bridging support for students entering with vocational qualifications such as BTECs, and sustained pre-enrolment online engagement with those groups most at risk of non-progression to help manage their transition. We will monitor, evaluate and learn by tracking the success of students accessing these opportunities and refine the workshop and other support opportunities over the duration of the plan. Evaluation will comprise of quantitative evaluation based predominantly on annual survey data following attendance at workshops and post-Welcome.

4d. Raising awareness of student support services

<u>Key change assumption</u>: Students are more likely to access support services if they receive timely personal notifications encouraging engagement.

We will build on our existing 'Student Success Festival' events which showcase and promote the range of advice, support and pathways available to students throughout the whole of their time at University, so that students feel more comfortable and confident in asking for support and accessing it. From 2020-21 will we further enhance the way we raise awareness of support services relevant to our target student groups via the mobile MDXApp using personalised notifications that are aligned to the time when students are most likely to be in need of support. We will annually monitor student engagement with these interventions evaluating impact through quantitative survey data and statistical analysis of target group gap reduction which will be used refine this approach over the duration of the plan.

Strategic Measure 5: Other targeted interventions

Interventions and activities will likely impact all target groups.

5a. Disabled students and mental health

Key change assumption: Students with mental health disabilities are more likely to succeed if they can access timely and flexible support.

Supporting students with a disability remains a priority for all student support services and their Faculty business partners. We have made significant progress reducing gaps across the student life cycle in the most recent years (section 1.4) but recognise that a persistent gap exists for students with a 'mental health' disability which we will continue to monitor carefully. Our disability advisors provide expertise for academics and disabled students in particular fields of study. Support measures range from early contact with applicants disclosing a disability to encourage registration and application for DSA, to a Library Induction and Library Buddy scheme available to students with disabilities. We have made substantial and sustained investments into our Counselling & Mental Health service and offer a range of support modalities, with specialist support now including a Counselling Psychologist and a range of honorary practitioners from 2019-20. We will continue to expand the hours of specialist support available in order to keep pace with the demand during the duration of the plan. This will be addressed through both established Middlesex staff and by bringing in external agents onto campus. In 2018-19 we invested in an online self-guided resource to support students with depression, anxiety and eating issues and are evaluating the impact of these resources on our target student groups. A deep dive review will be undertaken by an external evaluator in 2020 with service delivery evaluated annually thereafter. Evaluation will use a mixed methodology with numerical analysis of student outcomes and qualitative engagement with stakeholders including service staff and the Students' Union.

5b. Activity supporting wellbeing

Key change assumption: Students who build emotional strength and resilience are more likely to succeed academically.

The University takes a holistic and proactive approach to wellbeing recognising that students within our target group are likely to benefit most from these interventions. This is an area of substantial financial investment and is coordinated through our Wellbeing Action Plan introduced in 2018-19. The plan will ensure that all students have access to wellbeing information and are aware of the support available including links to local charities that may be of use to students. Our whole-University approach will see the implementation of a comprehensive, mainstreamed wellbeing programme with targeted events, initiatives, online self-guided materials and information for students with psycho educational needs, mental health conditions and a range of disabilities. Researchers in our Psychology Department are involved in the development and evaluation of interventions, as are student representatives who sit on recruitment panels for student-facing posts in this area. A post was created in 2019 to specifically support

Faculties and students in developing proactive peer-led initiatives from 2019-2020. We also plan to pilot the use of wellbeing mobile Apps to build emotional strength and resilience from 2019-20. We will monitor the impact on target group gap reduction, use learning about what works to refine our interventions and will incorporate the Student Minds Mental Health Charter throughout the duration of the plan. Continuous improvement will be informed through developmental evaluation.

5c. Commuter Student Experience

<u>Key change assumption</u>: Addressing the complex and diverse needs of commuter students will enable them to succeed.

We are aware of the particular challenges faced by students living in London, many of whom live at home with their families and commute to university. Many of the students who have significant commutes also fall within those groups where we have identified gaps in student success, such as being from deprived areas, male and of Black, Mixed or Other ethnicity. For this reason, enhancing the experience of commuter students forms part of our student-centred approach and we are working collaboratively with other London institutions on this agenda, including Advance HE's London Retention Group and London Higher's Commuter Students in London Task Group. Findings from the London Higher project were published in 2019 and internally a steering group established to take this work forward. We will pilot interventions aimed at supporting our commuter student population during 2019-20 with the evaluation and learnings informing more comprehensive work being put in place for 2020-21 which will be refined over the duration of the plan. Evaluation of commuter student support will take place late 2021-22 and will comprise of mixed methodology quantitative and qualitative approach which will flex according to the nature of the initiatives. Quantitative data analysis will be facilitated by the creation of key data fields within our student record system which will enable statistical analysis to be undertaken.

