

**University of Birmingham**  
**Outreach Report 2021-2022**

## **1. Purpose of Report**

This report summarises the University of Birmingham's Outreach and Access activity for the academic year 2021-2022. It includes data on the outputs and outcomes on access activity related to the Birmingham Scholar, and on broader outreach and pre-16 activity, as set out in the Access and Participation Plan approved by the Office for Students.

### **Context**

As we emerged from the pandemic, the Outreach team were able to return to face-to-face delivery and work more closely with our partner schools once again, visiting them directly to speak to their students and also hosting visits on campus. School and colleges have been keen to re-engage and to make up for the lost time caused by lockdowns and the pandemic. As a result, the team has been exceptionally busy with school visit and engagement requests and have had to prioritise at the busiest times. All programmes, post pre-16 and post-16, also returned to face-to-face delivery and it has been fantastic to welcome students back onto campus and to be able to run events such as our masterclasses and summer schools once more.

### **Key achievements against APP targets**

Table 1 shows overall performance against APP and local targets. Highlights include:

- There were 596 entrants through all outreach programme routes. This includes 534 through our institutional P2B programmes (including 408 through A2B), 54 Realising Opportunity students (up from 30 in the previous cycle) and 8 care leaver/experienced students (up from 4 last year). This represents 10% of our home UG intake, exceeding our target with the OfS of 9.5%.
- Early UCAS data suggests a Polar 4 Q5:Q1 ratio of 4:1, against a target of 6:1 and surpassing the 2025 target set with the OfS. However, this ratio will be subject to some adjustment in HESA reporting which is the dataset used in the APP.
- Implementation of the new Outreach Evaluation Strategy and a lead role in the delivery of the overarching APP Evaluation Strategy.

## **2. Post-16 Pathways to Birmingham (P2B)**

Our 2020-2025 Access and Participation Plan sets out the University's 'Birmingham Scholar' with the access element represented by our Pathways to Birmingham programme. This includes our longstanding Year 13 A2B programme, supplemented by a number of other streams, which students can complete in Year 12 and which afford students the alternative offer and financial support. These include Routes to the Professions (R2P), Inspired@Birmingham, Academic Enrichment Programme and the National Access Summer School. Table 2 in the appendix shows overall applications, offers and entrants along with a breakdown via programme route.

2021-22 was another successful year for the P2B programmes in terms of applications and entrants to the University. Whilst the number of entrants to the University did not reach the levels seen in 2020 and 2021, when higher than usual A-level and equivalent grades led to record numbers of

entrants, there was an increase in entrants compared to the pre-pandemic levels in 2019. Entry by students who completed an institutional P2B programme was 534, and to this, we add 30 students who completed Realising Opportunities. For further detail and data on P2B activity, engagement and outcomes, please see our comprehensive Pathways to Birmingham Annual Report (2021-22).

In addition to our institutional programmes, we are a longstanding partner and founding member of the Realising Opportunities Programme coordinated by Newcastle University. Table 3 details the applications and entrants to the University of Birmingham from RO students. This year there were 213 applications from RO applicants, representing another record year for this scheme. From cohort 12, 70 students had a conditional firm offer with the University of Birmingham, 24 more than in the previous cohort. 53 students have been accepted onto courses starting September 2022 at University of Birmingham, an increase of 19 from the previous year. This is the highest ever number of RO students admitted to University of Birmingham.

### 3. Academic Attainment Support

With a renewed focus on academic attainment support from the OfS, we have evaluated and reviewed our offer and for the next cycle will be running initiatives for pre-16 students, rather than Year 13 students on our Pathways to Birmingham. Therefore, this is the final year that we will be reporting on our findings for post-16 attainment activities.

Furthermore, in-depth evaluation of our work to date unfortunately did not demonstrate a clear and positive impact on exam attainment; however, the activities continued to receive positive feedback from the learners in terms of feeling more confident and prepared for their exams.

