UCR

University Centre Reaseheath

Access and Participation Plan 2025/26 to 2028/29

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Reaseheath College,

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University Centre Reaseheath

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Introduction and strategic aim

University Centre Reaseheath (UCR) is one of the UK's leading specialist providers for higher education in agriculture, conservation, animal management, equine, sport, and food science. Embracing our progressive focus on innovation, integrity, impact, and inclusivity, Reaseheath College has been delivering Higher Education for over 30 years. In 2017, our strategic alliance with the University of Chester (UoC) was established, and the College was granted University Centre status. Our close collaboration incorporates representation across deliberative and executive functions of both institutions, and cross-membership of governing bodies. We are aligned in missions and ethos to drive economic prosperity and personal growth.

UCR empowers the individual, providing inclusive, high quality, higher education through small group teaching and personalised support. Our approach begins with our inclusive, diverse, campus community, which staff and students alike refer to as the 'Reaseheath family'. This is built upon by our lecturers, who are passionately inspirational, pushing perceived limitations. Our approach is realised in our students, who are not afraid to be different or to break the mould.

The UCR curriculum is firmly situated within the land-based sector, which collectively contributes around £91 billion to the UK economy annually. UCR provides the education, training, and skills to those seeking to enter graduate employment as well as those upskilling and seeking progression within their careers.

We offer 24-degree programmes (BSc (Hons)/Foundation Degrees and Level six top up degrees with foundation years available on two animal and environmental sciences programmes. We offer these on both a full and part time basis. In addition to our degree level provision, we also offer the A.I.M Access to Higher Education Level 3 programme.

Our goal is to support students in realising their own purpose, equipping them with the skills they need to grow, progress, and achieve their passions.

Our HE student population consists of 496 students, with approximately 48% studying towards their first degree (BSc and BSc Top-up) and 52% on other full-time undergraduate provision (namely foundation degree programmes).[1]

We are proud that everyone in our community can express themselves and achieve their potential regardless of their demographic or personal characteristics. Developed organically over decades, inclusion is in our DNA, so we know exactly what it means to us and our community. Our diverse HE student population is made up of approximately 40% from quintiles 1 and 2 in the indices of multiple deprivation, 44% reporting a disability, and 44% are mature. Our inclusive approach to education comes to life through the supportive and secure learning environment found on our campus. With our comparatively small class sizes and proactive academic and pastoral support programmes, we genuinely care about every individual that steps through our doors.

In our UCR Strategic Plan 2020-2024 one of our five guiding principles is 'Inclusive access and participation'. At UCR a strong culture of inclusion, inclusive practice, fairness, and equality of opportunity is the 'golden thread' running throughout our provision. Our institution-wide culture, firmly embedded into our everyday practice, informs, and strengthens our ability to make the right decisions for all staff and students, enhancing the student experience and improving outcomes.

Through our understanding of unconscious bias, the social model of disability and a shared understanding of the issues around under representation in Higher Education, University Centre Reaseheath has worked relentlessly to achieve our Access and Participation targets and transform the lives and opportunities of our students. We recognise and value diversity amongst our student body and our strategic measures and

[1] Source: Internal data 2024

targeted interventions are designed to enable all students to access course content, participate fully in learning activities and demonstrate their knowledge and strengths at assessment ultimately leading to high quality progression outcomes into graduate employment and /or further study.

Our Access and Participation strategy, as embedded in our UCR Strategic Plan 2020-24, aims to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to access and succeed in higher education. We strive to ensure that every student can reach their potential and gain meaningful, relevant, highly skilled, graduate-level employment or progress with their studies into post-graduate programmes. Through our unwavering focus on fair access, inclusion and participation, we aim to:

- Encourage and support individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures to enable them to enter higher education and fulfil their potential.
- Be an inclusive institution, striving to support a diverse student body to aspire, achieve and progress.
- Build and develop a fully integrated and collaborative approach to preparing students for future graduate level employment and progression.

The activities and actions contained in our 2020-2025 APP have led to some notable increases in Access for both our target and monitoring groups. In 2021/22 19.6% of our entrants originated from IMD Quintile 1, an increase of 2.9% on 2016 /17 figures, and a greater proportion of our entrants originated from TUNDRA Quintile 1 areas than TUNDRA quintile 5. In 2021/22 30.7% of our entrants were mature, above the national figure of 29% and 33.9% of entrants declared a disability which is almost double the average recruited across all HE providers.[2] These successes have been due in part to our highly successful outreach and collaborative working with Uni Connect Higher Horizons, which have been a real strength to our widening participation work, and which will continue and be enhanced throughout the life of this new APP. Building on some of the successes of our 2020-2025 APP we have developed and embedded evidence-based approaches to our inclusion and widening participation work using evaluations based on TASO theories of change to good effect. Data from the OfS data dashboard in 2023 shows improvements in continuation rates for mature, disabled and students from the most deprived neighbourhoods. Further successes have been identified in our data for completion rates, with mature students seeing better completion than younger students and the completion gap between students from the most and least deprived areas narrowing from 11.9% points to 7.9% This data evidences the efficacy of our planned and implemented strategic measures in closing gaps, increasing representation and providing equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups throughout the life of our plan.

Whilst we have made some reassuring progress in our current plan, we are acutely aware of the areas where we now need to focus and improve Equality of Opportunity as indicated in our Assessment of Performance and detailed throughout the plan. The improvements we have made demonstrate our commitment to address equality of opportunity at each stage of the student lifecycle, developing individuals and securing positive transformative outcomes for those students most at risk of not experiencing equality of opportunity in higher education.

We believe that our actions and activities outlined in our APP 2025-2029 have the potential to address our contextualised risks to equality of opportunity and with a strengthened focus on effective and systematic evaluation will help us to secure strategies that will work for future students and communities in transforming opportunity for years to come.

[2] Source: OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard

Risks to equality of opportunity

UCR has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of performance, to identify the major risks to equality of opportunity for our current and prospective students. The risks identified will then form the basis of our objectives, intervention strategies, targets and financial investments, to ensure that the work we undertake is having a positive impact on specific groups at particular stages of the student lifecycle. A summary of our assessment of performance can be found in Annex A.

To undertake the Assessment of Performance, we have:

- Predominately used the Office for Students Access and Participation data dashboard[3], to identify potential risks to equality of opportunity for the data held within the dashboard, across the 5 stages of the student lifecycle (Access, Continuation, Completion, Attainment (awarding), Progression)
- Interrogated the data, and considered the major intersections of disadvantage to decide whether a risk manifestation poses a significant threat to the equality of opportunity for our students, or prospective students.
- Considered the statistical uncertainty of the data, and the impact that small datasets and low reportable numbers might have on the conclusions we draw. Where this is the case, we have used the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR)[4] to consider if other groups are nationally at risk of Equality of opportunity.
- Consulted the OfS EORR, to explore the underlying causes of any risk manifestations we discover.
- Compared our data with the national context, in order help us understand whether the manifestations of risk are nationally significant or provider specific.
- Compared our data with that of similar, land-based providers to help us understand whether the manifestations of risk are specific to specialist providers, or more likely unique to UCR.
- Aggregated data where appropriate, particularly where small numbers or low statistical certainty are apparent.

As a result of completing the assessment of performance, we have identified several indications of risk, for different groups at various stages of the student lifecycle. We have then consulted the EORR, to determine whether the indications are seen nationally, or indeed whether they are specific to our context, before selecting the following as key risks to equality of opportunity at UCR:

- **Access - A low proportion of entrants to HE at UCR have been eligible for Free School Meals at KS4, when compared with local and national eligibility.**

- **Access - A low proportion of entrants to UCR are males from the areas of lowest HE participation (POLAR[5] quintiles 1 & 2) and the most deprived areas (IMD[6] quintiles 1 & 2)**

- **Success - Lower completion rates for female students from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 & 2)**

3 The access and participation data dashboard shows data for individual higher education providers across different student characteristics. Access and participation data dashboard - Office for Students

4 The Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (the EORR) identifies 12 sector-wide risks that may affect a student's opportunity to access and succeed in higher education.

5 Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) classification is a UK-wide measure of educational disadvantage based on young participation rates in higher education (HE). It estimates how likely young people are to go into HE according to where they live, and assigns local areas into quintiles. The population is split into five groups and assigned equally across five quintiles, where quintile 1 areas have the lowest rates of young participation and quintile 5 areas have the highest rates. This means that the quintile used in the classification applies to the local area and not to each individual.

6 The English indices of deprivation measure relative deprivation in small areas in England called lower-layer super output areas. The index of multiple deprivation is the most widely used of these indices.

- **Success - Lower attainment/awarding rates for students declaring a disability compared with those who declare no disability.**
- **Success - Lower attainment/awarding rates for female students from areas of low HE participation (POLAR quintiles 1 & 2) and the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 & 2)**
- **Progression - Lower rates of progression to highly skilled, graduate employment for students with a disability, compared to those with no declared disability.**
- **Progression - Lower rates of progression to highly skilled, graduate employment for "young" students, i.e. those younger than 21 at the point of enrolment.**
- **Progression - Lower rates of progression to highly skilled, graduate level employment for female students from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 & 2)**

As a relatively small provider of College Based Higher Education (CBHE), we believe these are the most significant risks to equality of opportunity, given our context and our student profile. We also believe that with a smaller number of well thought out intervention strategies, we have the resources and expertise to help to reduce the risks for the groups we have identified.

Our focus on "access" is rooted in our previous APP, where we made good progress in increasing the number of male entrants to UCR who were from areas of low HE participation. However, we also see the opportunity to do more work with these groups, and through our outreach work we aim to engage further with school aged children, including males, from low participation areas and areas of higher deprivation. The geographical area in which UCR sits is home to some of the most deprived wards in the country[7], along with some of the lowest rates of progression to HE[8]. As a small but specialist provider of land-based education, it is our duty to reach out to underrepresented groups and showcase not only higher education in general, but also the highly specialised environment in which we operate.

We also want to focus on those students who have been eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) at Key Stage 4, i.e. their later years of secondary education. We know that students that have been eligible for Free School Meals are far less likely to progress into higher education than their peers. Given our excellent links with local schools, through partnership working with our local Uni Connect[9] programme, we believe that we can reach out to FSM students, providing them with good IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) about their future options, and delivering inspiring campus visits, along with activities aimed at raising school attainment which in turn will enhance their chances of being able to progress to higher education. Given the national and regional proportions of school aged children that are eligible for FSM, UCR will focus on increasing the proportion of FSM students that progress on to HE study at UCR.

In terms of student success, i.e. continuation, completion and attainment, we plan to focus on female students, particularly those from low participation neighbourhoods, deprived areas, and students with a disability. At UCR, female students outnumber male students by around 3:1, however the data shows that they do not have the same levels of course completion as their male counterparts, and that they do not achieve the same proportions of 1st and upper second-class degree classifications, especially if they are from areas of low HE participation or deprived areas. Using the EORR and other sources of internal data we aim to find out the underlying reasons behind this and address the gaps in our intervention strategies. Under "success" we will also focus on the attainment gap for disabled students, as all of our analysis clearly points to those students declaring a disability not performing as strongly as their non-disabled peers in terms of 1st and upper second-class degree classifications. Again, we feel this is an area where we

[7] In 2019, 8.3% of the population in Cheshire East was income deprived, in neighbouring Stoke on Trent, this figure is 19%, and is the 25th most income deprived areas in England. Source ONS – Exploring local income deprivation (Office for National Statistics, 2021)

[8] Neighbouring CW1 postcodes fall into quintile 1 across POLAR, TUNDRA and adult HE measures. OfS Young Participation by area postcode lookup tool (Office for Students, 2023c)

9 Uni Connect brings together 29 partnerships of universities, colleges and other local partners to offer activities, advice and information on the benefits and realities of going to university or college.

can have the biggest impact, given our strong recruitment of disabled students, which continues to increase year on year.

Finally, in terms of progression to highly skilled, graduate level employment and further study, we aim to focus again on female students and those declaring a disability. Our Graduate Outcomes data suggests that female students, particularly those from the most deprived areas, do not achieve the same progression outcomes as those from more affluent areas, and so our intention is to look more closely at the whole student journey of females from particular backgrounds, to ensure that they remain in higher education once enrolled and, just as importantly, are supported to achieve their full potential, thereby increasing their chances of securing high quality, fulfilling post graduate jobs or further study. As an institution, we pride ourselves in being industry focussed, preparing our graduates for careers in their chosen sector, and the work outlined in this APP around graduate outcomes sits alongside our institutional focus on improving graduate outcomes data. Through our Assessment of Performance, we have also identified disabled students as a group at risk of not experiencing equality of opportunity in terms of progression outcomes. Our data shows a gap in graduate outcomes between those with a disability and those without. There is an obvious link here between the work we do around attainment for disabled students, and the possible knock-on effect this will have on their ability to secure graduate jobs once they have completed their studies or continue with post graduate education. The final group that forms part of our work around progression and graduate outcomes are young students, i.e. those younger than 21 at the point of enrolment. So often in higher education, it is mature students that seem to be at risk of equality of opportunity when it comes to graduate outcomes, however UCR bucks the trend in this regard, and we see better outcomes from our mature graduates than we do our young ones. Hence, we consider young students to be the greater “at risk” group, and once again our intervention strategies along with our institution wide strategy will help to drive up our data around student progression outcomes over the duration of our plan.

Further detail about our assessment of performance, including our approach to using POLAR4 as an area-based measure of young HE participation can be found in annex A. Annex A also considers other groups of students for who there are risks to equality of opportunity at a national level, who we have chosen not to target in our 2025-29 APP.

Objectives

To address the risks outlined in our assessment of performance, UCR has set the following objectives and related targets.

Access

Indication of risk
- A low proportion of entrants to HE at UCR have been eligible for Free School Meals at KS4, when compared with the local and national eligibility.

Risks to Equality of Opportunity
- Knowledge and skills, Information Advice & Guidance, Perception of HE, Limited choice of course type and delivery mode, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Objective
- To ensure that students that have been eligible for Free School Meals at Key Stage 4 have equal opportunity to enter Higher Education at UCR.

Target PTA 1
- University Centre Reaseheath will increase the proportion of entrants to HE courses who were eligible for Free School Meals at Key Stage 4 to 20.0% by 2029 (Current UCR figure is 16.8% of entrants were eligible for FSM at KS4)

Indication of risk
- A low proportion of entrants to UCR are males from the areas of lowest HE participation (POLAR quintiles 1 & 2) and the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 & 2)

Risks to equality of opportunity
- Knowledge and skills, Information Advice & Guidance, Perception of HE, Limited choice of course type and delivery mode, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Objective
- To ensure that male students from areas of low HE participation and deprived areas have equal opportunity to enter Higher Education at UCR.

Target PTA 2
- UCR will increase the proportion of entrants to HE courses from male students originating from the areas of lowest HE participation by 2029, such that 15.5% of our entrants are male and from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2.

Target PTA 3
- UCR will increase the proportion of entrants to HE courses from male students originating from the most deprived areas, according to the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), by 2029, such that 17.0% of our entrants are male and from IMD quintiles 1 and 2

Indication of risk

- Lower completion rates for female students from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 & 2)

Risks to Equality of Opportunity

- Knowledge & skills, Information Advice & Guidance, Insufficient academic support, Insufficient personal support, mental health, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, cost pressures, capacity issues

Objective

- To ensure that female students from the most deprived areas have equal opportunity to complete their studies at UCR.

Target PTS 1

- UCR will increase the completion rates of female students from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 and 2, currently 69.6%) to 80% by 2029.

Indication of risk

- Lower attainment/awarding rates for students declaring a disability compared with those who declare no disability.

Risks to Equality of Opportunity

- Insufficient academic support, Insufficient personal support, Mental health, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, Cost pressure, Capacity issues

Objective

- To ensure that disabled students have the opportunity to gain a degree classification that reflects their capability

Target PTS 2

- UCR will increase the attainment rates (i.e. the number of students who gain a 1st class or 2:1 degree classification) of disabled students to the pre pandemic level of 60% by 2029, from the current figure of 44.1%.

Indication of risk	• Lower attainment/awarding rates for female students from areas of low HE participation (POLAR quintiles 1 & 2) and the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 & 2)
Risks to equality of opportunity	• Insufficient academic support, Insufficient personal support, Mental Health, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, Cost pressures, Capacity issues
Objective	• To ensure that females from areas of low HE participation and deprived areas have equal opportunity to gain a degree classification that reflects their ability.
Target PTS 3	•UCR will increase the attainment rate of females from low participation areas (POLAR quintiles 1 and 2) to 50% by 2029 (currently a 19.5% 2-year aggregate awarding gap between students from the highest and lowest HE participation areas)
Target PTS 4	•UCR will increase the attainment rate of females from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) to 65% by 2029 (currently an 11.8% 2-year aggregate awarding gap between students from the most and least deprived areas)

Progression

Indication of risk	•Lower rates of progression to highly skilled, graduate employment for students with a disability, compared to those with no declared disability.
Risks to Equality of Opportunity	•Insufficient academic support, Insufficient personal support, Mental health, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, Cost pressures, Capacity issues, Progression from HE
Objective	•To ensure students declaring a disability have equal opportunity to enter the workplace and gain highly skilled, graduate level employability post graduation.
Target PTP 1	•UCR will reduce the gap in progression rates to highly skilled, graduate level employment for disabled students to 7.0%, so that it is in line with 4 year (pre pandemic) aggregate gap.

Indication of risk	•Lower rates of progression to highly skilled, graduate employment for "young" students, i.e. those younger than 21 at the point of enrolment.
Risks to Equality of Opportunity	•Insufficient academic support, Insufficient personal support, Mental health, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, Cost pressures, Capacity issues, Progression from HE
Objective	•To ensure that young students have equal opportunity to enter the workplace and gain highly skilled, graduate level employment post graduation.
Target PTP 2	•UCR will increase the progression rates for "young" students to 30% by 2029, such that it is in line with the 4-year aggregate (pre pandemic) progression rates for young students.

Indication of risk	•Lower rates of progression to highly skilled, graduate level employment for female students from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 & 2)
Risks to Equality of Opportunity	•Insufficient academic support, Insufficient personal support, Mental health, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, Cost pressures, Capacity issues, Progression from HE.
Objective	•To ensure that female students from the most deprived areas have equal opportunity to enter the workplace and gain highly skilled, graduate level employment post graduation.
Target PTP 3	•UCR will increase the progression rates for females from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) to 26.8% by 2029 such that it is in line with the 2-year aggregate progression figure for females from IMD quintiles 3, 4 and 5.

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

Access Lifecycle stage

Intervention Strategy 1 – Improving access to Higher Education for underrepresented groups

Objectives and Targets

- To ensure that students that have been eligible for Free School Meals at Key Stage 4 have equal opportunity to enter Higher Education at UCR.
- To ensure that male students from areas of low HE participation and deprived areas have equal opportunity to enter Higher Education at UCR.

PTA 1 – University Centre Reaseheath will increase the proportion of entrants to HE courses who were eligible for Free School Meals at Key Stage 4 to 20.0% by 2029 (Current UCR figure is 16.8% of entrants were eligible for FSM at KS4)
PTA 2 – UCR will increase the proportion of entrants to HE courses from male students originating from the areas of lowest HE participation by 2029, such that 15.5% of our entrants are male and from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2.
PTA 3 – UCR will increase the proportion of entrants to HE courses from male students originating from the most deprived areas, according to the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), by 2029, such that 17.0% of our entrants are male and from IMD quintiles 1 and 2.

