

# University of Birmingham: 2019-20 Access and Participation plan

## 1. Introduction

The University of Birmingham is one of the largest universities in the UK covering a comprehensive range of disciplines, offering both academic and vocational programmes. We are a full-time, residential, campus-based university with a diverse student population. In 2017/18 our undergraduate population totalled 21,940, with 99% studying full-time, 82% from state schools, 19.5% from disadvantaged backgrounds (Polar Quintiles 1 and 2), 27% BAME, 57% female, 6% mature learners, 9.8% with a recorded disability and 12.3% international (non-EU). We are a research-intensive institution, founded on a civic mission, with a strategic aim to be a global force in both teaching and research. Supporting access to higher education – to Birmingham or elsewhere – is a cornerstone of our education mission; we seek to take the lead in spearheading innovative collaborations and initiatives in order to further this mission. The University of Birmingham Training School and our strategic partnership with University College Birmingham focussed on the development of links from FE to HE are particular examples; both of which we believe are unique amongst Russell Group institutions.

## 2. Assessment of current performance

Our self-assessment has been informed by a range of internal and external data (including HESA PIs, TEF metrics, UCAS equalities data, HESA and DLHE data and internal KPIs). We have reflected on our performance against national benchmarks (where available) and in the context of similar research-intensive and selective institutions. These data show the positive impact our interventions are having in reducing disparities in outcomes across different groups of students, but also highlight areas where there is more work to do. Our offer and intake rates for BAME and LPN students continue to increase, for example, whilst the number of less-advantaged white males commencing study at Birmingham is falling (Polar 3 Q1 males accounted for 2.2% (or 145 students) of our 2017/18 intake, compared to 2.5% in 16/17). Our non-continuation rates across all broad measures of disadvantage are amongst the lowest in the sector though ‘continuation gaps’ remain, particularly for students where a number of characteristics intersect (*BAME male* students for example, or *white Low-SEC*). In this section we identify priority areas for improvement of outcomes; we provide detail in later sections on our strategy and the actions we are taking to address the issues identified.

We have a demonstrable strength in attracting applicants from all backgrounds who have the ability to succeed at Birmingham and we have seen a number of recent successes<sup>1</sup>: applications from BAME students have increased by 50% between 2011 and 2017 (compared to a 17% increase in white applicants over the same period) and our offer rates for key student cohorts continue to increase, with rates for Black, Asian and LPN applicants rising to 51%, 63% and 58% respectively in 2017 (from 46%, 51% and 55% in 2016)<sup>2</sup>. We continue to review the UCAS Equalities dataset and recognise that we have more to do to further understand the issues highlighted in the report. Despite national campaigns and targeted local outreach activity, we have seen a decline in applications from *Polar 3 Q1 white males*: applications from this cohort fell by 9% in 2017 (from 962 to 876), though offer rates were maintained at 64%. This pattern is mirrored in our Access to Birmingham scheme (A2B) which saw applications from *white disadvantaged males* fall 18% (from 119 to 97); the proportion of these students who subsequently achieved their offer reduced significantly (32% (25 students) of those receiving an offer enrolled in 2017/18, compared to 51% (47 students) in 2016/17).

Our BAME intake has increased by 29% since 2017 (and POLAR 3 Q1 BAME intake increased by 27%). 82.1% of our young UG entrants are from state schools (increased from 78.6% four years ago and

---

<sup>1</sup> Per 2017 UCAS Sex, area background and ethnic group report (the UCAS Equalities dataset)

<sup>2</sup> Comparable application/offer data for disabled or care leaver students are not available in the UCAS dataset.

1.1% points above our HESA PI benchmark); this is a strong performance for a Russell Group university. We have made progress in increasing the proportion of LPN students studying at Birmingham, growing by 0.5% in the last four years to 6.7% of entrants (9<sup>th</sup> in the Russell Group); however we remain below our HESA PI benchmark of 7.6%. We have increased the absolute number of mature student entrants to full-time UG study (5.5% year-on year to 2017) though we have seen a slight proportional decrease as our overall student population has grown, mirroring the sector trend. We currently have 27 (self-identified) care leavers in our undergraduate population.

Students who commence study at the University of Birmingham are supported to continue and complete their studies; institutionally, 4.3% of our UG students did not continue from year 1 to year 2 (15/16 entrants<sup>3</sup>), and we have made significant progress in addressing differential continuation rates amongst our student cohorts. The non-continuation rate for LPN students has fallen from 4.9% in 2012/13 to 4.0% in 2016/17 (compared to 4.1% for the RG and 8.6% for the sector). Improvements have also been seen for mature students (from 11.2% to 10.9% compared to 9.1% for the RG and 11.6% for the sector) and BAME students (falling from 6.7% to 4.8%) over the same period, whilst rates for disabled students have remained broadly flat (c.4%)<sup>4</sup>. The non-continuation rate for our Access to Birmingham (A2B – our flagship access scheme) students continues to outperform institutional average – latest data show a 3.7% non-continuation rate. We are proud of our retention record and the improvements we have achieved in recent years. However, there remains more to do: analysis of our latest non-continuation rates has identified a number of priority cohorts where the gap between under-represented groups is greater than 2% points (*BAME male* students (6.9%, 2%pt higher than white, males), *white low-SEC* (2.2%pts higher than white, high-SEC), *female white low-SEC* (2.8%pts higher than white female high-SEC)). We provide detail in later sections of this Plan around the actions we are taking to address these gaps.

Birmingham students achieve strong degree outcomes. We have made positive strides over the past five years to address disparity in outcomes for our less advantaged students. Since 2012/13 the attainment gap (based on a simple comparison of % good honours) has reduced by 5.2%pt for disabled students (who now outperform their non-disabled peers by 1.2%pts), by 10.6%pts for mature students (to 8.1% gap) and by 2%pts for low-SEC students (to 6.2% gap). We have made significant gains in reducing the BAME attainment gap, which has fallen from 21.6% in our baseline year of 2010/11 to 10.3% (2016/17) – this is compared to a 15.6%pt gap across the English HEI sector<sup>5</sup>. We are pleased with our trajectory however our rate of improvement has slowed in recent years; it is therefore a priority to seek to continue to reduce this gap (see later section for details of the actions we are taking to address this).

We have very strongly positive employment outcomes for all of our students; our overall graduate employability ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the country and we received double positive flags across all splits in the latest TEF3 metrics. We continue to see a positive trajectory year-on year: BAME graduate employability increased by 0.3%pts (to 83.6%), disabled by 0.8%pts (to 82%), LPN by 0.4%pts (to 82.1%) and mature by 0.7%pts (to 89.8%). We are not complacent however and have identified a number of student groups for whom employability deviates negatively from our overall institutional average: graduate employability for *low-SEC BAME* students is 77.9% and for *low-SEC male* students is 82.8% (compared to our institutional average of 86.4%). Internal evaluation has also identified a number of priority programmes where some students from disadvantaged backgrounds have a lower level of graduate employability compared to the programme average: Law (BAME students), Accounting and Finance (BAME and A2B students), Biomedical Science (BAME, male and A2B

---

<sup>3</sup> 2015/16 entrants data used to be comparable to latest HESA Performance Indicators

<sup>4</sup> RG and sector comparator data not available from the HESA PIs for BAME and disabled students

<sup>5</sup> Based on latest available data (2015/16), <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/student-recruitment-retention-attainment/student-attainment/degree-attainment-gaps/>

students), Social Policy (male students) and Engineering (BAME students). We provide further detail in later sections on our strategy and actions in this area.

### 3. Ambition and strategy

The University of Birmingham is a proud civic institution with a strong reputation for offering an outstanding student experience and delivering high quality teaching and research. Our undergraduate offer is founded upon a full-time, campus-based, residential experience and the approach to access and participation is anchored within this context. Our vision can be characterised by the following broad objectives:

- In partnership with regional schools (including our own University School) and Further Education colleges we will work to ensure that all students with the potential to succeed at Birmingham have the opportunity to gain access, with a particular focus on growing participation from disadvantaged schools/FE colleges in our geographic region;
- We will offer the necessary additional support to ensure that all our students have the best possible opportunity to succeed and progress to graduate careers.

Our vision will be delivered through a strategy that has the following aims:

- (i) To broaden the reach of our existing and successful access programmes by supporting secondary schools and FE colleges to raise awareness and aspirations amongst their least engaged cohorts and finding new ways to remove perceived barriers to entry (social, cultural, accessibility financial);
- (ii) To offer additional support (including academic, pastoral and financial) to our students throughout their Birmingham journey to ensure they have an equal opportunity to succeed and progress;
- (iii) To deliver activities that will support all our students to develop the personal and social capital they need to make an informed choice about their futures;
- (iv) To continue to demonstrate leadership and innovation in regional and national collaborations and partnership activity.

