University of Durham

**Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25**

1. ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

Background

1. Durham University is a globally prominent, highly selecting institution, with demanding degree programmes. Durham recognises that many of its indicators of success can also be barriers to students traditionally under-represented in higher education. Demanding entry standards and a perception of high cost may discourage students who are already likely to become disaffected with formal education or lack confidence in their academic ability.[1]

2. The following analysis looks at each of the key under-represented groups through the three undergraduate student lifecycle phases of access, student success and progression, and then looks at intersections between the groups. Unless otherwise indicated the analysis takes its data from the OfS access and participation dataset.

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socio-economic status:

Access

3. For Durham, along with other high tariff institutions, the most significant access challenge is the participation of students from areas of lower higher education participation neighbourhood (LPN), lower household income and lower socio-economic status groups.   In recent years we have worked hard to increase the proportion of students from ACORN (A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods) categories 4 and 5, rising from 7% in 2012-13 to 13.4% in 2018/19 (internal data). That said, we have a large enrolment gap between the most and least represented groups as measured by POLAR4 quintiles, i.e. quintile 1 which is the Low Participation Neighbourhood group and quintile 5 (the highest participating in higher education). We are a long way from the OfS national target of reducing the ratio between quintiles 5 and 1 at high tariff institutions to 3:1 by 2024-25. Whilst the average ratio among high tariff institutions is currently 5:1, at Durham it is nearly 10:1.

4. For Durham to address this gap we need to take account of the fact that we not only have a small proportion of students in quintile 1 (LPN), but also the majority of our students are in quintile 5 which makes this ratio particularly problematic. Quintile 5 includes the postcode areas for many of the best performing schools in the country.

5. The pattern of quintiles over time looks like this.
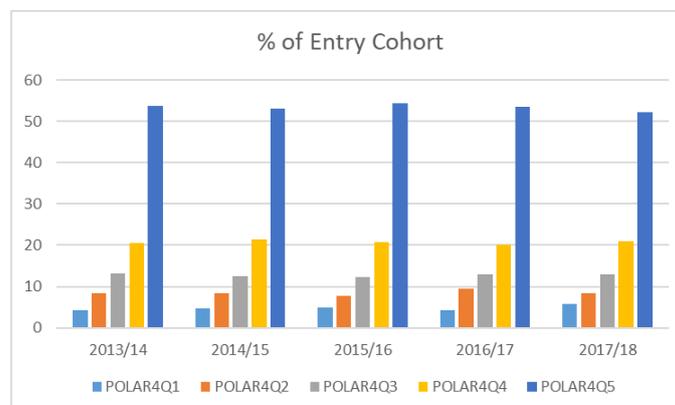

6. The same pattern is demonstrated in the quintiles for the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Proportion of IMD quintiles
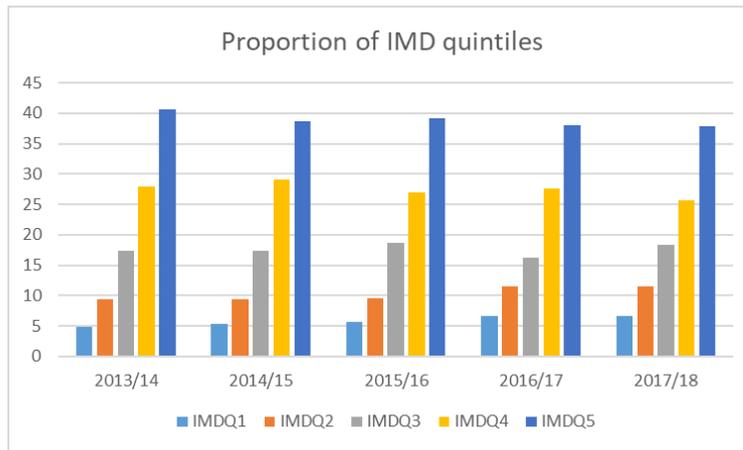
7. We cannot achieve the change through contextual offer making only. Our internal data shows that the ratio between quintiles 5 and 1 at the application stage is above 8:1, and even with the concerted effort of the current cycle, contextual offer-making will not be enough to achieve 3:1.

8. Undoubtedly, we need to generate more quintile 1 applications. Doubling the number of LPN students would bring Durham close to the average LPN population for universities in the North East, but we will have to go further to close the ratio to 3:1. We have to grow the proportion of students across quintiles 1 to 4.

Success

9. If we look at Durham's percentage point gap in non-continuation and attainment between POLAR4 quintiles 5 and 1, for most years the gap is small and according to the OfS analysis is not statistically significant. So whilst we cannot ignore the gap, it is not our first priority.


% of students awarded first or upper second
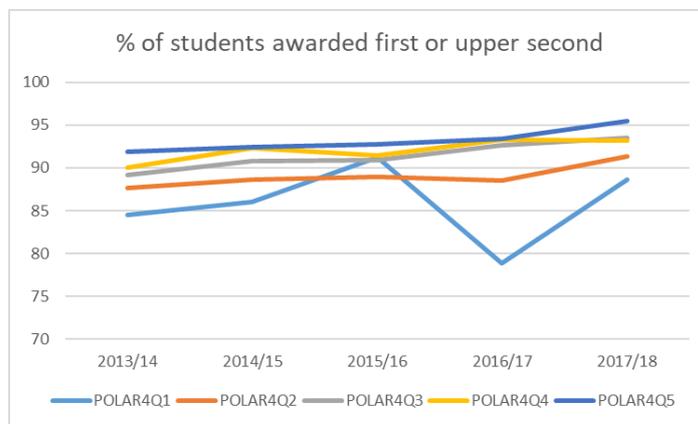
Progression

10. There is no significant gap in the progression of the different POLAR4 quintiles into highly skilled employment or higher level study.


% of students in highly-skilled employment or higher level study
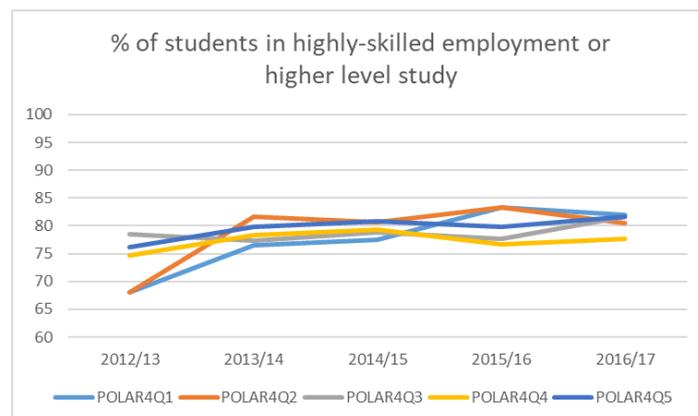
1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access

11. Durham also has an access challenge around the ethnic mix of its intake. Whilst the BAME proportion of all UK domiciled students at Durham has been increasing over recent years, it remains below the UK average, because there are geographical factors at work. Durham's position is consistent with its regional context. The population of the North East Region is not very ethnically diverse, and this is reflected in the ethnic diversity of the NE universities (with the exception of Sunderland and Newcastle which now have London campuses). That said, Durham has a particular issue around the proportion of black students, which we have begun to address by generating higher levels of participation in access schemes by black young people and forming effective relationships with groups that support black students. In October 2018 Durham was awarded a Corporate Fellowship Award by the Reach Society for its work in this area. The challenge is illustrated in the following figure.
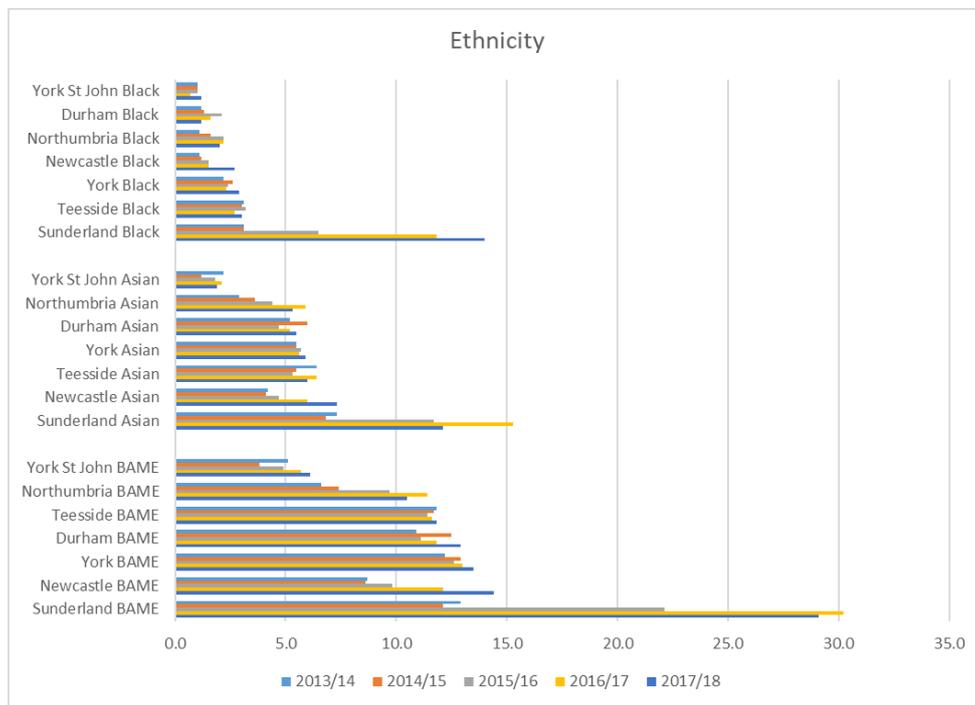