Risks to Equality of Opportunity

Knowledge and skills, Information Advice & Guidance, Perception of HE, Limited choice of course type and delivery mode, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross Intervention
UCR Outreach, in collaboration with local Uni Connect partner (Higher Horizons+) – IAG and aspiration raising for students in identified target postcodes with low HE participation or FSM. **New & Existing activity**	Staff hours – delivery Staff hours – planning Student ambassador costs Consumables Mileage/travel	Improved knowledge and aspiration around HE Better knowledge of all HE options (including land based HE and higher and degree apprenticeships) Increased intention to access HE	
UCR Outreach, in collaboration with local Uni Connect partner (Higher Horizons+) – Pre 16 attainment raising for students in identified target postcodes with low HE participation or FSM. **New & Existing activity**	Staff hours – delivery Staff hours – planning Student ambassador costs Consumables Mileage/travel	Improved attainment across GCSE subjects in participating schools Increased progression to HE in underrepresented groups	
IAG professional events for school leaders, teachers and careers staff from identified target partners. **New activity**	Staff hours – delivery Staff hours – planning Student ambassador costs Consumables Room hire Marketing & promotion	Increased knowledge of the HE options available to students, and confidence in providing IAG	

UCR transition programme to support L3 to HE internal progression, Inc HE staff teaching at L3 in specific subject areas, currently agriculture & equine to be extended across all subject disciplines) **New activity**	Dedicated Advanced Practitioner 0.3 FTE Agric Staff teaching in subject disciplines	Increased internal progression from FE courses to HE at UCR	
Increase in shorter qualifications – Cert HE and Dip HE from our existing curriculum areas so that students do not have to make a full commitment to a 3 year HE programme. **New activity**	Specialist Senior leadership role 0.1 Programme development & Approvals process	Increase in enrolment to Cert HE and Dip HE qualifications from 2025/2029 Increase in confidence for shorter qualifications	
Increased offer of both higher and degree apprenticeships to include 2 degree apprenticeships and up to 4 Higher Level apprenticeships by 2029. **New activity**	Dedicated HE Business Development staff to engage with employers. Staff hours - Curriculum Development and Approvals (Senior Leadership role)	Increase in numbers engaged in higher and degree apprenticeships and a wider constituency of students.	
Review marketing and promotional activities as part of our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. **New & Existing activity**	AP Coordinator and Marketing Team staff hours	Increase in HE enrolments at UCR Increased applications from male, FSM and low participation groups	
"Open doors" taster events for students from Reaseheath FE course, min of 6 per academic year **New activity**	Advanced Practitioner 0.3 Faculty staff from each subject area input	Improved knowledge of UCR curriculum and offer Increased in internal progression from FE Reaseheath College students	
UCR parent HE information events, providing IAG to parents of HE applicants. 2 per academic year **Expansion of existing activity**	Staff hours – organisation & delivery Marketing & promotion Higher Horizons Room Hire & conferencing	Increase in HE enrolments at UCR Increased applications from male, FSM and low participation groups	
Review UCR approach to contextual admissions and enhance promotion, advice and guidance of approach. Implement Contextual Admissions Policy **New activity**	Marketing and promotion UCR Academic Registrar & UCR Admissions & Data Officer	Increase in HE enrolments at UCR Increased admissions from male, FSM and low participation groups	

Total cost of activities and evaluation for Intervention Strategy 1

£50,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Detail relating to the evidence base for this intervention strategy, including a Theory of Change can be found in Annex B of this plan.

UCR considers improving access a core theme of this 2025-29 APP. In keeping with the OfS aims and ambitions, we believe that all students with the ability and desire to study Higher Education should have that choice, regardless of their background. Landbased HE courses, in college based HE providers are exciting, valuable and potentially transformative in today's society, and the industries to which we align need strong and diverse candidates, each of whom will have their own lived experience to bring with them into industry. Our approach to IS1 therefore is built around collaborative outreach and attainment raising, both to ensure students have the correct information, advice and guidance around landbased HE, but also to ensure they are achieving their potential in school, giving them the best opportunity to progress on to a degree, higher or degree apprenticeship, or other HE course. We have taken particular notice of the OfS EORR, which cites lack of knowledge/skills, lack of good information, advice and guidance, a skewed perception of HE and a limited choice of course types or delivery mode when designing this intervention strategy. Finally, we want to review our approach to contextual offers within our admissions policy, to ensure that students from particular target groups have equality of opportunity when it comes to accessing Higher Education, even when they have not necessarily met all the conditions of their offer.

Evaluation

We aim to evaluate all activities in Intervention Strategy 1 to generate either Type 1 or Type 2 evidence, as well as evaluating the overall impact of the intervention strategy on our target groups. To support our evaluation, we will ask ourselves the following research questions:

- Has our collaborative outreach work engaged with students who are eligible for FSM, or originate from areas of low HE participation or deprived areas?
- Does the data show an increased knowledge of HE, an increased aspiration to study at HE, or an increase in attainment rates after the intervention or activity?
- Can we see an increase in our entrant data from students from target groups, such as those eligible from FSM, those originating from areas of low HE participation, and those from deprived areas?
- Can we see an increase in the confidence and knowledge of career professionals and teachers about the land based HE options at a specialist provider such as UCR?
- Can we see an increased level of internal progression from FE courses at Reaseheath College, to a HE programme at UCR?
- Can we see students enrolling on a more diverse range of courses, such as Higher and Degree apprenticeships? Are these working to widen access and participation in HE for target groups?
- Do our marketing materials reflect the diversity within the landbased sector, and does this lead to an increase in admissions of underrepresented groups?

To answer these questions, we will collect data on:

- The nature of participants in outreach activities, including their WP indicators and school
- Pre and post intervention data from outreach activity, in collaboration with our Uni Connect Hubs
- School attainment data, where the nature of the activity is attainment raising
- Internal data on applicants and enrolments, including contextual data from UCAS
- Pre and post data for external facing events, such as work with teachers and career professionals
- Internal progression rates from FE to HE study

- Application and enrolment data on diverse courses, such as Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, short courses and HTQ's
- Contextual admissions, including the numbers of offers made under the Contextual Admissions Policy, and how this results in fairer admissions for those who narrowly miss the entry requirements.
- The Office for Students Access and Participation Data Dashboard

Sharing and publication

- Interim findings, including any cause for concern will be shared internally through our APP Steering Group
- Annual evaluation and findings will be published in our annual Scholarship and Research Journal
- Towards the end of our 4-year plan, findings will be published on our website in the form of an impact report

Success lifecycle stage

Intervention Strategy 2 – Improving attainment rates for students with a disability.

Objectives and Targets

- To ensure that disabled students have the opportunity to gain a degree classification that reflects their capability

PTS 2 – UCR will increase the attainment rates (I.e. the number of students who gain a 1st class or 2:1 degree classification) of disabled students to the pre pandemic level of 60% by 2029, from the current figure of 44.1%.

Risks to Equality of Opportunity

Insufficient academic support, Insufficient personal support, Mental health, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, Cost pressure, Capacity issues

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross Intervention
Further develop data dashboards to make transparent and accessible the data on access, continuation, completion, attainment and progression for underrepresented groups **New activity**	Academic Registrar and support team – Staff hours	Improved institutional understanding of the data and progress towards targets for all underrepresented groups, including disabled students	IS1, IS3, IS4
Embed data from dashboards into Continuous Monitoring and Enhancement (CME) process to focus evaluation on key targets in the APP.	Academic Registrar – staff hours Programme Leaders – staff hours	Improved institutional understanding of the data and progress towards targets for all underrepresented groups, including disabled students	IS1, IS3, IS4

Regular review of progress against targets with Academic Management Team (AMT) **New activity**	Training and development programme on data systems and dashboards and integration into CME processes		
Establish and sustain focus groups to research lived experiences of APP groups with greatest risks to equality of opportunity (success, and progression) 1 per semester **New activity**	Staff hours – to include planning, analysis and evaluation of focus group outputs UCR Specialist Learning Manager – 2 days per focus group 2 per year	Better representation of the student voice, leading to a better institutional understanding of the lived experience of students. Greater student sense of belonging	IS1, IS3, IS4
Use data dashboard intelligence and outcomes of targeted focus groups to inform faculty wide CPD and individual programme development sessions. **New activity**	Staff hours – HE Teaching and Learning Coach (Planning, delivery and evaluation of CPD programme) UCR Specialist Learning Manager – support new staff & deliver 3 x 1 hour sessions per academic year	Greater confidence amongst staff in understanding and supporting the individual needs of students from target groups, informing actions and interventions in staff CPD. Improved quality of inclusive/accessible HE teaching.	IS1, IS3, IS4
Early Access programme (Potentially rebranded) with 3 activity strands: 1) Internal transition sessions 2) Early Access programme 3) Offer holder transition **New activity & expansion of existing activity**	1) ILT to provide internal transition support sessions – up to 8 groups of 4 students – 4 x 1 hour sessions per group ILT manager attend EHCP reviews – 1 hr x number identified 2) Specialist Learning Manager x 4 days Peer mentors x 3 days 4 ILT staff x 2 days 2 residential staff x 1 day Curriculum staff x 2 hours per curriculum area 3) Specialist Learning Manager present at open days. Specialist Learning Manager to provide online sessions twilight. Offer 1:1 show rounds. Peer mentors & training for peer mentors Room hire	Increase in confidence, knowledge and understanding of HE study requirements. Greater self-advocacy. Greater confidence in attempting assignments. Greater sense of belonging post intervention. Reduction in early “drop out” rates in year 1 of study, and potential for increased rates of continuation to year 2.	IS1, IS3

	Catering Marketing & promotion		
Enhanced Dissertation support groups L6 for those with a reported disability (by invite or referral) **Expansion of existing activity**	Staff hours – HE Study Mentors 1.5 hour sessions x 20 weeks 1 support group per course Promotion and awareness raising	Increased L6 attainment (those achieving 1st or 2:1 degree classification) Reduction in disability attainment gap	IS4
Peer Mentoring Programme for students who are at greatest risk of not experiencing equality of opportunity. **New activity**	Inclusive Learning Team - staff co-ordination 2 x Academic Coaches Mentor recruitment and training Peer mentors' sessions and meetings 8 per year	Increased on course attainment, grades, marks and final degree classification for disabled students Increase in self-reported confidence	IS3, IS4
Workshops on developing an intellectual identity and academic confidence and academic performance (L4/5) 1 per semester **New activity**	Staff hours - Academic Development Manager and Access and Participation Coordinator Planning, delivery and evaluation	Increase in self-perception in relation to intellectuality Increased academic confidence and performance	IS3, IS4
Development of UCR Inclusive Teaching & Assessment Framework, emphasising the social model of disability. **New activity**	Staff hours – HE Teaching & Learning Coach, Specialist Learning Manager Expertise in Universal Design for Learning	More accessible and inclusive assessments, teaching and learning resources. Less reliance on individual reasonable adjustments Better on course attainment, marks and grades	IS3
Staff training programme (6 hours per academic year) Creating inclusive and accessible materials. **New activity**	Staff hours – HE Teaching & Learning Coach/HE Specialist Learning Manager	More accessible and inclusive assessments, teaching and learning resources. Fewer individual reasonable adjustments Better on course attainment, marks and grades	IS3
Extension of L6 Top Up degree provision from 1 year to 2 years to support enhanced attainment. **New Activity**	Additional teaching & assessment resource to offer 2-year alternative to top up programmes	Better completion rates in L6 Top up programmes Better overall attainment in L6 Top up programmes	IS3, IS4
Targeted interventions for disabled students at risk of falling below 2:1 threshold, consisting of grade boost workshops, personal	Staff hours - Inclusive Learning Team	Better degree outcomes (those achieving a 1st or 2:1 degree classification at L6, or those achieving a meritorious award at FD	IS3, IS4

development and resilience, academic self-concept and mental health. **New Activity**	Staff hours – to include 2 new Academic Coaches within the Inclusive Learning Team	level) for disabled students	
Promotion of ILT support service and academic coaching to provide flexible access to services. **Expansion of existing activity**	Staff hours – marketing and communications team	Better take up of Inclusive Learning Services by both disabled and non-disabled students	

Total cost of activities and evaluation for Intervention Strategy 2

£160,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Detail relating to the evidence base for this intervention strategy, including a Theory of Change can be found in Annex B of this plan.

UCR has been successful over a number of years in recruiting disabled students to our programmes and successfully supporting their individual needs, which in many cases has led to students progressing into highly skilled, graduate jobs and further study. However, we also note a persistent attainment gap for our disabled students, which was starting to close prior to the Covid-19 pandemic but has since widened. A major focus of this 2025-29 APP, and our rationale behind IS2 is therefore working to close this gap over the course of this plan. We have noted the risks in the EORR and have concentrated on several key risks in our approach to IS2. It is possible that insufficient on course support could be an underlying factor in the risk indicator, and so we have sought to expand our support for disabled students across all stages of the student lifecycle. We also note that simply adding more resource in isolation is unlikely to lead to the outcomes we want to see, so have pledged to review our inclusive teaching and assessment framework, giving more support to academic staff and Personal Academic Tutors in this regard. Cost pressures remain a concern for all HE students, but the additional costs associated with disability can cause additional burden for some students, and so we look to strengthen our support for students and staff around the Disabled Student Allowance, but also want to evaluate the efficacy of this against our own in-house provision and maximise this where we can. Finally, we cannot ignore the challenges that poor mental health brings for students, as there is often comorbidity with other disabilities and learning difficulties. We have addressed this more thoroughly in IS3, but there will be cross intervention with IS2, with regards to mental health support.

Evaluation

We aim to evaluate all activities in Intervention Strategy 2 to generate either Type 1 or Type 2 evidence, as well as evaluating the overall impact of the intervention strategy on our target groups. To support our evaluation, we will ask ourselves the following research questions:

- Do disabled students at UCR have a sense of belonging, and do we fully understand their lived experiences and challenges in HE?
- Do staff understand and the individual needs of students from target groups, and have confidence addressing these?
- Do disabled students feel satisfied with their course, their staff and the institution as whole? Do they feel UCR is an inclusive and accessible place to study?
- Do students feel knowledgeable, confident and ready to study at HE level after our attending an activity such as the Early Access Programme?

- Have we increased continuation rates amongst disabled students from the first year to the second year of their course?
- Have we seen better degree outcomes for disabled students at L6 (those achieving 1st or 2:1 degrees at L6)
- Have we reduced the awarding gap between disabled students and their non-disabled peers?
- Have we seen better marks, grades, attendance and attainment across all levels of study for disabled students?
- Can we see a more inclusive and accessible environment, and one that is less reliant on individual reasonable adjustments?
- Can we see a better take up of our Inclusive Learning Team services, brought about better visibility and promotion, and more flexibility in the service they offer?

To answer these questions, we will collect data from:

- Internal surveys, such as Module Evaluation Surveys and First Impressions Surveys
- External satisfaction surveys, such as the National Student Survey
- Focus groups and other sources of student feedback, such as the UCR Student Council
- Pre and Post intervention surveys where appropriate I.e. Early Access Programme
- Internal sources relating to withdrawals and interruptions of study, with regards disabled students
- Internal sources relating to degree outcomes and on course attainment levels for disabled students
- The Office for Students Access and Participation Data Dashboard
- Our Inclusive Learning Team, relating to the utilisation of the service, satisfaction levels and reasonable adjustments

Sharing and publication

- Interim findings, including any cause for concern will be shared internally through our APP Steering Group
- Annual evaluation and findings will be published in our annual Scholarship and Research Journal
- Towards the end of our 4-year plan, findings will be published on our website in the form of an impact report

Intervention Strategy 3 – Improving completion and attainment rates for female students from areas of low HE participation and the most deprived areas

Objectives and Targets

- To ensure that female students from the most deprived areas have equal opportunity to complete their studies at UCR.
- To ensure that females from areas of low HE participation and deprived areas have equal opportunity to gain a degree classification that reflects their ability.

PTS 1 – UCR will increase the completion rates of female students from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 and 2, currently 69.6%) to 80% by 2029.
PTS 3 – UCR will increase the attainment rate of females from low participation areas (POLAR quintiles 1 and 2) to 50% by 2029 (current attainment is 44%, with a 20% awarding gap between students from the highest and lowest HE participation areas)
PTS 4 - UCR will increase the attainment rate of females from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) to 65% by 2029 (current attainment is 52.9%, with a 12% awarding gap between students from the most and least deprived areas)

Risks to Equality of Opportunity

Knowledge & skills, Information Advice & Guidance, Insufficient academic support, Insufficient personal support, mental health, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, cost pressures, capacity issues

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross Intervention
Academic Knowledge and skills development activities 2x1 hour sessions annually, linked to curriculum **New Activity**	Staff hours – planning and delivery of workshops	Increased completion and attainment rates for those in target groups Fewer withdrawals or interruption of studies Students succeeding at the first attempt.	IS4
Personal/Pastoral Soft skills development activities 2x1 hour sessions annually, linked to curriculum **New Activity**	Staff hours – planning and delivery of workshops	Increased completion and attainment rates for those in target groups Fewer withdrawals or interruption of studies	IS4
Refine the Personal Academic Tutor service and tutorial structure to reflect the aims and principles of the employability and learning gain strategy and encourage reflection and evaluation. **New & Existing activity**	Staff hours Staff CPD	Increased completion rates for students in target groups Increased Graduate Outcomes, better progression to graduate employment/further study	IS4
Work in partnership with Reaseheath College internal mental health and wellbeing	Staff hours	Increased completion & attainment rates for students in target groups	IS2, IS4

services utilising the Step Change Mentally Healthy Universities Toolkit to implement best practice. **New Activity**	Partnership working between UCR & Reaseheath College wellbeing services	Fewer students leaving courses or seeking interruptions of study citing poor mental health	
Use OfS Financial Toolkit to critically evaluate Reaseheath bursary to further support students from low socio-economic groups. Explore additional mechanisms of support in a revised bursary offer **New Activity**	Staff hours – Academic Services Officer and AP Coordinator Research and development of revised offer Marketing & promotion Evaluation of current offer	Revised bursary offer, more closely aligned to target groups such as those from low income backgrounds Fewer withdrawals due to financial reasons	IS1, IS2
Career Professionals Programme. Centralised organisation of visiting guest lecturers & motivational speakers from a range of backgrounds **New activity**	Each subject area to provide 1 hour of delivery per academic year to support the programme.	Increase in completion Increase in attainment Increased awareness of, and motivation to pursue graduate career pathways and/or postgraduate study amongst target group	IS4

Total cost of activities and evaluation for Intervention Strategy 3

Bursaries and financial support are accounted for separately in our Fees, Investment and Targets plan.

£100,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Detail relating to the evidence base for this intervention strategy, including a Theory of Change can be found in Annex B of this plan.

UCR is highly successful in recruiting female students to HE courses, with around 75% of our student population being female. However, we note in some cases lower completion and attainment rates for female students from areas where HE participation is lower, and deprived areas in terms of the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation. This data provides the rationale for the work contained within IS3, as we look to improve continuation and attainment rates for all students, but particularly those from our identified target groups.

