University of Sussex
Access and Participation Plan

2020/2021 to 2024/25

Section one: context of our Access and Participation Plan

1. This Access and Participation Plan is aligned to our *'Sussex 2025 Strategic Framework – a better university for a better world'*. Sussex 2025 reimagines the pioneering spirit of the original purpose of our University, but for new times and a new generation. Our five core values are defined as: kindness, integrity, inclusion, collaboration and courage, and these values underpin our *Learn to Transform* strategic vision for education and the student experience. *Learn to Transform* has five main aims:

   Be collaborative: engage our students as co-creators in their learning experience;
   Be inclusive: dismantle borders, create opportunities, add value and deliver fair outcomes;
   Be disruptive: deliver an inspirational and transformative learning experience that transcends the classroom;
   Be courageous: deliver a distinctive, digitally advanced education that dares to be different;
   Be kind: ensure our students are respected and recognised for who they are, adding value to their learning experience and delivering positive outcomes.

2. We have identified actions for each of the above aims, a number of which will help us deliver the overarching vision of this Plan. The key actions for this area of work are:

   Be collaborative:

   - Create a student engagement, employability and enhancement programme;
   - Undertake a review of our student-voice mechanisms.

   Be inclusive:

   - Identify the causes of the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) attainment gap and to use that information to work towards eradicating the gap;
   - Review assessment and feedback mechanisms to ensure inclusive practice;
   - Work with students to understand issues of student diversity in order to enhance inclusive practice;
   - Engage with students and employers to advise on content, delivery and assessment of modules and programmes of study.

   Be disruptive:

   - Review modes of teaching delivery in order to enhance our pedagogic practices.

3. The Sussex 2025 *Engage for Change* Strategy sets out our vision for ensuring that our students and staff are connected, engaged, entrepreneurial and creative citizens of the world. A key

action in the *Engage for Change* Strategy, which will underpin the way we develop our access and participation plans, is to:

- Identify key organisations and partnerships that reflect our aims and values.

4. There are core, underpinning strategies that inform all of our key actions, including the *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* Strategy and the emerging *Employability* Strategy.

5. This Plan has been drafted within the context of the national student support and fee regime in place for 2019/20. The level of anticipated spend and support are subject to change over the duration of the Plan and may be dependent upon the response to the recently published Review of Post -18 Education and Funding and any subsequent sector-wide changes. We recognise any changes to our Plan would be in exceptional circumstances, and we would submit a request to OfS for approval of any such variations.

Strategic aims and objectives

6. The University's Education and Students Strategy, *Learn to Transform*, was created in partnership with students. In Summer 2018 a series of workshops were held which brought students, academic and professional service staff together to create the core aspects of the Strategy. Once drafted, the Strategy was considered by key University committees, with full student representation, and received approval from Council, the University's governing body in November 2018. The University is proud to have two student representatives on Council; the President of the Students' Union and an elected PG student.

7. The University's *Learn to Transform* strategy sits alongside the University's strategic vision to make students our partners in the big decisions that face the University. We are proud of our commitment to fair access and widening participation and, in line with our Learn to Transform Strategy, we have taken an aspirational approach working with our students to co-create partnership opportunities in all of the work that we do. Success will be achieved through:

- Students co-creating to shape the services that will support retention and an enhanced student experience;
- Providing a suite of personal development opportunities that improve students' confidence, self-belief and leadership capabilities;
- Aiding transition, particularly through working with students to increase their feelings of belonging and connection;
- Championing and extending opportunities for our students to engage more in University life.

8. In line with our ethos and ways of working, student representatives have been involved in every aspect of this Plan, both formally and informally, from evaluation of past activities through to shaping and creating the new vision.

Target groups

9. As further described in paragraph 38, our overarching aim to ensure equality of opportunity for under-represented groups at all stages of the student lifecycle. To ensure this, we have set a number of measurable objectives and targets, set over the lifetime of this Plan and beyond.

10. Through the performance analysis detailed in section two, we have targeted groups for whom gaps are widest. Many of these reflect OfS key performance measures, and we aim to

contribute to national equality of opportunity with OfS and colleagues across the sector. The groups we have identified are POLAR4 Q1; IMD Q1; BAME (specifically black and Asian) students and students with a disability.

11. While we will monitor our performance at every stage of the lifecycle for all of these groups, and will aim to reduce any gaps we find, we have identified eight objectives where we have found the most significant gaps. Our annual target milestones can be found in our targets and investment workbook.

12. Our measurable objectives will be to:

- Reduce the access ratio gap in POLAR4 Q1:Q5 students from 1:5.7 to 1:3 by 2024/25, on a trajectory to 1:1 by 2038/39
- Increase the percentage of IMD students from 8.8% to 21% by 2024/25, to achieve alignment with the sector average of IMD Q1 percentage intake
- Reduce the access ratio in BAME to white students from 3.7 to 2.2 by 2024/25, aligning us with a sector average ratio
- Reduce the attainment gap between Asian and white students from 21% to 4.2% by 2024/25 (eliminating the unexplained gap, based on OfS differences in student outcomes by ethnicity analysis), seeking to eliminate the remaining explained gap by 2029/30
- Reduce the attainment gap between black and white students from 25% to 5% by 2024/25, (eliminating the unexplained gap, based on OfS differences in student outcomes by ethnicity analysis), seeking to eliminate the explained gap by 2029/30
- Reduce the attainment gap between students with a disability and those without a disability from 7% to 0% by 2024/25
- Reduce the gap in progression outcomes between IMD Q1 and Q5 students from 16% to 0% by 2024/25
- Reduce the gap in progression outcomes between black and white students from 15% to 0% by 2024/25.

13. We propose to increase percentage of IMD Q1 students (rather than reduce ratio against Q5) recognising this is an ambitious deliverable, and we would seek to balance this increase against a decrease in the upper quintiles of IMD.

14. We will underpin our strategic aim of identifying the causes of the black, Asian and ethnic minority (BAME) attainment gap with the following objectives:

- Clearly identify the nature of the gaps that will present in different subject areas
- Produce a toolkit that will present a variety of methods that can be tailored to the gap that is identified
- Work with students as curriculum consultants to review the curriculum and made recommendations for a more inclusive approach and content.

15. In addition, we are actively supporting a number of other groups of students who are under-represented in higher education. We have signed up to the Stand Alone pledge for estranged students and the Care Leavers Covenant. We will also work to support forced migrants and refugees, children from military families and young carers.

Section two: assessment of performance

16. Data for the Assessment of Performance comes from several data sources: the OfS APP dataset; UCAS end-of-cycle reports; internal admissions data; and the HESA Student return (supplemented with internal student data). The OfS dataset showed no significant changes between years 1 and 5, or years 4 and 5 for any demographic group. Where in year gaps are significant, these are coloured and emboldened for each relevant year. Sector data show the Y5 gaps between each WP group and their counterpart.

Higher-education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Student Demographic	Measure		Sussex Year 1	Sussex Year 2	Sussex Year 3	Sussex Year 4	Sussex Year 5	Sector Year 5
POLAR4 Q1	Access	Ratio Q5:Q1	6.4	5.6	6.1	5.6	5.7	2.5
		Gap to population[1]	**10.7**	**10.4**	**11.5**	**10.4**	**11.0**	**6.7**
		Applications[2]	7.4	7.3	7.8	7.5	7.6	10.5
		Placed applicants[3]	7.5	7.0	8.0	6.8	7.4	10.8
	Gap to Q5	Continuation	4	-1	1	3	0	**5.0**
		Attainment	5	9	7	5	3	**9.5**
		Progression	3	-4	-9	-2	-8	**6.0**
Household income[4]	Access proportion	≤£25,000			32.0	29.8	27.6	
		£25,001 - threshold[5]			14.3	13.6	13.5	
	Continuation gap to above threshold	≤£25,000			1.5	1.9	1.7	
		£25,001 - threshold			-2.7	0.2	-2.1	
	Attainment gap to above threshold	≤£25,000			2.7	7.1	3.5	
		£25,001 - threshold			3.9	1.0	-0.9	
	Progression gap to above threshold	≤£25,000			-1.7	-0.9	-1.7	
		£25,001 - threshold			-7.4	1.0	1.3	
IMD Q1	Access	Proportion	8.9	8.5	8.7	8.9	8.8	21.6
		Gap to population	**12.7**	**14.3**	**14.1**	**14.5**	**13.5**	**5.7**
	Gap to Q5	Continuation	1	2	3	0	2	**7.9**
		Attainment	10	5	14	12	9	**18.0**
		Progression	4	-1	7	8	16	**7.1**

Table 1: performance across the student lifecycle for students from lowest quintiles of POLAR4 and IMD, and those with a household income lower than £25k.

17. Access: the data show significant gaps in access for 18-year-old POLAR4 Q1 and IMD Q1 entrants compared to the proportion of 18-year-olds in the total population[6] (11.0% and 13.5% respectively in Y5). The ratio of young POLAR4 Q5:Q1 entrants currently stands at 5.7:1,

[1] 18-year-old population
[2] Source: UCAS end-of-cycle data. Proportion of 18-year-olds from POLAR4 Q1
[3] Source: UCAS end-of-cycle data. Proportion of 18-year-old placed June-deadline applicants
[4] Source: Internal data, students who transfer considered non-continuer
[5] 'Threshold' for 2017/18 was £42,875
[6] The total population covers all of the UK for POLAR4, and England for IMD

well behind the OfS KPI measure to close the gap to 3:1 for higher tariff providers by 2024/25. UCAS data show there has been little change in the proportion of applications from POLAR4 Q1, and that to reduce the Q5:Q1 access ratio, the proportion of applications from Q1 students needs to rise significantly.

18. Success – non-continuation: there are no significant continuation-rate gaps between POLAR4 and IMD Q5 and Q1 students in any year. There are currently no gaps between POLAR4 Q5 and Q1, which suggests Sussex is likely to meet the OfS KPM to close the gap in continuation rates before 2024/25.