#### ***Aim 1: Broaden the reach of our existing and successful access programmes***

Birmingham's undergraduate offer is primarily a full-time, campus-based, residential experience; we will continue to support increased access to our programmes within this model, focusing particularly on growing participation from disadvantaged schools/FE colleges in our geographic region. The *Access to Birmingham (A2B)* scheme is the foundation of our access and outreach activity, and our ambition is to continue to increase the proportion of students entering via this route. For our intensive outreach interventions (see detail in later section) we utilise a basket of indicators, as we do not believe that using just a single measure of widening participation is appropriate. Working with non-selective state schools we target individual learners, giving due consideration to parental HE background, household income as well as postcode and socio-economic data. Through targeted interventions we expect to see a continued increase in the proportion of entrants from key underrepresented groups. We are aware that students from white disadvantaged communities, particularly males, are underrepresented in our intake (accounting for 2.2% of our intake in 2017/18, 145 students) and are particularly working to increase participation in our outreach programmes. The removal of maintenance grants, alongside the national narrative around student debt and the increasing promotion of alternative routes to HE (e.g. apprenticeships) is also impacting particularly on outreach to this group. We are taking focused steps to address this as part of our outreach programme.

We are working with schools (including our own) and FE colleges to raise the aspirations of their students, with a long-term goal of improving access to and participation in HE. In the short-term, this

work will focus primarily on improving the quality of teaching, as well as increasing opportunities for young people to be well-informed, encouraged and engaged as a means to support them to secure higher levels of prior academic attainment. We are implementing a more coordinated approach to the development of strong strategic and professional relationships with local schools and colleges, with a particular focus on building executive-level engagement across regional schools, as well as initial teacher training, continuing professional development and co-constructed research into professional practice. Our strategy in this area recognises that by influencing a single teacher we can have an impact on the life-chances of large numbers of young people. We provide further detail in the next section around a number of the initiatives we have in place.

We will extend the role that our own University of Birmingham School (UBS) plays in our approach to widening participation. The UBS opened in September 2015, following University capital investment of £2.6m, with the aim of advancing the educational attainment and aspiration of Birmingham's young people. Currently our School operates a 'nodal' admissions policy designed to recruit pupils from across the city to ensure that its population reflects the rich diversity of the city itself. Pupils with a Statement of Special Needs or an Educational Health and Care Plan, as well as those who are Looked After or Previously Looked After, are given priority, regardless of where their home is. 39% of the School's KS3 population (Y7 to 9) qualified for Pupil Premium Funding, which is linked to deprivation – compared with national (29.1%), regional (32.7%) and Birmingham (48.6%) figures. This policy results in a highly diverse school community; we believe that the benefits of this inclusive admission far outweigh the challenges such a varied community brings.

UBS pupils benefit from a unique Birmingham experience which has a strong focus on raising aspirations, increasing awareness of higher education and increasing social mobility. Pupils have access to the intellectual and physical resources of the University. University staff contribute to five hours of weekly 'enrichment activities' (such as subject clubs, master classes and assemblies on cutting edge research projects) timetabled into the standard teaching day and which are designed to develop the extra-academic skills needed for successful transition to work or further study. These enrichment activities are part of the School's commitment to a 'Character Education' – a curriculum framework for the development of moral, civic, behavioural – as well as intellectual – virtues, spearheaded by the University's Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. Students also have access to the University library, sports centre and attend classes/workshops on campus. The School building itself includes space for University researchers and trainee teachers to work and interact with students. Staff from the University's Careers Network are actively involved in the pastoral programme for sixth formers. Students are given advice on choosing the right university, preparing personal statements, understanding the costs of university, as well as guidance on alternative options after sixth form. Data from our first graduating sixth-form cohort show that 31% progressed to a Russell Group institution, with 14 coming to Birmingham.

The University of Birmingham School is developing a key role in enhancing our teacher training provision and educational research which directly and positively impacts our regional schools. Our teacher training programmes provide a key pipeline of high quality teachers to schools in Birmingham and the wider region, alongside our ongoing commitment to professional development for these teachers. The School aims to be a centre of excellence for teacher training and CPD. In collaboration with University staff, the School is leading on establishing a new integrated model of University-led and School-based teacher training. Teachers are encouraged to be research active, developing research-informed and research-informing teaching practice. Subject leaders have University academic 'partners' to deepen knowledge of their subject to enhance the learning experience. In turn, this informs the development of the University's undergraduate programme to ensure our offering continues to reflect the needs of current sixth form students and supports successful transition to HE.

As part of our collaborative activity with key partners across the region we are beginning to explore new ways of delivering education, some of which will seek to address the needs of a more diverse range of learners (for example, new flexible learning pathways, Degree Apprenticeships and distance learning programmes). A key area of focus within our strategic partnership with University College Birmingham (see below for further detail) is to support increased progression from further to higher education through the development of supported articulation pathways. We have already begun to address this challenge through a HEFCE Catalyst-funded project. Working with South and City College Birmingham (SCCB) and employer partners, we are developing an ‘holistic package’ (or enhanced curriculum) to enable post-16 vocational learners to access university.

***Aim 2: we will continue to offer additional support to our students throughout their University of Birmingham journey to ensure they have an equal opportunity to succeed and progress.***

Our strategy is to provide an integrated, inclusive and student-centred support package – our evidence and evaluation suggests that adopting an inclusive approach (supplemented by targeted interventions as necessary) is most appropriate in seeking to reduce continuation and attainment gaps between different groups of students. Where appropriate - and guided by feedback from our students, and evidence from our evaluations - we provide specific, targeted support to further enhance our existing support packages. The targeted interventions are designed to address specific needs or overcome particular barriers that certain groups of our students may face. The interventions and support we provide are focussed on addressing the key factors that can contribute to differences in student outcomes: curricula and learning practices, staff/student relationships and social, cultural, economic capital. Our long-term ambition is to seek to achieve, as far as possible, parity of continuation and attainment across our student body; in the medium term we will address the priority cohorts identified in our self-assessment and seek to achieve a year-on-year reduction in the observed gaps. For non-continuation this will be focussed on male BAME and white low-SEC students; for the attainment gap this will be BAME students. We provide examples of the interventions and support we offer in support of this aim in Section 4.

***Aim 3: To support all our students to develop the personal and social capital they need to make an informed choice about their futures.***

Whilst our graduate employability rates are amongst the best in the sector, our self-assessment has identified a number of target programmes and student cohorts where graduate employability deviates negatively from the institutional average. Our long-term ambition is to achieve maximise opportunity for all our students - to reduce the observed gaps in graduate employability, as far as this is possible and desired by our students; we appreciate that for some students graduate-level employment is not the optimal (or desired) outcome from their educational studies (and this can be reflective of personal aspirations or wider societal and cultural factors). In the short-term our focus will be to achieve increases in the graduate employability rate for low-SEC BAME and low-SEC male students. As with our approach to student support, we will continue to offer our extensive and inclusive package of employability support, with additional focussed support for priority student groups. Section 4 outlines some of the measures and support we provide.

We are committed to ensuring that the full Birmingham educational experience is accessible to all of our students. Where access may be limited (for example due to financial constraints, lack of ‘social capital’ or cultural barriers) we will ensure appropriate support is put in place to remove those barriers. Financial support is a clear element of this strategy. We recognise the role that financial support plays supporting our broader institutional access and success objectives – it aids our targeted recruitment activity (particularly within low participation and low-SEC communities in the wake of the removal of maintenance grants and wider narrative around student debt) as well

supporting student performance by reducing financial anxiety. We provide further details on the specific support available in section 4.

