

RTC Education Ltd
t/a Regent College London

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020/21 TO 2024/25



Access & Participation Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25

RTC Education Ltd t/a Regent College London (RCL), is part of Regent Group. (UKPRN: 10008455). We are a growing and diversifying Approved Fee Cap provider based in London and operating within a national sector transformed by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. Our campus spans the centre and north-west of the capital. We have been delivering FHEQ level-4/5 HND business programmes under licence from Pearson Education to full-time students since 2010. Initially, our intakes were drawn exclusively from a sixth-form college within Regent Group — learners who, though capable, struggled with the A-level curriculum and were looking for an alternative to traditional HE and a more appropriate progression route for study at level 4 and beyond. We committed from the outset to meeting the diverse needs of learners ill served by traditional HE, and in 2013 we opened up recruitment beyond our original Regent sixth-former audience. Whilst the HND remains a popular programme, RCL recognised the value of diversifying its course portfolio, forming partnerships with a number of well-respected universities and is proud to count Buckinghamshire New University, University of Northampton, University of Bolton and Bishop Grosseteste University as its partner institutions.

Like many alternative providers we reach out to sections of society previously disengaged from HE and have a long-standing commitment to equality of opportunity by widening access to, and participation in, higher education. Despite our UKVI status as a Tier-4 sponsor our recruitment focuses on our local area of Brent and northwest London. Brent is one of the most diverse boroughs in the capital: 56% of residents were born outside the UK; only 18% identify as White British. Brent is also one of most deprived boroughs in the capital across a range of indicators: it has the second lowest average weekly wage (out of thirty-two boroughs); 33% of the working population earn below the London Living Wage; in Black African and Pakistani/Bangladeshi communities the figure is over forty per cent; only 38% of Brent's working population are in SOC1–3 roles (senior professional and managerial) (cf. 55% across London and 46% nationally); conversely 43% are in SOC6–9 roles (service, manual, low skilled) (cf. 27% in London and 34% nationally).

Sixty-seven per cent of our students come from the local area. Largely non-traditional learners, they have typically been out of education for many years and have dependants or caring commitments. Eighty-five per cent of our entrants are non-UK nationals, mostly from recent EU succession states. Many have been in the UK for some years, having initially come to work, and maintain part-time (self-)employment alongside their studies. The overwhelming majority of our students continue to live at home while studying and upon graduating. Our students were profiled in the contextual data¹ compiled in 2018 for the purposes of the TEF Year 4 exercise; 96% are mature and 62% are over thirty on entry; by ethnicity 41% are black, Asian or 'other'; 98% have no known disability; 84% have only non-tariff qualifications; 6% are from areas in POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2; 62% are from neighbourhoods in IMD quintiles 1 and 2. The OfS's access & participation dataset² gives a flavour of the extent to which our student body contrasts with the national sector, as illustrated in Table 1:

| | <i>Mature</i> | <i>Disabled</i> | <i>IMD Q1/2</i> | <i>White</i> |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <i>RCL</i> | 95% | 2% | 60% | 37% |
| <i>English HE sector</i> | 27% | 13% | 40% | 71% |

Table 1: RCL and English HE entrants (all UG; full-time or apprenticeship; average of Years 1–5). (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-data/tef-year-four-workbooks/>

² <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/guide-to-the-access-and-participation-data-resources/get-the-underlying-data/>

Seen within the national context, the majority of our students are in one or more underrepresented group.

The assessment of performance below draws on and contextualises data and evidence relating to our established HND cohorts. However, in line with our strategic vision and our ambition to secure degree-awarding powers and university title, we are diversifying our portfolio of programmes and growing our student numbers. This started in 2018 with franchised provision leading to awards at level 6 (top-up and full degrees). This was then followed by the introduction of a four year programme – a foundation year followed by the three year degree. In developing collaborative provision, we have selected partners — initially Buckinghamshire New University and the University of Northampton, later the University of Bolton and Bishop Grosseteste University — on the basis of the alignment of their mission and values with our commitment to broadening access and widening participation. We also developed a two year foundation degree programme validated by University of Bolton for delivery in 2020/21. The student-number data included in our Access & Participation Plan fee information table extend beyond the figures to 2021/22 recently submitted to the OfS and assume progressive portfolio diversification and steady growth in our intakes throughout the planning horizon to 2024/25. During the 2019/20 academic year it was agreed with University of Bolton and Buckinghamshire New University, that, in line with our ambitions to obtain degree awarding powers, from academic year 2020-21, students taught on those programmes could be recorded on the 'books' of RCL which means they would be returned on the RLC HESA Student Record (AP) and students would apply on the RCL Student Loans Company portal. Thus, while our assessment of performance — by virtue of the retrospective nature of the data and evidence on which it is based — relates to the profile and outcomes of the students RCL has taught so far, the strategic aims, objectives and targets for improvement over a five-year period set out in later sections, as well as the strategic measures and investment to deliver them, progressively extend beyond the current portfolio to include new programmes and the students registered on them.

We recruit with integrity, transparency and professionalism, looking for potential not only on the basis of formal qualifications, but also — in the spirit of contextual admissions — broader experience, skills and prior accredited learning. We have established a strong and cohesive system of student engagement and support and encourage all our students, whatever their background, to focus on realising their full potential. In addition, our internal governance framework allows us to scrutinise the outcomes of different sub-cohorts within our student body. Our performance indicators and recent TEF award suggest that we have been highly successful in this across much of the student lifecycle. Nevertheless, we welcome the opportunity, within a systematic and evidence-based framework such as this, to scrutinise our past and current performance more closely and to establish a focus for future strategic intervention to build on established practice in support of the OfS's priority to deliver fair access, success and progression. We aim to deliver equality of opportunity for all to participate in HE and an inclusive education that meets our students' diverse aims, prepares them for life outside the classroom, and empowers them to realise their career aspirations.

1. Assessment of performance

This assessment of performance draws on data and evidence across the lifecycle of our full-time HND students. Unfortunately, the data contained within our access & participation dataset, on which much of this assessment is based, is not as rich as many providers'. This is because we have small cohorts of students and a limited history of engagement with, for example, HESA data returns and the DLHE survey. In respect of access, continuation and progression, these issues have implications in two areas. The first involves statistical issues such as the breadth of confidence ranges, the reportability of datapoints, and the significance of the gaps between outcomes for specific groups and their peers. So, for example, a number of datapoints are suppressed for data-protection reasons (represented as N in a number of the tables below), while none of the differences between the profile or outcomes of underrepresented groups and their peers achieves statistical significance. The second relates to the historical depth of our data record: we have four years of data for access, three for continuation, and just two for attainment

and progression. A different issue impacts attainment: the OfS's access & participation datasets look at classified degrees at level 6+, yet our students take HNDs at level 5.

Given these issues, where possible this assessment of performance conflates populations to produce reportable datapoints³ and draws on as wide a range as possible of alternative sources of quantitative data and qualitative evidence. For example, HND qualifiers are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction instead of a classified degree; in order to engage with the OfS's ambition to reduce/eliminate inequalities of opportunity as reflected in attainment (e.g. Key Performance Measures [KPM] 4 and 5), it is in the context of HND award categories that we have used data from our internal student information system to consider attainment among underrepresented groups and their peers and analysed gaps.⁴

Our capacity and capability to analyse internal and external quantitative data and qualitative evidence have developed over the last three to five years in line with our evolution as a provider, and we have at all times been compliant with the data-reporting requirements of the regulatory body. This will continue to be the case as we engage more deeply with the access & participation agenda and determine our strategic approach to improving student outcomes in general and to reducing gaps in outcomes between underrepresented groups and their peers. We have established (summer 2019) a new senior College-wide role of Academic Registrar to lead our approach to student-related data management and we shall be providing additional resource for data analysis, research and evaluation. Also, as we work in collaboration with our franchise partners, we shall be extending the range of data we collect.

The Academic Registrar is working to assess and analyse the current data reporting capabilities and capacity within the College building on high-level analysis undertaken by a consultant. This assessment will look at systems, knowledge, resource and governance.

This work is scheduled to take place within Term 1 of 2019/20 with a view of a recommendation report and roll out plan to be delivered in Term 2 enabling full delivery by the end of academic year 2019/20. It is anticipated that this improved reporting and analytical delivery model will include the full range of data commitment for all under-represented students at all stages in the student lifecycle and we expect to realise the benefits over the life of this Access & Participation Plan. However, due to small numbers within some of these groups statistical limitations will remain an issue. We will be adopting the OfS Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit to enable us to frame the data required for coherent reporting on access & participation outcomes.

1.1. HE participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

The POLAR4 classification is used in the OfS's access & participation dataset to shine a light on equality of opportunity for learners from low-participation neighbourhoods across all stages of the student lifecycle. The value of POLAR4 in assessing the delivery of equality is currently subject to significant debate and challenge within the sector, and for us its use is problematic for two specific reasons. The first is shared with all London-based providers: postcode clusters in and around the capital are much more socially and economically diverse than elsewhere, and POLAR4 is of limited value as a proxy for disadvantage. The second issue is that POLAR4 looks at 18–21-year-olds. Unlike English HE as a whole, where three in four entrants are young, just one in twenty of our

³ With data drawn from our access & participation dataset this means using composite indicators relating to conflated groups (e.g., by ethnicity or by POLAR4/IMD quintile) predefined by the OfS. These composite indicators are restricted to a specific year. The OfS access & participation dataset does not allow datapoint suppression to be avoided by conflating across multiple years, unlike the TEF's core and split metrics.