5d. Maintaining and evolving our access activities

<u>Key change assumption</u>: Students that have realistic expectations of HE and have clear aspirational goals will gain the confidence and social capital needed to succeed.

Our strategic commitment to the promotion of social mobility is embedded across the student lifecycle. Our access activity is focused on building early the transferable skills, attainment and aspiration that will lead to graduate-level employment and on opening higher education to those who have not previously had the opportunity to go to university or did not think this was a suitable route for them. Our broad range of access activities involves our Outreach team, Faculties, Employability Service and Students' Union working together to design resources and interventions which span the student journey from secondary level through to apprenticeships, degree study and graduate employment. We engage over 7,000 students from 130 schools and colleges annually across years 6 to 13, mature students and those not in formal education.

We will continue to engage in significant research with teachers and careers advisers to identify where we, and the sector as a whole, can work together to strengthen information, advice and guidance. Our award-winning 'Make Your Mark' microsite and skills assessment tool is an expanding initiative in this area for all ages from 11 years old. It is provided alongside careers workshops to our schools networks and has been recognised by the GLA as an example of best practice. In 2018-19 77.4% of students taking part in this programme were from IMD quintiles 1 or 2. We are continually extending the framework to include age-appropriate information, advice and guidance on apprenticeships, new training pathways and qualification routes. A new section, 'Discover Me', has been added to the digital tool kit in 2018-19 and provides individualised feedback to pupils about their preferred learning styles and likely fit career areas. We will continue to invest in the software and the creation of individual reports and offer this tool free to our network of schools and colleges from 2020-21. The further development and evaluation of this personalised, digital engagement approach will be the focus of our access activity with schools and colleges for the duration of the plan. We also plan to adapt the toolkit and offer it to mature students and other groups from 2021-22. We will undertake an implementation evaluation and beneficiary assessment of the digital toolkit which can be expanded through case studies.

Access work targeted at students aged over 21 through close links with partner colleges has seen our mature students figure remain relatively stable in a changing national landscape. We will continue to use our extensive expertise in work-based learning and a comprehensive approach to recognising prior learning to facilitate access to higher education programmes for mature students at all levels of study and to target mature students on Access programmes as the most impactful area of activity. As outlined in the section on apprenticeship provision below, we continue to expand the range of qualification pathways which allow students to continue to earn an income while studying. Throughout the duration of this plan, we are committed to increasing the number of activities promoting degree apprenticeships, such as our annual Apprenticeship event offered in collaboration with Barnet Council. We are also working with local SMEs to provide IAG on higher education pathways for lower skilled workers, targeting 20 contacts per week by 2020-21.

Working with care leavers and students with disabilities will continue to be a priority over the next five years. We believe that providing support and advice through the community is an effective way to engage students in a more informal environment and will therefore further build on our partnership work within Barnet which includes local government, schools, and charities. Our most important partners in our Access activity are our current students who play a key part in co-creating resources and activities for looked after children and students with disabilities. The planned expansion of our peer support SLA scheme during 2019-20 to 2024-25 will include an increase in the proportion of SLAs who have a disability and are care experienced.

We will maintain partnerships developed as a result of our involvement in the London NCOP network, delivering work in 13 wards identified as having lower participation in higher education than might be expected. In addition, we will continue our work with AccessHE, remaining active members of the Art & Design, Disability, BAME and Evidence and Evaluation forums.

An evaluation framework is in place that adopts a mixed methodological approach. The framework facilitates the effective planning of outreach activities by ensuring they are based on: the impact report generated during the previous cycle, practitioner reflective meetings and recent research or examples of best practice. Quantitative data is captured for 98.8% of learners and the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) is used to track longer term progression with varying interim outcomes for each year group centred on skills, knowledge, choices and identity.

5e. Expanding our higher and degree apprenticeship provision

Key change assumption: Expanding alternative degree provision that integrates work with study promotes social mobility by providing an entry route that allows students to continue earning an income while studying.

Degree apprenticeships are a key vehicle to enhance access to the professions, through collaboration with employers and PSRBs, and this is a key measure of social mobility. Middlesex was awarded Government funding to promote 'Access to the Professions through Public Sector Degree Apprenticeships' and recently delivered a national conference on 'Building on Best Practice for Public Sector Degree Apprenticeships'. Middlesex has represented the HE sector at the Department for Education Degree Apprenticeship Ginger Group to provide advice regarding national policy and has significantly contributed to the review and development of the UK Quality Code to ensure that it is fit for purpose for degree apprenticeship provision. Middlesex is also an Institute for Apprenticeship and Technical Education Provider Panel member. The University has engaged significantly in developing degree apprenticeships through membership of a variety of private and public sector employer Trailblazer Groups and currently co-Chairs the Higher Education Employer Trailblazer Group (which with over 100 members is the largest Trailblazer Group in the country). Currently, the University has 255 apprentices and 62% of these are from BAME backgrounds and 84% are aged 25 or over. We are committed to expanding alternative entry routes into higher education which our evidence shows will positively impact on the recent decline in mature students.