***Aim 4: To continue our leading role in regional and national collaborations, and to investigate the potential of new partnerships across the region.***

The University plays a leading role in a number of high profile regional and national collaborative activities. These partnerships support our strategic aims across all elements of the student lifecycle. Notable examples of our collaborative activity include:

- ***University College Birmingham:*** Our progressive strategic partnership with University College Birmingham (which we believe to be unique among Russell Group institutions) was announced in May 2017. The partnership is focused on using our collective expertise to raise aspirations and attainment (particularly in supporting articulation from further to higher education), contribute to the regional skills agenda, support economic growth, and enhance the global position of the West Midlands. We have already agreed a number of initiatives which we believe will contribute positively to these aspirations, including a HEFCE Catalyst-funded project to support articulation from FE to HE (see Aim 1 above), development of online and digital resources and shared staff development programmes. We are also exploring collaborative opportunities around degree apprenticeships (nursing is an initial focus).
- ***Aimhigher:*** We are lead institution for the Aimhigher West Midlands partnership (including Aston University, Birmingham City University, University College Birmingham and the University of Worcester), working with young people facing multiple dimensions of disadvantage. This provides a progressive and integrated programme of support and advice including the UniFest Summer School programme and regional Mentoring Scheme, to widen participation in HE at sector level. The partnership acts as a single point of contact to help schools make the most of the support available and aims to engage 1,000 young people per year in its intensive outreach and attainment building activity. The Aimhigher Data Service enables us to track participants, whose GCSE outcomes and rates of entry to HE exceed those of their disadvantaged peers. In collaboration with our Aimhigher partners we are reviewing expected outcomes to incorporate the introduction of Attainment 8. Latest evaluation data (2014/15) shows that 58.4% of Aimhigher participants gained 5 A\*-C GCSEs (including English and Maths) compared to 33.4% for disadvantaged learners in the West Midlands. Additionally, 32.4% of Polar 3Q1 participants applied to HE, compared to 13.4% across the West Midlands.
- ***National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP):*** Birmingham is the lead institution for Aimhigher Plus, one of the largest of the 29 consortia delivering the NCOP. We have designed a new, innovative programme of activity to address the lower than expected progression to HE of young people in Year Groups 9 to 13 living in 25 identified gap wards. Our activity has been designed to complement our institutionally-funded and Access & Participation Plan Aimhigher activity and whilst as yet there are not results to report, initial feedback from partner schools in the target wards has been overwhelmingly positive.
- ***Realising Opportunities (RO):*** The RO programme is a partnership of research intensive universities developing and delivering a national fair access scheme which promotes social and geographic mobility for able students from under-represented groups. The programme has been developed through shared best practice and provides support for students through interventions designed to raise aspirations, develop skills and enable them to demonstrate their potential to succeed at a research intensive university. These interventions are offered locally and nationally and include a National Student Conference, ongoing support and encouragement from a trained student e-mentor and an assessed academic element. Successful completion of RO will result in additional consideration being given to applications through UCAS from all Partner universities, and the potential for an alternative offer where successful completion of RO is worth two A Level grades of equivalent. The RO Programme aims to prepare students for successful

transition to higher education. In July 2017, HESA data provided by HEAT data showed that 77% of students received a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1 compared to 66% of all students nationally, including those from the most advantaged backgrounds. 94% of RO students who graduated in 2014/2015 were in work or study six months after graduation, compared to 90% for all leavers from all UK HEIs. As an RO partner we have committed funds to ensure the on-going delivery of RO to 31 July 2022.

- Advancing Access: A national collaboration of 24 selective universities working in partnership with schools and colleges to develop and deliver CPD for teachers and advisors. The aim of the programme is to support student progression to selective universities by equipping teachers/advisors with the information and tools they need to advise students with confidence. There is a particular focus on working with schools with historically low levels of progression to universities. Initial evaluation to understand the reach of the scheme's web-based resources shows the potential positive impact of scheme. Over 850 teachers/advisors from 448 schools/colleges across the country have downloaded resources. 44% of these schools (and 31% of colleges) have lower than average progression to HE, and 59% (60% of colleges) have lower than average progression to Russell Group universities.

In summary, the key aims of our Access and Participation strategy are:

- Increased numbers of entrants to full-time undergraduate study from disadvantaged schools/FE colleges in our geographic region;
- Increased proportion of our full-time undergraduate population entering via our Access to Birmingham pathways;
- Increased proportion of entrants to full-time undergraduate study from key underrepresented groups, particularly white disadvantaged communities, and white disadvantaged boys;
- Reduction in the non-continuation 'performance gap', particularly for male BAME and white low-SEC students;
- Reduction of the BAME attainment gap;
- Increases in graduate employability for low-SEC BAME and low-SEC male students and across priority programmes where students from disadvantaged backgrounds have lower levels of graduate employability compared to the programme average.

Further details on the measures we have put in place to help us achieve these outcomes and ambitions are provided in the Section 4.

#### *Ensuring continuous improvement through evaluation*

We have a robust access and outreach evaluation programme and a well embedded culture of using evaluation outcomes to inform future practice, though we have further work to do to embed a comprehensive evaluation framework across the full student lifecycle (building on the best-practice approach taken around our outreach activity). Our evaluation seeks to ensure that our activities are appropriately monitored, that our investment is delivering real impact on learner outcomes and that we are making the desired progress against our strategic aims and targets. Our evaluation programme includes:

- Analysis of the UCAS equalities dataset (referenced in section one above) to identify and understand any underrepresentation in our admissions population;
- Monitoring of applications, acceptances, continuation rates, degree outcomes and employability across key student cohorts/characteristics (ethnicity, low participation/SEC, entry qualifications, disability, A2B students, mature students, and students with dependents and intersectional groups, as evidenced in section one above). Where possible these are analysed against internal and external benchmarks;
- Review of HESA Performance Indicators;

- Specific evaluation programmes for our collaborative activity. Realising Opportunities has a robust evaluation framework which incorporates contextual data, student aspirations, outcomes for learners (including longitudinal tracking of students) and the wider impact of the partnership. This continues to inform the future of the scheme. Through Aimhigher West Midlands we jointly fund one of three data services approved by HEFCE to oversee the monitoring and evaluation of the NCOP. This also supports our ongoing work to track the attainment and entry to HE of participants in institutionally-funded Aimhigher programmes.
- Institution-wide Race Equality Charter survey and focus groups to inform development and delivery of our institutional REC action plan;
- Evaluation of our financial support includes a combination of supplementary qualitative surveys (drawing upon sector best practice) into how our awards reduce the need for part-time work, address any perceived disadvantage, and reduce levels of stress and anxiety experienced by some individuals, and quantitative analysis, drawing on the OFFA toolkit methodology. Our quantitative analysis focuses on the following key areas of impact: (i) retention into a second year of study, (ii) completion of study within 5 years, (iii) achieving a 'good' degree and (iv) graduate employment within 6 months (although this is likely to be aligned with the revised scope of the new Graduate Outcomes). We frame our evaluation in the context of existing research into the positive value and impact of financial support. Evaluation and review of our financial support package is overseen by the Access Awards Review Group; the Group's membership of which includes Student Guild representatives.

Responsibility for reviewing institutional performance and agreeing appropriate interventions sits with the Student Access and Progress Committee (SAPC, reporting to the University's Education Committee). This Committee is chaired by the PVC (Education), with membership including academic representation from each of our five Colleges, Guild of Students' Education and Postgraduate Officers and key Professional Services leads. Performance against our Access and Participation Plan targets and objectives are considered annually. School-level Education Plans (SEP) are produced annually. These documents respond to analyses of student performance indicators as well as institutional priority 'themes'. These themes are informed by the outcomes of our evaluation programme. SAPC regularly considers performance and impact reports on institutionally-coordinated interventions (i.e. A2B). Significant issues are referred to the Executive Board when appropriate, including annual reporting on non-continuation and degree classifications.

### *Equality and Diversity*

Equality is central to our mission to be a global force in teaching and research; our Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for Equalities leads our institutional development in this space. Whilst our work is guided by the Equality Act 2010 we also look beyond the legal definition of inequality in our Equality Scheme (2016-2020) to ensure that students from all backgrounds have an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. We are committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive learning and working environment; this is demonstrated by embedding equality and diversity into our decision-making and service delivery at all levels. Our work on equality and diversity has resulted in a 2-year HEFCE-funded project (in partnership with the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University) with a BAME and low socio-economic focus. The project, based on our established Student Ambassadors programme, will see staff and students working in partnership to develop and deliver targeted actions to promote wellbeing and improve outcomes for students with protected characteristics.

The University is actively involved in Athena Swan, the Race Equality Charter (REC) and the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, and we are working towards obtaining the *Stand Alone Pledge* on support for estranged students and we are in the process of applying for the REC Bronze Award. Four Pro-

Vice-Chancellors have taken respective new roles as equality champions for disability, race and religion, gender and family, and LGBT. In addition, we are expanding our E&D staffing through the creation of a Hate Crime Officer and a Student Equality & Diversity Officer.

In 2018-19 we will launch an institution-wide curriculum review, one of the key pillars of which will be *'Inclusive Education'*. As part of the review, we will explore best practice across teaching delivery, assessment and feedback, personal tutoring, provision of accessible learning materials and supporting student success. We will seek staff and student input via our *Big Conversation* blog series. This echoes with the establishment of our Higher Education Futures institute (HEFi) which was created to support academic staff to deliver effective and innovative teaching. As part of this, a 'micro CPD' series has been developed on a wide range of topics (e.g. *'equality and accessibility issues for programme specification'*).