Success

12. The number of black students in the home population at Durham is small, which creates an issue of statistical significance when looking at the gap with white students in non-continuation rate and degree class attainment. The non-continuation gap is more marked.
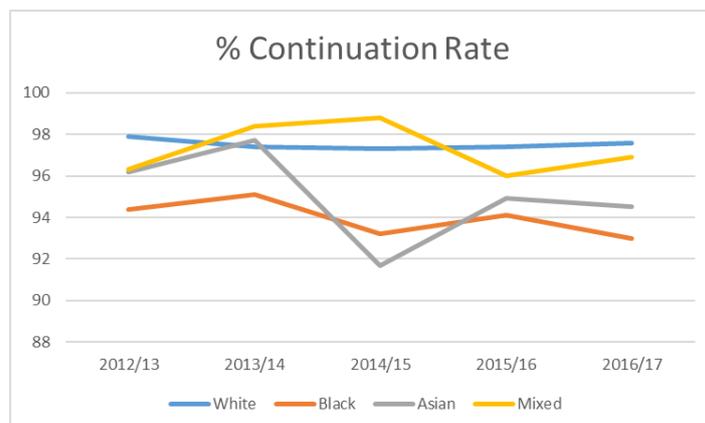
13. The small gap in attainment was at its narrowest in 2018.

% of students awarded first or upper second
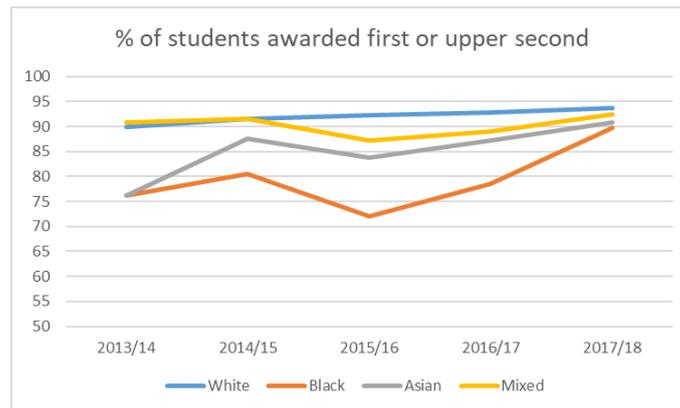
Progression

14. There is no gap in progression by ethnicity. About 80% of both white and BAME graduates enter highly skilled employment or higher level study. In the particular case of black students, there was only one year with a statistically significant gap, when black students progressed to highly-skilled employment or higher level study at a higher rate than white students.

1.3 Mature students

Access

15. The University has reduced its proportion of mature students as a consequence of a policy of focussing our Foundation Programme recruitment on mature students with other under-represented characteristics rather than mature students in general. The proportion of mature student entrants has fallen from 5.7% in 2013/14 to 3.4% in 2017/18.

Success

16. Durham offers a student experience that is designed overwhelmingly for young people and we have to consider how to adapt this for mature students. Historically, we have not given enough attention, beyond the foundation year, to the academic support of non-traditional mature entrants, as the analysis on success shows. We have to be sure that the offering is appropriate, reducing the gap in continuation and attainment, before growing the number of mature students.

% Continuation Rate
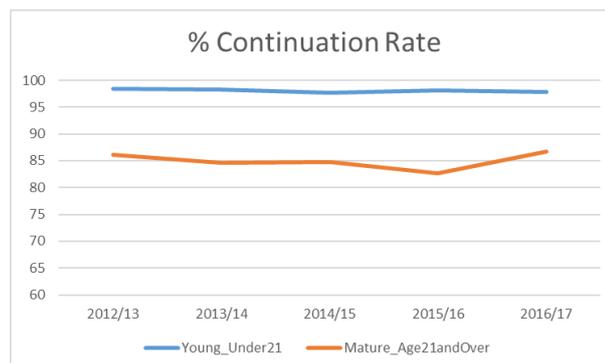
17. One of the reasons for the success gap is the intersection between mature students and other under-represented characteristics. Many mature students come from contexts of LPN, ACORN 4/5, disability and diverse ethnicity. Of all our target groups, it is therefore the most urgent cohort for intervention in student success. The problem has not been ignored. To alleviate the short-term challenges faced by mature students who enter through the Foundation Programme, the Programme has developed a more sophisticated admissions process, allowing us to better assess the varied support needs of students who typically have not taken A-levels, and has introduced a suite of formative assessments very early in the first term to inform early interventions with students facing difficulties.

% of students awarded first or upper second
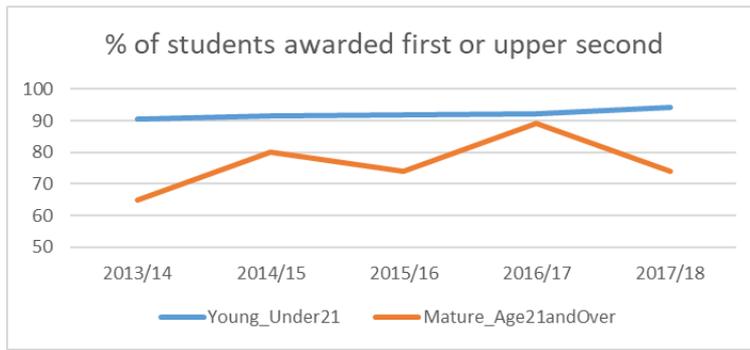
Progression to employment or further study

18. Mature students who complete their degree programme have a very high rate of progression into highly skilled employment or higher level study, and it exceeds that of young students.

1.4 Disabled students

Access

19. Durham has seen a fairly consistent growth in the proportion of disabled students among the home student population and this is driven particularly by students with mental health issues, as the following graph illustrates.

Growth in the proportion of disabled students
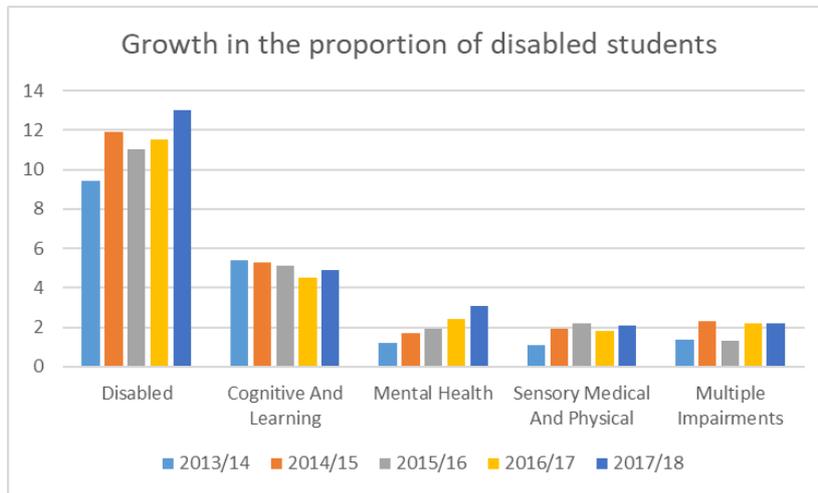
Success

20. We have invested significantly in our mental health support in the University in recent years which has impacted directly on the continuation rate of students with this form of disability. Otherwise, whilst the gap in attainment is not consistent, it is nonetheless an issue to be addressed.

% Continuation Rate

% of students awarded first or upper second
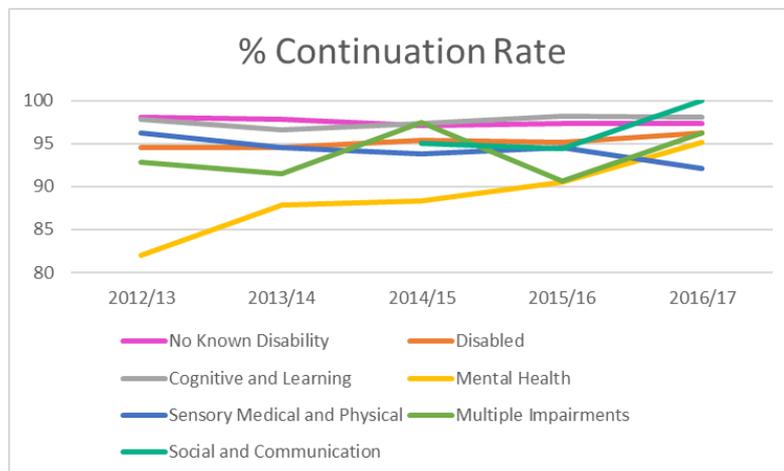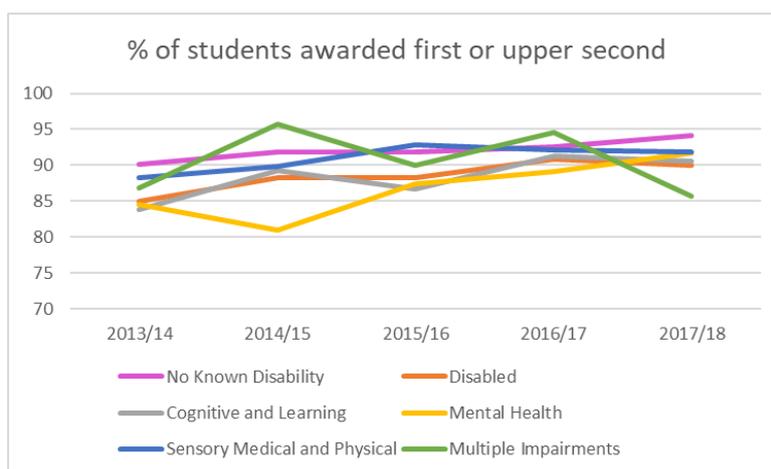
Progression to employment or further study

