



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE

## **Northumbria University Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25**

### **1. Assessment of performance**

Northumbria University is committed to widening participation and fair access, which is an integral part of our approach to student recruitment, and instrumental in our aim to attract motivated students with the ability to access Higher Education (HE) regardless of background. This approach applies to the entire student journey. It encompasses:

- wide-ranging and effective activities to support potential students on their pre-entry journey;
- transforming the lives of students through teaching and learning that provides a research-rich, experiential and enquiry-based educational experience;
- targeted and tailored support for students to successfully complete their studies;
- support for students to have a career plan enabling them to flourish in a competitive graduate labour market or progress to further study.

We are committed to our role as an anchor institution in the North East of England, contributing to society and economic growth. The University provides the highest number of graduates into the local job market and it inspires future generations to engage with HE through outreach programmes involving nearly 20,000 pupils from 140 schools per year.

The trends in the young participation report published by HEFCE (January 2015), states that the North East is the region where young people are least likely to access HE. The UCAS End of Cycle Report 2018<sup>1</sup> found that six regions had higher entry rates of 18 year olds in 2018 than 2017, with the East of England, the North East, and Yorkshire and the Humber having decreases (of 0.1, 0.7, 0.4 percentage points respectively).

Ofsted's Annual Report 2017/18<sup>2</sup> stated that one in ten secondary schools in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber and the East Midlands have been 'stuck' with a low Ofsted grade for up to 13 years. Stuck schools tend to have a higher proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Stuck schools are also more likely to have White British pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), who are among the worst-performing ethnic groups. This demonstrates the challenge we can face in the North East in raising awareness and supporting access to HE, with the UCAS End of Cycle Report 2018 showing that since 2006, those who received FSM have consistently had lower entry rates to HE than those who did not receive FSM.

Northumbria University is fully committed to fair access and participation which is an integral part of our "one university" approach to transforming students' lives. Due to the sustained and progressive programme of outreach activity, our relationships with schools and colleges, and the diversity of our programmes, we have historically been a highly successful widening participation university. The steady increase in the proportion of students from POLAR4 Q1 over the past five years demonstrates our success in this area.

We have used the OfS Access and Participation datasets in preparing our assessment of performance and identifying underrepresented groups to focus upon within the plan. We have supplemented this, where relevant, with analysis of our own internal application, acceptances and offers data and we have also cross

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports/2018-end-cycle-report>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-201718-education-childrens-services-and-skills>

referenced to TEF pilot 2018/19 datasets, to help validate our hypotheses. Care leavers analysis is necessarily based solely on available internal data as there is no reliable external source.

The review of our performance for each group highlighted by OfS as having significant gaps in equality of opportunity is set out below. The outcomes of our assessment and our identified priority areas are discussed further in section 1.8.

### 1.1 Higher Education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

#### a) Access

Table 1, Proportion % of students from POLAR4 Q5 v Q1

Proportion	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Polar Q1	13.2	14.5	18.0	16.8	17.6
Polar Q5	26.1	25.0	22.0	23.5	23.6

Table 1 shows that after an initially wide gap, real progress has been made in this area: the proportion of students entering the University from Q1 has increased by 4.4% since 2012/13 in comparison with a reduction in the percentage of students from Q5 of 2.5%. Compare this to the sector, where students from Q5 have dropped by 0.7% and from Q1 have increased by only 0.9%, our gap of 6% is significantly below that of the sector gap of 18%. In addition, data shows that while the sector has remained relatively static across the five year period, it is clear that Northumbria has seen Q1 and Q2 increase and Q4 and Q5 decrease proportionately. This is further evidence of a narrowing gap between students from a 'more deprived' and 'less deprived' background. Analysis of Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data shows a very similar narrowing of the gap between Q1 and Q5 for Northumbria over the period (11.3% in 2013/14 to 5.5% in 2017/18).

#### b) Success

##### Continuation

Table 2, Gap % in continuation between POLAR4 Q5 v Q1

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Northumbria	4.0	3.0	2.0	5.0	6.0
Sector	4.2	4.6	4.9	4.8	5.0

Analysis in this area shows that the gap has increased both at Northumbria and the sector, but at a greater rate at Northumbria. Table 2 shows that, at Northumbria, the gap between those from POLAR4 Q5 and Q1 has increased over the five-year period by 2%. Contrasted with the sector average increase of 0.8%, this shows that Northumbria should aspire to improve continuation for those students from lower participation neighbourhoods. For IMD, Northumbria's gap (5.6%) is below the sector (7.9%) but has increased at the same rate as the sector over the period. These gaps are addressed in our Success and Progression measures in section 3, page 12.

##### Attainment

Table 3, Gap % in attainment between POLAR4 Q5 v Q1

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Northumbria	4.0	8.0	11.0	8.0	10.0
Sector	10.0	10.5	9.6	10.4	9.5

The attainment gap for students from POLAR4 Q5 and 1 has increased over the five-year period to overtake the gap demonstrated in the sector. The sector shows a decrease of 0.5% and Northumbria an increase of 6% over this five-year period, which is a significant increase. Northumbria has also seen an increase in the gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 over the last 3 years following a dip in 2014/15 and 2015/16 which tells us that this is an area where improvement is needed. At 18%, Northumbria is almost level between the start and the

end of the 5-year period, which again matches the sector. Our plan to address this at subject level is given in section 3, page 13.

### c) Progression to employment or further study

Table 4, Gap % in progression between POLAR4 Q5 v Q1

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Northumbria</b>	8.0	4.0	0.0	4.0	8.0
<b>Sector</b>	7.1	8.0	8.0	6.1	6.0

The gap between progression into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level for those in POLAR4 Q 1 and Q5 shows a slightly different trend for Northumbria than the sector. Northumbria eliminated the gap in 2014/15 after 8% in 2012/13, which increased back to 8% in 2016/17. This is a larger gap than that demonstrated by the sector by 2% in 2016/17, again showing Northumbria does not perform as well as the sector, which has achieved a narrowing gap since year 1. The gap of 8% is statistically significant and therefore is not likely to be due to 'random variation'. The gap between deprivation Q5 and Q1 for progression has increased for Northumbria, as the sector has decreased. For IMD, Northumbria now has a similar percentage gap between Q5 and Q1 as the Sector (c7%). An overview of how we plan to approach this is in section 3, page 14.

## 1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

### a) Access

Table 5, Proportion % of enrolments by ethnicity

Northumbria	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Asian</b>	2.9	3.6	4.4	5.9	5.3
<b>Black</b>	1.1	1.6	2.2	2.2	2.0
<b>Mixed</b>	2.2	2.0	2.4	2.7	2.4
<b>Other</b>	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.7	0.9
<b>White</b>	93.4	92.6	90.3	88.6	89.5

Northumbria has a high proportion of White students compared to the sector, although this has fallen slightly over the period at a similar rate to the sector. Proportions of other ethnicities are therefore correspondingly low and increases, although small, are broadly proportionate with the sector; the largest increase has been in the proportion of Asian students. In 2018, 65% of our home, full time, undergraduate enrolments came from the North East and this demonstrates the challenge we face at Northumbria due to the demography of the region; according to the Office for National Statistics<sup>3</sup> the North East had the highest percentage of White British people (93.6%). An overview of how we plan to approach this is in section 3, page 12.

Further analysis shows there are some gaps identified for the proportion of Asian (3.5%) and black (2.5%) 18-year-olds entering the University compared with the UK 18-year old population. The general trend is a reduction in the gap over the period.

### b) Success

#### Continuation

Table 6, Gap % in continuation between White students and students from all other ethnicities

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Northumbria</b>	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
<b>Sector</b>	1.9	1.7	2.7	2.7	3.2

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/latest>

The gap in continuation between White students and students from other ethnicities has narrowed over the 5-year period, although there was a slight increase in 2017/18. The gap is low compared to the sector which is generally increasing over the period.

Disaggregation by the four BAME groups shows a negligible gap between Black and White and Mixed and White students. The gap between Asian and White students is small (3%) and has reduced over the period. The gap between other and White students has increased in the final year but there has been no difference over most of the period and actual numbers are very small.

#### Attainment

*Table 7, Attainment gap % between White and Black students*

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Northumbria</b>	35.0	30.0	29.0	34.0	29.0
<b>Sector</b>	24.6	24.6	24.7	23.8	23.1

Table 7 above shows the gap in attainment at Northumbria between White and Black students is large and higher than the sector. Apart from a spike in 2016/17, the overall trend over the period for Northumbria is one of improvement, which is similar to the sector over this period. The gap in attainment for White and Black students at Northumbria is statistically significant for the last three years at Northumbria. This implies that this is not random variation alone.