Inclusivity must resonate with the lived experience of students on campus. The University's Sport centre, for example, provides free classes specifically for students with disabilities in a move to diminish the perceived barriers to participate in sports; our Estates Office commissioned an independent audit of campus buildings to inform future investment and actions in improving accessibility; and a welcome reception for LGBT students is delivered annually.

Conversation around equality on campus is amplified by our year-round celebration of diversity with Black History Month, LGBT History Month, Mental Health Awareness Week and International Women's Day; programmes are delivered jointly by the University and Guild of Students. We have also provided specialised training to over 100 Equality and Diversity Student Ambassadors and Student Representatives to empower and support them in their roles developing student-led equality initiatives and reflecting minority voices.

We have developed a number of initiatives in line with UUK recommendations around the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual violence on campus. Our online reporting tool *'you report, we support'* allows for anonymous reporting of sexual harassment and we have established a Sexual Violence and Harassment Team of responders to support students and develop training and awareness workshops (delivered by our student ambassadors).

We regularly review our practice and service delivery to support continuous improvement. We are currently amending the terms and conditions for our Access to Birmingham (A2B) scheme to formalise extenuating circumstances support for students facing (e.g.) health challenges. We are also developing travel guidance to support students making informed decisions about taking part in international exchange programmes. In addition to the development of guidance for assistance dogs on campus, we are in the early stages of enhancement work on our maternity and student parent policies and procedures, as well as gender identity support guidance. Our new equality and diversity webpage will become our flagship portal to access a wide range of information and guidance for students, applicants and staff.

#### *Student consultation and involvement*

Our students are partners in their education, and we have a comprehensive engagement system in place to ensure our students are able to input and influence the development of their education. Our Student Representation System (SRS) is an important means by which students engage in their studies and become authentic partners. Students are represented by fellow students at all levels including in Schools and Colleges, at Senate and Council (and their sub-committees), in strategic reviews and project workshops.

The annual Student Voice Report is a further important mechanism through which the collective student voice is heard and prioritised. Progress on actions identified in the Voice is monitored by the Student Academic Engagement Committee and reported to the University Education Committee. This Voice report was initiated by the Guild of Students as a means of capturing key issues of concern and/or interest to the student body on a regular basis and following progress on those issues over time. We also ensure student views are prioritised by putting in place institution-wide annual feedback surveys (in addition to NSS), ad hoc surveys, and focus groups. The outcomes of all student consultations are scrutinised in conjunction with students through the committee systems. These operate at every level of the organisation ranging from individual course committees and task and finish groups to central executive committees.

This plan has been developed in partnership with representatives from our Guild of Students. We are developing a workshop-style approach to inform institutional strategy, aims and interventions and support the development of future Access and Participation Plans. Student representation will be a key component of this approach.

It is important to note that we are in the process of changing the shape of our academic teaching year and once the final plan is through Senate and Council (June 2018) we will be implementing the new structure in 2020. One of the drivers for the new academic year is to improve the learning experience for all students but we have particular concerns about the impact of our current structure on WP students. In the new structure assessment is closer to teaching with more prompt feedback on progress such that interventions can be targeted. In addition, we are introducing three new 'assessment support' weeks and an 'enrichment' week, and all of these new initiatives are being co-designed with our students to ensure we meet the needs of all student groups effectively.

In summer 2017 we are launching our major *Curriculum 2020* review; this is to be co-designed with staff and students. One of the three conceptual pillars of the review is inclusive education/social mobility, and we are providing funding for staff and student groups to work together to in projects to inform the design of the curriculum to ensure it meets our social mobility ambitions.

Students are also important contributors to the delivery of our access and participation activity; they are important role models as ambassadors and mentors in our outreach activity, and in our on-programme peer assisted study support and peer mentoring programmes. In many cases students are co-creators of the interventions we provide. The BAME Ambassadors scheme, for example, is successful on the merit and ongoing liaison with our student community. Our Careers Network survey all current A2C participants (representing a wide diversity of WP cohorts) to seek views on how the content might be further developed and has resulted, for example, in the inclusion of a workshop on confidence building and public speaking this year. We involve students in planning our careers internship programmes and over summer we will run focus groups for current students to look at ways to engage students in the implementation and evaluation of support for WP students. Evaluation of our intensive outreach programmes includes feedback from student participants and is used to inform the future development of the programmes.

### *Targets*

Our institutional targets are listed in table 8 of the Access and Participation Resource Plan (appended to this Plan). These targets have been previously agreed and approved by the Director of Fair Access at OFFA, and are designed to reflect the impact of our strategic aims across each of the key stages of the student lifecycle - from 'first contact' through our pre-16 outreach activity, to retention, degree outcomes and employability. These targets run to 2020/21. As the Office for Students will be reviewing its approach to targets over the coming year and issuing new guidance,

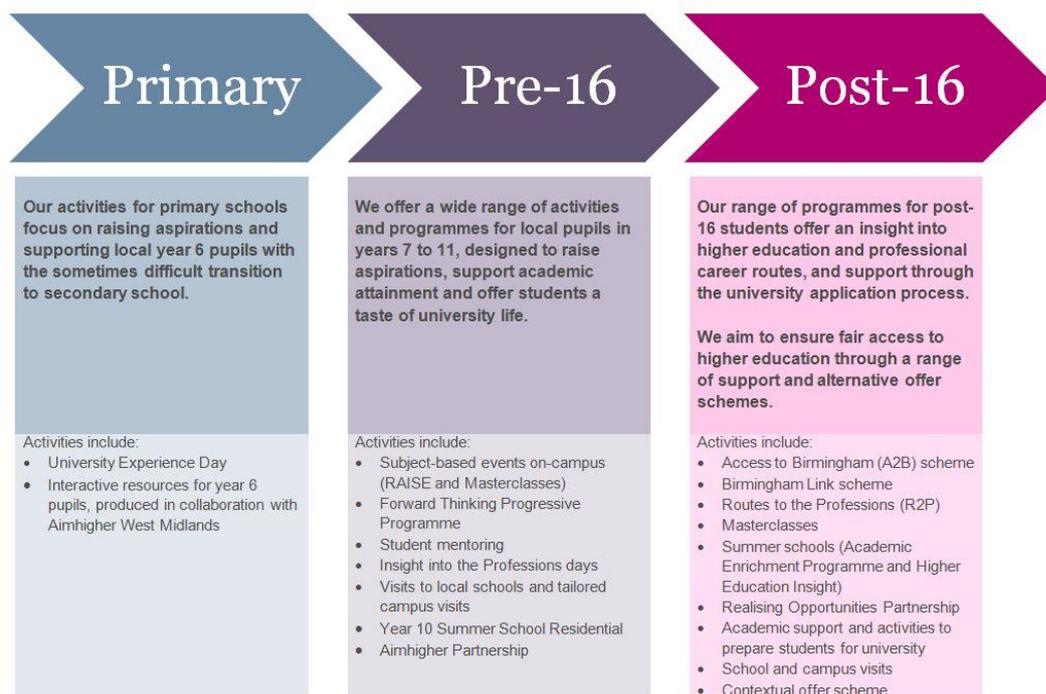
institutions with existing Access and Participation Plans (previously known as Access Agreements) have been advised not to make further changes to existing targets until the revised process has been developed and confirmed. We have outlined above the aims, objectives and expected outcomes of our Access and Participation activity. It is expected that in future Plans, our targets will more closely reflect our stated objectives.

#### 4. Access, student success and progression measures

We have outlined above our strategic, evidence-led approach to improving access, success and progression. In this section we outline some examples of the initiatives, actions and interventions we undertake in support of realising our aims and objectives. The examples are not exhaustive but are indicative of the type and range of measures we provide to support our students (and prospective applicants) to achieve their very best potential. Throughout this section we provide indications of the value and impact of our measures with reference to outcomes from our evaluation programme.

##### Access and Outreach activities

We are proud of our comprehensive suite of access and outreach activities which supports sector-wide progression as well as progression to research-intensive universities and the University of Birmingham. We recognise that schools are primarily responsible and accountable for their pupils' progress and achievement, so our activity is based on a partnership approach. The range of activities we provide ensures a spread of interventions throughout the educational career of a young person – from low engagement visits to campus to intensive courses leading to university admission. The diagram below indicates the key activities which are the foundation of our outreach work:



Our approach to outreach and access activity is underpinned by a firm commitment to the delivery of targeted and sustained outreach programmes which research shows are the most effective in widening participation to HE. Our targeted intervention approach ensures our support is directed at participants from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Examples of our activity include:

- ***Pre-16 Forward Thinking Programme (FTP):*** a progressive programme of activity for over 600 pupils in 35 regional schools in Years 8 to 11 with a particular focus on supporting progression to selective institutions. The programme targets able students who meet socio-economic indicators

of disadvantage. To support our work with white disadvantaged communities we are prioritising schools with large groups of this cohort when recruiting new partners. Our evaluation demonstrates the positive contribution the intervention is making in supporting the academic attainment and progression of participants: FTP students outperformed the KS4 attainment of peers in all Birmingham Local Authority schools (by 34% points), all peers in Forwards Thinking schools (by 39% points) and high-attainers in FT schools (by 2%)<sup>6</sup>. 96% of students progressed onto Level 3 study. Our evaluation also shows the impacts the programme is able to have on our targeted populations: 42% of the students were male, over three quarters were from lower-SEC groups, nearly 90% were living in areas of deprivation, and almost all students have parents with no experience of HE. 59% resided in areas with low youth participation in HE. The majority of our students experience more than one disadvantage.

