ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020-21 TO 2024-25

Birkbeck
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Access and participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Contents

Preface to Birkbeck's Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

1   Welcome to Birkbeck's Access and Participation Plan. This plan sets out how Birkbeck, University of London will support wider participation in higher education and ensure that students from all backgrounds can achieve their potential during their studies at Birkbeck.

2   Birkbeck is a special institution with a 200-year-old mission to educate working people, especially mature students combining work, study and caring responsibilities. Our teaching is mainly evening-based and our student population is a little older than the people found in many universities. We recruit students locally within London (including commuters), nationally and internationally into our flexible, part-time and full-time undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Around 12% of our current student population (undergraduate and postgraduate) are under 21, although these figures change over time and we welcome all ages and backgrounds through our doors.

3   An Access and Participation Plan is required by the universities' regulator, the Office for Students, to explain how institutions fulfil their obligations to improve opportunities for students and contribute to a nationwide 'levelling up' agenda. We have been asked to provide a 'variation' to the following plan (originally written in 2018) which explains how we will meet some new priorities. Our approach to this is to set out in this preface how we fulfil these new and developing requirements. We have decided not to change the text of our original plan so that there is continuity and clarity for readers about what we said we would do from 2020 onwards, how we are progressing and the changes we propose.

4   We set a number of targets in our 2020 plan and these remain our targets for the remainder of this plan. You will find them at the end of this document on the last page.

5   You will find information about our **undergraduate student population** in the Access and Participation Plan which follows Pages 4 to 12 (or Section 1). Our evening teaching model enables students from diverse backgrounds to study. Many of our students would not otherwise be able to combine study with their career or personal responsibilities. In 2021, the composition of our undergraduate student body was as follows:

- 78% of our students are 21 years old or older;
- 47% of our students are from Black, Asian, Arab or other 'minority' heritage backgrounds (53% of full-time students are from these backgrounds, so are in the majority at the College);
- 25% of students have declared a disability (against a national figure of 17.3%);
- 30% of our undergraduates are studying part-time.

6   We have been asked to address four priorities in this variation to our plan. The remaining part of this preface picks up each of these in order. The four priorities are:

A.   Make plans easier to understand for students and parents by completing a standard-template summary of our plan.

B.   Develop, enhance and expand relationships with schools to raise pre-16 attainment across England.

C.   Set out how by coming to Birkbeck (higher education), students from under-represented groups will do well because courses are high quality and designed to help them achieve and graduate with good outcomes.

D.   Develop more diverse pathways into and through higher education (including through apprenticeships).

SECTION TWO: INFORMATION ABOUT OUR NEW PRIORITIES

Priority A: summary of our plan

7   You can find a summary of our 2020-25 Access and Participation Plan, including this preface by [following the link to our Corporate Policies webpage](#).

8   If you have questions about our Access and Participation Plan, please [email the Academic Registrar mailbox](#).

Priority B: Develop, enhance and expand relationships with schools to raise pre-16 attainment across England

9   You will find more information about our access (preparing for and entering university) priorities on pages 18-19 (paragraph 3.1.3.1 Access and Engagement) in the main plan. We explain in our plan (paragraph 3) that most of our undergraduate population comes from groups that the Office for Students has identified as being [under-represented within higher education](#). This means we are already working hard – and succeeding – in attracting a wider range of people through Birkbeck's doors than is usual for many universities. This is in keeping with our mission. Our original plan, therefore, did not have many actions or targets associated with 'access' because it was an area of strength.

10   This strength continues in 2022, but we intend to develop our access activity to meet new priorities which will support the Director for Fair Access and Participation's objective of improving attainment for young people. We believe that higher education, which works at the cutting edge of developing knowledge and practice, has a role to play in supporting schools and young people to reach their potential. 'Raising attainment' for school children is one of these new priorities and we have considered how Birkbeck can best contribute to this agenda. As we note above, our student population does not tend to come immediately after completing school. By design, we are an attractive option for older students and for those seeking a second chance in education. We also work with young adults studying BTECs, given the predominant social demographics and their lower progression outcomes.

(a) Work with strategic Local Authorities and adults to improve their attainment and their ability to support their children's attainment.

11   Birkbeck's Access and Engagement department oversees the development of new and existing relations within local authorities, primarily in Newham and Camden ('host boroughs'). Within these boroughs we work with community partners, workplaces, adult learning providers and universities, interlinking with the civic engagement agenda and collaborating with our local communities to develop knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference to communities. We have helped generate successful collaborative activities ([Community Leadership programme](#); [HE Short courses;](#) joint ventures around employability and transferable skills relevant to university study), and long-standing programmes of work promoting access to higher education and advising on educational and career pathways.

12   Given our expertise in supporting adults into higher education, our partnerships and activities are well positioned to develop a new area of work to support the attainment raising of adults and children. We will explore the development of an intergenerational project to improve participation and success rates with children of primary school age. As outlined in the Education Endowment Foundation report, [Supporting parents to be better prepared and active in their child's learning is key to their own success and progression](#), educating and empowering parents and carers is a powerful way of improving the outcomes of children. We have experience in working with parents as prospective learners, but this dual approach could provide a holistic and impactful approach to address inequalities in class participation and success rates whilst also

supporting adults into higher study. Our approach follows the work highlighted in the Campaign for Learning's report [Parents, Children and Adult Learning Family Learning Policy in the 2020s.](#)

(b) Work with partner Further Education Colleges focused on BTEC student outcomes and progression

13   Birkbeck's Access and Engagement department focuses on providing support for those students who are studying non-traditional or vocational courses (such as BTEC National qualifications). The team works collaboratively with college teachers and advisers to ensure we have a clear understanding and insight into the needs of these students and can create supporting activity to help them in their college studies and which will prepare them for further, university-level, study. Our decision to work with BTEC students is consistent with Birkbeck's mission and with BTEC students being under-represented in higher education.

14   The Access and Engagement team develops and presents tailored pre-application events which we run online and on campus, workshops and academic engagement programmes, primarily targeting BTEC learners in further education colleges (FECs). We run a pre-university transition programme called On Track, which prioritises under-represented students. The transition course provides academic guidance, resources to support preparation, and ongoing success with their studies. On Track provides a bridge for students in FECs to help them make a transition to higher education.

15   We will extend our work with target FECs, using insights and research from Linking London Network, Uni Connect projects, [Pearson](#), [Social Mobility Foundation (SMF)](#) to develop attainment supporting initiative for BTEC students. BTEC students' prior attainment at Level 2 Maths and English might limit their progression to higher education. In partnership with an FE partner, our work will directly address the specific needs of BTEC students.

(c) Complement the work of local London-based universities in widening participation schools by working alongside the parents of those young people, so building again on our strength.

16   As a leading member of the *University of London Widening Access Leads Network* (see the statement below), Access and Engagement has long standing partnerships with other universities in the group, which complements their own access activities and allows Birkbeck to engage with the parents and carers of targeted children. Previously, via these partnership activities, we have worked with parents of 'widening participation' secondary school pupils to support, prepare and encourage them as adult learners into university study. We plan to revisit these historic activities with to find ways that we can respond to the call from the OfS and to develop together activities that will support attainment.

17   ***University of London Widening Access Leads Network Joint Statement***

The University of London is a federation of 17 independent member institutions with a diverse range of universities from larger, to smaller specialised institutions. The breadth of expertise, partnerships and academic standing extends beyond the classroom, deep into its communities such as schools, local authorities, colleges, businesses and charities.

Within this is a collaborative and active group of widening access leaders from across the federation. The group is committed to supporting each other, finding ways to collaborate, share and build on our understanding of the distinct challenges and opportunities of widening access work in London and to make a continuing and increasing impact on access to higher education for underrepresented groups.

The group has been in existence for some years with a rotating Chair from different member institutions. The emphasis on collaboration between institutions has galvanised the group to formalise this partnership and to implement Terms of Reference going forward. As a formal network we have committed to explore the following:

- *Work together to identify collaborative opportunities which complement institutional expertise and practise alongside access and participation plans*
- *Explore ways to develop a peer-based evaluation process*

- *Provide a cohesive voice championing the rights and long-term outcomes of non-traditional learners*
- *Share best practice on an ongoing basis to influence 'live' and future projects/areas of work.*

Priority C: Quality and equality of experience and outcomes

18   Most of the analysis and targets in our Access and Participation Plan are focused on what we describe here as 'quality and equality' for our students. In the Plan, the terms used are 'success' (which means continuing from year to year in study) and 'progression' (which means finishing and moving from undergraduate study to further study or a graduate job). Here, we outline where we have decided to focus our work for the coming two academic years, with the benefit of being part-way through our plan. This is also designed to show how we will achieve those twin aims of offering quality *and* equality for all of our students. We have made progress in this area, but we know that there is still much more to do.

19   In summary, our overall approach to securing quality and equality is as follows:

- Our teaching model has been designed to meet the needs of our diverse student body: teaching and services are offered in the evening to accommodate students with working and caring responsibilities. Our 2018 Student Experience Review (see pages 19-20), coupled with our experience during the Covid-19 pandemic of creating an enhanced digital architecture for study continues to inform how we offer our education to students.

- We regularly monitor the quality of our courses from the approval point through to annual scrutiny of what our students say, our data on how students perform.

- Our sources of quality monitoring provide us with the basis to set actions. The actions below have been generated by our regular monitoring coupled with specific research into successful student outcomes.

20   Pages 20 to 24 of our Access and Participation Plan outline the five areas of focus for our 2020-25 plan. We have made progress on all of these, particularly the implementation of the student experience review. The remainder of work in this area will be embedded in our new strategy, Vision 2021-26. . We have also identified particular areas of focus since drafting our initial plan for the period. For the remainder of this particular plan's life our priorities will principally be within the three areas outlined below. Within each of these we will identify specific projects. What follows is a general introduction to give a reader a sense of what we are trying to do and how we hope to achieve it.

21   We had four specific areas in which the OfS required action and use this Preface to update our work in relation to each of these.

- Our variation references, and is informed by, the Student Experience review and we reconfirm that this has shaped our further work, as required by the OfS.
- We have conducted research into the Black/White student attainment gap and our actions following this research are outlined in paragraphs 36 to 38.
- The Student Engagement Programme builds on and adds to our actions to develop activities which will support students in their first year and before commencing their studies (see paragraphs 28 to 33 and paragraph 14 about our 'On Track' programme).
- We have conducted research about the aspirations of disabled students particularly to support their progression, including interventions to support them (see page 9 and page 23 of the plan below for background).

Priorities for 2022-24

22   We will focus our participation activity on three areas for the remaining lifetime of the Access and Participation Plan. These areas are all designed to ensure that the education we offer will

deliver positive outcomes for students from our majority under-represented student populations. These three areas are:

- a new programme of work to improve student engagement, attainment and retention, supported by funding from J.P.Morgan;
- implementing changes to our organisational structures and our curriculum design for undergraduate students;
- implementing actions from our Awarding Gap report ('awarding gap' means the unexplained difference in qualification classifications for students from different groups, principally Black, Asian and mixed heritage students when compared to White student achievement).