19. Success – attainment: POLAR4 Q5/Q1 attainment gaps were widest in Y2 and Y3, however the gaps have narrowed. There are IMD Q5/Q1 attainment gaps in all years, however the gap has been narrowing over the last three years.

20. Progression: POLAR4 Q5/Q1 progression gaps were negative in the last four years showing Q1 students have better progression rates than Q5 students. However, for IMD Q1 students there has been widening of the gap, which now stands at 16%.

Students from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background

Ethnicity	Measure		Sussex Year 1	Sussex Year 2	Sussex Year 3	Sussex Year 4	Sussex Year 5	Sector Year 5
BAME	White:BAME access ratio		4.0	4.4	3.6	3.6	3.7	2.2
	Gap to white	Continuation	-1	0	1	-1	-1	3.2
		Attainment	10	4	9	14	14	13.2
		Progression	-4	3	0	-4	2	3.9
Black	Access	Proportion	6.0	4.7	5.8	5.6	4.3	10.5
		Gap to population	-3.1	-1.1	-2.2	-1.6	-0.8	-2.7
		Applications[7]	7.8	6.8	7.5	6.8	6.7	8.3
		Placed applicants[8]	4.3	5.0	4.9	4.1	3.9	6.9
	Gap to white	Continuation		-1	2	-1	-2	6.3
		Attainment	23	3	15	20	25	23.1
		Progression	0	5	-2	-4	15	4.8
Asian	Access	Proportion	5.5	5.8	6.4	7.6	7.2	13.7
		Gap to population	2.7	2.0	2.1	0.8	0.8	-6.3
		Applications	7.3	7.1	8.8	9.6	8.9	13.3
		Placed applicants	4.8	5.0	5.9	6.6	6.0	11.0
	Gap to white	Continuation	1	0	-1	-2	-3	1.0
		Attainment	8	7	12	17	21	10.2
		Progression	1	2	3	-5	-6	3.8

[7] Source: UCAS end-of-cycle data. Proportion of applications for each ethnicity
[8] Source: UCAS end-of-cycle data. Proportion of placed June-deadline applicants for each ethnicity

Mixed	Access	Proportion	6.5	6.3	7.6	7.0	7.7	4.8
		Gap to population	-2.4	-3.2	-4.2	-3.2	-4.8	-1.6
		Applications	6.4	6.4	6.5	7.0	6.9	4.7
		Placed applicants	6.6	6.6	7.1	7.5	7.3	4.5
	Gap to white	Continuation	-2	-1	1	-1	3	2.5
		Attainment	5	3	2	4	5	4.0
		Progression	-9	0	0	-3	1	3.0
Other	Access	Proportion	2.0	1.7	2.2	1.4	1.9	2.2
		Gap to population	-0.5	-0.4	-0.9	-0.5	-0.5	-0.6
		Applications	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.0
		Placed applicants	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.7	2.3	1.6
	Gap to white	Continuation			5		5	2.8
		Attainment			5	20	10	13.2
		Progression						3.5

Table 2: performance across the student lifecycle for students by ethnic background.

21. Access: data show that there is a higher proportion of 18-year-olds of black or mixed ethnicity at Sussex than there is in the total UK population, with negative gaps in every year (significantly so in most years). While behind the population, the gap is narrowing for Asian students. However, the gap for black students, while still ahead of the population, has fallen from Y1 to Y5. The proportion of black and Asian students at Sussex is lower than that found within the sector, with a 3.7:1 White:BAME access ratio in Y5 at Sussex compared to 2.2:1 within the sector. UCAS data show the proportion of applications from black and Asian students is above the proportion of placed applicants, showing a disproportionate loss of black and Asian students between the application stage and confirmation period. Also, the proportion of applications from black students has fallen. For students of mixed ethnicity, there is a greater proportion of placed applicants than applications.

22. Success – continuation: in most years, black students, Asian students, and students of mixed ethnicity have negative gaps, demonstrating continuation rates above that of white students. In years 3 and 5, small continuation gaps are present for students of other ethnicity (data in other years is suppressed due to small numbers).

23. Success – attainment: there are significant BAME attainment gaps in Y4 and Y5, with large attainment gaps present in almost every year for black and Asian students. Gaps for black and Asian students have widened from Y2 to Y5 (and exceed the sector gap for all ethnicity groups except those of other ethnicity). While still evident, gaps for students of mixed or other ethnicity are smaller in Y5.

24. Progression – the gap in progression rates between black and white students widened between Y4 and Y5 from -4% to 15% (there is a small population size, and the gap and year-on-year change are not statistically significant). However, for other ethnicity groups, and for black students in other years, gaps are either small, negative or suppressed due to low numbers of students.

Mature students

Measure		Sussex					Sector
		Year					Year
		1	2	3	4	5	5
Access proportion		10.9	10.9	9.5	9.1	8.3	27.8
Gap to young	Continuation	9	8	6	4	7	7.4
	Attainment	7	6	1	5	1	10.3
	Progression	-6	-5	2	-3	-12	-3.4

Table 3: performance across the student lifecycle for students over 21.

25. Access: the proportion of mature entrants has decreased year on year from Y2 to Y5, and remains well behind the proportion of mature students in the sector.

26. Success – continuation: there are gaps in continuation rates between young and mature students in every year, with little change over time.

27. Success – attainment: the mature-student attainment gaps in Y1 and Y2 have narrowed to leave a very small attainment gap in Y5 (1%).

28. Progression – except in Y3, mature students have negative gaps compared to young students, showing higher progression rates than young students, significantly so in Y5 at -12%.

Students with a disability

Disability	Measure		Sussex					Sector
			Year					Year
			1	2	3	4	5	5
All Disabilities	Access	Proportion	13.0	14.0	14.9	17.0	19.2	14.6
		Applications[9]	9.5	9.5	10.3	11.2	12.9	11.6
		Placed applicants[10]	9.8	9.3	10.2	12.4	13.7	11.4
	Gap to no known disability	Continuation	4	4	1	3	1	1.0
		Attainment	5	4	3	3	7	2.8
		Progression	2	5	2	0	0	1.8

[9] Source: Internal admissions data. Proportion of applications with a declared disability. Sector data source: UCAS End-of-cycle report, based on proportion of applicants

[10] Source: Internal admissions data. Proportion of all placed applicants with a declared disability. Sector data source: UCAS End-of-cycle data, for June deadline applicants

Mental health condition	Access proportion		2.4	3.4	4.2	4.9	6.9	3.5
	Gap to no known disability	Continuation	15	4	5	2	2	3.5
		Attainment	10	9	2	8	10	1.4
		Progression	15	6	10		3	4.1
Cognitive or learning difference	Access proportion		5.7	6.1	5.2	6.3	6.1	5.5
	Gap to no known disability	Continuation	0	2	-2	2	1	-1.1
		Attainment	1	0	3	5	1	3.4
		Progression	-5	10	2	1	2	0.0

Table 4: performance across the student lifecycle for students with a disability.

29. Access: in Y5, the proportion of entrants at Sussex with a self-declared disability is larger than that found within the sector as a whole**.** Application data show that the proportion of placed applicants with a disability is ahead of the proportion of applications in most years. The proportion of entrants with a mental health condition has risen to 6.9%, and is now the most common form of disability, ahead of those with a cognitive or learning difference.

30. Success – continuation: gaps in continuation rates are found for students with a disability. However, this has narrowed to 1% in Y5. A particularly large gap of 15% is found in Y1 for students with a mental health condition (a small population size, and is not statistically significant), however this gap has now narrowed to 2%.

31. Success – attainment: gaps in attainment are found for students with a disability, widening to a 7% gap in Y5. However, these gaps are not significant. The gaps are particularly wide for students with a mental health condition, at 10% in Y5. Both the gaps for students with all disabilities, and with a mental health condition are wider than that found within the sector.

32. Progression – there are no significant gaps for progression between students with a disability and no known disability.

Care leavers

Lifecycle stage	Number of entrants	Continuation gap	Attainment gap	Progression gap
Care leavers[11]	38	-4.7	10.6	12.0

Table 5: performance across student lifecycle for students who are care leavers, aggregated.

33. There have been 38 care-leaver entrants in the last three academic years. Aggregated over three years, success and progression analysis show care-leaver students are more likely to continue their studies than non-care-leaver students. However, attainment and progression gaps exist.

[11] Source: HESA Student return and DLHE data, with internal data on care leavers. Students who transfer are counted as a non-continuer. Data are aggregated over three years due to small numbers.

Intersections of disadvantage

Access proportion Year 5	Q1/2 Sussex (YOY change Y1 to Y5)		Q3/4/5 Sussex (YOY change Y1 to Y5)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
POLAR	8.4 (0.6)	10.6 (0.9)	36.0 (0.8)	45.0 (-2.4)
IMD	11.2 (-0.5)	13.3 (-0.9)	33.8 (1.3)	41.7 (0.0)

Table 6: access proportion by POLAR4 and IMD quintile and gender split.