⁴ A further source of quantitative data is provided by our TEF Year 4 metrics. Here, our (three-year weighted average) indicators for continuation and progression are compared with benchmarks based on the profile of our student body. The difference between each indicator and benchmark is tested for statistical significance, with significant differences either way being flagged at one of two levels, + and ++ for increasingly positive (above-benchmark) performance, – and – – for increasingly negative (below-benchmark) performance. While the core TEF metrics look at our student body as a whole, the split metrics disaggregate our student body on the basis of features relevant to access & participation, i.e., composite IMD and POLAR4 quintile, ethnicity, age and disability, as well as sex.

entrants is young (Table 1). Consequently, our access & participation dataset does not contain POLAR4 data for our entrants in all years or across all quintiles; what data there are show significant fluctuation over time. In the TEF Year 4 exercise (see footnote 4), even with up to three years of data conflated, and POLAR4 Q1/2 and Q3–5 combined, there were still too few students to support metrics for the Q1/2 group or for student progression; where cohorts were large enough (student satisfaction and continuation for POLAR4 Q3–5), our indicators were all above benchmark albeit — unsurprisingly given cohort size — not statistically significantly so. POLAR4 is not therefore helpful in assessing our delivery of equality of opportunity across the student lifecycle for disadvantaged groups, and will therefore generally be ignored. This is relevant to the OfS's KPM1–3, which aim to reduce/eliminate the gap in access and continuation between the most and least represented groups by POLAR4 Q5 and Q1; different approaches will be adopted instead.

Access. Looking at access through the prism of IMD quintile, 60% of our entrants are from IMD Q1/2, 82% from IMD Q1–3 (cf. sector rates of 52% and 70% respectively), as shown in Table 2:

| | <i>English population (age 18)</i> | <i>English entrants (age 18)</i> | <i>All English entrants</i> | <i>RCL entrants</i> | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | | | <i>Average</i> | <i>Year 2</i> | <i>Year 3</i> | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> |
| <i>Quintile 1</i> | 22% | 22% | 28% | 26% | 26% | 28% | 29% | 19% |
| <i>Quintile 2</i> | 20% | 20% | 24% | 34% | 38% | 34% | 34% | 31% |
| <i>Quintile 3</i> | 19% | 20% | 18% | 22% | 20% | 22% | 20% | 24% |
| <i>Quintile 4</i> | 19% | 20% | 16% | 14% | 11% | 12% | 14% | 20% |
| <i>Quintile 5</i> | 20% | 19% | 13% | 4% | 5% | 4% | 3% | 5% |

Table 2: English 18-year-old population, English 18-year-old HE entrants, all English HE entrants and RCL entrants by English IMD quintile (full-time or apprenticeship; other undergraduate; average of Years 1–5; rounding means that figures may not total 100%). (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

The OfS access & participation dataset indicates where the distribution of young HE entrants (nationally and at provider level) across IMD quintiles differs to a statistically significant degree from that of the young adult population at large. We do not recruit enough young entrants for this statistical test to be applied. However, Q5 is underrepresented among young entrants in all five years nationally, significantly so in four; Q4 and Q3 are overrepresented in all five years, significantly so in two (Q4) or four (Q3); Q1 and Q2 are underrepresented in most (but not all) years, in some cases significantly so. **In this context the concentration of our entrants in IMD Q1–3 indicates that we are reaching out to socially deprived populations more successfully than the rest of the sector.**

Continuation. Our TEF Year 4 core metrics show that (alongside student satisfaction) continuation is one of our areas of strength: we have a double positive flag for this metric, indicating performance at the highest level of significance above benchmark (see footnote 4). An October 2017 report⁵ published by the National Audit Office recognised us as being one of only ten alternative providers to achieve this. Split by composite POLAR4 quintile, our indicator and benchmark for Q1/2 are suppressed for data-protection reasons, while our indicator for Q3–5 is markedly above benchmark (albeit not achieving statistical significance, due to cohort size), as shown in Table 3:

| | <i>Indicator</i> | <i>Benchmark</i> | <i>Difference</i> | <i>Flag</i> |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| <i>Continuation</i> | 90.4% | 86.7% | +8.8 | + + |
| — <i>POLAR4 Q1/2</i> | N | N | N | N |
| — <i>POLAR4 Q3–5</i> | 76.2% | 69.4% | +6.8 | No flag |

Table 3: RCL TEF Year 4 metric for continuation, with split by composite POLAR4 quintile. N = datapoint suppressed. (See footnote 4.) (Source: OfS)

⁵ <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Follow-up-on-alternative-higher-education-providers.pdf>

Looking at continuation from the perspective of IMD quintile, **our data reveal (a) the same prima facie correlation between IMD quintile and continuation as found nationally and (b) that our continuation exceeds the national rates across all IMD quintiles**, as shown in Table 4:

| | <i>English sector (Average of Years 1 to 5)</i> | <i>RCL</i> | | | |
|----------------------|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | <i>Average</i> | <i>Year 3</i> | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> |
| <i>Quintiles 1/2</i> | 79% | 83% | 85% | 76% | 89% |
| — <i>Quintile 1</i> | 79% | 82% | 80% | 78% | 89% |
| — <i>Quintile 2</i> | 80% | 84% | 90% | 74% | 88% |
| <i>Quintiles 3–5</i> | 84% | 87% | 85% | 83% | 94% |
| — <i>Quintile 3</i> | 82% | 88% | N | 82% | 94% |
| — <i>Quintile 4</i> | 84% | 89% | N | 84% | 94% |
| — <i>Quintile 5</i> | 85% | 91% | N | N | N |

Table 4: Continuation by (composite) IMD quintile (full-time or apprenticeship; other undergraduate). N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

Attainment. As explained above, our assessment of performance with respect to attainment is based, not on the proportion of *qualifiers* securing a *first or 2:1*, but rather the proportion of *entrants* achieving an HND award at *Pass, Merit or Distinction* level.⁶ By POLAR4 quintile we have attainment data for just one year (Year 5), covering a total of twenty-eight students across Q3–5. A more meaningful picture is painted by looking at attainment by (composite) IMD quintile, for which we have data for Year 4 (n=169) and Year 5 (n=611), as shown in Table 5:

| | <i>Pass, Merit or Distinction</i> | | <i>Merit or Distinction</i> | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> |
| <i>Quintiles 1/2</i> | 44% | 49% | 10% | 5% |
| — <i>Quintile 1</i> | 28% | 48% | 5% | 4% |
| — <i>Quintile 2</i> | 54% | 49% | 14% | 6% |
| <i>Quintiles 3–5</i> | 61% | 58% | 11% | 8% |
| — <i>Quintile 3</i> | 62% | 56% | 12% | 8% |
| — <i>Quintile 4</i> | 61% | 59% | 11% | 8% |
| — <i>Quintile 5</i> | N | 68% | N | 9% |

Table 5: Attainment of RCL HND entrants at (a) pass, merit or distinction level, and (b) merit or distinction level, by year and by (composite) IMD quintile. N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: RCL student information system)

Our attainment rates were generally lower in Year 5 than Year 4; however, we have significantly increased the rate at which our completers from IMD Q1 achieve an HND award, and therefore reduced the gap between this group and their peers.

Progression. Our TEF Year 4 core metrics (see Table 7 below) indicate that, against benchmark, progression to positive graduate outcomes is an area of weakness, especially highly skilled employment or further study. In our TEF Year 4 provider submission we detailed the action we are taking to address this, for example, the launch of top-up degrees delivered locally under franchise. Our absolute rates of progression to highly skilled employment or to higher-level study, based on two years' participation in the DLHE survey and split by (composite) IMD quintile, are shown in Table 6:

⁶ We use *entrants* (rather than *qualifiers*) as the denominator as this provides a reliably consistent basis for year-on-year comparison. However, since we necessarily have more entrants than qualifiers, our attainment is lower than other providers' and the broader sector's. Tables containing our attainment data do not therefore compare us with the national sector (unlike the tables for access, continuation and progression).

| | <i>English sector (Average of Years 1 to 5)</i> | <i>RCL</i> | | |
|----------------------|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | <i>Average</i> | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> |
| <i>Quintiles 1/2</i> | 70% | 34% | 28% | 40% |
| — <i>Quintile 1</i> | 70% | 25% | 25% | N |
| — <i>Quintile 2</i> | 71% | 35% | 30% | 40% |
| <i>Quintiles 3–5</i> | 73% | 28% | 20% | 35% |
| — <i>Quintile 3</i> | 72% | 23% | 15% | 30% |
| — <i>Quintile 4</i> | 73% | N | N | N |
| — <i>Quintile 5</i> | 73% | N | N | N |

Table 6: Progression to highly skilled employment or to higher-level study split by (composite) IMD quintile (full-time or apprenticeship; other undergraduate). N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

The data show that **unlike what is found nationally, our progression is higher amongst IMD Q1/2 than IMD Q3–5 qualifiers**. The same is found when our TEF Year 4 metric for progression to ‘Employment or further study’ is split by composite IMD quintile: progression is stronger among our Q1/2 qualifiers than among our Q3–5 qualifiers, not only in terms of the indicator, but also in the distance from benchmark and the statistical significance of the difference (see footnote 4), as shown in Table 7:

| | <i>Indicator</i> | <i>Benchmark</i> | <i>Difference</i> | <i>Flag</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| <i>Employment or further study</i> | 89.3% | 94.4% | –5.1 | – |
| — <i>Quintiles ½</i> | 92.6% | 94.2% | –1.6 | No flag |
| — <i>Quintiles 3–5</i> | 84.9% | 93.8% | –8.8 | – – |

Table 7: RCL TEF Year 4 core metrics for student outcomes, with the metric for ‘Employment or further study’ split by composite IMD quintile. (See footnote 4.) (Source: OfS)

1.2. Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access. Our access & participation dataset indicates extreme fluctuation over time in the ethnic composition of our entrant population, as shown in Table 8:

| | <i>English sector (Average Years 1 to 5)</i> | <i>RCL</i> | | | | |
|----------------|--|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | <i>Average</i> | <i>Year 2</i> | <i>Year 3</i> | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> |
| <i>White</i> | 71% | 37% | 46% | 56% | 46% | 1% |
| <i>ABMO</i> | 29% | 63% | 54% | 44% | 54% | 99% |
| — <i>Asian</i> | 11% | 15% | 7% | 21% | 21% | 9% |
| — <i>Black</i> | 12% | 20% | 45% | 21% | 10% | 4% |
| — <i>Mixed</i> | 3% | N | N | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| — <i>Other</i> | 2% | N | N | 1% | 22% | 84% |

Table 8: Entrants by ethnicity and by year (full-time or apprenticeship; other undergraduate). N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

The sharp fall in Year 5 in the proportion of students registered as white and the sharp increase in the proportion registered as ‘other’ suggest inconsistency in the (self-)classification of our entrants. This is an issue which will be addressed by our new Academic Registrar. While the data suggest that we recruit significantly larger proportions of ABMO entrants than the sector nationally, there are **concerns about the validity of any assessment, based on this dataset, of our delivery of equality of opportunity to BME entrants/qualifiers across the student lifecycle**.

