

University of Hertfordshire Access and participation plan 2025/26 to 2028/29

Introduction and strategic aim

Our University of Hertfordshire (Herts) vision, set out in a new Strategic Plan, is that we ‘power the potential’ of our students and that we are ambitious for them to have fulfilling careers with impact locally, nationally and globally. The plan, due for launch in January 2025, is based on values of excellence, expertise, and enterprise and will be achieved in a friendly, inclusive environment where the positive transformation of student lives is our core purpose. Through the Education and Student Experience commitments within the Strategic Plan, and our newly designed underpinning Frameworks for Induction, Personal Tutoring, Academic Skills, Career Development and Wellbeing, as well as our University Policies and Regulations (UPRs), we focus on education that develops students’ skills for life. This includes the development of our University of Hertfordshire Graduate Attributes (*Professionally focused, Globally minded, Sustainability driven, Digitally capable and confident, Inclusive and collaborative, Evidence-based and ethical*), which ensure our students stand out in the labour market and secure positive outcomes aligned to their career aspirations.

We welcome a diverse community of over 34,000 students from more than 140 countries, across six Schools of study. Throughout the period of our current Access and Participation Plan (APP), the make-up of our student body has changed considerably, reflecting challenges in recruitment of UK-domiciled undergraduate (UG) students and supporting overseas market interest in postgraduate taught programmes (Table 1). UK-domiciled UG students now represent only 34.5% of the total student population, compared to 50.1% in 2020/21.

Table 1: UH student population 2020/21-2022/23 (HESA student return)

Academic Year	Total Student Population (UG, PGT and PGR)	UK-domiciled UG Population	UK-domiciled UG population as % of total student population
2020/21	30,099	15,266	50.1%
2021/22	31,942	13,458	42.1%
2022/23	34,636	11,937	34.5%

Of our 2022/23 UK-domiciled UG student population, 81.5% are full-time. Of these, an estimated 52%¹ are the first in their family to attend university and approximately 66% will typically be studying their first degree². Table 2 provides further details of the demographics of our UK-domiciled UG full-time student body in comparison to the sector³. The data is our own unless indicated by ◊, which indicates data from the Office for Students’ (OfS) Size and Shape of Provision dashboard (2021/22)⁴.

Table 2: UH student demographics compared to sector (UH and School Profile 2021/22, FT, UG, UK-domiciled; OfS Size and Shape of Provision 2021/22)

2021/22 Student Population (UK-domiciled UG Full-time)	UH	Sector
Sex (Female / Male)	58.5% / 41.5%	55.9% / 43.9%
BTEC Entry Qualifications (combined ‘at least DDM or one A-level and two BTECs’ & ‘lower than DDM’) ◊	25.8%	14.9%
Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles 1&2 ◊	34.6%	33.4%
Disability reported	17.3%	17.8%
Mature (over 21)	22.7%	24.3%
Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility ◊	27.4%	18.3%

¹ ‘Parental Education’ question of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student return

² OfS Size and Shape of Provision Data Dashboard / Four-year aggregate / Accessed April 2024.

³ Comparator populations not identical.

⁴ Most up to date at time of writing.

Asian	24.6%	12.9%
Black	20.3%	8.3%
Mixed heritage	6.1%	4.4%
Other	5.5%	2.2%
White	41.6%	54.2%

Many of our students come from non-traditional routes into Higher Education and our average tariff entry points, where applicable, were 113.0 in 2020/21; 119.1 in 2021/22; 119.7 in 2022/23. In 2023/24 there were 98 Care Experienced, 79 Independent (Estranged), 23 Young Adult Carers and 58 Displaced (Refugee) students, all UK-domiciled/UG and all in receipt of targeted support from the University’s centrally based widening participation (WP) team.

Herts was proud to be one of the first universities to gain the Race Equality Charter Mark Bronze award (2015) with successful renewal in 2021, and we hold an Athena Swan Silver award (2024). Our long-term goals are to eliminate inequalities, ensure equal outcomes for all our students and to improve on our 16th position in England for social mobility⁵. Our APP’s ambitious targets will help us to meet these goals, facilitated by the adoption of a whole provider approach to WP.

Risks to equality of opportunity

An assessment of performance was completed using a range of data sources including the OfS’ APP (2021/22) and Size and Shape of Provision (2021/22) dashboards, Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) open data and the University’s own locally held data. The focus of the assessment was on the identification of gaps in outcomes between underrepresented groups and their peers for UK-domiciled, full-time, UG students across the student lifecycle from access through to progression. Characteristics explored included age, race, disability, sex, Free School Meals (FSM), and Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). We also considered our performance in relation to a selected group of comparable providers as well as in relation to the sector generally (see Annex A for further details).

For each data set, cohort size, trends over time, and where available, statistical certainty, were considered. Data was disaggregated where possible (e.g., race, disability), and two-way intersections of student characteristics were considered to give granularity to the emerging indications of risk. Locally sourced data was used to assess outcomes for groups that are only identifiable by the University such as estranged students and students of different religions. Where numbers of students were below threshold for inclusion e.g., children from military families, the data was not used to inform the primary risk areas.