*Table 8, Attainment gap % between White and Asian students*

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Northumbria</b>	0.0	12.0	13.0	18.0	16.0
<b>Sector</b>	12.4	11.6	12.0	10.4	10.2

Table 8 above shows the gap in attainment between White and Asian students has increased at Northumbria over the five-year period. This has not been mirrored in the sector, where there has been a slight decrease in that time. Asian students are not achieving the same outcomes as their White counterparts. It is also worth noting that the proportion of Asian students has increased in this period. It is also worth noting that this gap has been calculated as statistically significant for the last two years of the reporting period for Northumbria. These attainment gaps are addressed within our Strategic Measures, section 3, page 11.

Further analysis of disaggregated data shows that the gap in attainment between White and Mixed students is small and has fallen significantly since 2013/14. Separate analysis of the Other category is not possible due to low volume of student numbers.

#### **c) Progression to employment or further study**

*Table 9, Gap % between White students and all other ethnicities*

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Northumbria</b>	4.0	-3.0	9.0	7.0	6.0
<b>Sector</b>	6.5	5.1	3.3	4.5	3.9

There is a variance in progression rate gaps between White students and all other ethnicities at Northumbria over the period. The gap in 2016/17 exceeds the sector which has fluctuated over the period. However, the gap at Northumbria has been narrowing since 2014/15.

### **1.3 Mature students**

#### **a) Access**

*Table 10, Proportion % of Young (under 21) v Mature*

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Northumbria</b>					
<b>Young (Under 21)</b>	81.2	80.9	79.8	78.6	81.7

<b>Mature (Over 21)</b>	18.8	19.1	20.2	21.4	18.3
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Northumbria has a consistently lower proportion of mature students compared to the sector over the period in Table 10. The proportions have remained relatively static, while the sector which has seen a small increase in mature students. A formal target has not been set for mature students, given our local context and portfolio, but information about our continued support for mature students is given in section 3, page 11.

#### b) Success

##### Continuation

Table 11, Gap % in continuation Young (under 21) v Mature

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Northumbria</b>	4.6	2.2	1.1	0.8	2.8
<b>Sector</b>	6.7	6.8	7.1	6.8	7.4

The gap in continuation between young and mature students at Northumbria has consistently improved since 2013/14. However, there was a slight increase in the gap in 2017/18, with young students' continuation rates being better than mature. The gap at Northumbria still remains below the sector in this area.

##### Attainment

Table 12, Attainment gap % Young (under 21) v Mature

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Northumbria</b>	13.0	7.0	11.0	11.0	8.0
<b>Sector</b>	9.0	10.3	10.2	10.8	10.3

The gap in attainment between young and mature students at Northumbria has narrowed over the period and is now lower than the sector that has seen little movement over the period, to the extent that Northumbria is lower than the sector by 2017/18 despite starting considerably higher. Further information about support for mature students is available on page 16.

#### c) Progression to employment or further study

Table 13, Gap % in Progression Young (under 21) v Mature

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Northumbria</b>	-13.0	-14.0	-11.0	-14.0	-14.0
<b>Sector</b>	-7.3	-7.4	-5.3	-3.3	-3.4

There is a significant gap between young and mature students in terms of progression (mature students have a higher progression rate than young students). This has remained broadly constant over the period, but the gap is considerably larger than the sector which has seen a gradual narrowing of the gap.

### 1.4 Disabled students

#### a) Access

Table 14, Proportion % of disabled students v non-disabled students

<b>Northumbria</b>	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Disabled</b>	8.3	9.8	10.5	12.1	12.0
<b>No Known Disability</b>	91.7	90.2	89.5	87.9	88.0

<b>Sector</b>	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Disabled</b>	11.8	12.3	12.9	13.7	14.6
<b>No Known Disability</b>	88.2	87.7	87.1	86.3	85.4

The vast majority of students at Northumbria have no known disability. Northumbria has increased the proportion of disabled students over the period, which is a pattern reflected in the sector. However, Northumbria's overall proportion is still below the sector. Individual disability categories are small absolute numbers and have remained generally static over the period. Applications/Offer/Enrolment data shows a small increase in the proportion of applications from disabled students. Further analysis of data disaggregated into disability type shows an increase in students with a mental health condition reflecting a similar sector wide increase (Northumbria 1.5% to 3% over the period 2014/15 to 2017/18 v the sector 1.4% to 3.5% over the same period). The University is leading on an OfS Mental Health Challenge partnership project, further information is available on page 17.

## b) Success

### Continuation

Table 15, Gap % in continuation of disabled v non-disabled students

Continuation Rates	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Northumbria	0.0	1.0	-2.0	-1.0	2.0
Sector	1.5	1.3	0.9	1.0	1.0

Although the overall gap in continuation rates between disabled and non-disabled students is very small there has been a shift towards slightly better continuation rates for non-disabled students reversing the previous trend. The gap is also higher than the sector which has had little movement over the period. Analysis of disaggregated data suggests an increase in the percentage continuation gap for students with a mental health disability although population numbers are small, and the gap is not statistically significant.

### Attainment

Table 16, Attainment gap % disabled v non-disabled students

Attainment	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Northumbria	7.0	8.0	6.0	3.0	4.0
Sector	3.4	3.1	2.8	3.0	2.8

The gap in attainment between disabled and non-disabled students at Northumbria has narrowed since 2014/15. The gap is still larger than the sector which has seen more modest narrowing over the period. Analysis of disaggregated data reflects the trend towards a reduction in the gap across the categories.

## c) Progression to employment or further study

Table 17, Gap % in progression disabled v non-disabled students

Progression	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Northumbria	1.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
Sector	1.1	1.8	1.6	1.9	1.8

The gap in progression rates between disabled and non-disabled students at Northumbria is subject to fluctuation. After two successive years where there was almost no gap, and performance exceeded the sector, 2016/17 saw a spike where the gap widened significantly. The sector has seen little overall change. Further analysis of data disaggregated into disability type shows no statistically significant gaps in progression. The gap for mental health category is higher than the sector but has reduced over the reporting period. Measures to address the mental health gaps identified by the assessment of performance at category level are detailed in Strategic Measures section paragraph 8 page 15.

## 1.5 Care Leavers

### a) Access

Due to the relatively small numbers, the table below includes absolute figures rather than percentages:

Table 18, Care Leavers, full time

Gender	2013/4	2014/5	2015/6	2016/7	2017/8	2018/9
Female	15	22	24	22	25	18
Male	13	14	11	16	18	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>39</b>

Northumbria has remained relatively static in the number of care leavers entering the University. It may be that the figures are higher than this, but students may not have chosen to disclose this information. The University's work on disclosure to target support effectively is referenced in section 3.2.

#### **b) Success**

##### Continuation

Data shows that since 2012/13 the gap in continuation between care leavers and non-care leavers has widened slightly over the period to 7.5%.

##### Attainment

Attainment figures vary considerably over the period because of the small absolute numbers. There is a 6% gap between non-care leavers and care leavers in 2017/18 and overall non-care leaver performance has improved over the period whilst care leavers has deteriorated.

#### **c) Progression to employment or further study**

In 2017/18 a higher percentage of care leavers (61.5%) entered graduate level employment than non-care leavers (58.6%), a gap of 2.9%, whilst the reverse applies for graduate study, with a gap of 1.3%.

Performance varies considerably as absolute care leaver numbers are small.

### **1.6 Intersections of disadvantage**

Further analysis was carried out to look at intersectionality in relation to IMD, gender and ethnicity. Findings showed that where there is a level playing field in terms of deprivation, females outperform males. These findings also link with our TEF metrics and in comparison to females, males underperform in terms of enrolment, retention, progression, satisfaction, good honours and professional employment. When looking at IMD data, the trend here is similar for Northumbria and the sector - amongst White students continuation is higher where students come from Quintiles 3, 4 & 5 compared to 1 and 2.

### **1.7 Part time Students**

Northumbria's part-time cohort is relatively small in proportion to its full-time cohort. There are some gaps identified in performance particularly relating to attainment. Specifically, there is a 10% gap in mature V young (under 21) which is slightly higher than the gap for full time students. The cohort of mature students studying part time is higher than full time. The attainment gap between white and Asian students (40%) is higher than the full time cohort. Although actual student numbers in the category are low strategic measures to address the gap for full-time students will also apply to part time students.