(a) Birkbeck Student Engagement Programme

23   This innovative four-year programme aims to create a personalised development approach to working with undergraduate students from the beginning of their courses. Birkbeck is building a new team that will focus on student success dedicated to understanding, developing and implementing innovative new ways to address the student attainment gap. We will use learner analytics to develop a tailored suite of activities and interventions to enhance student continuation and outcomes, supporting students to meet their academic, personal and professional goals.

24   We will work closely with students who are at risk of drop out or who are underperforming in their studies to help them to improve their engagement with their studies and with university life with a bespoke package of support tailored to individual student needs. There will be a particular focus on supporting students from Black, Asian and other under-represented ethnic backgrounds and those on very low incomes, who have already been identified as being at significantly higher risk of dropping out.

25   This programme will lead to lower drop-out rates, better rates of continuation and attainment with an increasing number of students obtaining good degrees, resulting in a further narrowing of our current gap in achievement between Black and White/Asian and White students. We intend that more of our students will be able to take up good quality employment opportunities. The findings of the Student Success Programme will be used to inform the teaching, learning and assessment design of our undergraduate programmes and the wider academic support that we can offer our undergraduate students.

26   In 2019 we conducted field research into the factors indicating academic success (known as 'correlates') at Birkbeck to help us understand why certain groups of students were not performing as effectively as others. The project focused specifically on Birkbeck students, building on a programme of research carried out by Professor Diane Houston, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, over the course of her career.

27   This research uncovered a number of inter-related causes for student demotivation, decreased performance and eventual withdrawal from studies including:

- underdeveloped literacy and numerical skills required for university study due to poor prior academic attainment;
- underdeveloped study skills including time management, use of study support services;
- low confidence;
- lack of access to relevant role models;
- lack of knowledge of how to successfully navigate academic institutions;
- challenges in identifying with and belonging to the university community;
- psychological and motivational factors including social comparison, stereotype threat and self-esteem; and
- personal challenges including work commitments, financial difficulties, and caring responsibilities (these are particularly significant among mature students).

28   The result of this research is a programme of activity to achieve the personalised development approach to working with students. The programme's activities were delayed by the impact of

the pandemic, but with a project lead appointed, work has now commenced. The overall programme is supported by grant funding from J.P. Morgan. We will be evaluating the impact of this work and reporting as part of our grant requirements and in meeting the expectations of our Access and Participation Plan.

(b) Birkbeck teaching model, curriculum and organisational changes

29   We have been working over the 2021-22 academic year on a new teaching model which will come into effect from the 2023-24 academic year. The model has been designed to address some of the concerns we have found through quality monitoring and the Student Experience Review. It is designed particularly to support students who might be less well-prepared for higher education study. The list below indicates some of our priorities.

- We have course structures that are streamlined and give students larger blocks of learning with early feedback and fewer overlapping assessment points.
- There is space in the curriculum for bespoke employability skills training for students across all subjects.
- Students can be taught across the whole academic year, rather than this being mostly in autumn and spring terms with assessment in the summer, and we can be efficient about students' attendance so that their time on campus is filled with teaching rather than spread across several evenings in smaller blocks of time.
- There are opportunities for students to take modules from outside their main subject area where possible and especially for them to study other languages.
- Students can feel connected within their programme as a whole, as well as to individual module groups.
- We are getting ready for offering learning in suitably-sized modules as part of the plans for a Lifelong Loan Entitlement.
- We have an infrastructure to support our students' engagement in their studies and for their career development (including the student engagement programme outlined above).
- Our departmental and school structures can prioritise efficient and effective learning and student support.

30   We will be implementing these structural changes to start in the 2023-24 academic year and will then be able to evaluate the impact of this on how well it supports students continuing in and successfully completing their studies.

(c) Awarding Gap

31   We describe in the Access and Participation Plan (in section 1.2, pages 4-6) the different achievement levels for our Black and White, Asian and White and mixed heritage and White students and commit to actions to close those achievement gaps. The majority of our targets, which we retain, relate to gaps in achievement for students who are from Black, Asian and mixed heritage groups compared to their White peers. We committed to conducting a full analysis of these gaps and identifying actions to address the awarding gap (we describe it as an 'awarding gap' because it is about the final classifications of those students which might not represent their full achievement, rather than an 'attainment gap' which appears to put the onus onto the students themselves).

32   The report we produced had two parts, the first focusing on activities to address the awarding gap and the second on activities which would improve the student experience for all students. The report identified a number of recommendations, which were agreed and a two-year time period set to address these. Our priorities include

- continuing Birkbeck's work to diversify (and 'decolonise') our curriculum across the institution;
- work on developing our approaches to assessment and feedback for students: a dedicated project which will also support changes to our curriculum;
- obligatory race equality training for all staff members including how to handle racist incidents in the classroom and on site at Birkbeck;

- compulsory race equality orientation activity for students including a clear message of zero tolerance of racism and other forms of harassment and discrimination;
- implementing the research and recommendations for the student engagement programme, including students receiving a bespoke skills assessment and support plan;
- identifying through an analysis of our regulations where these might have differential impacts for students and taking steps to address these;
- actions to make our staff, especially teaching staff, more ethnically diverse and reflective of our student body.

33   We are making positive progress against our targets and where we have not yet met or exceeded targets, this is with very small numbers (two or three students) which present as higher percentages. In our 2020-25 plan we were asked to set targets for all our gaps. This has resulted in us having targets for gaps between groups of students which are represented in very small numbers. This means they will inevitably fluctuate annually, but not significantly in statistical terms. We are ahead of targets on the largest awarding gaps. The gap in the award of a good degree for Black and White students is now 21% (down 10%) and for part-time students is 31% (down 7%). As we note, this is progress, but with more work to do.

Priority D: Pathways through higher education

34   We consider that offering pathways into and through higher education is one of Birkbeck's strengths, offering, as we do, models of learning which can fit with our students' lives, including their work, family and caring responsibilities. We are already planning to develop our flexible learning model further to be ready for the introduction of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement. Flexible and part-time learning is an area Birkbeck has promoted and our Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Latchman CBE, has championed flexibility in higher education and advised several government administrations, over two decades, on the needs and challenges for part-time students. Showing our commitment, we have launched a Lifelong Learning Guarantee for Birkbeck students, which offers support and discounts to students as they step back into their education at Birkbeck throughout their lives.

35   Birkbeck embarked early on a trial of the higher apprenticeships model in 2017. We have found that this has not chimed with our particular student population. We have offered three of the most popular standards (Chartered Manager, Digital and Technology Solutions Professional and Senior Leader) but recruited only 36 learners across these three programmes between 2017-18 and 2020-21. We have 18 students now completing their apprenticeships but are not offering further places. Our evening teaching model did not mesh with employer preference for day-time/day release. However, feedback from both apprentices and employer partners has been consistently good and learner retention across the four years has been 89% (over 30 percentage points above the currently national average).

Financial support changes

36   Birkbeck has included financial support in its Access and Participation Plan activities (see pages 24-25 for further information).

37   We have reviewed our financial commitments to student bursaries and other forms of support in relation to the life of the plan to date and our anticipated student population in 2022-23 and 2023-24. We propose a reduction in the commitment made to financial support as a result of a rebalancing of our student population to approximately 8,000 full-time equivalent students (with around 4,800 undergraduate full-time equivalent). Our commitment will change from £613k to £500k for each of the 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years. We propose adjusting within the available funds to include:

- a higher provision in our hardship fund, including additional resources to support students gaining Refugee status, and noting concerns about the impact on students of a rise in the cost of living;

- using philanthropic donations, rather than higher fee income, to fund financial support commitments which means that we can be proactive and fleet-footed in offering support which matches our students' needs;
- keeping our Birkbeck Needs-Based Assessment scheme as the main focus of our financial support for students.

38   Following our internal evaluation, our schemes do not offer a standardised package of support (for example a particular income triggering a particular bursary). We find that a bespoke package of support comprising financial aid (up to a maximum of £5,000 for any individual student) combined with other forms of guidance is more effective in meeting the needs of our students.

39   We will continue to review the effectiveness of financial support and how this is best offered to our students to accommodate changing economic circumstances as well the needs of our students.

SECTION THREE: A FINAL NOTE

40   Birkbeck takes its access and participation commitments seriously. We are an institution that offers second and third chances as well as first opportunities for students in higher education. This Plan represents our work in progress, the targets we have set and the commitments we make to our regulator, the Office for Students. Above all, it sets out our commitments to our students, to give people the opportunity of personal transformation that higher education affords.

41   We are grateful to the Birkbeck Students' Union for their contributions to this Preface and to the original Plan.

Birkbeck
July 2022

Access and participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Birkbeck, University of London is an evening university, predominantly delivering teaching between 6-9pm, retaining our historic mission to educate working Londoners. We are 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 mature students, whilst also diversifying and increasing the number of younger students, through our full-time undergraduate evening degrees. We continue to be a research-led widening access institution and a significant voice for the high proportion of our students coming from underrepresented groups. We remain committed to driving this agenda in the higher education sector.

The focus of our access and participation plan is on the continuation, attainment and progression of underrepresented groups. We have a high proportion of students from these groups, so our approach is large-scale and across the student body. The access and participation plan articulates our ambitious plans, while maintaining our open approach, which allows students who may not be able to study elsewhere, to benefit from a higher education.

At Birkbeck almost 60% of the 2017/18 'Other Undergraduate' population (using HESA Heidi+ data) are students on our flexible Level 4 modular programme including Certificates of Higher Education and stand-alone modules where students do not intend to continue from one year to the next. For our assessment of continuation performance, we have therefore focused on students on degree and foundation degree programmes[1].

Each data item quoted is from the OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard unless otherwise stated. (https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/).

1. Assessment of performance

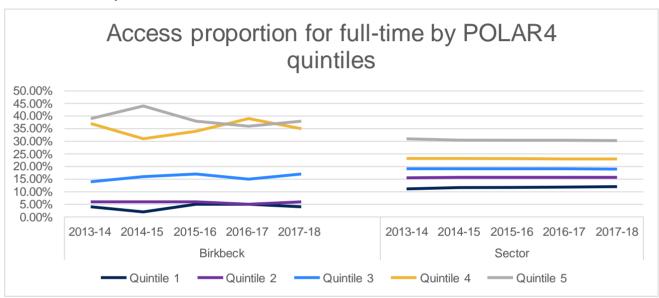## 1.1. Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status
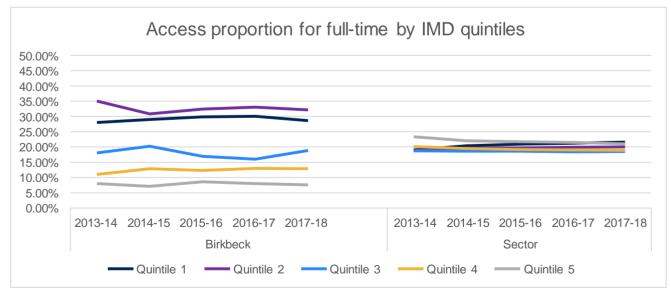
1.1.1 Access

1.1.1.1 Birkbeck has a long and proud history of enabling learners who may not have previously had the opportunity, to access degree-level study. A London provider, specialising in part-time evening education, our students come from our local communities with 82% of our undergraduate students living in London (HESA 2017/18 data from Heidi+).