Our Dip HE Nursing Associate Apprenticeship Cohort commenced in December 2018 with 141 students. This built upon our previous Dip HE NA Cohort, funded by Health Education, which resulted in 38 Nursing

Associates registering with the NMC in January 2018. The wide entry gate allows access to students who would otherwise not gain access to university due to their educational profile. As the apprenticeship programme is funded and provides a salary, this further supports access for a wide range of students. Expansion of this provision is ongoing; we have a local target of 291 nursing associate students in the calendar year 2019, part of a national (England only) target of 7500 and a London target of 1710. We therefore have cohorts planned for July, October and December. We will continue to expand our higher and degree apprenticeship provision over the duration of the plan and will evaluate annually through outcomes reporting to track outcomes of higher degree apprentices.

5f. Financial Support

Key change assumption: Reducing the financial burden on students will reduce their likelihood dropping out and will enable them to focus on their studies leading to improved student success.

The University offers a range of financial support to students, with a particular focus on those from under-represented groups. The aim is to support students to stay at university and achieve successful outcomes during times of financial difficulty, and to reduce the cost of study through the provision of free e-books and free printing. In 2018-19 the University began a comprehensive review of its financial support in light of internal analysis demonstrating the statistically significant impact of financial support on continuation and achievement outcomes. Building on the target data that has emerged in preparing this plan, and including qualitative data obtained during 2019, we anticipate introducing changes to the support package offered to students during the lifetime of this plan, which will further align financial support measures with the aims and objectives set out here. We aim to complete this review in Autumn 2019. We will apply for a variation to the Access and Participation Plan to reflect any realignment of financial support, ensuring that information is available at the appropriate time in the admissions cycle to facilitate applicants researching and planning their university applications.

The University plans to maintain its level of expenditure on financial support for the lifetime of this plan, at 1.8% of HFI. This equated to expenditure of £558K in 2018-19 (excluding the cost of providing unlimited free printing and free e-books to all students).

The Student Support Fund finances up to 50% of the discrepancy between income and expenditure for eligible students in each year of study in which the student makes an application. Historically, our focus has been on providing additional financial support to students from a wide range of under-represented groups, including mature students, those with caring responsibilities, students with disabilities, care leavers and estranged students and those who are or have been homeless. Other target groups include those at risk of dropping out of higher education, students coming to university from social housing, students who are the first in their families to enter higher education and those experiencing particular financial difficulties. Initial analysis of the timing and size of Student Support Fund payments has shown that a £1,000 bursary was associated with a 53% improvement in the likelihood of a student continuing, and that those students receiving consistent payments across all academic years outperformed those receiving larger one-off payments. These findings will inform the larger review of financial support.

We will continue to offer our Community Scholarship scheme which was launched in 2015/16 and aims to encourage more applications and enrolments from target groups specified in this plan, and to help improve the continuation rates of recipients. In line with our strategic commitment to enhancing and rewarding community engagement as a route towards increasing social mobility, key criteria for eligibility are evidence of having acted as a role model within the community or having overcome challenging personal circumstances. Applicants should be from households with an income below £25,000, in line with our commitment to supporting those from deprived areas. Scholarship holders are awarded £2,000 a year over three years of study. Analysis of recipients to date has shown a positive impact on continuation. Numbers of recipients who have completed their programmes of study are too small at this stage to evidence a significant impact on attainment but we will continue to evaluate this as part of our plan. Community scholarships are in the late stages of review as part of our overarching revision of financial support, taking into account analysis of impact.

We also provide additional universal financial support through free printing to all students for their programme of studies. No individual cap is placed on this beyond an expectation of reasonable usage. Students also receive one free e-textbook per module throughout their studies. Over the next two years we will undertake a more detailed evaluation of this support to explore ways we can support our students' learning through the provision of other types of learning materials. Impact of our financial support will be reviewed annually through statistical investigation into causal links with continuation and attainment.

