

2019-20 access and participation plan monitoring

Provider impact report

This impact report summarises the progress made by University of Bristol against targets, objectives and written commitments set out in its 2019-20 access and participation plan. This document is a summary of information submitted by the provider to the OfS. This document is a self-report by the provider only and does not indicate any OfS assessment of compliance.

1. Ambition and strategy

University of Bristol's ambition and strategy as detailed in the 2019-20 access and participation plan:

Our strategy during 2019-20 was to continue the diversification of the student body, taking an innovative approach to outreach, contextualised admissions system and a whole institution approach to student success and progression. The Covid-19 pandemic caused us to take proactive decisions about the balance of spend and prioritise student financial support while delivering access, success and progression activities digitally.

We are pleased that during such a challenging year we made progress on almost all targets, including those in the 2020-25 APP, whilst also delivering on all financial support commitments to current students. We aimed to take a proactive approach to meeting targets focusing our efforts on those areas which were identified by the OfS and our student body as priorities.

Priority areas and progress made:

1. Narrowing the gap in intake between POLAR Q1 and Q5 students: In 2020 our intake ratio was 6.82:1 (7.61:1 in 2019).
2. Increasing the number of mature students enrolling at the University: In 2020 5.8% of our intake was mature (5.1% in 2019) .
3. Increasing the number of Black students enrolling at the University: In 2020 2.9% of our intake was Black (2.4% in 2019).
4. Increasing the number of Asian students enrolling at the University: In 2020 8.3% of our intake was Asian (7.1% in 2019).
5. Ensuring all students are supported financially: All financial support commitments were met.
6. Narrowing the continuation gap affecting mature students: reduced from 7pp in 2017-18 to 4pp in 2018-19.
7. Eliminating the BAME attainment gap: reduced from 6pp 2018-19 to 5pp in 2019-20.
8. Narrowing the continuation gap affecting students with mental health conditions: initially reduced from 7pp in 2016-17 to 2pp in 2017-18 but widened again to 9pp in 2018-19.

In order to make progress on narrowing the gap between POLAR Q1 and Q5 students we now make contextual offers to applicants from Q1 postcodes. To increase the number of mature students at the University and ensure they are well prepared to succeed we are launching our STEM foundation year, and to increase the number of Black and Asian students at the University we have introduced our Next Step Bristol programme.

In order to make progress on eliminating the attainment gap we have established a Decolonisation Group working with Bristol Institute of Teaching and Learning. This group is working with our academic schools to inform and develop their approach to decolonising the curriculum. They have also designed a Future Learn course - Decolonising Education: From

Theory to Practice which is a resource for academic colleagues as well as bring publicly available. In order to improve continuation rates for mature students we have revised the framework of support available to mature students and work closely with our Mature Students, Parents and Carers Network. We are also conducting research into the experience of mature students in order to inform development of our approach in future.

The 2019-20 APP contained a number of targets using NSSEC data. Following guidance from the OfS we did not prioritise these and have therefore made little or no progress on them. We have also made no progress on our target for conversion of applicants from low performing schools. It should be noted that although conversion levels are lower than hoped for, our intake of these students exceeds target by a significant margin.

We undertake rigorous in-year monitoring of our higher fee income and spend on all aspects of APP work, including financial support. It became clear in Spring 2020 that spend on our financial support package would be larger than the 18.5% of higher fee income committed to in the APP. It was also clear that moving access activities online would cost less than budgeted for. We therefore took the decision to rebalance spend in- year, shifting £650k from access, success and progression to student funding. This allowed us to maintain our overall reinvestment commitment of 30.2%, and deliver on all aspects of our Plan. This decision was made with appropriate governance and student engagement via the University's committee structure.

We continually review policy to ensure it protects the interests of students, taking corrective action where necessary. In 2020 we amended the terms and conditions of our bursary policy such that rent arrears could not be recouped or withheld from bursary payments.

We have embraced the need to take a whole institution approach. We have developed a structure and culture of access and participation across the organisation. This structure includes a collaborative approach to the writing of the Access and Participation Plan, shared responsibility for meeting targets and ensuring the efficacy of spend, all of this includes the University's senior management team.

We continued to take a holistic and contextualised approach to admissions. In response to analysis of offer making data, all students from aspiring state schools and colleges, low participation neighbourhoods, intensive outreach participants and those in Care were flagged within the University's admissions database and if an offer was made it was automatically be at the contextual level (typically two grades lower than the standard offer). In addition, as part of the Bristol Scholars programme, a sector leading approach to admissions recognising the impact of educational and domestic disadvantage and the importance of potential, this reduction in offer was four grades below the typical offer.

At the outreach stage, the focus of interventions in 2019-20 was long-term, targeted and designed, where possible, to diversify the student body at the University of Bristol. We have taken an evidence-based approach to the targeting of activity and have specific intervention progress measures to reflect this.