1.1.1.2 There are relatively few postcodes (fewer than 5%) which fall into the lowest two POLAR4 quintiles across the London boroughs, despite London having some areas of significant deprivation, as evidenced in the next paragraph (OfS and London datastore data 2019). Even

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[1] At Birkbeck the part-time 'Other undergraduate' population is largely made up of students studying 15 and 30 credit modules within a flexible Level 4 programme. Many such students will be leisure learners or working Londoners who wish to study discrete standalone modules as part of their – often work based or personal - Continuing Professional Development plan. This provision is fully flexible, and thus the notion of continuation will not be valid for many.

with this small number of eligible postcodes in our local recruitment area, we still contribute to the widening participation agenda in this area with 10% of full-time and 6% of part-time entrants coming from these postcodes.

1.1.1.3   In addition, we recognise that a large proportion of our students, whilst not living in a low participation postcode, due to the generally high participation of London as a whole, do come from some of the most deprived communities. 61% of our undergraduate entrants come from the lowest two quintiles of IMD deprivation. Our own 2018/19 enrolment survey data shows a significant proportion (39%) of our full-time undergraduate students living in households with an annual income of less than £25k per annum, and 46% of part-time students coming from a household with annual income below £40k per annum[16]. These rates have been consistent over a number of years in both full-time and part-time student populations.

Figure 1: Access proportion for full-time students, by POLAR4 and IMD quintiles (OfS Data Dashboard 2019)

Access proportion for full-time by POLAR4 quintiles

Access proportion for full-time by IMD quintiles

1.1.2   Success: Non-continuation

1.1.2.1   Full-time 'all undergraduate' students from the lowest two POLAR 4 quintiles have 5% better continuation rates than their counterparts from quintiles 3-5. There are no part-time students in the lowest two POLAR4 quintiles.

1.1.2.2 IMD data shows that despite the clear disadvantages many of our students arrive with, they make good progress with us, with only a 3% above gap in full-time and 1% in part-time degree continuation rates between those from deprived backgrounds (IMD quintiles 1-2) and those from more advantaged backgrounds (IMD quintiles 3-5). Furthermore, our own internal analysis suggests that household income does not significantly impact students' continuation rates, despite the very large number of students who have low incomes and/or depend on benefits. Despite the very small gaps identified, we have included a target to eliminate our small gap in non-continuation between quintiles 1-2 and quintiles 3-5.

1.1.3   Success: Attainment

1.1.3.1 Attainment of a "good degree" can be a challenge for disadvantaged students. The gap between those from the lowest IMD quintiles and those from the highest at Birkbeck has considerably improved amongst full-time students, from a gap of 17% in 2014/15 to 7% in 2017/18: smaller than national and London averages. The gap is however higher in our part-time degree student population, which is just above the sector gap at 16% and we intend to address this.

1.1.3.2 There are no students whose postcodes were in the lowest two POLAR4 quintiles in the cohorts who have graduated, so no attainment gap data is available.

1.1.4   Progression to employment or further study

1.1.4.1 Progression to employment is undoubtedly a success for Birkbeck. Students from IMD quintiles 1&2 succeed in entry to graduate employment or study at the same rates as those from more advantaged backgrounds. This has been a consistent pattern over recent years, demonstrating that our unique model of evening teaching enables our students to add value to their Birkbeck experience by undertaking paid or voluntary work in the daytime and thus gaining the work experience which employers value. There is a progression gap between our part-time 'Other Undergraduate' students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 compared to quintiles 3-5, however as these students are not studying for a degree, graduate level employment is not an appropriate outcome metric.

1.1.4.2 As in 1.1.3.2 there are no students whose postcodes were in the lowest two POLAR4 quintiles in the cohorts who have graduated so no progression gap data is available

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

1.2.1 Access

1.2.1.1 Our student body is ethnically diverse. While the BAME proportion of London's population is 40%[2], 56% of our full-time and 42% of our part-time undergraduate entrants identify as BAME. Across our full-time student population, the proportion of students receiving an offer is broadly the same across all ethnic groups. Through our OfS transparency data, we have recently identified a gap of 10% in offer rates for BAME applicants applying in 2018-9 to study part-time. Our investigation of this demonstrates that the lower offer rates are entirely a consequence of lower entry qualifications[3]. The College offers programmes 'with foundation year'; to students with lower or non-traditional qualifications who wish to study full-time. We have not yet developed a part-time foundation year. We will create a clear part-time foundation entry pathway for 2020/21 entry and expect that this will increase offer rates to those with lower qualifications.

1.2.2 Success: Non-continuation

1.2.2.1 There is a gap in the 2016/17 continuation rates of black students compared to all other ethnicities, with 79% of black full-time students continuing compared with 87% of all other full-time students – a gap of 8% compared to a sector gap of 5%, although there was no gap in the two years that preceded this. There is a gap of 6% in the full-time undergraduate continuation rates in 2016/17 of mixed-race students compared to that of white students: however there was no gap in the two years prior to this. The continuation gap between Asian and other ethnicity students is negative.

1.2.2.2 The corresponding gap for the part-time continuation rates of black degree students is 6% lower than all other students, although this has improved from the previous year, where black students continued at a rate 12% lower than other students. We will monitor to see if this improving trend continues. There is a 15% gap in the continuation rate of our Asian students compared to white students on part-time degrees, but no gap between the continuation rates of our mixed-race students compared with white students.

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[2] https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/latest

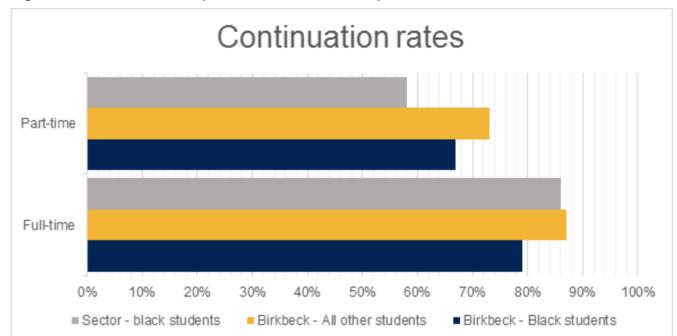[3] Source: Birkbeck student records system (BSIS), 2019.

Figure 2: Continuation rates (HESA Heidi+ 2017/18 data)

Continuation rates

Legend: Sector - black students | Birkbeck - All other students | Birkbeck - Black students

1.2.3   Success: Attainment

1.2.3.1   The OfS dashboard shows that our attainment gap for Asian students continues to improve with the full-time gap between Asian and white students showing a consistently improving trajectory - now 10% compared to 25% four years ago. We have set a target to eliminate this gap. Amongst the part-time population, with very low numbers, the gap is 27% (down from 35% in 2014/15) and again our target is to eliminate this.

1.2.3.2   The gap in attainment of a good degree in our black, compared to white, full-time student population has improved from 50% in 2014/15, to 31% now, as seen in the OfS dashboard data. Despite this considerable improvement, the current gap, and the equivalent part-time gap of 39%, remains a significant concern of ours. We have undertaken analysis of our data in order to understand this issue better, looking at factors including the age and subject of study of black students. Through linear regression analysis we find these attributes do not have any significant impact on the attainment of black students at Birkbeck. We calculate that just under a third of the gaps in attainment are attributable to entry qualifications. There is an "unexplainable" gap of 18% for full-time and 24% for part-time students. Reducing these gaps in attainment is a core priority in this APP cycle.

1.2.3.3   There is a 10% gap between mixed race and white student attainment in the full-time population, and a 20% gap in the part-time population. The analysis above indicates that for mixed-race students, around 40% of the gap is due to entry qualifications, so we intend to work to eliminate the 60% unexplained gap.
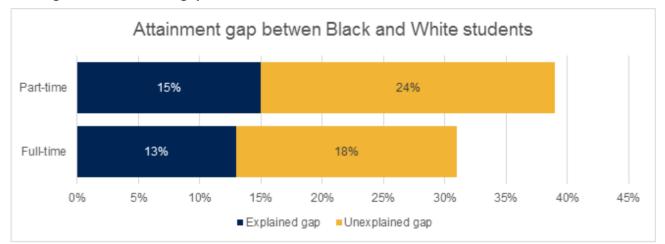
Figure 3: Attainment gap between Black and White students

1.2.3.4 We have undertaken analysis of our National Student Survey (NSS) data over the last three academic years as well as our internal survey of satisfaction for non-finalist undergraduate students with the aim of exploring differences between our white and BAME students. We find that across all years, black students are less likely to agree that 'marking and assessment has been fair' and report less satisfaction with advice and guidance from staff. These are both areas that we are seeking to make improvements in, through our student experience review implementation, outlined in Section 3.

1.2.3.5 Additionally, through our attendance monitoring data we find that across all types of attendance (lectures, laboratories, seminars etc.) black students attend less frequently than white students: for example seminar attendance is only 56% for black students compared to 69%[4] for white students. It is highly likely that this impacts on eventual attainment.

1.2.4   Progression to employment or further study

1.2.4.1 Despite the lower rate of good degree attainment of our full-time black degree students, their progression is relatively good with a 5% gap when comparing them to their white full-time peers (down from 10% in the previous year) which we intend to address. There is a gap for part-time of 20% compared to the sector gap of 9% which we intend to address.

1.2.4.2 Asian students' progress well with the gap is now negative compared to their white peers. There is no data on progression of part time Asian students, or mixed-race students.

1.3   Mature students

1.3.1   Access

1.3.1.1 We are a specialist provider of face-to-face evening higher education, with 67% of our full-time and 93% of part-time undergraduate entrants over the age of 21. Younger students under 21 are almost exclusively on full-time programmes. The mean age of a Birkbeck undergraduate entrant is 28. We have significant numbers of students who are much older, often combining evening study with work or caring responsibilities in the day: the age distribution of our 2016/17 undergraduate degree population (full- and part-time combined) is shown below.

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[4] Internal student attendance data 2018/19

Figure 4: Student age distribution (HESA 2017/18 data from Heidi+)

1.3.2 Success: Non-continuation

1.3.2.1 Nationally, the sector continuation rate for mature full-time students is 7% lower than for young full-time students, while our continuation rates are slightly better, with a 5% gap. Rates amongst our part-time degree students are similar, with young students continuing at a rate 5% higher than mature. Until 2017/18, many of our mature students had to study full-time in order to access maintenance loans, even though this may not have been the most appropriate mode for their circumstances. We anticipate the small gap in full-time will close as students do not have a maintenance loan barrier to part-time study which is a more appropriate mode of study for those with work and caring responsibilities.
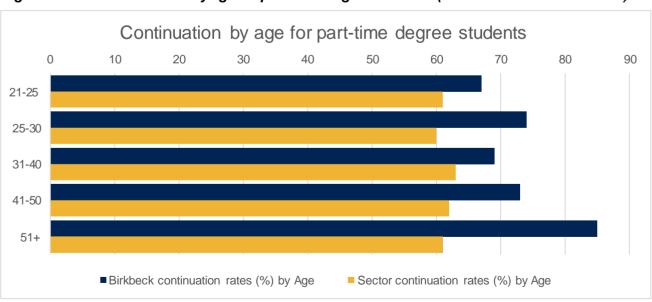
Figure 5: Continuation rates by age for part-time degree students (source HESA 2017/8 Heidi+)

1.3.3   Success: Attainment

1.3.3.1   There is no difference in the achievement of good degrees of our mature students compared to our young entrants, despite the fact that our mature students are more likely to be working[5] or caring for family whilst studying (see 1.3.1.1 Age Profile of students). This contrasts with the rest of the sector where mature entrants achieve good degrees at a 10% lower rate than young students.