Access proportion Year 5	Q1/2 Sussex (YOY change Y1 to Y5)		Q3/4/5 Sussex (YOY change Y1 to Y5)	
	BAME	White	BAME	White
POLAR	4.2 (0.9)	14.8 (0.6)	16.9 (-0.2)	64.1 (-1.3)
IMD	9.2 (-1.0)	15.2 (-0.3)	12.0 (2.0)	63.6 (-0.7)

Table 7: access proportion by POLAR4 and IMD quintile and ethnicity split

Intersection Year 5	Baseline group	Measure	Sussex (YOY change Y1 to Y5)			Sector (YOY change Y1 to Y5)		
			Female Q1/2	Male Q1/2	Male Q3/4/5	Female Q1/2	Male Q1/2	Male Q3/4/5
Gender / POLAR	Female POLAR4 Q3/4/5	Continuation	0 (1)	3 (-1)	1.4 (0)	2.7 (0.3)	5.2 (1.0)	2.2 (0.4)
		Attainment	4 (2)	6 (-5)	6 (-5)	5.5 (-0.2)	10.3 (0.3)	5.2 (-0.2)
		Progression	-4 (-2)	-7 (1)	0 (3)	3.2 (0.1)	1.6 (0.3)	-1.5 (1.9)
Gender / IMD	Female IMD Q3/4/5	Continuation	1 (2)	5 (2)	1.3 (1)	4.4 (0.8)	8.8 (2.3)	1.9 (0.4)
		Attainment	9 (7)	8 (-10)	6 (-3)	12.7 (-0.5)	16.2 (-0.2)	4.7 (-0.7)
		Progression	5 (8)	6 (3)	0 (5)	4.7 (-1.1)	4.7 (-1.2)	-0.4 (1.4)
			White Q1/2	BAME Q1/2	BAME Q3/4/5	White Q1/2	BAME Q1/2	BAME Q3/4/5
Ethnicity / POLAR	White POLAR4 Q3/4/5	Continuation	1 (0)		0 (1)	3.7 (0.7)	1.9 (0.7)	1.8 (0.6)
		Attainment	2 (1)	20 (15)	14 (4)	6.5 (0.1)	14.9 (-1.1)	12.3 (-1.1)
		Progression	-6 (-1)		1 (8)	4.0 (-1.1)	4.6 (-2.2)	3.8 (-3.3)
Ethnicity / IMD	White IMD Q3/4/5	Continuation	3 (2)	0 (1)	0 (1)	4.8 (0.4)	6.3 (2.0)	1.3 (0.3)
		Attainment	3 (1)	18 (2)	12 (5)	8.4 (0.3)	19.4 (-1.5)	9.4 (-1.7)
		Progression	4 (2)	8 (9)	-1 (5)	3.6 (-1.2)	7.2 (-3.6)	1.5 (-2.0)

Table 8: success and progression performance by POLAR4 and IMD quintile and gender and ethnicity split.

34. Access: data show a small increase over five years in the proportion of male POLAR4 Q1/2 entrants to 8.4% in Y5, compared to 10.6% female POLAR4 Q1/2 entrants in Y5. However, there has been a small fall in the proportion of both male and female students from IMD Q1/2. The proportion of BAME students from POLAR4 Q1/2 has increased over five years by 0.9% points, against a fall of 0.2% points for Q3/4/5 BAME students. The proportion of white entrants from POLAR4 Q1/2 has increased over five years, while the proportion of white entrants from POLAR4 Q3/4/5 has decreased. There has been a fall in IMD Q1/2 entrants for both BAME and white groups.

35. Success – continuation: there are no significant gaps in continuation rates for any intersection. However, the widest gaps are found for males from IMD Q1/2 and POLAR4 Q1/2, and white students from IMD Q1/2 compared to their baseline groups. The gaps for males from IMD Q1/2 and white students from IMD Q1/2 have widened over five years, but not significantly.

36. Success – attainment: there are attainment gaps between several intersections. For both POLAR and IMD, compared to white students from Q3/4/5, BAME students from both Q1/2 and Q3/4/5 have large attainment gaps (significantly so for BAME students from POLAR

Q3/4/5 and BAME students from IMD Q1/2). BAME students from both POLAR and IMD Q1/2 have noticeably wider attainment gaps than those from Q3/4/5. All of these gaps have widened over the five-year period.

37. Progression: there are no significant gaps in progression rates. While not significant, progression gaps for male and BAME students from IMD Q1/2 are wider than those for students from IMD Q3/4/5 compared to their baseline groups. Also, there are gaps for white and female students from IMD Q1/2 compared to their baseline groups.

Section three: strategic measures

38. Our overarching aim is to ensure equality of opportunity for under-represented groups at all stages of the student lifecycle. Our theory of change is underpinned by the NERUPI framework, which is embedded in our outputs across the lifecycle. This gives us a strong evidence base to support us in achieving our outcomes and aim.

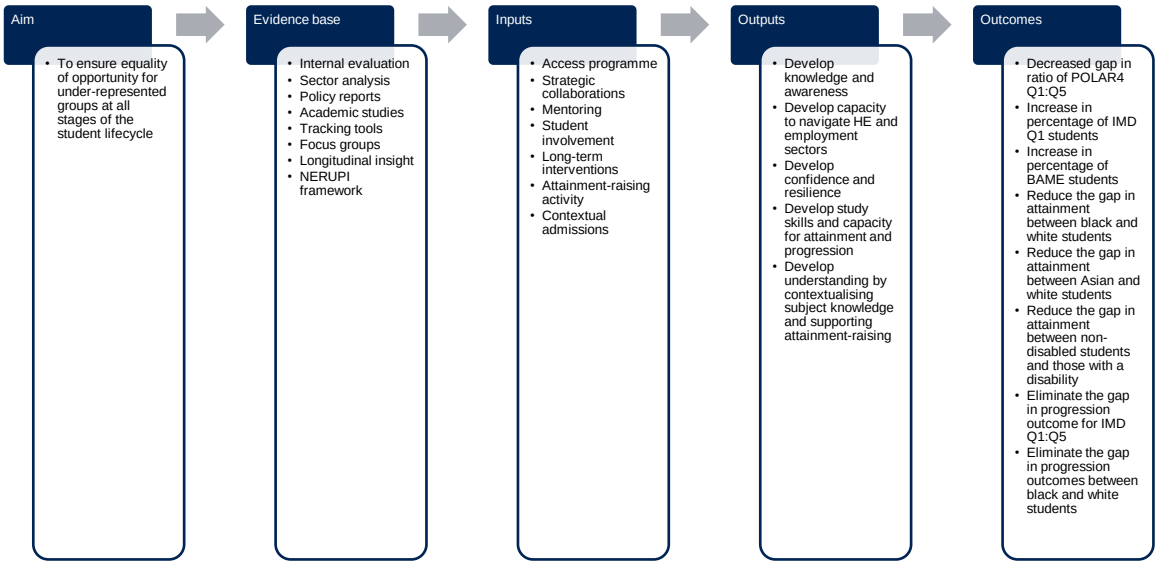


Figure 1: overarching theory of change to achieve fair access and participation aim.

39. For each stage of the lifecycle we have developed a theory of change, which demonstrates how we will ensure equality of opportunity. These are presented in Appendix 1.

Whole-provider strategic approach

40. In section one, we explained the alignment of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) with our Sussex 2025 and Learn to Transform Strategies. Another key strategy underpinning this APP is the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy – *Inclusive Sussex*. *Inclusive Sussex* sets out how achieving equality, diversity and inclusion is fundamental to the success of the University of Sussex. Through this Strategy, the University is aspiring not just to reduce inequalities in outcomes for individuals, but to use our expertise, commitment and courage to challenge the status quo. It sets out how we will take bold action to transform the campus into one that is experienced as inclusive by all our communities. This includes understanding and addressing power relations and the intersecting inequalities that many members of our community experience.

41. To deliver an inclusive Sussex we will:

- Reduce the gap in representation, experience, progression and reward between those with and without protected characteristics;
- Be a place that celebrates diversity and tolerance and fosters good relations in our own and the wider community;
- Embed an ethos of co-creation with students through employment opportunities that enable students to shape their experiences;
- Provide equal access to excellent learning, research and employment opportunities, regardless of physical or unseen disabilities;
- Become an organisation that is flexible by default to ensure we are inclusive in everything we do.

42. We are members of the following schemes in order to achieve external recognition of our work.

- Race Equality Charter
- Stonewall Champion
- Disability Confident
- Athena SWAN

Strategic measures

43. The University has identified high-level measures to enable the achievement of its targets. We have underpinned this by embedding our strategic values into the approach outlined in this section.

44. By taking a holistic, aspirational and inclusive approach throughout the entire student lifecycle, we will build on our current provision, shaping an offer that supports all students not only to negotiate but to co-create, design and deliver the student journey to, through and from higher education. This approach benefits from all of the intended and unintended outcomes from delivering 'with' as opposed to delivering 'to' students. See paragraph 82 for more details.

45. The NERUPI framework underpins our offer across the student lifecycle as a conceptual structure, as well as forming the basis of our evaluation.

46. For the duration of the Plan we are committed to spending 30% of our HFI on Access, Success, Progress and student financial support measures.

Social and academic capital

47. Evidence suggests that early years interventions[12] can have a positive impact on motivations to progress to higher education. While our own tracking data have yet to mature enough to draw conclusions, it appears from internal evaluations that behaviours and attitudes toward education generally, and higher education specifically, have shifted positively as a result of extended pre-16 work.[13] Additionally, we are conscious of the benefits of sustained interventions over time in making informed decisions about progressing to higher education.[14] We will, therefore, ensure we deliver a portfolio of engaging, age-appropriate and curriculum-focused activities for pupils in key stages 2, 3 and 4. We believe it is important to reach

[12] Education Endowment Foundation toolkit – early years interventions
[13] Internal source: 'Making choices evaluation'
[14] Office for Students (2018) 'National Collaborative Outreach Programme: the first year'

potential students in these age groups to increase their capacity for informed choice.

48. In order to meet our access targets we are proposing to introduce a holistic access programme to facilitate entrance to the University for students from these groups. A cross-university analysis of performance among competitor institutions shows an upward trend in enrolments of students from under-represented groups through access programmes.[15] This programme will develop social and academic capital ahead of applying to university. We have considered academic studies undertaken by other universities, including Kingston University,[16] when gauging the effectiveness of such a programme, and will use their findings to inform our programme's development.