### **1.8 Assessment of Performance outcomes**

Based on the assessment of our current performance, the priority areas for Northumbria as aligned to the OfS strategic priorities include:

- **Access: (1)** Students from low participation neighbourhoods **(2)** Care Leavers.
- **Success (Non-continuation): (3)** Students from low participation neighbourhoods.
- **Success (Attainment): (4)** Students from low participation neighbourhoods **(5)** Black students **(6)** Asian students **(7)** Disabled students.
- **Progression: (8)** Students from low participation neighbourhoods **(9)** Students from all other ethnicities except White **(10)** Disabled students.
- The data also shows that females outperform males in relation to **Success and Progression** where there is a level playing field in terms of deprivation.

These have been selected taking into account a range of factors about gaps between the underrepresented group and other students: absolute gap; the gap vs the sector, the gap's trend over time; and the regional context.

Further work to understand the gaps (structural and unexplained) in continuation and attainment and, in particular, for students identified as being in our target groups (section 2.2, page 8) will be undertaken in 2019/20 and reviewed annually. This work will align with that of the University's Education Committee and its focus on an inclusive curriculum using students' knowledge and experience in its co-creation and design, and the Students' Union to ensure a coordinated approach to understanding the gaps.

## 2 Strategic aims, objectives and targets

### 2.1 Ambition and Strategy

Northumbria University's strategic ambitions for Access, Success and Participation are informed by: OfS' priorities, the assessment of our performance, and our understanding of the North East regional context. The overall ambition is embedded in the University's Strategy 2018-2023<sup>4</sup> and the following business outcomes: 'An access and participation plan supports and communicates improved student outcomes', 'Experiential and degree-plus opportunities are available for all students in all programmes', 'Support is available for all students to plan and be ready for post-study employment', and 'Student experience and outcomes action-planning', which follows our approach to NSS action-planning and will focus on continuation, attainment and employability

In this plan, we have maintained our focus on the whole student lifecycle, from access through success to progression. We have focussed on smarter, evidence-based interventions and spend, and on collaboration. The University has taken a whole-institution, strategic approach.

### 2.2 Target Groups

Our assessment of our performance has highlighted areas where the University performs well and identifies areas for ongoing continuous improvement, in order to support the success and progression of our underrepresented groups. We are proud of our performance to date and have built excellent relationships with schools and colleges, and other stakeholders, and we will continue to do so to achieve our ambition. The following table summarises which underrepresented groups will be targeted, and at which stage of the student lifecycle:

Access	Success: Continuation	Success: Attainment	Progression
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students in POLAR4 Q1</li> <li>Care Leavers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students in POLAR4 Q1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students in POLAR4 Q1</li> <li>IMD Q1</li> <li>Black students</li> <li>Asian students</li> <li>Disabled students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students in POLAR4 Q1</li> <li>Students from all other ethnicities</li> <li>Disabled students</li> </ul>

For Access, we will continue our extensive programme of activity to support the groups listed below and in particular students from low participation neighbourhoods, mature students and students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, which the data indicates are areas for continuous improvement.

- Low income backgrounds
- Disabled students
- Care-leavers
- Carers
- Estranged students
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Female students into STEM

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/our-vision/>



- State school students (from schools with below average attainment)
- Commuter students
- Children from military families.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies, found White British disadvantaged boys are the least likely of any ethnic group to progress to university. It found groups with the next lowest progression rates – disadvantaged Black Caribbean males and males from a mixed ethnic background – are around twice as likely to progress to HE compared with their White British disadvantaged peers. The report found that ethnic minority groups which have relatively lower school attainment are, on average, more likely to continue into HE than White British pupils, which highlights that prior attainment is not one of the key drivers of the differences in university participation between these groups. As a sector it was claimed that more research was needed to understand the issues. Although the data we have used for our assessment (when looking at gender/IMD/ethnicity intersections) highlighted issues with males, we do not propose to set a target for this group. Because this is such a large group we consider a more targeted approach is necessary – and because as a sectoral and regional issue, more collaboration may be required to address it. Instead we will use Educational Analytics, discussed in detail on page 14 of this plan, to identify and support individual students.

In order to develop our strategic measures in detail, we will undertake further analysis to better interrogate the causes of the gaps between underrepresented groups of students, including unexplained and structural gaps. Recent research undertaken in 2018 by our Equality and Diversity Task and Finish Group (reporting to Education Committee) provided insight into some of the issues. This work investigated the differences in performance and experience of mature, male, BAME, and ‘other disabled’ students, following the analysis of student Equality and Diversity data. An example is that feedback from BAME students highlighted feelings that recruitment was targeted towards White students and that there was a lack of diversity within the Northumbria community.

Qualitative responses from the NSS (2015, 2016 and 2017) can also be analysed in relation to mature students, Black students and disabled students. Comments from mature students included difficulties with timetable changes and arranging childcare, and BAME students commented that they struggled to integrate at first. We will continue to develop our understanding through liaison with the Students’ Union to engage with current students and using findings from external research, such as the recent independent research for the OfS into overcoming the challenges of ethnicity targeting<sup>5</sup>. We will also use our data on the participation by WP groups in different disciplines, to understand why some subjects have higher numbers of WP students than others and look to readdress the balance. In addition, we will refer to the OfS A-Z directory of effective practice to inform our approach and access the toolkits and research from The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO).

For the purposes of this Access and Participation Plan, the University has identified the following **four strategic aims**:

- 1. Minimise and eliminate where possible the gaps in access, success and progression between different groups of students to progress towards achieving equality of opportunity**
- 2. Continue to develop inclusive learning, teaching and assessment in which all students, regardless of background, are able to achieve their full potential**
- 3. Minimise and eliminate where possible the gaps in outcomes between different groups of students through better understanding of the causes of differential outcomes and deliver targeted strategies to address these**
- 4. Support the Government’s Social Mobility goals by ensuring that investments in widening participation have maximum impact**

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/0a6d56c9-9fe4-40af-a1f3-14fe515476d6/ethnicity-targeting-guidance-and-case-studies\\_.pdf](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/0a6d56c9-9fe4-40af-a1f3-14fe515476d6/ethnicity-targeting-guidance-and-case-studies_.pdf)

The approach we have taken is set out below that provides an overview of our interventions. Further detail about these are set out in our Strategic Measures.

## 2.3 Aims and objectives

### Targets

Our targets and milestones are set out in the Targets and Investments Plan. Our targets seek to reduce the actual Northumbria gap by at least half of their current levels, with a number of them seeking to eliminate the gap entirely within the next five years. It is our expectation that all gaps will be reduced to 0% within a maximum of 20 years (i.e. by 2041). The table below sets the timescales in when we aim to achieve this for each underrepresented group where targets have been set in the plan.

By 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progression between White students and students from all other ethnicities</li> </ul>
By 2035	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access between most and least underrepresented groups (POLAR)</li> <li>Continuation between most and least underrepresented groups (POLAR)</li> <li>Attainment between most and least underrepresented groups (POLAR)</li> <li>Attainment between White and Asian students</li> <li>Progression between most and least underrepresented groups (POLAR)</li> </ul>
By 2041	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attainment between White and Black students</li> <li>Attainment between most and least underrepresented groups (IMD)</li> </ul>

#### a) Access

The University has a strong record in recruiting students from underrepresented groups, but we recognise that there are ongoing challenges in the area of Access, particularly in the North East region. Secondary school performance is much lower in the North East than other regions; the region has the highest proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training after Year 11. Therefore, it remains a key focus of the University to continue to invest in activity to support aspirations and progression to HE.

#### Access objectives:

- Increase the intake of students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4 Q1), reducing the gap between Q1 v Q5 to 3% by 2024/25.
- A statistical target has not been included but it remains a strategic aim for Northumbria University to contribute significantly to supporting improved entry rates to HE for students in the North East, currently 28-31%<sup>6</sup>.
- Maximise the impact of our outreach in the North East and other target regions through collaboration, with a particular aim to increase the number of care leavers progressing to HE in the North East from 7% to 9% by 2024/25.
- Within the context of the factors and constraints identified in the Assessment of Performance statistical targets have not been set for increasing the proportion of students from a BAME background or the proportion of mature students (over 21). The University objective, however, is to increase the proportion of students from a BAME background in line with the trajectory followed over the previous five years and the proportion of mature students (over 21) in line with the maximum over the previous 5 years.