Continuation. Our TEF Year 4 core metrics show that continuation is one of our strengths. Our continuation split by ethnicity is shown in Table 9:

| | <i>English sector (Average Years 1 to 5)</i> | <i>RCL</i> | | | |
|----------------|--|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | <i>Average</i> | <i>Year 3</i> | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> |
| <i>White</i> | 83% | 88% | 90% | 80% | 93% |
| <i>ABMO</i> | 78% | 83% | 82% | 77% | 89% |
| — <i>Asian</i> | 80% | 86% | N | 78% | 93% |
| — <i>Black</i> | 77% | 77% | 80% | 76% | 76% |
| — <i>Mixed</i> | 77% | N | N | N | N |
| — <i>Other</i> | 79% | 94% | N | N | 94% |

Table 9: Continuation by ethnicity and by year. N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

Note that the RCL entrants in Years 3 to 5 in Table 9 are the same as those in Years 2 to 4 in Table 8; given the comments above these data need to be approached with caution.

These data show a prima facie continuation gap for black students. However, we do not believe this warrants inclusion, at this stage, in our strategic aims/objectives/targets in section 2. First, the gap is not statistically significant. Second, this is not an OfS KPM (see p. 3). Third, unlike what recent national analysis shows,⁷ our continuation gap for black (and Asian) students compared with white students has not increased. Fourth, when our TEF Year 4 core metric for continuation is split by ethnicity, its double positive flag is replicated for both white and BME entrants, suggesting no marked gap in continuation, while when the BME group is further disaggregated, we have a double positive flag for continuation among Asian entrants, as well as a single positive flag for continuation among black and ‘other’ entrants (see footnote 4), as shown in Table 10:

| | <i>Indicator</i> | <i>Benchmark</i> | <i>Difference</i> | <i>Flag</i> |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| <i>Continuation</i> | 90.4% | 86.7% | +8.8 | ++ |
| — <i>White</i> | 93.0% | 85.4% | +7.6 | ++ |
| — <i>BME</i> | N | N | +8.2 | ++ |
| — — <i>Black</i> | 84.2% | 77.9% | +6.3 | + |
| — — <i>Asian</i> | N | N | +10.6 | ++ |
| — — <i>Other</i> | N | N | +13.1 | + |

Table 10: RCL TEF Year 4 core metric for continuation, with split and further disaggregation by ethnicity. N = datapoint suppressed. (See footnote 4.) (Source: OfS)

Attainment. Our assessment of performance with respect to attainment is based on the proportion of entrants achieving an HND award at different levels. Our attainment split by ethnicity is shown in Table 11:

| | <i>Pass, Merit or Distinction</i> | | <i>Merit or Distinction</i> | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> |
| <i>White</i> | 69% | 59% | 15% | 6% |
| <i>ABMO</i> | 33% | 43% | 7% | 7% |
| — <i>Black</i> | 33% | 32% | 8% | 10% |
| — <i>Asian</i> | 33% | 58% | 0% | 5% |
| — <i>Mixed</i> | N | N | N | N |
| — <i>Other</i> | N | N | N | N |

Table 11: Attainment of RCL HND entrants at (a) pass, merit or distinction level, and (b) merit or distinction level, by year and by ethnicity. N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: RCL student information system)

Looking at the OfS’s KPM4 (reducing/eliminating the attainment gap between white and black students) through the lens of our HND outcomes, these (two years of) data show that **white completers are achieving an HND award at a markedly higher rate than ABMO completers, although the gap is reducing.**

⁷ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/continuation-and-transfer-rates/>

Progression. Because of small cohort sizes, the disaggregated rate of progression of our qualifiers to highly skilled employment or to higher-level study is suppressed for all (composite) ethnic groups apart from white. We know from our TEF Year 4 core metrics that progression is an area of weakness. However, when our TEF Year 4 metric for ‘Employment or further study’ is split by (composite) ethnicity, it shows that **our below-benchmark performance is concentrated among our white rather than our BME qualifiers; also, when the BME group is disaggregated further, our metric for black qualifiers actually has a positive flag (the indicator is therefore significantly above benchmark)** (see footnote 4), as shown in Table 12:

| | <i>Indicator</i> | <i>Benchmark</i> | <i>Difference</i> | <i>Flag</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| <i>Employment or further study</i> | 89.3% | 94.4% | –5.1 | – |
| — <i>White</i> | 87.6% | 95.8% | –8.2 | – – |
| — <i>BME</i> | N | N | +4 | No flag |
| — — <i>Black</i> | 100% | 91.4% | 8.6 | + |
| — — <i>Asian</i> | N | N | –10.7 | No flag |
| — — <i>Other</i> | N | N | N | N |

Table 12: TEF Year 4 metric for progression of RCL qualifiers to employment or further study, with split and further disaggregation by (composite) ethnicity. N = datapoint suppressed. (See footnote 4.) (Source: OfS)

1.3. Mature students

Access. Ninety-five per cent of our entrants are mature (cf. the English sector rate of 57%⁸), and the mean age of our entrants is thirty-four years old. The largest age group in our intake is consistently 31–40 years old, followed by 26–30 and 41–50 years old, as shown in Table 13:

| | <i>English sector (Average of Years 1 to 5)</i> | <i>RCL</i> | | | | |
|----------------|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | <i>Average</i> | <i>Year 2</i> | <i>Year 3</i> | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> |
| <i>Young</i> | 43% | 5% | 10% | 5% | 3% | 4% |
| <i>Mature</i> | 57% | 95% | 90% | 95% | 97% | 96% |
| — <i>21–25</i> | 19% | 14% | 11% | 14% | 13% | 16% |
| — <i>26–30</i> | 11% | 24% | 24% | 19% | 22% | 29% |
| — <i>31–40</i> | 15% | 34% | 31% | 33% | 36% | 34% |
| — <i>41–50</i> | 9% | 18% | 17% | 21% | 20% | 14% |
| — <i>51+</i> | 3% | 6% | 7% | 9% | 6% | 3% |

Table 13: Age of entrants (full-time or apprenticeship; other undergraduate). (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

Even controlling for the ‘other UG’ nature of our HND programmes, therefore, we attract into HE higher proportions of students from all age groups from 26 years old upwards than the sector as a whole.

Continuation. As is true nationally, our continuation is higher among mature students. As already noted, our TEF Year 4 core metrics show that continuation is one of our strengths. Split by age, our indicators for continuation of young and mature entrants are both above benchmark, at the highest level of statistical significance in the case of mature entrants (see footnote 4), as shown in Table 14:

| | <i>Indicator</i> | <i>Benchmark</i> | <i>Difference</i> | <i>Flag</i> |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| <i>Continuation</i> | 90.4% | 86.7% | +8.8 | + + |
| — <i>Young</i> | 76.2% | 70.0% | +6.2 | No flag |
| — <i>Mature</i> | 91.2% | 82.3% | +8.9 | ++ |

Table 14: RCL TEF Year 4 metric for continuation, with split by age. (See footnote 4.) (Source: OfS)

⁸ The figure of 27% in Table 1 relates to all UG. The figure of 57% in Table 13 relates to other UG, which is a more relevant comparison for our HND provision.

