

Birkbeck, University of London 2019-20

access and participation plan

1. Assessment of current performance

Access

Birkbeck is proud to be a university that opens its doors to people who may otherwise not be able to study. We have maintained our commitment to enabling access for underrepresented students during a time where our student demographics have changed considerably. We remain an evening university, predominantly delivering our teaching between 6-9pm and we retain our historic mission to educate working Londoners.

Our student body has a high proportion of part-time and mature students. Many of our students have non-traditional qualifications, and high proportions of students have low income, are BAME, and have a disability. The vast majority of students live and work in London. 94% of our part-time students and 66% of full-time students are over 21. We provide an opportunity for students who wish to combine evening university teaching with daytime work, and therefore offer opportunities for students who otherwise would not be able to study.

In recent years higher tuition fees, the absence of maintenance loans, and debt aversion have resulted in lower recruitment onto our part-time programmes. We are hopeful that the introduction of maintenance loans in 2018/19 for part-time students may encourage more students to apply for part-time options.

Despite the challenges faced by the part-time sector, our outcomes regarding access continue to be strong and demonstrate an institution-wide commitment to working with non-traditional students. We plan to continue with our current approach on access.

Low income households:

We believe that providing part-time and flexible education can facilitate social and economic mobility and we are pleased that we attract a significant proportion of students from low income backgrounds.

Proportion of students eligible for Birkbeck financial support ¹	
Part-time (household income of below £40,000)	64%
Full-time (household income of below £25,000)	39%

Students with non-traditional qualifications:

We actively encourage students with non-traditional qualifications to study at Birkbeck. Our outreach work, alongside the various entry routes to degree study, support students without traditional entry qualifications to study successfully at Birkbeck. As a part-time institution, 25% of part-time entrants at Birkbeck had either level 2 (equivalent to GCSE), or lower entry qualifications in 2016/17. 83% of full-time entrants have low tariff or non-tariffable qualifications (source: Birkbeck TEF2 metrics). That a high proportion of students

¹ Source: applications for Birkbeck financial support (the Birkbeck bursary), 2017/18

do not have a level 3 qualification is a strong demonstration of our commitment to widening participation and to facilitating social mobility.

Disability

We have a higher proportion of students eligible for DSA than our HESA benchmark. We have the same proportion of full-time and part-time students eligible for DSA, and a slightly higher proportion of full-time students than part-time who declare a disability to us. The proportion of students eligible for DSA dropped this year from 7.4% in 2015/16.

Proportion of disabled students, 2016/17	Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)	Declared disability to Birkbeck
Part-time	6.8%	16%
Full-time	6.8%	18%

Ethnicity

The proportion of BAME students at Birkbeck is comparatively high at 46% of all undergraduate students. The proportion on full-time programmes is higher still, at 56%.

Our widening access provision predominantly targets students on low income rather than focusing on ethnicity but as our work is exclusively in London our approach means that we work with high numbers of students from BAME groups. The proportion of Black students at Birkbeck is 8% higher than the percentage that live in London, whereas Asian students and White students are proportionally underrepresented.

Ethnicity	Birkbeck	London ²	Difference
Asian	12%	19%	-6%
Black	21%	13%	8%
Other (including mixed)	13%	8%	4%
White	54%	60%	-6%

Our overall assessment of our access experience is that we make a valuable contribution to national access priorities by supporting underrepresented students into education, including mature students, those from lower income, all ethnicities, and with non-traditional qualifications.

Care leavers

We received 41 applications through UCAS from care leavers, of which 33 (or 80%) received an offer, compared to a 76% offer rate for all UCAS applicants. Of the 33 care leavers who received an offer, 27 students successfully enrolled. It is likely that the figures understate the real number of care leavers at Birkbeck as we do not capture the data on care leavers for our part-time students, and as most of our UCAS students are mature students they may not identify as care leavers.

² Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales: 2011, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11>

Student Success

While our success in access to university is strong, our retention rates have been lower than we would have liked. We acknowledge that retention is currently a challenge, and we are determined to make improvements. The latest data offer reassurance that we are moving in the right direction.

In 2016, we undertook research to examine the impact of student demographics on student retention, in order to determine particular characteristics that may predict the likelihood to withdraw. The statistical analyses we conducted indicated that demographic factors are only weakly associated with retention.

The research has been useful in showing that tackling withdrawal would benefit all student groups rather than any one particular demographic group. We outline in later sections how we propose to improve retention. The research is an example of the data-led approach that we are taking in addressing our work.

The College has recently conducted a comprehensive Student Experience Review, and an implementation group is currently planning action against the recommendations, many of which will have the goal of supporting and improving retention rates. The initiatives will lead to significant changes to College practice which should have long-term impact on retention. We will be developing greater support for technology-enhanced learning to provide a scaffold for our classroom-based teaching and investigating ways in which we can use learner analytics to support attendance and retention.

Mature and part-time students:

Our part-time students are nearly all mature with a high proportion over 30 years old. The non-continuation rates are significantly better than our benchmark for part-time, mature students. The HESA data for 2017/18 show significant improvements on last year.

Part-time students no longer in Higher Education two years following year of entry (as reported in HESA Table T3e, 2014/15 entrants)		
	Birkbeck	Benchmark
2012/13	31.1%	40.8%
2013/14	34.0%	38.5%
2014/15	24.6%	37.4%

We are consistently above our benchmark for part-time mature student continuation. We saw an exceptional improvement for 2014/15 entrants that is unlikely to be sustained; we will however aim to keep part-time non-continuation below 30%, and to consolidate the improvements we have seen.