The EORR cites several potential underlying factors for this indicator, but we have chosen to focus on 3 key areas. Ensuring that students have sufficient academic and pastoral support should improve completion rates, leading to fewer interruptions of studies and withdrawals. We would also hope to see an improvement in students succeeding at the first attempt assessment, rather than relying on resit periods.

We also note that financial cost pressures are often underlying factors in a student's ability to remain on their course and successfully gain a good degree. We aim to readdress our financial support package, ensuring it is still fit for purpose in a post pandemic, cost of living crisis era, and using evaluation, ensure it has maximum impact for those most at risk of not experiencing equality of opportunity.

Finally, in alignment with the EORR, we consider the impact of poor mental health to be a key underlying factor in students withdrawing from studies or not achieving a good degree. The evidence outlined in Annex B shows that "mental health" is the most stated reason for students leaving their course early, and this provides a rationale for focussing on mental health under IS3. We realise that mental health transcends all stages of the student lifecycle, for all underrepresented groups, and fully appreciate the cross intervention with other

strategies within this plan. However, as IS3 specifically considers completion rates, we believe this is the best place to outline our approach to improving mental health across our HE student population.

Evaluation

We aim to evaluate all activities in Intervention Strategy 3 to generate either Type 1 or Type 2 evidence, as well as evaluating the overall impact of the intervention strategy on our target groups. To support our evaluation, we will ask ourselves the following research questions:

- Can we see increased rates of completion and attainment for females from areas of low participation and deprived areas, associated with Intervention Strategy 3?
- Have we seen lower rates of withdrawals and interruptions of study from those in target groups?
- Are more students succeeding assessment at the first attempt, rather than requiring a reassessment or resit?
- Can we see improved graduate outcomes for those in target groups, i.e. more females from areas of low HE participation and deprived areas progressing to highly skilled graduate employment or further study?
- Can we see a decrease in students citing mental health as a reason for non-completion of their studies or withdrawal from their course?
- Can we see fewer withdrawals due to financial reasons, associated with a revised bursary offer?
- Can we see better awareness, knowledge and aspiration to follow a post graduate pathway such as a Masters programme after graduating from UCR?

To answer these questions, we will collect data from:

- The OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard, to monitor completion and attainment rates of students in target groups.
- Internal data on withdrawals, interruptions of studies, reassessments and success rates
- The Graduate Outcomes Survey
- Our mental health and wellbeing support service, monitoring uptake in their service from UCR students.
- Our financial support service, including the data on bursary recipients, number of students accessing hardship funds and citing financial pressures on their course.
- The OfS financial support evaluation toolkit, and associated survey results (Office for Students, 2023b)
- Tutorial data where appropriate, giving insight into the intentions of graduates post graduation.

Sharing and publication

- Interim findings, including any cause for concern will be shared internally through our APP Steering Group
- Annual evaluation and findings will be published in our annual Scholarship and Research Journal
- Towards the end of our 4-year plan, findings will be published on our website in the form of an impact report

Intervention Strategy 4 – Improving progression outcomes for students with a disability, young students and female students from the most deprived areas (Future Focus)

Objectives and Targets

- To ensure students declaring a disability have equal opportunity to enter the workplace and gain highly skilled, graduate level employability post graduation.
- To ensure that young students have equal opportunity to enter the workplace and gain highly skilled, graduate level employment post graduation.
- To ensure that female students from the most deprived areas have equal opportunity to enter the workplace and gain highly skilled, graduate level employment post graduation.

PTP 1 – UCR will reduce the gap in progression rates to highly skilled, graduate level employment for disabled students to 7.0%, so that it is in line with 4 year (pre pandemic) aggregate gap.

PTP 2 – UCR will increase the progression rates for "young" students (currently 21.7%) to 30% by 2029, such that it is in line with the progression rates of their mature peers

PTP 3 – UCR will increase the progression rates for females from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) to 26.8% by 2029 such that it is in line with the 2-year aggregate progression figure for females from IMD quintiles 3, 4 and 5.

Risks to Equality of Opportunity

Insufficient academic support, Insufficient personal support, Mental health, Ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, Cost pressures, Capacity issues, Progression from HE

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross Intervention
Further develop data dashboards to make transparent and accessible the data on access, continuation, completion, attainment and progression for underrepresented groups **New activity**	Academic Registrar and support team – Staff hours	Improved institutional understanding of the data and progress towards targets for all underrepresented groups, including disabled students	IS1, IS2, IS3
Embed data from dashboards into Continuous Monitoring and Enhancement (CME) process to focus evaluation on key targets in the APP. Regular review of progress against targets with Academic Management Team (AMT) **New Activity**	Academic Registrar – staff hours Programme Leaders – staff hours Training and development programme on data systems and dashboards and integration into CME processes	Improved institutional understanding of the data and progress towards targets for all underrepresented groups, including disabled students	IS1, IS2, IS3
Establish and sustain focus groups to research lived	Staff hours – to include planning, analysis and	Better representation of the student voice, leading	IS1, IS2, IS3

experiences of APP groups with greatest risks to equality of opportunity. 1 per semester **New Activity**	evaluation of focus group outputs 2 per year	to a better institutional understanding of the lived experience of students. Greater student sense of belonging	
Future Focus Staff CPD to identify and apply pedagogical approaches which reinforce and enhance 'employability' traits (Higher Education Academy, 2006) **New Activity**	Teaching and Learning Coach time for preparation delivery and evaluation	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS1, IS2, IS3
Future Focus Review current programme content to identify: i) Embedded development of skills and knowledge (aligned to professional/occupational standards where applicable) **New Activity**	Staff hours – Assistant Dean of HE & Programme Leaders/UCR academic staff	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3
Future Focus Embed through curriculum design-Assessment opportunities which encourage the application of knowledge and skills through real world scenarios (supported by industry where appropriate) **New Activity**	Staff hours – Academic Development Manager	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3
Future Focus Promotion of self-advocacy skills for students with a declared disability, young learners and those from low participation neighbourhoods via Learning Mentors. **New activity**	Staff hours – UCR Academic Staff Specialist Learning Manager	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3
Future Focus Review the Experiential Learning module and implement opportunities to incorporate alternative/additional work-related activities (for	Staff hours – UCR Assistant Dean of HE, UCR Registrar and Programme Leaders Student Experience and Outcomes Officer 0.3 FTE	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3

example linked to entrepreneurship, environmental stewardship) **New Activity**			
Future Focus Identify and evaluate existing enrichment experiences with reference to the aims and principles of the Future Focus strategy and develop further opportunities linked to student societies and the Student Union, employers and industry and the needs of the wider college. **New Activity**	Staff hours – UCR Assistant Dean of HE, UCR Registrar and Programme Leaders	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3
Future Focus Identify existing industry and employer contacts and establish links to support enhanced programme involvement including work placement and sandwich year opportunities, industry-related projects and scholarly activity **New Activity**	Staff hours – UCR Assistant Dean of HE, UCR Registrar and Programme Leaders	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3
Future Focus Review and evaluate current Career Development Learning Activities and, in partnership with the Careers Team, develop activities and resources to achieve aims and principles of the strategy. **New Activity**	Staff hours – UCR Assistant Dean of HE, UCR Registrar and Programme Leaders Input from cross college careers team	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3
Future Focus Provide an enhanced careers guidance offer for students from underrepresented groups, through additional appointments with trained colleagues underpinned by tailored communications	Staff hours – UCR careers team	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3

and targeting of students to boost engagement. **New Activity**			
Future Focus Further enhanced development of the Graduate Toolkit resources 'Careers Hub' to bring together: career development learning resources, links to discipline specific careers information and resources provided by external agencies as well as recruitment and employment opportunities information. The Careers Hub will be available to recent graduates and alumni to provide support for progression to employment following graduation. **New Activity**	Specialist resource - Online developer hours Input from UCR careers team Communications and promotion with Alumni association	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3
Future Focus CV writing, social media profiles, interview and presentation skills workshops for L5 and L6 students to encourage the development of social capacity and networking (including through digital platforms) to support success **New Activity**	Academic staff hours for workshops Resource production Input from UCR careers team	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3
Future Focus Further develop and enhance our Alumni links and reach to explore mechanisms for alumni support for mentoring students Provide an extension of our careers guidance and support for alumni in the first year post graduation **New Activity**	Staff hours - Careers guidance and support (UCR careers team) Promotion and communications with alumni association Development of an online alumni space on a relevant platform	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for students in target groups Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3

Future Focus Progression to post graduate study workshops prior to final examination/assessment period **New Activity**	Staff hours for post graduate study workshops x 3 per year	Higher occurrence of further study, post graduation at UCR	IS2, IS3

Total cost of activities and evaluation for Intervention Strategy 4

£60,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Detail relating to the evidence base for this intervention strategy, including a Theory of Change can be found in Annex B of this plan.

As a leading, landbased provider of Higher Education, graduate outcomes are a key strategic focus, in line with our "industry focussed, career ready" mission statement. The future growth of the landbased sector, including vital industries such as food sustainability relies on institutions like ourselves delivering strong, well-rounded graduates, who progress into the highly specialised sectors to which we align, or continuing their education in further study, to become experts in what they do. However, for some groups of students, we notice slightly lesser outcomes when compared with peers, and our rationale around IS4 is to close that gap as far as possible, so that all students, regardless of characteristic or background achieve the very best degree outcomes, and progress into highly skilled graduate jobs or further study. We also appreciate that for some students, success is not always defined solely by their employment at the end of their time with UCR, but by their distance travelled, and for some of our students, completing a programme of higher education is the goal, and the measure that defines their outcome.
Taking this into consideration, we have again consulted the EORR to explore the potential underpinning reasons for our risk indicators, within our unique context. We recognise that most of the factors outlined in the EORR could be resulting in our risk indicators and have pledged to develop a new institutional programme called "Future Focus", with the main aim being to drive up Graduate Outcomes for students across the institution. However, within this programme, we also recognise that specific groups, such as disabled students will have specific needs, and may need further guidance to ensure a lack of support is not contributing to poorer outcomes.

Evaluation

We aim to evaluate all activities in Intervention Strategy 4 to generate either Type 1 or Type 2 evidence, as well as evaluating the overall impact of the intervention strategy on our target groups. To support our evaluation, we will ask ourselves the following research questions:

- Do we see better Graduate Outcomes Survey across the institution, but particularly for those students in target groups (according to Graduate Outcomes Survey data)?
- Do we see an increase in confidence and an intention, awareness or aspiration to progress to further study, particularly at Post Graduate level?

To answer these questions, we will collect data from:

- Annual Graduate Outcomes Survey data
- Data from final year tutorials, to assess intention to continue to Post Graduate Study
- Internal satisfaction data e.g. Module Evaluation Surveys.

- External satisfaction and student perception data e.g. National Students Survey

Sharing and publication

- Interim findings, including any cause for concern will be shared internally through our APP Steering Group
- Annual evaluation and findings will be published in our annual Scholarship and Research Journal
- Towards the end of our 4-year plan, findings will be published on our website in the form of an impact report

Whole provider approach

The organisational culture of Reaseheath College is founded in our PRIDE (People, Responsibility, Integrity, Diversity, Excellence) values. These are displayed in every room in the college and are embedded within our lesson observation and annual appraisal criteria. This holistic approach ensures that every member of academic, support and management staff lives and works in such a way as to create a supportive and inclusive culture which encourages and enables each individual, whether student or staff, to fulfil their potential. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy, which adheres to the Equality Act 2010, ensures that all persons involved with UCR are treated with respect, courtesy, integrity and equality of opportunity, and this is further embedded in our college values. In the creation of this plan, we have conducted an Equality Impact Assessment, which we apply to all new policies, procedures or practices.

The leadership team within University Centre Reaseheath (UCR) works across the organisation and in close partnership with the UCR Student Union to drive our access and participation agenda. All major reports and findings are fed into the committee structure and directly to the Executive Management Team and the Governing Body of the institution, which includes the Assistant Principal and Dean of Higher Education who assumes overarching responsibility for Higher Education. The Governing Body is fully committed to our ambitious approach and maintains effective oversight of the actions and efficacy of the APP. Our Access and Participation Steering Group reports to the HE Academic Board and HE Committee (Governors) and is represented at the college wide Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The EDI committee, as well as providing strategic oversight of the college's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, has also introduced Equality Impact Assessments to all policies and procedures across the college, ensuring EDI is a consistent golden thread, and that there are no unintended consequences on those students or staff with protected characteristics. The membership of the APP steering group includes staff from all relevant areas of the organisation, providing a platform for challenging assumptions, monitoring progress and evaluating impact. Membership incorporates academic staff, senior management, student services, careers, library and administrative staff to collectively drive the implementation of our plan. We have a designated Access and Participation Coordinator whose role is to drive the APP actions and activities across the whole provider with inputs to outreach, admissions, teaching, learning and assessment, inclusive learning support and careers and progression activities. The effective links made through this appointment enable connections to be made and opportunities to be exploited to ensure equality of opportunity across Reaseheath College and University Centre Reaseheath.

In the creation of this plan, there are numerous examples of where the "whole provider" has worked in collaboration to develop and shape our work for the next 4 years. In some cases, whole provider relates to the entire organisation, Reaseheath College, involving teams from right across our FE, HE and apprenticeship provision. In other cases, whole provider refers to University Centre Reaseheath, where specific teams and individuals have worked together on a specific element or intervention strategy. For

example, when developing new strategies and business plans around our library resources and mental health provision, this has been done with the aims and objectives of the APP in mind, with teams coming together to ensure a common theme runs throughout. Our work around disabled students has been developed collaboratively in conjunction with our Inclusive Learning Team, to ensure that the strategies we have planned are deliverable and will impact the outcomes of disabled students positively over the course of the plan. Our work with schools involves input from right across the organisation, including our academic and support staff, but we also ensure that this work is aligned with the aims of our marketing and schools liaison teams, and have considered how aspiration and attainment raising work in our APP aligns with the wider institutional strategy around schools engagement and partnership building. Finally, our work around graduate outcomes and equality of opportunity post-graduation is part of a much broader, whole provider approach to improving graduate outcomes, known as the Future Focus programme.

We continue to work collaboratively with the University of Chester as our strategic and validating partner, to identify and consider common challenges and share best practice. Furthermore, through our involvement with the Higher Horizons+ project (Uni Connect) we will seek opportunities to work with other local providers to address common challenges.

We recognise the increasing challenge faced by the sector in supporting students with issues of mental health and will continue to strengthen our approach which was recognised in 2017/18 through a nomination for the Association of Colleges Beacon Award for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

We are committed to further developing our approach to inclusive learning, teaching and assessment as recognised within the aims of our HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

Aim 4: To embed inclusive teaching, learning and assessment practices in curriculum design and delivery to maximise accessibility and enhance the learning experience and environment for all students
Aim 5: To support students in exploring and advancing their growth and resilience through the provision of personalised support, guidance and intervention.
Aim 6: To facilitate career-aligned learning, embedding vocationally relevant opportunities which maximise graduate employability and capability.

Our approach seeks to ensure that our student learning experience removes barriers, enables participation, respects diversity, and caters for a range of learning preferences and needs. This will be achieved through consideration of all aspects of the student experience and lifecycle, incorporating the consideration of pedagogy, curricula, assessment and support, recognising disability as a normal part of diversity, and embracing the Social Model of Disability (DSSLG, 2017).

Mountford-Zimdars et al. (2015) state that “given the multi-faceted and individualistic nature of the factors underpinning differential outcomes, whole-institution approaches which combine a diversity of different ‘bottom-up’ interventions are likely to have more impact”. This approach is further supported by the What Works? project, whose recommendations are based on their findings that ‘universal’ interventions, though provided to all, can have the effect of particularly benefitting disadvantaged students, and are more effective than those targeted at specific groups (Thomas, 2012). These principles, coupled with our status as a small and specialist provider, have guided us in the development of intervention strategies which can be universally applied, but tailored to meet the needs of individual students. This tailoring will be driven by each student’s Personal Academic Tutor (PAT).

Student consultation

UCR boasts a strong, active and diverse student body, who engage with senior leaders and the wider college through a variety of means. At UCR, we recognise the significant personal and financial commitments students make when choosing to enter Higher Education and are fully committed to hearing the "student voice", reflecting on the feedback we hear and acting where appropriate, to ensure a high quality, inclusive education setting for students from all backgrounds.

The Student Council consists of representatives from our HE courses, whose role is to gather feedback from peers relating to the quality of teaching and learning and overall student experience at UCR. This feedback is then presented to staff and senior leaders at termly Student Council meetings, with actions recorded in a "your feedback, our actions" approach. This also gives student councillors an opportunity to engage with representatives from other courses and compare and contrast their student experience. The Student Council is attended by a full time Student Union President, Senior Leaders, Programme Leaders and range of both academic and support staff from across UCR.

At UCR, all of our deliberative committees and steering groups have student representation, not only to ensure that the student voice is heard, but to give students the opportunity to shape strategies and contribute to the development of the university centre. In the case of our Access and Participation work, our Access and Participation Steering Group is attended by our SU president, which reflects a strong history of student engagement in our work around fair access and equality of opportunity.

As a smaller provider, there is strong 2-way communication between the student body, academic staff and senior leaders, supported and facilitated by faculty support staff. This is reflected in our above benchmark NSS scores for questions relating to opportunities to provide feedback and the student voice being valued[10]. Students can "Tell UCR" at any point in their student journey, via our online form, and student opinions about individual modules are gathered via Module Evaluation Surveys. At the commencement of the academic year, students are able to feedback on their first impressions, and of course those eligible are encouraged to complete the National Students Survey, which is the major independent survey that gathers the thoughts of final year undergraduate students. In addition, each and every UCR student is assigned a Personal Academic Tutor (PAT), with whom they can discuss their course and provide feedback to.

In preparing this APP, UCR has consulted and engaged with students in the following ways:

- UCR has always had student representation on our Access and Participation Steering Group. This allows all members to inform the student body about our ongoing work to improve access and participation through the representative, but to also gather the views of the student body and allow them to test and challenge our initiatives and help to evaluate impact. The steering group chair ensures that the student representative has access to all meeting agendas, appendix papers and actions for each meeting, allowing time for discussion during the meeting itself.
- We have consulted our Student Council, which consists of course representative from each of our Higher Education courses, as well as senior staff and policy makers, academic staff and support staff. In the creation of this 2025-29 plan, we have especially endeavoured to include the views of students from a range of underrepresented backgrounds, such as disabled students, mature students and students whose gender identity is different from birth. Students have been consulted through a series of online and face to face focus groups, to ensure the work we have outlined with students at risk of equality of opportunity will have the impact we desire, with the students holding us to account if it does not.

[10] National Student Survey data: provider-level dashboard - Office for Students (Office for Students, 2023d)

- We have conducted several round table discussions with representatives from our Student Union and Student Council, particularly relating to the creation of our intervention strategies. These discussions have been key in gathering student views on “what works” and hearing first hand experiences of being a Higher Education student in the post pandemic era.
- We have considered the lived experience of our underrepresented groups, taking care not to make assumptions about their HE experience, but rather engage in meaningful discussions through our deliberative committees, providing feedback where we have made adjustments or improvements based on their point of view.
- We have supported our Student Union to complete a student submission to accompany our 2025-29 APP. This document, submitted separately and independently to the main plan asks students to what extent they have been consulted in the preparation of our APP, and asks them to consider how effectively the plan addresses the key risks to equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups at UCR.