3.2 Student consultation

Our Access and Participation Plan was developed in consultation with Students' Union representatives according to the OfS guidance. They were members of the working group that oversaw the process of production and development of a draft plan, and they sit on the governance structures of the University that agreed the final version. The Students' Union did not request for any additional steps to be taken as a result of our student consultation and engagement. This is due in part to the University's long standing and strong commitment to working in partnership with the Students' Union which includes their significant involvement in the development of the University Strategy 2017-2022 that underpins this Access and Participation Plan. Many of the strategic measures outlined in the plan were developed over a number of years through extensive student engagement ensuring that student views had been taken into account. In 2019-20, we further strengthened the way we collaboratively work with students through a new partnership agreement with the Students' Union. This ensures the continued active engagement of students in the development, implementation and evaluation of strategic measures outlined within the plan.

The Student Submission (Annex 1) provides additional insight into some of the ways in which the University has recently worked in partnership with the Students' Union in response to student feedback. This includes the strengthening of our student representation systems and annually agreed joint learning and teaching priority objectives for the year ahead. The President of the Students' Union chairs the Student Experience Sub-committee of the University Learning and Teaching Committee and in this capacity, initiates and shapes recommendations for key academic developments to the Academic Board. The Students' Union also leads on a number of initiatives seeking feedback from students about their learning and campus experience, such as carrying out a series of themed 'student conversations' and has led sector-wide research to gain more in-depth insights at both an institutional and national level into student lifestyles and the impact of students' unions.

In collaboration with the Students' Union, we have recently reviewed and consequently replaced traditional Boards of Study with Programme Voice Groups which adopt a fully collaborative approach to considering student feedback and co-developing programmes. This work also draws on the findings of a pilot research project into student engagement practices which are inclusive and accessible to students of colour. The research was funded by The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) and was carried out in partnership between the Students' Union and the University in 2018/19. The wider student representation work is supported by a Student Engagement Officer who spends 50% of her time in the Students' Union and works with officers to engage student representatives across the University in developing learning and teaching at Middlesex University.

We actively involve students in the evaluation, monitoring and embedding of the Access and Participation Plan. Student representatives feed into the monitoring and evaluation of our strategic measures through the sub-committees of the University Learning and Teaching Committee and other working groups. We will further formalise this process by including the evaluation of University wide initiatives within the Programme Voice Group agenda from 2020-21. We will continue to strengthen the way we work in partnership with students expanding the range of initiatives co-developed with students and ensuring the active engagement of our target student groups.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

Strategic context

Putting students first and continuous improvement through the creation of a learning culture are core values of our institutional Strategy 2017-22. As such, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) are essential to our commitment to the ongoing strengthening of both the quality and use of evidence in our work to improve student outcomes. Recent years have seen significant improvements in the quality and robustness of data quality and collection and growing recognition amongst staff of the importance of evaluation.

At an institutional level, evaluation is built into our Enabling Plans which use theory of change principles to make explicit our assumptions about how change happens. This informs our strategic programme of evaluations by prioritising on the basis of the strength of evidence underpinning those assumptions. We have developed a detailed Theory of Change based logic model which sets out our assumptions, target groups, evaluation methodologies and timelines and which informs planning, interventions and continuous evaluation at all levels. Evaluations are reviewed at University level through the Learning and Teaching Committee and its subcommittees to ensure institution-wide, embedded enhancement, with subject-specific action plans developed and prioritised by Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees. Funding is additionally provided to each department to conduct research into student achievement and satisfaction, with findings disseminated at our Annual Learning and Teaching Conference and good practice promoted by our HEA Fellowship Group.

Staff across professional services and academic faculties undertake evaluations often collaboratively and occasionally through external consultants. It is common practice for evaluations to also make use of academic expertise and challenge within the institution. This devolved approach means that evaluations often benefit from subject or issue expertise but we acknowledge, through our self-assessment, that our institutional approach could be enhanced through more evaluation practitioner interaction and engagement. To address this, work is underway on a shared institutional plan on completed, ongoing and forthcoming evaluation to assist in sharing resources, good practice and learning. In future our intention is to complement this through the establishment of an Evaluation Working Group to provide a learning and reflective forum for evaluation practitioners across the University. We plan to set up an initial group in 2019-20 with it becoming fully operational by 2020-21. To further improve evaluation quality, this group will look to conduct or commission a meta-evaluation in 2021-22 to assess the strengths and weaknesses of our previous evaluations.

Programme design

Any new programme is required to have an integrated evaluation plan and we are increasingly retrospectively adding evaluative elements to pre-existing initiatives where evaluation has been assessed as being weak. Appropriate performance measures and proxy indicators and their alignment to clear objectives are considered and incorporated at an early stage so that we can monitor progress and evaluate impact. In terms of programme design, initiatives are based on a range of internal and external evidence as well as the results of multi-stakeholder project scoping exercises. Objectives are specifically set in relation to Enabling Plan theory of change frameworks linked to the overarching institutional Strategy.