Full-time students:

Full-time non-continuation rate has improved this year, from 18.5% to 16.1% (HESA Table T3a). While we have missed our target, the target was set when we had a very small full-time population and trends had not yet settled, and we wish to revisit our target in future years in order to provide a challenging but realistic goal. Our ambition is to improve full-time retention rates to our benchmark initially and then to be better than benchmark.

88% of our students are over 21 years of age and many of our full-time students face similar issues as our part-time students such as combining study with work and caring responsibilities. We are determined to lead improvements and the Student Experience Review’s recommendations aim to improve retention rates in future years.

Low income households

The TEF (TEF3) statistics show that the retention rate for students in the lower IMD deciles is at our benchmark. Further, our internal research found that receipt of the bursary, which is exclusively available to students with low income, showed no correlation with withdrawal rates (see Section 2). We therefore believe that low income is not the primarily determinant for withdrawal at Birkbeck.

Non-traditional entry qualifications:

Large proportions of Birkbeck’s students come from non-traditional backgrounds and without standard academic qualifications, and require additional support for them to succeed at university. Yet our students achieve demonstrably excellent outcomes and report high overall satisfaction, and students with low prior attainment outperform their counter-parts from other institutions.

Students with prior education at level 2 or lower who gain a 2:2 or above³		
	Birkbeck	Sector
Part-time	95%	75%
Full-time	97%	90%

Our success in supporting students with non-traditional qualifications to achieve in their degrees is a testament to our teaching staff, and the institution’s commitment to offer the opportunity for mature, working people to achieve the education that they deserve.

‘Good degrees’

Since 2010 we have seen a decline in the proportion of ‘good degrees’ awarded (i.e. 2.i or 1st Class Hons) due to the decline of ELQ students and related changes in student characteristics. In 2016/17 we awarded 52% of degrees at a 2.1 or above and 90% of degrees at 2.2 or above (source: HESA). Many of our students have no recent experience of education and many have low entry qualifications. Given our student population and our widening access mission, and that many students combine full-time work with their study, obtaining a 2.2 can be regarded as a successful outcome for many students.

Ethnicity

We have a diverse student body. The table below shows that full-time Black students at Birkbeck achieve a lower proportion of ‘good degrees’ than the sector as a whole, whereas Black part-time students achieve a higher proportion than the sector.

³ HESA, part-time numbers are 2015/16 graduates, full-time are all graduates since 2012/13 totalled to give a large enough sample.

Percentage of graduates who achieve 1st or 2:1 2016/17			
	Birkbeck	Sector Average	+/- Sector Average
Full-time White	77	77	0
Full-time Black	47	57	-10
Part time White	72	55	17
Part time Black	31	24	7

Disabled student progression rate

Part-time students with a disability have significantly higher continuation rates at Birkbeck (at 67.9%) than the sector benchmark average, and progress to employment or further study at a higher rate (at 94.3%) (TEF Year 2 metrics).

Birkbeck is at the sector benchmark for students with a disability in 'Highly Skilled Employment or Further study'. In common with much of the sector, students with a disability are less likely to progress successfully than students who do not declare a disability.

Progression to work or further study

Given the profile of our student body as set out in the access section above, the progression outcomes for our student are impressive. The progression performance suggests that our priority should lie in directing marginal resources towards improving retention rather than progression. Accordingly, our investment plans show that we will direct a greater proportion of additional fee income towards retention, with a smaller increase in expenditure towards progression.

In light of the fact that many of our students come from underrepresented backgrounds and with low entry qualifications, Birkbeck's performance in 'employment or further study' is remarkable. Accordingly, we have received a positive flag in the TEF metrics indicating that our students have particularly high rates in progressing to 'highly skilled employment or further study'. Some students choose Birkbeck because they are already in work, and they enhance their career during the course of their studies or after graduation. Other students have chosen Birkbeck in order to enable them to start their careers alongside their study.

The employment and further study outcomes receive positive flags in the TEF (TEF3) outcomes split metrics for BME, low IMD, disability and age (mature), for both full-time and part-time students. Despite achieving better results than the sector, we recognise that there remain gaps in Black students' employability success compared with White students. Through our Careers and Employability service we have instigated projects to address this gap (see Section 3), and will keep monitoring the gap.

Employed or in further study (TEF Year 2 metrics)	Birkbeck	Benchmark
Full-time	95.4%	90.7%
Part-time	97%	95.12%
Progression to further study⁴	Birkbeck	Russell Group average
Part time	25.2%	22.9%

⁴ HESA 14/15 Destination of Leavers Survey: Undergraduate Leavers 'Most Important Activity'.

2. Ambition and strategy

As outlined in Section 1 we are pleased with our access outcomes. We are an institution that opens its doors to students who may otherwise not be able to study. We recognise that the sector is constantly evolving and that our provision must adapt to ensure that we remain attractive and accessible to students from all sectors of society.

With our evening teaching model, our main contribution to national priorities is to maintain access opportunities to mature students and people who wish to combine their studies with work. We contribute significantly to lifelong learning in London. Our focus remains on working with mature students, as we are experienced and skilled at supporting their particular needs. We will ensure that we remain an institution where students with non-traditional qualifications can enter, thrive and transform their career prospects.

Our access outcomes are strong, and our approach will be to continue our approach and make incremental gains regarding access. The focus of new activities and committing resources will be on improving student retention and success.