49. Drawing from the co-creation ethos of our whole programme, the University ran the 'Access Your Future' project in partnership with the regional NCOP (SLNCOP). The project sought to understand barriers to higher education among students living in local Q1 areas through giving an authentic voice to our local communities and by placing the research in the hands of Year 12 students. The results so far have provided a solid foundation for our access programme, focusing on the honest challenges faced by students from under-represented groups. These results are complemented by a series of focus groups with current students from under-represented groups, who participated in outreach activities prior to entering higher education, in order to gain a deeper insight into what works.[17]

50. Understanding that real or perceived barriers can remain throughout the student journey, we want to empower students and develop the tools to dismantle these together through pre-emptive engagement programmes. To achieve our success objectives, we will use learning analytics to provide peer and coaching support to identified cohorts before additional barriers emerge. Our personal development offer will build students' confidence, providing the investigative, technical, navigational and recruitability skills at university and in the graduate job market that can support students in making informed choices. A tailored academic progression programme provides a more targeted approach to support the transition from level 4 to 5 for those at risk of repeating or withdrawing, together with financial health checks to scaffold the monetary transition from halls to private housing.

51. We will move toward looking at the curriculum through three key lenses, one of them being inclusivity. We will work with BAME and disabled students to co-create a revised curriculum. This will have a significant impact, as delivery will be more accessible and students will see themselves in their curriculum: a barrier that students report to be facing. By working with co-creators in specific cohorts we will gain further insight into the barriers that the target groups face. This will lead to peer created support to address these barriers in an inclusive and aspirational way.

52. A BAME attainment gap steering group comprising staff and students has now formed and created a toolkit for staff. Additionally data packs have been created for a pilot group of Schools which together with the toolkit provide a clear set of data indicating by subject areas where gaps exist. This has led to facilitated open meetings between staff and students to try and identify some of the causes of the gaps. We will be working in co-creation and particularly with students from BAME backgrounds using course and institution level data to explore and

[15] Internal source: 'compact programmes analysis'

[16] Butt, E & Woods, J (2018) 'The Kingston University compact scheme: from fair access to success' in *Concepts of Value & Worth: National Perspectives on Widening Access and Participation*, Forum for Access and Continuing Education

[17] Internal source: 'Compact focus groups transcription'

investigate gaps. We are seeking to make changes for a more inclusive learning and assessment experience and in parallel we will formulate the foundations of appropriate interventions ready for implementation in September 2020. We will therefore aim to have evidence of causes of the gaps highlighted within 6-12 months, along with initiatives designed to address these.

53. We are looking at ways of providing a streamlined experience for students leaving care. We have consistently sought to provide additional on course and enhanced support for these students over previous Plans and Access Agreements. Under our new Plan students will be able to access tailored coaching and progression support centred around building academic and study skills. Students leaving care will be prioritized for co-creation roles in order to build confidence and widen experiences and we will seek to include their voice and active participation in the development of our vision. Paragraph 62 shows that student ambassadors achieve better success and progression outcomes and we propose that participation in the co-creation roles will contribute to similar outcomes.

54. Working with alumni in the target groups who can mentor current students around employability and access to opportunities will directly impact IMD and BAME progression. We will grow access to entrepreneurship providing more opportunities that may have been deemed unreachable for students in these groups. Business advisor support coupled with a social entrepreneur in residence, who we hope to be an alumni in the target group, will bring exposure and present different pathways for students.

55. Research[18,19]suggests that targeted mentoring can benefit students from under-represented groups, and has a positive impact on progression. Peer and alumni mentoring are deeply embedded throughout the lifecycle of our offer, starting with mentoring opportunities for young people to support them in their decision-making process and in understanding the application process.

56. On-course academic mentoring will utilise our students' strengths and abilities to mentor their peers through particular areas of study that previous students have identified as challenging to navigate. The residence life programme sees peers creating and delivering a programme to enrich the student experience at 'home'. Recent graduates – particularly black and Asian as well as disabled alumni – will work to support final-year students in their exam preparation and applications to graduate roles. Networks will grow organically (as will social and academic capital), supporting the closure of the attainment gap for black and Asian students.

57. Early career Alumni mentoring will see new graduates supporting students with exam technique and graduate application forms, building social capital and their network, exposing them to an industry of their choice and guiding opening their access to opportunities. The introduction of shorter term and micro –placements rather than the commitment of a year-long placement will provide sound and manageable experiences whilst supporting the development of skills and preparedness for progression.

58. We will continue in our efforts to encourage applications from mature students, and provide outreach support for progression to higher education. We will seek to provide opportunities through the development of alternative provision such as online distance learning.

Habitus

[18] Storey, P (2005) 'Mentoring and Aimhigher: a literature review'
[19] Brightside Trust – theory of change

59. To support our access objectives a travelling team of staff and students and opportunities to access the Sussex campus via virtual reality will give prospective students the opportunity to see and sense what studying at the University and its surrounding community might be like. Simulating the environment for prospective applicants with the help of our current students is key as we expand our catchment areas and recruitment radius into areas of low participation.

60. The access programme will provide familiarity with the language and surroundings of higher education. These initiatives will contribute to an early sense of belonging, which will lead into supporting our success objectives. Concurrently, we will work with students to shape, create and deliver, making the programme more relevant, inclusive and responsive. An early sense of connection and belonging to a space, a community, a cohort or an environment is key to the foundations of confidence, self-belief, self-efficacy and the ability to flex with the changes they will experience in a set of new spaces.[20]

61. The Ambassador programme is a real 'connecting' factor. Our own evaluations suggest[21] that positive contact with an Ambassador from a similar background has a beneficial impact on the choices of prospective students, and is often cited in longitudinal studies as one of the most critical events in making the decision to go on to higher education. Building on this further, we propose that developing similar on-course roles will support our success and progression objectives. The offer will ensure that students co-create and deliver the new Welcome and Induction programmes. These programmes will place the personalised student journey at their heart, while scheduling key activities without clashes so that a student's time is not conflicted, thereby making priorities easier to spot, and successful navigation at this early stage more achievable.

62. Evaluation from our current programme illustrates the likelihood of better than average success and progression measures for students engaged with the University beyond their course.

Stage	Ambassadors	Whole institution
Continuation	97.7%	93.0%
Progression into next academic year of study	94.4%	91.4%
Good honours	96.7%	87.1%
Work or further study	97.6%	95.2%
Highly skilled work or further study	92.7%	83.1%

Table 9: performance across the student lifecycle for student ambassadors compared with the whole institution (aggregated over three years).

63. The planned launch of 'Connectors' to support activity provision will contribute to our attainment targets and yield success for students in these roles. We believe that as they will co-create and deliver the provision in partnership with us, the engagement levels in the programmes delivered will increase and, in turn, those that participate in an activity or a service will also have higher levels of attainment and progression. The Connectors will also create a sense of safety, belonging and connectedness, as well as leaving a legacy for the next Connectors to build upon.

64. Transitioning into a new environment can lead to emotion and behaviour change and – at particular periods during the journey – growing academic pressure, together with work and financial pressures, can create an environment that feels uninhabitable. We will develop a

[20] Hayton, A and Bengry-Howell (2016) 'Theory, evaluation and practice in widening participation: A framework approach to assessing impact' *London Review of Education* 14 (3) p44

[21] Internal source: 'extended projects longitudinal evaluation'

peer-led, well-being offer that is accessible, in recognition of the constraints of traditional workshop settings, which supports success. It will be complemented by a psycho-educational offer, resulting in life skills to manage behaviours that can affect wellness and success. These will be coupled with 'online chat' opportunities around managing relationships and peer-led empowerment workshops, supporting the emotional transition to university, and reintegration back 'home' during holiday periods.

65. The Students' Union launched 'Decolonise Sussex' in 2018/19, which has been led by students in partnership with staff. This was a pilot which we will now roll out to all schools in order to provide data to identify the nature of gaps across the whole institution. Students participating in this project will use focus groups and sounding boards to continue to review the curriculum by course, making recommendations for a more inclusive curriculum.

66. We have commissioned research from our School of Education and Social Work for 2019/20 to understand more about the challenges and barriers faced by mature students. This will feed into a revised institutional approach to contextualized admissions.

Educational and intellectual capital

67. Research shows that attainment-raising activity has a significant effect on the chances of entering higher education,[22] and enhances students' educational capital. Our own internal evaluation suggests[23] that participants in the Sussex Study Experience, our current vehicle for supporting attainment-raising in Year 12, has a beneficial effect on the conditions that help to raise attainment and subsequently support access to higher education. We will further develop programmes aimed at students in key stages 4 and 5 that contribute to raising attainment.

68. Embedding widening participation and student success across the institution through data-informed interventions and initiatives that benefit all students is central to our offer. Interventions will also be shaped by the imperative to reach those who fall into one or more of our milestone groups. We will launch a strategic strand of work that seeks to improve the success and progression of target groups through curriculum developments.

69. Through our work on the inclusive curriculum and other academic development initiatives, we will aim to support academics to further enhance their skills so they can confidently create an experience that benefits all students, which supports our success objectives. Our students will become 'Curriculum Change Agents', collaborating on creating a curriculum that is truly inclusive. The training of Curriculum Change Agents will focus on building confidence and robust relationships with academic staff, as well as on facilitating learning mechanisms to capture the student voice, such as through storytelling and sounding boards.

70. This approach will be bolstered by the reshaping of an academic skills offer that is clearly visible, accessible through a number of routes and focused on what students want and need most at different points in the lifecycle. Through co-delivery, students will feel more confident to access and return to the provision, as well as attend sessions that they otherwise may be fearful of or embarrassed that they need, such as academic writing and maths for non-maths-based courses and statistics for research purposes.