Designing evaluation

We make use of a range of approaches and resources including Better Evaluations 'rainbow framework' to assist in selecting approaches and methods, the Amosshe Value and Impact toolkit (http://www.amosshe.org.uk/value-and-impact-toolkit) to evaluate student support activity and Kirkpatrick's evaluation model to inform our training and awareness raising programmes.

In terms of OfS's standards of evidence, our evaluations incorporate a narrative component in that they are designed in relation to testing the assumptions set out in our Enabling Plans and action plans, which utilise theory of change principles. This allows us to strengthen the evidence base surrounding our assumptions and prioritise interventions on that basis. We are increasingly using empirical enquiry and

more advanced statistical analysis, including the use of counter-factuals where appropriate. Although more challenging to evidence, establishing causality is an aim where possible through the use of triangulation of different sources of evidence and data.

Evaluation implementation

Evaluations are scoped appropriately before commencement to ensure stakeholders are engaged, milestones are in place and relevant risks such as anonymity, data protection, safeguarding are mitigated. Where direct contact with students is part of the evaluation, implementation plans have to seek approval from the University's Ethics Committee.

Involving students in evaluation activity is central to our approach to measuring impact and ensuring continuous improvement. For example, our peer-led Student Learning Assistants' (SLA) scheme actively seeks SLAs' feedback on learning, teaching and student support both in their roles as learners and as members of a teaching team. We are continuing to develop the role of staff-student programme boards in evaluating strategic initiatives and our new Programme Voice Groups now adopt a fully collaborative approach to considering student feedback and co-developing programmes. We also collaborate proactively with both our Students' Union and other institutions on research projects such as our investigations into the experiences of commuter students.

Learning

Our approach to MEL is an iterative one with the learning from our evaluations continually fed back into the evolution of our plans and approaches as framed within our theories of change. In many cases, such as our Personal Tutoring model, this takes the form of annual evaluations which allow for learning and improvements to be incorporated into the next annual cycle. We are also improving our evaluations to incorporate sections on limitations and future areas for potential inclusion so that the quality of our evaluations and learning mechanisms continue to improve. Through consideration by the Learning and Teaching Committee and associated sub-committees, the results and recommendations of evaluations influence the future delivery of our interventions. The creation of an Evaluation Working Group and meta-evaluation of previous evaluations over the course of this plan will further seek to strengthen our approach to learning.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The University will monitor progress against the strategic objectives set out in this plan as part of its annual reporting cycle of organisational performance. The eight targets will be included as part of our Disparity Index, one of the University's eight Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which is a basket indicator used to monitor disparities of student outcomes across characteristics including ethnicity, IMD, age, gender and reported disability at institution, faculty, department and programme level. This is reported three times a year to the University's Board of Governors and Executive as part of a Balanced Scorecard of organisational performance. Reporting will determine the extent of delivery of strategic measures against the agreed timeframes, present measures of the impact of actions to determine level of success, and assess overall progress with meeting the targets and determine further action required. Additionally, we have committed to reviewing data relating to our assessment of performance annually on receipt of latest OfS data and presenting findings to Academic Board so as to flag areas where progress is being made and address any areas where disparities may be at risk of developing in future. This will also provide an additional evidence base against which we will assess the impact of specific interventions.

As part of our annual quality enhancement processes, demographic information underpinning our organisational Diversity Index KPI is cascaded down to programme and department-level. Here we place significant emphasis on tackling disparities at their root cause and addressing underperformance across our academic portfolio as every department is required to interrogate disparities in student outcomes across ethnicity, age, disability status, gender and IMD and formulate an action plan for tackling them. This is further supported through the setting of departmental-level targets to incentivise improved

performance. From 2020-21, the data used to inform this process will be further aligned so as to directly link to our eight new targets set out in this plan.

The University's Learning & Teaching Committee oversees and operationalises our Strategy and plans relating to the student learning experience and will set annual objectives and review strategic measures in order to ensure we meet the targets set out in this plan. Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees and four sub-committees, including a newly formed Wellbeing and Inclusivity Sub-committee report to this committee and play a more detailed and hands-on role in developing and overseeing activities related to our objectives.

With evidence and assessment built in at every governance level from the course programme to Board of Governors, any remedial action will be identified and prioritised in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. In practice this means disparities at course programme level will be addressed through local mechanisms and linked to any departmental, faculty or institutional decisions addressing wider performance issues.

We are committed to ensuring students are our partners in monitoring progress and we work closely with our Students' Union in monitoring, evaluation and learning. Our Students' Union is represented on our Board of Governors, Academic Board and Learning and Teaching Committee and our SU President also chairs our Student Experience Sub-committee.