Access

Low income and low participation areas:

Our Widening Access team will work with low income communities in order to support their application and progression to higher education, and aim to further increase the proportion of students from areas of Index of Multiple Deprivation quintiles 1&2. We will continue to work with mature students, running regular workshops and events to welcome them and support their transition to undergraduate study. In 2018-19, we will further develop our relationship with these students by creating a year-round focus group to better understand their journey into Birkbeck and while studying here.

We have created a new Outreach post to work in Stratford to expand our work with underrepresented students in east London, working with the borough and community groups. The initiative follows a successful project in Haringey, which saw an increase in students from Tottenham going on to study successfully at Birkbeck. The work in Stratford, which we run in collaboration with the London Legacy Development Corporation, aims to improve the rates of pre-entry attainment and preparation for study amongst adults and support the increase of the number of students who apply successfully from east London postcodes.

Students with non-traditional qualifications

In order to support our strategic goal of ensuring that we provide appropriate entry routes to degrees we have invested in the creation of degrees with foundation years, and we will ensure that we provide targeted guidance regarding entry routes for students. The appropriate entry routes aim to improve both access and student success measures, and are discussed in detail under Student Success, below.

Ethnicity

We focus all of our outreach work, as well as our general recruitment efforts, in London, with our outreach work working with low income students. Our approach necessarily

means that we work with a high proportion of BAME students and so we enjoy an ethnically diverse student body that has a higher proportion of BAME students than that of the general population of London. We focus two of our largest outreach projects in Newham and Haringey, two of the boroughs with the highest BAME proportion in the country. Our approach will ensure that our student body will continue to reflect the ethnic diversity of London.

Student Success

We outlined how we are currently better than benchmark for retention for part-time students and slightly lower than benchmark for full-time students. While we are doing better than our benchmark for part-time students, we wish to consolidate recent significant improvements, as well as to get our full-time retention rates to benchmark as a first stage. We believe that full-time students' retention is adversely impacted by the fact that some students choose to study at a higher intensity than their commitments allow, and due to maintenance loans being unavailable to part-time students. With the introduction of maintenance loans, we will seek to advise students to consider part-time study, where appropriate.

Improving retention rates is challenging given our student body and our approach to access, as we wish to remain open to mature students who have non-traditional qualifications and many of these students study with us successfully.

In Section 1, we outlined how our research into retention at Birkbeck demonstrated that withdrawal is associated with demographic characteristics, but the statistical significance of these associations is low. Subsequent research at Birkbeck has led to the development of a model of the causes of student-dropout at the College. This research has been published (Dewberry and Jackson, 2018⁵). The model suggests that intention to withdraw, and whether or not students actually withdraw can be predicted by their attitude to the course, their perceived academic ability to complete it, and the extent to which they believe that significant others (e.g. family and friends) expect them to complete. The implication is that interventions cannot easily be targeted by demographic, and therefore some interventions will target the whole student population, and in others we need to use this model to identify 'at risk' students and target them.

Following the research, we conducted a project (supported by the HEFCE Catalyst fund) to research the impact of retention initiatives at Birkbeck. The project carried out 5 interventions designed to increase undergraduate retention and performance, based on the above model. For example, the model suggests that one of the key predictors of retention and performance is support from significant others, so two of the interventions were designed entirely or in part to promote that support. The interventions were carried out as experiments and had control groups (or close proxies where this was not practicable) so that the impact of the interventions could be assessed experimentally. The project identified statistically significant impact on retention for one of the interventions,

⁵ Dewberry, C and Jackson, D (2018), An application of the theory of planned behavior to student retention, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, August 2018, Vol.107, pp.100-110

and suggested a positive impact (but the sample size was too small to demonstrate statistically significant impact) for two others. We will seek to test these interventions with bigger samples of students, e.g. all undergraduate students, college-wide.

The process of research, followed by a trial of several initiatives, using experimental research methods, demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that we base our initiatives on a sound evidence base.

Non-traditional entry qualifications

Birkbeck's core mission has long been to find ways to support non-traditional students into and through university, and this presents challenges for retention. We offer a range of courses to support access to university for people who would not be able to study elsewhere – or who would not feel ready or able to embark on university level study. This provision includes Certificates of Higher Education, part-time degrees, foundation degrees and four-year degrees with foundation years.

We introduced a new provision of degrees with foundation years in 2016/17 which help students who require additional support before embarking on the first year of a degree. By providing additional support, in smaller groups and with a focus on developing students' study skills during the first year, we aim to ensure that students are in the best possible position to continue on their degree to graduate with good degrees, and to fulfil their career ambitions. The introduction of the degrees with foundation year has been positive with 162 students enrolling in its first year. It is our aspiration that we expand these programmes across the college academic portfolio in order to ensure that we provide a route into each of our degrees through a foundation year pathway. We also wish to explore an equivalent part-time route.

'Good degrees'

As outlined in Section 1, the proportion of good degrees have fallen. During 2018/19, we will undertake research to understand the breakdown of achieving good degrees by student characteristic. We discussed above the research we conducted into withdrawal rates; we will now conduct similar research in order to understand the impact of various student characteristics on the likelihood of achieving a good degree. The research will direct our efforts to address any achievement gaps that are identified by the research.