- *Post-16 Academic Enrichment Programme (AEP)*: The AEP supports 100 able WP students annually (latest cohort data shows that 99% of our students had no parental history of HE, 99% had a household income below £42,875, and 81% came from a postcode in the bottom 40% by Index of Multiple Deprivation) boosting their academic performance and enabling them to apply to high quality degree programmes, often associated with the professions. This is a long term intervention supporting students during year 12 and 13 beginning with a 5-day summer residential and followed by e-mentoring, support with university applications and study skills support. For the last two years we have created a small number of additional places for white males from less advantaged communities and are monitoring the impact of this. Our evaluation demonstrates that this programme is supporting the academic attainment of participants and demonstrably supporting progression to selective universities: in 2017 39% of AEP students achieved A-Level grades ABB and 42% progressed to a Russell Group university. Latest targeting data shows a 4% increase (to 32%) in male student engagement with the programme compared to the previous year.
- *Routes to the Professions (R2P)*: The R2P programme underpins our commitment to supporting local students from less advantaged backgrounds to access professional careers. An important focus of this programme is the development of professional links to the associated employment area. R2P streams include: Medicine, Dentistry, Law, Financial Services and Engineering. Each strand of R2P includes an initial Year 10 Insight Day, followed in years 12 and 13 by a programme of practical workshops, applications and interview support, student shadowing, mentoring, and support with accessing placements. Students are supported with placement preparation, as well as follow-up reflection activity to support future UCAS and job applications. This programme is supporting the academic attainment of participants: 34% of R2P Medicine and 19% of R2P Law students achieved grades of AAB or higher in at least two facilitating subjects. For Medicine this is 17% points above the average for all schools in England and 22% points above schools in the West Midlands. For Law, these figures are 2% and 7% points above all schools in England and the West Midlands respectively.
- *Access to Birmingham (A2B)*: Our A2B programme (for year 13 students) is a proven and highly regarded access scheme and remains our flagship access route for eligible students across the West Midlands. A2B is targeted at applicants from less advantaged backgrounds who are identified by their school as having the potential to succeed at Birmingham. Entrants receive an A2B Scholarship (see later section for detail); evaluation has shown that this has a significant and sustained positive impact on retention and completion of the scheme. From 2018/19 (therefore impacting on entry from 2019/20) we will be piloting a number of additional, more flexible A2B pathways, in support of our objective to remove barriers to entry by improving the reach of A2B as well as choice and flexibility for our applicants. We will enhance and develop our post-16 sustained programmes so that successful completion of the prescribed elements will lead to the same A2B offer and financial support as the traditional year 13 scheme. We hope that this will

---

<sup>6</sup> This comparison is based on 2015 Final DfE data

provide a flexible alternative which may be particularly attractive to disadvantaged white males. We will monitor the transition and success of this group of entrants alongside our traditional year 13 scheme to inform our future approach.

- Contextual offers and mutual recognition schemes: We offer a nationwide contextual offer of one grade below the standard prospectus offer to eligible students from areas of low participation in HE (i.e. HEFCE Polar 3 Quintile 1) who attend, or have attended, a school/college where performance is below the national average. We also offer a mutual recognition scheme with the University of Nottingham which enables students who have participated in Nottingham's access programme to receive a comparable offer to our A2B students.
- Bespoke activities for Looked-after Children (Care Leavers): We have a range of focused outreach activities for young people who have had experience of local authority care. We are a member of the Care Leavers' Network, have a presence on the Propel website, host bespoke events, and provide dedicated induction and transition support through our Vulnerable Students Officer. Students are given priority choice of University accommodation and are eligible for additional financial support (see later section).
- Bespoke activities for Young Adult Carers: We work with community support groups to provide bespoke outreach activity to raise aspirations of young carers in the region. A film has also been made to highlight the support available for young carers once studying at the university.
- Postgraduate Access: We continue to strengthen diversity by expanding participation of under-represented groups in postgraduate programmes. We provide focused activity targeting A2B students and those from WP backgrounds and also identify final year WP students at other HEIs via an amended application process. For 2018 entry we are piloting 25 new £2k scholarships for Masters Students from under-represented groups. The A2B Postgraduate Scholarships are available to students who have previously participated in A2B, Realising Opportunities or similar undergraduate programmes at other universities.

### Supporting Academic Achievement

Our data shows that each year around 50% of the students who hold offers through A2B do not achieve the grades to enter the University. To support students in gaining the academic attainment necessary to thrive at the University of Birmingham we have introduced additional academic support to complement activity in schools and colleges. We are currently evaluating these interventions to determine the impact on outcomes for participants. This includes:

- Online A level tutoring: We are working in partnership with an external provider to give 100 A2B students online one to one tutoring for 10 hours in one A level subject with the aim of helping more of them to achieve the grades needed for entry to the University;
- A-level Maths support: After-school class on the University Campus for Year 13 and Year 12 students, delivered by a qualified teacher who was previously Head of Maths in a local school. This activity is particularly to support progression to STEM degrees where A-level maths is a key requirement for access.
- Skills4Uni: our award winning on line study skills module which is undergoing a significant upgrade to meet the current needs of students completing EPQ and other assignments as part of the preparation for transition to HE study.
- On line curriculum resources: We have a range of materials to support the A level practical examinations in Physics, Biology and Chemistry. These materials help to develop important skills needed for further STEM study and support the academic attainment of A-level students.

### School and FE College partnership activity

We are bringing together the breadth of our WP, ITE and CPD activity through a virtual 'Schools Portal' (<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/teachers/index.aspx>), signposting enquirers to appropriate

contacts across the University. Creating a single-point-of-entry for all school/college interaction will enable us to develop comprehensive and tailored packages of support for our partner schools which utilise the full breath of our expertise. This will include priority placement of trainee teachers, access to pupil support provided by our undergraduates and access to tailored professional development sessions. We will strengthen our School Partnership team (including the Head of ITE and Head of Outreach) to oversee this programme of work. Our well-established Teacher Education Strategy Group is made up of senior colleagues from schools and multi academy trusts and ensures that we are able to be responsive to issues of recruitment, training and retention of school teachers in the region.

We have already referenced above our collaborative project with UCB and South and City College Birmingham (SCCB), through which we are developing a pilot Foundation Degree curriculum (for intake from 2019/20) with an articulation route to 'top-up' to degree-level at the University of Birmingham. The pilot foundation programme will be based at SCCB but with teaching delivered across all three partners.

### **Supporting student success**

Our strategy of support ranges from academic and pastoral support through to intra- and extra-curricular opportunities, designed to ensure our students make a successful transition to, and succeed in, higher education. We believe that an inclusive approach to support services is most appropriate in seeking to achieve our aims of reducing the continuation and attainment gaps between different groups of students, particularly those identified through our self-assessment. The interventions and support we provide are focussed on addressing the key factors that can contribute to differences in student outcomes: curricula and learning practices, staff/student relationships and social, cultural, economic capital. Examples of initiatives we have in place include:

- *Improving/supporting transition to HE:* The University tutorial system is underpinned by a commitment to supporting students through their transition to HE. The University has supported the development of an integrated pastoral care network, which brings together the ongoing review of students' transition to HE within a broader network of tutorial support meetings. As part of our Welcome programme (the University's main induction and orientation period, which begins, though an online induction module, before our students join us) we provide students with a range of information and activities aimed at helping them make the academic and social transition to university life. Following feedback from student focus groups about the importance of peer-to-peer connections and network building for non-traditional students, we now host (in partnership with the Guild of Students) dedicated welcome and networking events some of our groups of disadvantaged and/or other specifically targeted student groups. These include: student parents, mature students and students living at home in the local area. These transition initiatives are particularly targeted to support strategic Aim 1, which seeks to broaden the reach of support and remove perceived barriers to those entering the University from secondary schools, FE colleges and those often returning to education after a period of absence.
- *Enhanced Academic Support Tutoring:* Our enhanced academic tutoring system, primarily aimed at year 1 students, provides regular small group and 1:1 sessions with an academic tutor. The discipline-specific tutorials provide the opportunity for students to receive feedback, enhance their learning capabilities, and develop transferable skills and the confidence to employ them. It can also give an early indication if a student is experiencing difficulties so that appropriate information, advice and guidance can be given. In addition to providing signposting to additional support opportunities, tutorials also identify academic potential and talent, and signpost students to further opportunities to develop their skills, interests, and engagement in the life of the University and the wider community. Personal tutors work closely with the University's

Careers Network to provide tutees with opportunities to engage in early career planning and CV writing.