We recognised that applications from mature students have dropped (in line with a national decline) from 2012-13 onwards. In order to increase applications from mature learners the University will continue to invest in a range of outreach activities. In 2019-20 this included: information sessions to Access students in local Further Education Colleges and institutions identified as having significant numbers of mature students; contributing to the regional Access Conference; running specific 'drop in' sessions on the University campus for prospective applicants; and providing information, advice and guidance on applications, childcare, funding and accommodation. We will ensure that mature students continue to take part in the University's Access to Bristol scheme, where they are offered support from the Mature Student Recruitment Officer during an IAG session. In 2016-17 we successfully piloted a condensed Pathways to Law model for students studying Access courses in Law.

In addition to our ambition to diversify the University's student population, we also seek to make an active contribution to the wider community of which we are a part. Specifically we aim to improve the educational attainment within the City of Bristol and now sponsor nine schools (two secondary schools, seven primary schools and a specialist school for those with Autistic Spectrum Conditions) as part of the Venturers Trust. The University made an active decision to sponsor schools in areas of socio-economic deprivation, with low progression rates to higher education and with diverse student populations in order to target resource where most needed within the city.

The University recognises the strength of collaborative arrangements, including the benefits of scale, increased engagement with students and potential applicants, enhanced co-ordination and reduced duplication. In 2019-20 we continued to build on existing partnerships, including the IntoUniversity Bristol South centre developed with the Universities of Bath and Exeter, the Western Vocational Progression Consortium, Western Outreach Network, South Bristol Youth and Russell Group WP Association.

The University Strategy makes clear our commitment to provide students from under-represented backgrounds with a tailored package of academic and pastoral support to guide their development and ensure that they thrive at Bristol.

In line with this, we have developed a whole institution approach to student support focused on the interrelated themes of student wellbeing and resilience, and inclusive communities. This includes investing £1m of core funding annually in the new Wellbeing Service, and making significant improvements to pastoral support in student residences. We have enhanced our study skills provision including online, interactive resources, regular one-to-one, drop-in tutorials, and small group workshops. These resources have been co-created by students, lecturers and specialist staff, to ensure that the materials are relevant and inclusive.

Alongside this investment in supporting all students, we have made significant improvements to our ability to access and analyse data about student outcomes. Data about the success and

progression of students from identified widening participation groups is now included in each academic school's Education Action Plan.

Our overall track record in student retention is strong and our improvements to supporting students from all backgrounds will help us to maintain this performance. Specialist support for mature students, with an understanding of the complex histories and identities that mature learners bring to their studies, has a clear impact on retention rates. .

Analysis of our performance highlights the attainment gap between Home BAME and White students. This has already been identified as an area of concern through the extensive equalities data report received by the University's Education Committee. This indicated a gap between white and BAME students in relation to their both satisfaction and degree attainment. In 2016-17 we commissioned two research projects to seek a greater understanding of the issues and the relationship between experience and attainment.

In 2017-18 we developed and implemented a University-wide action plan to address the recommendations from these reports, and formed a task and finish group to identify further priority actions for 2018-19. This includes a more fine-grained analysis of the latest data in this area, in order to focus new interventions as effectively as possible. The group has engaged consultancy from the Equality Challenge to inform the next stage of this work. This remained a key priority for the University in 2019-20 and will continue to do so until the gap in experience and attainment is closed.

The University Strategy sets out our commitment to reviewing all curricula to ensure that they are inclusive in scope and delivery. This has been built into programme review and approval processes, and has been a particular focus of the development of the Bristol Futures open units.

Analysis of our progression data highlights that we need to do more to ensure that BAME students progress to highly skilled work and further study. We have introduced a number of initiatives to support the progression of students from under-represented groups, including targeted internships, alumni mentoring and development of the targeted Flying Start programme to encourage early engagement with the Careers Service.

It is noted that the most effective interventions in this area start early in a students' degree. This means that the impact of these interventions on outcomes will only start to be seen as students move into employment and further study. This can mean a lag of 4-5 years before outcomes on destinations can be observed. We will continue to employ a range of evaluation approaches to understand both immediate impact and long-term outcomes of these interventions.

To ensure we take a whole student lifecycle approach to widening participation, the University expanded our WP and Postgraduate Recruitment Team in 2016. Responsibilities of this team include identifying target groups, developing interventions with current undergraduates from such groups to raise awareness of our postgraduate programmes and continuing to explore and promote new sources of funding (such as the PG loans system) to relevant individuals. We commissioned a piece of research from the Graduate School of Education breaking down our postgraduate student body by WP category and conducted focus groups with PG students. Based upon the results, we have launched a pilot programme, 'Access Postgrad', which will take five undergraduate final-year students at Bristol who fulfil WP characteristics through a programme of mentoring and skills development to help them to access postgraduate study. We recognise that robust monitoring and evaluation help to prioritise the delivery of programmes and activities that have the greatest impact. Evaluation is embedded in all of our plans and we analyse the efficacy of our outreach and student success interventions throughout the year.