#### b) Success and Progression

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports/2018-end-cycle-report>

Our holistic student experience strategy is aimed at providing targeted, personalised support to achieve the reduction in gaps for underrepresented groups. One of the ways in which we will do this is through the implementation of Educational Analytics, which will help improve retention and attainment, and support personalised, adaptive and self-regulated learning. Through wellbeing, learning and employability support, and involving a mixture of tailored support for students from underrepresented groups and interventions which support all students, we aim to improve graduate outcomes for students from underrepresented groups.

It will support students during induction and transition and also include peer support, personal support, experiential opportunities, supporting inclusive learning, teaching and assessment, and using data to match support to need.

#### **Success and Progression objectives:**

- Improve the continuation rates of students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4), reducing the gap to 3% by 2024/25.
- Improve the attainment rate of disabled students, reducing the gap between disabled and non-disabled students to 0% by 2024/25.
- Improve degree classification outcomes for Black students, reducing the gap in attainment between White and Black students to 14% by 2024/25.
- Improve degree classification outcomes for Asian students, reducing the gap in attainment between White and Asian students to 5% by 2024/25.
- Improve degree classification outcomes for students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4), reducing the gap between most and least represented groups to 4.5% by 2024/25.
- Improve degree classifications outcomes for students from IMD 1, reducing the gap between IMD 1 and IMD 5 to 9% by 2024/25.
- Improve the progression of students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4) into highly skilled employment and further study, reducing the gap between the most and least represented groups to 3% by 2024/25.
- Improve the progression of students from all other ethnicities into highly skilled employment and further study, reducing the gap between White students and students from all other ethnicities to 2% by 2024/25.
- Improve the progression of disabled students into highly skilled employment and further study, reducing the gap between disabled and non-disabled students to 0% by 2024/25.
- A statistical target has not been set in relation to attainment or degree classification outcomes for care leavers. The University objective however is to reduce the gap in both areas in line with the minimum achieved over the previous five years.
- A statistical target has not been set in relation to the degree classification outcomes for mature students. The University objective however is to reduce the gap by 2024/25 in line with the trajectory followed over the previous five years.

### **3. Strategic measures**

All of our strategic measures have been designed to achieve the outcomes set out in our Targets and Investment Plan:

#### **3.1 Access**

Northumbria University has an extensive outreach programme which begins in Year 5 (Key Stage 2) and continues up to mature students. We will offer a programme of activity to support HE awareness and progression which can be tailored to the specific needs of the school/college and pupils. To gain maximum impact of interventions, this activity is built upon year on year to strengthen relationships with schools and colleges and to ensure pupils have a sustained interaction with the University. The content of sessions will be reviewed and refined following an analysis of activity evaluations and feedback from schools. In addition, we will work with subject areas that have been identified as having low numbers of students from underrepresented groups, to develop tailored activity to support access in these areas.

### 1) Pre 16

We plan to review our overall approach to school and pupil targeting, using appropriate datasets to work with students/schools in most need and continue to offer the following programme of activity:

- a) **Primary:** awareness and aspiration raising activities targeted at pupils in Year 6. Activities and workshops delivered on and off campus with specific learner outcomes.
- b) **Secondary:** Activities range from awareness raising in Year 7 and introducing pupils to aspects of university life to transition activity in Year 11.

### 2) Post 16

We will review our approach to school/college and pupil targeting, continuing to expand our geographical reach:

- a) Our approach involves working with schools to create a bespoke programme (Evolve) for their pupils that support the development of 'soft' skills but also prepares them for the application and update progression to HE. In 2017/18, the University delivered 1,018 workshops for schools and colleges; 489 of these were delivered in schools/colleges that we had not previously visited which were outside of the NE, which demonstrates the demand for this type of bespoke programme. In addition, analysis shows that in the schools in which we have worked there has been a greater increase in applications to Northumbria than the schools in which we haven't worked.
- b) During 2018/19, we received 602 applications for the NU Entry supported entry scheme. This is a decrease from 2017/18 however, the completion rate of the compulsory assessment increased by 17%. This means that overall, we have an increased number of potential students from underrepresented groups that have achieved NU Entry points. The most recent data shows that 88% of participants in the scheme applied to the University. Further analysis of the data including the success and progression outcomes of NU Entry students is planned. NU Entry selects eligible students to participate based on widening participation criteria including, low participation neighbourhood, Care Leaver and children from military families. Successful students earn NU Entry points through participation in activity and assessment and Northumbria University accept these as equivalent to UCAS tariff points. We will continue to review the groups eligible for the scheme on an annual basis.

### 3) Graduate Ambassadors

- a) We will continue to deliver the Graduate Ambassador Scheme. Graduate Ambassadors deliver presentations, events and activities and act as role models at our pre/post 16 on campus events, and in schools and colleges in target areas across the UK, to support progression into HE. Through discussions with schools and colleges, and using feedback from our evaluations, we will review our programme of workshops and events, on an annual basis, to ensure we are continuing to support pupils and their aspirations.
- b) By September 2020 we will review our approach to the recruitment of outreach staff and student representatives in relation to ethnicity but also other underrepresented groups. This is something we believe has a direct impact upon progression to HE and a sense of belonging, along with supporting the aspirations of those students from underrepresented groups. We will work across the University and the Students' Union to identify how we can encourage students from different groups and subject areas to consider and apply for the role from September 2020.
- c) From January 2020 we will work across the University and with community groups to deliver cultural awareness training to support new and current staff when visiting schools from September 2020.

### 4) Mature students

- a) We will develop our relationships with adult learning colleges to identify the barriers to HE and develop a programme of activity to support mature students in their research, application and progression to HE to be launched in September 2020.
- b) Following feedback from current mature students, from January 2020 our Open Days and Post-application offer holder events (NUEx Days) will offer additional sessions for mature students and our messaging in communications and on the website will also be reviewed.

- c) Following recommendations by OfS, we will work with the Students' Union to encourage more mature students to become student ambassadors to help them to become better engaged with the community from September 2020.

**5) Black, Asian and minority ethnic students**

To support access to HE for students from BAME backgrounds, during 19/20 we will review our school and college targeting to focus on areas with high populations of BAME students and develop our links with community groups and church groups. We aim to increase awareness and positive perception of the accessibility of HE opportunities by linking sport with academic activity. Commencing in September 2020, in conjunction with Team Northumbria, the University will continue to seek to work with BAME communities in the North East, using established relationships in sport. The aim will be to raise awareness of the opportunities available in HE, deliver skills workshops and offer support on progressing to HE. The University will seek to develop links with community groups and social enterprises to develop our work in this area.

**6) Foundation Years**

The promotion of Foundation Years will be a key element of the Northumbria offer, which will be integrated into the University's Widening Participation outreach activity. The introduction of Foundation Years in recent years has proven a popular option for those from LPN's, with 37% of Foundation Year students from 'Low' and 'Low-Mid' participation neighbourhoods. For the past four years, retention between level 4 and 5 has typically been higher for students who have previously completed a Foundation Year, compared to those that have not. Our analysis of internal data shows that male students who completed a foundation year are more likely to progress than other male students. This suggests a stronger shared identity and investment with the University although this requires further exploration. For Females, more tend to progress without a Foundation Year than those with. However, we can see that in general the trend over time has shown that Foundation Years are starting to have more of an impact in recent years.

**7) Subject specific activity**

From September 2020, we will also continue to offer a range of initiatives which support the development of subject specific activity, particularly those from underrepresented groups. For example, STEM activities with schools and colleges, subject taster days and conferences.

**8) Other underrepresented groups**

During the lifetime of this Plan, the University will continue to work to understand the support required pre-entry and on course for groups such as Estranged Students and Young Carers. We have close links with local Carer Support Networks and attend regular meetings to understand the key issues facing this particular group of students. Training has been delivered to staff involved in on-course support for students and we will continue to invest in keeping our staff informed. Estranged students remain a focus and we continue to work to try to identify and support this group.

**9) Collaborative Initiatives**

**a) NERAP**

The North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP) is a collaboration of the five universities in the region (Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside) working together to support HE progression. The Partnership has been working collaboratively since 2015 on a variety of projects to specifically target underrepresented groups such as Young Carers, Looked after Young People and BAME students and also to extend the reach of all institutions, through joint representation activity in both primary and secondary schools and at regional events. In 2019/2020, NERAP will align with the North East Collaborative Outreach Programme as part of the development of the Outreach Hub. The NERAP single point of contact website will be signposted and the activity developed by the Partnership will also contribute to the additional support provided to schools as part of the extended outreach offer across the region.