Our HESA UK performance indicators (alternative provider experimental data) consistently show higher continuation among mature entrants than young entrants, and performances above benchmark almost across the board, as shown in Table 15:

| | Young (indicator) | Young (benchmark) | Difference | Mature (indicator) | Mature (benchmark) | Difference |
|---------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 2014/15 | N | N | N | 85.6% | 71.3% | +14.3 |
| 2015/16 | 76% | 68.4% | +7.6 | 79.3% | 80.3% | -1.0 |
| 2016/17 | 73.9% | 73.5% | +0.4 | 91.8% | 85.4% | +6.4 |

Table 15: RCL continuation indicators and benchmarks, by year of entry and by age (other UG). N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: HESA UK performance indicators (alternative provider experimental data⁹))

Our access & participation dataset shows average continuation of 75% among our young entrants and 86% among our mature entrants. **We outperform the sector in all age groups apart from young entrants (<21 years old), and while the time depth is limited, our continuation rates have risen across all age groups**, as shown in Table 16:

| | English sector (Average Years 1 to 5) | RCL | | | |
|---------|--|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | Average | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| Young | 81% | 75% | N | 75% | N |
| Mature | 82% | 86% | 88% | 79% | 91% |
| — 21–25 | 79% | 79% | N | 69% | 88% |
| — 26–30 | 82% | 83% | 80% | 82% | 88% |
| — 31–40 | 84% | 87% | N | 81% | 93% |
| — 41–50 | 84% | 87% | N | 79% | 94% |
| — 51+ | 81% | 80% | N | 70% | 90% |

Table 16: Continuation by age (full-time or apprenticeship; other undergraduate). N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

Attainment. The attainment, split by age, of our entrants is shown in Table 17:

| | Pass, Merit or Distinction | | Merit or Distinction | |
|---------|----------------------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| | Year 4 | Year 5 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| Young | 13% | 46% | 0% | 14% |
| Mature | 54% | 52% | 12% | 6% |
| — 21–25 | 16% | 46% | 0% | 3% |
| — 26–30 | 50% | 55% | 13% | 11% |
| — 31–40 | 62% | 51% | 13% | 6% |
| — 41–50 | 66% | 56% | 14% | 4% |
| — 51+ | 58% | 58% | 17% | 4% |

Table 17: Attainment of RCL HND entrants at (a) pass, merit or distinction level, and (b) merit or distinction level, by year and by age. (Source: RCL student information system)

The data show a significant year-on-year increase in attainment for the two youngest age groups of completers (<21 and 21–25), alongside a reduction in attainment for older age groups; the gap in performance between populations at either end of the age spectrum has therefore reduced markedly.

Progression. Our access & participation dataset contains limited datapoints in respect of progression to highly skilled employment or to higher-level study of qualifiers by age. The datapoints have been suppressed for all but our two largest age groups, as shown in Table 18:

⁹ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/07-03-2019/experimental-uk-performance-indicators>

| | <i>English sector</i> | <i>RCL</i> |
|---------------|-----------------------|------------|
| <i>Young</i> | 68% | N |
| <i>Mature</i> | 76% | 31% |
| — 21–25 | 74% | N |
| — 26–30 | 78% | 20% |
| — 31–40 | 77% | 31% |
| — 41–50 | 75% | N |
| — 51+ | 73% | N |

Table 18: Progression to highly skilled employment or to higher-level study, split by age (full-time or apprenticeship; other undergraduate; average of Years 1–5). N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

1.4. Disabled students

On average ninety-eight per cent of our entrants have no known disability (cf. the sector rate of 86%). Since our entrant cohort is small there is significant fluctuation over time in the proportion with a known disability. Continuation among our entrants with no known disability is 86% (cf. the sector rate of 82%); for entrants with a known disability the datapoint is suppressed. Fifty-two per cent of our entrants with no known disability secure an HND award at Pass, Merit or Distinction level (cf. 22% of entrants with a disability). Progression of our qualifiers with no known disability to highly skilled employment or higher-level study is 32% (cf. the sector rate of 72%); for qualifiers with a known disability the datapoint is suppressed. This is summarised in Table 19:

| | <i>RCL</i> | | <i>English sector</i> | |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| | <i>Known disability</i> | <i>No known disability</i> | <i>Known disability</i> | <i>No known disability</i> |
| <i>Access</i> | 2% | 98% | 14% | 86% |
| <i>Continuation</i> | N | 86% | 81% | 82% |
| <i>Attainment</i> | | | | |
| — <i>HND Pass, Merit or Distinction</i> | 22% | 52% | | |
| — <i>HND Merit or Distinction</i> | N | 17% | | |
| <i>Progression</i> | N | 32% | 69% | 72% |

Table 19: Breakdown of: (a) entrants by disability; (b) continuation by disability; (c) attainment (RCL only) by disability; (d) progression (to highly skilled employment or higher-level study) by disability (full-time or apprenticeship; other undergraduate; average of Years 1–5). N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: OfS access & participation dataset; RCL student information system)

While the data picture is incomplete, where comparative figures are available, they show an access gap and an attainment gap for disabled students. The latter gap relates to the OfS's KPM5 (reducing the attainment gap between disabled and non-disabled students).

Since our entrant cohort is small, datapoints in respect of different *types* of disability are suppressed, and we are unable to disaggregate disabled student data in any year. Further, as noted in footnote 3, the format of the OfS access & participation dataset prevents us from conflating populations across multiple years in order to mitigate the impact of datapoint suppression in single years. In section 2 we identify Access for disabled students as a strategic aim and set ourselves the objective of increasing the proportion of our entrants with a known disability, more specifically achieving the target of 9% of entrants with a known disability by 2024/25. As we progressively achieve this target, as well as grow student numbers overall, the number of our students with a disability will increase. This means that fewer datapoints will be suppressed and more robust data/statistics relating to students with (different types of) disability across the student lifecycle will be available. We shall identify and act on any significant gaps with respect to these groups as soon as the disaggregated data allow. Further, and independently of formal data returns we shall, on an ongoing basis, review the academic progress of students with a known disability.

Academic progress is continually monitored for all students in a number of ways, and this will be enhanced when we incorporate the disaggregated data.

This monitoring includes analysis of the Recruitment, Achievement, Continuation and Progression data at fortnightly Senior Management Team meetings and, regular Assessment Boards (at least 12 per year in the HND system) which consider individual student data in terms of progression by unit and level and overall achievement.

The College have committed to the introduction of an Access and Participation Committee in 2019/20, Terms of Reference are to be signed off by Academic Board and SMT at the commencement of the 2019/20 academic year.

This Committee will meet monthly and oversee all aspects of the access, success and progression lifecycle of underrepresented groups at the College. The committee will play an active role in monitoring progress towards APP targets and any other widening participation targets and objectives. An output of this committee will be to provide a summary of issues, progress and recommendations for Academic Board. It will provide strategic direction to the College, focusing the energies and expertise of colleagues across the College to address the issues faced by different groups of widening participation students. The Committee will also seek to identify and consider student issues which may not be highlighted in other forums.

The Equality & Diversity Monitoring Group will also meet at least three times per year to consider issues which do, or may, impact on students with a disability. The Group will not consider individual students as there will be student representation. However, issues raised by staff and student representatives will be followed up by staff members of the Group and fed back into the relevant committees, teams and operational groups.

Finally, issues, concerns and progress of students with a disability will be raised at Academic Board, held at least three times per year. Again this will be done in a way which does not allow individual students to be identified but which will reflect on the ethos of the College to ensure equality of opportunity across the student body.

1.5. Care leavers

The status of entrants to HE and qualifiers from HE as care leavers (or not) is not included in the OfS access & participation dataset, and we do not currently record this information either. As noted above, we anticipate being in a position to collect and begin to analyse the full range of data relevant to access & participation by the end of the 2019/20 academic year and expect to realise the benefits over the life of this Access & Participation Plan.

1.6. Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

Local/commuter students. There is a further group that we have identified in the context of the access & participation agenda of improving equality of opportunity across the student lifecycle. The profile of our student body — the proportion who are mature, come from ethnic minorities, have part-time (self-)employment, have caring responsibilities, and/or live locally — resembles the local commuter students who were identified in a recent HEPI report¹⁰ and the focus of a thematic discussion at a recent OfS insight event.¹¹ Unlike traditional residential students, local commuter students are more likely to be first in family to engage with HE, have lower incomes, be mature and from ethnic minorities; they also have to deal with the higher cost, time and unpredictability of commuting. The academic ambitions and aspirations of local commuter students are just as high as residential students, but with less access to an integrated and immersive academic, social and cultural experience in their HE setting, they have less opportunity to build networks, expand their social capital and secure excellent employment; consequently, they have poorer HE outcomes, and are less engaged or satisfied. Across UK HE between one in four and one in five students is a local commuter student (cf. the early 1980s when just one in twelve students was a commuter); they are not evenly spread across the sector. The equivalent figure in respect of our active

¹⁰ Maguire, D. & Morris, D. (2018). *Homeward bound: defining, understanding and aiding 'commuter students'*. (HEPI Report 114). Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute.

¹¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/events/insight-event-fairer-access-and-participation/>

students when we made our TEF Year 4 provider submission was estimated at approximately nine in ten (11% of our active students lived at an address with a different postcode to when they applied); the profile of our entrants over recent years shows that 17% fall into this category, as shown in Table 20:

| | Year 2 (n=169) | Year 3 (n=611) | Year 4 (n=633) | Year 5 (n=628) |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>Same address</i> | 83% | 82% | 83% | 83% |
| <i>Different address</i> | 17% | 18% | 17% | 17% |

Table 20: RCL entrants by current address status. (Source: RCL student information system)

Our TEF Year 4 metrics show that we have very successfully mitigated much of the impact that our students' local commuter status can have on engagement and satisfaction. However, more detailed assessment of our performance across the student lifecycle point to gaps in performance between these students and their peers, as shown in Tables 21 to 23:

| | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| <i>Same address</i> | 75% | 69% | 90% |
| <i>Different address</i> | 100% | 84% | 95% |

Table 21: Continuation of RCL entrants by address status. (Source: RCL student information system)

| | <i>Pass, Merit or Distinction</i> | | <i>Merit or Distinction</i> | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|--------|
| | Year 4 | Year 5 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| <i>Same address</i> | 47% | 47% | 11% | 6% |
| <i>Different address</i> | 64% | 76% | 11% | 8% |

Table 22: Attainment of RCL entrants by address status. (Source: RCL student information system)

| | Year 4 | Year 5 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|
| <i>Same address</i> | 94% | 84% |
| <i>Different address</i> | 100% | 76% |

Table 23: Progression of RCL qualifiers to employment or further study, by address status. (Source: RCL student information system)

Our local commuter students (labelled here 'same address') have lower continuation than their peers, but the gap is reducing; they have lower attainment, and although the gap is widening at the lower threshold of pass or above, it is narrowing at the higher level of merit or above; for progression to employment or further study the picture is more complex, having flipped in polarity between the two years for which we have data.