Specific initiatives are evaluated using a range of quantitative and qualitative measures, a number of which are included in our access and participation plan. A 'Guide to Evaluation' has been developed to ensure that appropriate evaluation is built into planning of all activities.

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2. Self-assessment of targets

The tables that follow provide a self-assessment by University of Bristol of progress against the targets approved in its 2019-20 access and participation plan.

Please note the tables contain only a summary of target milestones approved in 2019-20 access and participation plans. Full information can be found in **Table 8a – statistical targets and milestones** and **Table 8b – Other milestones and targets** of University of Bristol's 2019-20 [access and participation plan](#).

Any optional commentary provided against the targets is given in [Annex B](#).

Statistical targets and milestones

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self-assessment
T16a_01 (Access)	Applications from low performing schools and colleges	2013-14	18.9%	21.5%	22%	Percentage	2019-20	35.2	Expected progress
T16a_02 (Access)	Applications from mature students	2013-14	9.7%	10.75%	11%	Percentage	2019-20	6.4	Limited progress
T16a_03 (Access)	Applications from N-SEC groups 4-7	2013-14	19.6%	20.8%	21.1%	Percentage	2019-20	21.8	Expected progress
T16a_04 (Access)	Applications from Black and minority ethnic groups	2013-14	17.8%	18.2%	18.3%	Percentage	2019-20	24.7	Expected progress
T16a_05 (Access)	Applications from disabled students	2013-14	6.5%	6.9%	7%	Percentage	2019-20	10.4	Expected progress
T16a_06 (Access)	Applications from students applying from BS and BA postcodes	2013-14	4.2%	5.1%	5.5%	Percentage	2019-20	5.2	Limited progress
T16a_07 (Access)	Intake from low performing schools and colleges	2013-14	15.7%	19.7%	20.7%	Percentage	2019-20	37.4	Expected progress
T16a_08 (Access)	Intake from mature students	2013-14	5.2%	5.8%	6%	Percentage	2019-20	5.1	Limited progress
T16a_09 (Access)	Conversion rates: application to intake rates for students from low performing schools and colleges	2013-14	12.0%	13.2%	13.5%	Percentage	2019-20	12.9	No progress
T16a_10 (Access)	Conversion rates: application to intake rates for students from N-SEC groups 4-7	2013-14	10.1%	11.3%	11.6%	Percentage	2019-20	10.7	No progress
T16a_11 (Access)	Conversion rates: application to intake rates for students from BA and BS postcodes	2013-14	15.1%	16.3%	16.6%	Percentage	2019-20	18	Expected progress

T16a_12 (Student success)	Withdrawals from first year: N-SEC groups 4-7	2013-14	5.1%	3.5%	3.1%	Percentage	2018-19	5.6	No progress
T16a_13 (Student success)	Withdrawals from first year: non white	2013-14	4.6%	3.0%	2.6%	Percentage	2018-19	3.9	Limited progress

Other milestones and targets

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self-assessment
T16b_01 (Access)	Access to Bristol scheme - participants	2013-14	680	680	680	Headcount	2019-20	871	Expected progress
T16b_02 (Access)	Access to Bristol scheme - applications	2013-14	156	176	181	Headcount	2019-20	594	Expected progress
T16b_03 (Access)	Access to Bristol scheme - intake	2013-14	37	49	52	Headcount	2019-20	159	Expected progress
T16b_04 (Access)	Sutton Trust summer school participants	2013-14	178	160	160	Headcount	2019-20	179	Expected progress
T16b_05 (Access)	Sutton Trust summer school applicants	2013-14	97	100	100	Headcount	2019-20	134	Expected progress
T16b_06 (Access)	Sutton Trust summer school intake	2013-14	17	21	22	Headcount	2019-20	35	Expected progress
T16b_07 (Access)	Student in Schools placements	2013-14	82	80	80	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		No progress
T16b_08 (Student success)	Peer mentoring participants	2013-14	1062	1100	1100	Headcount	2019-20	1052	Limited progress
T16b_09 (Student success)	Peer assisted study sessions participants	2013-14	48	2000	3000	Headcount	2019-20	1021	Limited progress
T16b_10 (Access)	Number of Pathways to Law students at other universities that apply to the University of Bristol	2015-16	68	80	84	Headcount	2019-20	61	Limited progress
T16b_11 (Access)	Number of BME students who take part in Insight Into Bristol	2015-16	61	70	73	Headcount	2019-20	177	Expected progress
T16b_12 (Access)	Number of students aged 7 -18 engaged with IntoUniversity South Bristol Centre	2015-16	100	900	900	Headcount	2019-20	1174	Expected progress
T16b_17 (Progression)	Recognising the impact of building professional networks and gaining workplace experience, we will increase the proportion of BAME students taking part in funded internship programmes.	2017-18	12%	15%	18%	Percentage	2019-20	25	Expected progress

3. Investment commitments

3.1. Access and participation investment for the last audited year

Please note that some differences in predicted vs actual spend may be due to reporting differences between academic and financial years.