## b) **NECOP**

The North East Collaborative Outreach Programme is a partnership of the 5 universities and 15 colleges in the region working together to support National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) target students to progress to HE. Phase 2 of the NCOP will enable the Partnership to capitalise on our existing collaborative infrastructure in support of a coherent framework to join up and transform HE outreach provision in the region to enable more students to benefit.

In 2019/2020 we will actively support the development of the Outreach Hub to signpost outreach provision provided through Access and Participation Plans and provide additional support and strategic engagement to join up and transform HE outreach provision in the region. The North East region has consistently had the lowest progression rate to HE in England at age 18 and it is our ambition as part of the new Outreach Hub strategic relationship to instigate a step change in attitude and expectation of young people to apply and progress to HE in all its forms. We will therefore explore setting regional HE progression targets in order to measure the effectiveness of our collective efforts in achieving this goal as part of the NCOP.

## c) **QA**

Northumbria University partner with QA to deliver programmes at its London Campus. We offer a range of programmes which recognise the specific context of the London based learner and enhance access to underrepresented groups through the way in which the courses are delivered, including multiple intakes and block mode. This allows learners to fit part time work and other family commitments around their study and access programmes at more convenient times of the year, such as summer when arranging childcare commitments can be less problematic. It is important to note that students enrolled at London Campus are still Northumbria University students and as such are subject to the same policies and regulations as students based in Newcastle Campus and are afforded the same support and opportunities outlined in this Access and Participation Plan.

### **3.2 Success and Progression**

Northumbria is committed to supporting, enabling and transforming students' experiences to allow them to be the best they can be. This includes enabling students' continuation and progression at all stages of study. It takes a targeted approach to achieving the reduction in gaps for underrepresented groups, through wellbeing, learning and employability support, and involving a mixture of tailored support for students from underrepresented groups and interventions which support all students. At the centre of our plan is engagement to help us to understand our student body. It will support students during induction and transition and also include peer support, personal support, experiential opportunities, supporting inclusive learning, teaching and assessment, and using data to match support to need.

The key initiatives for success & progression are:

#### **1) Targeted and personalised support**

Our approach to Success and Progression at Northumbria is to take a targeted approach to reducing the gaps in performance for underrepresented groups. Educational Analytics (EA) is one of the key methods we will use to identify and sensitively target students from underrepresented groups to support their success and progression outcomes. EA enables the University to use data-driven precision and targeting to identify and provide tailored support to those individuals and cohorts at risk of dropping out, support attainment and graduate outcomes. This insight allows us to make personalised and tailored 'nudges' into services and support at key times. Our personalised support promotes targeted personal, pastoral, wellbeing or other support interventions. At dropout 'hotspots' throughout the academic calendar, we contact the most 'at-risk' students to offer support, which includes a 'call to action' linked to key activity. We monitor student predictions weekly and contact students to offer personalised support from a trusted person. The approach draws upon successful pilot studies conducted in 2017/18 and 2018/19. Implemented in 2018/19 as a Business Outcome of the University strategy, EA has had a demonstrable impact on the student experience.

In addition, to support the University's strategic objectives in relation to continuation, attainment and progression of underrepresented groups, we will incorporate the University's Step Change work. Step Change operates at subject level and aims to close attainment gaps where analysis shows they exist, improve

continuation in areas of decline or poor performance and generally target teaching and academic support initiatives to drive an improved experience for every Northumbria student.

## **2) Transition support**

Transition to HE is a critical process for all students to support retention and belonging. Our approach to transition support is detailed below:

- In order to support transition to University, our Student and Library Services team have developed a programme in 2019/20 to work with partners (the Students' Union, National Citizen Service) and targeted schools at KS2, 3, 4 and 5 to build confidence and resilience, delivered by experienced practitioners in these areas. A range of workshops are offered including:
  - Preparing for HE
  - Mental health support
  - Disability Support
  - Careers advice and guidance
  - Study skills and how to study in a HE environment

This also presents an opportunity to share understanding and practice around student resilience through collaborative engagement with teachers within these schools. The University will offer an orientation programme for neurodiverse students, offering campus visits, tours and coaching in the period between confirming their offer of study and starting their course. This will enable our Resilience Practitioners to become a key point of contact for these students throughout the whole of their studies.

Initial implementation of the above initiatives within the 'Transition Support' strategic measure will be within the 2019/20 academic year, with an initial review in December 2020. Following the outcomes of the review, it is anticipated further development and scaling of these will take place from 2021, with further reviews in 2023 and 2025 to determine longitudinal impact against the relevant APP objectives. Examples include: -

- 'Preparing for Northumbria' – A learning opportunity made available to all students pre-enrolment and delivered as a non-credit bearing module on the virtual learning environment. This was piloted during enrolment in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 and will be evaluated in late 2019 to understand the experience and impact on the target groups in this plan and used to inform the iterative development of the learning content, including materials aiming to improve mature student attainment. Refinements will then be made ahead of 2020/21 enrolment.
- Induction for all students will also be reviewed by January 2020 to ensure inclusivity at institution, programme and module level. Implementation of the review recommendations will be in place for 2020/21 enrolment.

In addition, we have a dedicated support package in place for care leavers to support transition and retention, which includes dedicated pre-entry support and advice, financial support, a fast track arrangement for Hardship Fund applications and the provision of University accommodation on a 52-week basis, therefore ensuring care leavers have a secure and safe place to stay during vacations.

## **3) Disclosure, improving data collection (i.e. student record)**

This measure will contribute to the achievement of all targets; enabling us to better understand the individual student journeys and implement targeted intervention for groups that need additional success and progression support. To understand students and be able to deliver targeted intervention it is crucial to collect and apply the right data on personal characteristics, student needs, preparedness (including career readiness) from the outset and throughout the student journey. This measure will enable the university to continuously review and improve the targeted interventions outlined in this plan, ensuring that the aims are being addressed and enabling us to close the gaps outlined in our targets. If we do not collect the right data and use the insights it provides to address gaps in success and progression, we may be missing opportunities to implement initiatives which will support these students. Current processes for encouraging early

disclosure and data collection are being reviewed during 2019/20 and implementation of any recommended amendments to this process will be achieved by September 2021.

#### **4) Student Success Coaching**

The University will develop a new practice of student success coaching to maximise the insight delivered by EA to provide proactive personal support to students directly and through integrated referral to all support expertise and opportunities. After initial review of EA, recommendations will be made for an implementation model for Student Success Coaching, aiming for implementation during 2021/22 with an initial review in August 2022. Following the outcomes of the review, it is anticipated further development and scaling of these will take place from the 2022/23 academic year, with further reviews in 2025 to determine impact against the relevant APP objectives.

#### **5) Supporting Personal Tutors**

Academic staff will be supported to provide excellent one to one guidance to their tutees, benefiting from seamless join-up and access to professional support, and including a toolkit for academic staff working in a personal tutoring role. Working holistically across Northumbria we have developed a targeted training programme on issues around dealing with students in distress, understanding specific learning disabilities, awareness raising around student carers, to ensure early referrals for students in need. This support for Personal Tutors aims to improve attainment for all students and in particular, for mature students, disabled students and care leavers. Initial implementation of this strategic measure will be within the 2020/21 academic year, with an initial review in Semester 1 of 2021/22. Following the outcomes of the review, it is anticipated further development and scaling will take place from 2022, with a further review in 2024 to determine impact against the relevant APP objectives.

#### **6) Peer Support**

Evidence suggests that developing communities of practice for students during their first year can have a positive impact on their sense of belonging and continuation<sup>7</sup>. We will work with students and the Students' Union to co-design a university-wide peer support scheme, empowering and training student mentors across a targeted range of support areas and specifically targeted at underrepresented groups, including wellbeing and academic success, and employability.

In 2020/21 we will implement a pilot peer support package for students. In aiming to reduce the continuation gap for POLAR4 Q1 students they will be offered the opportunity to engage with a peer mentor during the transition period, from pre-entry throughout their first year of study, which we believe will help to improve a sense of belonging to the University.

To support our aims around improving attainment for Black, Asian and POLAR4 Q1 students, we will also develop an enhanced academic peer support offer. Northumbria currently offers academic peer support schemes in a number of departments across the university, which provide opportunities for more experienced students to provide insight into university life for both social and academic progression of new students. The aims of these schemes are to: enhance the quality, quantity and diversity of student learning within a discipline, involve students as partners in their learning experience, provide further opportunity for the development of students' intellectual and professional competencies; and provide students with a supportive environment to assist their transition to and through HE.