21. The outcomes achieved by Durham graduates are outstanding, and this extends to disabled students.

% of students in highly-skilled employment or higher level study
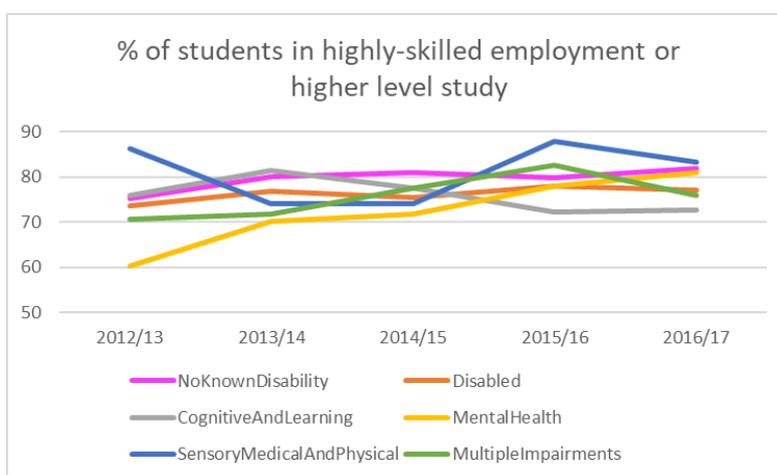
22. The small gap between disabled and non-disabled students in their progression to highly-skilled employment or higher level study is so small that in most years it is statistically insignificant. In the TEF 3 metrics we had positive flags for every year and for every under-represented student group, including disabled students. Therefore in a benchmarked context, this is a strong performance, but not one about which we can be complacent.

1.5 Care leavers

23. We recognise that many children in care have experienced a disrupted education which affects their academic performance. The numbers at Durham are too small to be subject to statistical analysis so instead we have used national research published by the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)[2] and the Centre for Social Justice[3] to inform our support for these students. We have also looked at the work and recommendations of the children in care and care leavers charity Become[4]. Our approach is also informed by our work with other North East universities through the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP) and we have established a collaborative target for access using Department for Education data.

Access

24. Durham has a very low number of care leavers applying each year. Our experience is verified by NNECL's research, published in "Moving On Up: Pathways of care leavers and care-experienced students into and through higher education" (Neil Harrison, November 2017). The report states that "care leavers were around 11% less likely to enter higher education than other young people with similar demographic profiles and qualification levels." We recognise that access is an issue

particularly for a university like Durham with our high entry requirements being less attractive to a group more likely to have weaker qualification profiles.

Success

25. We note from NNECL's report that care leavers are around 38% more likely to withdraw from their course and not return. However, their reasons for withdrawal were similar to other students, with academic issues being the most common. The implication is that any measures we put in place to support disadvantaged students more generally will support care leavers. We also note that once entry qualifications and the demographic profile of care leavers are taken into account there is little difference in achievement of a first or upper second class degree in comparison with other students. Our priority for our work with care leavers, therefore, remains one of access.

Progression to employment or further study

26. There is limited research available concerning progression to employment or further study. This is an area where we recognise the need to gather more evidence, using our NERAP collaboration as a source.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

27. We have looked closely at the two-dimensional intersections between under-represented groups, using data from UK entrants into Level 1 across four academic years (2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19). In the total of 13,685 students, 11.5% had a known disability, 4.9% were mature students; 12.0% were BAME; 5.6% were from Low Participation Neighbourhoods; and 13.0% were from ACORN 4-5 postcodes.

	Acorn 4/5	Known Disability	Ethnicity BAME	Gender Male	LPN	Mature
Acorn 4/5						
Known Disability	weak correlation					
Ethnicity BAME	strong correlation	negative correlation				
Gender Male	negative correlation	negative correlation	weak correlation			
LPN	strong correlation	no correlation	weak correlation	negative correlation		
Mature	strong correlation	weak correlation	weak correlation	weak correlation	strong correlation	

Legend: strong correlation (dark blue); weak correlation (light blue); negative correlation (pink); no correlation (yellow).

28. Mature student entrants were the group most likely to have more than one under-represented characteristic. Mature students were more likely than young students to have a known disability (21.0% of mature students did, compared to 11.0% of young students). They were more likely to be from an LPN than young students (17.3% to 5.0%). They were much more likely to be from ACORN 4-5 (40.7% to 11.5%). Mature students were more likely to be BAME (17.4% BAME) than young students (11.8% BAME), but the proportion of mature students who were also BAME fell between 2015/16 and 2018/19.

29. ACORN 4-5 entrants were the second group most likely to have more than one under-represented characteristic. They were more likely to be mature students (15.5% from ACORN 4-5 were mature students, compared to 3.4% of other ACORN categories), more likely to be BAME (25.1% of ACORN 4-5 compared to 10.1% of other ACORN categories) and slightly (but diminishingly so) more likely to have a known disability (13.1% of ACORN 4-5 compared to 11.3% of other ACORN categories).

30. Entrants from Low Participation Neighbourhoods were more likely to be mature students (15.1% LPN compared to 4.3% non-LPN) and were slightly more likely to be BAME (15.7% LPN compared to 11.8% non-LPN).

31. Gender did not seem to overlap significantly with other groups. The overall gender split was 52.6% to 48.4% female to male. In view of a national concern around white working class males, we looked at a single three-dimensional intersection, between ethnicity, gender and LPN areas: white entrants from LPN postcodes made up a smaller proportion of the overall male entrant population (4.2%) than they did from the overall female entrant population (5.2%). White working class males are therefore more likely to be absent from Durham than white working class females.

32. Overall, the multidimensional analysis suggests that our future focus for access should be on ACORN 4/5 and LPN students and their intersections with other indicators of disadvantage. There would be merit in targeting mature student access since in Durham's population they are likely to have multiple under-represented characteristics. However, we need to develop an offering that will ensure that any increase in mature student entrants is matched by their success.

33. The differences in the success and progression data for under-represented groups are small, and therefore the differences for intersecting groups are even smaller, too small to draw any conclusions about their relative success or progression.

34. In addition to the categories of under-representation above, we will investigate how income intersects with other forms of disadvantage. We will examine how we can capture free school meals (FSM) data as a marker for students from socio-economically deprived backgrounds who may not be recognised in other measures of under-representation such as ACORN or POLAR4.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education
People who are estranged from their families

35. Durham has recently taken the Strand Alone Pledge to support students who are estranged from their families. As it is very hard to identify students who fall into this category we do not have a level of data that allows us to properly analyse the access, success and progression of these students. We are working with students who have identified themselves by joining the Durham Estranged Students group in order to understand their personal circumstances and barriers to success.

2. STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

36. Educational excellence is one of Durham's three core strategic goals. We aspire to provide our students an education of the highest quality: on the cutting edge of research, methodologically rigorous and nourishing of critical and creative thinking. To fulfil this strategic goal, Durham must be diverse, equitable and inclusive.

    - We must create a *diverse* community, reflecting the range of experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and geographic region.

    - We must be *equitable*. We guarantee fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, faculty, and staff while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of marginalized groups.

    - We must be *inclusive*, creating environments in which any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued.

37. The pursuit of diversity, equity and inclusion should inform every aspect of Durham's educational offer. They are essential to the realisation of our strategic goal: welcoming talented students from all backgrounds and enabling every one of them to thrive and excel.

38. Durham is aware of the challenges that it faces across access, student success and progression, and widening participation features strongly in the University's ten year strategy. Durham will achieve these strategic goals by committing:

- to generate applications from disadvantaged groups through highly targeted outreach activity;
- to adopt a holistic approach to assessment of merit and potential, including the use of information about the context of prior achievement;
- to ensure a high degree of academic and non-academic support to all students, but to be targeted towards at-risk cohorts where necessary;
- to focus on employability by offering opportunities to develop key skills and to engage with employers;
- to offer financial support packages to support access, success and progression where there is most need;
- where possible to use the experience and expertise of our staff and students to inform good practice.

2.1 Target groups
Rationale for targeting based on self-assessment

39. Our self-assessment indicates that the following are the areas most in need of major action:

- Recruitment of students from low participation neighbourhoods (LPN).
- Recruitment of students from the black community.
- The gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between disabled students and non-disabled students.
- The gap in success between mature students and those classed as young entrants.
- Recruitment of care leavers.

40. Other areas where we can still improve are considered in section 3, 'Strategic Measures', below.

2.2 Aims and Objectives
LOW PARTICIPATION NEIGHBOURHOODS

Stage of lifecycle targeted: Access

Measurable objective: To greatly increase the number of LPN students and in doing so close the gap at Durham between the most represented and the least represented.

Timescale: The University intends to reach a ratio between quintiles 5 and 1 of POLAR4 to 3:1 by 2024-25.

Interim indicators of success: Increase in applications/enrolments monitored by POLAR4 data from UCAS and HESA.