[22] EEF toolkit - multiple

[23] Internal source: 'Sussex Study Experience evaluation'

71. An emerging employability strategy builds on success to date and aligns with the 'Learn to Transform' element of our Sussex 2025 Strategic Framework, which states:

"Our students will be confident, knowledgeable and skilled, with clear career choices and real opportunities. They will be ready to be citizens of the world – connected, civically and politically engaged, entrepreneurial and creative."[24]

72. Central to this is ensuring that our programmes allow all students to have equal access and opportunities to develop 'world readiness' and 'recruitability', which will support our progression objectives and lead to positive graduate outcomes and prepare students for the five or six different careers they are likely to have in their lifetime.

73. In order to move away from 'self-selecting' activity toward maximum exposure for the development of skills and strengths, our approach will be centred around longer-term preparation and an emphasis on embedding reflection and skills development within the curriculum. Live Project and Service Learning briefs will be central to translating theory into practice, allowing students to work side by side with a range of large, medium and small employers both locally and nationally on the development of solutions to real problems. In the case of Service Learning, students will have the opportunity to deliver the solutions and monitor the social impact of this in a community. Visiting entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs from target groups will inspire and bring practical insight into the realities of creating companies for profit and social good.

74. Our progression objectives will be further supported by tailored career-management support, a personal development programme delivered in partnership with alumni from our target groups and ongoing support to apply for the range of paid opportunities that will be created on campus.

75. Evidence shows that students from low-participation neighbourhoods do not access work experience at graduate and professional level to the same degree as students from a more privileged background.[25] As such, we will take a lifecycle approach, customising our programme delivery dependent on the stage of the student. To support our progression objectives and encourage participation in our programmes by students from priority groups, we will use targeted communications created by students to encourage groups with little or no experience to apply for a range of different roles. Students will be able to access particular sessions within the personal development programme to support the role they secure.

76. At the same time, research shows that students who come from under-represented groups are more likely to have to take part-time work,[26] much of which doesn't develop the skills that will support students. This last point is then compounded by lack of relevant employability skills hindering chances of progressing to graduate level jobs.[27] Our progressive and nurturing programme, which sees students co-creating the experiences for themselves and their peers, will develop these skills, support students financially and provide a strong foundation from

[24] Sussex 2025 – Learn to Transform
[25] Greenbank P & Hepworth, S (2008) 'Working class students and the career decision making process: a qualitative study', HECSU
[26] Greenbank P & Hepworth, S (2008) 'Working class students and the career decision making process: a qualitative study', HECSU
[27] Social Mobility Commission (2017) 'Social mobility, the class pay gap and intergenerational worklessness: new insights from the labour force survey'

which to make career choices. This will clearly support our progression objectives.

77. These paid opportunities will be flexible, ranging from a short-term temporary position on campus to co-creation 'Connector' or 'Curriculum Change Agent' roles. These roles would be short and project based, or longer-term opportunities focused on creation and delivery. To capture full cycles of feedback, a number of 12- to 18-month graduate development roles will allow for continuity. The input of final-year student Curriculum Change Agents will also be critical when recruiting new students to the programme and inspiring other students to participate.

78. Research has shown that maximum impact can be achieved by developing an institutional commitment to employability and the development of supporting programmes that rely less on one-off, short-term approaches. [28]

79. An internship programme will offer a stepped approach to build confidence, resilience and aid transition into a variety of different spaces.

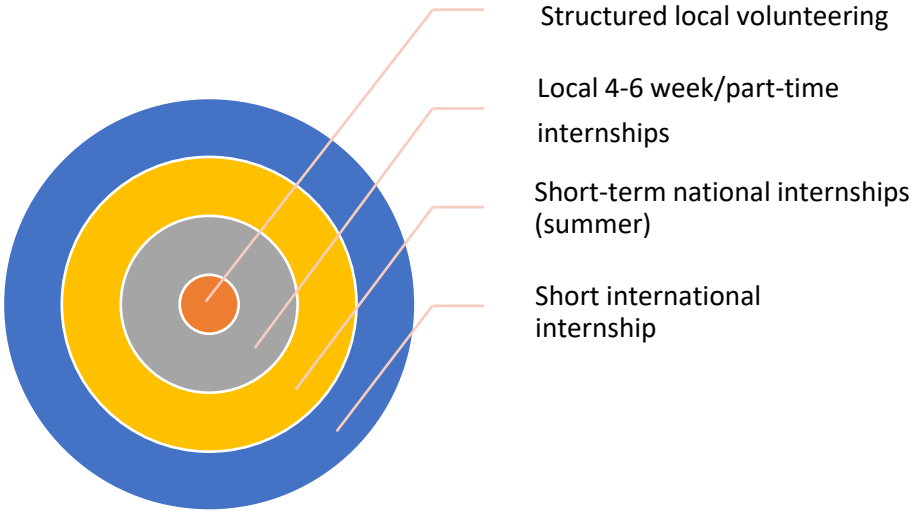


Figure 2: Engagement opportunities by intensity

80. Our co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes will complement our Sussex 2025 strategy by:

'providing the opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, experiences, behaviours, attributes and attitudes to enable graduates to make successful transitions and contributions; benefitting them, the economy and their communities'

81. In order to recognise the participation of our students in creating a legacy for their peers, enriching their experience and in demonstrating the values of the University, we are developing the Sussex Award. Students will be given the opportunity to collect points for activity they participate in, culminating in an award that can be highlighted on their CV, and form the base of an interview with an employer while enriching their experience at University. This will also act as an aid for self-reflection and support our success objectives.

[28] HE Academy (2015) Framework for embedding employability in higher education

‘Connectors’ and ‘Curriculum Change Agents’

82. Students from all of our target groups will be actively encouraged to apply for a paid position as a ‘Connector’ or ‘Curriculum Change Agent’ (who will focus on curriculum redesign). Assignments will vary in length and depth, allowing students of all confidence levels at whatever stage of their degree to actively work with us to design, create, shape or deliver an aspect of the student experience. As well as being integral to the role, meaningful co-creation will lead to increased success and progression for participants. In addition to this, continuous feedback, data and a diverse range of student voices will be heard throughout the year rather than just at particular touch points, or through structured surveys. Connectors and Curriculum Change Agents underpin and are the vehicle that will drive our provision.

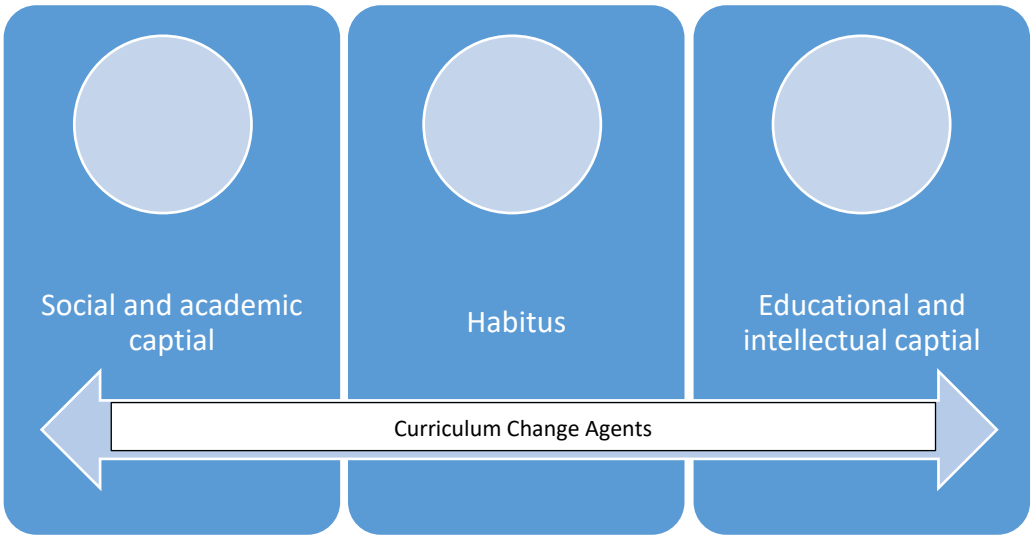


Figure 3: Change Agents across the NERUPI framework

Additional measures

Strategic collaborations

83. Within our overarching programme we propose to include a number of types of activity to best support access to the University of Sussex, as well as to institutions across the sector. We will seek strategic collaborations that support a greater reach – geographically and more deeply into local communities. Data suggest[29] our recruitment radius is concentrated in the South East. We will work closely with partners to connect with individuals, schools and communities across the country in areas of low participation.

84. Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS)
As highlighted in research by the Social Mobility Commission[30] (among others), there is a gap between aspiration and expectation among students from under-represented groups progressing to the professions. The University of Sussex has a longstanding collaborative programme with the University of Brighton through our shared medical school, BSMS, to address access to medicine. Work to improve access to BSMS has been recognised by the Medical Council, which awarded an additional 50 places for students from under-represented

[29] Internal source: ‘POLAR4, IMD access data’
[30] Social Mobility Commission (2017) ‘Social mobility, the class pay gap and intergenerational worklessness: new insights from the labour force survey’

groups. Given the impressive success rate of BSMS we will seek to use their evidence base in searching out other partners and collaborators to support our aims and objectives, who are best positioned to further our reach into areas of underrepresentation.

85. NCOP
Being an active partner in our local NCOP (SLNCOP), we have worked with the central team and various partners across the network to deliver innovative and impactful projects. We understand that collaborative working in a local area has a beneficial impact on participants, reduces cross-over between institutions and supports value for money.

86. Association of Life Long Learning
We will aspire to collaborate with colleagues through the Association of Life Long Learning (ALLL) network to seek to make the University flexible in recognising individual circumstances, supporting people from varied backgrounds to participate in higher education. ALLL will be a good partner as we embark on delivering our Employability strategy, which has a significant focus on 'world readiness'. This looks much more to equipping students with life-long skills that will support them in the 5-6 careers they will experience or create for themselves during their life time. We will look to the partnership to support the embedding of skills in the curriculum and how we weave this in more readily to our alumni community, supporting our success and progression objectives.