1.3.4   Progression to employment or further study

1.3.4.1   Our full-time mature students' progression is slightly poorer than our young graduates, with a 5% gap. We will continue to monitor this small gap, which we believe will close as a result of work being undertaken to close other gaps. There is almost no data available for part-time progression as very few young students choose this mode. However, our LEO data suggests our graduates are highly valued by their employers, with the latest data from the 2016/17 tax year showing median earnings of our graduates one year after graduation of £25k pa, the 8th highest nationally.

1.4   Disabled students

1.4.1   Access

1.4.1.1   Birkbeck admits a much larger proportion of students with disabilities than the sector as a whole: over 23% of our full-time entrants in 2016/17 disclosed a disability compared with 13% in the sector (HESA 2017/18 data). 16% of our students have a mental health condition, with two thirds of this group also having multiple disabilities, although only 6.6% claimed Disabled Student Allowance in 2016/17, and 9.3% in 2017/18 (HESA Performance Indicators).

1.4.1.2   It is common for students to report an 18 month wait for psychotherapeutic treatment on the NHS (this is half the period of registration for a full-time undergraduate degree). Our disabled students tell us that our evening provision is helpful to them as their conditions often prevent them from travelling during rush hour or attending morning lectures. It is not uncommon for a psychiatric care plan to encourage a patient to embark on studies at Birkbeck as part of their recovery. We welcome this client body and are committed to providing support to ensure a level playing field for such students, to attain further qualifications and change their lives.

1.4.2   Success: Non-continuation

1.4.2.1   When looking at the continuation rates of students with disabilities compared to those without, at Birkbeck they continue at the same rate as, or in the case of part-time, better than students with no disabilities. In fact part-time students with disabilities at Birkbeck continue at a 9% higher rate than their non-disabled peers; nationally disabled students' continuation is 6% poorer than non-disabled. This positive gap has been seen consistently over the last few years and is testament to the high levels of support they receive here.

1.4.2.2   Full-time students with mental health disabilities are however less likely than students with no disability to continue into their next year of study, although part-time students with mental health disabilities do continue at a higher rate (10% more) than those with no disability. We have examined gaps in more detail for students with specific disabilities. Full-time students with

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[5] 70% of those over 21 state their main activity as working; only 10% regard their main activity as studying. Source: Birkbeck enrolment survey 2013/14 to 2018/19

cognitive, multiple and sensory impairments show a 5-6% gap in continuation rates. There is no adverse gap amongst part-time students (consistent with the data on those with mental health difficulties). This provides good evidence that part-time study is more suitable for students with additional needs. Anecdotal evidence from our own Disability Office suggests that students with disabilities would have studied part-time had the option of a maintenance loan been available – now they are eligible for this, this barrier to a more suitable mode of study has been removed and we would expect that to have a positive impact on outcomes for this group.

1.4.3   Success: Attainment

1.4.3.1   Our disabled students perform extremely well compared to their non-disabled peers – in fact part-time undergraduates with a disability achieved a greater proportion of good degrees in 2016/17 and 2017/18 (2%) than those who were not disabled. The picture for full-time is similar (we believe that the small attainment gap of 2% in 2017/18 is an outlier). The data does show a small gap in 2017-18 for those with cognitive difficulties, but this is not a consistent pattern. We will continue to monitor these statistics in future to identify and address any emerging trends.
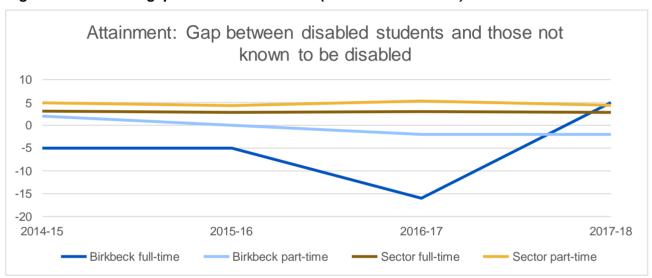
Figure 6: Attainment gap for disabled students (OfS Data Dashboard)

1.4.4   Progression to employment or further study

1.4.4.1   Disabled students do generally find it harder to source graduate level employment, and at Birkbeck we have a 10% gap between full-time graduates with a disability, and those without, and a corresponding gap of 15% for part-time students. The specific categories of disability within the graduate cohort are not known so no gap analysis on the outcomes of students with specific disabilities is possible.

1.4.4.2   Internal data highlights that our mature students tend to have multiple, and more complex disabilities than our younger students and have often been long term unemployed, and it is the poorer progression outcomes of these older disabled students which contributes significantly to our gap in this area: 66% of those under 25 with a disability go onto graduate level work or study, compared to 45% of those over 25 (source: DLHE institution data 2016/17 survey).

1.5   Care leavers

1.5.1   Access

1.5.1.1   As a provider that recruits mainly mature students, the majority as direct entrants rather than through UCAS, our data on care leavers studying part-time is limited; however we will begin to

collect this information for all our students from 2019/20, although many mature students who have been in the care system as children may no longer believe this status to be relevant and may not disclose a care leaver status, which will affect the robustness of data collected.

1.5.1.2 Nationally there were 27,000 care leavers aged 19-21 in 2017 – approximately 1.5% of the population in this age group[6]), of which just 6% were at university, compared to 38% of the same age non-care leaver population. A large number of our last two cohorts of full-time degree entrants did not answer the question about their care leaver status; of those that did, 2.2%[3] indicated that they were a care leaver, higher than the population average.

1.5.2 Success: Non-continuation

1.5.2.1 Although we have relatively small numbers of students who have identified themselves as care leavers, 90%[3] of those that did over the past two years are still actively studying.

1.5.3 Success: Attainment

1.5.3.1 As most of our identified care leavers are yet to complete their degree programmes, we do not have sufficient data to ascertain whether or not they are fulfilling their potential. However as the number increases we will monitor their attainment.

1.5.4 Progression to employment or further study

1.5.4.1 Similarly, as most of our identified care leaver students have not yet completed their degree programmes we do not have sufficient data to ascertain whether or not they are fulfilling their potential. Again we will monitor this over the coming years.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

1.6.1 Access

1.6.1.1 Nationally the largest group of full-time entrants to Higher Education are white and from relatively advantaged backgrounds (47%). In contrast at Birkbeck the largest single group are BAME students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2: this group of students represents 38% of our intake (in 2017/18). Women from the lowest IMD quintiles are our largest groups in both full-time and part-time, in contrast to the sector where women from higher socio-economic groups have the highest participation rates.

1.6.2 Success: Continuation

1.6.2.1 Full-time BAME students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 continue at a 4% lower rate than BAME students from quintiles 3-5. Internal analysis shows that this is explained by low continuation in black and mixed race students (see para 1.2.2.1): these students make up around three quarters of the BAME population, and as in the paragraph above, nearly 40% (38%) of our students are BAME and in IMD quintiles 1 and 2.

1.6.2.2 Similarly comparing white and BAME students from the lowest IMD quintiles, at Birkbeck white students continue at a 6% higher rate than BAME students – virtually the same gap when ethnicity is considered alone (5% for full-time). Black students are the single largest BAME group (55%), and analysis on internal data shows that this 6% gap is largely a function of overall poorer continuation amongst black students.

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6   https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2016-to-2017

1.6.2.3 Male students from low IMD quintiles on full-time degree programmes have a continuation gap compared to females from quintiles 3-5. Our internal analysis suggests that this is explained by higher female continuation rates as a whole, which are 9% higher than male continuation for full-time students and 6% for part-time.

1.6.3 Success: Attainment

1.6.3.1 BAME students from the lowest IMD quintiles gain good degrees at a rate 8% lower than BAME students from more advantaged backgrounds. However, we should note that the number of BAME students who graduated from quintiles 3-5 is relatively low at Birkbeck (40 in 2016/17, compared with over 70 from quintiles 1 or 2). Again our own analyses suggest that the gap identified is largely due to black students achieving good degrees at a lower rate (see 1.1.5): we do not find that this gap has an interaction with their IMD status, more that black students are more likely to be from IMD quintiles 1 and 2.

1.6.3.2 Female students from both high and low IMD quintiles achieve good degrees at a lower rate than males. These rates are the same as for women as a whole, and not related to IMD status (9% gap for full-time amongst quintile 3-5, and 10% amongst quintiles 1-2). This is discussed later in paragraph 1.7.6.

1.6.4 Progression

1.6.4.1 There is limited data on ethnicity and IMD status (i.e. low numbers of BAME graduates are in quintiles 3-5), but what there is does not suggest a pattern of under-achievement amongst BAME students from the lowest quintiles. We will however monitor this as we have larger cohorts due to graduate. Part-time BAME students from the lowest quintiles do appear to out-perform BAME students from the higher quintiles by 15%. However only 10 graduates are in the BAME and high IMD quintile population.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

1.7.1 We identified adult asylum seekers as a group of students who face significant barriers, where we could lead due to our expertise in working with mature students.

1.7.2 We launched the Compass Project in 2016, offering students a full fee waiver for the first 120 credits, together with financial support either at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

1.7.3 The focus of the Compass project is to provide asylum seekers with a recognised entry qualification to the 'sanctuary scholarships' offered by other universities. We work with several universities including UCL, Royal Holloway, Goldsmiths, King's and SOAS to lobby and represent these non-traditional students and ensure they are considered for scholarships they may not have been considered for previously.

1.7.4 Of the 18 students that had started their academic journey with Compass in 2016, 17 continue to be engaged in education at Birkbeck and several other universities. Due to us taking a lead in the area of asylum seekers and refugees and building relationships with organisations, increasing numbers of refugees have chosen to study at Birkbeck, up from 15 entrants in 2015/16 to 40 in 2018/19[3]. The majority of our undergraduate students apply directly to Birkbeck rather than through UCAS. This means that some of the applicant background data provided by UCAS is not collected. As a provider to mainly mature students, our applicants do not regard themselves as 'children' and therefore categories such as 'estranged from family' and 'children from military families' are not relevant in the same way as it might be for an 18-year old. This means that comparison data on these groups is not currently available.

1.7.5   Many of our mature student learners have caring responsibilities, for example, for children or older relatives. Our model of evening delivery is designed to enable carers to attend, and we provide an evening nursery.

1.7.6   We note that the attainment of a good degree of female students studying full-time is 10% lower than for men, in a pattern that suggests childcare commitments are a barrier to success. Further analysis of the intersection of age and sex reveals that female student attainment drops sharply amongst those aged 26 to 30 on entry; the average age for the birth of a first child 28[7]. Male attainment has a drop amongst those aged 31 to 40 on entry; the average age of first-time fathers is 33[7]. Our preliminary hypothesis is caring commitments are the primary cause of this decline. We are currently unable to explore this further as we do not currently have reliable or comprehensive data on caring responsibilities but will collect this from 2019/20 onwards.