Commentary

41. Durham can be bolder in its use of contextual information and data in judging applications and making differential offers, and our recent centralisation of admissions will provide the opportunity to implement more radical change using POLAR4 quintiles. We expect to make timely progress but recognise the scale of our challenge in reaching a ratio of 3:1 by 2024/25. We will review the entire lifecycle of LPN students to ensure equality of opportunity and high levels of retention and attainment.

BLACK STUDENTS

Stage of lifecycle targeted: Access

Measurable objective: To greatly increase the number of students from the UK black community.

Timescale: The University intends to add 100 UK domiciled black students by 2024/25.

Commentary

42. As an international University, Durham has a rich cultural background and an environment where cultural diversity is celebrated, and we wish to encourage more students from under-represented UK domiciled ethnicities to apply to Durham. Whilst a large part of our focus is on LPN students we understand the need to be ambitious in supporting BAME students. In view of the DfE's Destination Measure statistics for the entry of black students into high tariff universities, Durham recognises the particular need to support the entry of students from the black community.

43. When dealing with this issue, the most significant barrier is one of geography. Durham is not based in an area of the UK with a great deal of ethnic diversity and students with low aspirations are often unwillingly to move significantly from their local area. We must therefore do more to access communities in other parts of the UK where there is greater diversity.

44. We will continue to build upon the goodwill that has been generated through Durham's partnership working, such as with the Reach Society, to engage talented black students. The University has also used the student voice to define its work in this area by listening to the experiences of its current BAME students, and has involved its staff BAME network in planning this Access and Participation Plan.

DISABLED STUDENTS

Stage of lifecycle targeted: Success

Measurable objective: To decrease the gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between disabled students and non-disabled students. To analyse performance by disability type.

Timescale: The University intends to greatly reduce the gap in degree outcome between disabled and non-disabled students by 2024/25.

Interim indicators of success: End of year of course marks and final degree outcome data.

Commentary

45. Durham has always been able to offer sector-leading support to disabled students, but given the inconsistency in the level of achievement of disabled students, we need to continue our work around inclusive teaching. We will look further at how different types of disability affect performance so we can understand the types of inclusive teaching measures that will have most impact.

MATURE STUDENTS

Stage of lifecycle targeted: Success.

Measurable objective: To ensure equality of success.

Timescale: Success gap greatly reduced by 2024/25.

Interim indicators of success: Internal data and HESA KPIs for non-continuation. Internal data for end of year of course marks and final degree outcome.

Commentary

46. Durham's undergraduate curriculum and student experience is largely designed for young entrants, who have recently been in formal education. Durham has always had a small yet significant mature student population but these students have been dispersed throughout Durham's collegiate system creating very small populations in otherwise predominantly "young" communities. Durham intends to give further consideration to how we can adapt a student experience that is designed overwhelmingly for young entrants to better suit mature students. We will put in place structural changes to ensure success before increasing the number of mature students with under-represented characteristics.

47. We will have particular regard for mature students characterised by intersecting indicators of disadvantage and under-representation, such as socio-economic disadvantage or disability. It is mature students in these intersections who are our target group. With this in mind we will take a holistic view of the mature student experience to ensure proposed measures for support, where possible, are effective regardless of age.

CARE LEAVERS

Stage of lifecycle targeted: Access.

Measurable objective: To increase the percentage of care leavers in the North East progressing to HE.

Timescale: To reach 9% by 2024/25.

Interim indicators of success: Year on year increases according to Department for Education statistics.

Commentary

48. A number of our strategic measures will support care leavers more generally and this has been considered in their design. As the numbers of care leavers progressing to HE are so small we will work with NERAP to create region-wide solutions to access. This will include the Choices Together programme for looked after young people as well as exploring a partnership with First Star Academy UK, which has an ambition to increase the participation rate of care leavers to 12% by 2024.[5]

3. STRATEGIC MEASURES
3.1 Whole provider strategic approach
Overview

49. The 2020/21 Access and Participation Plan has been formed through workshops and consultations that involved a large number of stakeholders drawn from across the University and including staff and students. This inclusive, whole institution approach is important to embedding a culture that understands the needs of under-represented students. Overall responsibility for Durham's widening participation policy, and approval of this Access and Participation Plan, lie with the University's governing body, University Council, advised by Senate, both of which include representatives of the student body.

Alignment with other strategies

50. Access and participation is an essential goal of the University's ten year strategy. A new Access and Admissions Sub-committee of Senate was created in 2018 to ensure that Durham's access and participation work was strategically aligned, properly evaluated and had impact.

51. Durham University is aware of its commitments and duties under the Equality Act 2010 to advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. We work hard at creating inclusivity in our learning communities and develop curricula which are accessible, challenging, engaging and meet the needs of diverse groups of students, in terms of design, delivery, content, mode of learning, assessment and achievement. There is renewed emphasis on curriculum reform as part of the institutional strategy, and inclusivity is one of its key strands of work. Our Access and Participation Plan is a coherent part of this overall strategy.

52. We also believe that in order to inspire entrants from under-represented groups they need to see diversity in our staff community. It is by catering for a diverse community of staff and students that we can ensure that we have a created a living environment that supports the needs, backgrounds and beliefs of all students.

53. The University is also conscious that as part of our outreach delivery we ensure that we create activity that takes account of all protected characteristics. As well as undertaking activity that directly impacts certain groups, such as our outreach work with BAME students, we have made

efforts to ensure that everything we offer is welcoming to students of all backgrounds, beliefs and needs. To this end we have consulted with student groups such as Durham's LGBT+ Association, Durham University Islamic Society and the Durham People of Colour Association (DPOCA) about outreach activity.

54. The University has a process in place which ensures that equality impact assessments (EIAs) are undertaken on key policies and procedures. A full assessment will be made on this plan.

55. The University collects, collates and publishes annual admissions statistics that include reporting on ethnicity, sex, declared disability and age group. Through this the University can monitor its admissions process to ensure that there is fairness and consistency of treatment for applicants from all backgrounds and that admission decisions are made on academic grounds.

Regional Context

56. The strategic approach taken in this plan is shaped by the distinctive features of the North East within which Durham University operates. In particular, the North East has limited ethnic diversity, the lowest secondary school attainment in the nation, and the lowest HE progression rates in the nation. The plan takes account of this institutional context and commits to distinct regional and national interventions to improve access and participation.

Strategic Measures – Regional Access

Durham Mathematics School[6]

57. We are exploring the feasibility of establishing a Durham Mathematics School (DMS) in 2022. Serving approximately 150 students in years 12 and 13, DMS will offer exceptional teaching in a dynamic and diverse learning environment. Students will be introduced to mathematics in a world-class university, and belong to a socially and culturally supportive community that nurtures a sense of confidence, achievement and innovation. We anticipate a significant number of LPN students will matriculate at Durham from the Durham Mathematics School each year, and working with schools and local authorities, DMS will improve mathematics standards in the region.

58. Monitoring and evaluation will be a key part of the DMS design and we will follow the DMS pupils' progress during their courses and beyond in order to measure the impact on North East mathematics teaching and the progression of students to high tariff institutions.

59. *Evaluation strategy*: to be advised by DfE.

Schools Outreach (Cultural and Science Outreach, Student Volunteering) [7]

60. Fostering strong, strategic links with schools and colleges across different age ranges is key to supporting higher education progression among pupils from targeted backgrounds. Durham University offers numerous activities and learning resources for local schools organised by the Science Outreach team, the Library and Museums Culture Learning Team, Experience Durham (student volunteering) and Colleges. These activities will focus on target groups to enable them to develop the key skills, social and cultural capital required for higher education access and success. With our recent adoption of the High Education Access Tracker (HEAT) we can track whether students who have engaged with us at an early age progress to higher education.

61. *Evaluation strategy:* narrative/empirical enquiry. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; teacher statements, tracking by HEAT.

Excellence in the Local Context (ELC) [8]

62. Durham will operate a membership scheme with North East Schools which will offer a range of benefits to the participating schools and colleges, including dedicated support for under-represented students and access routes into Durham. As well as priority advice and guidance for potential students and opportunities for teacher CPD, schools will take advantage of multiple entry

points into Durham for students from under-represented groups who show excellence in their local context. The entry points will be determined by the level of support needed:

- Students with good academic performance will be eligible for a guaranteed contextual offer if they are from a POLAR4 quintile 1 postcode or they qualify for free school meals (see below "Enhanced contextual admissions").

- Students with good academic performance will also be eligible for a guaranteed contextual offer if they meet two or more of the following criteria: their home postcode is classified as ACORN 4 or 5; their school is classified as a UK state school; they are from a POLAR4 quintile 2 postcode (see below "Enhanced contextual admissions").

- Students requiring additional support to achieve the contextual offer, or further support in terms of confidence and aspiration, will be eligible to join our revised Supported Progression programme (*see below*).

- Students with potential but who are not ready for study at Durham University will be offered a place on the revised Foundation Programme, to support them reaching a level of academic competence suitable for joining Year 1 of a Durham degree (*see below*).

63. We will ensure the greatest impact by targeting North East schools and colleges with high numbers of students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2 and students eligible for free school meals, with pathway options open to students from these target cohorts. This programme will start in 2020/21 in County Durham, then spread across the region.

64. *Evaluation strategy*: empirical enquiry/possible causality analysis. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; tracking by HEAT, analysis by academic researcher using comparator groups.