Over the course of this plan we will continue to improve our approach to monitoring including through the development of our data, business intelligence and learner analytics systems. Improvements include a new Student Attendance and Engagement platform and revised and more coordinated student surveys that will give us clearer indications as to whether our initiatives are working. This will enable us to monitor and respond accordingly in nearer to real-time to ensure we deliver on our objectives and targets.

4. Provision of information to students

Information on fees and links to relevant financial support is provided on every course page for prospective and current students, so that it is transparent from the earliest point in the applicant journey. It is also signposted clearly in the printed prospectus. Information is also available as part of the University's applicant and student portals, through the University Student App, and on promotional material for student support services. Formal offer literature includes information on fees and financial support. There is a consolidated financial support and scholarships section with FAQs.

Students have access to eligibility criteria and levels of support through our online student portal. All our students also have access to information, advice and guidance from our dedicated Student Welfare and Advice Team. The Student Support Fund is provided by Middlesex University to help students who are experiencing financial difficulties. The fund provides awards of between £200 and £2,500 with applications assessed on individual need. The average award is £700 and is based on the shortfall between income and outgoings. Students can apply annually and can also make a second application if circumstances change resulting in financial difficulties within an academic year. In our guidance to students we highlight that the additional financial support is available to students from a wide range of under-represented groups, including mature students, those with caring responsibilities, students with disabilities, care leavers and estranged students and those who are or have been homeless. Other groups are prioritized when assessing an application initiated by a student including those at risk of dropping out of higher education, students coming to university from social housing, students who are the first in their families to enter higher education and those experiencing particular financial difficulties.

Eligibility criteria are published alongside the application forms. Students must be enrolled on an Undergraduate or Postgraduate programme and meet the following general criteria:

- Assessed as a 'Home' student (Not international students, students seeking asylum, EU students not eligible for the maintenance loan)
- Studying at least 30 credits on any year of the programme
- In receipt of the maximum statutory funding entitlement e.g. SLC loan and/or NHS bursary (for Undergraduate students)

Students apply for the fund by completing an application form and submitting supporting documentation including relevant financial information via our online portal, myUniHub. The university does not rely on students agreeing to share information from their student loan form in order to obtain financial support.

Middlesex University Community Scholarships guarantee £2,000 per year of study to successful applicants, who are assessed on the following criteria:

- New undergraduate student entering 1st year of full-time study or a foundation year
- Have a household income of less than £25,000
- Attend a state-funded school or college
- Achieve entry qualifications equivalent to BBC at A-level or DMM in BTEC Level 3 or 45 credits Merit or higher at Level 3 Access to HE Diploma
- Eligible, and apply for, financial support from Student Finance England
- Provide evidence of having acted as a successful role model in school or college or succeeding despite personal or challenging circumstances or demonstrate engagement in the community
- Put Middlesex as a firm choice

Students apply for the Community Scholarships by completing an online application form and submitting supporting documentation, including relevant financial and community engagement information. The university will rely on students agreeing to share information from their student loan form in order to obtain financial support.

The full range of the university's scholarships and bursaries for undergraduate and postgraduate studies can be found here: https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study-with-us/fees-and-funding/scholarships-and-bursaries

Additionally, we provide a regular e-newsletters to influencers in local schools and colleges who receive updates on tuition fee costs and our scholarship offer. We also have a parents' area on our website and use this to ensure parents have access to the most accurate and up-to-date information from us and wider higher education sources. In addition to all of the above we include fees and funding information as a core part of the pre-applicant and applicant journey and direct enquirers and applicants to comprehensive online resources outlining fees, funding and scholarship information. Applications to all university awards are made via an online application form.

5. Appendix

The OfS will append the following items from the fees and targets and investment documents when an access and participation plan is published:

1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)

2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)

3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)

5. Annex 1. Student Submission

The Students' Union actively contributes to the university governance structures with representation on key decision-making committees and the President chairing the Student Experience Sub-Committee of the Learning and Teaching Committee. Some key successes achieved in partnership as a result of strong working relationships have been fee waivers for four refugee students living in Barnet giving access to higher education which may not have been possible otherwise, a more accessible policy on long term illness and disability by allowing students to submit one doctor's note at the beginning of the year alongside their Personal Development Plans and no longer requesting future letters which were costing students up to £30-£40 each time, student input into new attendance monitoring and engagement systems which will see additional support for students who have not been able to engage fully in their programme of study, the introduction of trained student Wellbeing Heroes working with student groups and communities to tackle mental health stigma, a two month programme of de-stress activities for students run collaboratively throughout the main assessment periods, student input into the reporting systems for sexual harassment, assault and hate crime, and a commitment from the institution to adopt the APPG definition of Islamophobia.