#### 3.1 MyTutor

We continued with the third-party provider, MyTutor, to offer A level subject support to P2B offer holders and at the beginning of March 100 students were registered to receive online tuition. All students with a P4Q1 postcode were selected for the programme. The rest of the students were selected based on date of application. As in previous years engagement varied, and 32 students withdrew or were withdrawn from the programme (for missing more than two consecutive sessions for no good reason). Where possible these were replaced by other students from the waiting list, but due to difficulties in accessing this information, it was difficult to monitor attendance on a regular basis.

Numbers engaged and received tuition:

- **100** students were initially signed up for MyTutor support
- All the students were WP students meeting A2B criteria
- **82 students** (including some who had replaced withdrawn students) continued with the programme to attend one or more tutoring session. **NB. the numbers below are shown as a percentage of this number**
- **68%** (56) attended seven or more sessions.
- **60%** (49) attended eight or more sessions
- **24%** (20) attended 10 sessions

Of the 82 students who completed the MyTutor programme, **36 (44%)** students progressed to UoB.

In terms of the grades achieved:

- **9 (11%)** students achieved an A\*. Six of these students attended 7 or more tutoring sessions.

- **18** (22%) students achieved an A. Eight of these students attended 7 or more tutoring sessions

When the outcomes are looked at in terms of the number of sessions attended, it can be seen that 50% of students who attended 7 or more sessions achieved or exceeded their predicted grade compared to 34% of students who attended less than 7 tutoring sessions. However, it is difficult to draw many conclusions from this without knowing more about the context of this information, and how many of the students were likely to achieve their target grades without MyTutor intervention.

### **3.2 Academic Mentoring**

The Academic Mentoring programme involves second year undergraduate university students mentoring and supporting Year 13 school students in their study of specific A Level subjects – English, Maths and Biology. Year 13 learners are selected by the sixth form mentor lead, prioritising learners who are already on a P2B programme or who are intending to apply through A2B. Mentors usually complete between 10 -12 weeks of mentoring. In 2022, 61 learners took part in academic mentoring which is a return to pre-pandemic numbers as the cancellation of examinations over the last couple of years had resulted in lower engagement.

#### **Progress against targets**

Table 4 shows the progress against internal and programme level targets. The first target around increasing the number of learners has been met as more mentors were trained to support a higher number of learners in schools and to allow for any mentor dropouts. This was a recommendation from last year's report.

Coordinators were encouraged to select males for the programme and this worked very well with 44% of males being mentored. This was an increase of 12% from the previous year and exceeds the original target set. There was also an increase of white males being mentored than in previous years.

Unfortunately, the P4Q1 target was not met this year, with the emphasis on coordinators selecting more males this impacted the number of students from P4Q1 areas. The majority of students on the programme were from P4Q3 areas.

An additional programme target focuses on the number of sessions mentors receive; this target was exceeded this year with 90% of learners receiving 6 – 12 sessions. This is a great outcome to show the dedication and commitment of the mentors working on the programme.

The final programme target looks at progression to UoB, data shows that only 7% of the tracked learners progressed to the University of Birmingham. However, it is hard to make inferences from this data due to small numbers. The tracking of the learners is also unreliable as we do not have UCAS numbers for the learners.

Having looked at the predicted and achieved grades of the learners this year it seems that schools were selecting students that were middle to lower ability, in previous years there were fewer students predicted below BBB so this may be reflected in the number then progressing to UoB. It is also evident that fewer students were being mentored that were already on a P2B programme or decided not then to apply through A2B in Year 13. A large majority of the learners went on to study at Aston, Birmingham City University and Wolverhampton (74% of those placed).

#### 4. Closing the Polar4 Q5:Q1 Gap

Early admissions data from UCAS indicates that we have reduced our Polar 4 Q5:Q1 gap from 7.4:1 to 4:1 (against a target of 6:1) for 2022 entry, achieving our 5-year target with the OfS.

In order to drive progress against this target, each of our Outreach programmes focused on engaging with Polar 4Q1 learners, alongside the use of our WP basket of measures. This is also the case in our partnership activity. Our National Access Summer School (NASS), which is one of our P2B strands, targets schools from outside of the area where there are high numbers of Q1 learners. Much of the rest of our activity to drive applications from P4Q1 learners outside of the region is through our contextual offer as well as marketing materials and digital advertising campaigns.