In aiming to improve graduate outcomes for our BAME, POLAR4 Q1, mature and disabled students, the University will also provide increased opportunity for these groups in particular to engage with both peer and professional mentors which will enhance employability and enterprise skills, improve our students' professional networks and offer expert and independent advice from an industry specialist. Peer and alumni mentors will also be engaged to offer students insight into the graduate job market and relevant recruitment processes. Initial implementation of this strategic measure will be within the 2020/21 academic year, with

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<sup>7</sup> Rachel Masika & Jennie Jones (2016) Building student belonging and engagement: insights into higher education students' experiences of participating and learning together, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21:2, 138-150, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2015.1122585



an initial review in August 2021. Following the outcomes of the review, it is anticipated further development and scaling of these will take place from 2021/22, with further reviews in 2023 and 2025 to determine longitudinal impact against the relevant APP objectives.

### **7) Student Engagement**

At the centre of our plan is engagement to help us to understand our student body. A more formalised approach to engagement will be implemented to understand the key issues affecting the groups of students identified in our assessment of performance. We want to understand the lived experience of these students and use this engagement to continuously improve on our approach and refine the interventions that we have in place.

Alongside supporting all students to be engaged with every aspect of their individual student experience, the university understands the importance of facilitating new opportunities for specific groups to contribute and co-develop key aspects of university life. We are working in partnership with The Student Room Group to develop the student engagement platform 'Enlightened'. This innovation will allow us to engage with all students in a more dynamic and student friendly way and give us the capability to understand the experience and ideas of specific groups, including the groups where this plan seeks to address performance gaps. Initial implementation of this strategic measure will be within the 2019/20 academic year, with an initial review in December 2020. Following the outcomes of the review, it is anticipated further development and scaling will take place, with a further review in May 2022 to determine impact against the relevant APP objectives.

### **8) Student wellbeing**

We recognise that wellbeing is crucial to success and progression and are committed to developing a new whole university approach to student life and wellbeing. This will transform our support for all students and in particular, the groups in this plan, through new prevention work, earlier intervention, at community level and, in addition to for individuals. This builds on our commitment to student wellbeing, expressed through our support for the Time to Change pledge.

The University is leading on an OfS Mental Health Challenge partnership project: 'Mental Health and Analytics: A Continuum Approach to Understanding and Improving Student Mental Health', which aims to improve mental health and learning outcomes for all students, match students in need to appropriate health and wellbeing support, and reduce student suicide. The project is a collaboration between sector leading universities and technology companies, students, a mental health charity and sector representative organisations. This project commences in 2019 and will be completed by autumn 2021 for final evaluation and reporting.

### **9) Targeted experiential opportunities for progression**

We will develop new targeted employability interventions and opportunities to improve participation by student groups in this plan with internships, placements, study abroad, recruitment simulation, enterprise and career readiness, and alumni mentoring. In addition, we will work with employers and their schemes and initiatives to enhance the diversity of their workforce for both student and graduate opportunities.

In addition, financial support for targeted groups undertaking activity such as placements or work experience, where finance could be a barrier, will also be offered. Initial implementation of the above initiatives will be within the 2019/20 academic year, with an initial review in December 2020. Following the outcomes of the reviews, it is anticipated further development and scaling of these will take place from 2021, with further reviews in 2023 and 2025 to determine longitudinal impact against the relevant APP objectives.

### **10) Inclusive learning and teaching**

Research<sup>8</sup> has shown that an inclusive approach to the provision of HE with programmes that enable all students the opportunity to develop a positive identity and sense of belonging is required. The University will

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<sup>8</sup> McDuff, N. Tatum, J. Beacock, O. Ross, F (2018) Closing the attainment gap for students from black & minority ethnic backgrounds through institutional change. Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Vol 20 No 1 pp. 79-101

embed Inclusivity within the curriculum and assessments by adopting a practice of Inclusivity by Design and ensure that this is part of its Education Strategic Plan. The University will:

- Review induction for all students to ensure inclusivity at institution, programme and module levels. Timescales for implementation are set out in 'Transition Support' above.
- Embed Inclusivity within the curriculum and assessments by adopting a practice of Inclusivity by Design and ensuring that this is part of Education Strategy.
- Develop materials around decolonising the curriculum in consultation with the Students' Union and student support services, in order to raise awareness among academic and support staff around inclusivity for all students.
- Unpack the educational factors influencing differential attainment at Northumbria (pedagogy, curriculum, University environment, and regional context) and design specific interventions based on best practice across the sector.
- Promote Unconscious Bias training and develop CPD resources for staff to support inclusive teaching and learning.
- Ensure that the current reviews of both the Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards and programme governance and performance identify inclusivity and diversity as a priority area for action and monitoring.
- These initiatives are in development or ongoing throughout the 2019/20 academic year aiming to influence delivery plans and practice from 2020/21. Immediate promotion of existing resources and CPD will occur.

### **3.4 Investment**

Our expected Access investment is based on the assessment of our performance and our proposed measures to address our strategic objectives. In 2020/21 we plan to invest £3.5m in Access measures. Investment in Access (inclusive of expenditure on Research and Evaluation) is held at the same level as our forecast for 2019/20. We had at that time forecast inflationary increases for subsequent years. On reviewing for this plan, we are confident that outcomes can be achieved without the projected increases. This is based upon experience and because good financial stewardship means we are always aiming to be more efficient, something that benefits all students. We will monitor and review our level of investment on an annual basis, this will take into account progress towards the milestones and targets set in this Access and Participation Plan, emerging priorities and the development of new ideas and initiatives.

#### Financial Support

Northumbria has been developing (by using the statistical tool from the OfS financial support evaluation toolkit) its approach to supporting students from non-traditional backgrounds and invested in increasing activities to target support and recruitment at students from these groups. In 2020/21 we will provide approximately £2m in financial support. This is consistent with our aim to reduce our overall level of investment in financial support as outlined in our 2019/20 Access and Participation Plan. In line with our own internal analysis of financial support and its impact on continuation, and previous research commissioned by the Office for Fair Access (now OfS), Northumbria has changed its approach from a focus on financial incentives such as bursaries and scholarships to more emphasis on longer term outreach and support activities, where there is an opportunity for more demonstrable impact.

Financial support provision is informed by internal analysis of the impact upon application rates, enrolments, retention. The OfS financial support evaluation toolkit has been used in conjunction with the datasets previously provided by HESA for two consecutive years. This focussed upon whether institutional financial support had an impact on continuation. The study concluded (in both years) that there was no clear correlation – students who did receive a means-tested bursary had the same likelihood of continuing their study from year 1 to year 2 as the control group who did not. Further analysis will be undertaken for subsequent academic years as data becomes available.

In 2020/21 we will offer a scholarship programme which aims to attract high achieving students and support them during their studies. Although not specifically targeted at under-represented groups, we estimate (based on analysis of our existing scholarship) that 40% of recipients will be from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2. We also expect that the majority of these recipients will be from a lower income background.

We have continued with our commitment to alleviating hardship amongst our existing student body and have identified a continuing budget to provide a UK/Home Student Hardship support fund. This fund will ensure that students in hardship can continue to receive the financial support that can often be the difference between staying at or leaving University. Students are eligible to apply for this fund if they are a Home, full time or part time student, have taken out the full entitlement of student funding, including tuition fee loan if eligible, and are enrolled at the University. All applications and the amount to be awarded is assessed on an individual basis.

In addition, we have also identified funds to help support the reasonable adjustments required to support our disabled students, so they can continue in their studies. Brought together and known as our Access to Learning Fund, these funds will total £1.4million in 2019/20 and we will maintain them at this level in 2020/21, this demonstrates both our financial and operational commitment to supporting access, success and progression.

In 2020/21, we will continue to offer a Care Leavers Bursary of £2000 per year to students meeting the eligibility criteria and studying on a full-time undergraduate course. The above model applies to students joining the University in 2020/21. Students who joined prior to 2020/21 will remain on schemes in place at the time of intake. In 2018/19 13 new students were awarded the Care Leavers Bursary. The Care Leavers Bursary aims to support care leavers with their living expenses whilst studying at university and enable them to continue with their studies.

### **3.5 Whole provider strategic approach**

At Northumbria University we are committed to fostering a culture where diversity is valued and encouraged, where we advance equality of opportunity, and all colleagues and students feel respected. Our 'One University' approach means that the University Executive, and staff in Faculties, Services and the Students' Union have been involved with the development of the APP and the proposed approach is endorsed across the University. With representatives from across the University, the APP Steering Group ensures that we have a whole University strategic approach to the preparation and delivery of the APP.