The institution also actively involves student representation on various recruitment panels for roles across the institution ranging from staff within the wellbeing services to senior Executive roles which really highlights the commitment to working in partnership to all applicants.

Middlesex University Students' Union welcome the launch of the Partnership Agreement with the institution this academic year at the annual University Staff Conference. The Partnership Agreement has been approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee and supported by the university Executive and will allow both organisations to have three jointly-decided key priority areas of work to enhance the student experience at Middlesex each academic year.

This academic year the University and Students' Union ran a joint review of the elections process for Student Voice Leaders (academic programme reps) and as a result have made positive changes to the process which should aid recruitment. The Students' Union are in contact with Heads of Departments to encourage higher Students' Union involvement in the academic induction process across the institution through the introduction of Programme days for courses which scored the Students' Union lowest in the National Student Survey (NSS) to promote the relevance of the students' union for different groups of students. Training for both academic and student chairs of Programme Voice Groups is jointly run by the University and Students' Union and joint communications to staff will hopefully encourage academics to place a stronger emphasis on the importance of the student voice. Where Programme Voice Group minutes have been shared with the University's Quality Enhancement Team, a report outlining key themes from each term has been shared with the Students' Union and discussed in central academic committees at which there is both Students' Union staff and full time Sabbatical Officer attendance. The introduction of a full-time Quality Enhancement Co-ordinator (Student Engagement) who works across both the University and Students' Union has had a positive impact on building relationships with the academic community and has aided Sabbatical Officer induction processes.

Last academic year the percentage of trained Student Voice Leaders was much lower than hoped so the Students' Union have been working on Volunteer Incentives package for all volunteers across different areas of our work. This will hopefully encourage students to complete their training either in face to face sessions or using the online resources created, and be more prepared and confident in their roles.

The Students' Union conducted a full Democracy Review undertaking research through Student Leaders Conferences (Students' Union policy setting conferences), an online survey of both staff and students, focus groups with students and site visits to other students' unions. Students then voted in a cross campus election for the outcomes which will see the full time Sabbatical Officer roles aligned to the

University Faculty structure (previously linked to the institution's old school structure which caused difficulties in building working relationships at a Faculty level), the establishment of a Student Council so that a wider range of students representing our diverse student body will be represented in decision-making channels (currently purely academic reps when most of our engagement with students is through non-academic channels such as Societies and Liberation Groups), and a simplified system for all students to propose new ideas to the Students' Union which removes some of the previously faced barriers for student involvement. Changes to the Students' Union's democracy will take effect from 1st July 2019.

The Student's Union has been working with the University to embed more inclusive practices at Middlesex with a key project being one run in collaboration with The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP). The research project focussed on whether the student representation structures at Middlesex are representative of the students studying at the institution. Research included surveys and focus groups with students who both have and haven't engaged in representative roles focussing on reasons they did or didn't get involved and any challenges or barriers they faced in doing so. Some of the recommendations included diversifying events to be more inclusive of students from various different cultures and backgrounds, more visibility of student voice mechanisms and more frequent ways to provide feedback than the Programme Voice Groups which happen once a term.

The Students' Union supports four student liberation groups (Women, Disabled Students, Black Students and LGBT+ students) alongside supporting communities of students who may struggle to engage in extra-curricular activities due to circumstance (mature, student parents and carers, international students, commuter students and postgraduate students) which has this year resulted in more students from these communities engaging in the opportunities offered. This has also resulted in a member of Students' Union staff co-chairing the University LGBT+ Staff Network, involvement in a key piece of work on supporting commuter students and involvement in the review of Postgraduate Research Boards of Study.

Full time student Sabbatical Officer campaigns have focused this academic year on student mental health, support for survivors of sexual harassment and sexual violence, tackling hate crime on campuses and support for students with disabilities in their studies. The institution have been supportive of Students' Union campaigns and as a result the Students' Union have been involved in the creation of materials to promote Report and Support options to students who have experienced discrimination or violence of any kind. This is an area of work where the Students' Union wishes to continue to be involved to ensure the best available support to students. Alongside this the Students' Union have worked with the University Wellbeing team to be actively involved in the creation of the Student Wellbeing Strategy and improved Mental Health Support.

The Students' Union at Middlesex has led sector-wide research for a consortium of Students' Unions to gain insight at both an institutional and national level into student lifestyles and the impact of students' unions. This research has informed much of the partnership work within the institution and continues to give us a better understanding of who are students are and their expectations within a higher education setting.