Supported Progression Phase 3

65. We will redesign our flagship access scheme, Supported Progression, to become a North East Programme limited to 100 LPN students. Supported Progression will also provide a pathway for care leavers and people estranged from their families, being a focus for our work with the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) and Stand Alone. We will offer both a residential summer school version of Supported Progression and a non-residential version. Both will focus on academic success and conversion and will be informed by research and evaluation carried out by the School of Education.

66. *Evaluation strategy*: empirical enquiry/causality analysis. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; tracking by HEAT, analysis by academic researcher using comparator groups.

AIM [Achievement. Inspiration. Motivation.] [9]

67. To meet our access goals, it is essential that every department and college take responsibility for widening participation. St Chad's College in partnership with the Department of History and Park View School in Chester-Le-Street have demonstrated what can be achieved when colleagues come together to offer coordinated outreach activity in the form of AIM (Achievement. Inspiration. Motivation.).   A group of 20 – 25 sixth form students have participated in a two-year program on the campus of Durham University. Participants worked with academic staff on academic enrichment activities (year 1) and completed an extended project qualification (year 2); had an UG mentor trained to help them understand and engage with university and college life; completed a short summer tutorial-based course in the academic discipline of their choosing; received special advice on university applications and financial aid. We will extend the AIM programme over the next five years to all departments and colleges and continue to monitor and support college and department outreach.

68. *Evaluation strategy:* empirical enquiry. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; tracking by HEAT.

Strategic Measures – National Access

Enhanced contextual admissions[10]

69. Durham's use of contextual admissions has contributed to considerable improvements in Durham's widening participation key performance indicators. Students are currently eligible for a guaranteed offer of two or more A-Level grades below the typical offer if they meet at least two of the three following criteria:

   - Their home address postcode is classified as Quintile 1 of POLAR3 (LPN).

   - Their home address postcode is classified as ACORN 4 or 5.

   - Their current or most recently attended school is classified as a UK state school.

70. This measure will continue and be modified (not least to update it to POLAR4 and incorporate FSM information) with a regular review of appropriate indicators of disadvantage.

71. To complement this measure, we will implement two further initiatives, in part specifically designed to have an impact on the quintile 5 to quintile 1 ratio. Firstly, we will extend the use of contextual admissions to quintile 2 and to recipients of free school meals irrespective of POLAR quintile. We will look to source individualised free school meal data to enable this. We will look at the intersection of quintile 2 with other contextual indicators and make guaranteed offers that reflect potential that has not yet translated into attainment. We may also do this in a more targeted way with quintile 3.

72. Secondly, we will replace the current differential offer factors which are based on school type, and introduce differential offer factors for students based on their POLAR4 quintile. Offer factors determine how many offers need to be made in order to secure one enrolment. The conversion rate for quintile 5 is higher than for the other quintiles and therefore we will have separate offer factors for quintile 5 versus quintiles 1-4.

73. The University is also reviewing how it defines the concept of "merit and potential" in order to ensure that the tools we use to encourage fair access are as broad and inclusive as possible. With this in mind we are using guidance from the Office for Students to inform any revisions.

74. *Evaluation strategy:* empirical analysis. UCAS and internal data reporting.

School Partnerships[11]

75. A number of universities in the US have adopted a system to support diverse recruitment by looking to create supportive networks of under-represented students rather than target individuals. With evidence that certain under-represented students, not least BAME students, do not travel beyond their local area for higher education, this approach seeks to bring together groups to remove feelings of isolation and inspire a sense of belonging.[12] These students are then given pre-university training to prepare them for university life and create a supportive group, which continues after enrolment.

76. Adapting this approach, Durham will extend its schools membership scheme nationally in order to recruit groups of students from partner schools. This programme will draw upon support from other measures such as contextual offers, targeted financial support and the Foundation Programme.

77. *Evaluation strategy*: empirical enquiry. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; tracking by HEAT.

National summer schools[13]

78. Working with the Sutton Trust Summer School Programme, we will look at how we can better target UK areas with high LPN or FSM populations as well as provide a progression pathway for care leavers and people estranged from their families. We will reduce the number of students on

our national summer school to a highly-targeted 100. Visits and digital learning will be used to increase engagement without the need to bring students to Durham on multiple occasions.

79. Durham will also create a programme aimed at recruiting more black students. We will target areas of the UK with high proportions of black students in LPN areas. We will offer a range of activity including a short residential visit to Durham. We will work with community groups and organisations such as the Reach Society and Amos Bursary which support black students.

80. *Evaluation strategy*: empirical analysis. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; tracking by HEAT, analysis by academic researcher using comparator groups.

Strategic Measures - Success

Revised Foundation Programme[14]

81. The Foundation Programme will be re-established as a pathway exclusively for students from under-represented groups regardless of age (young entrants as well as mature learners). The Foundation Programme, as part of the Durham Centre for Academic Development, has a wealth of expertise in supporting students to achieve their full academic potential. The Foundation Programme will also support the Excellence in Local Context initiative.

82. *Evaluation strategy*: empirical analysis. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; analysis of degree outcome and continuation rates against comparator groups.

Non-residential offering in selected colleges[15]

83. The University is already investing in broadening the provision offered by its Colleges. To further this work the University will offer, in a designated subset of colleges, distinct facilities and support for students living locally. Current colleges are largely designed for resident students, with facilities for students living out intended to support those in very close privately rented student accommodation. It is anticipated that this new college model will encourage a sense of belonging and engagement for local students living at home, including mature learners, supporting the continuation of a more diverse intake.

84. *Evaluation strategy*: possible causality analysis. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; analysis of degree outcome and continuation rates against comparator groups.

Durham Centre for Academic Development (DCAD)[16]

85. Students can access academic advice from their departments and pastoral support from their colleges, but this does not appear to be sufficient for students in groups where there is an attainment gap. DCAD will offer student academic support programmes, with special attention to the writing, communication, numerical and analytic skills and abilities needed to thrive at Durham. DCAD will also offer staff development programmes to facilitate inclusive teaching. We anticipate that DCAD initiatives will close the gap in degree class outcomes for LPN students, black students and disabled students compared with the general student population.

86. *Evaluation strategy*: empirical analysis. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; analysis of degree outcome and continuation rates against comparator groups.

Curriculum Reform and new degree programmes[17]

87. The University will reform its curriculum to take account of the needs and expectations of students from under-represented groups. Curriculum and pedagogic developments will support successful outcomes from groups traditionally under-represented at Durham, especially LPN students, mature students, certain BAME groups and care leavers.

88. As a matter of priority the University will review its curriculum design and measure the extent to which the curriculum can be attractive to and supportive of students from a range of under-represented backgrounds. We will promote programmes with well-established pathways into employment, recognising the need to provide good value for money for students looking to

develop their employability but constrained by a low income. The University will also develop more inclusive teaching styles and facilities with support for pre-induction sessions for under-represented students including academic writing and enhanced study support. The opportunities for the University to adapt in this way will inform planning and targets from 2021/22 up to 2024/25.

89. *Evaluation strategy*: empirical analysis. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; analysis of degree outcome and continuation rates against comparator groups.

Student Financial Support

90. Durham participated in a study run by the Institute of Education, based on cohorts of students graduating between 2009 and 2015, which showed that "unconditional financial aid in the form of an annual bursary increases students' likeliness of obtaining a good degree by 3.7 percentage points for each additional £1,000 of aid awarded."[18] As the value of the bursaries increase, the marginal impact decreases so that aid only has a positive impact up to £1,900. The 2018/19 Durham Grant Scheme therefore limited bursaries to £2,000 for those whose household income was below the threshold of £25k. In our previous Access and Participation Plan we committed further gradation in bursary offering above the household income threshold of £25k. Students with household incomes between £25,000 and £42,875 will receive a bursary calculated on a rule that will see the level of bursary reducing from £2,000 for those on a household income of £25k to £250 for those on household incomes at £42,875. The calculation will result in the bursary proportionally reducing as the household income increases in accordance with the rule £1 reduction in bursary for every £10 increase in household income, with a step at the end. We will continue with this scheme but use the expertise of academic staff to evaluate its effectiveness through our own bespoke research. Durham has used the OfS Bursary Toolkit to evaluate the effect of its financial support, but the outcome was inconclusive because Durham's very low non-continuation rate is not compatible with the OfS methodology. Durham's School of Education is creating a bespoke toolkit designed to evaluate financial support at Durham.

Wider Student Experience Scholarship Fund

91. The education Durham offers comes partly from its degree programmes and partly from a rich student experience that facilitates a sense of community belonging, invests in social capital and offers important opportunities to develop skills required for graduate progression. The wider student experience is essential to "the Durham difference," but students from under-represented backgrounds are less likely to take up opportunities to engage with it.[19] Completing an internship, or playing sport, can be significantly more expensive than volunteering in a local school or organising the chess club, though all four are vital to student development; for many students the cost, or the loss of employment income, prohibits participation. Yet, existing loans and bursaries focus only on tuition and maintenance. There is, therefore, a need to establish whether targeted financial support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds will enable greater participation in the wider student experience and enhance their progression. Our long-term goal would be to establish a wider student experience fund that supports all students who have demonstrated financial need.

92. The pilot WSE Grant will have two parts: a total of £40,000 will be distributed according to need as college fee JCR bursaries; a total of £30,000 will be distributed as "activity grants" to students from the North East who apply for need-based financial assistance for engagement in WSE activities. In order to be eligible for a Wider Student Experience Scholarship, students must come from families whose household income is within the range where means tested government maintenance loans are provided by the Student Loans Company. Students will apply via their college and will be required to provide evidence of financial need. Approximately 160 grants will be made for college JCR fees (£250 each), and additionally about 100 "activity grants" will be made to students from the North East. Applications to both schemes will be prioritised on the basis of financial need.