Evaluation of the plan

At UCR, we are committed to strengthening our work around evaluation and dissemination of findings in relation to our Access and Participation work. Evaluation helps us to understand whether the intervention strategies and activities outlined above are effectively addressing the risks to equality of opportunity we have identified, giving us insight into "what works", for whom, and at which stage of the student lifecycle. It is also important that such evaluation is shared and disseminated both internally and with the wider sector, so that the HE sector as a whole, including smaller more specialist providers like ourselves can develop better knowledge of the impact of access, success and progression strategies.

In our 2023/24 APP Variation[11], we outlined our approach to strengthening evaluation practice across our access and participation activity. As a small, specialist provider of landbased higher education, providing strong causal evidence for the work we do is difficult, given our relatively small student numbers. However, with a small student population and limited resources, it is even more imperative that we ensure the work we do is effective in closing gaps and promoting equality of opportunity, and hence we remain committed to finding out what works, so that we can invest the largest proportions of our staffing and financial resources in those activities most likely to have a beneficial outcome for underrepresented groups, whether at the access, success or progression stage of their student journey.

Further to the commitments we made in our variation, we have used the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool[12] to help us identify our strengths and weaknesses in our approach to evaluation. The tool will support us in ensuring our evaluation practice is robust enough to produce high quality evidence, giving us the confidence to make claims about the impact and effectiveness of our work.

Using the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool, we have rated our current evaluation practice as "emerging" overall, meaning that work is ongoing around our evaluation strategy, but we understand where we can improve our practice, given our context as smaller provider. However, we do note that the strategic context around our evaluation is now "good". This means that we have a better culture of evaluation across the whole provider, people fully understand the importance of evaluation in our access and participation work, and we have regular opportunities to reflect and report on the work that we do, to ensure that it is working in a beneficial way for those involved.

In terms of **strategic context**, UCR ensures:

- There are regular opportunities for those involved in access and participation to have conversations and reflect upon the impact of our activities, through our operational steering groups and deliberative committees.
- An understanding of the importance of evaluation across the provider, but also within our support teams, marketing department, senior leaders and academic staff
- A culture of honest reflection, promoting honesty when assessing whether the work we do had had the outcomes we had hoped to see.
- Effective utilisation of skills from across the organisation in relation to evaluation
- Collaboration with other sectors, such as Uni Connect partners, to triangulate findings and ensure cross referencing with the findings of others which further strengthens the robustness and validity of findings.

[11] Available to view at https://ucreaseheath.ac.uk/policies/

12 The OfS Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool assists providers in reviewing whether their evaluation plans and methodologies go far enough to generate high quality evidence about the impact of activities in their access and participation plans.

Our next step is to further utilise the OfS evaluation self-assessment to ensure that all areas of evaluation progress to "good" or "advanced" over the duration of this plan. In terms of **designing interventions and activities**, we have endeavoured to build in evaluation from the start (see individual intervention strategies 1-4), ensuring that each intervention strategy is contributing to the overall aims and objectives, and that there are metrics in place by which to assess the degree to which the activities are effective. Each of our intervention strategies are underpinned by a Theory of Change (see Annex B), which allows us to understand the change we want to see over time, including the short, medium and long-term objectives involved.

In **designing evaluation**, we have been mindful of the OfS guidance on Standards of Evidence, and the associated claims we can make with the 3 different types of evidence:

13

Type of evidence	Description	Evidence	Claims that can be made
Type 1 – narrative	The impact evaluation provides a narrative or a coherent theory of change to motivate its selection of activities in the context of a coherent strategy.	Evidence of impact elsewhere and/or in the research literature on access and participation activity effectiveness or from existing evaluation results.	We have a coherent explanation of what we do and why our claims are research-based.
Type 2 – empirical enquiry	The impact evaluation collects data on impact and reports evidence that those receiving an intervention have better outcomes, though does not establish any direct causal effect.	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post intervention change or a difference compared to what might otherwise have happened.	We can demonstrate that our interventions are associated with beneficial results.
Type 3 – causality	The impact evaluation methodology provides evidence of a causal effect of an intervention.	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post treatment change on participants relative to an appropriate control or comparison group who did not take part in the intervention.	We believe our intervention causes improvement and can demonstrate the difference using a control or comparison group.

The table above highlights the 3 main types of evidence commonly used in access and participation evaluation. In most of our intervention strategies, we are able to produce Type 1 evidence, i.e. we have a strong narrative about why we are doing what we are, and the evaluation will clearly outline the impact we think we have seen, and how this fits with our overarching theory of change. Furthermore, there will be evidence in the literature and research that underpins the activity, and sufficient evidence for us to be confident that we are making a difference and having a positive impact towards a particular student group or objective. Where an intervention strategy cites narrative evaluation, we will be able to claim with confidence that we have a coherent explanation and rationale for our work.

Although not hierarchical, we are mindful of the need to produce more Type 2 evaluation in our access and participation work. Empirical evidence means that the evaluation of the intervention strategy collects data on the impact of the intervention, and then uses this data to assess whether participants who have received that intervention have experienced better outcomes. Our intention is, where appropriate, to make full use of the TASO Access and Success Questionnaire (ASQ) to better evaluate our access and success interventions. In incorporating more empirical evidence into our work, we have employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, often on a pre and post intervention basis, to support judgements about what could have happened if the intervention had not taken place. Using this approach, in conjunction with type 1 evidence, we can start to strengthen the claims that we can make

13 Extract from OfS Regulatory Advice 6 – How to prepare an access and participation plan (Office for Students, 2023f)

about the impact of our work, using data to demonstrate that our interventions are associated with beneficial results.

Finally, we have considered Type 3 evidence, which provides evidence of a causal effect of interventions and activities. We are not planning to incorporate any Type 3 evaluation into our intervention strategies at this stage, concentrating in the main on implementing a coherent and consistent system of evaluation across the whole of our APP, and ensuring this results in a reliable and regular stream of empirical evidence in our evaluations. As a small provider, with very small student numbers in particular groups, we do not currently have the appropriate expertise to carry out Type 3 evaluation that would lead to casual evidence and deem it more important to develop confidence and mastery in producing Type 1 and Type 2 evidence. Where collaboration is possible with other organisations, such as local Uni Connect hubs, we will support their evaluation work, as well as gaining the benefit of any Type 2 or Type 3 evidence they share.

To **implement the evaluation plan** we will develop a comprehensive evaluation strategy based on the work we conducted in our 2020-25 APP. This will clearly outline the type of evaluation we will conduct for each intervention strategy, building on the framework we have outlined in this plan. This strategy will include (but is not limited to):

- The process and arrangements we will employ around data collection, including the type of data, the timescale for collection, the responsible person or team/s.
- A data collection plan.
- The research questions and outcome measures that will allow us to measure the efficacy of our interventions and activities.
- The ethical, safeguarding and GDPR considerations around our data collection, including information around our internal ethics process for research and scholarly activity.
- Where we aim to work in partnership with external providers, for example EMWPREP.[14]
- The resources required to successfully undertake the evaluation.
- Any risk management strategies we implement around data collection and evaluation.
- How we evaluate where numbers are low, or there is little statistical confidence in the data.
- How we will respond to interim findings and adapt interventions quickly to ensure we remain on target against our objectives.

Finally, we will ensure we **learn from and disseminate our findings**. Any evaluation output created under this plan will be shared with our Access and Participation Steering Group in the first instance, who will provide analysis and act as a critical friend to provide challenge to our findings. At this point we have historically taken a “Continue, Adapt, Stop” approach to our work, ensuring that where we believe an activity or intervention is having the desired effect, and our evaluation supports this belief, we continue to implement that particular strategy or intervention. Similarly, where we believe amendments or adjustments would improve the outcomes of a programme, we discuss the changes required before making any amendments. Alternatively, where we observe something which is clearly not working, or where the evidence is that an activity is having an unintended consequence, we may choose to cease activity in that area, which may lead to us submitting a variation to our approved APP.

Once evaluation has been shared, analysed and discussed internally, we will publish a summary of the findings in our annual UCR Scholarship and Research Journal. The journal contains articles relating to our faculty scholarship and research, providing both academic and support staff with the opportunity to share the findings of their current research, or provide discussion pieces on topics relevant to their curriculum area. The journal also contains research around teaching, learning, assessment and pedagogy, and is the ideal place to report our access and participation achievements across the academic year. We will commit

[14] EMWPREP is a non-profit making collaborative partnership which allows partners to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their widening participation (WP) outreach and recruitment interventions.

to publishing an annual access and participation update in this manner, with the potential to provide verbal presentation and updates and our annual UCR Scholarship Symposium, which takes place in the summer term of each academic year.

We also take note of the OfS intention to create a repository where providers can submit evaluation findings over the duration of the plan. Where appropriate, and where the wider sector could potentially benefit from the results of our findings, we will submit reports, papers or articles to the repository to further contribute to sector wide evidence of what works in access and participation.

Provision of information to students

UCR provides a wealth of information to current and prospective students in a number of different ways.

We still produce an annual physical prospectus for prospective students, which contains information relating to:

- Curriculum offer, available course types, course length, UCAS codes and awarding bodies
- Student life and campus facilities
- Wellbeing and disability support
- Information for mature students, international applicants and students with a disability
- Study tours and potential career opportunities for our graduates
- Student accommodation and transport
- Student finance, maintenance loans, tuition fee loans and repayments
- Bursaries and financial support available
- Open days and offer holder days

UCR prospectuses can be requested by contacting the university centre, obtained in person, or at one of the many UCAS events and careers fairs we attend or via our school outreach projects.

In addition, prospective and current students can find our tuition fee information on our "policies" webpage https://ucreaseheath.ac.uk/policies, along with our APP and associated summary document. All major institutional policies relating to prospective and current students can be accessed via this link.

Tuition fees for full time home students, part time students and international students can be found at https://ucreaseheath.ac.uk/undergraduate-study/student-finance. This page also contains information about student loans, with links to Student Finance England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland web pages. We also publish our financial support package available to students on this page.

Individual course web pages contain information relating to course structure and content, assessment methods and entry requirements. Costs associated with study tours, field trips and equipment are also outlined on each individual course page.
Prospective students are able to attend open days, with offer holders being invited to offer holder events prior to enrolling on their programme of study.

Financial Support

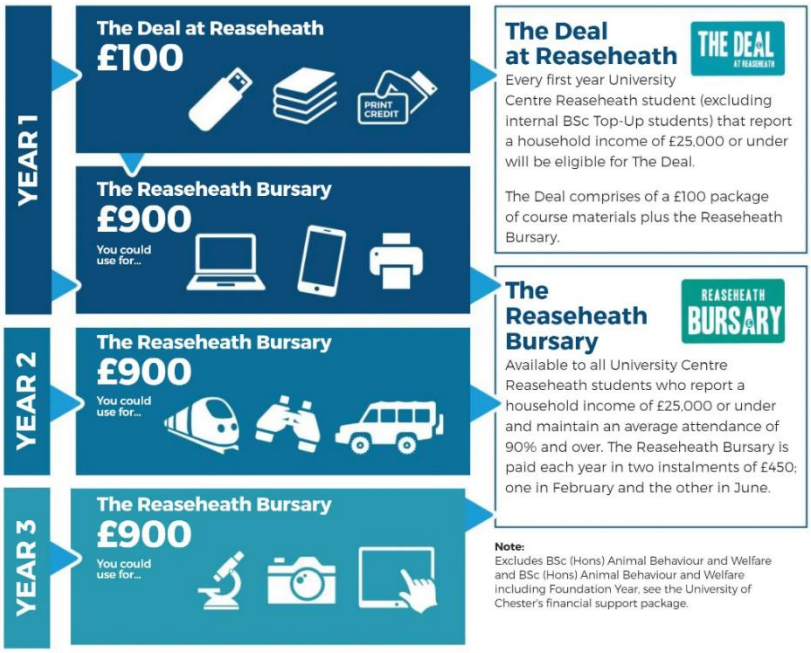
As a result of the provisions within this plan, University Centre Reaseheath is committed to providing additional financial support to those who need it. Our bursary schemes detailed below are designed to ensure that students can access, thrive and succeed in Higher Education at UCR. Additional financial support is available to eligible students. Eligible students must maintain a 90% attendance average to receive their bursary payments.

Students are directly contacted by our Academic Services Team, informing them of the financial support available to them. Eligible bursary students automatically receive their bursary payment, so long as they have declared their household income, and their attendance is satisfactory.

The Deal at Reaseheath and The Reaseheath Bursary

The Deal at Reaseheath, and the Reaseheath Bursary, are designed specifically to support students who come to us from a household where the total income is £25,000 a year or less. To enable us to process the bursary, it is important that students allow Student Finance England (or equivalent) to share their household income information with us.

The bursary component of The Deal consists of £900 paid in instalments of £450 in February and June. The course materials component of The Deal is available only to level 4 students. Level 4 students may choose course-related textbooks up to the value of £80. Level 4 students may also choose between a study skills textbook and printer credit plus a memory stick.



Diagnostic Assistance Bursary (DAB)

To access the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) students may need a diagnostic assessment. Diagnostic Assessments arranged through UCR can cost up to £350.

Our Diagnostic Assistance Bursary can offer a contribution towards a diagnostic assessment when booked through UCR. We do not offer a bursary for tests booked outside of this process.

An initial screening can confirm if a diagnostic assessment is appropriate, after which we will refer the student for the necessary assessment, and confirm their financial contribution.

Aspire

The Aspire bursary is available to all students who progress from a level 3 qualification at Reaseheath College in the previous year, including those students on the Reaseheath Access to HE level 3 course, providing that a minimum attendance level of 90% is maintained. The Aspire bursary of £1,000 is paid in instalments of £500 in February and June. This will exclude BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour and Welfare Students (incl. Foundation Year) who will served by the University of Chester's portfolio of bursaries.

Student Assistance Fund (SAF)

The Student Assistance Fund provides discretionary financial assistance to support students who are facing financial hardship, which may prevent them from continuing with their studies. Awards from the fund are usually £300 or less. Eligibility includes:

- appropriate evidence to support an application, including three months of bank and credit card statements.
- Student's regular weekly outgoings must exceed their regular weekly income, as evidenced by bank statements.

Study Tour Support Fund

Study tours are a life-changing experience which can really enhance student employability. The Study Tour Support Fund is available to students with a household income of £25,000 or under, and can therefore support those who otherwise would struggle to meet the costs. The fund does not cover the full study tour cost, but a percentage based on the number of applicants in any given year.

Annex A: Assessment of Performance

Analysis relating to the identification and prioritisation of key risks to equality of opportunity

1. Our approach to using POLAR vs TUNDRA

Throughout our assessment of performance, we have used both the POLAR and TUNDRA measures of HE participation by area. However, we have chosen to focus more heavily on the POLAR measure, for the following reasons:

- There is limited risk to equality of opportunity of access when the TUNDRA measure is considered alone. The proportion of entrants from TUNDRA quintile 1 has increased each year over the last 6 reporting years, and currently stands at 22.8% of entrants, 6.3pp higher than the proportion of entrants from quintile 5. Similarly, when aggregate data is considered the gap between the proportions of quintile 1 entrants vs quintile 5 entrants has widened.
- There is limited risk to equality of opportunity of progression, with TUNDRA quintile 1 students consistently seeing better graduate outcomes from students from quintile 5.
- There is missing TUNDRA data in the OfS Access and Participation data dashboard across the "success" stages of the student lifecycle, which limits the conclusions we can make about the risks and outcomes for students from the various TUNDRA quintiles.
- The POLAR measure of HE participation by area was used extensively in our previous 2020-25 APP, so continued use will allow for more direct comparison between our previous plan and this one.
- It is not possible to intersect TUNDRA data with sex in the OfS Access and Participation data dashboard. It is important that we are able to consider the ways in which a student's sex intersects with the area-based measures of HE participation, as this was a key focus in our previous plans, and we are keen to continue this theme in this iteration of our APP.

2. Our approach to small datasets and statistical uncertainty[15]

As a relatively small, specialist provider of college-based Higher Education, the analysis of data, particularly that contained within the access & participation data dashboard is often subject to low numbers, data suppression and statistical uncertainty. Consequently, we must take care when drawing conclusions relating to underrepresented groups, and the various lifecycle stages. We must also ensure we remain compliant of UK GDPR, in that where student numbers in a particular population are low, they must not be identifiable as individuals.

To this end we have considered the statistical uncertainty at the 95% confidence interval for the major groups across all 5 stages of the student lifecycle. This has helped to inform and guide our comprehensive assessment of performance, the summary of which is contained within this annex. As a result, we have tailored our assessment of performance to those groups, lifecycle stages and intersections where we have reasonable confidence that the occurrence is not down to random variation.

[15]As the actual students in a provider's observed population are just one possible realisation of many other populations of students who could have attended that provider, or may do so in the future, statistical uncertainty exists because of the potential for random variation in student behaviours and outcomes.

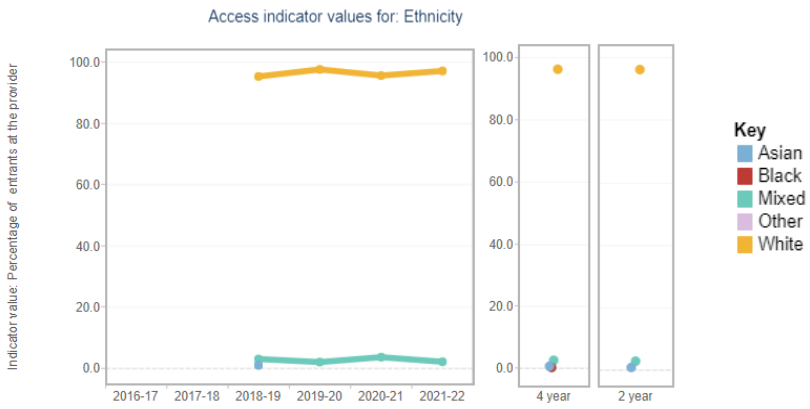
3. Indications of risk to Access

University Centre Reaseheath is successful in attracting and recruiting students from a diverse range of backgrounds. The analysis of our access data shows that:

- In 2021/22, a greater proportion of our entrants were from TUNDRA[16] quintile 1 areas (22.8%), than from quintile 5 (16.5%). This is part of an increase in TUNDRA quintile 1 entrants, from 12.3% in 2016/17.
- 19.6% of our entrants in 2021/22 were from the most deprived (IMD[17] Quintile 1) wards in England. This has increased from 16.7% in 2016/17.
- In 2021/22, 30.7% of our entrants were mature, higher than the comparative figure from all English registered HE providers (29%)
- In 2021/22, 33.9% of our entrants declared a disability, nearly double the average recruited across all English HE providers.
- The proportion of entrants receiving Free School Meals (FSM) at KS4 has increased from 13.6% in 2016/17 to 16.8% in 2021/22.