Middlesex University Students' Union June 2019

Access and participation plan
Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: Middlesex University

Provider UKPRN: 10004351

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		£9,250
Postgraduate ITT		£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year		£0
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	CTC Aviation Training (UK) Limited. 10025435	£9,250
First degree	Helicentre Aviation Limited 10048850	£9,250
First degree	QAHE (MDX) Limited 10066754	£9,250
First degree	Tayside Aviation Limited 10006512	£9,250
First degree	The College of Animal Welfare Limited 10001539	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	The College of Animal Welfare Limited 10001539	£9,250
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		£6,935
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE		£6,935
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Middlesex University

Provider UKPRN: 10004351

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 (£)	£868,726.73	£889,655.87	£911,128.19	£933,621.64	£956,970.65
Access (pre-16)	£295,180.80	£302,861.71	£310,758.55	£319,109.16	£327,829.64
Access (post-16)	£446,103.06	£456,802.42	£467,778.07	£479,269.07	£491,192.75
Access (adults and the community)	£74,839.44	£76,336.23	£77,862.95	£79,420.21	£81,008.62
Access (other)	£52,603.44	£53,655.51	£54,728.62	£55,823.19	£56,939.66
Financial support (£)	£588,000.00	£588,000.00	£588,000.00	£602,000.00	£602,000.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£305,699.00	£311,812.80	£318,049.05	£324,410.03	£330,898.23

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)	£33,511,564.00	£32,900,734.00	£33,317,209.00	£34,233,454.00	£34,233,454.00
Access investment	2.6%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.8%
Financial support	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%
Research and evaluation	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	0.9%	1.0%
Total investment (as %HFI)	5.3%	5.4%	5.5%	5.4%	5.5%

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Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Middlesex University

Provider UKPRN: 10004351

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	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
	PTA_1												
	PTA_2												
	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	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
To reduce the non-continuation gap between Asian/White students and those of Black/Mixed/Other ethnicity	PTS_1	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in non-continuation rates between full-time Asian/White and Black/Mixed/Other students	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	2.4	2.1	1.9	1.6	1.4	1.2	Filters used were 'All undergraduates', 'Full-time or apprenticeship'
To reduce the non-continuation gap between low IMD female and male students	PTS_2	Multiple	Gender and socio-economic. Percentage difference in non-continuation rates between full-time IMD Q1/Q2 female and IMD Q1/Q2 male students	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	6.1	5.5	5.1	4.5	3.7	3.0	Filters used were 'All undergraduates', 'Full-time or apprenticeship'
To reduce the non-continuation gap between students entering university with A Levels and those with BTECs	PTS_3	Other	Percentage difference in non-continuation rates between students with A Levels and students with BTECs	No	Other data source	2017-18	11	9.3	8.5	6.8	5.8	5.5	Internal data and continuation metric used. Students included were: new, UK-domiciled, full-time undergraduates actively enrolled in December of their starting year. Continuation defined as active enrolment at the start of December of the following academic year. Baseline year of 2018-19 used as data for students continuing from 2017-18 to 2018-19 is already available.
To reduce the attainment gap between students entering university with A Levels and those with BTECs	PTS_4	Other	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between students with A Levels and students with BTECs	No	Other data source	2017-18	17.5	14	12	11	10	9	Internal data used. Students included were: new, UK-domiciled, full-time undergraduates. Attainment defined as achieving a First or Upper Second class degree. Denominator population is those achieving a First, Upper or Lower Second, Third class or Ordinary degree.
To reduce the gap in good honours attainment between White and Black students	PTS_5	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between full-time White and Black students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	17	14	12	10	8	6	Filters used were 'All undergraduates', 'Full-time or apprenticeship'
To reduce the attainment gap between students in IMD Q1 and those in IMD Q2-5	PTS_6	Socio-economic	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between full-time students in IMD Q1 and students in IMD Q2-5)	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	6.0	5.4	4.7	4.1	3.5	3	Filters used were 'All undergraduates', 'Full-time or apprenticeship'
To reduce the attainment gap between White students and students of Asian, Mixed or Other ethnicity	PTS_7	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between full-time White students and those of Asian, Mixed or Other ethnicity (AMO)	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	9.2	8.5	7.5	6.3	5.5	4.6	Filters used were 'All undergraduates', 'Full-time or apprenticeship'
To reduce the attainment gap between part-time BAME students and White students	PTS_8	Part-time	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between part-time Asian/Black/Mixed/Other students and White students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	24	20	16	13	11	9	Filters used were 'All undergraduates', 'Full-time or apprenticeship'

Table 2c - Progression

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
	PTP_1												
	PTP_2												
	PTP_3												
	PTP_4												
	PTP_5												
	PTP_6												
	PTP_7												
	PTP_8												