As is the case with care leavers, the OfS access & participation dataset does not provide data in respect of the status of our entrants/qualifiers as carers, people estranged from their families, people from Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities, refugees, or children from military families, and we do not capture this information either.

1.7. Intersections of disadvantage

Data showing how composite IMD quintile intersects with (composite) ethnicity and sex across the student lifecycle are given in Tables 24 to 27:

| | <i>Ethnicity</i> | | <i>Sex</i> | |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| | <i>White</i> | <i>ABMO</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> |
| <i>Q1/2</i> | 20% | 40% | 32% | 28% |
| <i>Q3-5</i> | 18% | 22% | 18% | 23% |

Table 24: RCL entrants by composite IMD quintile and by (composite) ethnicity and sex (average of Years 2–5). (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

| | <i>Ethnicity</i> | | <i>Sex</i> | |
|--|------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| | <i>White</i> | <i>ABMO</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> |

| | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Q1/2 | 83% | 83% | 80% | 87% |
| Q3–5 | 91% | 86% | 85% | 91% |

Table 25: RCL continuation by composite IMD quintile and by (composite) ethnicity and sex (average of Years 3–5). (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

| | <i>Pass, Merit or Distinction</i> | | | | <i>Merit or Distinction</i> | | | |
|------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| | <i>Ethnicity</i> | | <i>Sex</i> | | <i>Ethnicity</i> | | <i>Sex</i> | |
| | <i>White</i> | <i>ABMO</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>White</i> | <i>ABMO</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> |
| Q1/2 | 58% | 39% | 41% | 51% | 8% | 8% | 6% | 10% |
| Q3–5 | 71% | 36% | 49% | 67% | 13% | 3% | 4% | 14% |

Table 26: RCL attainment by composite IMD quintile and by (composite) ethnicity and sex (average of Years 4/5). (Source: RCL student information system)

| | <i>Ethnicity</i> | | <i>Sex</i> | |
|------|------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| | <i>White</i> | <i>ABMO</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> |
| Q1/2 | 28% | N | 35% | 28% |
| Q3–5 | 25% | N | N | 28% |

Table 27: RCL progression by composite IMD quintile and by (composite) ethnicity and sex (average of Years 4/5). N = datapoint suppressed. (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

The size of our student body means that, even at the highest level of comparison, none of the gaps between the profile/outcomes of different underrepresented intersectional groups and their peers reaches statistical significance.

There is one variable included in this intersectional analysis which is not covered elsewhere, namely sex. Tables 25 and 26 show evidence of an adverse success gap (continuation and attainment) for male entrants/qualifiers from IMD Q1/2. However, the age profile of our student body (95% mature) suggests this is not the same success gap as has been noted across the sector in respect of *young* working-class male students.

In contrast, Table 27 indicates an adverse progression gap for *female* qualifiers from IMD Q1/2. This gap is further evidenced by the data in Table 28, which (while not intersectional with composite IMD quintile) looks at Years 4 and 5 separately and shows that the significant improvement in progression among male qualifiers has not been replicated for female qualifiers, with the consequence that a sizeable gap has opened up:

| | <i>RCL</i> | | | | <i>English sector (Average Years 1 to 5)</i> |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--|
| | <i>Year 2</i> | <i>Year 3</i> | <i>Year 4</i> | <i>Year 5</i> | |
| <i>Progression</i> | | | | | |
| — <i>Male</i> | | | 25% | 55% | 70% |
| — <i>Female</i> | | | 27% | 28% | 72% |

Table 28: Breakdown of progression (to highly skilled employment or to higher-level study) of RCL/English qualifiers by sex (full-time or apprenticeship; other undergraduate). (Source: OfS access & participation dataset)

(Relatedly, we have previously identified a gender gap (in favour of male qualifiers) in respect of graduate earnings.) When our TEF Year 4 core metric for ‘Employment or further study’ is split for sex it shows that our below-benchmark performance is primarily among our female rather than our male qualifiers, as shown in Table 29:

| | <i>Indicator</i> | <i>Benchmark</i> | <i>Difference</i> | <i>Flag</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| <i>Employment or further study</i> | 89.3% | 94.4% | –5.1 | – |
| — <i>Male</i> | 91.3% | 93.7% | –2.4 | No flag |
| — <i>Female</i> | 88.1% | 94.8% | –6.7 | – – |

Table 29: RCL TEF Year 4 metric for ‘Employment or further study’, with split by sex. (See footnote 4.) (Source: OfS)

In sum, these datasets point to a growing adverse progression gap for female qualifiers from IMD Q1/2.

2. Strategic aims, objectives and targets

We have already established our commitment to equality of opportunity by widening access to, and participation in, HE (see Table 1). We can point to a track record of reaching out to previously disengaged sections of society. This goes back to the provision of alternative progression routes at level 4 and beyond to meet the diverse needs of learners ill served by traditional HE; more recently we have attracted non-traditional learners who have been out of education for many years and have dependants or caring commitments; and now we are working with collaborative partners whose mission and values align with our own commitment broadening access and widening participation.

The previous section assesses our historical performance in delivering equality of opportunity for different underrepresented groups on the basis of outcomes in access & participation across the student lifecycle. As noted above, while our access & participation dataset is the basis of much of our assessment of performance, its value has been constrained by small cohort sizes and a lack of historical depth: a number of datapoints are suppressed for data-protection reasons and none of the differences between the profile or performance of underrepresented groups and their peers achieves statistical significance.

This section identifies the key findings, however tentative, from that assessment and builds on them to identify appropriate aims and objectives for improvement, as well as set ambitious targets over the life of this Access & Participation Plan. Our aims identify which underrepresented and disadvantaged groups we shall focus on at which stages in the student lifecycle. Our objectives determine the specific performance indicators in respect of which we aspire to reduce gaps. Our targets quantify the scale of the reduction we plan to achieve, and the timescale over which we plan to achieve it. We then set out the strategic measures we shall take to achieve our ambitions and demonstrate continuous improvement in practice and outcomes for students.

2.1. Aims

Based on the above assessment of performance — as well as (a) data and evidence relating to national and provider-level performance, (b) our mission, values and vision and (c) the OfS's strategic priorities for improvement as articulated in its KPMs — our strategic aims in respect of improving equality of opportunity for underrepresented or disadvantaged¹² groups within HE are to address the following gaps:

- (a) The continuation gap by IMD quintile;
- (b) The attainment gap by ethnicity;
- (c) The access gap by disability;
- (d) The attainment gap by disability;
- (e) The intersectional progression gap by sex and IMD quintile.

2.2. Objectives

Our objectives are to reduce the gaps between the rates at which underrepresented groups and their peers contribute to our population of entrants or achieve educational outcomes as follows:

- (a) Eliminate the gap in continuation between our IMD Q1 and Q5 entrants¹³;

¹² Whilst we do not have a significant gender gap in our student population, we have identified a gender-based intersectional progression gap

¹³ Our small number of entrants from IMD Q5 has hitherto led to continuation for this group being suppressed within our access & participation dataset (see Table 4). As our programme portfolio diversifies and our student body grows, this is less likely to occur. However, should this datapoint continue to be suppressed, we shall instead aim to reduce our gap in continuation between IMD Q1 and Q4.

- (b) Eliminate the gap in attainment (Pass, Merit or Distinction) between our white and BME HND entrants¹⁴;
- (c) Increase the proportion of our entrants with a known disability;
- (d) Reduce the gap in attainment (Pass, Merit or Distinction) between our HND entrants with and without a known disability;
- (e) Eliminate the gap in progression between our male and female qualifiers from IMD Q1/2.

Our collaboration over access & participation with our franchise partners Buckinghamshire New University, University of Bolton, Bishop Grosseteste and the University of Northampton is facilitated by the significant overlap across the strategic aims and objectives which emerge from our respective assessments of performance. Our Plan was prepared in collaboration with our University Partners to ensure that our shared values manifested in either shared or mutually beneficial targets in terms of increasing access and participation from underrepresented groups.

We recruit from very different student groups but our objectives most closely overlap with BNU in:

- (b) Eliminate gap between White and BAME good honours (Ethnicity target)
 - (c) Students declaring a disability (Disabled target);
- https://apis.officeforstudents.org.uk/accessplansdownloads/1920/BuckinghamshireNewUniversity_APP_2019-2020_V1_10000975.pdf

and with UoN in:

- (a) To increase the retention in year 1 of English students from 0 - 20% quintile IMD (Socio-economic target)
 - (b) To close the gap in Good Degree attainment between BME and White students (Ethnicity target)
 - (d) To close the graduate employment gap between students with disclosed disabilities compared to the national average for disabled students (Disabled target)
- https://apis.officeforstudents.org.uk/accessplansdownloads/1920/TheUniversityofNorthampton_AP_P_2019-20_V1_10007138.pdf

We have also collaborated with our incoming partner, University of Bolton, in the development of this Plan. The Vice Chancellor is Chair of our independent Advisory Panel and the Board have maintained an overview of the Plan's preparation. Allowing for the differences in student populations, but with a similar focus on increasing widening access and reducing attainment gaps, our Plan aligns loosely with University of Bolton's Learning Excellence Achievement Pathway (LEAP) Action Plans, which have been designed to address the needs of mature, commuter, BAME and disabled learners.

https://www.bolton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/TheUniversityOfBolton_APP_2019-2020_V1_10006841.pdf

2.3. Targets

We have set ourselves the following targets which are stretching/ambitious, outcomes-based, consistently measurable and clearly defined:

- (a) Eliminate the gap in our rolling three-year average continuation between IMD Q1 and Q5 by 2024/25.
- (b) Eliminate the gap in attainment (Pass, Merit or Distinction) between our white and BME HND entrants by 2024/25.
- (c) Increase the proportion of our entrants with a known disability to 9% by 2024/25.
- (d) Halve the rolling five-year average gap in attainment (Pass, Merit or Distinction) between our HND entrants with and without a known disability by 2024/25.
- (e) Eliminate the gap in progression between our male and female qualifiers from IMD Q1/2 by 2024/25.