Ethnicity

We outlined in Section 1 that there is an achievement gap of good degrees between ethnicities. We will complete a regression analysis to understand the underlying causes and develop an action plan to address identified issues. We are also taking steps by implementing the recommendations of the Student Experience Review, which we expect to lead to improvements in student success and outcomes. As many of the initiatives will target students with lower entry grades, they should have a greater impact on Black students. The initiatives will be evaluated against their success in reducing the ethnicity gap and the overall impact on the student body as a whole.

In terms of retention and ethnicity, the TEF Year 2 data shows that our BAME non-continuation rates are above benchmark for part-time students, and at benchmark for full-time students (TEF Year 2).

Progression

Through Birkbeck Talent and our Careers and Employability Service support, we will offer appropriate tailored support to mature students to combine study with work experience, which helps makes our provision appropriate and attractive to low income students. Birkbeck Talent is available for all students and alumni who are looking to progress their career. More details of the provision is set out in Section 3.

Disabled student progression rate:

We have a specific target to improve the progression rate of students with disabilities. We have invested significantly in the Disability and Dyslexia Service and the Mental Health Advisory Service to ensure that students receive specialist support with a focus on empowering students and building resilience so that they can progress with their studies and beyond.

Evaluating and monitoring

The access and participation plan is monitored by the Strategic Planning Committee and is reported to the Board of Governors. The targets and milestones are reviewed at Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee. Student representatives are members of these bodies.

As an example of our approach to evaluating the impact of the investment in access and student success, we undertook substantial evaluation of the impact of our student financial support package, and instigated reform based on the evaluation. We outline the research and the subsequent changes under the Investment section (Section 4). Further, evaluation and monitoring is built into the approach taken by the student experience implementation group, which is overseeing the rolling out of the review's recommendations. We will monitor and evaluate each initiative to measure its outcomes against objectives.

Equality and diversity

The College has restructured the Equality and Diversity Committee, in relation to staff and students, with a data-driven approach to improving outcomes, and this work will be led by our new Education Committee from September 2018 in order to ensure our Equalities and Diversity work is integrated within our curriculum and processes. From 2017/18, six new Assistant Dean (Equalities) posts were appointed to across the College, to embed and mainstream equalities.

A set of Strategic Equality Targets and Actions have been developed following a Strategic Equality Review (which concluded in 2017), including the provision of an inclusive educational experience and learning environment for all students. These Targets and Actions are supplemented by other activities identified within other College frameworks, such as the action plans for Athena SWAN (see below), Disability Confident, the HR Excellence in Research Award, and the actions in relation to Equal Pay (including Gender

Pay). The College's People Strategy includes Building Workforce Diversity as a key theme, and equalities is embedded in all themes within the Strategy.

Our access and participation plan will support our equality and diversity approach through identifying resources to direct towards the equality and diversity priorities. We have recently dedicated additional resources to support mental health, counselling and disability in Student Services. The College also invested in the Students' Union to create four paid Liberation Officers posts (Black Members' Officer, LGBTQ+ Officer, Women's Officer and Disabilities Officer) to promote equality and diversity.

The College holds an Athena SWAN institutional award as well as four departmental awards for areas within our School of Science and School of Business, Economics & Informatics. We are recognised for our commitment to Disability Confident, being a Stonewall Diversity Champion and a signatory of the Mindful Employer charter.

We have an agreed institutional process for undertaking equality analysis of all College policies. Equality analysis of student-facing policies is embedded in the College's policy review cycle. The process assesses any potential negative impact the College's policies may have on protected groups, and puts in place remedies for these. Equality Assessment outcomes are reported to the Colleges Equality & Diversity Committee.

We outlined above the research that we have conducted into student retention at Birkbeck, which was intended to identify specific student characteristics that may predict student withdrawal. We will conduct further statistical analyses, looking at student success (e.g. retention, good degrees, module marks) and will explore the extent to which protected characteristics (e.g. ethnicity, disability) uniquely impact on the likelihood of achieving success. We will feed the results of the research into the equality and diversity approach as well as on initiatives related to future Access and Participation plans. We will also evaluate the impact of the changes to the financial support scheme, including any impact on students with protected characteristics.

Consulting with students

Access and participation plan

Birkbeck and the Students' Union (SU) work in partnership to ensure that the organisation is as effective as possible, with strong communication between the Union and the College. The College has invested significantly to support the SU and provide more services and staff to ensure that the student voice is heard.

The SU is represented across the College's committees with two students on our governing body, the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (to be the Education Committee from 2018/19), and on the Committee to plan for our 200th anniversary celebrations.

The SU is in the first year of a three-year turnaround plan agreed with support from the NUS. The SU commissioned research to help improve understanding of the particular needs of the student body, helping the SU and the College to be more responsive to the evolving needs of our community. The SU aims to empower and represent underrepresented groups and has an Executive structure that includes part-time paid liberation officers to represent Black, Disabled, Women's and LGBTQ+ students.

Each of the liberation officers has established a student forum to advise them in their role and to feed issues into the democratic mechanisms of the SU which in turn can be raised by officers at College Committees. The range of student based academic and special interest societies provide a further avenue for the SU to assist in the retention of students through peer support and belonging.

The SU has recently submitted a paper to the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee to develop a course representatives system to be managed in partnership with the College. This is to be able to assist both the College and the SU gather a better understanding as to the experiences and needs of students across the institution. The SU have asked the College to consider how different religious groups can be supported in their studies through ensuring that compulsory activities are not scheduled over religious holidays. The SU will be working with the College in 2018/19 to understand how faith relates to the student experience.