[7]

https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthcharacteristicsinenglandandwales/2017

2. Strategic aims and objectives

2.1 Target groups

2.1.1 Analysis of our data shows that we perform well on Access, but have significant gaps for some student groups in Continuation, Attainment and Progression. Our strategic aim is to address these gaps, while maintaining our strong Access outcomes.

Figure 7: Target groups and Strategic Objectives

Student life cycle stage	Student Group	Target	Strategic objective	Relation to OfS KPM
Access	IMD Q1, 2	N/A	Maintain the current rate of access from low socioeconomic backgrounds so that no gap develops.	#1
Access	Black students	N/A	Maintain the current access proportion of black students so that no gap develops.	#1
Continuation	IMD Q1, 2	PTS_1	Eliminate the gap in continuation in full-time first-degree students from lower socio-economic backgrounds by 2024/25.	#3
Continuation	Black students	PTS_2	Reduce the non-continuation gap between white and black full-time degree students by 2024-25.	#3
Continuation	Mixed race and Asian students	PTS_3, PTS_4	Eliminate the gap in continuation between mixed race and white full-time degree students by 2024/25, and Asian and white part-time degree students by 2025/26.	#3
Attainment	IMD Q1, 2	PTS_5	Halve the attainment gap for part-time degree students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds by 2025/26.	#4
Attainment	Black students	PTS_6 & PTS_7	Eliminate the 'unexplained' attainment gap between white and black students by 2024/25 for full-time students and by 2025/26 for part-time students.	#4
Attainment	Mixed race students	PTS_8 & PTS_9	Eliminate the unexplained gap in attainment between mixed-race and white full-time degree students by 2024/25 and part-time by 2025/26.	#4
Attainment	Asian students	PTS_10 & PTS_11	Eliminate the gap in attainment between Asian and white full-time degree students by 2024/25 and part-time degree students by 2025/26.	#4
Progression	Students with disability	PTP_1	Halve the gap in progression to graduate level activity for degree students with disability by 2024-25.	#5
Progression	Black students	PTP_2 & PTP_3	Halve the gap in progression to graduate level activity between black and white degree students by 2024-25 for full-time and 2025-26 for part-time.	

2.2 Aims and objectives

2.2.1 Our evening teaching model and our commitment to enabling students who may otherwise not be able to study at higher education has ensured that we do not have a gap in access between the most and least represented groups, and we therefore make an important contribution to the OfS's national priorities on Access. Our first strategic aim is to ensure the continuation of this achievement. While our targets focus on the other stages of the student lifecycle, we will ensure

that we maintain our achievement in supporting the least represented groups to access higher education, and we will therefore maintain our Access expenditure with inflationary increases, focused on adults and the community.

2.2.2   We play an active role in promoting the needs of mature and part-time learners at a national level and will continue our work to inform policy and practice in this area. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Latchman CBE, is an active member of The Labour Party's Lifelong Learning Commission. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Education, Professor Diane Houston, is a member of UUK's Flexible Learning Advisory Group.

2.2.3   We will improve the continuation, attainment and progression rates of our students: in particular, our BAME students who have lower success rates than our white students. A proportion of these gaps are explained by differences in entry qualifications, but there remains a large unexplained difference even when such factors are considered.

2.2.4   Addressing the unexplained gaps between BAME and white students in continuation, achievement and progression rates will be a strategic priority over the coming 5 years. Our attainment and progression targets reflect that improvements will take longer to appear for part-time students because there will be fewer cohorts in the timeframe of this plan.

2.2.5   The gap in attainment of good degrees between white and black students is where we will seek the largest transformation, as we acknowledge that the current gap is large. There are also gaps for mixed-race and Asian students, which we will address as part of this effort. Our priority, which directly addresses the third OfS national aim, is to reduce this gap in attainment. Our bold and ambitious approach to tackling the gap is described in Section 3. There are only three cohorts of part-time students and full-time students with foundation year who will graduate by 2024/25: hence the opportunities to influence outcomes for these groups are more limited than in a predominantly full-time institution. We have, nonetheless, set challenging targets.

2.2.6   There are also gaps in attainment and progression between students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and others, albeit more modest in scale than the ethnicity gaps. There is a gap in attainment of 7% (see 1.1.3.1) for full-time students from different IMD quintiles, this gap has narrowed considerably year-on-year and we will continue to monitor this to ensure this trend continues. For part-time students the IMD gap in attainment is 16% and progression is 4%. In recent years many of our students have studied full-time in order to get maintenance grants, despite having considerable other commitments in addition to study. We anticipate that the availability of maintenance grants for part-time will enable some of this population to study part-time and to balance their study, work and family commitments. We have set a target to halve the gap attributable to IMD by 2025/26.

2.2.7   Tackling these gaps is a long-term strategic aim, and in the context of the challenges outlined above, our targets anticipate modest gains over the first two years, with the gains accelerating towards the end of the period.

2.2.8   Birkbeck does not have a gap in attainment for disabled students compared with non-disabled students; this has been a negative gap in recent years. However, we have identified a gap in progression to graduate work or study, and our efforts will therefore be focused on progression of disabled students. Our mature students tend to have multiple disabilities and complex needs,
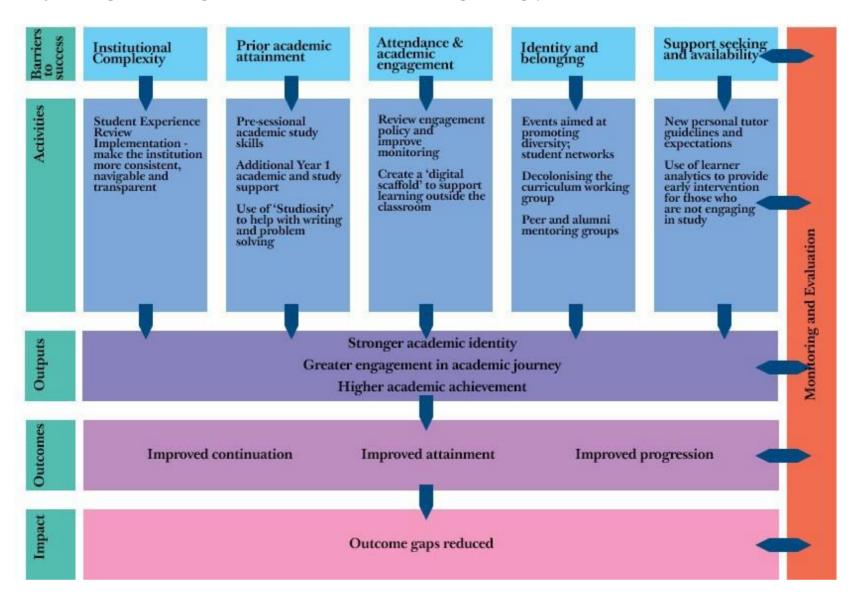
making the prospect of graduate level employment challenging for many of our students. We have set a challenging target to halve the current gap.

2.2.9   We recognise that full-time students with mental health disabilities are less likely than students with no disability to continue into their next year of study. We have not set a target for this group because they are within a group that represents a proportionally high number of students with multiple disabilities. These students face complex challenges in continuation, and our approach to support them through the development of a holistic university-wide approach to mental health is outlined in Section 3. We will continue to monitor this gap, and review support accordingly.

2.2.10   Birkbeck has a relatively high proportion of care leavers in our full-time student population, and their outcomes are similar to the rest of our population. Our inclusive and diverse student body is an environment in which these students can thrive. It is possible that Birkbeck has an important role to play for mature learners with care experience. We started collecting part-time student care leavers status from 2019/20 and will monitor outcomes for this group. We will develop a strategy informed by fuller outcomes data; this will be available from 2023 (i.e. two cohorts of 4-year part-time degree students).

3.   Strategic measures

3.0.1   Birkbeck is highly unusual in that most of our undergraduate student population is disadvantaged on one, and in many cases more than one, measures of disadvantage. Our diverse student body has not arisen by accident, but as a result of conscious strategic and mission driven decisions and reinterpreting our long-standing mission in the light of government priorities, and London's changing demography.

3.0.2   The dramatic fall in part-time student numbers following the ELQ policy (2008) and the introduction of loans and higher fees (2012) is well documented. In response, Birkbeck introduced innovative full-time, three-year evening undergraduate degrees that enable students to continue to fulfil their daytime commitments. These degrees build upon the success of our core part-time degrees, and respond to the needs of those students who want to get a degree and further their lives and careers as quickly as possible. Birkbeck had no full-time undergraduate students in 2009 and now has nearly 3,000, a third of whom are under 21 years old[3]. These younger students recognise that Birkbeck gives them the means to gain meaningful work experience whilst studying alongside the rich diversity of a student population of working Londoners. HEFCE recognised and supported the development of this unique initiative, providing £1.5M of Catalyst funding to further develop our intensive, full-time evening model as an exemplar for the rest of the sector.

3.0.3   This shift brought about a more diverse student body, where far fewer students have previous higher education experience or indeed, high level 3 attainment (Heidi+ data shows that in 2008/09, the year before the ELQ policy was introduced, 46% of Birkbeck degree entrants with known entry qualifications had previously studied at HE level, compared with 21%, and declining, in 2017/18.) Our challenge today is that the type of student that might make up the majority elsewhere in the sector – in terms of ethnicity, age and socio-economic and educational background - are the minority at Birkbeck.

3.0.4   Whilst these changes have strengthened our access mission, they have brought challenges, in terms of attainment in particular. Under new academic leadership the College embarked on an ambitious review and change programme (the Student Experience Review) to address these issues. Rapid progress is being made in changing practice, curriculum and student support. It is too early to see the impact of this work on our key measures of student outcomes, which we recognise need to improve.

Figure 8: Theory of Change: Addressing the Continuation, Attainment and Progression gaps

Barriers to success	Institutional Complexity	Prior academic attainment	Attendance & academic engagement	Identity and belonging	Support seeking and availability	Monitoring and Evaluation
Activities	Student Experience Review Implementation - make the institution more consistent, navigable and transparent	Pre-sessional academic study skills Additional Year 1 academic and study support Use of 'Studiosity' to help with writing and problem solving	Review engagement policy and improve monitoring Create a 'digital scaffold' to support learning outside the classroom	Events aimed at promoting diversity; student networks Decolonising the curriculum working group Peer and alumni mentoring groups	New personal tutor guidelines and expectations Use of learner analytics to provide early intervention for those who are not engaging in study	
Outputs	Stronger academic identity Greater engagement in academic journey Higher academic achievement					
Outcomes	Improved continuation		Improved attainment		Improved progression	
Impact	Outcome gaps reduced					

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3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

3.1.1 By using the data provided by the OfS, our own institutional data and the analysis from our self-assessment, we have established key demographic groups that we want to make more targeted interventions to support. It is clear that we have had excellent outcomes in terms of access across all core target groups. Despite this success, and perhaps partly because of it, there are gaps in continuation and attainment which we need to work to address, and some improvements that should be made in relation to progression. Our aim by 2024/25 is to significantly reduce the gaps identified in the data. In order to do this, we have taken a multi layered approach.