Financial year	2019-20		
	Predicted spend (£)	Actual spend (£)	Difference (ppt)
Access investment	£3,576,538.00	£2,438,000.00	-32%
Financial Support	£9,236,979.03	£9,668,000.00	5%

4. Action plan

Where progress was less than expected University of Bristol has made the following commitments to increase the rate of progress against their targets.

Reference Number	Steps that will be taken in the future to make expected progress against target
T16a_02	This is the last year which we will report on this target.
T16a_06	This is the last year which we will report on this target.
T16a_08	We will continue to grow our outreach provision for mature students, increase entry routes into the University and are exploring the growth of part time provision.
T16a_09	This is the last year which we will report on this target.
T16a_10	This is the last year which we will report on this target.
T16a_12	This is the last year which we will report on this target.
T16a_13	This is the last year which we will report on this target.
T16b_07	This is the last year in which we will report on this target
T16b_08	This is the last year in which we will report on this target
T16b_09	This is the last year in which we will report on this target
T16b_10	This is the last year in which we will report on this target

5. Confirmation

University of Bristol confirms that:

Student engagement	
Have you worked with your students to help them complete the access and participation plan monitoring student submission?	
Yes	
Have you engaged with your student body in the design, evaluation, and monitoring of the plan?	
Yes	
Verification and sign off	
University of Bristol has confirmed that the information included in this impact report is accurate, that it has been compiled in line with OfS guidance, and that it is being submitted on behalf of the governing body of the provider.	
Yes	
Accountable officer sign off	
Name	Doug Jennings of behalf of Professor Hugh Brady
Position	Vice-Chancellor

Annex A: Commentary on progress against targets

University of Bristol's commentary where progress against targets was less than expected.

Target reference number: T16a_02
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
We have recruited an additional Mature Student Officer, significantly increased the amount of outreach taking place and created a foundation year which will admit its first intake in September 2022

Target reference number: T16a_06
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
We have made progress in this area and are 0.3% away from target.

Target reference number: T16a_08
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
We have recruited an additional Mature Student Officer, significantly increased the amount of outreach taking place and created a foundation year which will admit its first intake in September 2022

Target reference number: T16a_09
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
No

Target reference number: T16a_10
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
As NS-Sec data was identified by the OfS as no longer being a target area we have not increased our activity.

Target reference number: T16a_12
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
As NS-Sec data was identified by the OfS as no longer being a target area we have not increased our activity.

Target reference number: T16a_13
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
No (see commentary)

Target reference number: T16b_07
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
No additional activity in 2019-20

Target reference number: T16b_08

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
No additional activity in 2019-20

Target reference number: T16b_09
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
No additional activity in 2019-20

Target reference number: T16b_10
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
We took the decision in 2019 to withdraw from the Pathways to Law programme as we believed that we could redirect resource to our Access to Bristol programme more effectively. Withdrawing from the programme is likely to have impacted on our ability to meet this target but has allowed us to grow local provision and improve students' experience on Access to Bristol.

Annex B: Optional commentary on targets

University of Bristol's commentary on any of the targets listed in [Section 2](#).

Reference Number	Optional commentary
T16a_01	N/A
T16a_02	
T16a_03	
T16a_04	
T16a_05	
T16a_06	
T16a_07	
T16a_08	
T16a_09	
T16a_10	
T16a_11	
T16a_12	
T16a_13	Whilst we have not made the planned level of progress in relation to the continuation rate of our BAME students in absolute terms, we have closed the gap in continuation rate between white and BAME students to 0pp for the last three years. We have therefore not continued this target in the 2020-25 Access and Participation Plan.
T16b_01	
T16b_02	
T16b_03	
T16b_04	
T16b_05	
T16b_06	
T16b_07	
T16b_08	We delivered all aspects of this activity. Uptake was slightly lower from new students this year, despite all our normal practices to promote the benefits of mentoring. However, this is within normal levels of engagement fluctuation

T16b_09	The move to online delivery halfway through the year has had an impact on engagement from students, and our ability to record attendance for a significant part of the year. Actual attendance is believed to be higher but evidence is limited to the number provided here. Higher levels of engagement have already been observed in 2020/21 with improved monitoring processes for online provision.
T16b_10	
T16b_11	
T16b_12	
T16b_17	