An ongoing close working relationship exists between Registry and the Students' Union throughout the year with a joint committee established to work together. The Academic Services Manager has met with the SU regularly throughout the process of developing the APP and the SU have contributed to the production of the document.

Strengthening student voice in outreach

We proactively contact participants of our outreach programmes to provide further individualised support to each participant and to gather their feedback so we can provide the right level of advice and support to them. The feedback we receive from the students is important in helping us to ensure that we remain relevant to our intended audience. We have also sought the experiences of FE students progressing to Birkbeck in order to ensure that we are fully supporting this group of students.

As part of our outreach project supporting forced migrants to study, we meet the students for an hour each month to ensure that we receive the students' perspective of the project. The ongoing communication with the students has been invaluable in ensuring that the project runs smoothly and successfully from the perspectives of the students and of the academics.

3. Access, student success and progression measures

Access and Attainment Raising measures

We focus our outreach activity on giving prospective students the ability and confidence to apply successfully to university. Birkbeck's strength in our outreach is that we reach people who are otherwise not contacted by universities, and that our outreach activities operate alongside our various entry routes to lead directly to the enrolment of non-traditional students.

We will be launching a new pre-entry attainment raising programme, to provide a programme of support to students accessing adult learning services in key London boroughs. Participants take part in study skills sessions and attend lectures to make use of the skills they have acquired. Students will then attend an information and application support session.

Entry requirements and provision of entry level programmes

The commitment to creating a range of degrees with foundation year programmes in order to offer appropriate entry routes to students are a key method for achieving our strong access outcomes, as has been outlined in previous sections. These programmes are intended to help students enter Birkbeck, and to be given additional support to become successful students. We will evaluate these against their effectiveness in improving access and retention outcomes.

Outreach with mature students:

We will continue our successful range of outreach activities that have contributed to our Access success. Examples of the projects we run include Get Started, our application support programme for mature students, Bridges to Birkbeck, where we work with local authority partners to open up university study to mature students with low previous qualifications, and our work with FE Colleges. We also work with Unionlearn to incentivise working Londoners to study, with a fee discount. We also work in partnership with other HEIs to identify opportunities to work with the families of non-traditional students. We successfully fundraised for £1000 bursaries in order to support underrepresented students who attend our outreach events to progress to study.

We offer the mature students who attend one of our outreach sessions the opportunity to send us their personal statement for feedback before they submit their application. The service is intended to go some way towards replicating the application support that school students receive in their schools. The initiative was developed as the mature students we worked with were often unsure how best to approach the personal statement, causing a barrier to applying. The tool has recently been revamped and relaunched and also fully integrated in to all outreach communications and activities.

We work closely with borough councils to provide a programme to support users of the adult learning services.. Participants take part in a study skills session and then attend a lecture where they make use of the skills that they have learnt. Participants then attend an information and application support session.

Working with FE Colleges

We continue to prioritise working with FE Colleges, in particular BTEC and Access students. We have worked closely with FE partners to develop a relevant and replicable provision of activities and support. This includes BBK Maths, where FE students who are resitting their GCSE Mathematics are helped by trained Birkbeck students. Students who have not achieved a Grade 4/C in Mathematics are invited to the programme, with the aim of helping them to achieve an improved grade. Many of the students have previously attempted the GCSE multiple times and they are unlikely to progress to university immediately, and we see the initiative as an attainment raising activity rather than supporting recruitment to Birkbeck.

The Widening Access team are also working on a new enhanced provision for FE colleges which will include support and the development of academic skills. The initiative will engage admissions tutors and aims to increase application and conversion rates of FE students.

Birkbeck hosts Linking London, a partnership of 49 organisations. The core aims of our partnership are to support recruitment, retention and progression into and through higher education. We are part of Linking London's coordinated outreach IAG project, delivering workshops and one-to-one support to FE and Sixth-Form college students. The collaborative project has a target of working with 500 college students in 2018-19. Qualitative evaluation will be obtained via questionnaires from both students and college staff, which will inform the ongoing development of this offer.

Working with asylum seekers

We run a unique project, the Compass Project, targeting forced migrant communities in London. We have successfully attracted donor money from corporate sponsors and have a large collaborative network of charities, advice organisations, HEIs and other University of London (UoL) institutions working together to achieve a truly cross-sector commitment to improving access to HE for a vulnerable group. Using our flexible study options and our open access routes to study, we have designed an outreach programme to support, advise and help forced migrants to access higher education. We have also set up a fund to support asylum seekers whereby 20 full fee waivers will be on offer for the first 120 credits of study at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The Compass Project won the 2018 Guardian University Awards in the Widening Access and Outreach category.

Student Retention and Success

We highlight below three strategic College-wide initiatives that demonstrate our commitment to improving student success and progression.

Building up appropriate entry routes

We will retain and strengthen our openness to students with non-traditional qualifications by ensuring that students can enter onto appropriate entry routes. As well as continuing to demonstrate strong access outcomes, we will strengthen our student success outcomes by providing better information and advice to students as to the most appropriate entry route for them.

2018/19 will see an expansion of our degree with foundation year provision so that more students can progress to degree programmes from a foundation year pathway. During

2018/19 we will also explore the feasibility of extending the provision to part-time degree routes. These entry routes will support our access work, and will also help ensure that students receive the support required during their course and so improve retention outcomes.

Wellbeing

We identified that men were underrepresented in accessing the counselling service and launched initiatives to increase usage by men. We first worked with students to identify reasons that men chose not to access the support available, and then launched initiatives to address these reasons. Although at an early stage of the project, the service has seen a 20% increase in usage by men, and for recent months 50% of the students using the counselling service have been male. We will continue to monitor usage statistics and ensure that we provide the services in a way that is welcoming and accessible by all.