3.1.2 Developing Research and Analysis

3.1.2.1 Under the supervision of the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education the College has begun a research project specifically aimed at understanding the possible drivers of our continuation and attainment gap between black and white students. This work has several strands. It will attempt to synthesise the ongoing national work in this area (such as the recent UUK report and national good practice), as well as examining academic research in this area. Multivariate analysis of internal datasets is also being conducted to examine predictors of attainment and differences in satisfaction and attitudes. Qualitative and quantitative research with the Birkbeck student body will begin in summer 2019. This work will explore academic, demographic and psychological factors including Stephenson's (2012)[8] exploration of "possible selves" and social comparison, stereotypes, and identity (Abrams *et al*, 2018)[9]. We will also build on previous HEFCE Catalyst-funded research at Birkbeck which showed three psychological variables to be strong indicators of student success: the extent to which students felt that significant others (family and friends) expected them to complete the course; the extent to which students believed they had chosen the wrong course; and the extent to which the students believed they had the ability to complete the course[10].

3.1.2.2 We anticipate that by the 2019-20 academic year our research will begin to directly inform further strategies to reduce the gaps in continuation and attainment. These will be evaluated through further quantitative analyses.

3.1.3 Alignment with other strategies

3.1.3.1 Access and Engagement

3.1.3.1.1 In 2018, a new and larger Access and Engagement Directorate was created – this activity previously having been part of another department. This strategic decision recognises the important role the activity plays across the student lifecycle and not just at the point of entry.

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[8] Stevenson, J. (2012) An exploration of the link between minority ethnic and white students degree attainment and views of their future "possible selves." Higher Education Studies 2(4)

[9] Abrams, D., Houston, D.M., Masser, B.M, & McKimmie, B. (2018) - A social identity model of educational achievement. In L. Argote and J. M. Levine (Eds), Handbook of Group and Organizational Learning. Oxford University Press

[10] Dewberry, C., (2018), 'An application of the theory of planned behavior to student retention', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 107, pp100-110

The new directorate reports directly to the Vice Chancellor, ensuring its work and strategic planning is embedded across institutional priorities.

3.1.3.1.2 The Access and Engagement team has spent many years increasing the uptake of study at Birkbeck with key demographic groups. In particular, its work with BTEC students in further education has had a positive impact on the number of students from diverse backgrounds. The team is also in partnership with London-based adult education and further education colleges to ensure that mature learners undertaking Pre-Access and Access to Higher Education courses, or similar level 2 and 3 qualifications, receive support from both their current institution and Birkbeck. Through strengthening our partnerships with London colleges we are able to collaborate with college staff to support raising attainment in numeracy for mature learners, ensure prospective students make informed decisions and improve students' levels of preparedness. Areas of development include: Birkbeck subject librarians supporting Access to HE learners at Morley College to improve their research skills; Birkbeck student academic mentors supporting Access to HE students at Westminster Kingsway College who are re-taking their GCSE Maths; Access & Engagement staff attending and contributing to college student advice events, such as the twice annual Morley College Knowledge Café; a partnership between City Lit, the Refugee Council and Birkbeck to deliver Digital Literacy workshops for forced migrants.

3.1.3.1.3 Working closely with the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education, the Access and Engagement team will be supporting the strategic commitment to close the gap through a department restructure, revision of its strategy and the development of an extensive programme of pre-entry support to address skills, confidence, resilience and belonging, before application and enrolment. This will complement the extensive on-course interventions across the student experience. The department is also utilising existing areas of good practice from other HEIs to inform its practice such as Kingston University's enrichment programme and UCL's Leading Routes.

3.1.3.1.4 We have considered the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010 in the development of the access and participation plan. We do not believe there to be any disadvantage to any protected group.

3.1.4 Student Success - Education strategy: The curriculum, pedagogic and student support

3.1.4.1 Institutional Complexity

Student Experience Review Implementation

3.1.4.1.1 The College carried out a comprehensive review of the student experience in 2017/18, covering all taught provision, academic practice and services. 2018/19 marks the first year of the implementation plan developed from this review. A key conclusion of the review was that the College had undergone considerable change in its student body and breadth of delivery and that organisational change was now required to support both students and staff. The overall aim of the implementation of the review is to make Birkbeck more navigable, supportive, transparent and consistent for all our students. The whole-institution strategy will bring about change, but this change is likely to have a more significantly positive effect on students who come from non-traditional backgrounds. The Student Experience Review implementation has several elements, including those listed below:

- Strengthening our enrolment operations to ensure that students applying later in the cycle (most of our applications from mature students are outside the UCAS process) are

enrolled and have sufficient information to make a good start at the beginning of the academic year.

- Optimisation of orientation and induction processes, to ensure students have a stronger understanding of the College and the support on offer.

- Revision of all core academic regulations, credit framework and progression rules to ensure consistency of outcomes across the College and all student groups.

- Enhanced monitoring of the outcomes (continuation, attainment etc.) for all student groups with annual scrutiny at subject, School and College level.

- The implementation of a new on-line module evaluation system – Blue by Explorance. This will be used to ensure cross-College engagement in module evaluation by our students and will provide a mechanism for prompt and good quality feedback to them in response to their views.

- Investment in, and development of, our approach to Digital Education to provide more flexible delivery (see Paragraph 3.1.5.2.2)

- Revision of personal tutor policies and related guidance to academic staff (see Paragraph 3.1.5.4.1).

- Improved engagement with our student body to ensure that we enhance the mechanisms for the student voice to be heard and acted upon.

- Institutional-level support to improve engagement with the National Student Survey and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey.

- Review of assessment and feedback processes in order to facilitate the implementation of best practice from parts of the College and externally, with the aim of ensuring that these processes support the best possible learning and achievement for our students.

- Review of how programmes are delivered across the academic year and the timing of examination schedules.

- Renovation of the library over the summers of 2019 and 2020 in order to provide more study spaces and better facilities for informal and small group learning.

- Development and bringing together of the Careers and Recruitment Services to ensure support is embedded across the College.

- The development of a holistic university-wide approach to mental health to support student wellbeing and ensure a step change approach in our services.

3.1.4.1.2 We anticipate that these cross-institutional developments will lead to an improvement in student experience, continuation, and attainment across all student groups. We expect that change in outcomes will be greater for disadvantaged student groups because making the College more navigable, supportive, transparent and consistent will be of greater benefit to those who are less familiar with, and comfortable in, the higher education context. Key outcomes in this area are numerical (improvements in continuation statistics, proportion of 'good' degrees and NSS scores) and we will be able to monitor change and use multivariate analysis to examine the outcomes on different student groups.

3.1.5   Strategic measures

3.1.5.1   Prior Academic Attainment

3.1.5.1.1 Statistical analysis of our internal data indicates that 18% of our attainment gap between black and white full-time students can be accounted for by differences in the qualifications they have before entering the College. We plan to develop both pre-sessional and first-year interventions to ensure that all students entering with non-standard or lower qualifications are supported in developing the academic skills they need to succeed in degree-level study. Some pilot work will begin in 2019 with further development 2019-20 and implementation in the 2020-21 academic year. It is anticipated that these workshops will focus on understanding higher education as well as Birkbeck systems and processes and then focus on library and research skills, academic writing/numeracy skills, time management, seminar and group working skills, and career planning. We will evaluate student satisfaction with these interventions and be able to examine their impact on longer term continuation and attainment.

3.1.5.1.2 In 2018-19 the College began a pilot of an innovative method of support for students provided by "Studiosity". This on-line service offers students the opportunity to obtain feedback on draft written work. The feedback is developmental and addresses issues such as grammar, spelling, punctuation and structure. In addition to this, a second service called 'Connect Live' provides students with on-line problem-solving for tasks in subjects such as maths and statistics. This on-line support is available 24/7 and feedback is provided within 24 hours. This form of support is particularly relevant to our student body, who may well be working during the day and studying late at night when it can be difficult to access support. Feedback from students in the first year of the pilot has been incredibly positive and the pilot will now be extended into 2019-20 for all taught students.

3.1.5.2 Attendance and Academic Engagement

3.1.5.2.1 A recently conducted analysis of our attendance data (attendance during 2018/19) demonstrates a clear 'attendance gap' between black and white students; this is most pronounced in the first year of study. It is likely that this is a key contributor to both our continuation and attainment gaps (for example white first year students have an average seminar attendance rate of 69% whereas their black peers have an attendance rate of only 56%[11]). We plan to explore the drivers of student attendance and to conduct interventions to improve this. This will take the form of a review of our attendance and engagement policies, personal tutor intervention when students do not attend, and further measures to provide online material to support students whose work commitments occasionally prevent attendance. We will also develop interventions to support engagement in seminars/workshops/laboratories as one possible driver of non-attendance may be lack of academic confidence[12]. We offer an evening nursery for students' children, and low-income students receive the full costs through either a childcare grant or funding from Birkbeck. We will continue to further examine our internal data on engagement and attendance and measure improvement against these interventions.

3.1.5.2.2 In addition to traditional engagement and attendance activity, our new digital education strategy aims to create an effective digital 'scaffold' around all our face-to-face provision in order to support all our students. This will provide additional academic resources,

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[11] Source: Birkbeck e-Registers student attendance system, 2018/9 academic year.

[12] Workshops with our academic staff on the possible causes of the attainment gap have identified the possibility that lack of academic confidence may be a driver of non-attendance at interactive learning events. We are further investigating this through survey work with our students.

opportunities to take part in on-line discussion fora and the opportunity to review lecture material.

3.1.5.3 Identity and Belonging

3.1.5.3.1 Birkbeck students combine study with the responsibilities of work (often full-time)[16], families and caring responsibilities. The vast majority live at home, as opposed to university or separate term-time accommodation. Many engage with the College in a quite instrumental way, just to attend classes. This makes our student body very different from that found in a traditional university and therefore fostering a sense of "identity as a student" and "belonging at Birkbeck" has extra challenges. However, a substantial amount of the academic literature demonstrates that cultivating this plays a role in academic success. A UUK/NUS survey[13], found that 72% of respondents felt that a lack of role models was a contributing factor to the ethnicity attainment gap. We are therefore going to expand our mentoring programmes and consult with students on how we might foster a stronger sense of academic community and identity.

3.1.5.3.2 Birkbeck currently delivers a number of different mentoring programmes focused on different student groups and stages of the student lifecycle. We aim to expand this provision and roll out a system of both peer and alumni-mentoring for our students. As we have relatively large proportions of BAME graduates we anticipate that this will be a rich source of advice and guidance and will help to provide role-models for our current BAME students.

3.1.5.3.3 A group of staff have also established a Decolonising the Curriculum Working Group which brings together members of the Birkbeck community to tackle the academic and institutional legacies that arise from the colonial encounter. The group operates on the basis that one of the key legacies of colonialism as it relates to higher education is that of racism. Racism in higher education continues to have a detrimental impact on the lives of BAME students and staff in higher education and may contribute to lower attainment rates of black students and lack of black professors and senior managers in higher education. The decolonising group through research, knowledge exchange, community engagement and activism seek to bring about fundamental change in educational and institutional practice at Birkbeck.