#### 5. Pre-16 Programmes

##### 5.1 Forward Thinking

Forward Thinking is a progressive programme of higher education awareness activity to encourage and support future application to higher education and more specifically to a research-intensive university. It has been designed to support appropriate subject choices in year 9 and 11 and aid attainment, whilst also informing students about higher education pathways, courses, and student life and employment opportunities.

In 2021-2022 the programme worked with 500 students (years 9 -11) from 35 schools from 5 networks. An additional 187 Year 8 students were recruited in 2022, bringing the total to 687 students on programme.

End of Year 11 KS4 data was obtained for 147/166 students (89%). The analysis of attainment data revealed that:

- **86%** (127 out of 147 students) achieved 5 or above in GCSE English and **86%** (127 out of 147 students) achieved 5 or above in Maths.
- **80%** (118 out of 147 students) achieved 5 or above in both English and Maths.
- **93%** (137) of students achieved five or more GCSEs at grades 9-4, and **93%** (136) achieved five or more GCSEs at grades 9-4 including Maths and English.

Progression data was obtained for 93 out of 166 students completing the programme (56%):

- 88 out of the 93 tracked students (95%) progressed on to Level 3 study.
- Of the 88 students who progressed to Level 3 study 75% (66) went on to study A Levels and 20% (18) were studying BTEC courses.
- 2 students also joined the Armed Forces and 2 students started Electrical Engineering Apprenticeships.

Progression to Higher Education – Cohort 10 (2022 entry):

156 cohort 10 students completed the programme and were tracked two years after completing the programme. The tracking data revealed that:

- 56% of students (87 out of 156) applied to HE, with 71% of these students (62/87) applying to University of Birmingham.
- 20% of students completing Forward Thinking (31 of 156) were made offers to study at the University of Birmingham.
- 19% of students completing Forward Thinking (30 out of 156) applied to a Pathways to Birmingham programme; all were accepted.
- 54% (85 of 156) progressed to university in 2022.
- 8% (13) cohort 10 students progressed to studying at the University of Birmingham.

We have been successful in a bid funded through TASO via the Office for Students to carry out an in-depth evaluation of the programme to explore and further understand the value of multi-interventional programmes. We are currently working on the summative research report (including an RCT component) and this will be published in Spring 2023.

## 5.2 Year 10 Summer Schools

With the lifting of Covid restrictions, we were finally able to run our in-person residential again for 200 learners. To attract a diverse range of students, the stream names and subject focus' where changed to the following:

- **Discover**, included Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Biomedical Science, and Biology.
- **Explore**, included Business, Psychology, Law, Engineering, and English.
- **Achieve** included Sports Science, Medicine, Biomedical Science, Pharmacy, Law and Business.

Each stream remains a 2-night, 3-day residential experience, taking place during term time and is offered completely free of charge to schools and students. Each stream follows the same programme of personal and social development activities, which prove to be effective at raising aspirations to future learning and higher education and only differs for different academic subject sessions. We received a total of **331** applications from **38** schools. These number are comparable to our last in person even of 303 applications.

In evaluating the progression rate to HE, we reviewed the learners who attended the 2019 summer school and applied to university in 2021/22. Here there were 146 students who participated and completed the programme. Of those 146 students, 98 (67%) students applied through UCAS, an increase of 7% from 2018. 39 (27%) students applied to the University of Birmingham. 75 (51%) students achieved a place at other universities, an increase of 10%.

## 6. Other Non-Programme Schools Activity

### 6.1 Masterclasses

Our annual Masterclasses programme provides school pupils in Years 8-13 with fun, engaging and interactive insights into what it is like to study at a selective university. Our expert academics lead sessions in a whole range of subjects and topics, from physics to filmmaking to philosophy. Pupils take part in activities, workshops and lectures which aim to advance their understanding of a particular topic and motivate them to pursue further study in the field.