93. *Evaluation Strategy*: empirical enquiry. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; monitoring of graduate outcomes.

Nudge Messaging[20]

94. Durham offers excellent student support services, but we need to be confident that students from under-represented groups are accessing these services when they need them. Kings College London has already explored the success of discreet SMS messages in supporting this goal. The University will, therefore, use "nudge messages" to encourage current students from under-represented groups to access support services.

95. *Evaluation strategy*: empirical enquiry. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; monitoring of degree outcomes and continuation rates.

Strategic Measures – Progression

Employability Fund[21]

96. The Student Employability Fund was launched in October 2018 to support students to develop the skills, attributes and experiences that will help them to progress within an increasingly competitive labour market. It is aimed at students for whom financial barriers may inhibit their access to recruitment and employment activities. The fund provides a contribution toward the cost of travel and/or clothing and/or subsistence for current, registered undergraduate and postgraduate students who are attending external recruitment activities and employability development experiences.

97. *Evaluation strategy*: empirical enquiry. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; monitoring of graduate outcomes.

Life-time career service for alumni[22]

98. There exists a strong interconnectedness between academic and employability skills and we need to play a role in enabling students to develop the transferable skills that will enable them to excel in both their studies and future careers. The Careers and Enterprise Service will extend its support to students in transition from their final year of study through an approach called Focus On Leavers (FOL), which gives particular attention to under-represented groups. Alumni from under-represented backgrounds will be able to access a lifetime career service from Durham to support their progression throughout their working lives and complement their lifelong learning.

99. *Evaluation strategy*: narrative enquiry. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; monitoring of graduate outcomes.

Dedicated Work Experience[23]

100. Durham has excellent links with a wide range of employers. In order to ensure that our target cohorts are able to take full advantage of this, the University will develop its internship and placement opportunities and create specific work experience opportunities for students from under-represented groups who lack confidence.

101. *Evaluation strategy*: empirical enquiry. Participant experience surveys; pre and post attitude surveys; monitoring of graduate outcomes.

Progression Target

102. Currently we do not have any targets set for progression within our Plan. This is due to the transition of progression monitoring moving from Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data to Graduate Outcomes (GO) data. By moving to a 15 month survey, Graduate Outcomes data will not be available until Spring 2020. Our commitment is to eradicate any statistically significant gap in progression by under-represented groups and our self-analysis suggests we are near this level. To ensure future equality of opportunity we intend to set a target in our Plan for POLAR4 quintile 1 students progressing to further study or highly skilled employment when Graduate Outcomes data becomes available.

	Regional	**National**
Access	• **Durham Mathematics School** – Approved by University Council, Business Case submitted to the Department for Education, aiming for a 2022 opening. • **Schools Outreach** – Development underway. In place by 2020/21. • **Excellence in the Local Context** – First school partnerships in place by 2020/21. • **Supported Progression Phase 3** – Development underway. Revised summer school in summer 2020. Fully revised Supported Progression Scheme in place for 2020/21. • **AIM** – Wider pilot in 2019/20. Aiming for between 5 and 10 departments in 2020-21, expanding each year, to reach full implementation by 2024-25.	• **Enhanced Contextual Admissions** – Development underway. Fully operational 2020/21. • **School Partnerships** – Full realisation in 2020/21. • **National Summer Schools** – Summer School for young, black people – pilot event in summer 2020. Partly revised national summer school for LPN & FSM in summer 2020. Fully revised version in 2021.
Success	• **Foundation Programme 2.0** – Foundation Programme Review to report late September 2019. New Foundation offering in place by 2020/21. • **Non-residential offering in selected colleges** – In place by 2020/21.	• **DCAD** – in place, further developments in 2019/20 including opening a new Teaching and Learning Centre. • **Curriculum Reform** – Reform in stages over three years 2019/20 to 2021/22. • **New Degree Programmes** – Programme Development Group established in 2019, looking at developments over a three year horizon. • **Durham Grant Scheme** – in place. • **WSE Scholarship Fund** – Pilot scheme in place for 2020/21. • **Nudge messaging** – in place by 2020.
Progression		• **Employability Fund** – Successful pilot complete. Fully in place for 2020/21. • **Life-time Careers & Enterprise Support** – Pilot in 2020/21. Fully operational by 2021/22. • **Dedicated work experience opportunities** – in place 2019/20.

Strategic Measures - Collaboration

Collaboration with other HEIs

103. The North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP) is a collaboration of the five universities in the region (Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside) working together to support higher education progression. The Partnership has been working collaboratively since 2015 on a variety of projects to specifically target under-represented groups such as Young Carers, Looked after Young People and BAME students and also to extend the reach of all institutions

through joint representation activity in both primary and secondary schools and at regional events. In 2019/2020, NERAP will align with the North East Collaborative Outreach Programme as part of the development of an Outreach Hub. Through NERAP we are able to have more impact with groups that in our own institution are found in small numbers and are therefore hard to engage with. NERAP will be particularly important for our continued support for care leavers.

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

105. Durham also takes advantage of collaboration through its work with the Sutton Trust. The Trust supports evaluation and enables us to monitor and refine our summer school programme through communication with other Sutton Trust summer school providers. It is also a valuable opportunity to share good practice and evidence with other providers.

106. Durham is one of 24 leading universities that funds Advancing Access. This is a collaboration that allows us to interact with teachers across the UK by providing CPD resources and events.

School Governors Scheme

107. In our 2019/20 Access and Participation Plan the University stated its intention to support school attainment and governance by using the expertise and experience of Durham staff as volunteer school governors in local schools and colleges. The University recognises that it must make links with schools at a fundamental level if it is to support the most disadvantaged students. We are currently only one of three universities that holds Governors for Schools gold status.

Engagement with employers

108. Durham's Careers and Enterprise team has close working relationships with a wide range of graduate employers, directly facilitating over 300 campus based employer events a year and creating student access to 6,000+ vacancies. Opportunities for under-represented groups are flagged for easy student visibility, and diversity and access discussions are a regular part of employer liaison activity. Many employers support the progression of under-represented students by engaging with the University through targeted internships or financial support in the form of scholarships.

109. The University recognises the importance of regional employment to the regional access agenda. We engage with the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, with membership on both the innovation and business growth boards. Durham University and Durham County Council has a memorandum of understanding which sets out how both organisations will work together to raise the profile of County Durham, with a focus on ensuring the University's activities benefit the region. The ERDF-funded Durham Internships and Collaborative Enterprise project (DICE) supports County Durham businesses to harness the knowledge and enterprising skills of Durham University students and recent graduates through a 50% funded internship programme. The paid internships introduce students and graduates to the opportunities available to them.

3.2 Student consultation

110. Almost all outreach activities involve undergraduate students working as mentors and role models. Increasingly these students are creating activities that feature as part of Durham's residential access activities. Many of these students come from under-represented groups and, indeed, were participants on Durham's various targeted programmes such as Supported Progression or Sutton Trust summer schools.

111. The University has involved the Students' Union from the very start of the creation of this Access and Participation Plan. A workshop to investigate new ideas included Students' Union officers, and the Head of Access met independently with the Students' Union to discuss ideas. Students are represented on Senate and Council, the senior bodies responsible for the institutional approval of this plan. We have also engaged with students from a range of different under-represented backgrounds.

112. When writing this plan we took account of the concerns of the Students' Union about a change in culture. This has underpinned the entire plan with strategic measures that represent a step-change in Durham's current approach. Our strategic aims and objectives state that "the pursuit of diversity, equity and inclusion should inform every aspect of Durham's educational offer". We believe this addresses the Union's statement in the submission in the appendix below that senior leadership must have a "clear vision for how the community can and must support widened access to the University".

113. Much of this plan focuses on local students and this was a key feature to come from our Access and Participation Plan workshops that student representatives took part in and is mentioned in the student submission in the appendix below.

114. Throughout the consultation process we were also aware of student concerns about finance and the evidence for decision making. During the consultation students expressed concern that Durham's wider student experience was unaffordable for some students and we hope the WSE Scholarship Fund will go some way to address this concern. We have also embarked on a collaborative approach to gathering more recent evidence for future decision-making around financial support by working together with the Students' Union to adapt the OfS Bursary Evaluation Toolkit for use at Durham. A survey will be sent out in the first term of 2019-20 academic year.

115. The development of our flagship Supported Progression scheme has taken into account the views of current undergraduates from under-represented backgrounds who took part in the programme. Their positive experience has helped give the University confidence in the value of continuing to improve and develop the scheme.

116. Our strategic measures to increase the number of black students has been informed by talking to current black students and consulting with the Durham People of Colour Association (DPOCA). This helped to develop the concept of a residential summer school targeted at black students.

117. In 2019 Durham took the Stand Alone Pledge as a sign of its commitment to students estranged from their families and in response to concerns of estranged students currently studying at Durham. By working with the student group Durham Estranged Students, we have ensured that our access work will do more to target and prioritise estranged students, as well as care leavers. We believe that broadening college provision will create spaces that can include tailored support for students from these backgrounds.