Contextual admissions

87. Once students apply to us, we will offer a transparent and contextual admissions experience. We know that a student's individual circumstances can make an enormous difference to their attainment and chances of applying. We will therefore endeavour to treat all applicants with respect and courtesy, and assess them as individuals, taking account of their personal circumstances in our decision-making process.

Financial support

88. The University has undertaken a review of financial support, using the three stages of the OfS toolkit. Considering the results of this process,[31] and the guiding principles of our access, success and progression work[32] we will reserve 25% of our total spend for financial support.

89. To support our success objectives we will continue to support students in the most need. Students whose family income is less than £25,000 and care leavers will all be eligible to receive our entry bursary. Estranged students and carers whose household income is greater than £25,000 may also be eligible to apply and will be assessed on a case by case basis. The entry bursary will usually provide £1,000 for each student's first year at University and £500 for each subsequent year as they progress through their studies.

90. Additionally, the University will increase our student hardship and retention fund. Eligible students who demonstrate financial need will be prioritised for additional hardship funding, reducing the risk of temporary/permanent withdrawal due to financial difficulties. These funds may also be used to provide support to students with disabilities and specific learning differences for support no longer available through the DSA and/or diagnostic assessment of specific learning differences.

[31] Internal source: 'OfS toolkit summary'
[32] University of Sussex, Access and Participation Plan 2019/20

91. In most cases, awards will be made directly to students. However, payments for diagnostic assessments and DSA–related expenditure may be paid directly to the provider.

92. In addition to the hardship fund we will offer a range of money advice and financial awareness opportunities, designed to support students to be financially literate.

Student Centre

93. In line with our commitment to enhance our student experience offer, the University is investing in a major new Student Centre, which will be a centre of excellence for student experience. Students have been engaged through the planning of this major new resource, including road shows, to ensure the student voice is integrated into each stage of the development.

Student consultation and co-creation

94. The student voice is of paramount importance to us, and we fully involve students in all aspects of our Access and Participation work. At a Governance level, representatives from the Students' Union and former participants in projects are members of the Access, Success and Progression (ASP) Group, the formal steering committee for our fair access and participation work. As part of the development of the Plan, key University staff met on a regular basis with officers of the Students' Union on both strategic and operational aspects of the Plan. The Plan was tabled at several key strategic meetings, including the Students Experience Committee and Senate providing directly elected student representatives, from across the University, to consider and provide input into this Plan.

95. During 2018/19 as part of the preparatory work for the APP, using the OfS toolkit, we directly engaged the Students' Union to seek insight into the impact of the financial support package available to students through focus groups and interviews. This has influenced our proposed ethos of co-creation and measures, such as Change Agent and Connector roles, outlined within this Plan. See paragraph 82 for more details of these roles.

96. Going forward, the voice, thoughts, ideas, experiences, stories and insight of our students will be woven into our work as we build the co-creation model from feedback and representation through to actively working with students on creating and shaping provision; delivering and then evaluating this with us in true partnership. This wholly integrated approach allows for a constant flow of feedback that enriches the more targeted workshop and focus group structure while providing an ongoing narrative.

Evaluation strategy

Strategic context

97. As noted previously, we are currently in the process of mapping the NERUPI framework to our programmes so that we can understand comparability of learning outcomes across our range of activities. Staff have been supported to attend training courses and workshops/conferences in evaluation practice.

98. We work hard to ensure there is a shared understanding of the value of our work, and we are committed to the importance of reviewing and assessing our programmes regularly. Given the value we place on evaluation, practitioners are expected to build programmes around aims and measurable objectives. Staff are given time to analyse and interpret findings, and there

are regular fora for sharing and dissemination. We have an established Evaluation and Data Working Group that meets to consider issues and develop best practice.

99. We are active members of the HEAT Research Group and the NERUPI network, and are key contributors to national discussions on improving evaluation across the sector. The majority of our projects are evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative survey data and our analyses use simple descriptive statistics and graphs. Over the past five years we have periodically commissioned academic research on our intensive WP programmes, using the findings to develop our work.

Designing programmes

100. Our current programme design has been based upon existing evidence of what works. Our lifecycle programme was based upon Aim Higher models of practice and was further developed through learning and sharing best-practice models.

101. We measure outcomes in terms of attitudinal change, knowledge and skills development both pre and post activities. We utilise surveys that capture self-reported evidence from participants and surveys from both teachers and parents. Our questions map to the NERUPI framework and are direct measures of our objectives. We also measure impact by tracking students' progression through HEAT and UCAS information. Evaluation is built in to project proposals, and data collection is planned, so that timings and method are agreed before delivery. The 'Curriculum Change Agents' will enable programmes to be reviewed every term and informed regularly by the student voice.

Evaluation design

102. Narrative evaluation: we review programmes on an annual basis to see where programmes can be improved. We have, on joining the NERUPI network, mapped activities to the framework and identified gaps in some intensive programmes. These have been addressed this year and we are awaiting evaluation of additional modules. Over the last 18 months we have started to provide links between programmes for the purpose of evaluating across the Access lifecycle. Through the new proposed provision, our 'Curriculum Change Agents' (as described in paragraph 82) will be able to build the narratives of our students through regular storytelling and representation. This powerful form of evaluation will inform the programme shape and design year on year and illustrate real progress and areas for development.

103. Empirical research: we use empirical evaluation methods for some of our more intensive projects. We have commissioned a report to analyse the differences between participants on our extended programmes against students of similar profiling provided by UCAS Strobe. However, as these were quantitative data only, we are aware that this needs more qualitative work for a fuller understanding.

104. Establishing causality: we have limited use of evaluation that establishes causality. We have commissioned research to explore psychological barriers for First- Generation participants of an intensive outreach project compared with the experiences of POLAR3 Q5 students, not participating on a programme, in a quasi-experimental design using statistical significance testing. The survey data were run over several years and we are awaiting an analysis by our School of Psychology.

Implementing the Evaluation

105. Evaluation is an expectation for all projects. We have a systematic and considered approach to data collection, ensuring that we have decided on the contents of surveys, the mechanism, the timings of surveys and adequate permissions and GDPR considerations are in place prior to delivery. Participants are encouraged to query any questions that they are confused by at the point of data collection. We constantly revise questions for clarity. We currently use HEAT to track participants on our programmes.

Learning from Evaluation

106. Evaluation reports are produced after delivery of all programmes to assess effectiveness of the programme, and recommendations are made for improvements to processes or content. Programme development is agreed between project teams and managers. Evaluation findings have been included in monitoring returns, department- and University-wide reports and in feedback to schools and colleges. Academics involved in delivery of our programmes also receive mini reports on targeting data, effectiveness of the programme and achievement of learning outcomes. This encourages continuous improvement of all activity.

107. We are active participants in ongoing developments within the NERUPI network. We are providing training for all staff to enhance their evaluative skills and embed the concepts into the development of activity. We envisage a continuous evaluative loop through our co-creation programme, which will enable student voice to actively shape the progression of the programme. This will necessarily evolve over time, as new students arrive with new ideas and concerns, shaping the programme to the needs and requirements of each cohort of students.

Evaluating financial support

108. As noted in paragraph 88 we have used the OfS toolkit methodology to understand the effectiveness of our financial support package. As a result, we have changed our award as detailed in paragraph 89.

109. Statistical analysis showed that no significant differences in continuation or good honours achievement based on bursary receipt are found. However, it is noted that this lack of significance could be attributable to one of two possible explanations: either that the bursary is effective in eliminating any expected gap in continuation or good honours rates, or there was no gap to eliminate.

110. A survey of over 1,000 students shows that 30.4% of respondents were aware that they were entitled to the First-Generation Scholars bursary, and the amount of the bursary, before commencing their studies. Students also reported they perceive the bursary has a positive impact on their academic, social and personal outcomes, and on their wellbeing. Students in receipt of the larger foundation and year 1 bursary were less likely to undertake paid work than students in receipt of the smaller award.

111. Interviews with 20 students showed that most interviewees were unaware of their eligibility prior to starting at the University, and very few cited financial support as the reason for choosing Sussex, being more likely to have made their decision based on visiting the campus. However, most stated that the bursary alleviated stress and promoted wellbeing, particularly in relation to mitigating the need for part-time work alongside studies.

112. The evaluation process allowed us to review the way we financially support students from underrepresented groups. We know from our extensive survey response that there has been low awareness of financial support before arrival at the University, but wellbeing has been enhanced. Considering these results, we propose to continue to further target financial support at those students in the most need, to promote wellbeing and security. As stated in paragraph 62, we know from further internal analysis that students who have participated in our Ambassador programme achieve better results in both success and progression measures, so our financial awards will exist alongside a wide range of employment opportunities for students from under-represented groups, as outlined in paragraph 82, which will support success and progression outcomes for these students.

113. The relatively low level of awareness of the bursary indicates that financial support was not particularly effective in helping us to meet our access target. Alongside our desire to re-balance spend across Access, Success and Progression, we took the decision to reduce bursary funding and increase funding to support students on course.

114. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of models of financial support, using a combination of OfS toolkit stages at appropriate points in the student lifecycle. Specifically, this will involve an annual statistical analysis of performance, alongside qualitative surveys and interviews to assess the experience of recipients.

Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

115. Fair access and participation are institutional priorities and staff and students across the University community are involved in its governance, design and delivery. To underline the importance of this work, our University Council has devised a target of positioning the University as first in its comparator group for the percentage of POLAR4 Q1 students enrolling by 2025/26. Council approve our APP, and receive monitoring reports on progress. The APP is also scrutinised by the Student Experience Committee, University Executive Group and University Senate. We provide topic briefings to Council on fair access and participation issues, and our Access and Participation Plan.

116. The principal vehicle for developing, producing and monitoring the Access and Participation Plan is the Access, Success and Progress (ASP) Group, whose membership includes representatives from the Students' Union, as well as students who have previously participated in fair access and participation programmes. Additionally, we have undertaken a number of focus groups to better understand the experiences of students who have been through various strategic measures. This allows us a longitudinal insight to help guide our programme development.