- *Welfare and wellbeing support:* We have invested heavily in developing a cross-campus network of professional wellbeing and welfare staff based within academic School and Colleges, connected to and supported by the University's Student Services department, most recently through investment in c. 18 new posts to increase capacity across our Counselling and Wellbeing Service, which has experienced a large influx of referrals thanks to the effective identification of students experiencing challenges by schools-based Welfare Tutors. College-based Welfare Officers act as point of contact and onward referral, providing low level interventions and assisting with practical arrangements for supporting students with diagnosed mental health conditions and disabilities. Welfare tutors advise students on a range of issues, primarily pastoral, and are supported in their role by staff from Student Services Support Teams. We are continuing to further develop the roles of School Welfare Officers to support them to deliver a wider range of wellbeing interventions.
- *Academic Skills Development and Support:* The Academic Skills Centre (ASC) offers drop-in advice, one-to-one appointments, generic workshops and embedded training developed in direct partnership with Schools. The ASC supports UG students across all disciplines with their academic transition to the University, progression to higher years, and academic attainment by developing their writing and study skills. Whilst the Centre is open to all students, our evaluation shows that its services are utilised comparatively more by mature, BAME, disabled, low SEC and A2B students. We also offer targeted support for at-risk cohorts as part of the ASC activity, for example: part-time students can access support outside of core hours and mature students are offered dedicated induction sessions. This mainstreams significant elements of the provision in line with our aspirations to develop a more inclusive learning environment. The Maths Skills Centre operates as part of the Academic Skills Centre, offering specific drop-in support to students in developing their numerical and statistical abilities as well as offering examination resit support.
- *Online study support:* The Academic Skills Gateway provides an online portal to the University's skills development resources, with additional content developed as part of this initiative to cover the full range of skills support offered. The Gateway is highly valued by our students; between August 2016 and July 2017, it received 19,659 views. The Academic Writing Advisory Service (within the College of Arts and Law) provides a host of online, self-access materials for students wishing to improve their writing and achieve the highest possible degree outcomes. There is a combination of support in the form of discipline-specific small-group workshops led by postgraduate students, and feedback through email and tutorials.
- *Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS):* PASS builds on research findings around the benefits of peer support. The Scheme is discipline-owned and student-led, and aims to enhance the first year student experience through collaborative, exploratory discussion. Sessions are facilitated by students from later years of study which, simultaneously, supports them to enhance their own learning outcomes.
- *Inclusive Teaching and Learning practices:* We have introduced digital reading lists and digitised content (ResourceLists@bham and FindIt@bham) which have been extremely successful in improving access to our extensive print and online collections through a single search interface integrated with Canvas. In particular, these services respond to feedback from student focus groups about the accessibility of course materials for disabled students. We have also introduced a 'lecture capture' facility (Panopto) that is available for use in over 230 teaching venues across campus. This facility supports student learning depending on individual needs; for example, revisiting learning which can be particularly beneficial for those students who struggle to take notes in a lecture; supporting those students who wish to take additional time to consider the learning points made; and as a revision tool.

We will continue to design and implement our student support initiatives with all students in mind, but we recognise that additional support may be necessary to address specific needs or enable students overcome particular barriers that certain groups may face. As such, we will work to 'level the playing field' as far as possible, with additional targeted activity for specific cohorts. These interventions are developed in response to student feedback as well as learning from our self-assessment, and are designed to support the achievement of our strategic aims. Examples for 2019/20 include:

- **BAME Student Ambassador Scheme**: This initiative involves student ambassadors engaging with staff in Schools and Departments to consider actions that can be taken to improve BAME student inclusion, representation, engagement and to promote race equality. BAME student ambassadors work with School Equality co-ordinators to develop action plans for activities that will make a positive difference. This project has been widely cited across the UK HE sector as an example of good practice in engaging and listening to BAME students. We will continue to focus on developing this area of work and will be partners with Manchester University and Manchester Metropolitan University in a HEFCE Catalyst funded project as part of this. As part of this initiative, a website dedicated to supporting the success of BAME students has been developed, supported by an online platform for staff which captures the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of ambassador activity. There are over 200 BAME students who are ambassadors and 10 College student leads.
- **Support for Mature Students**: There is a dedicated webpage for mature students considering applying to the University and a mature student ambassador attends Open Days to give first-hand advice. Through A2B, mature students are invited to a separate guidance event before working on their assignments and are also invited to a morning induction in September to help them navigate Welcome Week. Tailored advice about studying as a mature student is also provided and bespoke academic skills sessions are available through the Academic Skills Centre (implemented as a result of focus groups). Additionally, there is an intranet webpage with video and useful links which students can use once they are at the University and our Guild of Students runs a Postgraduate and Mature Student Association.
- **Support for Young Adult Carers**: A student carer has the option to disclose their carer status when completing their on-line registration form. Early disclosure is encouraged so that support can be co-ordinated. Following disclosure student carers have the opportunity to discuss what support might be appropriate with a designated contact and develop a 'student support plan' where appropriate. We have developed guidance for Welfare Tutors engaging with student carers, to ensure our students receive consistent support across the university. Our Student Support team run drop-in and focus group sessions to allow student carers to engage with Student Services. We also work in partnership with local carer support services and organisations, to ensure that students get the most appropriate and effective support possible.

### **Supporting student progression beyond Higher Education**

Much of the investment we are committed to in relation to employability is specifically aimed at improving access to the professions for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Our performance trajectory to date underlines the value and impact of this investment (see self-assessment section), and our offering for 2019/20 will continue to build on past successes.

We will continue to develop and deliver our unique Access to Careers (A2C) employability programme - a targeted skills & employability programme for our A2B and Routes to Professions entrants. The A2C programme offers specific guidance, career development opportunities and work-related activity to first year undergraduates who came to the University through our Access to Birmingham and Routes to the Professions programmes. In its pilot year over 120 students participated in the programme, which includes personalised strengths guidance, visits to local

businesses and practical opportunities with employers. The scheme has now been extended to a broader range of students (e.g. those from low-income households and in receipt of the Chamberlain award – the University’s financial support award) – in doing so we are continuing to ensure that our support is targeted at the groups of students most in need of additional support, as identified through our regular evaluation and in our self-assessment (above). It is our intention to use this scheme, and other related initiatives, to develop a guaranteed offer of work-related activity - such as business treks, virtual internships, business and consultancy challenge, and mentoring - for A2B, R2P (and other eligible) students within their first two years at the university.

In addition to our A2C programme, we provide a wide range of services that benefit a broader range of underrepresented groups and widening participation students. In line with our approach to student support, we offer an inclusive range of activities, supplemented with targeted interventions where necessary in order to support the achievement of our strategic aims. Through our careers support offering we aim to develop students’ abilities to build social capital, create professional networks and gain relevant work/professional experience in order to enhance their career opportunities. A number of activities/events are delivered in partnership with our Guild of Students.