¹⁴ In establishing objectives to reduce attainment gaps we are mindful of the need to avoid grade inflation.

The above targets cover the timeframe for this Plan. Our longer-term objectives will be to:

- increase the proportion of our entrants with a known disability to 13% by 2029/30. This would bring us in line with the national average, according to the HESA data for *HE student enrolments by personal characteristics*, AY 2013/14 to 2017/18.
- eliminate the rolling five-year average gap in attainment (Pass, Merit or Distinction) between our HND entrants with and without a known disability by 2029/30.

The longer-term objectives indicated above (related to sections b, c and d) are based on achieving our stated targets by 2024/25. In the event we reach our targets earlier, we hope to bring the secondary timeframes forward.

3. Strategic measures

3.1. Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

The overarching theory of change which underpins the delivery of equality of opportunity for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups — to which our leadership team is visibly committed — builds on our institutional Strategic Plan, and is supported by an integrated framework of thematic strategies and policies, a set of evidence-based strategic measures aligned to our ambitious aims across access, continuation, attainment and progression, as well as a robust strategy to evaluate the impact of our interventions and a comprehensive governance framework to monitor and respond appropriately to our progress in achieving our targets.

Our **Strategic Plan** was first prepared in 2014. It articulates our values around equality, diversity, inclusiveness and providing opportunity and support for all students as they work to fulfil their academic potential and aspirations. It provides a solid framework for focused improvement and enhancement activity based on the needs of current and future students. In our TEF Year 4 provider submission we gave a wide range of examples of deliberate interventions to improve the quality of our students' learning experience, and these provide the foundation of our outstanding core metrics for continuation and student satisfaction. Not only did our indicators significantly exceed benchmark, they were among the highest in the UK in absolute terms. Further, our split metrics were positively flagged across the various underrepresented groups on which the OfS's access & participation ambitions are focused (see footnote 4). These metrics were not benchmarked against all markers of disadvantage relevant to our student body, and this only serves to underline the significance of our achievements.

Alignment with other strategies

Delivery of our Strategic Plan is supported by an integrated framework of thematic strategies and policies which, as appropriate, take a holistic approach or focus on specific stages of the student lifecycle.

We revised our **Admissions Policy** in 2017. With our understanding of the profile of our student body and the challenges which potentially pose barriers to their full engagement with learning we committed to interviewing every potentially suitable applicant to ensure their individual learning needs are assessed and met. The Policy was recognised by the QAA in an annual-monitoring report as '*ensuring that all applications are treated with equity, transparency and fairness*'. The Policy has been further revised in 2019 to account for changing conditions.

Our **Equality & Diversity Policy** aims to ensure the provision of a fair, equitable and supportive learning and working environment for all existing and prospective students and staff, as well as other collaborators and visitors. It was revised in 2018 in line with best sector practice and acknowledges everyone's right to be treated with respect and dignity, to be treated fairly, and to be encouraged to reach full potential. This is to be achieved through the delivery of equality of opportunity to engage fully in the academic, cultural and social life of the College, and the provision of support relating, e.g., to age, disability, sex. Specifically, staff involved in student recruitment, selection and admissions are made aware of the Policy, as will be academic staff supporting teaching, learning and assessment. Finally, the Policy covers the collection and use of personal

data in line with the Data Protection Act 2018, e.g., for the purposes of monitoring student access, success and progression.

Our **Timetabling Strategy** recognises our students' diverse circumstances and the conflicting pressures they are often under. We offer alternative study modes with timetabled sessions on consecutive full days, or during mornings, afternoons or evenings only, or a mixed pattern; in April 2019 we introduced a Friday–Saturday delivery cohort. Where students experience unexpected disruption within their family, caring commitments or part-time employment, we respond as flexibly as possible. One year-2 student wrote to express her appreciation that we had effectively avoided her withdrawal by opening up a teaching group for just five students attending class during mornings only. The introduction of this flexibility has contributed to significant increases in attendance levels, with attendance now reaching to over 80% in 2018.

Our **Learning & Teaching Enhancement Strategy** was first produced for 2015–18, then revised for 2018–21. In line with the first aim in our Strategic Plan (that every student be supported to fulfil his or her academic potential and aspirations), the Learning & Teaching Enhancement Strategy is based on principles which include a learner-centred approach (encouraging student engagement and providing flexibility for how, when and where learning takes place) and learning, teaching and assessment practices which meet the needs of a diverse — but overwhelmingly commuter — student body. Implementation of the Strategy has led to steady increases in continuation, as shown in our HESA UK performance indicators and TEF Year 4 core metric. These exceptional metrics are testament to the interventions we have put in place to support personalised learning, tailored to the relevant point in the student journey.

Our **E-learning Strategy** focuses on the development and delivery of blended-learning opportunities. It recognises that, with a mean age on entry of thirty-four years old, our students have often not had the same level of exposure to, or developed the same confidence in, the use of digital technologies as typical HE students.

Since launching the HND suite in 2010, and with an increasing influx of mature students from 2013/14, we have focused on supporting students' transition back into learning, recognising and addressing their diverse needs. To meet the needs of our large number of learners who had been out of education for a significant period of time, and to help them acquire at an early stage skills essential to full engagement with their studies and avoid early withdrawal, in 2016/17 we introduced a voluntary programme of **study-skills support** during the first term of year 1. The support focused on conducting research, completing assignments, time management, development of reading/writing ability and critical thinking. Originally co-curricular and optional, in April 2018 it was reformatted as a compulsory non-credit-bearing module. Students value its relevance to core HND modules.

Now that we are confident in supporting non-traditional HE students to transition into and thrive in an HE environment, we are focusing on the graduate outcomes of all our students. In the context of our recognition that progression to positive graduate outcomes was a weakness (relevant factors include the profile of our student body and the socio-economic profile of the local area from which our students are drawn and to which they return post-graduation), in 2018 we launched a **Student Employability & Enterprise Strategy**. It involves: identifying entrants' post-study employment aims and aspirations; providing tailored advice, information and guidance; giving students opportunities to engage with (co-)curricular real-world scenarios and live projects within their programme; expanding our network of contacts among employers who can provide guest lectures, both within the curriculum and as extra- or co-curricular opportunities (focusing on entrepreneurs and business start-up), as well as a wider range of work-experience opportunities; working with enterprise agencies to help students develop their business start-up ideas; actively engaging with local graduate recruiters; tracking alumni to better understand graduate outcomes; graduate mentoring and work shadowing; delivering top-up degrees.

This strategy includes, unique to the College, Thinking into Character (TiC). This is a new, transformational programme that will support the personal development of students and help in setting personal, educational and career goals by identifying achievements they can build on. We

believe that this programme is intrinsic to student development, building confidence across the student body, but perhaps of particular benefit to under-represented/disadvantaged groups who may go on to face greater challenges in their education/career journey.

We strongly believe that the current education system needs to be supplemented by in-side out education and studying about the laws of nature. Indeed we are encouraging our students to discover what they need to know to face a world that is constantly changing. Many of our students are mature learners so we believe this philosophy will be well-received and will perfectly fit with the ethos and learning environment of our College.

Strategic measures

To deliver the aims, objectives and targets set out in section 2, in the context of a whole-provider approach, policy/strategy alignment and coherent theory of change, as well as visible leadership commitment to equality for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, we shall deliver the strategic measures set out below, as well as evaluating their effectiveness and monitoring their impact:

| <i>Strategic measure</i> | <i>Relevant strategic aim(s)</i> | <i>Timeline</i> |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Target our advertising on underrepresented groups. | c | Commencing from 2019/20 recruitment cycle for entry in AY 2020/21, based on existing enrolment and recruitment data. Data gathered from three intakes per year, plus evening and weekend provision, forms part of the offer to attract non-traditional and underrepresented groups. This offer will be further enhanced across 2021/22 – 2024/25 by specific timetabling practices to allow flexibility of attendance across cohorts, to allow for external commitments. Marketing strategy to be amended and updated following: impact assessment of 2019/20 strategy; growth in recruitment of underrepresented groups; demographic changes across different regions. |
| 2. Engage in outreach work with schools and colleges, given the relevance of pre-HE experience to the BME attainment gap. | c | From 2020/21 recruitment cycle for 2022/23 entry, formed by assessment of recruitment and enrolment data to 2019/20 recruitment cycle. This will form part of the annual recruitment cycle strategy to ensure we address changing demographics and continue to narrow gaps in attainment. The launch of a central London campus, starting 2019/20 with provision expanding over the next 5 years, is aimed at making our offer more accessible to students from a wider geographic area. |
| 3. Adopt contextual admissions as relevant to our local recruitment patterns. | c | From 2020/21 recruitment cycle for 2022/23 entry, formed by assessment of recruitment and enrolment data to 2019/20 recruitment cycle. Admissions strategy to be reviewed on an annual basis to incorporate changes in demographics and allow for growth in recruitment of underrepresented groups as part of our Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions strategy. Revisions will also |