For the purposes of this plan our approach to achieving our Strategic Objectives is set out below:

- Step 1:** Identification of the issues and priorities for the University: OfS dashboard, internal data, HESA data
- Step 2:** Engagement and research to understand the causes: For example, Student representatives, Equality and Diversity dashboard, research, OfS Effective Practice guidance
- Step 3:** Review of evaluation, internal/external research and best practice from the sector to inform our approach and the measures we will put in place to achieve our Strategic Objectives
- Step 4:** Implementation of Strategic Measures and changes to processes/systems and resource
- Step 5:** Monitor, evaluate and review approach and outcomes using appropriate tools (e.g. HEAT database) and datasets

This overarching approach will be developed further to enable us to address the issues identified in this plan, test the evidence and highlight other areas of priority, which will then enable us to review our approach and allocate resources accordingly. This model will have short, medium and long term outputs and the measures we are taking to achieve each of these. The University Strategy and its Business Outcomes reinforce our commitment to supporting progression to HE and holistic approach to the success and progression of all of our students. The University's Education Strategic Plan 2018-23, lays out our ambitions for learning, teaching and the student experience. The University's Education Committee oversees the strategic development and coordination of policy and activity to enable the success and progression of all students.

At Northumbria University we are committed to fostering a culture where diversity is valued and encouraged, where we advance equality of opportunity, and all colleagues and students feel respected. The University's public Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2017-18 includes a section dedicated to how we support students and for the first time includes data on the access, success and progression of different student groups for four of the nine protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010 and also including TEF flags to highlight areas of concern based on benchmarked performance. This is part of ongoing commitment to join-up University strategy, policy and practice as it affects student groups across our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, TEF, and Access and Participation Planning work streams.

### **3.6 Student consultation**

Students contribute extensively in our access, success and progression work, promoting HE and the University in ambassador roles, and offering mentoring and peer support roles during their studies. Student engagement is embedded in our governance of the APP, with the Director of Member Services and Vice President Welfare as members of the APP Steering Group. The Students' Union have provided a statement attached as **Appendix 1**.

In 2015, the University launched a Student Engagement Plan, which developed our commitments to student representation, engagement and consultation in order to secure student voice and feedback capture on our learning offer and our approach to a high quality student experience. The University will engage students from a range of backgrounds about the Access and Participation Plan in accordance with the Student Engagement Plan. Channels include programme representatives, student experience surveys, Go Out And Listen (GOAL) events and other face-to-face engagements.

There is Students' Union representation on the Board of Governors, Academic Board and its University and Faculty sub-committees, including the Education Committee. Consultation with students of different backgrounds at the University is also enabled through the Students' Union which plays a full role across the University. Close working relationships exist between the SU and the Board of Governors, the University Executive, faculties and service departments. As a result, it has numerous opportunities to contribute to the University's approach to widening access.

This plan has been developed through consultation with the Students' Union, engaging the President and the Director of Membership Services, on behalf of their members. There has been the opportunity for SU representatives to review this plan, make suggestions, and have feedback incorporated into the final version however, there has been limited engagement with SU Representatives from underrepresented groups due to timescales.

Looking forward, the University and the Students' Union have a range of structures through which consultation with students of different backgrounds will take place in reference to this plan. The five Sabbatical officers are elected through an annual cross-campus ballot, bringing with them the experience of students at that time. Officers sit on a wide range of formal committees and working groups and use the Students' Union structures to seek ad hoc input from student groups on specific issues when needed. The Union also submits an annual quality report to the University, giving its perspective of work in the institution. This includes issues of access and participation. This report is made formally to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Academic Registrar and a formal response is given. In addition, the Students' Union has a council of student representatives, each elected to represent the views of a different student group by background, where open place representatives bring forward the views of other students and set policy for the Students' Union. These groups are Black and Ethnic Minority, International, LGBT+, Trans, Mature, Disabled and Women.

In 2017/18, the Students' Union Council and the Vice President Welfare became members of a University Task and Finish group to look at the attainment gap. As well as the input of elected representatives the SU Council ran a series of focus groups to gather views of students of different backgrounds within those groups.

As well as elected representatives, the Students' Union supports the network of over 1,000 student representatives, most working at programme level. Although these are not recruited specifically in relation to their background, they do provide a strong network of students to be consulted on different issues. At the level of the department, the Students' Union actively ensures representatives reflect a range of backgrounds and has specific representatives for departments where the perspective of a particular type of student is seen to be most needed; for example, women students in STEM subjects and international students in Business. These representatives meet every 6 weeks with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Registrar and other senior staff to discuss issues they face including access and participation. The SU's Student Council also attends these scheduled meetings.

The SU and University work jointly on the Student Engagement Forum, which feeds into the Education Committee. This forum exists to bring students together with senior University staff and SU leaders. It takes place twice a year with separate events for satellite campuses. The format varies but aims to speak to over 800 students a year, gathering their comments to inform the work of the University and is an excellent vehicle for reaching a wide range of students.

The action taken in this plan to address the gaps in our performance was a result of consultation with students and feedback via the forums highlighted above. In particular, this includes the steps to improve access and continuation through a focus on Foundation Years, a programme of bespoke interventions in Careers and Student Support and Wellbeing to support students from underrepresented groups. In addition, feedback from the Equality and Diversity Task and Finish Groups, and the reference to the lack of diversity at the University and the sense of belonging, resulted in a focus in this plan on area/school targeting, transition support and the development of peer support.

As we deliver this plan, the SU will continue to have representatives on the APP Steering Group and engage with student representatives who will be integral to the success of the plan by being co-creators in the development of activity, its implementation and evaluation.

### **3.7 Evaluation strategy**

A key aspect of Northumbria's access, success and progression activity is monitoring and evaluation, to support a culture of continuous improvement. At a University level, evaluation of the impact of our widening participation work takes place annually with progress reports submitted to the University Executive, Student Progress Committee and Board of Governors.

#### **a) Access**

Our current approach comprises four main sections:

- Detailed evaluation, by beneficiaries and stakeholders, of all outreach and student recruitment activity.
- Analysis of enquiry, application and enrolment data, including HESA performance indicators and the use of socio-demographic and geographic mapping.
- The adoption of a strategic, analytical model, which draws together analysis and outcomes and which is used to inform subsequent operational planning and delivery.
- Formal reporting of objectives and progress to senior groups across the University.

#### Beneficiary evaluation

The University has always sought beneficiary evaluation of its outreach activity via a combination of 'on-the-day' and online questionnaires. Feedback indicated that for many events the "on the day" questionnaire approach was successful with at least 90% of participants completing the questionnaires; 'Mood cards' based on the Likert Scale<sup>9</sup> are used for the majority of younger age group events and have also proven successful, with at least 90% of participants engaging with the evaluation technique. We aim to engage with academics at the University with expertise in evaluation to strengthen our approach, particularly in relation to our long-term programmes such as NU Entry, to ensure that we are using the most current methods to try to demonstrate the impact of our outreach activity. This will involve a review of all of our evaluation methods,

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<sup>9</sup> <https://sure.sunderland.ac.uk/id/eprint/6965/7/Hall%20Hume%20Tazzyman%20IDC.pdf>

with a new programme for evaluation of all our major initiatives to be developed by a working group made up of academic experts and professional service experts, to be in place by September 2020. This programme will encapsulate the full student journey, including Access, Success and Progression.

#### Data analysis

The University monitors enquiries, applications, and enrolments against the following characteristics: age; gender; school-type; location; disability. This monitoring takes the form of significant analysis and review of our application profiles and data, and monitoring of our admissions policies and practices to ensure fair and equal access for all. Our analysis clearly indicates that the University attracts and admits students fairly with no bias either in favour or against any socio-economic group or protected characteristic - each applicant is assessed on their: academic ability and potential; and, where necessary, the specific skills and aptitudes required by the course.

Data analysis is further supported by the use of socio-demographic mapping to enable the identification of enquiry/application/enrolment trends and in particular to pinpoint geographic areas of strength or weakness (i.e. areas where we attract more students from widening access backgrounds (than our benchmark), or where we could improve our profile of these students). The outcomes of this analysis will be used to determine successful interventions and the sharing of effective practice across the breadth of our activity. We will identify the regions where we have made the most improvements in terms of number of WP applications, and identify the initiatives that have been undertaken in these areas, and duplicate this best practice in other regions.