Further analysis of the OfS Access & Participation dataset highlights the following potential indications of risk to access:

Ethnicity



Our data shows historically low levels of entrants from Asian, Black, Mixed and Other groups. Entrants identifying as "mixed" ethnicity have fluctuated over the reported time period, to a high of 3.6% in 2020/21. We attribute this historical and present pattern to 2 main factors. ONS data[18] shows that in 2021, 94.4% of people living within the Cheshire East ward identified as "white". Given that around 40% of our recruitment is from the immediate locality (Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire) it seems in keeping that relatively low numbers of non-white students enter Higher Education at UCR. It is also the case that our current curriculum offer as a small and specialist provider of land based Higher Education aligns to some of the least diverse industries in the UK, and so we experience relatively low levels of cultural diversity on many of our courses. An example of this is the UK agriculture industry, in which DEFRA states that 99.8% of farmers would describe their ethnic group as "white"[19].

[16] TUNDRA (tracking underrepresentation by area) is an area-based measure that uses tracking of state-funded mainstream school pupils in England to calculate young participation. It is an official statistic. TUNDRA classifies local areas across England into five equal groups – or quintiles - based on the proportion of 16 year old state-funded mainstream school pupils who participate in higher education aged 18 or 19 years. Quintile one shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile five shows the highest rate of participation.

[17] The Index of Multiple Deprivation is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (or neighbourhoods) in England. The Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area). It is common to describe how relatively deprived a small area is by saying whether it falls among the most deprived 10 per cent, 20 per cent or 30 per cent of small areas in England (although there is no definitive cut-off at which an area is described as 'deprived'). To help with this, deprivation 'deciles' are published alongside ranks. Deciles are calculated by ranking the 32,844 small areas in England from most deprived to least deprived and dividing them into 10 equal groups. These range from the most deprived 10 per cent of small areas nationally to the least deprived 10 per cent of small areas nationally.

[18] How life has changed in Cheshire East: Census 2021 (ons.gov.uk) (Office for National Statistics, 2023)

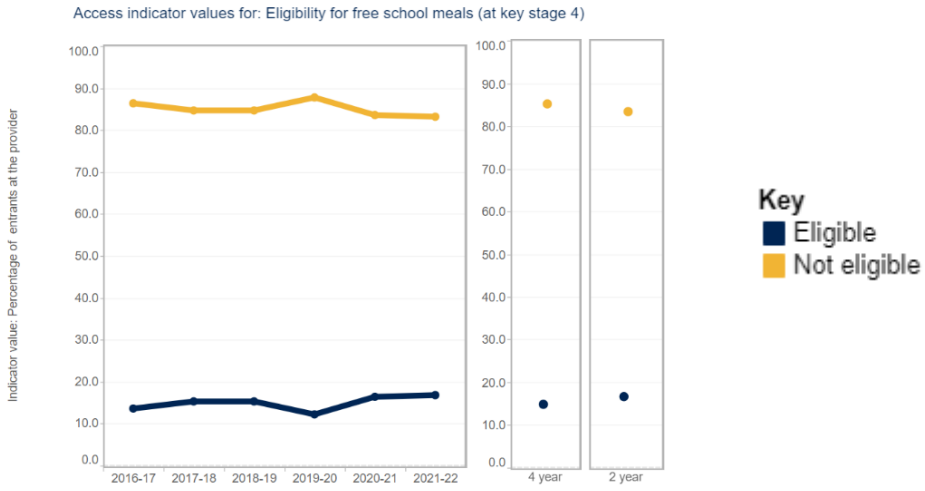
[19] Agricultural workforce in England at 1 June 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (DEFRA, 2022)

Whilst there are mitigating factors to the low levels of ethnic diversity at UCR, we do remain committed to exploring and researching the themes of equality, diversity and inclusion through our EDI committees, and our Access & Participation Steering group. We work closely with other land based (LANDEX) providers on projects and outreach work designed to engage with hard-to-reach populations in our locality and beyond.

Although we are setting no objectives or targets relating to access for ethnically diverse entrants, we do remain committed to increasing the diversity within our student population through our whole provider approach, and this will be highlighted accordingly in our intervention strategies.

Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)[20]

Our data shows that in 2021/22, 16.8% of our entrants were eligible for FSM at Key Stage 4. This figure has increased from 13.6% in 2016/17.



Whilst the increase in FSM eligible students accessing HE at UCR is encouraging, our current proportion falls below the figure for the whole of England, which currently stands at 23.8% [21] across all stages of provision. Furthermore, the percentage of students known to be eligible for FSM in the Northwest of England is one of the highest in the country, at 26.8% [22]. This would suggest a possible risk to equality of opportunity for those students in the locality that wish to progress to Higher Education at UCR. Any targets set in relation to FSM will be subject to national levels of FSM eligibility and may be subject to change depending on local and national eligibility criteria.

Target PTA 1 – University Centre Reaseheath will increase the proportion of entrants to HE courses who were eligible for Free School Meals at Key Stage 4 to 20.0% by 2029 (Current UCR figure is 16.8% of entrants were eligible for FSM at KS4)

[20] Children in state-funded schools in England are entitled to receive free school meals if a parent or carer were in receipt of certain benefits

[21] Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk) (His Majesty's Government, 2023).

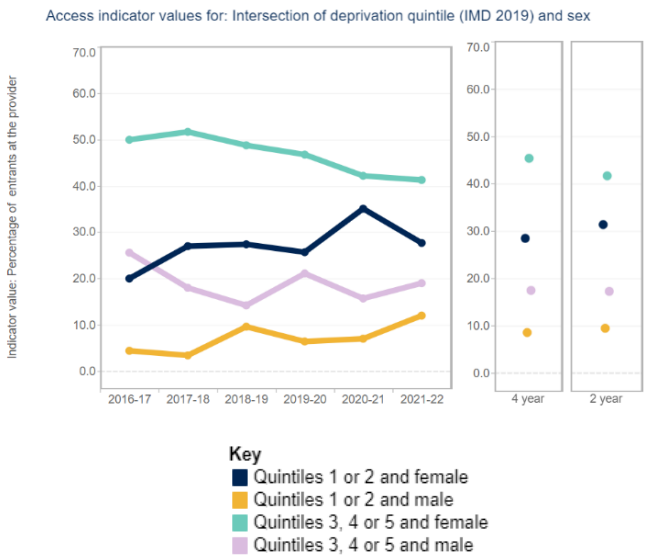
[22] Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk) (His Majesty's Government, 2023).

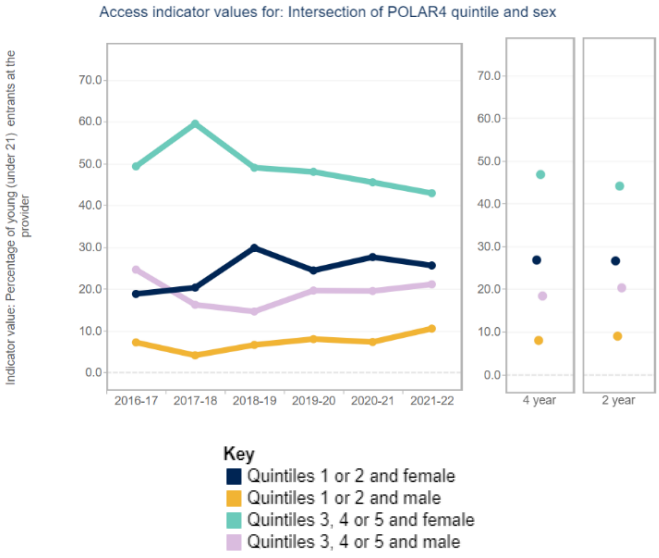
Sex

UCR has historically seen an imbalance between the number of entrants that are female, compared with those that are male. In 2021/22, only 30.7% of our entrants were male, although this has increased from 24% the previous year. However, we believe this imbalance is partly due to the curriculum on offer at UCR, where subjects such as veterinary sciences, agriculture, food and natural sciences are more often studied by female students in Higher Education.[23]
The previous APP at UCR sought to understand this gender imbalance more fully, and broaden and revise our curriculum offer to appeal to a wider range of students from a variety of backgrounds, including male students and this work will continue under our plans to provide a more diverse curriculum through the expansion of higher degree apprenticeships and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)

Intersections of sex

UCR typically sees a larger number of female entrants each year than male. In 2021/22, 30.7% of the entrants to HE courses at UCR identified as male, compared with 69.3% female. The number of males has increased between the 4 year and 2 year aggregates, due in part to a realignment of our curriculum offer over the past 3 years. However, our data does indicate a risk to equality of access for males who originate from both the most deprived areas (IMD quintile 1) and the areas with the lowest rates of HE participation (POLAR4 quintile 1). We believe this to be a greater risk to equality of opportunity than considering sex as a standalone characteristic.





In terms of improving equality of access, males from both IMD quintile 1 areas and POLAR4 quintile 1 areas have formed a significant part of our access and participation work to date, and it is no surprise the proportions of both are increasing. However, we feel that there is still more work to do in this regard, and as such have set the following 2 objectives.

[23] What do HE students study? | HESA (Higher Education Statistics Academy, 2023)

Target PTA 2 – UCR will increase the proportion of entrants to HE courses from male students originating from the areas of lowest HE participation by 2029, such that 15.5% of our entrants are male and from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2.

Target PTA 3 – UCR will increase the proportion of entrants to HE courses from male students originating from the most deprived areas, according to the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), by 2029, such that 17.0% of our entrants are male and from IMD quintiles 1 and 2.

Intersections of ethnicity

As previously stated, our data shows very low overall numbers of students identifying as Black, Asian, Mixed or Other as their ethnic group. This results in even smaller numbers of ethnic students from areas of low HE participation (POLAR) and the most deprived wards (IMD). As we start to intersect ethnicity with other characteristics, we see very low reportable numbers and data suppressed for data protection reasons, along with low statistical significance.

Other groups – Risks to equality of access

It is apparent from our assessment of performance that there may be other groups of students or potential students that face risks to equality of opportunity. Many of these groups are small in number, for example applications from Care Leavers for 23/24 was <10 [24]. It is also apparent that there are gaps in internal data systems that would allow us to better understand the risk to equality of opportunity for particular groups. It is our intention to work with our MIS software supplier, and UCAS to develop our reporting systems in the near future.

In the meantime, and for the purposes of this assessment, we have used the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register[25] to identify national **access** risks to equality of opportunity for the following groups.

At risk group	Potential risk to access as identified in the EORR
Gypsy, Traveller or Roma/Boater & Showmen	- Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required to be accepted onto higher education courses that match their expectations and ambitions. - Students may not have equal opportunity to receive the information and guidance that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, or to make informed choice about their higher education options. - Students may not feel able to apply to higher education, or certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified. - Students may not be accepted to a higher education course, or may not be accepted to certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified.

[24] Internal data collected via UCAS

[25] The Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (the EORR) identifies 12 sector-wide risks that may affect a student's opportunity to access and succeed in higher education. Equality of Opportunity Risk Register - Office for Students

No parental experience of HE	- Students may not have equal opportunity to receive the information and guidance that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, or to make informed choice about their higher education options. - Students may not have equal opportunity to access a sufficiently wide variety of higher education course types.
Care Experienced	- Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required to be accepted onto higher education courses that match their expectations and ambitions. - Students may not have equal opportunity to receive the information and guidance that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, or to make informed choice about their higher education options. - Students may not feel able to apply to higher education, or certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified. - Students may not be accepted to a higher education course, or may not be accepted to certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified.
Students on vocational courses at KS4/5 or studied a KS5 qualification other than A-Levels or IBacc	- Students may not have equal opportunity to access a sufficiently wide variety of higher education course types.

We have chosen not to set specific targets and objectives for these groups, as we firmly believe our wider intervention strategies for access will positively impact these groups. Our assessment of performance does not suggest these groups are most at risk for equality of opportunity at UCR.

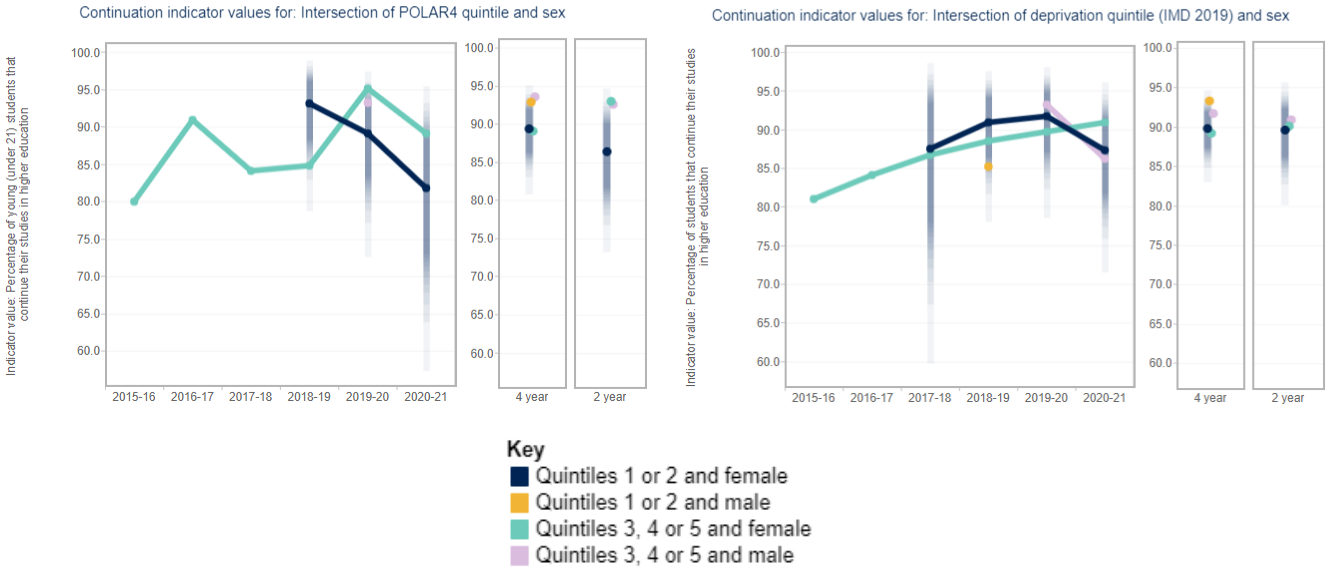
4. Indications of risk to Continuation

Following our assessment of performance for continuation rates, University Centre Reaseheath reports that:

- In 2020/21, students from the most deprived IMD quintiles experienced better continuation rates than those from the least deprived areas (84.4% Vs 83.9%)
- In 2020/21, mature student continuation rates were 93.1%, compared with 87.6% for young students.
- In 2020/21, continuation rates for disabled students were 93.5%, compared with 87.1% for those with no disability reported.
- Continuation rates in general have risen between the 4 year and 2 year aggregate measures.

Analysis of the OfS Access and Participation data dashboard does raise some concerns about the statistical certainty of any differences we observe in our data. When considering continuation as part of the student lifecycle there is no evidence of statistical certainty for any of the major indicators, or key intersections of disadvantage.

We do however note 2 trends in our continuation data that could indicate risks to equality of opportunity in terms of continuation at UCR.



These 2 graphs taken from the OfS data dashboard suggest that female students from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2, and those from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 are at risk of non-continuation of their studies, from one year to the next. Whilst not significant at the 95% confidence interval, we have taken this into consideration later in this analysis and will set targets around attainment of female students from low participation and deprived neighbourhoods.

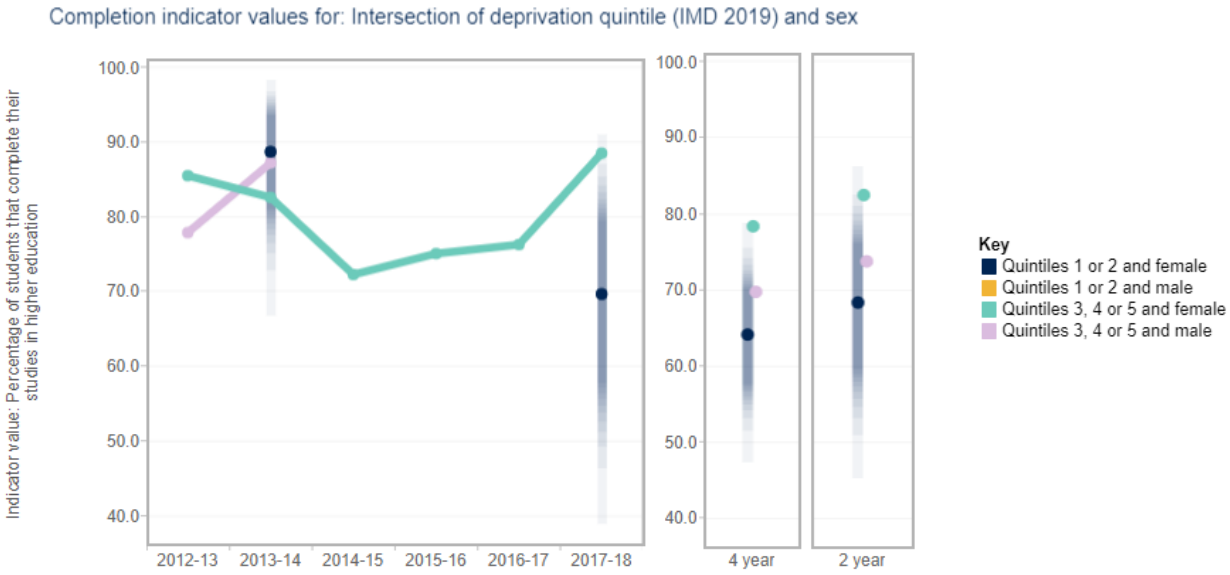
5. Indications of risk to Completion

Completion data held within the OfS data dashboard is sporadic for UCR, due in the main to low reportable numbers and data suppression. Where data is reportable, there is little statistical significance.

However, our assessment of performance of completion rates at UCR highlights the following successes:

- In 2017/18 (the most recent data available), mature students had better rates of completion that young students (88% completion for mature students, 81.9% for young students)
- Between the 4 year and 2 year aggregate data, completion rates for the students from the most deprived areas (IMD quintile 1) have increased from 64.1% to 75%. The completion gap between students from the least deprived and most deprived areas has also closed to 7.9pp (from 11.9pp)
- Across a 4 year aggregate, students eligible for FSM had better completion rates than those not eligible.

Drawing solid conclusions about risks to equality of opportunity is difficult given the data in the OfS data dashboard and lack of statistical significance in many of the populations. However, we have identified the following potential risk to equality of opportunity during our assessment of performance.



The graph above shows a significant difference between completion rates for female students from the most deprived areas of England (IMD quintiles 1 and 2). This was particularly stark in the most recent reporting year (2017/18) where there was an 18.8pp gap between females from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 vs IMD quintiles 3,4 and 5.

Using the aggregate data to substantiate this conclusion, there is a large and persistent completion gap between these 2 groups over the 4 and 2 year aggregates, although it should be noted that overall completion rates have risen for both groups between the 4 year and 2 year aggregates.

We believe this completion gap between females from the least and most deprived wards to be of statistical significance.

Target PTS 1 – UCR will increase the completion rates of female students from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 and 2, currently 69.6%) to 80% by 2029.