117. Overseen by the PVC for education and students, the ASP Group will meet termly to monitor progress toward the objectives and aims of this APP. Updates from the Group will be received for scrutiny by the University Executive Group (UEG). Action will be directed by the Group should progress not be deemed sufficient enough. If progress is found to be flat-lining or worsening, our proposed measures will be refined or substituted for replacement, evidence based activities, in dialogue with OfS. A new structure within the Student Experience Division will provide the apparatus to respond to challenges which inhibit progress by adapting and refreshing activity, advised by co-creators. The University is ultimately answerable to Council for the success of its targets. Any changes will be presented to the Student Experience Committee (Council level Committee chaired by an independent member of Council), with material changes requiring governing body level approval reviewed by this Committee and

recommended to Council for approval where necessary.

118. Our developmental strategic measures are embedded in our *Learn to Transform* strategy and have time bound objectives which structurally support the ambitions in our APP (appendix ii). A framework of our strategic measures will be ready in order for us to begin implementation by August 2020, and we will achieve our commitments by July 2025.

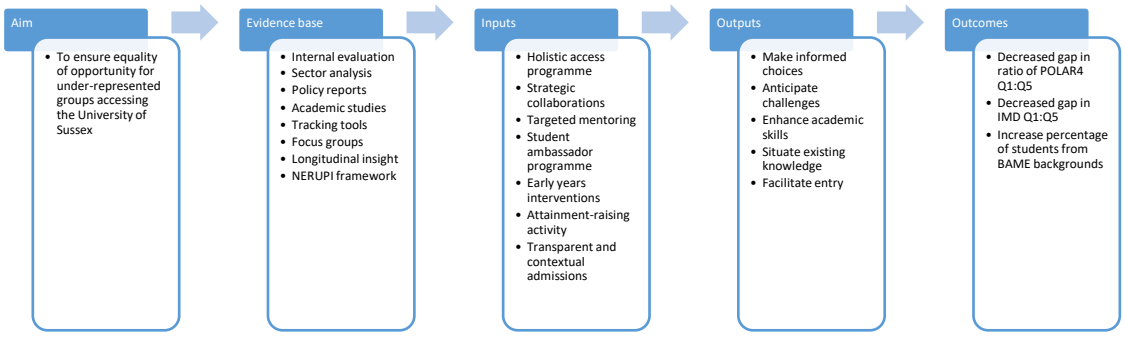
Section four: provision of information to students

119. We will provide prospective students with clear, accessible and timely information relating to our fees and support schemes, including the cost of tuition. This information will be communicated through:

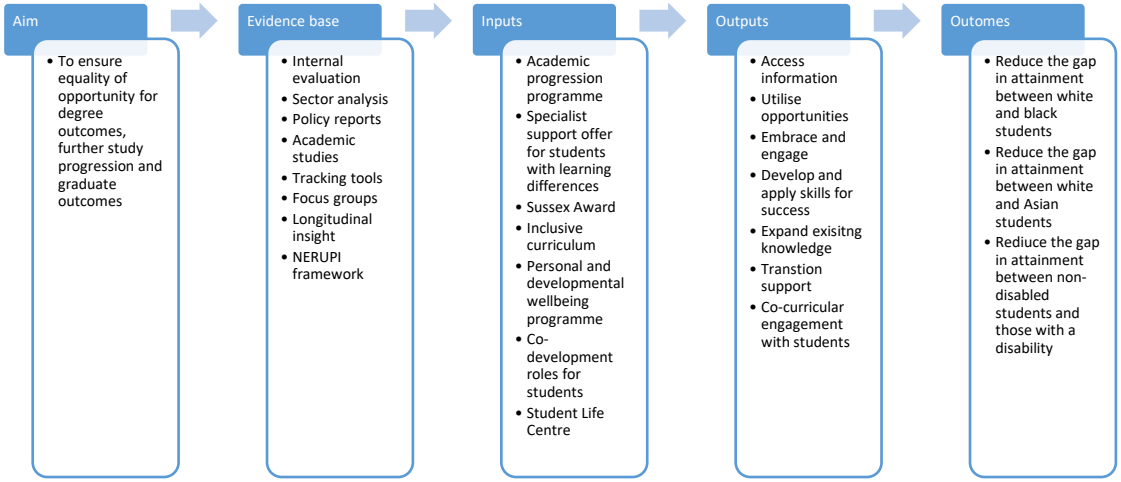
- Website and web-prospectus
- Direct communications with both current applicants, entrants and enquirers
- Information available at our Open Days
- A schedule of age-appropriate communications
- An access programme passport, which records every activity undertaken
- Wall planners for schools and other partners
- Up-to-date version of this and future Access and Participation Plans on our website.

Appendix 1: theories of change across the lifecycle

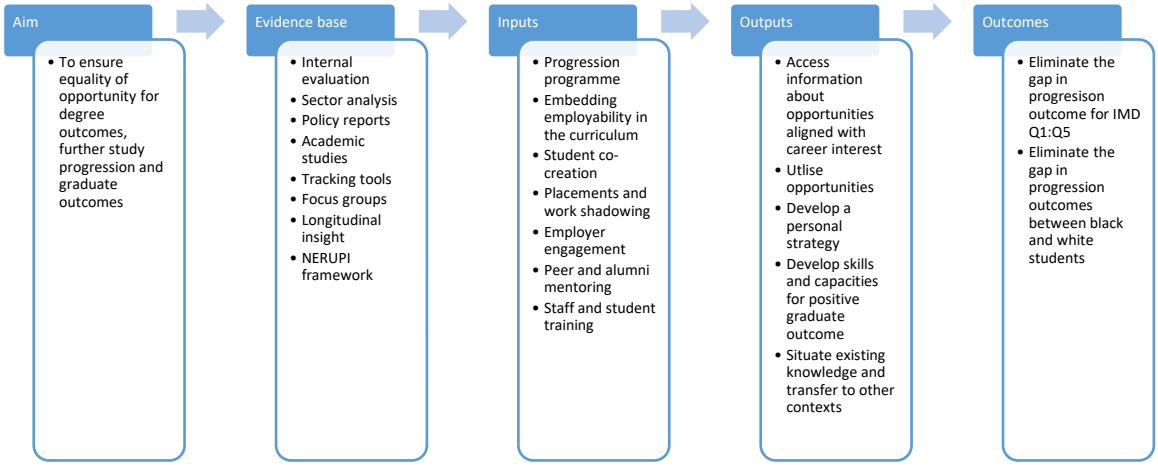
Access



Success



Progression



Appendix 2: strategic measures in development

The following key milestones from our *Learn to Transform* strategy will support our developing measures in this APP

We will deliver our aims by:		
AIM 1: Be collaborative: by engaging our students as co-creators in their learning experience, and by demanding the highest standards from staff and students, we will deliver an exceptional and personalized educational environment		
Key actions to be taken to deliver Aim 1	**By whom?**	**By when?**
Establish a Student Experience Sub-Committee of Council for oversight of student engagement.	Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Students)	October 2018 -ongoing
Create a student engagement, employability and enhancement programme of activity to provide opportunities to specific student cohorts.	Director for the Student Experience	September 2020
AIM 2: Be inclusive: by dismantling barriers, creating opportunities, adding value and delivering fair outcomes, we will ensure that every student is able to achieve their personal ambition and reach their full potential		
Key actions to be taken to deliver Aim 2	**By whom?**	**By when?**
Identify gaps in BME Student Attainment, the causes of gaps; and develop strategies to improve outcomes and evaluate/monitor the impact.	Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Students); Director for the Student Experience	June 2021
Engage with students and employers (where appropriate to advise on design, content, delivery, and assessment of modules/programmes of study, in order to ensure currency of education provision.	Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Students); Director for the Student Experience	January 2019 - ongoing

University of Sussex 2020/21-2024/25
Access and Participation Plan Proposed Variations
July 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 In reviewing our current Access and Participation Plan (APP), we have taken into account the advice of the OfS to ensure that activity happening relating to the new priorities is included, even where it is not referenced in the existing 2020/25 APP. As requested in the OfS guidance, our variations, set out below, incorporate our further intentions in regard to each of the OfS priorities.

1.2 In addition to the variations set out below, it is our intention to use revised terminology, replacing the terminology 'attainment gap' with the phrase 'awarding gap.' This change follows sector-wide good practice and will be a change we retain in the submission of our new APP to be submitted in 2023 for consideration by the OfS.

2. Variations

2.1 The variations we would like to make are set out below:

Page 2: Appendix 1 - Variation to **University of Sussex 2020/25** APP in Relation to Access Objectives
Page 4: Appendix 2 - Variation to APP in Relation to Success and Progress Objectives
Page 6: Appendix 3 - Priority D, Commitment to Degree Apprenticeships
Page 7: Appendix 4 – APP Variation: Research and Evaluation

Appendix 1 - Variation to University of Sussex 2020/25 APP in Relation to Access Objectives

OfS Priority B: Develop, enhance and expand partnerships with schools and other local and national organisations, to help raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England.

Additional information to section 47 of current University of Sussex 2020/25 APP:
The University has longstanding partnerships with over 70 schools and colleges located in both Sussex and South London, where we offer a comprehensive programme of outreach, information and guidance and some specific attainment -raising activities. Recent reporting of HEAT data indicates some attainment improvement at key stage 4 for disadvantaged students that participate in intensive outreach programmes, such as summer schools.

We intend to further analyse the intermediate outcomes of all our pre-16 activity to ensure that we find further ways of supporting both the social and academic capabilities of the disadvantaged learners we work with. We also intend to review sector programmes and evaluation that demonstrates what works in terms of outreach and non-direct attainment-raising interventions, e.g. developing self-efficacy and a sense of belonging. These reviews will lead to revised or new programme design for new APP activity delivery starting in 2024.