3.1.5.3.4 From 2019-20 the annual process of quality and portfolio monitoring at Birkbeck will require Departments to consider the inclusivity of their curriculum and the performance and engagement of students of different ethnic groups.

3.1.5.4 Support Seeking and Availability

3.1.5.4.1 Birkbeck's "time poor" students have busy lives. In juggling the responsibilities of work[14] and family, including caring responsibilities (see 1.3.1.1: age profile of Birkbeck students), it is often difficult for them to find the appropriate support at a convenient time. Academic staff report that mature students often feel that, as adults, they should be able to resolve difficulties themselves. We have revised our personal tutor policy and our guidance to staff and students. This will ensure that tutors and students meet early in the academic year, that roles and responsibilities are clear and that students understand how to seek support. We are also implementing an on-line system for personal tutors which will help them monitor their students'

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[13]   https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.aspx

[14] 65% of Birkbeck first Degree students tell us that they are in employment, 40% in full-time employment, 25% part-time employment; source: Birkbeck Enrolment Survey 2017/8, based on 3,328 respondents.

progress and record their interactions with them. This system will also employ "learner-analytics" (e.g. attendance data, course work submission, academic performance) in order that the tutor has early awareness of students who are not engaging with study or struggling with work. This will enable targeted intervention and appropriate support.

3.1.5.5 Progression support for students with disabilities

3.1.5.5.1 In January – March 2019, the UK employment rate among working-age people with a disability was 51.7%, compared to 81.7% for people without a disability, with people with mental health issues less likely to be in the workplace. In addition, 43.8% of working age adults with disabilities were economically inactive (not in work or looking for work), compared to 15.6% of those without disabilities[15]. As Birkbeck students tend to be older, we have higher numbers of long-term unemployed disabled students.

3.1.5.5.2 With this in mind, in 2017/18 we commissioned a piece of research to explore the challenges that our students face. The majority of students worried about the impact of their disability on their future employment and felt unconfident about opening up to employers about their disabilities and their needs. Some had also had negative experiences in the workplace.

3.1.5.5.3 As an outcome of the research, we developed the Ability Programme. The Ability Programme is a set of bespoke workshops designed specifically for students and recent graduates with a disability or neurodiverse condition, along with 12 four-week paid work experience placements, offered on a part-time basis so that students can spend time on their studies. The placements are for a range of jobs covering finance, marketing, software development and events management and in a range of companies, from The Telegraph to Reed Smith/Apple. Staff from Birkbeck, in the Careers and Disability services have open discussions with employers to agree workplace adjustments. The programme was designed in consultation with our disabled students who outlined the barriers that they faced in finding employment, including mature students who had previous employment experience but who felt that the employer had not been supportive, and the students subsequently had low confidence and low expectations of being able to find their desired employment. Workshops cover disability rights, grants applications, networking and confidence building. The Ability Programme's continued development and expansion will depend on ongoing evaluation. Although the programme has been very popular with students who attend the workshops, overall attendance has been low with 50 out of our almost 2,000 disabled students attending.

3.1.5.5.4 Our annual Enrolment Survey[16] shows us that 33% of disabled students come to study for career-related reasons, compared to 40% of non-disabled students. The primary reason that some disabled students choose to enter higher education is based purely on the ambition of getting a degree, and indeed, this is an important outcome in itself. Nevertheless, we would expect that students' aspirations and ambitions may change as they develop skills and confidence as they progress through their studies. We will track the extent that those hopes might change as their studies progress and identify the extent to which their ambitions have been fulfilled after graduation.

3.1.5.5.5 We also need to understand the distinction between the impact support services have had not just on students who have declared a disability, but between those that engage with support

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[15] https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7540

[16] Birkbeck enrolment survey: 2013/14 to 2018/19

services and those that do not, and the reasons why students might engage with support services, or not.

3.1.5.5.6 A higher percentage of BAME students are disabled and so we anticipate that other initiatives will also support the progression of disabled students.

3.1.5.5.7 We will work with academic staff to remove barriers to disabled students by ensuring that staff understand the basic tenets of an inclusive approach and using flexible methods in teaching and assessment.

3.1.5.5.8 We will be working to identify when disabled students are struggling at an earlier point. To this end, from 2018/19 we have assigned all disabled students with a key contact at the start of the year, which will remain their point of contact for the duration of their studies.

3.1.5.5.9 We have a Whole University Approach to Mental Health and have started to offer students workshops combining wellbeing and approaches to employment, which will be reviewed and evaluated at the end of 2018/19.

3.1.5.6 Financial Support

3.1.5.6.1 We recognise the importance of provision of financial advice and additional funding towards retention and success of students and we continue to provide a high level of investment in this area.

3.1.5.6.2 In 2018/19 we implemented a major change to the level of expenditure and approach to financial support for new students in order to re-direct investment to more effective areas of supporting student retention. This followed research carried out that identified that the amount of financial support students received did not have a statistically significant impact on their retention and success. Government maintenance loans for part-time students were introduced in 2018/19, which provided the opportunity to make changes to the financial support offering whilst ensuring that part-time students remained able to access additional maintenance support.

3.1.5.6.3 The new financial support scheme is based on making available more resources to students regarding financial advice and financial capability alongside a more detailed methodology for assessing student applications for financial awards. We assess undergraduate students' financial situations individually in order to give them a tailored package that includes referral to relevant sources of financial advice and an individualised assessment of any monetary award we might recommend, and this allows us to target funds to students who genuinely need them most and where they will have the most impact.

3.1.5.6.4 Awards from the fund are assessed using an 'additional need' method rather than just household income, and looking at the difference between a student's expected income for the academic year and accepted reasonable expenditure for their circumstances. The assessment of award and amount is dependent on individual circumstances and appropriate for students of Birkbeck where their financial commitments and circumstances is varied and where many Birkbeck students are mature with existing domestic commitments. We expect students to 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.

3.1.5.6.5 Alongside the financial support fund we have invested in enhancing our areas of advice and support to meet the needs of Birkbeck students, including;

- o a partnership with Citizens Advice; we have a dedicated Citizens Advice advisor based on-site one day a week so that students can seek advice and support on financial matters as well as other welfare issues.

- o running financial budgeting workshops in partnership with corporate partners from the banking industry.

- o offering one to one budget management meetings

3.1.5.6.6 We will continue this scheme and level of investment in financial support in 2020/21 and beyond. We will also continue to operate the following additional support funds:

- o 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.

- o Fee reduction scheme - based on application, for students with discretionary leave to remain or limited leave to remain in the UK, who are not eligible for student loans and maintenance.

- o Disability and dyslexia funds – including; dyslexia screening and assessments and contributions towards assistive IT.

- o Graduation fund – to support priority group students with costs to attend graduation

- o Course Costs – fund to support some course costs for low-income students and priority groups, including costs for childcare and field trips.

3.1.5.6.7 Undergraduate students who started prior to 2018/19 will continue to receive a cash bursary in each year of study based on household income.

3.2   Student consultation

3.2.1   We provided the Birkbeck Students' Union with details of our access and participation work, attended their Executive Committee to discuss it, and will work with the incoming student officers to provide a briefing at the beginning of their term of office. We have invited discussion on our proposed targets, the positive outcomes that we achieve in access and the ongoing challenges we face in continuation and attainment. We have developed a consultative overview in conjunction with the SU to set out how they can most meaningfully be involved in the ongoing monitoring of the access and participation work. The SU are represented on the College's Education Committee, where all the Student Experience Review projects are reported.

3.2.2   To support the SU's involvement in access and participation projects, the College have allocated a grant for the Students' Union to bid for projects to support improvement of student outcomes, and we expect that the projects emerging from this process will work with our priority groups and will support the APP targets. The College has agreed a budget for the Students' Union to support its operation, including employing Student Reps for each of the five Schools, to further improve student engagement.

3.2.3   The research work currently being conducted into the experience of black students at Birkbeck will include the input of students through questionnaires and focus groups. The monitoring of the projects to improve our results will continue to ensure the input of students from across the student body, and we have recently introduced a new module evaluation survey tool which we will use to develop a better understanding of the student experience from an access and participation viewpoint.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

3.3.1 Strategic context

3.3.1.1 We completed the OfS self-assessment tool and recognise that we need to develop and embed an institution-wide approach to evaluation, if we are to meet the ambitious targets we set ourselves. We have made student success data available College-wide (via our data visualisation service Tableau), and academic staff are required to engage with this in our annual programme monitoring. We have conducted staff briefings and training to build academic and professional services capacity to interrogate data and identify trends. This monitoring has had an impact on strategy and planning across the student lifecycle, and there are plans to introduce a programme of consistent College-wide evaluation of initiatives and interventions.

3.3.1..2 The College will resource and implement the structures and processes described below. We aim to have this in place during the 2019/20 academic year.

3.3.2 Programme design

3.3.2.1 Central to our approach is the continuation of our own research and review of national and international research into the barriers to success that our target student groups face. We have identified and will keep under review a set of barriers that we are working to eradicate (see Figure 8), and recognise that these will and should evolve over time.

3.3.2.2 A set of College-wide KPIs for the programme will be established. These will include the targets in the APP and other targets.

3.3.2.3 All intervention activities will be linked to one or more identified 'barriers to success' (see Figure 8).

3.3.2.4 The following group and roles will be put in place:

- Success and Progression Activities Oversight Group: chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and containing directors of professional services and senior academic staff, this group will steer and oversee all activity on behalf of the Education Committee. For a given intervention activity, we will identify:

  o Intervention owner: a member of academic staff or a member of the Access and Engagement team.
  o Project Manager: responsible for ensuring that the initiative is produced on time and to required quality.
  o Evaluation owner: responsible for the evaluation of the initiative (design, collection, analysis, recommended outcomes).

3.3.2.5 The Oversight Group will consider the outcomes under the following headings: i) Assessment of success of the activity against objectives, ii) recommendation as to whether or not the activity should continue, or continue in a modified form and at what scale, iii) commentary on potential impact on College success and progression KPIs, iv) commentary on likely cost, including impact on staff workloads, v) risk analysis.

3.3.3 Evaluation design

3.3.3.1 We have used the 'three-step evaluation tool', which Birkbeck helped to develop in 2018 with OFFA[17] as part of the strand looking at mature learners with low or no prior qualifications. This tool has proven to be effective in our outreach work, and we will seek to build on this approach.

3.3.3.2 All interventions must have the following products documented: description of intervention and who it is aimed at (target group), aims and objectives (outcomes), measures linked to objectives, evaluation design (using experimental design where possible), qualitative evaluation plan (where appropriate), quantitative evaluation plan containing data collection definitions, timings and responsibilities.

3.3.4 Evaluation implementation

3.3.4.1 Most of our interventions are College-wide; although some will be experimental and targeted at a subset of the target student group.

3.3.4.2 Where an intervention is College-wide, as most of the Student Experience Review interventions are, we can measure student outcomes before and after the intervention. With multiple improvement activities in play at once, identifying the impact of a given intervention can be challenging. We will identify clear and precise aims and objectives for a given intervention, and will associate metrics linked to these. Qualitative impact reviews, such as focus groups, have an important role to play here, as does a more nuanced understanding of pre-intervention practice and student outcomes in different academic departments.