Prior to the pandemic, approximately 40 face-to-face masterclasses were delivered each year on the University of Birmingham campus. These took place during the Autumn term. It was not possible to run face to face sessions in 2020/21 and therefore 19 masterclasses were delivered virtually in January-February 2021, which coincided with a period of school closures. Schools and the university campus re-opened during the 2021/22 academic year, although there were still some restrictions in place. The decision was made to return to face-to-face masterclasses on campus, although these were scheduled for the spring term when it was hoped restrictions would have eased. Classes were originally due to start in February 2022, but a return to homeworking in December/January meant that all February classes were moved back and the programme started in March 2022. Masterclasses took place each week for six weeks between 2 March – 6 April.

Teachers could request places for school groups, and students in Year 12 & 13 could book individual places. Once requests had been received, places were allocated with priority being given to non-selective state schools and P2B partner schools. A total of 2329 places were offered across 36 Masterclasses. However, only 829 people attended the classes. There was a high level of drop-out / non-attendance, primarily due to the continuing impact of the pandemic on staff & pupil absence. A small number of schools also had issues arranging transport. Places were offered to students from 91 different schools but only 55 different schools attended.

The number of attendances at the masterclasses was disappointing compared to the number of places offered. In previous years around 1/3 of students did not attend classes, but this year only 1/3 attended. However, circumstances were difficult at the time the masterclasses took place due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Due to the different format of the 2021/22 masterclasses, it is difficult to make comparisons with previous years, or draw conclusions from the data. For the 2022-23 cycle, we will review the objectives of the masterclass programme to determine how we can get the most of them.

## 6.2 School visits

Typically, the Outreach team works with 150 – 175 schools each year, with the majority being located in the West Midlands. With schools open again, we saw a substantial increase in requests for school visits and a reduction of requests for virtual delivery. There were 403 requests from schools and colleges for a variety of activity. The Team managed to support 212 events (52.6%) alongside working on a variety of other programmes. This year we worked with a total of 134 schools which is more than double compared to last year where we worked with only 57 schools in 2020-21.

### Key Findings

- The Team delivered the most on campus visits in the past three years, nearly doubling 2019.
- HE Fairs had the highest decline rate compared to other requests and were mainly declined due to staff availability, clashes with compulsory events (Team Away days and programme dates) or last-minute requests from schools and colleges.

The Outreach team also usually deliver large-scale events which involve multiple schools including Christmas Lectures and a number of different subject-themed quizzes. These also returned to face-to-face activity and had high levels of student engagement. In total, over 3000 students took part in these events.

## **7. Departmental Outreach Activity**

Each of the Colleges supports University wide Outreach / Access activity through delivery of academic workshops and masterclasses and the delivery of the A2B reflective assignment.

Engineering and Physical Sciences run a WP specific fully funded Foundation Year, 'EPS Futures,' which is a target in our APP Plan and is currently recruiting for its third cohort. MDS also deliver additional activity for students interested in the health professions.

This year we again ran a programme of support for students from widening participation backgrounds interested in applying to university subjects, which use an interview as part of the admissions process. Colleagues from CAL, CoSS, LES and MDS collaborated to develop a skills programme, which provides sessions including the benefits of volunteering and work experience, reflecting on experiences, and communicating with confidence.

## **8. Aimhigher West Midlands and Uni Connect – Regional Partnership**

We continue to lead the Aimhigher Partnership, including Aston, BCU, UCB and Worcester, with APP linked activity. In addition to this we manage, the OfS funded UniConnect Programme in which Newman is also a partner. We delivered all of the associated targets with UniConnect for 2022-2023 but this year will continue to be challenging. We will also face considerable uncertainty as this phase of UniConnect funding finishes in July 2023 and we are awaiting news of ongoing funding in Spring 2023.