Pre-entry support

The high proportion of students who start on degree programmes either with non-traditional qualifications, or after a long break from education, has led us to develop more pre-entry support in order to support these students' study skills ahead of their degree.

The School of Arts developed a short summer course to help prepare students for undergraduate study. The course is a blended learning module, combining face-to-face events with online resources and module assignment. The purpose of the course is to present academic skills and understanding of university study before term starts, to help students gain skills and confidence. The course consists of four units, and we invite students to submit an assignment for each, for which feedback is given.

The aim of the module is to support retention particularly during the first year, and we will evaluate it by the impact on retention of participants. The course was part of the HEFCE funded Catalyst Project in 2017/18. If successful, we will explore how best to adapt the programme for other Schools.

We have also created online Study Skills Modules, which are available to students from all programmes across the College. We are adding an IT Skills module in 2018/19 in response to a low level of IT skills and confidence demonstrated by many of our mature students.

Mentoring of WP students:

We offer a pre- and post-entry mentoring scheme, targeting WP students at key points in the student cycle. The majority of the mentees attended our outreach events in the previous year, and most of them are BAME. The mentoring offer during the first term has seen positive outcomes with all mentees successfully progressing to their second term of study, and students note that the mentoring programme has helped them to succeed.

Supporting transition to postgraduate study

The School of Arts runs a successful project called 'Step Up to Postgraduate Study' a version of which has now been adapted for School of Business, Economics and Informatics. The module provides students making the move from undergraduate to postgraduate study with the opportunity to work on the skills needed for taught

postgraduate programmes. At the end of the module, participants reported high levels of increased confidence in their ability to succeed at postgraduate studies.

Study Skills

We have dedicated Study Skills provision, with central and school-based Learning Development Tutors whose work is critical to the College's retention activities, particularly students with lower skills on entry. The provision available to students includes a full schedule of workshops and individual support, and online learning tools. More than 9,500 students used the online module last year. We also have a Senior Learning Development Tutor for Technology Enhanced Learning, focused on supporting and leading on initiatives related to blended and flexible learning.

Progression:

Employability: Birkbeck Talent and Birkbeck Careers and Employability Service

In order to achieve our ambitions to support students in their progression to their chosen careers, we established Birkbeck Talent, an in-house recruitment agency, alongside our Careers and Employability Service.

Since the launch of Birkbeck Talent in 2015, 958 students have secured interviews with employers, 394 students have found jobs, including 88 paid internships.

The Careers and Employability team have delivered a project called UpSkill: Tech supporting underrepresented students to pursue careers in the technology sector. The programme has worked with over 3,000 students, targeting those underrepresented in the technology sector, including BAME, disabled and women. We also delivered bespoke career support for students with disabilities through our Ability Programme.

The Enterprise Pathways Programme is another initiative that provides support and opportunities for students interested in enterprise and entrepreneurship. We have engaged over 400 students through enterprise activities on and off campus, including a unique partnership with eight other London University Enterprise teams taking hundreds of students to different start-up spaces across London. Birkbeck is a partner university with IPSE (The Association for Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed), and is offering 50 free student memberships alongside self-employment events.

In order to ensure the provision is available to all students, we invite them to make use of bespoke online resources, which has over 10,000 students.

Student financial support:

Following evaluation of our financial support package, we changed our financial support package for 2018/19 in order to redirect resources towards student success measures, in line with where we wish to make improvements.

Our financial support aims to support student retention and ensure that students have access to the support they need to ensure that they have the necessary resources to study. We will assess students on our UG degree programmes individually in order to give them a tailored package that includes financial advice as well as financial support.

Awards from the Fund will be assessed under an 'additional need' method which looks at the difference between a student's expected income for the academic year and accepted reasonable expenditure. If the expenditure is higher, we will judge them to have an 'additional need' and an award may be made towards living costs. We expect students will have applied for all statutory support to which they are entitled before we consider an award from this fund. This includes maintenance funding and grants from Student Finance England as well as any benefits they may be entitled to.

We will use pre-determined expenditure levels, known as Composite Living Costs, for all students. These cover basic costs such as food, household bills, clothes, entertainment etc. and are used to ensure that all applications are treated fairly, regardless of individual lifestyle choices. The actual amount provided will depend on individual circumstances.

We will evaluate the impact of our financial support as it begins in 2018/19 to analyse its impact on student retention. We will use our own tools to evaluate the impact of the financial support package, as the OFFA-created tools are not relevant for Birkbeck, as they do not adequately take account of part-time students' situations. We will run the evaluation again during 2019/20 to evaluate the impact of the part-time maintenance loans and our new financial support package.

Continuing students who started studies before 2018/19 will continue to receive an annual income-based bursary and will have access to additional need-assessed support where appropriate. We also continue to operate a hardship fund for all students who may experience a change of circumstances during their studies to support students through unexpected events that have a financial impact.

Financial Advice Services

In addition to the financial support offering we will offer a number of financial advice services in order to provide assistance with managing their finances. These additional resources will be of practical assistance to students by ensuring that they are accessing all the financial support that they are entitled to, and support the students who need support with budgeting.