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| | | incorporate changes to compulsory and FE education system |
| 4. Offer targeted bursaries and other financial support to reduce students' reliance on part-time employment. | a, c | For entrants from 2020/21 onwards. Targeted information will be derived from existing student progression and attainment data plus 2019/20 recruitment, enrolment and progression data. Bursary and other financial support schemes to be evaluated using OfS Toolkit to assess impact, value to students, retention and progression data and updated as necessary for 2021/22 - 2024/25. |
| 5. Analyse unsuccessful applications and refer applicants to appropriate support, including internal training at level 3, where relevant. | c | Enhanced evaluation of existing provision, which includes referral to, and provision of, additional language training and recommendations to alternative access programmes, commencing with data gathered from the 2019/20 recruitment cycle. This evaluation will also consider the option of providing alternative access routes as part of the College offer, from 2021-22, to enable continuity of provision and enhance retention of vulnerable groups. The initial introduction, subject to campus and regional demand, will be expanded for 2022/23 – 2024/25. |
| 6. Enhance transition support, including pre-entry support, targeted maths and academic writing support, with a focus on vulnerable groups. | a, c | Enhanced academic support pilots commencing 2019/20 academic year. Analysis and evaluation to assess requirements for 2020/21 academic year. For level 6 (Top-up) applicants, we are introducing a bridging programme supporting learners making the transition. If analysis of the bridging programme shows value to students, we will develop a similar bridging programme for foundation to level 4 students for 2021/22 - 2024/25 |
| 7. Enhance welfare provision within the student-experience team; IAG; signposting; counselling services. | a, b, d, e | Increasing level of provision with dedicated staff attached to each campus. Enhanced provision began with introduction of Randstad support services during 2018/19 academic year. Mental Health Awareness training for academic staff to be piloted in 2019/20 and rolled out across all campuses in 2020/21. A supporting app for students will also be launched to aid with positive mental health. Evaluation of impact and student perceptions through feedback, committee and management structure and progression and attainment data across 2019/20 – 2024/25. Improvements and enhancements to be supported for implementation 2021/22 – 2024/25. |
| 8. Introduce and implement an inclusive curriculum framework (teaching, learning, assessment) focusing on accessibility and | a, b, c, d, e | Ongoing enhancement of programme of staff training and development commenced in 2018/19 academic year. Working with various validating partners allows us to use and |

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| inclusiveness and reflecting students' backgrounds (alternative assessment methods for disabled students), preparing graduates to contribute to positive, global workplaces, e.g., active, team-based learning, problem-/ enquiry-based learning in strategically constructed groups. | | <p>assess different assessment methodologies and working practices and incorporate the most effective for our students.</p> <p>2019/20 academic year will be used to evaluate progression and attainment data in conjunction with enrolment data and student support data with enhancements and improvements to be considered for introduction 2020/2021 – 2024/25.</p> <p>Successful initiatives will be incorporated into outreach activities, wherever possible, to promote inclusive learning approaches to underrepresented groups</p> |
| 9. Provide assistive technologies and accessible learning resources. | c, d | <p>2019/20 academic year to see introduction of fully accessible e-books system. Evaluation of individual learner needs will be ongoing with in-year improvements on demand and any long-term proposals to be planned for implementation across 2020/21-2024/25</p> |
| 10. Improve accessibility of social/recreational space, teaching and learning facilities | c, d | <p>Enhancements made to Wembley and Kingsbury campuses in 2018/19.</p> <p>Additional enhancements will made across campuses 2020/21 – 2024/25 subject to ongoing evaluation based on student feedback and analysis of assessment, retention and progression data.</p> <p>With 5 campuses operating 7 days a week, our 'local campus' model is intended to create active, accessible learning spaces based on a diverse community of learners. This proactive model will enable us to create cohesive and personalised learning experiences</p> |
| 11. Enhance our term-6 'forward thinking' programme, preparing students for employment and further study, boosting confidence. | e | <p>Trial of careers, employability and work-based Study Skills workshops has been launched for HND students at end of 2018/19 academic year. Evaluation of attendance and attendee feedback will form proposals for broader roll-out in 2019/20.</p> <p>A full analysis will take place at year end to assess impact and value for increasing frequency and locations of workshops for 2020/21– 2024/25, across all campuses and provision.</p> <p>This measure specifically addresses strategic aim (e) but is expected to benefit all students within our access & participation agenda.</p> |
| 12. Run high-visibility campaigns to reduce the stigma around disability, including mental health, and encourage disclosure. | c, d | <p>Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions activity to be developed, in conjunction with schools, colleges and external agencies, across 2019/20 with more targeted interventions to be introduced across 2020/21 – 2024/25</p> <p>This recruitment activity will operate in tandem with ongoing pastoral care and Student Welfare support and materials for enrolled students to ensure the</p> |

| | | |
|---|------------|---|
| | | message remains consistent and helps reduce stigma |
| 13. Adopt social model of disability to go above and beyond reasonable adjustments. | c, d | Needs-based assessment of student and staff requirements to take place across all campuses in 2019/20. Estates and facilities strategies to be revised and implemented as appropriate in-year and across 2020/21–2024/25. |
| 14. Enhance our use of data and learner analytics. | a, b, d, e | Introduction for 2019/20 – 2020/21 of new VLE software and enhanced data collection across MRA and Student Support will permit higher level of data analysis. Growth of Professional Services and management team across 2018/19 – 2021/22 will also enhance analysis and evaluation capacity and implementation of improved student services based on data-driven knowledge. |

These have been selected, collaboratively with students, from a long list of possible priority areas drawn, e.g., from OfS website resources.

The College is proud of the level of engagement with widening participation students. However, we also recognise that our unique offer has not previously focussed on creating learning communities that provide a further sense of social and academic cohesion. This recognition, combined with increased understanding of working with our own, and external datasets, has led us to identifying the targets set out in this plan. Although a large number of strategic measures have been outlined, many of them will be delivered in thematic combinations. This links with our overarching theory of change to introduce strategic measures working across access, continuation, attainment and progression targets and includes:

- measures 1, 2, 3, 5, 12 which will form part of a unified approach by our Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions (MRA) team;
- measures 5, 6 will be delivered by the student support and English language training teams as appropriate;
- measures 9, 10, 13 form part of our IT and facilities development and will focus on creating inclusive and accessible environments that enable community building in physical and cyber spaces

Some measures appear as standalone (4, 7, 8, 11, 14) but will have direct impact on the identified underrepresented groups

The Strategic Measures outlined above are aligned, as relevant to our strategic access & participation aims, to the full student lifecycle, and involve a wide range of College staff.

3.2. Student and Advisory Board consultation

Students from a range of backgrounds were given the opportunity to engage meaningfully in the design of this Access & Participation Plan and to express their views about its content (assessment of performance; aims, objectives and targets; strategic measures) prior to it being submitted for approval. This opportunity was provided within the context of an established framework for partnership working with the student body — course and cohort representatives, feedback channels, student membership of formal governance bodies — which has proved very effective: the average level of student satisfaction with the areas covered by questions 21 to 25 in the 2018 NSS (learning community and student voice) is 88%. In the development of this Access & Participation Plan we worked with our highly engaged student representatives, drawn from a range of programmes and reflecting the diversity of our student body in terms of age, ethnic background,

prior educational experience and current caring responsibilities. We shared with them our draft submission and invited them to attend a presentation at which we set out the background, the headline findings from our assessment of performance, and our proposed strategic aims/objectives/targets. They were then invited to comment, orally or in writing: they welcomed the opportunity to be involved in this important work; they appreciated the effort we had made to clarify the background and make the data accessible; and they endorsed our proposed strategic aims, objectives and targets and our proposed strategic measures. Student engagement was particularly valuable in providing a range of personal perspectives on maximising impact. Students were explicitly invited to feed into the focus of proposed financial support — an innovation in the College — in particular its value in reducing students' dependence on — and distraction by — paid employment. This framework for partnership working will also provide students with an ongoing opportunity to engage with monitoring and evaluating delivery of the Plan (see below). Our Advisory Board has also been engaged in the development of, and had endorsed, this Plan.

The primary purpose of the College **Advisory Board** is to provide advice and guidance to the executive team in the development and focused delivery of the RCL's operational mission and strategic vision. While not legally responsible or accountable, the Advisory Board is called upon to act as a valuable and critical adviser to the executive team. The Board provides support and challenge, to identify and help act upon identified areas for development and to bring to bear a diversity of expertise and experience from both education and non-education sectors. Input is provided with the ultimate goal of improving all aspects of our provision with an emphasis on the protection of the interests of students, the reputation of the provision and the protection of the UK higher-education sector as a whole.

3.3. Evaluation strategy

We recognise the necessity to have a consistent and effective approach to evaluation and any new projects or interventions included within our Plan for 2020/21 – 2024/25 will incorporate an evaluation plan and associated timeline, to enable us to demonstrate the impact of our initiatives. We shall implement a robust and credible strategy to evaluate our practices, using qualitative and quantitative evaluation tools as appropriate to the individual initiatives and in line with our strategic aims. Our strategy will focus on the strategic access & participation aims that we are investing in most heavily and will be informed by our evaluation self-assessment.

The impact of the strategic measures set out above will be evaluated with appropriate frequency in terms of historical changes in outcomes for relevant student groups.