118. Other strategic measures to be introduced will address concerns raised during the formation of this plan and in the Students' Union submission below. Where possible we will work with the student body to bring the measures to fruition and, with Students' Union representation on decision making committees, we hope to continue to develop this plan with the student voice clearly heard.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

119. The University's ten year strategic plan has a specific objective for access: welcoming talented students from all backgrounds and enabling every one of them to thrive and excel.   Strategic responsibility for access and participation lies with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) who must ensure that reasonable steps are taken to comply with the provisions of the Access and

Participation Plan and that action is undertaken if it appears that the intentions of the Plan may not be delivered. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) chairs University's Access and Admissions Sub-committee, whose membership includes academic and professional support staff with relevant expertise in the evaluation of interventions. Durham University has considerable research expertise among its academic staff in social mobility and in evaluating educational interventions. The Committee has only two terms of reference: to monitor admissions and recruitment policies and outcomes and to monitor widening participation policies and outcomes. Senior University committees will also monitor Durham's plan, including the University Executive Committee and Provost's Board.

120. There is already evaluation of our current access programmes, and we have reason to believe that our programmes are effective, but we recognise the call for widening participation interventions to be evaluated more robustly in order to test and improve their effectiveness. We have taken account of the OfS guidance on evaluation of widening participation and outreach activities which sets out three levels of evaluation practice.[24] Much of our current evaluation has taken place at the levels of 'theoretical narrative' and 'empirical enquiry'. We have used our student data to investigate the outcomes for students involved in widening access initiatives, which were initially designed in the light of theoretical and practitioner literature and engagement in practitioner groups. An 'empirical enquiry' is less robust than a large scale randomised control trial, but it is cost-effective. For example, the level of financial support and the use of contextual data in admissions have been based on research conducted by our School of Education and the School of Applied Social Sciences.

121. The core ambitions of this Access and Participation Plan are around an expanded range and intensity of interventions for widening access initiatives which will provide young people from disadvantaged backgrounds an alternative means of demonstrating their ability to succeed at the University, and offering support to those subsequently admitted to the University. The potential risks involved in providing alternative entry routes are a potential reduction in levels of continuation and attainment. Whilst both of these risks can be mitigated by providing better support for contextually disadvantaged learners, we have recognised the need to extend our evaluation to include success rates of disadvantaged groups.

122. So this Access and Participation Plan has been written with a narrative of change that is rooted in relevant theoretical and practitioner literature and practitioner group knowledge exchange and the empirical evaluation of our previous access interventions. This theoretical narrative has driven our selection of interventions. We have a clear understanding of how each activity has defined outcomes which are expected to generate positive improvements. The intervention logic was developed through wide engagement across the University, including with academic staff with research expertise in this area. We have a coherent explanation of what we plan to do. Evidence has guided our decisions about which types of interventions and practices we should adopt. All new activity that supports access and participation must support an agreed Access and Participation outcomes target. New access and participation activity will not be implemented without a clear evidence base and plan for evaluation.

123. The design of our programme of access, success and progression interventions has incorporated the level and type of evaluation that we feel is appropriate to demonstrate impact. We aim to provide accountability for the results achieved and to learn whether the activities work or not. Some programmes require a longer timescale to prove effective, particularly where younger age groups are involved and interim targets are used to assess performance. Use of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) is key to this type of long term monitoring.

124. Beyond the narrative of change, we are planning to use empirical enquiry in nearly all our interventions. We will be collecting data systematically in order to determine whether, as we

expect, those receiving an intervention have better outcomes, even if we cannot absolutely establish a direct causal effect.

125. We will use quantitative data collected from participants and secondary data from our admissions and assessment processes and survey data from the NSS and Graduate Outcomes to draw inferences. We have data from a number of years of previous interventions and we will use statistical analysis to compare between groups, engaging academic expertise within the institution to complete this analysis. We will triangulate these quantitative inferences with qualitative evaluation through focus groups, case studies, and direct observations. The core quantitative indicators for most of our interventions are the proportion of each under-represented group that is enrolled, with POLAR4 Quintile1 being the primary target, for which we will have a time series. We will demonstrate where our interventions are correlated with beneficial results.

126. To arrive at a demonstration of a direct causal link requires a robust control group.   This is hard to achieve. We do not intend to engage in any randomised controlled trials. We will look for comparison groups who do not take part in an intervention, but it will be difficult to control for other factors. Wherever possible, we will triangulate our findings analysing qualitative and quantitative data from different sources to draw on a range of perspectives. We will also explore the use of a regression discontinuity to demonstrate causal effect by analysing the impact measure above and below the threshold at which an intervention is assigned.   We will compare the outcomes of students just above the threshold of intervention with the counterfactual outcomes of students just below the threshold.

127. When we carry out our evaluation we will have due regard for data responsibility and security. Where necessary we have data sharing agreements in place so we can work collaboratively with external organisations such as schools or other higher education institutions. We will track individual students using our own internal data and external resources such as HEAT in order to understand long term effects

128. Evaluation will help to ensure that our access and participation expenditure is directed to the most effective activities, and it will help us to improve our performance and clarify the claims that can be made when reporting our results.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

129. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) has strategic responsibility for access and participation. The PVC (Education) is responsible for ensuring reasonable steps are taken to comply with the provisions of the Access and Participation Plan and that action is undertaken if it appears that the intentions of the Plan may not be delivered. In addition regular oversight is provided by the University's Access and Admissions Sub-committee.

130. To drive forward the commitments of the Access and Participation Plan, the University has Recruitment, Admissions and Access teams, reporting to the Academic Registrar, supporting widening participation across the University.

4. PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

131. Through its website, the University will publish clear, accessible and timely information for applicants and students on the fees that it will charge and the financial support that it will offer. The University will also disseminate information via its outreach and recruitment activity, with a dedicated team of staff focused on this activity.

132. The University's student financial support service will work with staff in the University's constituent colleges to ensure that all existing students have access to the financial support information that they need. The development of guidance information provided through our programme of open days is key to providing clear and accessible support.

133. The University will also provide timely information to UCAS and SLC to populate their applicant-facing web services.

134. The University's CRM system enhances the user experience for enquirers and applicants from under-represented groups. Data captured enables timely and targeted messages to support students through their Durham visit or application journey. Enhanced tracking and feedback reporting through regular communications will allow us to further develop personalised content and monitor engagement rates.

135. This Access and Participation Plan will be published on the University's website, with clear navigational links from our admissions and recruitment pages.

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Durham Students' Union
Access Submission 2020-21

As a Union, we have worked closely with Durham University in developing their Access plans over previous years, including the 2020-21 plan. Below are our main areas of focus as a Union, based on the views of our Student Officers and the students they represent.

1. Increasing BAME student numbers

Background;

While Durham has made progress recently and a commitment to increasing the number of BAME students is present in the 2020-21 access plan, methodology remains largely unclear. Though the local area is one of the least diverse in the country, this should not be a barrier, given Durham's reach nationally. As a Union, we would welcome national level guidance from the OfS in this area.

Why this is important;

A more diverse environment enhances education, and as a University which positions itself as a "Global" institution, we feel Durham should reflect that.

To do so, Durham needs to think about how it appears from the outside, which involves a multi-faceted look at recruitment of students in this group.

Success in this area would include;

- Greater cooperation with BAME groups in the North East particularly, but also in other, more diverse regions outside of London, such as the Midlands.
- Specific target groups within BAME to be identified for particular growth, based on low participation or socio-economic status of that group in a particular area.
- Further work on curriculum reform to make curricula as diverse as possible.
- **Other examples**: Specific groups are identified in other APPs – such as Oxford – where particular groups – ie "Black/Black British" or "Asian/Pakistani"[1] are identified specifically for greater focus.

2. Continued focus on local students

Background;

While we welcome the increased focus on local students in the 2020-21 Access Plan, Durham's recruitment has not traditionally focussed on the local area, with large numbers instead coming from outside the North East, despite the fact that, according to HESA data, more North Eastern applicants come from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPNs) than

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[1] Oxford's 2019-20 APP, paragraph 47 -
https://apis.officeforstudents.org.uk/accessplansdownloads/1920/UniversityofOxford_APP_2019-2020_V1_10007774.pdf

any other part of the UK – some 23.9%[2]. We define 'local' as students from the North East region, as identified by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)[3], which takes in Teesside, County Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

Why this is important;

The University should take a greater role in the local area, and one of the ways in which it can do that is by placing a greater focus on recruiting disadvantaged students from the area. By recruiting more from the local area, Durham would prove that, as part of the local community, it would like to see that community thrive by providing the world-class education it is so proud of, to some of the most disadvantaged students in the country, who happen to be on its doorstep.

Currently Durham's percentage of students from LPNs is very low – 5.6%[4] - and could clearly do more to increase participation as the foremost University in an area of very low participation in Higher Education.

Success in this area would include;

- Students from the North East, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds, should be a separate section of the agreement.

- This group should have specific recruitment targets, as a specific group, even if it counts towards broader LPN and ACORN targets.

- Data on the number of local students at Durham should be made available on the University webpages along with statistics for other groups.

- Work should particularly focus recruiting students from schools which have never sent someone to Durham before.

- We acknowledge the University's use of contextual offers to bring in more disadvantaged students and feel this would be a useful tool for this goal in particular.

- **Other examples**: Bath's school sponsorship scheme (9 schools) Oxbridge's focus on bringing in students from schools who have never sent to Oxbridge before.