6. Indications of risk to Attainment (awarding)

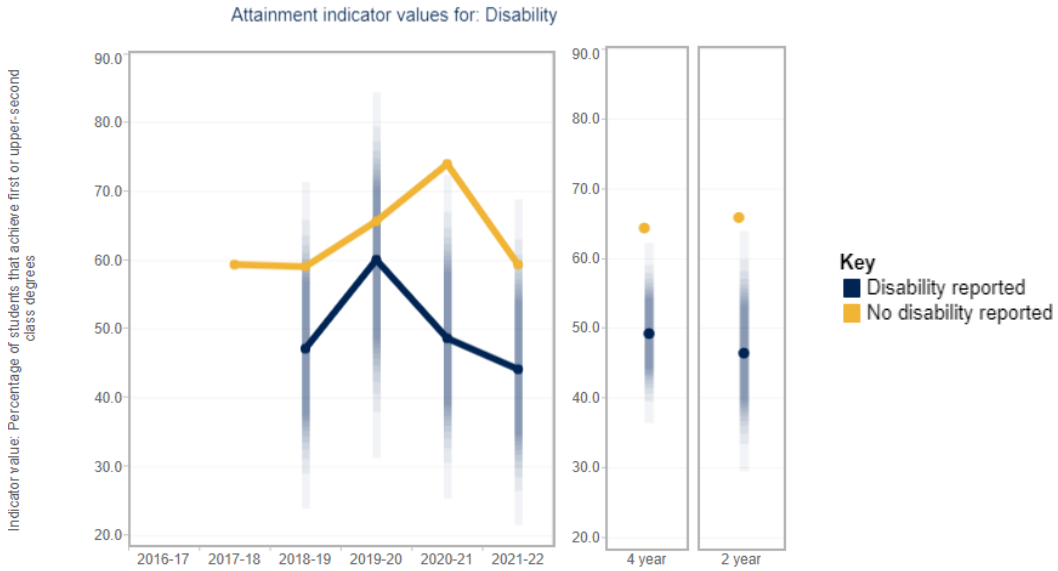
Overall, attainment rates at UCR have tended to fluctuate over the period reported in the OfS data dashboard. However, there is consistency over both the 4 year and 2 year aggregates, where attainment rates (L6 students gaining a 1st or 2:1 at degree level) are c.60%.

Our assessment of performance has highlighted the following successes around attainment:

- In 2021/22, the attainment rates for mature students were 9.1percentage points higher than that of young students. Across the 4 year and 2 year aggregate data, attainment for mature students was consistently higher than that of young students. This is the reverse of the national landscape.

Further analysis of our attainment data at UCR suggests the following potential risks to equality of opportunity:

Disability



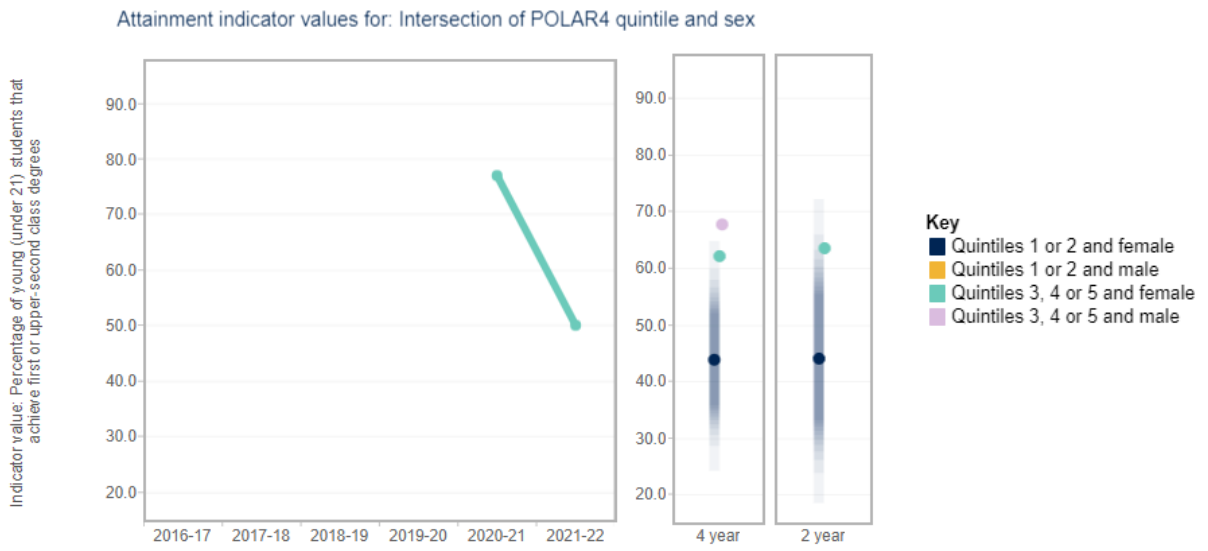
The graph above suggests there is a large and persistent awarding gap for students declaring a disability at UCR. In 2021/22, the gap had closed slightly on the previous year, but still stood at 15.2pp. The 4 year and 2 year aggregate data for the same measure suggests that this gap has widened over time, and the risk to equality of opportunity for disabled students has therefore increased. This widening of the gap does correspond with the Covid-19 pandemic, and research suggests that disabled students (and those with other indicators of disadvantage) were most severely impacted by the pandemic[26].

Target PTS 2 – UCR will increase the attainment rates (I.e. the number of students who gain a 1st class or 2:1 degree classification) of disabled students to the pre pandemic level of 60% by 2029, from the current figure of 44.1%.

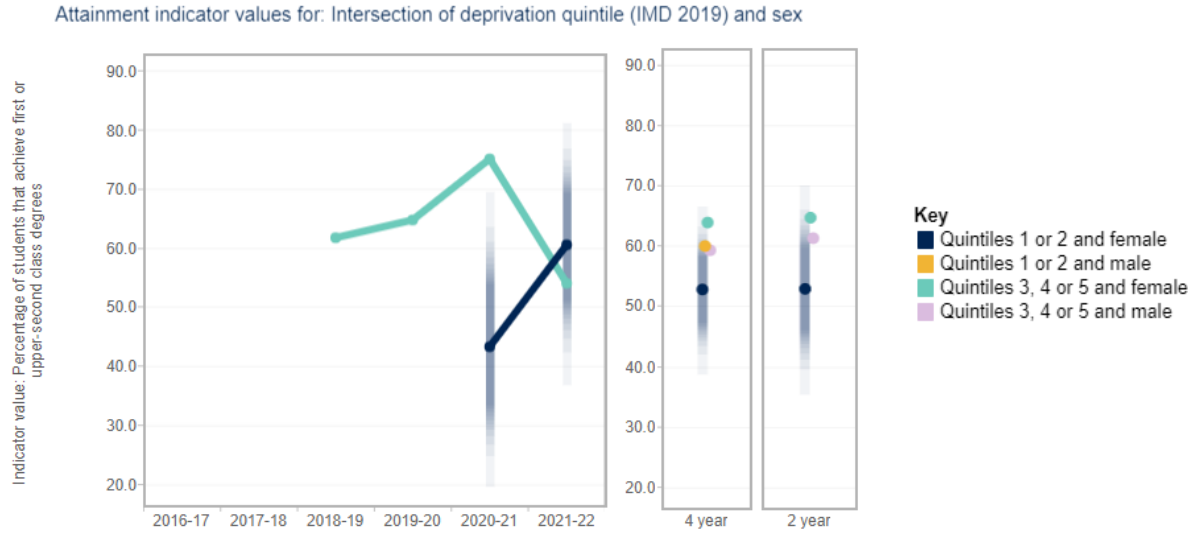
Intersections of sex and POLAR/IMD:

Our assessment of performance has highlighted some interesting attainment data at the intersection of sex and POLAR quintile. Whilst there is no significant awarding gap when attainment is considered in isolation with sex and POLAR quintile, there is a statistically significant difference when both sex and POLAR quintile are taken into consideration.

[26] DSC_disabled students' experience_Covid19_Qualitative Report.docx_1643369663.pdf (Disabled Student's Commission, 2022)



Whilst data is limited for individual years, when we consider aggregate data across the 4 and 2 year period, we can see a large and persistent awarding gap between females originating from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 compared with those from quintiles 3, 4 and 5. There is insufficient data held within the OfS data dashboard to make any conclusions about male awarding data from the various POLAR quintiles.



Similarly, when we consider the intersectional awarding data for sex and IMD quintile, we again see a large and persistent gap between females from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 and those from quintiles 3,4 and 5. The data for 2021/22 appears to show this gap closing, and indeed attainment for females from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 surpassing that of those from quintiles 3, 4 and 5. However, given the significance of this gap across the 4 and 2 year aggregate data, and POLAR data, it seems critical that we consider the risks to equality of opportunity in each case.

Target PTS 3 – UCR will increase the attainment rate of females from low participation areas (POLAR quintiles 1 and 2) to 50% by 2029 (current attainment is 44%, with a 20% awarding gap between students from the highest and lowest HE participation areas)

Target PTS 4 - UCR will increase the attainment rate of females from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) to 65% by 2029 (current attainment is 52.9%, with a 12% awarding gap between students from the most and least deprived areas)

Other groups – Risks to equality of on course success

To conclude our assessment of performance, we have used the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register to identify other groups who may be at risk of unequal on course success.

At risk group	Potential risk to on course success as identified in the EORR
No parental experience of HE	- Students may not receive sufficient personalised academic support to achieve a positive outcome. - Students may not receive sufficient personalised non-academic support or have sufficient access to extracurricular activities to achieve a positive outcome.
Eligible for Free school meals in the last 6 years	- Students may not receive sufficient personalised academic support to achieve a positive outcome. - Students may not receive sufficient personalised non-academic support or have sufficient access to extracurricular activities to achieve a positive outcome. - Students may not experience an environment that is conducive to good mental health and wellbeing. - Students may be affected by the ongoing consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. - Increases in cost pressures may affect a student's ability to complete their course or obtain a good grade. - Students may not have equal opportunity to access limited resources related to higher education, such as suitable accommodation.
Estranged	- Students may not receive sufficient personalised academic support to achieve a positive outcome. - Students may not receive sufficient personalised non-academic support or have sufficient access to extracurricular activities to achieve a positive outcome. - Increases in cost pressures may affect a student's ability to complete their course or obtain a good grade. - Students may not have equal opportunity to access limited resources related to higher education, such as suitable accommodation.
Care Experienced	- Students may not receive sufficient personalised academic support to achieve a positive outcome. - Students may not receive sufficient personalised non-academic support or have sufficient access to extracurricular activities to achieve a positive outcome. - Students may not experience an environment that is conducive to good mental health and wellbeing. - Increases in cost pressures may affect a student's ability to complete their course or obtain a good grade. - Students may not have equal opportunity to access limited resources related to higher education, such as suitable accommodation.
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups	- Students may not receive sufficient personalised academic support to achieve a positive outcome. - Students may not receive sufficient personalised non-academic support or have sufficient access to extracurricular activities to achieve a positive outcome.

Having undertaken our assessment of performance, we have decided not to set specific targets related to specific groups as we do not feel they are experiencing the biggest risk to equality of opportunity at UCR. We will ensure our intervention strategies are inclusive, so that other groups will benefit.

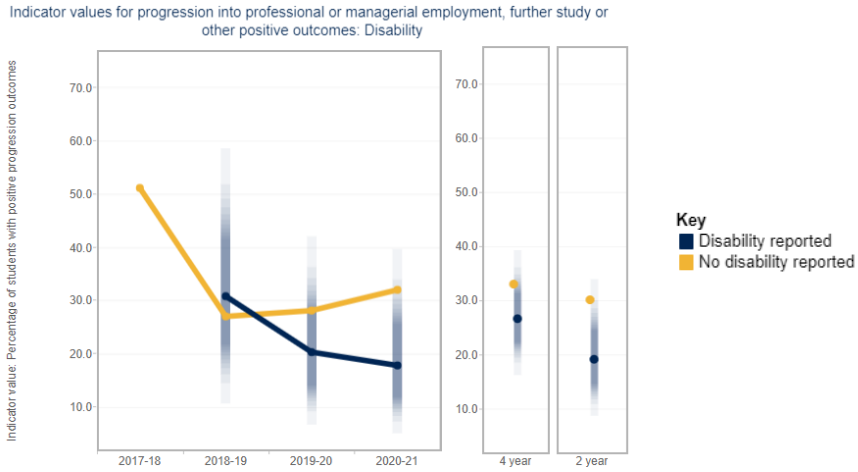
7. Indications of risk to Progression

Our Assessment of Performance has highlighted the following strengths when considering student progression to managerial/professional employment, further study or other positive outcomes:

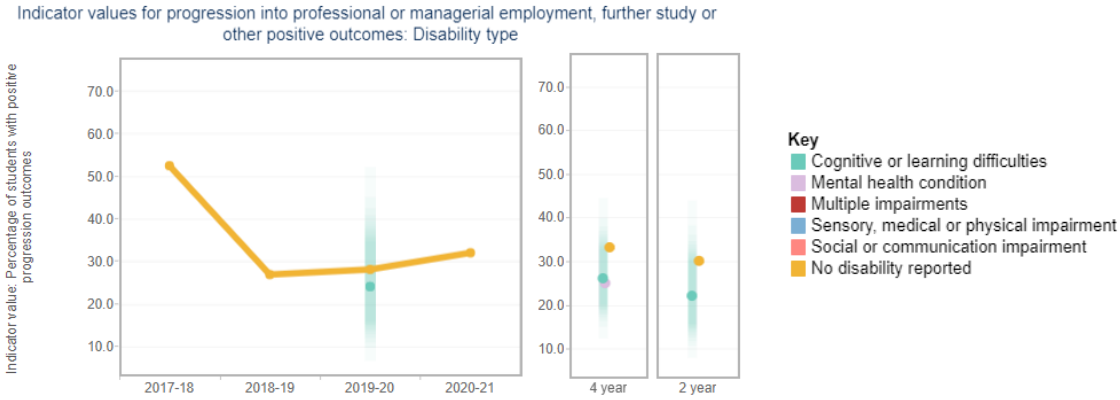
- In 2020/21, progression rates for mature students were 17.2 pp higher that young students, part of a more general trend of higher progression for mature students.
- Progression rates for students from IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) has increased between the 4 year aggregate period and the 2 year aggregate period, from 30.6% to 31.1%.
- Across both the 4 year and 2 year aggregate data, the group of students with the highest progression rates are those from POLAR quintile 1 (least participation)
- Across both the 4 year and 2 year aggregate data, the progression rates are higher for students from TUNDRA quintile 1 (least participation) than those from quintile 5 (most participation). The gap is 5.2 pp and 6.5 pp respectively.

Further assessment of the progression measure highlights the following potential risks to equality of opportunity.

Disability



There is a gap between the progression rates of students that report a disability, and those that don't. In 2020/21 the gap was 14.2 pp, and in 2019/20 it was 7.8 pp. Between the 4 year aggregate and the 2 year aggregate data, the analysis shows that whilst progression rates for both disabled and non-disabled students have fallen, the gap between the 2 groups has widened, from 6.4 pp to 11 pp. This analysis shows a risk to equality of opportunity, in terms of progression, to those students reporting a disability whilst studying at UCR.

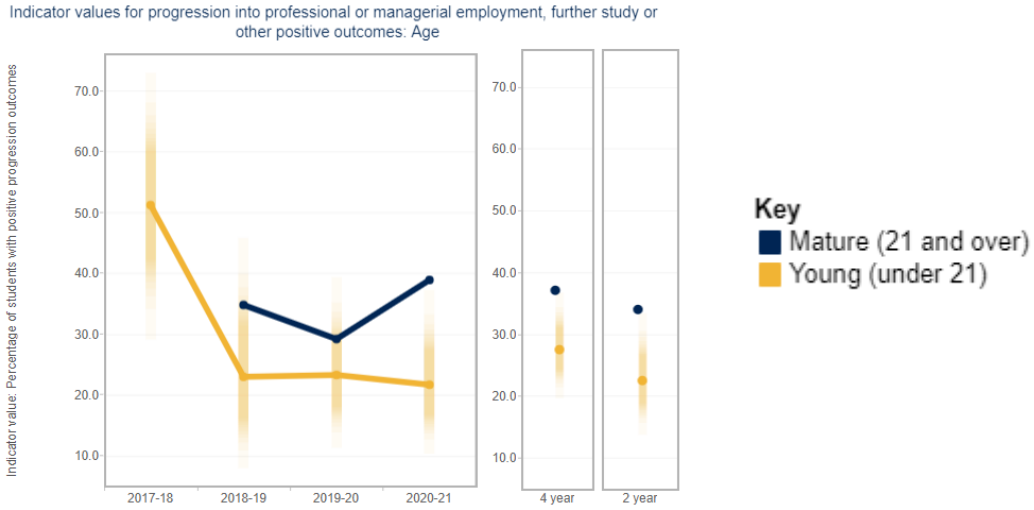


When disaggregated by disability type, there is less available data in the OfS data dashboard, due to low reportable numbers and less statistical significance. However, it is worth noting that there is some indication that students reporting cognitive and learning difficulties, and those with a mental health conditions could fare less well in terms of progression outcomes than their non-disabled peers.

Target PTP 1 –UCR will reduce the gap in progression rates to highly skilled, graduate level employment for disabled students to 7.0%, so that it is in line with 4 year (pre pandemic) aggregate gap.

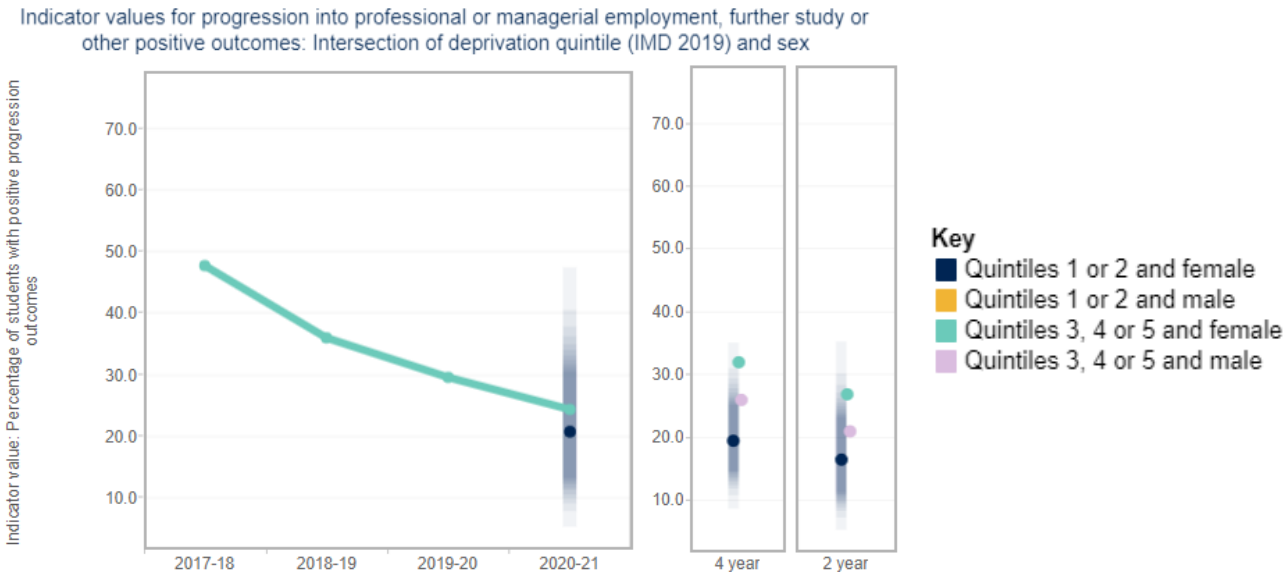
Young students

Whilst our assessment of performance has highlighted the positive progression outcomes for mature students, we must also note the gap this opens up for "young" students, i.e. Those younger than 21 at the point of enrolment. Progression rates for young students have fallen from 51.2% in 2017/18 to 21.7% in 2020/21, leading to a gap of 17.2 pp in 2020/21. The 2 year aggregate data also suggests this gap is widening when compared to the 4 year data. This data shows a potential risk to equality of opportunity for young students, when considering their progression outcomes to professional employment or further study.