Measurement and analysis to be considered as part of the evaluation and process will include:

- interventions by target group
 - e.g. group and one to one sessions for students who have struggled with a particular piece of assessment
- overall levels of student satisfaction in relation to each initiative
 - to highlight areas of best practice and concern so they can be replicated or improved
- level of student engagement of each initiative
 - e.g. to assess the relevance of content, timings and accessibility of extra curricula activities
- behaviour change(s) as a result of the initiative(s)
 - assessed via external student surveys GOS and NSS but also internal feedback collected after each initiative and throughout the student journey.
- impact of each initiative individually and as part of the overall strategy (value for money)
- consideration of benefit of continuing each initiative
 - successful activities will be incorporated into the curriculum where possible and will inform us in regards to future plans for programme development

2019/20 will see the trialling of a number of new initiatives based on our 14 point plan and as part of our five year strategic planning for 2020/21 – 2024/25. These trials will guide our planning and commitment to a significant investment of financial support (15% of HFI and half of our overall

investment in access & participation) for 2020 - 2025. As we have cohorts enrolling, re-enrolling and qualifying at three points in each academic year, it may be necessary to initially work on (rolling) multi-year populations. We estimate investing 2% of HFI in research and evaluation activity. In terms of methodology, and as evaluation of the effectiveness of the financial support given to students has not previously been carried out; we will be adopting the OfS Financial Support Evaluation toolkit in the first instance, adapting it as necessary for local conditions. As our evaluation methods develop, we may create a more tailored approach to coordinate with our own data collection systems. We will take steps to ensure that this data can be represented as required by external agencies, including the OfS.

We will use a combination of methods to support evaluations. This will include utilising internal data provided through Enrolment and registration data, including datasets compiled for our University partners; Marketing, Recruitment & Admissions team activities, including outreach; Retention, Achievement, Completion & Progression data; and Student Welfare data, including cross-campus services access and external referrals, as soon as they become available. We will combine this qualitative and quantitative data with those available from official data releases of external agencies including DfE, GOS, HESA, NSS, OfS and TEF metrics.

Students will be strongly involved in the evaluation process, which will include direct feedback from participants in/recipients of the individual initiatives, as well as from the broader student body via the student representative structure. Feedback will be discussed, as appropriate, with staff and student representatives across our committee structure, within the parameters of Data Protection, with the Student Representative Committee, Academic Planning & Resources Committee, Course and Programme Boards, Campus Management Teams and Equality & Diversity Monitoring Group. Each committee/group feeds into other aspects of the governance structure, including the Senior Management Team and, ultimately to the Academic Board.

Our strategy for increasing access and participation, and enhancing student success, is that evaluation of our initiatives takes place across our governance structure in a feed-forward loop, a continuous cycle of review and improvement. We have a mature policy structure which requires, in addition to student feedback, regular reports from relevant staff and departments to ensure that their remit is being met and that the student experience is the best it can be.

All policies are reviewed and approved by Academic Board on an annual basis but we also have a responsive structure which allows for in-year adjustments according to legislative requirement, student demand and local variations for each campus. The policies which relate directly to this Plan include those regarding:

Anti-harassment and anti-bullying; Data Protection; Equality and Diversity; External Speakers; Fitness to Practice; Fitness to Study; Health & Safety; Induction; IT, Internet and Wi-Fi; Learning and Teaching Enhancement; Learning Resources; Learning Support; Student Charter; Student Pastoral Care; Students at Risk; Study Skills & Tutorial and, Work Placement

Throughout, the programme of activities will be seen within the broader strategic context of our work to enhance the education and broader experience of all our students.

With regard to our strategy informing programme design, our current programme offer is built around the Pearson HND and franchised programme delivery from University of Bolton, Buckinghamshire New University, University of Northampton and Bishop Grosseteste University. As such, we are not actively involved in the programme design. We do however use qualitative and quantitative data to guide us in assessment and learning and teaching development and activities. This includes utilising internal data provided through student evaluation and feedback questionnaires, **Retention, Achievement, Completion & Progression data**; and **Student Welfare data**, including cross-campus services access and external referrals data. As well as Enrolment and registration data, including datasets compiled for our University partners; Marketing, Recruitment & Admissions team activities, which include outreach. This is combined with the

application of our Observation of Teaching Policy, Study Skills & Tutorial Policy, Student Pastoral Care Policy and Learning & Teaching Enhancement Strategy.

Our Learning & Teaching practitioners use the above information to develop classroom techniques and assessment methods that connect more closely with our student body. This includes scheduling assessment standardisation sessions and academic team meetings to ensure that good practice is shared and students are able to benefit from the most engaging and interactive learning methods. Good practice is formally shared through Assessment Boards, Cohort Leader meetings and Director of Study/Programme Leader meetings, as well as more formal staff learning and teaching development sessions.

As we develop our offer and move towards Validated provision, we will use the evidence and evaluations from our well-established practices to inform design and development of our own programmes.

3.4. Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

We have implemented formal policies and procedures to monitor the experience and educational outcomes of our cohorts and students. In 2016 we introduced a monthly **Retention, Achievement & Completion (RAC)** meeting to review management information, identify problem areas, and determine appropriate interventions. As reflected for example in our TEF Year 4 core metrics and as noted in our HER (AP), the intervention was successful. The success in analysing this data led to the RACP data being incorporated as an agenda item at all Assessment Boards, which regularly and systematically review the progress of each cohort collectively and each student individually, and has been included as a standing item for the Senior Management Team meetings.

We have established an **Equality & Diversity Monitoring Group** to ensure that the principles of equality and diversity are embedded within our policy and practice. The Group analyses recruitment, retention, achievement and satisfaction data mapped against key equality & diversity characteristics to ensure that no groups are underachieving in comparison with their peers. It noted that employment rates and earnings amongst female qualifiers were significantly lower than males; in response we held a series of focus groups with female students in spring 2018 in order to better understand women's employment aspirations and how we can enhance delivery to support their future employability — this relates to one of the strategic access & participation aims identified above.

We shall be developing this monitoring framework further in the context of the strategic measures to deliver our access & participation aims, objectives and targets; this will be in place ahead of 2020/21. We shall put in place appropriate management and governance arrangements to oversee the delivery of this Access & Participation Plan, both in terms of implementing the strategic measures (inputs and outputs), evaluating their impact (see above), and monitoring progress in achieving the aims, objectives and targets (outcomes). This arrangement will take the form of the **Access and Participation Committee** (subject to ratification by Academic Board) and will hold responsibility for monitoring and managing our strategic aims, objectives and targets. Monitoring progress in delivering this Plan will involve student representatives and our Advisory Board and will form part of the governance structure for the College. This committee will report into the Senior Management Team and Academic Board. A strong mandate for appropriate action will be given to the Senior Management Team in the event that our performance worsens. Responsibility for ensuring that the strategic measures are implemented rests with the Principal. Responsibility for ensuring that data is compiled tracking our performance rests with the Academic Registrar.

4. Provision of information to students

We shall ensure that prospective students are provided with information about the fees they will be charged for the duration of their programme, as well as the financial support that they are entitled to as a result of the provisions within this Access & Participation Plan. This will include the eligibility criteria and will set out the level of financial support that students from underrepresented groups will be offered in each year of their studies. Information will be provided through our website, our

prospectuses, and other documentation. All information contained in prospectuses, websites and other material used in the recruitment of students is subject to sign-off and will promote equality of opportunity and make reference to our Equality & Diversity Policy.

An annual cash bursary of £1000 is provided, subject to attainment and attendance criteria, to students with a registered disability and care leavers (who have spent at least three months in local-authority care). An annual cash bursary of £250 is provided, again subject to attainment and attendance criteria, to students from IMD Q1. Non-repayable support (normally limited to a maximum of £1000 per level of study) for students in financial need is provided via a discretionary hardship fund. It is not explicitly targeted at any particular student group; however, in view of the make-up of our student body, we envisage that applications and need will be concentrated among students in the most disadvantaged groups. To be eligible to apply, students must already have applied for and been awarded a full student loan and received their first instalment (emergency repayable loans are available to students prior to receipt of their first student loan instalment). All eligible applications will be considered but awards will be prioritised for the benefit of students with child/adult dependants, final-year students and students unable to undertake paid part-time work due to an extended or chronic condition.

Access and participation plan

Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: RTC Education Ltd

Provider UKPRN: 10008455

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we intend to increase fees each year using the RPI-X

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

| Full-time course type: | Additional information: | Course fee: |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| First degree | | £8,000 |
| Foundation degree | | £8,000 |
| Foundation year/Year 0 | | £8,000 |
| HNC/HND | | £8,000 |
| CertHE/DipHE | * | * |
| Postgraduate ITT | * | * |
| Accelerated degree | * | * |
| Sandwich year | * | * |
| Erasmus and overseas study years | * | * |
| Other | * | * |

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

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

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

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

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

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

Provider fee information 2021-22

Provider name: RTC Education Ltd
Provider UKPRN: 10008455

Summary of 2021-22 course fees

*course type not listed

Table 1a - Full-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students

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

Table 1b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students

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

Table 1c - Part-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students

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

Table 1d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students

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

Targets and investment plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: RTC Education Ltd

Provider UKPRN: 10008455

Investment summary

The OfS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

| Access and participation plan investment summary (£) | Academic year | | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
| Total access activity investment (£) | £355,678.00 | £901,958.00 | £1,420,565.00 | £1,838,266.00 | £2,284,832.00 |
| Access (pre-16) | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Access (post-16) | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Access (adults and the community) | £355,678.00 | £901,958.00 | £1,420,565.00 | £1,838,266.00 | £2,284,832.00 |
| Access (other) | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Financial support (£) | £410,398.00 | £1,040,720.00 | £1,639,114.00 | £2,121,077.00 | £2,636,345.00 |
| Research and evaluation (£) | £54,720.00 | £138,763.00 | £218,549.00 | £282,810.00 | £351,513.00 |

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

| Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI) | Academic year | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
| Higher fee income (£HFI) | £2,735,985.00 | £6,938,135.00 | £10,927,425.00 | £14,140,510.00 | £17,575,630.00 |
| Access investment | 13.0% | 13.0% | 13.0% | 13.0% | 13.0% |
| Financial support | 15.0% | 15.0% | 15.0% | 15.0% | 15.0% |
| Research and evaluation | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Total investment (as %HFI) | 30.0% | 30.0% | 30.0% | 30.0% | 30.0% |

[illegible]