3.3.4.3 A significant issue found in evaluation to date (in the HEFCE Catalyst funded experimental interventions project) was insufficient data for all groups in order to establish statistically robust findings; also that the desired outcome, for example better degree attainment or continuation, may only be known months or years after the intervention. Both of these issues need to be mitigated in the evaluation design: for example, by measuring proxies (e.g. module marks as a proxy for degree outcome) and using measures on a continuous scale.

3.3.4.4 The Director of Planning (who will be a member of the Oversight Group) will own the feedback loop for evaluation, assess the success of our approach to evaluation and recommend changes in structure and practice to the Oversight Group.

3.3.5 Learning to shape improvements

3.3.5.1 This will be a standing item on Education Committee and Strategic Planning Committee, from 2019/20. Education Committee will agree the intervention activities (including curricular changes and changes to practice) that will be carried out, and at what scale. Strategic Planning Committee will agree allocation of resources.

3.3.5.2 There will be termly staff briefings for both academic and professional staff about progress and research findings. We plan to contribute to the Evidence and Impact Exchange once we have research to share. We will find an equivalent mechanism for communication with students.

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[17] Office for Fair Access (2017). Understanding the impact of outreach on access to higher education for disadvantaged adult learners. Office for Fair Access

3.3.5.3 Education Committee will identify interventions that are to be 'mainstreamed' into College practice. At this stage an assessment of required resource will be undertaken, and escalated to Strategic Planning Committee if this is significant.

3.3.6 Evaluation of financial support

3.3.6.1 In 2017/18 the Catalyst funded research found that the amount of institutional financial support students received did not have a statistically significant impact on retention and success.

3.3.6.2 In 2018/19 we implemented a major change to the level of expenditure and approach to financial support for new students. We reduced overall expenditure on financial support, and invested in providing support to students through financial advice and capability support as well as a financial support fund that provides targeted awards based on full assessment of individual circumstances.

3.3.6.3 We will re-use our own survey and statistical tools to evaluate the impact of the revised financial support package alongside the introduction of part-time maintenance loans. We plan to continually evaluate and review our financial support package to ensure it meets the needs of Birkbeck students and is an effective use of resources towards supporting student success.

3.3.6.4 We do not intend to use the survey and statistical tools from the Office for Students Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit; it is not appropriate for the Birkbeck student demographic as the data set has only been designed to consider full-time students. We do intend to use the interview tool of the Office for Students toolkit.

3.3.6.5 Our evaluation of the new financial support package will consist of:

- A survey of students on their access to student financial advice and access to financial support funds.

- A rerun of analysis to identify significant factors in student attainment and continuation including receipt of institutional financial support.

- Comparison of retention rates of those in receipt of financial support.

- Demographic analysis of recipients by ethnicity, gender, disability

- Use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

3.4.1 Progress against targets in the APP plan will be updated annually, as updated data on, e.g. attainment and continuation, becomes available. This is too infrequent to understand whether the programme of work is having the desired impact. We will develop proxy measures such as in-year student withdrawal and student attendance, in order to get more frequent feedback.

3.4.2 Programme KPIs and proxies will be reported to Education Committee on a termly basis, along with a verbal assessment of progress and recommendations. The Oversight Group will be responsible for compiling this, with the Director of Planning responsible for the reporting of the metrics.

4.   Provision of information to students

4.1   Fees and Financial Support

4.1.1   Students are charged an annual tuition fee in each year of their programme. Information regarding fees and annual increases are made available in the College Fees Policy, on online course listings and also in the Confirmation of Study Agreement (COSA), which is a document issued to all new undergraduate students when they start their programme of study with Birkbeck.

4.1.2   Financial support available to undergraduate students is detailed on the Birkbeck website and makes it clear which cohort and groups of students are eligible. We are committed to ensuring students in receipt of financial support continue to receive support for the duration of their studies in line with the financial support they receive in the first year of their programme, dependent on eligibility.

4.2   Publicising the Access and Participation Plan

4.2.1   We will publish 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), Governance page (www.bbk.ac.uk/about-us/governance) and Access and Engagement department page (www.bbk.ac.uk/outreach).

Annex: Birkbeck Students' Union's Statement

Throughout the development of the Access and participation plan, the Students' Union have been consulted in a number of ways. The College have attended one of our Executive Committee meetings, which our six paid Officer and Chair of Student Council sit on, as well as providing a written summary for the Union Officers around the plans and targets for the plan. The Union have been asked to provide feedback on the College's drafts of the Access and Participation plan and have made amendments based on the feedback the Union have provided.

In the 2018/19 academic year, the College provided the Students' Union with funding for the 'School Reps' which is a paid student staff role that focusses on working with Course Reps in each school as well as building community through creating more academic societies. We believe that these roles are key to involving more students in providing feedback for the consultation around the Access and participation plan implementation. The continuation of this role relies on the Union receiving additional funding from the College each year.

The Students' Union and the College are in the process of developing a student consultation agreement, which will outline how the College and Union might work together in the future to ensure student input into all projects surrounding the Access and participation plan. The Union is keen to work with the College to ensure that the College progresses to meet the proposed targets in the plan. We would like to work with the College on the intervention planning, as well as being involved in the College's implementation and delivery of the interventions.

The Students' Union welcomes the College's increased commitment to improving the progression rates of our students and closing the attainment gap between white and black students.

In furthering this work, the Students' Union would like to see the College commit to:

- Enhancing its mentoring programmes by creating more opportunities for current students, alumni, people in industry and College staff to act as mentors to our current students;
- Introduce compulsory race equity training for all College staff, starting with those in student-facing roles;
- Continuing to fund the Students' Union's School Reps project for the duration of the Access and Participation Plan. Currently, the Students' Union hire one student per School to help drive the work of our Academic Societies, enhancing students' sense of belonging to Birkbeck.

Access and participation plan
Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: Birkbeck College

Provider UKPRN: 10007760

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	Standard Fee 2017/18 or later starters	£9,250
Foundation degree	Standard Fee 2017/18 or later starters	£7,375
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	Standard Fee	£6,325
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	Standard Fee	£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	Standard Fee 2017/18 or later starters	£6,935
Foundation degree	Standard Fee 2017/18 or later starters	£5,530
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	Fee tier 1	£3,150
CertHE/DipHE	Fee tier 2	£3,935
CertHE/DipHE	Fee tier 3	£4,740
CertHE/DipHE	Fee tier 4	£5,200
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Birkbeck College

Provider UKPRN: 10007760

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 (£)	£380,814.00	£395,402.00	£408,462.00	£419,285.00	£430,502.00
Access (pre-16)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Access (post-16)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Access (adults and the community)	£380,814.00	£395,402.00	£408,462.00	£419,285.00	£430,502.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£699,000.00	£681,000.00	£612,500.00	£594,000.00	£594,000.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£13,167,875.00	£13,014,325.00	£12,985,975.00	£12,988,300.00	£12,988,300.00
Access investment	2.9%	3.0%	3.1%	3.2%	3.3%
Financial support	5.3%	5.2%	4.7%	4.6%	4.6%
Research and evaluation	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
Total investment (as %HFI)	9.0%	9.0%	8.6%	8.6%	8.7%

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Birkbeck College

Provider UKPRN: 10007760

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 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
	PTA_1												
	PTA_2												
	PTA_3												
	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 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
Eliminate non-continuation gap for full-time degree students from low IMD quintiles	PTS_1	Socio-economic	Percentage difference in continuation of full-time degree students in IMD quntiles 1 and 2 compared to 3,4 and 5.	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	3%	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%	Aim to eliminate this gap fully.
Eliminate 'unexplained' non-continuation gap for black students	PTS_2	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in continuation between white and black students on both full-time and part-time first degrees	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	8%	8%	8%	7%	5%	4%	Half of the gap is explained by qualification on entry, leaving a 4% gap that is 'unexplained' by other factors.
Eliminate gap in continuation for full-time mixed race students	PTS_3	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in continuation between mixed race and white students on full-time undergraduate programmes	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	0%	We aim to eliminate this gap fully.
Eliminate gap in continuation of Asian part-time degree students	PTS_4	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in continuation between Asian and white students on part-time degree programmes	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	15%	12%	10%	8%	6%	3%	Aim to eliminate the gap fully by 2025/26.
Halve attainment gap for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.	PTS_5	Socio-economic	Percentage difference in attainment of part-time degree students in IMD quintiles 1 and 2 compared to 3,4 and 5.	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	16%	15%	14%	12%	10%	9%	Our aim is to halve the gap (i.e. to 8%) by 2025/26. See commentary in section 2.
Eliminate 'unexplained' attainment gap for black students	PTS_6	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in attainment of a good degree between white and black students on full-time first degrees	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	31%	30%	28%	24%	15%	13%	A third of the gap is explained by qualification on entry and socioeconomic background (IMD): leaving two thirds 'unexplained'.
Eliminate 'unexplained' attainment gap for black students	PTS_7	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in attainment of a good degree between white and black students on part-time first degrees	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	38%	35%	35%	25%	20%	16%	A third of the gap is explained by qualification on entry and socioeconomic background (IMD): leaving two thirds (14%) 'unexplained'. Our aim is to reduce the gap to 14% by 2025/26.
Eliminate 'unexplained' attainment gap for full-time mixed race students	PTS_8	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in attainment of a good degree between mixed race and white students on full-time degree programmes	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	10%	10%	8%	6%	5%	4%	Aim to eliminate the unexplained gap by 2024/25 leaving 4% which is explained by other factors.
Eliminate 'unexplained' attainment gap for part-time mixed race students	PTS_9	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in attainment of a good degree between mixed race and white students on part-time degree programmes	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	20%	18%	16%	14%	12%	10%	Aim to eliminate the unexplained gap by 2025/26 leaving 8% which is explained by other factors.
Eliminate attainment gap for full-time Asian students	PTS_10	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in attainment of a good degree between Asian and white students on full-time degree programmes	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	10%	8%	5%	3%	0%	0%	Aim to eliminate this gap fully.
Eliminate attainment gap for part-time Asian students	PTS_11	Ethnicity	Percentage difference in attainment of a good degree between Asian and white students on part-time degree programmes	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	27%	24%	20%	14%	8%	4%	Aim to eliminate the gap fully by 2025/26.

Table 2c - Progression

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
Reduce progression to graduate level activity gap in under-represented groups	PTP_1	Disabled	Halve gap between those with no disability and those who are disabled (part-time and full-time degree students).	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	10%	10%	8%	7%	6%	5%	See commentary in section 2.
Reduce progression to graduate level activity gap in under-represented groups	PTP_2	Ethnicity	Halve progression gap between part-time black and white degree students	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	20%	18%	18%	15%	12%	9%	See commentary in section 2.
Reduce progression to graduate level activity gap in under-represented groups	PTP_3	Ethnicity	Eliminate progression gap between full-time black and white degree students	No	The access and participation dataset	2016-17	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	0%	See commentary in section 2.
	PTP_4												

PTP_5											
PTP_6											
PTP_7											
PTP_8											