Target PTP 2 – UCR will increase the progression rates for "young" students (currently 21.7%) to 30% by 2029, such that it is in line with the progression rates of their mature peers.

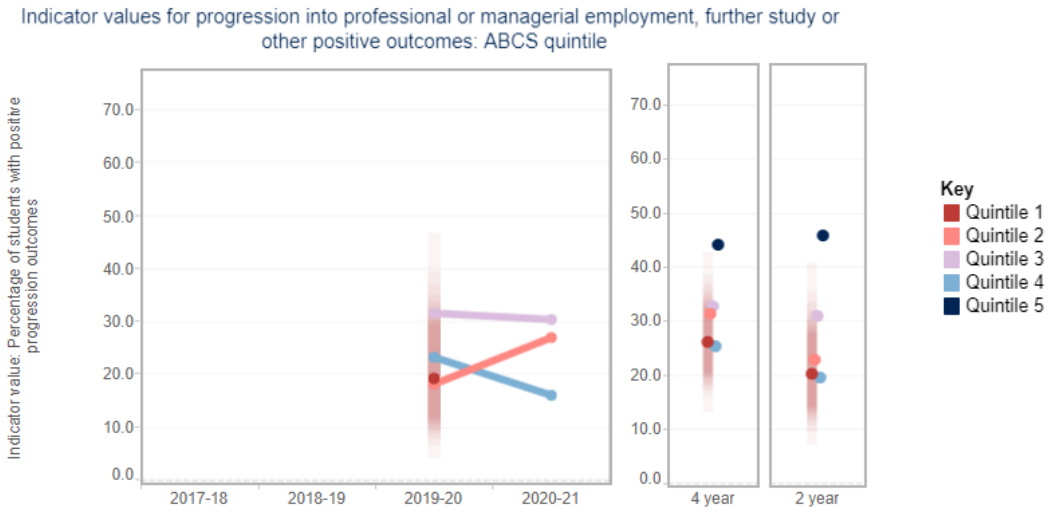
Intersections of sex and deprivation



The graph above shows the intersectional data for sex and IMD quintile. Whilst the annual data is limited, the 4 year and 2 year aggregate data does show a significant and persistent gap in progression outcomes for female students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 (the most deprived areas), when compared with their counterparts from quintiles 3, 4 and 5 (the least deprived areas). Across the 4 year aggregate, the gap was 12.5 pp, whilst across a 2 year aggregate this had reduced to 10.4 pp. However, the gap still represents a risk to equality of progression opportunity for females from the most deprived wards.

Target PTP 3 – UCR will increase the progression rates for females from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) to 26.8% by 2029 such that it is in line with the 2-year aggregate progression figure for females from IMD quintiles 3, 4 and 5.

Associations Between Characteristics of Students (ABCS)



Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) is a set of measures that seeks a better understanding of how outcomes vary for groups of students with different sets of characteristics (for example, ethnicity, sex and background).

The student characteristics considered within the ABCS measure should not have an impact on students' outcomes, but the evidence shows that they do.

The graph above shows clearly that students who have these characteristics, and therefore fall into quintile 1 are less likely to progress to managerial or professional employment, further study or have another positive graduate outcome after they have completed a full-time higher education qualification. Given that these characteristics are largely centred around disability, care experience, sex, FSM eligibility and deprivation quintiles of students, we feel we have accounted adequately for this risk indicator throughout our assessment of performance and will plan our intervention strategies accordingly.

Other groups – Risks to equality of progression

To conclude our assessment of performance for progression, we have used the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register to identify other groups who may be at risk of unequal progression outcomes.

At risk group	Potential risk to progression as identified by the EORR
Gypsy, Traveller & Roma/Boater & Showmen **Vocational Learners** **Care Experienced** **Eligible for Free School Meals** **No parental experience of Higher Education**	Students may not have equal opportunity to progress to an outcome they consider to be a positive reflection of their higher education experience.

Reporting a sexual orientation of gay/bisexual/transgender	

We have decided not to set specific objectives or targets to these particular groups of students, as we do not believe they are the most as risk of equality of opportunity. We believe that are wider strategies around improving progression outcomes at UCR will benefit all students, including those outlined above.

Annex B

Further information that sets out the rationale, assumptions and evidence base for each intervention strategy that is included in the access and participation plan

Intervention strategy 1 – Improving access for FSM students and male students from areas of low HE participation/deprived areas

In the creation and design of this intervention strategy, we have taken into account the following research and evidence to develop our rationale:

- In our 2020-25 APP, we have evaluated our activity around outreach, improving access and providing information, advice and guidance. Through analysis of EMWPREP data, provided by our Uni Connect partners Higher Horizons+, we can see the positive, and often transformational impact good outreach can have on the attitudes and perceptions of Higher Education. We propose to use this as a basis on which to build further work around outreach, in particular focusing on opportunities to improve attainment amongst the pre-16 population in our locality.
- Evidence from TASO, taken from Crawford (2014) (Typology of attainment-raising activities conducted by HEPs: Rapid Evidence Review) suggests that academic achievement is the most important predictor of progression to university, however there are persistent equality gaps in GCSE achievement. For example, in 2020/21, 30% of students eligible for FSM gained a grade 5 or above in English or Maths GCSE, compared to 57% of non-FSM students. All providers of Higher Education seeking an approved APP have been asked to carefully consider working in partnerships with other organisations, (schools, Uni Connect partners) to support the raising of pre-16 attainment. Taking this into consideration, we have included collaborative project work to improve pre-16 GCSE attainment in Intervention Strategy 1.
- TASO have reported emerging evidence of the positive impact of study/soft skills in improving pre-16 attainment (TASO, 2022a). We have included this type of activity in Intervention Strategy 1, both for our internal (FE) students and pre-16 students that are currently external to the college. We have coupled this attainment raising activity with more traditional aspiration raising activity. Despite there being weaker evidence of the benefits of this kind of activity, there is much Type 2 evidence that has been collected, and we believe it can complement activity more based around attainment raising.
- In 2023, CFE research highlighted the benefits of collaborative outreach work between HE providers and a range of different stakeholders (CFE Research, 2023a). Intervention Strategy 1 focusses heavily on working with our Uni Connect partnership to reach out to schools that are harder to reach. Through this approach, we are able to engage with a wide range of underrepresented groups, such as FSM/Pupil premium students, those with disabilities or learning difficulties, those from Gypsy, Traveller or Roma groups and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups. Our local Uni Connect programme has hubs at 4 major HE institutions, linking us to schools across the North West, allowing us to share resources and engage with students through both TUNDRA targeted and strategic outreach.
- In 2023, a CFE Research report into the impact of the Uni Connect programme (CFE Research, 2023b) highlighted that Uni Connect is "succeeding in its aim to support learners to make informed decisions about their future education options". The latest evidence builds on earlier findings to further demonstrate that all intervention types delivered and evaluated by partnerships can contribute to increased knowledge of the higher education offer and the benefits of higher education – essential insight for learners when deciding if higher education is the best option for them." Most of the activity provided by Uni Connect can have a positive impact on self-confidence, resilience, problem solving and communication skills, all of which are key

undergraduate attributes. Intervention Strategy 1 uses this evidence as its under pinning rationale, but we recognise that we must work with Uni Connect to develop more activity around attainment raising, as evidence suggests this can impact student grades. We have also seen evidence in EMWPREP data that such programmes can have a positive impact on motivation and a willingness to engage in school, leading to a "knock on" effect of better grades at school and an increased likelihood that students will apply for Higher Education.

- Evidence from the Higher Horizons evaluation annual report for activity delivered in 2022-23 (Higher Horizons Evaluation Annual Report 2022-23) paints a positive picture, with considerable evidence of both short and longer term impact of their work (Higher Horizons, 2023). In particular, their pilot work around attainment raising showed positive change in the ability of participants to effectively revise, increasing their chances of achieving their potential in pre 16 examinations, such as GCSEs.
- A 2021 report from TASO (An investigation into the relationship between outreach participation and KS4 attainment/HE progression) looking at the relationship between outreach participation and KS4 attainment shows a positive link between more intensive outreach programmes, and that campus visits and tours are particularly associated with higher attainment in particular disadvantaged groups (TASO, 2021). Both of these pieces of evidence will help to form the backbone of our future outreach and access work.
- In 2024, a report from NEON (Universities not for everyone: levelling up and who is missing out on higher education in England) highlighted that the chances of young people that receive Free School Meals progressing to Higher Education is significantly lower than those who do not, and that the rates of HE progression amongst such students has seen little improvement over the last decade (National Education Opportunities Network, 2024). A state school pupil in England receiving FSM has a less than 1 in 4 chance of progressing to HE by age of 19, and in areas of particular deprivation the chances are even lower. Of all the state funded pupils that progressed to HE by age 19 in 2021/22, less than 10% came from FSM backgrounds. For this reason, along with our own analysis of performance, we have chosen to focus heavily on those eligible for FSM at KS4 in Intervention Strategy 1.
- We know from our extensive analysis of the OfS Access and Participation data dashboard (Office for Students, 2024a) that progression to HE is significantly less likely for particular groups than it is for others. We also see from our internal data that relatively low numbers of our FE students progress on to HE study with us at UCR. For these reasons, we have chosen to focus on L3 to L4 progression as part of our intervention strategy, paying particular attention to students from low POLAR quintiles, areas of deprivation and those who have been eligible for Free School Meals.
- Recommendations from the Sutton Trust (Degree Apprenticeships: Levelling Up? Making degree apprenticeships work for social mobility) include providing young people with good quality information, advice and guidance around degree level apprenticeships. Our work with schools, through our partnership with Higher Horizons will address this recommendation in Intervention Strategy 1 (Cullinane & Doherty, 2020). The report also suggests institutions adopt a "contextual admissions" approach to ensure access to Higher/Degree apprenticeships is fair, given a student's individual circumstances. We aim for our curriculum diversification work around higher/degree apprenticeships to improve access to higher education by providing a more diverse portfolio of courses, course type and delivery mode, the work under intervention strategy 1 should help to support this aim.

Intervention Strategy 2 – Improving attainment rates for students with a disability.

In the creation and design of this intervention strategy, we have taken into account the following research and evidence to develop our rationale:

- The 2024 report from TASO Supporting Disabled Students: Mapping reasonable adjustments and transition support has been fundamental in shaping and informing this intervention strategy 1 (TASO, 2024). The paper focuses heavily on both transition to HE, and reasonable adjustments once you are successfully enrolled at your institution. In particular, we have noted:
    - A relatively low number of disabled students attending transition support at their chosen HE provider. UCR has provided transition support in the form of our Early Access programme and will review and enhance this further under Intervention Strategy 1. The evidence within the report points to a number of key considerations when providing transition support, namely the benefit of Spring/Summer programmes to allow disabled students to familiarise themselves with the environment and provider well in advance of the start of the academic year, the importance of early disclosure of disability and early engagement between the student and disability support services, and the important role that accurate IAG provides in terms of the available support and signposting.
    - In terms of reasonable adjustments, we note the importance of ensuring reasonable adjustments are in place, and the importance in having a single point of contact with regards disability and reasonable adjustment. With this in mind, we have renewed our commitment to staff development and CPD, ensuring academic staff are knowledgeable about their duties, and confident in supporting students with reasonable adjustments. Work already undertaken by our Inclusive Learning team on "Reasonable Adjustment Plans" will also help support this strand of work.
    - Inclusive Practice is important in creating an inclusive environment in which all students can participate fully without having to overcome barriers. In addition, truly accessible and inclusive courses, pedagogies and environment lessen the need for individual reasonable adjustments and help support the anticipatory duty under the Equality Act. Hence, we have committed to further development of our inclusive teaching and assessment framework, and further work with academic and support staff to ensure that they are able to operate in an inclusive way, with accessible and clear teaching materials catering for a variety of different needs.
    - Finally, we are acutely aware of the difficulties disabled students can have in navigating the current system of funded (DSA) support. Where possible and viable, we have sought to provide a level of support to all students, both disabled and non-disabled, via our in-house Inclusive Learning support service, and we will ensure this service is promoted to all so that access to support can be fast, efficient and accessed when required.
- The 2023 TASO report entitled What works to reduce equality gaps for disabled students (TASO, 2023c) makes several recommendations which have shaped and informed intervention strategy 2. In developing this intervention strategy, we have particularly noted:
    - The importance of data, including data collection, sharing and disaggregation. We have made commitments in Intervention Strategy 2 to develop data dashboards which support a better understanding of key indicators (such as attainment) with underrepresented groups. This data will then be reviewed as part of our continual monitoring and enhancement process.

  - The need to better understand the benefits of reasonable adjustments, whilst continuing to recognise our legal and moral duties of anticipatory adjustments under the Equality Act. We have addressed this recommendation by committing to engage with students from particular groups, including disabled students to better understand what works in terms of reasonable adjustments. We have also outlined plans to better evaluate the activity under Intervention Strategy 2 in order to understand what works.
  - Whilst the evidence is abundant in terms of transition into HE, this paper also considers the importance out of HE, into the labour market, graduate level jobs and further study. This evidence has been taken into account in developing Intervention Strategy 4.
  - The importance of a "whole provider" approach to supporting disabled students, which has been outlined in our Whole Provider Approach section of this plan
  - The importance of including disability as a theme throughout APPs, which we hope is abundant in the main section of this plan.
- The OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register cites "insufficient academic support" as key contributor to an attainment gap, and hence we have committed further support for L6 dissertation students that have reported a disability (Office for Students, 2024b). There will also be a 2 year (as well as one year) option for all L6 Top up programmes, allowing more time to complete and succeed in the highest level of study.
- Sarrett (2018), Autism and Accommodations in Higher Education: Insights from the Autism Community, suggests that curricula and environments should be designed with everybody in mind, and refers heavily on Universal Design for Learning. This research has helped shape our work on inclusion and inclusive pedagogies in Intervention Strategy 2.
- We have used the work of Schlossberg (1981) to support and shape our work around transition at various points in the student journey. In particular, we recognise that transitions can occur at 3 different stages, transition in, through and out of a particular event, in this case Higher Education. We have used this approach in both Intervention Strategy 1, considering how our Early Access programme can support transition into HE, and in Intervention Strategy 4, where we look at transition out of Higher Education into the workplace or further study.
- Gartland and Strosnider (2023), Considerations for Transition from High School to Postsecondary Education, although an example from the USA, has been used to further inform our approach and attitudes to transition. This paper particularly focuses on the difficulties disabled students can experience at various transition points, and the added complexities of having to disclose disability, often for the first time in their lives.
- English (2018), Supporting the transition of autistic students into university life: reflections on a specialist peer mentoring scheme has supported the development of both our transition work and a peer mentoring scheme which we plan to incorporate into Intervention Strategy 2.
- Beard et al (2023), Divergent pathways: How pre-orientation programs can shape the transition to college for first-generation low-income students suggests that students who participate in pre orientation programs show improved self-advocacy skills, and that forming relationships with peers and staff during such programs is key to this.
- Lambe et al (2019), Autism and transition to university from the student perspective shines a light on the experiences and difficulties autistic students face when the transition to university and helps to support practical interventions within Intervention Strategy 2.

- The TASO evidence toolkit cites emerging evidence as to how self-advocacy can improve student outcomes, and we have used this report as a rationale for developing Intervention Strategy 2 (TASO, 2023b).
- Hillier, Goldstein et al (2019), Outcomes of a peer mentoring program for university students with disabilities, has informed our approach in terms of peer mentoring disables students, and the impact of their outcomes. The research highlights that peer mentoring can have benefits such as knowing "how things" work on campus and a better understanding of where and how to access support. Although there was little evidence to suggest improved degree outcomes, we feel this is an area for further research, and plan to evaluate such activity accordingly.
- We acknowledge the work of the Disabled Students' commission (The Disabled Students' Commitment, 2023) and continue to take note of the recommendations and findings of this report.
- We acknowledge the Disabled Students' Commission report 3 months to make a difference, which was published in the immediate aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, but which continues to be relevant today, with many of the recommendations as relevant today as they were in 2020 (Disabled Students' Commission, 2020). In particular, the recommendations relating to "Welcome Weeks" and Inclusive learning platforms have supported the development of Intervention Strategy 2.
- Collier (2022), How Peer Mentoring Can Help Universities Promote Student Success in a Post-COVID19 Pandemic World suggests that transition to university is more complex in the post pandemic era due to a variety of factors. However, research suggests that peer mentoring is a useful tool in ensuring student success and continuation at university and provides useful tips on how to implement peer mentoring programs to assist students in a post pandemic context.

Intervention Strategy 3 – Improving completion and attainment rates for female students from areas of low HE participation and the most deprived areas.

In the creation and design of this intervention strategy, we have taken into account the following research and evidence to develop our rationale:

- The OfS Insight Brief 20 - Meeting the mental health needs of students (Office for Students, 2023a) outlines the current landscape in terms of student mental health, stating that particular underrepresented groups are more likely to experience mental ill health, and that this can have a significant impact on student outcomes, such as attainment. We also note in the report that female students are more likely to report mental health difficulties, and that the rate of reporting for female students has dramatically increased. This is our key rationale for focussing on mental health in Intervention Strategy 3.
- The Insight Brief 20 also states that *"students who were eligible for FSM when at school are more likely to report a mental health condition that their counterparts who were not FSM eligible"* and *"continuation, completion and progression rates were lower for students who were eligible for FSM than those who were not".* As an institution, our focus on FSM eligible students is mainly part of our "access" interventions, however there is an important cross intervention between Intervention Strategies 1 and 3, as the more we are successful in attracting FSM eligible students, the more our Mental Health strategies need to be able to support such students through the success and progression stages of the student lifecycle.

- The 2023 HEPI Student Academic Experience Survey suggests that Mental Health is the most stated factor when students are considering leaving a course (Neves & Stephenson, 2023). We therefore consider this as a major risk to equality of opportunity when considering student completion and attainment and have therefore focussed heavily on mental health in Intervention Strategy 3.
- The HEPI report also found that when students were asked to "*name one thing you institution could do to improve your academic experience",* Mental health support ranked as number 3.
- We have considered the University Mental Health Charter (Hughes & Spanner, 2019), and will use this as a guiding document in developing a whole provider approach to mental health support over the course of our APP.
- Similarly, we have consulted the StepChange: Mentally healthy universities framework and toolkit and will look to use this as part of our self-assessment of mental health resources for our HE student body (Universities UK, 2023). This work will help support the whole provider work already in development with regards mental health and will ensure any cross-institution strategies will work for Higher Education students at UCR.
- Moores & Burgess (2023) Financial support differentially aids retention of students from households with lower incomes: a UK case study finds that there is a positive correlation between students receiving financial support and their likelihood of continuing their studies after the first year, particularly where the student was from a lower income family. This research, along with previous research completed under our 2020-25 APP has formed the basis for us maintaining our current financial support offer to students, but we also commit to undertake a further review to ensure the financial support we provide is having the best possible impact for underrepresented groups, particularly female students from low participation, low income or deprived backgrounds.
- The Advance HE Education for Mental Health Toolkit (Advance HE, 2020) has been consulted and will be used to further our institutional approach to support student Mental Health, and will inform our inclusive approach to mental health, ensuring it is an embedded thread throughout our curriculum offer.