The financial advice services will consist of face-to-face support to ensure that students are accessing all the financial support that they are entitled to, and online resources to provide budgeting advice. We have entered into partnership with Citizens Advice Camden who will provide sessions at Birkbeck, which will offer on-site independent and confidential advice service on a broad range of enquiries including debt, homelessness and benefit problems. We have also developed relationships with corporate partners (RBS, Santander and Lloyds) who will run a number of workshops and similar pro-bono support.

Combined with the financial support to students who most need it, the financial advice services aims to support students and support their retention.

4. Investment

The Access and Participation Plan has outlined that the main areas of focus over the coming years will be in improving the retention and success of our students. Our expenditure plans are consistent with our strategic aims.

We set out in the 2018/19 access agreement our plans to redirect expenditure from financial support towards other areas of support. We have based our plan on the research that we have conducted into the effectiveness of the financial support that we have provided. We conducted a review of the impact of our financial support to analyse whether students in receipt of bursaries had improved retention rates. The results of the logistic regression analyses indicate that – after taking into account student characteristics – whether students receive a bursary does not have a statistically significant association with whether or not they withdraw in year 1, nor whether they repeat year 1. This finding has given us the confidence to reduce the overall financial support expenditure and to allocate the expenditure to areas that will achieve a greater impact on student success.

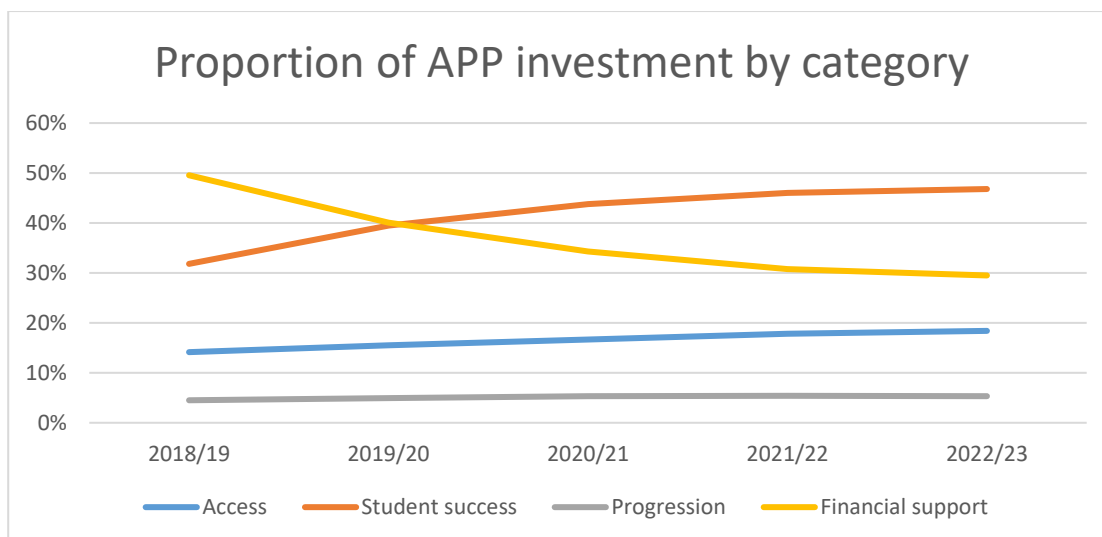
The methods used in our review were similar to the evaluation resources made available by OFFA to identify the impact of financial support. We will review the impact of the student financial support changes and will respond accordingly. We believe that the resources that are re-directed will support the efforts to ensure improved student success outcomes. The change shows that we base our expenditure decisions on the available evidence.

The Investment Summary table below outline our approach. We will retain the proportion of additional fee income above the guideline figure of 22.5%, with an increased expenditure on student success and access activities. The investment is approximately £3.5M per year. The expenditure profile ensures that resources are directed to the areas that require greatest attention, and we believe that the increased focus on student success will lead to improved outcomes for underrepresented students.

Investment

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Access	£537,000	£553,110	£569,703	£616,794	£665,298
Student success	£1,207,973	£1,406,950	£1,499,159	£1,594,133	£1,691,957
Progression	£171,120	£176,253	£181,541	£186,987	£192,597
Financial support	£1,881,522	£1,426,942	£1,174,262	£1,066,091	£1,066,361
Total	£3,797,615	£3,563,255	£3,424,665	£3,464,005	£3,616,213
Additional fee income	£13,360,590	£12,673,650	£13,074,625	£12,924,010	£12,923,025
Proportion of AFI	28.4%	28.1%	26.2%	26.8%	28.0%

Of the access and participation investment, the following chart outlines the proportion invested in each category over time:



The table shows that the proportion of investment that we forecast directed towards Student Success will increase markedly from 32% of our expenditure in 2018 to 47% in 2022. The proportion directed towards financial support will decline correspondingly. The access proportion will also increase, with progression remaining broadly constant. The changing profile in expenditure is in line with previous OFFA guidance, and follows the evidence presented by our research earlier in the document.

Changing the investment profile allows us to drive our strategic priorities and the direction outlined in the Access and Participation Plan, and to commit the resources required to improve student success without compromising our access-related success.

Additional investment

The access and participation plan has outlined that a high proportion of our students are from underrepresented groups, including 88% of our students are over 21 years of age, and mature students often face numerous challenges that are different to those faced by younger students. We have further outlined in this report how our research shows that students across the student body experience similar difficulties.

The implication of these points is that our work to improve retention needs to address the whole student body. Our core business is the retention of underrepresented groups. We have identified only the most direct expenditure in the calculations above, which amounts to a small proportion of our overall expenditure that goes towards our efforts to improve retention of underrepresented students. The Student Experience Review will lead to several new initiatives during 2018/19 that will have benefits across the undergraduate body and we have not directly accounted for many of these.