- **Mentoring:** Our Alumni Leadership Mentoring Programme (ALMP) offers individual mentoring to final year students by some of the University’s most senior and successful alumni. This scheme supports students who may not have the cultural capital to access business leaders through their personal networks. We recognise that some students require very specific forms of mentoring support; our BAME mentoring scheme has given students opportunities to network and express their identities when making the transition from HE to the workplace, whilst our LGBT Mentoring scheme matches students with relevant alumni across a range of occupations to gain advice on how to be happy and successful as an "out" LGBT employee. Student mentees from the 2015/16 cohort achieved 88.6% graduate-level work or study (against a University figure of 86.4%). To support our stated aims, we will further develop these programmes to target students from low socio- economic and BAME backgrounds, with a clear aim of extending their opportunities to develop social networks by partnering with a number of regional business leader and young professional forums (e.g. BPS Aspire [bpsbirmingham.co.uk/aspire](http://bpsbirmingham.co.uk/aspire), and Uprising Leadership, [uprising.org.uk/Birmingham](http://uprising.org.uk/Birmingham)).
- **Internships:** Our Global Challenge internship programme provides fully funded and bespoke internship opportunities around the world. We also provide a range of bespoke internships created from our strong alumni and employer partnerships. We continue to increase the number of bespoke internships available and in 2019/20 we expect to have over 100 ring-fenced internship places for students from widening participation backgrounds, and our programmes are underpinned by a suite of financial bursaries (see below for further detail). Those students in receipt of a Careers Network bursary in 2015/16 achieved 86.2% graduate employability. Additionally, 100% of respondents rated their knowledge, competence and confidence in their own working abilities after completing the work experience either ‘good’ or ‘excellent’, compared with just 48% before undertaking the activity. From 2017/18, we have offered a number of *micro internships* aimed specifically at UG Law students from disadvantaged backgrounds (a priority programme identified in our self-assessment), giving students the opportunity to undertake a mini placement in both law and non-law related roles.
- **Virtual Internships Programme:** This initiative provides students with the opportunity to work on a project for a global employer and get international experience without leaving the country. This enables students with other commitments, such as caring responsibilities, to participate when otherwise similar opportunities might not be accessible for them.
- **Global Challenge Programme:** This initiative gives student access to fully funded international internships in top organisations across the world and is a sector leading scheme that sources and fully funds internships across the world, often in the region of £5k each. Previous opportunities have included museum work in Melbourne and business functions in Morocco, Brazil, Argentina

and China. We have recently introduced a post-experience workshop, designed for students to reflect and articulate their developed skills & experience on completion of the programme. Our aim is that this will also serve as a forum for our target groups to get peer support and individual support from CN staff to develop the confidence and ability required to apply for, and succeed on, the programme

- *Enterprising Internships*: These opportunities are based within a local social enterprise and are funded to support students pursuing work experience in research and professional settings. These opportunities provide a unique opportunity to undertake community-based projects, and have proven particularly attractive to our target cohorts in Social Sciences and Arts.
- *Work Integrated Learning and Enterprise Education*: Increasing the level of work-based learning in the curriculum is one of our key strategic approaches towards supporting students who may have less opportunity through extra-curricular methods to apply their academic learning to business or industry. In partnership with employers, we create industry-based projects which enable students from under-represented groups to undertake a module that exposes them to industry based problems. Current examples are the Reckitt Benckiser (RB) modules in Chemistry and Biomedical Science, which attract over 60 students and are now leading to year-long opportunities with the company. Both of these have been identified as target Schools for graduate employability where the diversity measure(s) indicate deviation from benchmark.
- *Employer engagement*: Our careers team maximise on their extensive employer networks and partnerships to establish bespoke opportunities aimed specifically at underrepresented groups. This has resulted in companies and organisations (e.g. BBC, EY, NHS, Civil Service, PwC, Advanced) delivering employer-led workshops and events on campus, and hosting students in their offices through our 'Access to Your Career' programme. We look to build on these tailored opportunities and, in addition, to continue to focus on forging relationships with SMEs in the region to actively direct local work experience and employment opportunities to targeted groups of students. These events have provided vital recruitment networking opportunities for BAME students, and as we increase the variety and scope of these employer-led events, will also provide similar opportunities for low-SEC males. We have recently developed an employability module targeted at Y2 Accounting and Finance students (a priority programme identified in our self-assessment) which involves a series of workshops delivered jointly by university staff and employers. The module is designed to develop confidence and capability to career plan, make successful applications and secure relevant work experience.
- *Careers Network tutor referral*: Via our personal tutor system we have piloted a 'tutor referral process' to support students to access careers support where they demonstrate difficulties in career motivation, or to support students who are not continuing with their studies to access the support they need to progress. We will use this initiative to particularly support BAME and low-SEC male students, per our stated aims; tutors will be briefed on our priority cohorts and encouraged to discuss career readiness during tutor sessions so that appropriate referrals for additional careers support can be made.
- *Improved information, advice and guidance about career pathways*: Our dedicated team of careers professionals, allocated across each of our five Colleges, provide students with bespoke careers guidance specifically relevant to their programme of study, as well as the make-up of their cohort. We offer ring-fenced appointments with our Employability Offer for priority cohorts; these sessions provide targeted support for seeking (and securing funding for) work experience. We provide a wider range of online resources, and stand-alone online 'modules' to support students to develop key employability skills at their own pace (including the dedicated online course for our A2C programme, delivered through our student portal).

In addition, we offer a variety of targeted interventions for student groups for whom additional careers support can help to address some of the barriers they face in achieving their potential. These

activities have been designed to complement our stated aims of increasing graduate employability for BAME and low-SEC males, as well across programmes. Examples of activities include:

- *BAME Careers Showcase*: a dedicated careers event discussing the relationship between ethnicity and employability and providing practical strategies to excel in the workplace.
- *BAME Ambassadors*: training sessions are provided to our BAME Ambassadors on goal setting and employability.
- *African Caribbean Careers Evening*: This networking evening provides students with an opportunity to meet recent alumni to hear their experiences of developing their career whilst at university.
- *Social Policy Academic Skills and Employability Programme*: This Programme, delivered within the School's tutorial programme, includes workshop sessions and structured careers support, combined with academic support. Social Policy has been identified as a target School for graduate employability where the diversity measure(s) indicate deviation from benchmark.
- *Data-led targeting of 'at-risk' students*: We have recently implemented a number of data-led initiatives to improve our targeted support. From 2017/18, data on recipients of the University's Chamberlain Award has been used by our Careers Network to send targeted information to students from low-SEC backgrounds and to encourage participation in the A2C programme as a means to support the further development of key employability skills. We have also introduced 'Careers Registration' as part of our annual online enrolment as a means to identify students with additional careers support needs. Initial analysis of this data has resulted in the introduction of our '*Insight Into*' series of panel discussions with regional employers and SMEs. In 2017/18 1,154 students (15% of our UG final year population) were identified as 'at risk' in terms of their career readiness and were contacted by their College careers team and offered additional support.
- *Bespoke and targeted support*: Since 2016 we have supported students from WP backgrounds to source and secure internships. To date, 106 opportunities have been sourced and a further 23 bespoke opportunities created. Additionally, our WP Employability Officer provides bespoke support via careers workshops, employer events and 1-1 advice. This post provides a crucial point of contact for our WP students who may be unsure about how to engage or access the wide range of employability support available to them. We have also provided examples above of programme-specific interventions to support our targeted cohorts identified in our self-assessment.
- *Disabled and Mental Health Students Association*: We offer a series of workshops for students with disabilities to support them in seeking and securing workplace experience. Evaluation of this activity showed a resultant year-on-year increase in applications to the *Change 100* internship programme (an external programme organised by Leonard Cheshire Disability) of 320% (to 21 applications).

### *Financial Support*

The provision of financial assistance is a fundamental element underpinning each of our strategic aims, from supporting our targeted recruitment activity, to supporting student performance by reducing financial anxiety, to unlocking access to opportunities and experiences which might otherwise be unattainable. Our ambition is to ensure that the full 'Birmingham experience' is available to all of our students and we offer a range of targeted financial support packages to facilitate this. The following will be available in 2019/20<sup>7</sup>:

---

<sup>7</sup> The University will attempt to provide the financial support outlined above to all eligible students, but will apply an upper limit to the level of total expenditure in any single financial year. This limit will be based on the commitment to fulfilling the proportionate spend of additional fee income outlined in this Plan. Priority for awarding bursaries will be given to Care Leavers and for students from households with the lowest incomes.

- Chamberlain Awards: Home students (first and subsequent years of study) who have residual household income of between £0 and £36,000, will be eligible for a Chamberlain Award of between £2,000 and £1,000. We would seek to continue to provide the same level of financial support to eligible students covered by this Plan during any study year abroad, which is a component of the programme for which they have registered. Where students on a year abroad would have otherwise qualified for a Chamberlain Award, the maximum award will be to the value of £2,000.
- Enhanced Chamberlain Award for Care Leavers: We are committed to alleviating the financial barriers which prevent our most disadvantaged students from participating to the same extent as their more advantaged peers, therefore all eligible Care Leavers will be offered either fully subsidised University accommodation (to the value of £5,915) or a cash award of £3,000.
- A2B Scholarship: A2B entrants who pass the A2B module and achieve the standard offer grades (or equivalent) for their course will receive a £1500 scholarship for each year of study; those who meet the terms of their A2B offer (usually two grades below our standard offer) will receive a one-off £1000 bursary. Students can, if eligible, hold both a Chamberlain Award (or Enhanced Chamberlain Award if they are a care leaver) and an A2B Scholarship.
- Young Adult Carers: The Sarah Hawkins *Financial Award for Young Adult Carers* funds seven young carers studying at the University, to the value of £2000 per year of study. This award is currently funded until 2022.
- Gateway Bursary: Our sector-leading scheme is targeted at priority WP student groups (defined as A2B students, registered disabled, leaving care, first generation of the family into HE, in receipt of a Chamberlain Award, lone parent and ethnic minorities) and offers up to £2000 to fund extra-curricular placements throughout the year. We fund a wide variety of work experience across a range of sectors and professions, both in the UK and overseas; previous opportunities secured by our students have ranged from a coding internship in China, to the provision of comprehensive health services to rural communities in Tanzania.
- Global Challenge bursaries: This prestigious scheme offers students fully funded summer internships with top global employers including GSK India, U21 Educador, Guangzhou Municipal Government, Museum Victoria in Melbourne, and British Consulates in Melbourne, Chicago and Sao Paulo. The scheme is open to all our students, but for WP students success in the scheme offers exclusive opportunities which they might otherwise not have access to (i.e. due to financial constraints, or limited contacts in the field).
- Low or no-cost field trips: We have designed our fieldwork options in our curriculum to be as inclusive and accessible as possible; for example offering options of low- or no-cost field trips, and in some areas student subsidies/bursaries are available for field trips. These packages are coordinated and arranged locally by academic departments; applicants are advised to speak to their department for details of any specific support available.