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## Appendix

Table 1: Outreach and Access APP and departmental targets

APP/ Local Target	Description of Target	Indicators	Baseline	Progress against target				
				20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
APP	To increase the proportion of our intake of students with multiple measures of disadvantage	% All P2B students entering UoB	6.2%	11%	12%	10%		
APP	To reduce the gap between the number of students we admit from the most (P4Q5) and least (P4Q1) represented groups to a ratio of 5:1 by 2025	P4Q1 and Q5 ratio	7.4:1	5:1	4:1	4:1		
APP	To increase the number of students participating in our post-16 activities who then progress to other universities (500)	Number of P2B students entering HE	427	990	470	1144		
APP	To increase the percentage of Realising Opportunities students entering accessing a research-intensive university, within two years of becoming 'HE ready' and completing their Post-16 studies, by 12% to 54% (by 2025)	% RO students entering research intensive universities	42%	TBC	TBC	TBC		
APP	To increase the percentage if P4Q1 learners engaged on Aimhigher West Midlands programmes to 40% (240 learners) by 2025	% P4Q1 learners engaged on Aimhigher West Midland programmes	24.1%	26.5%	34%	TBC		
LOCAL	To increase the percentage of students progressing from our Pre 16 programmes to our Post 16 programmes by 7% (to 15% by 2025)	% students on pre 16 programmes participating in Year 12 P2B programmes	8.2%	8%	19%	15.5%		
LOCAL	To increase the percentage of students progressing from our Pre 16 programmes to Higher	% student on pre 16 programmes progressing	46.6%	61.5%	69%	56%		



	Education by 7% (to 50% by 2025)	to higher education						
LOCAL	To increase the application rate of Year 12 P2B programme students applying to UoB by 8% (to 75% by 2025)	% Year 12 P2B students applying to UoB	To be established in 2020	89%	97%	94%		
LOCAL	To increase the percentage of Year 12 P2B programme applicants who make UoB their conditional firm choice by 4% (to 70% by 2025)	% Year 12 students who make UoB their conditional firm choice	To be established in 2020	66%	57%	59%		
LOCAL	To increase the percentage of A2B students who make UoB their conditional firm choice by 6% (62% by 2025)	% A2B students making UoB their conditional firm choice	56%	58%	56%	64%		

Table 2: P2B 2015-16 to 2021-22, an overview

Admissions cycle	P2B applicants*	P2B applications*	P2B offers*	CF offer holders*	Entrants**	Application to offer	Offer to CF	% applicants
2015-16	1324	1559	941	728	340	60%	77%	26%
2016-17	1234	1512	912	686	347	60%	75%	28%
2017-18	1307	1499	1000	725	378	67%	73%	29%
2018-19	1841	2161	1660	1032	497	77%	62%	28%
2019-20	1950	2382	1803	1163	662	76%	65%	34%
2020-21	2212	2755	1940	1248	794	70%	64%	36%
2021-22	2068	2573	1573	994	534	61%	63%	26%

\*data taken from all eligible P2B students, not accounting for those who completed their A2B programme

\*\*only students who passed their P2B programme included in entrants

Table 3: RO Applications and Entrants

Year	Cohort	Application to UoB from national programme	Applicants hosted by UoB	CF students from whole programme	RO entrants to UoB	RO entrants hosted by UoB or Warwick	RO entrants hosted outside of the area
2015-16	6	119	37	39	21	12	9
2016-17	7	187	40	49	24	8	16
2017-18	8	204	56	59	32	18	14
2018-19	9	170	51	32	23	11	12

2019-20	10	201	75	50	38	27	11
2020-21	11	222	67	46	34	17	17
2021-22	12	269	69	70	53	27	26

**Table 4: Academic Mentoring Progression and Academic achievement of academic mentoring**

Progression and academic achievement	19/20	20/21	21/22
A Level Predictions versus actual	17% predicted to achieve below BBB 41% who achieved below BBB	13% predicted to achieve below BBB 12% who achieved below BBB	26% predicted to achieve below BBB 55% achieved below BBB
Target grades	20% achieved target grades 72% achieved below target grades 7% exceeded target grades	20% achieved target grades 50% achieved below target grades 30% exceeded target grades	4% achieved target grades 85% achieved below target grades 11% exceeded target grades
Applications to HE	62% applied to HE 38% unable to track	62% applied to HE 37% unable to track	77% applied to HE 23% unable to track
Applications to UoB through A2B/RO	Of those that applied to HE 86% to UoB through PtB	Of those that applied to HE 90% to UoB through PtB	Of those that applied to HE 35% applied to UoB through PtB
PTB Pass	Of those that applied through A2B 64% passed PtB module	Of those that applied 100% passed PtB module	Of those that applied 79% passed PtB module