5. Provision of information to students

Fees

Students are charged an annual tuition fee in each year of their programme. Following the first year of study tuition fees may be subject to annual inflationary increases. Fees for Home/EU undergraduate students are regulated by the government and annual fee increases will be made up to the maximum level permissible by current government regulation. In all other circumstances for the duration of their programme students may expect tuition fees to increase annually in line with inflation up to a maximum of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) +3%.

Publicising the Access and Participation Plan

We will provide information to our prospective students for the 2019/20 programmes, together with the financial support that we have available, as clearly and as timely as possible. Our own research has shown that the majority of mature students rely on Birkbeck's own information channels for the majority of their knowledge and understanding about higher education, and so our outreach activities will be an important means of distributing the information.

Current students are able to view information on their fees through a prominent link on their My Birkbeck profiles.

We will provide the Access and Participation Plan on our website. The Access Agreement is currently available from our Policy and Procedures pages (www.bbk.ac.uk/about-us/policies) and Governance page (www.bbk.ac.uk/about-us/governance).

* course type not listed.

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

Please enter inflationary statement in the free text box below.

Students are charged an annual tuition fee in each year of their programme. Following the first year of study tuition fees may be subject to annual inflationary increases. Fees for Home/EU undergraduate students are regulated by the government and annual fee increases will be made up to the maximum level permissible by government regulation. In all other circumstances for the duration of their programme students may expect tuition fees to increase annually in line with inflation up to a maximum of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) +3%.

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Students who started in academic year 2017/18 or later	£9,250
First degree	All students on intermediate priced courses (16/17 entrants)	£7,150
Foundation degree	Students who started in academic year 2017/18 or later	£7,150
Foundation year / Year 0	Year 0	£6,000
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year	Standard for all	£1,850
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Franchise full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		*
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	- Standard fee	£6,935
First degree	- Intermediate fee	£5,360
Foundation degree	- Standard fee	£5,360
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE	- Cert fee tier 4	£6,250
CertHE / DipHE	- Cert fee tier 3	£4,620
CertHE / DipHE	- Cert fee tier 2	£3,825
CertHE / DipHE	- Cert fee tier 1	£3,025
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

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

Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16a_01	Access	Low income background	Other statistic - Low-income backgrounds (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of part-time students who meet the eligibility for the highest value maintenance loan	No	2013-14	39.1%	42%	43%	44%	45%		
T16a_02	Access	Low income background	Other statistic - Low-income backgrounds (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of full-time students who meet the eligibility for the highest value maintenance loan	No	2015-16	40.8%	42%	43%	44%	45%		
T16a_03	Access	Socio-economic	HESA T1a - NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Percentage of young, f-t students from lower NS-SEC classes	No	2013-14	39.7%	45%	45%	n/a	n/a		Target replaced by T16a_12 as the NS-SEC data is no longer published
T16a_04	Access	Disabled	HESA T7 - Students in receipt of DSA (full-time, all undergraduate entrants)	Percentage of full-time students in receipt of DSA	No	2013-14	7.9%	8.5%	8.5%	9%	9.5%		
T16a_05	Access	Disabled	HESA T7 - Students in receipt of DSA (part-time, all undergraduate entrants)	Percentage of part-time students in receipt of DSA	No	2013-14	6.7%	7.5%	7.5%	8%	8%		
T16a_06	Student success	Part-time	Other statistic - Completion/Non continuation (please give details in the next column)	HESA T3e - HESA T3e - No longer in HE after 2 years (part-time, all entrants)	No	2013-14	31%	27%	26%	25%			
T16a_07	Student success	Other (please give details in Description column)	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (All, full-time, first degree entrants)	Percentage of full-time students not in HE after 1 year	No	2013-14	14.4%	11%	10%	10%			
T16a_08	Access	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of black and ethnic minority students, p-t and f-t degree	No	2014-15	49%	54%	55%	56%	56%		
T16a_09	Access	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of students who declare a disability	No	2015-16	16%	17.5%	17.5%	18%	18.5%		
T16a_10	Student success	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of students with disabilities who progress to second year	No	2015-16	64%	69%	70%	70%	71%		
T16a_11	Progression	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	Number of non-traditional students supported to interview for paid opportunities	No	2015-16	90	105	110	115	-		
T16a_12	Access	Socio-economic	Other statistic - Location (please give details in the next column)	Index of Multiple Deprivation, quintiles 1 & 2	No	2015-16	73%	75%	77%	77%	78%		

Table 8b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16b_01	Access	Mature	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	UnionLearn - 10% discount to unionlearn members as part of memorandum of understanding with unionlearn. Target relates to number of UG students the discount was granted to.	No	2014-15	250	300	300	300			
T16b_02	Access	Mature	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of students who attend a Get Started workshop and percentage who successfully enrol	No	2014-15	500	500	500	500			
T16b_03	Access	State school	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of students who apply through an Institutional Progression Agreement	No	2014-15	145	180	190	190			
T16b_04	Access	Mature	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of students who receive one to one guidance interviews via a single, holistic Information, Advice and Guidance service in partnership with UEL	Yes	2013-14	2191	2700	2800	2900	3000		
T16b_05	Access	Attainment raising	Lifelong learning	Mature students attending Get Ready programme	No	2017-18	n/a	100	125	125			