Evaluation of our financial support package has underlined the positive impact of our financial support. Internal survey data showed that 99% of respondents agreed that a bursary had enabled them to 'concentrate on studies without worrying about finances' and 94% agreed it had reduced anxiety. Results from the OFFA toolkit suggests that financial support 'levels the playing field' with continuation rates for students with a household income of less than £36k and in receipt of a bursary showing no statistically significant variation to those for the control group (students with household income of £36-42k without bursaries). We will continue to evaluate and review the support package and eligibility criteria to ensure our offer remains impactful and applicable to the wider fees and funding environment (see earlier section for detail of our evaluation framework).

## 5. Investment

The ambitions and activities outlined in this Plan are underpinned by an investment in 2019/20 of £16.4m (c. 29% of our higher fee income). This reflects investment of £2.7m in outreach and access

activity, £3.4m to support student success, £1m investment in progression/employability activities, and £9.3m in financial support. We will continue to fund collaborative outreach via Aimhigher West Midlands (with a contribution of £35k in 2018/19) and the Realising Opportunities Partnership (with a contribution of £37k).

## **6. Provision of information to students**

Recruitment activities for the 2019/20 entry are already underway. Details of fees and funding arrangements (including information on our financial packages, sport and music scholarships, and statutory support available from the SLC) are available on the University website ([www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/fees](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/fees)) which is regularly updated with the latest information. A printed 'Money Matters' booklet is also available.

Course information can be found in our print Prospectus (applicants can request a copy online, or collect from UCAS fairs and school events) and on our website. The course finder section of the University's website allows students to search courses on offer ([www.birmingham.ac.uk/study](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/study)), and our offer calculator helps applicants predict whether they are likely to receive an offer from Birmingham. Open Days in June, September and October give applicants the opportunity to visit campus and engage with our staff and current students. We provide all offer-holders with online programme factsheets which are produced annually and contain information on course-specific fees and associated costs, assessment methods and core modules.

We will continue to review our student and stakeholder communication strategy – informed by market research with current and prospective students and their parents/advisors – to ensure the content and channels of our communications continue to respond to the needs of our stakeholders.

An online copy of this Plan is available at <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/about/equality/widening-access.aspx>. Latest Plans are published following formal approval from the Office for Students (usually by June each year).

\* course type not listed.

Full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants.

Please enter inflationary statement in the free text box below.

The University reviews and agrees its fee levels annually. Fees are likely to increase annually, in line with the maximum fee cap approved by Government.

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Entry year 2017/18 or later	£9,250
Foundation degree		£9,250
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		£9,250
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		£1,850
Erasmus and overseas study years		£1,385
Other		*
Franchise full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		*
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		*
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

**Table 8a** - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16a_01	Access	Multiple	<b>Other statistic</b> - Other (please give details in the next column)	Increase the proportion of young people from our pre-16 progressive activity target group on level 3 programmes	No	2011-12	54%	60%	60%	60%			The baseline established is the percentage of students for whom we obtained data compared to the total number of students on the programme. As many students moved to different establishments post 16 securing this data was a challenge for the baseline year.
T16a_02	Access	Multiple	<b>Other statistic</b> - Applications (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of young people from our pre-16 progressive activity target group applying to a FT place in HE is greater than local average for YP from socially disadvantaged groups	No	2013-14	50%	52%	52%	52%			Long term tracking of students to university is challenging given our current inability to access individual learner data from UCAS
T16a_03	Access	Multiple	<b>Other statistic</b> - Applications (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of students engaged in our post 16 Outreach programmes applying to the University of Birmingham	No	2013-14	57%	62%	62%	62%			This target is specifically for our institutional Academic Enrichment Programme. We have a collaborative target with our Realising Opportunities partners.
T16a_04	Access	Multiple	<b>Other statistic</b> - Other (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of entrants via our Access to Birmingham Programme	No	2013-14	5.7%	6.2%	6.2%	6.2%			Access to Birmingham students have been targeted on the basis of a basket of measures that includes the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), POLAR3 and School performance level. This is explained in more detail in the narrative.
T16a_05	Access	Multiple	<b>Other statistic</b> - Other (please give details in the next column)	Number of students entering Medicine via Access to Birmingham	No	2013-14	19	31	31	31			Entrants to Medicine through A2B to be 10% of intake. Target given in absolute entrants
T16a_06	Progression	Multiple	<b>Other statistic</b> - Other (please give details in the next column)	Progression of students who entered via A2B is comparable to overall cohort	No	2011-12	93%	96%	96%	96%			
T16a_07	Student success	Multiple	<b>Other statistic</b> - Completion/Non continuation (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of students who entered via A2B gaining 2.1 or above	No	2011-12	68%	75%	75%	75%			
T16a_08	Student success	Multiple	<b>Other statistic</b> - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of students who entered via A2B gaining a graduate level job within 6 months of graduating.	No	2011-12	76%	80%	80%	80%			

**Table 8b - Other milestones and targets.**

Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16b_01	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of students engaged in on-campus WP activity (e.g tailored school visits, Raise Programme and Masterclass Programme)	No	2009-2010	5000	6000	6000	6000			
T16b_02	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Volume of students engaged in Forward Thinking Progressive Programme	No	2010-2011	440	600	600	600			
T16b_03	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (summer schools)	Number of WP students engaged in summer schools	No	2010-2011	100	200	200	200			
T16b_04	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds engaged in intensive activity with collaborative partnership using a basket of indicators.  Baseline year is 2010/11 to enable overall growth in beneficiaries since the inception of the project to be reported.	Yes	Other (please give details in Description column)	500	1000	1000	1000			Aimhigher West Midlands is a partnership of 5 HEIs working to provide a programme of HE progression support to disadvantaged KS3, KS4 and KS5 learners in at least 30 regional schools.
T16b_05	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Proportion of engaged young people from disadvantaged backgrounds attaining 5 x GCSE A* to C inc English and Maths (or attainment 8 equivalent) is greater than local average for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, using a basket of indicators	Yes	2013-14	FSM 60.2% (regional baseline 36.2%)	25% over baseline	25% over baseline	25% over baseline			This medium-term impact target applies to the cohort of young people aged 11-16 engaging in the Aimhigher programme. Baseline year updated to 2013/14. Impact on each cohort passing this milestone will be reported against the relevant benchmarking data for the academic year in which they complete Key Stage 4.
T16b_06	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in intensive activity target group applying for FT place in HE is greater than local average for YP from disadvantaged backgrounds, using a basket of indicators  Baseline year for overall longitudinal tracking remains 2010/11 but impact on each cohort passing this milestone will be reported against the relevant benchmarking data for the academic year in which they complete Key Stage 5.	Yes	2013-14	FSM6 31.6% (regional baseline 22%). POLAR 3 Q1 40.0% (regional baseline 12.4%)	10% over baseline	10% over baseline	10% over baseline			Baseline year changed to 2013/14.  Due to UCAS policy on access to learner level data, tracking now based on HESA data, reporting % entering any form of HE and retained for 6 months.
T16b_07	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Realising Opportunities Targets for progression of RO participants to a research intensive university	Yes	Other (please give details in Description column)	na	38%	39%	NA	NA		Shows the target for the percentage of RO participants entering a research intensive university
T16b_08	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Realising Opportunities Targets for progression of RO participants to an RO Partner university	Yes	Other (please give details in Description column)	na	25%	25%	NA	NA		Shows the target for the percentage of RO participants entering an RO Partner university