Intervention Strategy 4 – Improving progression outcomes for students with a disability, young students and female students from the most deprived areas.

In the creation and design of this intervention strategy, we have taken into account the following research and evidence to develop our rationale:

- The overarching strategy around improving graduate progression and employability outcomes has been heavily influenced by the work of Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007). Research entitled The Key to Employability: Developing a practical model of graduate employability proposes a straightforward, practical model that allows the complex landscape of "employability" to be mapped out such that it can be used a framework to implement an institutional approach to improving graduate outcomes. At UCR, we feel the Career EDGE model is a useful tool around which to build a cohesive strategy around learning gain, employability and graduate outcomes, and as such the research from Dacre Pool and Sewell has been the key evidence behind our approach to Intervention Strategy 4. We also feel that, with some alterations, the model can be used to address the specific needs of our target groups within the APP, namely disabled students,

young students and female student from deprived areas, each of whom we have identified as being at risk of not experiencing equality of opportunity at UCR.

- The 2022 report from TASO entitled What works to reduce equality gaps in employment and employability? makes several recommendations that we have taken into account in Intervention Strategy 4 (TASO, 2022b).
    - Work experience in its various from is a well evidenced programme, which has a strong association with improving graduate outcomes. As such we have committed to reviewing our experiential learning module and implementing opportunities to incorporate alternative/additional work-related activities.
    - The report also cites the importance of CVs, suggesting that it is important to support students to clearly communicate their work experience via their CV, and so we have committed to better supporting our students, particularly those from target groups with key employability skills such as CV writing, social media management and interview skills.
    - There is evidence to suggest that information, advice and guidance around career options can support students in making effective decisions. Other research shows that a career counselling approach is strongly associated with a student's knowledge of, and readiness for the graduate jobs market, and there is also causal evidence that engagement in IAG vastly improves the progression rates to post graduate study in students from disadvantaged groups. As such, we have included much work around IAG in Intervention Strategy 4, such as improving the careers advice and guidance for those in target groups, workshops and advice on progression to post graduate study and developing new and existing industry links, so that students have better access to professionals within their chosen industries, leading to enhanced opportunities to receive IAG.
    - There is evidence that technology-based interventions can be beneficial in terms of improving graduate outcomes for students from particular groups, and as such we have committed to reviewing and enhancing our online Graduate Toolkit, with a specific focus on the "employability" and "entrepreneurship" resources.
    - Whilst there is limited evidence on the benefits of providing discrete "employability skills" sessions, we have committed to developing student's soft skills, such as self-advocacy. We are confident that our approach to teaching, learning and assessment, coupled with our new employability and learning gain strategy (Future Focus) will support students in honing their employability skills, leading to improved job opportunities, rewarding employment in their chosen sectors or further post graduate study should they wish. We also take note of the recommendation that supporting a student's career adaptability and their psychological capital is also associated with better outcomes, as it enables student to be better at seeking employment, moving between jobs and having the ability to know their own strengths and weaknesses.
    - The report suggests that there are some more general interventions that have benefit for particular groups, namely those with physical disabilities and neurodiverse conditions. We have therefore committed to holding more focus group discussions with such students, to better understand their lived experiences, including what works for them, so that we can continue to develop suitable interventions for disabled students.
    - Finally, the report recommends the development of the alumni association, using it as a tool to communicate with and support students with their career journey after they have graduated from the institution. We have therefore committed to enhancing our alumni

activity, so that we are able to keep in contact with our graduates, offering them support, advice and guidance after their formal studies have ended.

- The work from the Higher Education Academy (2006) around Pedagogies for Employability has also been used to inform and guide the work in Intervention Strategy 4. We will use the evidence, guidance and research contained within the report to design staff CPD to identify and apply pedagogical approaches which reinforce and enhance 'employability' traits.

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Accessibility and document statistics

This document has been checked using Microsoft Word Accessibility Checker and Editor

In addition to the full Access and Participation Plan, an accessible summary document is also available

Readability Statistics ? ×

Counts	
Words	24,147
Characters	136,545
Paragraphs	1,010
Sentences	807
Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	1.8
Words per Sentence	23.5
Characters per Word	5.3
Readability	
Flesch Reading Ease	28.6
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	15.1
Passive Sentences	10.4%

TASO Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education

Intervention Strategy 1 - Improving access to Higher Education for underrepresented groups

University Centre Reaseheath

1 Situation

UCR sees relatively low numbers of entrants that have been eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) at Key Stage 4, and relatively low numbers of entrants who are male and from POLAR quintiles 1 & 2, or the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 & 2)

2 Aims

To increase the proportion of entrants to UCR that have been eligible for FSM at Key Stage 4, and increase the proportion of male entrants that originate from POLAR quintiles 1 & 2, or the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1 & 2)

7 Inputs	5 Activities	6 Outputs	3 Outcomes	4 Impact
	Process		Impact	
Staff resources for both delivery and planning of outreach Specialist resource for curriculum development Finance for resources, mileage/travel Collaboration between UCR, schools and our UniConnect partners Resource to develop a contextual admissions policy/procedure	Campus tours (as part of multi intervention outreach events) Provision of Information, Advice and guidance at multi intervention outreach events and one-off campus days Curriculum development and funding bids around Higher and Degree Apprenticeships Collaborative outreach with our local UniConnect hubs, focussing on IAG and attainment raising Clearer marketing communications aimed at target demographics Contextual Admissions policy	Attendance by Pre & Post 16 pupils at UCR outreach events and attainment raising activities More choice of course type and delivery mode, including the option of Higher and Degree apprenticeships. FE to HE Progression – a programme of events aimed at increasing internal FE to HE progression at UCR	Increased intention to attend HE Increased knowledge of the HE experience (in particular in land based HE) Increased knowledge of career options Increased capacity to make informed choices about their future and increased confidence about their HE options Increased school attainment, leading to better grades and more post 16 choices, including HE	Increased applications and enrolments to HE courses at UCR from FSM eligible students, and those originating from POLAR quintiles 1&2 and IMD quintiles 1&2) Better equality of opportunity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, in terms of their access to Higher Education

8 Rationale & Assumptions

Information about our assumptions, rationale and the underpinning evidence for Intervention Strategy 1 can be found in Annex B of our Access and Participation Plan. In short, we assume that by experiencing Higher Education through outreach and campus events, potential students will be more likely to aspire to HE, returning to school with a clearer picture of the options available to them, which may lead to better attainment and an increased chance of being able to enter HE. A diverse range of curricula, delivery modes and course types will improve these chances further.

TASO Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education

Intervention Strategy 2 - Improving attainment rates for students with a disability

University Centre Reaseheath

1 Situation

The attainment rates of disabled students (those receiving a 1st or 2:1 degree classification at L6) are lower than students with no declared disability

2 Aims

To increase the proportion of disabled students who achieve a 1st or 2:1 degree classification at UCR

7 Inputs	5 Activities	6 Outputs	3 Outcomes	4 Impact
	Process		Impact	
Knowledge, skills and time of Inclusive Learning Team staff Knowledge, skills and time of academic staff Staff resource to support those not in receipt of DSA Specialist staff resource from Teaching & Learning Coach Updated assistive technology resource for those not eligible for DSA Assistive Tech	Thoroughly investigate the HE/UCR experience of students with disabilities Continue to evaluate, refine and deliver Early Access programme Deliver dissertation support groups to L6 students and wider sessions on intellectual identity Peer mentoring Programme Develop framework on inclusive pedagogy, assessment and curriculum design Targeted interventions and support for disabled students Processes to embed APP data analysis and evaluation into CME and CPD processes	UCR will better understand the lived experiences of its disabled students Students will have the opportunity to arrive early (and move on to campus if they are residential) as part of the Early Access Programme Academic and support staff will receive further training, advice and guidance on inclusive practice, including mental health difficulties L6 dissertation students with a disability will receive additional support and guidance	Increased on course attainment/grades/marks for disabled students Fewer students failing assessments & requiring reassessment Fewer students resorting to exceptional circumstances process as their normal way of working Reduction in the attainment gap between disabled and non disabled students Disabled students increase in positive academic self-concept	Better degree outcomes for students with a disability leading to better employment opportunities in highly skilled graduate employment, or more opportunities for post graduate study Better equality of opportunity for disabled people in the employment market Long-term societal benefits, including a more diverse and inclusive workforce

8 Rationale & Assumptions

Information about our assumptions, rationale and the underpinning evidence for Intervention Strategy 1 can be found in Annex B of our Access and Participation Plan. In short, Intervention Strategy 2 aims to better understand the experience of disabled students and using evaluation to better understand the impact of our interventions. The rationale is that a better degree classification will provide students with more opportunities to succeed in the workplace or further study.

TASO Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education

Intervention Strategy 3 - Improving completion and attainment rates for female students from areas of low HE participation and the most deprived areas

University Centre Reaseheath

1 Situation

UCR sees lower completion rates amongst females from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1&2), and lower attainment rates (in terms of 1st class and 2:1 degrees) amongst females from areas of low HE participation (POLAR quintiles 1&2) and the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1&2)

2 Aims

To improve the completion and attainment rates of female students, in particular those from the areas of lowest HE participation and the most deprived areas

7 Inputs	5 Activities	6 Outputs	3 Outcomes	4 Impact
	Process		Impact	
Sufficient staff resource to support interventions Cross institution buy in, including support from internal mental health support services Engagement from sector professionals (Inc. financial input to cover expenses)	Working groups to establish the lived experiences and crucial support networks for female students at UCR Provide a dashboard to aid course level completion and grade analytics to tutors, highlighting areas of risk and the need for intervention Academic/soft skills support workshops focussing on HE skill building Further develop PAT model of academic & personal support Strengthen mental health and wellbeing support offer for UCR students Career professional events Evaluate & revise financial support offer	A better understanding of our female cohort, particularly those who face additional barriers to their studies, resulting in non completion or lower degree outcomes Clearer data on "at risk" students, allowing for earlier interventions at course level Students will have the opportunity to build key skills through a series of targeted workshops A more visible and accessible UCR mental health service Career Professionals Programme Revised financial support offer	Higher rates of completion by female students, particularly those from areas of low HE participation and deprived areas. An increased number of female L6 students receiving a 1st class or 2:1 degree classification Fewer withdrawals Fewer interruption of studies	Better equality of opportunity for female students in HE Better prospects of progression into highly skilled, graduate level employment. Increased social capital and social mobility amongst students after graduating from UCR

8 Rationale & Assumptions

Information about our assumptions, rationale and the underpinning evidence for Intervention Strategy 1 can be found in Annex B of our Access and Participation Plan. In short, we have looked closely at the OfS EORR in relation the risks of low completion and attainment rates for particular groups, carefully considering the implications of poor mental health, insufficient financial support and the impact that institutional capacity has on these groups.

TASO Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education

Intervention Strategy 4 - Improving progression outcomes for students with a disability, young students and female students from the most deprived areas

University Centre Reaseheath

1 Situation	UCR sees low rates of progression to highly skilled, graduate employment or further study in students with a disability, young students, and female students who originate from areas of low HE participation (POLAR quintiles 1&2) and the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1&2)
2 Aims	To increase the proportion of young, disabled and female students from under represented groups who progress into highly skilled, gradated level employment or further study

7 Inputs	5 Activities	6 Outputs	3 Outcomes	4 Impact
	Process		Impact	
Staff resource to deliver programmes Whole provider buy in and support and collaboration between teams Research to inform evidence based interventions and actions.	Development of Future Focus, an overarching institution wide intervention on improving graduate outcomes, employability and learning gain Further revision and development of Graduate Toolkit resources around employability skills Strengthen the links with students post graduation through our alumni Embedding professional knowledge and skills into curricula Review Experiential Learning module	Future Focus - a programme of support, resources and activities aimed at improving progression outcomes of UCR students Alumni association reviewed to better support former UCR students post graduation Careers hub enhanced within existing Graduate Toolkit Further workshop style activities around key employability skills IAG workshops around progression to PG study	Improved Graduate Outcomes data for: - Young students - Disabled students - Female students who originate from areas of low HE participation or the most deprived areas. Higher occurrence of graduates continuing in further study, be it at the same level or higher More support available for students during and after studying at UCR	Improved equality of opportunity for students in under represented groups Enhanced post-graduation outcomes, including higher rates of employment, further education, and socioeconomic mobility. A more diverse workforce with a greater range of lived experiences, knowledge and skills.

8 Rationale & Assumptions	Information about our assumptions, rationale and the underpinning evidence for Intervention Strategy 1 can be found in Annex B of our Access and Participation Plan. Our work on improving employability and graduate outcomes draws heavily on the work from TASO around reducing equality gaps and is also underpinned by the work of Lorraine Dacre Pool and Peter Sewell.

Office for Students

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Reaseheath College

Provider UKPRN: 10005404

Summary of 2025-26 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflation statement:

We will not raise fees annually for new entrants

Table 3b - Full-time course fee levels for 2025-26 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	BSc Top up	N/A	9250
First degree	BSc Veterinary Nursing Year 2 and 3 (Placement related years)	N/A	5550
First degree	BSc, BA	N/A	9250
Foundation degree	FdSc, FdA	N/A	9250
Foundation year/Year 0	Foundation Year	N/A	8250
HNC/HND	HNC/HND	N/A	7860
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 3b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2025-26

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

Table 4b - Part-time course fee levels for 2025-26 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	BSc Top up	N/A	6935
First degree	BSc, BA	N/A	6935
Foundation degree	FdSc, FdA	N/A	6935
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2025-26

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

Office for Students

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Reaseheath College

Provider UKPRN: 10005404

Investment summary

A provider is expected to submit information about its forecasted investment to achieve the objectives of its access and participation plan in respect of the following areas: access, financial support and research and evaluation. Note that this does not necessarily represent the total amount spent by a provider in these areas. Table 6b provides a summary of the forecasted investment, across the four academic years covered by the plan, and Table 6d gives a more detailed breakdown.

Notes about the data:

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.

Yellow shading indicates data that was calculated rather than input directly by the provider.

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

"Total access investment funded from HFI" refers to income from charging fees above the basic fee limit.

"Total access investment from other funding (as specified)" refers to other funding, including OfS funding (but excluding Uni Connect), other public funding and funding from other sources such as philanthropic giving and private sector sources and/or partners.

Table 6b - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£104,000	£109,000	£115,000	£120,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£138,000	£145,000	£152,000	£159,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£31,000	£32,000	£34,000	£36,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£10,000	£10,000	£11,000	£11,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£10,000	£10,000	£11,000	£11,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£84,000	£89,000	£93,000	£98,000
Access activity investment	**Total access investment (£)**	**£104,000**	**£109,000**	**£115,000**	**£120,000**
Access activity investment	***Total access investment (as % of HFI)***	**8.4%**	**8.4%**	**8.4%**	**8.4%**
Access activity investment	***Total access investment funded from HFI (£)***	**£20,000**	**£20,000**	**£22,000**	**£22,000**
Access activity investment	***Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)***	**£0**	**£0**	**£0**	**£0**
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£130,000	£137,000	£144,000	£151,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000
Financial support investment	**Total financial support investment (£)**	**£138,000**	**£145,000**	**£152,000**	**£159,000**
Financial support investment	***Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)***	**11.2%**	**11.2%**	**11.1%**	**11.1%**
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£31,000	£32,000	£34,000	£36,000
Research and evaluation investment	*Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)*	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%

Office for Students

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Reaseheath College

Provider UKPRN: 10005404

Targets

Table 5b: Access and/or raising attainment targets

Aim [500 characters maximum]	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
To increase the proportion of entrants to full time HE courses who were eligible for Free School Meals at KS4	PTA_1	Access	Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)	Eligible			No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	16.8%	17%	18%	19%	20%
To increase the proportion of entrants to full time HE courses by males who originate from the lowest areas of HE participation (POLAR quintiles 1&2)	PTA_2	Access	Intersection of characteristics	Other (please specify in description)		Male students from areas of low HE participation (POLAR quintiles 1&2)	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	10.5%	11%	12.5%	13.5%	15.5%
To increase the proportion of entrants to full time HE courses by males who originate from the most deprived areas (IMD Quintiles 1&2)	PTA_3	Access	Intersection of characteristics	Other (please specify in description)		Male students originating from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1&2)	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	12%	13%	14%	15.5%	17%
	PTA_4														
	PTA_5														
	PTA_6														
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
To increase the completion rates of full time female students who originate from the most deprived areas (IMD Quintiles 1&2)	PTS_1	Completion	Intersection of characteristics	Other (please specify in description)	N/A	Female students originating from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1&2)	No	The access and participation dashboard	2017-18	Percentage	69.6%	72.5%	75%	77.5%	80%
To increase the attainment rates of full time disabled students	PTS_2	Attainment	Reported disability	Disability reported	N/A		No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	44.1%	45%	50%	55%	60%
To increase the attainment rates of full time female students who originate from the lowest areas of HE participation (POLAR Quintiles 1&2)	PTS_3	Attainment	Intersection of characteristics	Other (please specify in description)	N/A	Female students originating from the lowest areas of HE participation (POLAR Quintiles 1&2) - 2 year aggregate data has been used to formulate the baseline figure due to limited data for individual years	No	The access and participation dashboard	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage	44%	45%	46%	48%	50%
To increase the attainment rates of full time female students who originate from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1&2)	PTS_4	Attainment	Intersection of characteristics	Other (please specify in description)	N/A	Female students originating from the most deprived areas (IMD quintiles 1&2) - 2 year aggregate data has been used to formulate the baseline figure due to limited data for individual years	No	The access and participation dashboard	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage	52.9%	54%	58%	62%	65%
	PTS_5														
	PTS_6														
	PTS_7														
	PTS_8														
	PTS_9														
	PTS_10														
	PTS_11														
	PTS_12														

Table 5e: Progression targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone

To reduce the gap in progression rates between full time disabled and non disabled students	PTP_1	Progression	Reported disability	Disability reported	No disability reported		No	The access and participation dashboard	2020-21	Percentage points	14.2	13.0	11.0	9.0	7.0
To increase progression rates for full time young students	PTP_2	Progression	Age	Young (under 21)	N/A		No	The access and participation dashboard	2020-21	Percentage	21.7	24%	26%	28%	30%
To increase the progression rates for full time female students who originate from the most deprived areas (IMD Quintiles 1&2)	PTP_3	Progression	Intersection of characteristics	Other (please specify in description)	N/A	Female students originating from the most deprived areas (IMD Quintiles 1&2)	No	The access and participation dashboard	2020-21	Percentage	20.7%	21%	23%	25%	26.8%
	PTP_4														
	PTP_5														
	PTP_6														
	PTP_7														
	PTP_8														
	PTP_9														
	PTP_10														
	PTP_11														
	PTP_12														