3. Specific support guarantees
Background;

Contextual offers are a useful tool to ensure that previous attainment is understood in the context of a student's background, which are already in use across the University, and that we would like to encourage the further use of.

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[2] HESA Data (POLAR3) – Region; North East, table WP1 - https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/07-02-2019/widening-participation-tables
[3] ONS regional classification, Section 2 - https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/ukgeographies/eurostat -
[4] HESA Data for 2017/18 - https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/07-02-2019/widening-participation-tables

Evidence shows that there is a relatively small difference in degree outcomes based on attainment at A-level (*83% 1st and 2:1 for those with BBB, 91% for those with AAA*[5]), especially for some students with contextual offers, there may be additional factors which can impact academic achievement. As a result, support (both academic and pastoral) is particularly important for those students.

Why this is important;

Specific groups of students, such as BAME students, may also benefit from specialised support, which may take the form of a more inclusive curriculum, to maximise potential outcomes.

Success in this area would include;

- Focused academic support programmes through DCAD for recipients of contextual offers of all backgrounds.
- Specialised resources made available via DCAD to departments on curriculum reform to increase inclusivity for BAME and other groups (such as some curricular knowledge being "assumed" by seminar leaders).
- Further direct support for the First Generation Scholars' Network for staff and students.

4. More specific cross-referencing of data to identify disadvantage
Background;

Data sets such as POLAR (both POLAR3 and POLAR4) and ACORN are vital in helping universities to target access work to most effect. However, larger amounts of data is becoming available at an ever more granular level.

Why this is important;

POLAR and ACORN are, without doubt, useful tools with which to identify disadvantage, however to ensure that those in the most need receive support and access opportunities, there should be greater use of more specific, data to identify disadvantage more clearly and target interventions precisely.

Success in this area would include;

- Use of metrics such as Free School Meals (FSM), in line with research conducted by Dr Vikki Boliver, in an expansion of the existing 20-school pilot programme
- Recognising that, while this may not be a particular indicator of disadvantage, disaggregating currently held data on school type (i.e. identifying types of state school previously attended by students) holds value for the purpose of developing wider cultural change in the University
- Use of up to three indicators (from a wider selection of indicators) to inform recruitment planning and outcome analysis – a further extension of the University's own analysis of how different sources of disadvantage intersect

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[5] Durham's 2019-20 access agreement, Paragraph 6 (**original work by Dr Vikki Boliver**)

- Identification of other potential indicators beyond those currently used.
- **Other examples**: Cambridge has a broad spectrum of datasets it lists, in which use of "up to three"[6] measures, is cited as a specific goal.

5. Disaggregating disabled students group

Background;

Disabled students are currently recognised as a single group in Durham's APP, rather than separating them out by different declared disabilities.

Why this is important;

We would like to disaggregate that group, as per the sub-groups defined in the University's own statistics releases[7].

Better disaggregation of this group in the APP would enable greater targeting of interventions, particularly to identify outcome gaps for students with particular disabilities.

Success in this area would include;

- Identify those sub-groups within the broader heading of "Disabled Students" in the APP, which we are pleased to see in the plan submitted.
- Work to identify differences in outcome, continuation and other associated measures for each of those sub-groups to identify gaps.
- Note different reasonable adjustments which are available to different sub-groups, and areas which new adjustments are being planned to help a specific group (such as the recent introduction of Lecture Capture).
- Work with our Students with Disabilities Association directly.

6. Student Financial Support

Background;

Durham has maintained over a number of years that direct financial support for students is ineffective over the amount of £1900, based on research (Murphy and Wyness, *Testing Means-Tested Aid*, 2016[8]) that relies data gathered 9 years ago. Although changes have been made to the bursary system at Durham over the last 12 months, the maximum amounts set are still based on this figure, which is not consistent with other schemes nationwide.

Why this is important;

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[6] Cambridge's 2019-20 APP, section 2.8 -
https://apis.officeforstudents.org.uk/accessplansdownloads/1920/UniversityofCambridge_APP_2019-2020_V1_10007788.pdf
[7] Durham's 2018-19 full disability statistics -
https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/student.registry/statistics/summary/1.7disability/181-7.pdf
[8] http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1396.pdf

Tuition fees have increased three times this amount and the conditions attached to student loans have been revised (in particular, maintenance grants no longer exist) since the quoted research was conducted, and a new methodology and research must be applied to be considered current data. It would be disingenuous to suggest that the £1900 impact level remains relevant to current and future students. The study also warns in its findings that "universities and policymakers should not simply assume that all aid to all student types will be equally effective" (2016: 27).

Success in this area would look like;

- Inclusion of alternative research into direct financial support for students to inform bursary scheme at Durham.
- Increased upper limit of financial support available to Durham students, in line with what is offered at comparator institutions (e.g. Oxford's maximum bursary amount in 2018-19 was £3,700).

7. Leadership on Culture Change

Background;

Durham's culture is often defined by its predominantly white, middle class student body and staff body.

Why this is important;

The culture of Durham University can be perceived as exclusionary by students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods, BAME students and other groups the APP hopes to support in accessing the University. As a collegiate University with strong autonomy in academic departments, strong leadership on access issues is needed at many levels to create a more inclusive culture.

Success in this area would look like;

- Strong leadership at the executive level, expressing a clear vision for how the community can and must support widened access to the University.
- Close attention being paid to candidates' commitment to access and success initiatives when recruiting to leadership positions throughout the University.
- Departments and Colleges being able to deliver impactful interventions, such as the AIM initiative proposed in the APP.

Access and participation plan
Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: University of Durham

Provider UKPRN: 10007143

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

We will charge the maximum fee subject to the fee limits set out in Regulations

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

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

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

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

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£4,625
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Durham

Provider UKPRN: 10007143

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 (£)	£4,235,000.00	£4,235,000.00	£4,235,000.00	£4,235,000.00	£4,235,000.00
Access (pre-16)	£500,000.00	£500,000.00	£500,000.00	£500,000.00	£500,000.00
Access (post-16)	£3,000,000.00	£3,000,000.00	£3,000,000.00	£3,000,000.00	£3,000,000.00
Access (adults and the community)	£700,000.00	£700,000.00	£700,000.00	£700,000.00	£700,000.00
Access (other)	£35,000.00	£35,000.00	£35,000.00	£35,000.00	£35,000.00
Financial support (£)	£5,300,000.00	£5,510,000.00	£5,560,000.00	£5,560,000.00	£5,560,000.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00

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)	£34,513,450.00	£34,337,605.00	£34,624,510.00	£35,244,595.00	£35,833,830.00
Access investment	12.3%	12.3%	12.2%	12.0%	11.8%
Financial support	15.4%	16.0%	16.1%	15.8%	15.5%
Research and evaluation	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Total investment (as %HFI)	27.7%	28.4%	28.3%	27.8%	27.4%

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Durham

Provider UKPRN: 10007143

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)
To reduce the gap in participation between the most and least represented groups.	PTA_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Ratio in entry rates for POLAR4 quintile 5: quintile 1 students	No	HESA T1a - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	2018-19	10:1	9:1	8:1	7:1	4.5:1	3:1	N.B. Baseline is taken from internal data rather than HESA for greater accuracy.
To enrol an additional 100 UK black undergraduates to Durham University.	PTA_2	Ethnicity	The percentage of UK black undergraduates enrolled at Durham University, indicating an increase of 100 students.	No	Other data source	2018-19	1.2%	1.4%	1.5%	1.7%	1.9%	2.1%	Based on internal data using HESA groupings.
To reduce the gap in participation between the most and least represented groups.	PTA_3	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	The percentage of POLAR4 quintile 1 students.	No	HESA T1a - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	2018-19	5.5%	5.8%	6.4%	7%	9.8%	12.2%	N.B. Baseline is taken from internal data rather than HESA for greater accuracy.
To reduce the gap in participation between the most and least represented groups.	PTA_4	Other	The percentage of POLAR4 quintile 2 students.	No	Other data source	2018-19	9.1%	9.8%	10.7%	11.6%	13.4%	15.3%	Based on internal data.
To increase the percentage of care leavers in the North East progressing to HE	PTA_5	Care-leavers	The percentage of Care Leavers currently at an HE institution aged 19, 20 and 21 who were looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday including some time after their 16th birthday.	Yes	Other data source	2017-18	7%	7%	7.5%	8%	8.5%	9%	Measured by government national statistics published by the Department for Education. The target will be achieved through the NERAP collaborative Choices Together programme for looked after young people.
	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)
To reduce the gap in attainment between disabled students and non-disabled students.	PTS_1	Disabled	Percentage point gap in attainment of first and upper second class degrees between disabled and non disabled students.	No	Other data source	2017-18	4.1	3.5	3	2.5	2	2	Based on internal data.
To reduce the non-continuation rate of mature students.	PTS_2	Mature	Percentage of mature students enrolling at Durham no longer in higher education after one year.	No	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (Mature, full-time, first degree entrants)	2016-17	12%	11	10	9	8	8	
To reduce the gap in attainment between mature and young students.	PTS_3	Mature	Percentage point gap in attainment of first and upper second class degrees between mature and young undergraduates.	No	Other data source	2017-18	20.1	18	16	13	10	10	Based on internal data.
	PTS_4												
	PTS_5												
	PTS_6												
	PTS_7												
	PTS_8												

Table 2c - Progression

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
	PTP_1												

	PTP_2										
	PTP_3										
	PTP_4										
	PTP_5										
	PTP_6										
	PTP_7										
	PTP_8										