Additional information to section 67 of current APP:
We are currently piloting attainment-raising support in four Sussex schools for years 10 and 11 as a direct response to addressing post-COVID-19 catch up. Outside of the work of our Widening Participation Access team, the University has academic staff members who have developed programmes for our regional schools that support attainment. The following are programmes that indicate some promising impact:

- Sussex Writes is a project run from our English Department, supporting secondary schools with creative writing. English undergraduate students work in targeted schools to support teachers with developing creative writing lessons and helping students who are struggling to achieve their grades. Early reporting has shown that students' confidence is improving, and their writing skills are developing with this extra support. It is our intention in 2022-23 to evaluate this programme in more depth to capture which elements of support are demonstrating the most benefits to the young learners.
- Our Psychology Department has research interests in the psychological barriers to learning that are experienced by low socioeconomic groups and students from minority ethnic groups. This has led to studies exploring the impact of value affirmations in reducing the gap in academic performance between students who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) and their more advantaged peers.
- Our Music Department has been supporting local schools to develop confidence and skill in the composition of music, and is developing resource packs and digital tools for use within the classroom.

Our ambition is to find further ways that our academic community and our professional staff base can support school management, enrich the school curriculum, support attainment, and research ways to develop education practice.

Additional information for section 83 of current APP:
We value our partnerships with third-sector organisations, as they are very important to support our widening participation practice.

- We have worked with the Brilliant Club for 10 years and were one of the first university partners to implement the Scholars Programme.
- We run a successful National Saturday Club for widening participation students from the local region, supporting young people's skills, confidence, and awareness of Higher Education.
- We have a partnership with First Star UK, providing support for care-experienced young learners, and host the summer residential programme.

We intend to review and further develop third sector partnerships where we see that best practice and collaborative working have the greatest benefits for the learners we support.

Additional information for section 85 of current APP:
We continue to work with our local Uni Connect and are now in the process of identifying where we can collectively support the activities across our region. The University of Sussex, Uni Connect, the University of Brighton and the University of Chichester are strategically mapping our outreach provision and are seeking the views of our regional schools to identify ways that we can support schools further in raising attainment. This will be the focus of our scoping work for this priority in 2022-23.

Appendix 2 - Variation to APP in Relation to Success and Progress Objectives

To ensure we continue to develop and grow the projects and programmes outlined in our current APP, we will continue to track success outcomes for students participating on all projects and interventions using more robust engagement tracking methods. This, together with the TASO methodology, will further help us to understand the impacts of our projects across the whole student body and how our work is contributing to cultural and systemic change at the University. This development will be relevant to all current APP targets. Specific variations are articulated below.

Additional information for section 50 of current APP:
We will expand our tailored academic progression programme to include supporting students' transition from level 5 to 6 in response to the continued impact of COVID-19 on student experiences.

Additional information for section 52 of current APP:
We will expand our co-creation work with BAME students to explore and investigate gaps to include all students from underrepresented groups. This is in response to the continued impact of COVID-19 on students' experiences, which has meant that further evidence of the causes of gaps needs to be investigated. To do this, we will use engagement data to target communications more effectively to students, ensuring that those students who would benefit the most from an intervention are prioritised. We will continue to work with Student Connectors to ensure our communications are relevant and engaging to underrepresented groups.

Additional information for section 54 of current APP:
We have consolidated access to entrepreneurship into a substantial annual Sussex Entrepreneurship Programme. This now incorporates the business adviser and Entrepreneur-in-Residence support referenced, but is much expanded to include other support, such as an eight-week annual training programme for student entrepreneurs, growth grants, funding competition and accelerator. Representation of target groups is threaded throughout (e.g. mentoring and inspirational speakers), and we have engagement targets across the programme for these groups.

Additional information for section 64 of current APP:
Our work to develop a peer-led, wellbeing offer will be bolstered by the development of our summer school offer, working in partnership with the Widening Participation Access team, to ensure that all students receive the support they require as they transition from school/college to HE, bearing in mind the impact of COVID-19 on lost learning. The summer schools will have a particular focus on providing tailored support for the most underrepresented learners, ensuring that students have access to bespoke information and support to enable them to make the best start possible.

Additional information for section 75 of current APP:
Post pandemic, students have understandably had their minds elsewhere and the resulting challenge of engaging students – particularly those from target groups – in planning for their future career has been well documented across the sector. At Sussex, this challenge has driven us to experiment with new communication approaches to ensure we meet engagement targets. 'Student-controlled' events have proven a solution. While funded by the University, these events are otherwise entirely controlled by students, who pick the venue, topic and content. Generally, these are community-building, social events – popular as students re-find their feet after the pandemic. The approach has been particularly effective for target groups, and is a variation in practice that we will continue going forward.

Additional information for section 76 of current APP:
Coherent messaging and access at Sussex is key and, with this in mind, we have brought together a number of our employability programmes (e.g. alumni mentoring, internships) under a new umbrella, called 'Career Lab'. Career Lab is a menu of c.15 activities, stepped by year group. All activities are co-designed with Connectors to build student skills, confidence and job-market connections. Target groups have priority access to Career Lab.

Additional information for section 82 of current APP:
Students from all of our target groups will be actively encouraged to apply for a paid position as a 'Connector' or 'Curriculum Change Agent' (who will focus on curriculum redesign). To strengthen this approach, we will

instigate, using the co-creation model, a student-voice platform to allow us to obtain a constant flow of student feedback and stories, thereby allowing us to see areas of future projects and work that can be led by students with staff facilitation and support.

Appendix 3 - Priority D, Commitment to Degree Apprenticeships

We have been successful in our bid to establish an Institute of Technology (IoT), as part of a consortium that will create a new facility for higher-level technical training, providing industry-standard 'Learning Factories' with equipment and resources for use by learners across the Coast to Capital LEP region (West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Surrey). The IoT will create a dynamic and demand-led new partnership, offering vocationally led Degree Apprenticeships in Engineering. The recent successful IoT bid has provided us with the opportunity to further explore Apprenticeships in other subject areas at the University.

Appendix 4 - APP Variation: Research and Evaluation

We have employed a Research and Evaluation Manager to further embed evaluation into the lifecycle of projects across our access, success and progress programmes. We will continue to utilise sector-leading standards from NERUPI and TASO to inform our evaluation practice. We will build on our use of mixed methods and will explore national data capabilities and quasi-experimental designs to measure causality and further develop an evidence base for impact. We plan to share our findings with sector colleagues to help contribute to the national knowledge base. We will develop our existing networks and build new partnerships to explore independent evaluations with other institutions to continue to raise standards and establish common language and measures for what works.

Office for Students

Access and participation plan
Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: University of Sussex

Provider UKPRN: 10007806

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
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	*	*

Office for Students

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Sussex

Provider UKPRN: 10007806

Investment summary

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

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

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£1,597,167.00	£1,881,821.50	£2,052,686.38	£2,063,249.16	£2,061,792.00
Access (pre-16)	£400,000.00	£400,000.00	£400,000.00	£400,000.00	£400,000.00
Access (post-16)	£1,097,167.00	£1,381,821.50	£1,552,686.38	£1,563,249.16	£1,561,792.00
Access (adults and the community)	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£4,610,100.00	£3,479,300.00	£2,779,000.00	£2,750,999.00	£2,749,056.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£319,433.00	£376,364.00	£410,537.00	£412,650.00	£412,358.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£36,662,560.00	£36,688,620.00	£36,632,485.00	£36,679,985.00	£36,654,080.00
Access investment	4.4%	5.1%	5.6%	5.6%	5.6%
Financial support	12.6%	9.5%	7.6%	7.5%	7.5%
Research and evaluation	0.9%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%
Total investment (as %HFI)	17.8%	15.6%	14.3%	14.3%	14.2%

Office for Students

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Sussex

Provider UKPRN: 10007806

Targets

Table 2a - Access

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones					Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
								2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
To reduce the gap in participation in HE for students from underrepresented groups	PTA_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Ratio in entry rates for POLAR4 quintile 5: quintile 1 students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	5.7	4.9	4.5	4.1	3.5	3	
To increase participation in HE for students from underrepresented groups	PTA_2	Socio-economic	Increase percentage of entrants from IMD Q1 areas	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	8.8	11	13	16	19	21	We propose to increase percentage (rather than reduce ratio against Q5) recognising this is an ambitious deliverable, and we would seek to balance this increase against a decrease in the upper quintiles of IMD.
To increase participation in HE for students from underrepresented groups	PTA_3	Ethnicity	Reduce the access ratio in BAME to white students from 3.7 to 2.2 by 2024/25, aligning us with a sector average of BAME percentage intake	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	3.7	3.3	3	2.7	2.4	2.2	
	PTA_4												
	PTA_5												
	PTA_6												
	PTA_7												
	PTA_8												

Table 2b - Success

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones					Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
								2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
To reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_1	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between white and Asian students.	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	21	18.9	17.1	12.1	7.1	2.1	
To reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_2	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between white and black students.	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	25	22.9	20.9	15.6	10.3	5	
To reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS_3	Disabled	Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between students with a disability and those without.	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	7	5	4	2	1	0	
	PTS_4												
	PTS_5												
	PTS_6												
	PTS_7												
	PTS_8												

Table 2c - Progression

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones					Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
								2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
To reduce the gap in progression outcomes for students from underrepresented groups	PTP_1	Socio-economic	Reduce the gap in progression outcome for students from IMD Q1 areas	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	16	13	9	6	3	0	
To reduce the gap in progression outcomes for students from underrepresented groups	PTP_2	Ethnicity	Reduce the gap in progression outcome for black students	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	15	12	10	7	4	0	
	PTP_3												
	PTP_4												
	PTP_5												
	PTP_6												
	PTP_7												
	PTP_8												