#### Higher Education Access Tracker

Northumbria University is a member of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) membership service which assists HE Institutions in England to target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activity. Being part of the HEAT service allows us to share the costs of a monitoring and evaluation system and it also underpins the collaborative delivery of evidence-based evaluation. Our national community of HEAT members work together in the research and development of effective, fit for purpose evaluation practice to inform outreach planning and assess impact. The University is represented on HEAT's Steering Group.

By working collaboratively within HEAT, we can critically reflect on our approach to building an evidence-based practice. HEIs who subscribe to HEAT have developed a student data tracking system and a set of reports which allow annual tracking of outreach participants longitudinally from Key Stage 2 data through to entry to HE, postgraduate study and employment. Using these reports Northumbria University can assess the relationship between outreach programmes, disadvantage, attainment and patterns of progression into HE. The HEAT student tracking studies allow the monitoring of applicants and entrants to other HEIs and to HE in FE settings, thus we are able to assess the contribution that our outreach is making to reducing sector progression gaps.

Whilst Northumbria receives reports on its own outreach participants from the HEAT service, it is also able to aggregate its data with other members. This enables the membership, as a whole, to interrogate the intersections of multiple combined outreach participant characteristics.

#### **b) Success and Progression**

A Success and Progression Team has been established in Student and Library Services which will facilitate the collection, collation and analysis of data in order to measure the impact of interventions on student continuation, attainment and graduate outcomes. We are taking a mixed methods approach to monitoring and evaluating success and progression activities. Where possible, we are adopting data-driven methods to measure participation and to track follow-up activity and outcomes for individual students. For example, we have started to monitor at the individual level student participation at Careers Fairs and the percentage of students engaging which hold a WP characteristic.

We are also developing our services to provide new sources of data to feed into Educational Analytics. We are collaborating with academic colleagues to evaluate 'success' projects, such as peer support in Sport and

the impact these schemes are having on continuation, attainment and satisfaction. We have created a new Student Success Committee which provide a rich source of qualitative data on the experience of WP students.

The University is actively evolving systems and processes to encourage early disclosure from pre-entry onwards of for example, care leaver status, caring responsibilities, and to provide students with the choice to opt-in to their data being used to support equality of opportunity, for example through Educational Analytics. We are developing a community of practice to share innovation, enhancing literacy around evaluation methodology and encouraging and supporting access to relevant sources of data for more effective evaluation. For example, the University Library has developed and maintains a NVivo database of student feedback, comprising qualitative data from multiple sources.

#### Future developments

Our priorities prior to implementation of this plan will be to review our approach to monitoring and evaluation, in line with OfS guidance, and following the outcomes of the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool (by early 2020). We will draw on colleagues' expertise to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework (by the end of 2020) that can be used to evaluate the strategic measures to be outlined in our APP and is proportionate to the activity taking place. We will also utilise the HEAT database further and work with schools regarding GDPR and data sharing to ensure we are able to continue to track students and use this to inform our strategy to widening participation outreach.

The University is also committed to qualitative evaluation of our outreach programme. We will look into the possibility of working with current students to gather feedback from pupils participating in outreach activities. Additionally, we will utilise the OfS financial support evaluation toolkit and recently provided HESA datasets to further evaluate the impact of financial support provided in prior years. Following the self-assessment, we plan to invest in additional training, skills development for staff involved in the coordination and delivery of our widening participation activities.

### **3.8 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan**

Following feedback from OfS in 2018/19 there was a review of governance relating to the Access and Participation Plan at Northumbria. A cross-University Steering Group has since been created to maintain a strategic overview of all widening participation activity at Northumbria. It will ensure:

- Joined up and targeted support for WP activity informed by evidence.
- Responsibility for compliance and monitoring.
- Ensuring effective management of resources for WP activity across the University.
- Developing processes for allocation of resources.

This Access and Participation Plan has been developed by the Steering Group, involving representatives from the University's Strategic Performance and Planning team, Marketing, Student and Library Services, and the Students' Union, representing all stages of the student lifecycle. This group is chaired by the Director of Strategic Planning, who is a member of the University Executive and attends the Board of Governors and its Strategic Performance Committee. The plan has been developed and approved at key stages by University Executive and reported to Strategic Performance Committee and the Board of Governors (the latter both include representatives from the Students' Union).

The Steering Group will report periodically to the University Executive. Annually the Group will submit a report to the University's Strategic Performance Committee and subsequently the Board of Governors about progress and performance and appropriate actions being taken where any areas of activity are at risk of not being delivered.

As this plan is implemented, a priority for the Steering Group will be to develop plans to understand more about the causes of the gaps relating specifically to Success and Progression of identified underrepresented groups.

Our evaluation framework will include plans to assess the impact that our undergraduate Student Representative scheme (in which current students assist in the delivery of outreach) has on their retention, success and future employability. The University's financial support schemes are approved by University Executive and reviewed annually by the Employment and Finance Committee.

To ensure continuous improvement across all the objectives set out in this Plan, the submission of annual progress reports, along with the University's annual Equality and Diversity report, and individual activity evaluations will enable us to review the effectiveness of our approach, and its impact. Questions such as how well the activity met the individual aims will be considered, along with whether the needs of the target group have changed at all, which will allow the impact of our activity to be assessed. The Steering Group will ensure resource is allocated to areas that have the most impact and support stakeholders to make changes and influence the design of interventions. The University is committed to maintaining performance in those areas where we have not set formal targets or objectives, and performance will be monitored by the Steering Group.

Should there be concerns raised that milestone targets are not being met in line with the ambitions of this plan, a review would be undertaken and mitigation strategies presented to the APP Steering Group with recommendations to resolve any issues.

As indicated in section 3.4, we will review our level of financial investment on an annual basis. This will take into account progress towards the milestones and targets set in this Access and Participation Plan, emerging priorities and the development of new ideas and initiatives

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

Northumbria is committed to the provision of accurate, timely and relevant information for all potential and existing students and will continue to provide this service. The University recognises this as vital to the recruitment of well-motivated students who have made informed, considered and appropriate decisions and who subsequently achieve good degree outcomes. We will therefore continue to deliver a wide range of information-giving services via:

- Published materials such as our prospectus.
- Our website.
- Personalised communications by email, telecentre and by SMS to enquirers, applicants and students.
- At events on-and off-campus, in schools, colleges, community venues and employers.
- Our Student Support & Wellbeing Service which provides support and advice for current and potential students.

We provide relevant information to UCAS, the Student Loans Company and other relevant bodies to ensure they too are able to provide all necessary information to students when it is requested.

The information we provide to students will include: tuition fees to be charged for the duration of their course; the financial support available and the relevant eligibility criteria; course entry requirements; methods of assessment for admission; course content - including placement and work experience opportunities and assessment methods; and ensuring that students are aware of the other types of academic and pastoral support that is available. In addition, the Access and Participation Plan is a public document and will be available for students and prospective students on Northumbria University's website.



**Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees**

\*course type not listed

**Inflationary statement:**

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,250
First degree	Arts, Design and Social Sciences, Fashion	£5,550
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0		£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE		£9,250
Postgraduate ITT		£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year		£1,850
Erasmus and overseas study years		£1,385
Other	*	*

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

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	QAHE (NU) Limited 10066760	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£5,000
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Northumbria at Newcastle

Provider UKPRN: 10001282

## Investment summary

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

### Note about the data:

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

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£3,500,000.00	£3,500,000.00	£3,500,000.00	£3,500,000.00	£3,500,000.00
Access (pre-16)	£1,039,800.00	£1,039,800.00	£1,039,800.00	£1,039,800.00	£1,039,800.00
Access (post-16)	£2,252,900.00	£2,252,900.00	£2,252,900.00	£2,252,900.00	£2,252,900.00
Access (adults and the community)	£173,300.00	£173,300.00	£173,300.00	£173,300.00	£173,300.00
Access (other)	£34,000.00	£34,000.00	£34,000.00	£34,000.00	£34,000.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£1,980,000.00	£1,650,000.00	£1,610,000.00	£1,600,000.00	£1,600,000.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£49,850,805.00	£49,566,985.00	£48,820,415.00	£48,829,670.00	£48,829,670.00
<b>Access investment</b>	7.0%	7.1%	7.2%	7.2%	7.2%
<b>Financial support</b>	4.0%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	11.1%	10.5%	10.6%	10.5%	10.5%