Risks to equality of opportunity emerging from the assessment were independently ranked by five members of the Access and Participation Steering Group (APSG) using a bespoke ranking scale to determine low, medium, and high priority risks. The rankings were then moderated in a group exercise to reach agreement on the key areas of risk to equality of opportunity at the University. These were then shared for feedback in the student and staff consultation period. This led to the removal of the TUNDRA and ABCS measures and the Completion stage of the lifecycle (see Annex A for explanation of exclusions). The final key risks were focused on the areas where the largest and most persistent inequities in outcomes exist and where we believe change can be most impactful. For smaller risks (not covered in the plan), we will monitor outcomes locally and act accordingly should the risk change or impact increase.

Thirteen risks were identified in total. These appear across the student lifecycle as follows:

⁵ DFE/IFS/Sutton Trust. (2021) Which university degrees are best for intergenerational mobility? Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1035185/Scorecards.pdf (Accessed 29th July 2024)

Access

As described in the introduction and as illustrated in Table 2, Herts has a highly diverse student population, with 75% of our Full-Time UK-domiciled, UG students having one or more WP characteristics⁶. Our well-established Higher Education Consortium partnership and our impactful widening access programme, which includes the leadership of our Uni Connect partnership, have undoubtedly contributed to the University's success in attracting large numbers of WP students to Herts, many of whom are local to the area. As a result of our strong access record, we have decided to focus our attention on the elimination of inequalities in outcomes for our WP students once they start their Herts journey. However, the risks which have been identified across the remainder of the lifecycle will be used to inform our access and outreach work, including delivering targeted activity where appropriate. In this way, promoting equality in access will continue to be the bedrock of our provision, playing a vital role in how we prepare young people to transition successfully into and through higher education.

Continuation

Risk 1 The continuation rate for students declaring Mental Health Conditions is below the sector average and below that of students declaring other disabilities. Evidence suggests this could be a result of factors such as students missing key content and falling behind, which can contribute to further ill-health. It may also be influenced by assessment type and by the way our policies and processes support those with Mental Health Conditions.

Risk 2 FSM eligible students have lower rates of continuation than students not eligible for FSM. Evidence suggests this gap could be a consequence of insufficient personal and academic support, both before and during university, and cost pressures impacting day-to-day living and access to developmental opportunities including placement.

Risk 3 Male students consistently have lower rates of continuation than Female students. Evidence suggests this risk could be a function of Male students being less likely to access support or taking longer to do so than Female students, making it harder to retrieve the situation when problems do arise. Additionally, some Males may find it harder than Females to develop effective personal and study support networks, behaviours which may be influenced by societal expectations about asking for help.

Risk 4 BTEC⁷ entry students have lower rates of continuation than A-level students and this gap is increasing year on year. Evidence suggests this could be a function of different experiences of learning and assessment prior to entering university, insufficient knowledge of best pedagogic practice to facilitate equality of outcomes and a need for improved access to personal and academic support.

Attainment

Risk 5 White students achieve more 'good degrees' (First Class / Upper Second) than students from other ethnic backgrounds and there is a 'good degree' awarding gap between White and Black students, White and Asian students and White Male and Black Male students. Evidence suggests this could be a result of insufficient personal and academic support and the need for further development of inclusive pedagogies, policies and practice.

Risk 6 There is an awarding gap between FSM and non-FSM eligible students in favour of non-FSM students. Evidence suggests this gap could be a consequence of insufficient personal and academic support, both before and during university, cost pressures impacting day-to-day living, and access to developmental opportunities including placement.

⁶ An internal measure including low household income, disability, ethnicity and priority student groups.

⁷ It is recognised that there may be changes to BTEC qualifications during the period of the APP. Objectives associated with this qualification will be kept under review and additional A-Level equivalent qualifications (e.g., T-Levels) may also be considered depending upon future developments at a national level.

Risk 7 There is a 'good degree' awarding gap between students from IMD Q1 and Q5 in favour of Q5 students. Evidence suggests this could be a function of insufficient personal and academic support and cost pressures impacting day-to-day living and access to developmental opportunities including placement.

Risk 8 There is a 'good degree' gap between A-level and BTEC entry students in favour of A-level students. Evidence suggests this could be a function of different experiences of learning and assessment prior to entering university, insufficient knowledge of best pedagogic practice to facilitate equality of outcomes and insufficient access to personal and academic support.

Risk 9 There is a gap in 'good degree' performance between Male and Female students in favour of Female students. Evidence suggests this could be a result of Male students being less likely to access support or taking longer to do so than Female students, making it harder to improve grades when they fall below the required standard. Additionally, some Males may find it harder than Females to develop effective personal support networks, behaviours which may be influenced by societal expectations about asking for help.

Progression

Risk 10 The progression rate for students with a declared Mental Health Condition is lower than for students with no declared disability. Evidence suggests this could be a result of having fewer opportunities to engage with CV enhancing co-curricular opportunities.

Risk 11 The progression rate for students from IMD Q1 is lower than for students from IMD Q5. Evidence suggests this could be a result of insufficient personal and academic support, cost pressures impacting day-to-day living and job-seeking activities and insufficient access to developmental opportunities.

Risk 12 There is a persistent progression gap between Male and Female students in favour of Female students. Intersectional data shows fluctuating rates of progression for all students of Asian, Black and White backgrounds. Evidence suggests there may be a subject-specific component to our data (see Annex A).

Risk 13 There is a progression gap between A-level and BTEC entry students in favour of A-Level students. Evidence suggests this could be a consequence of the 'good degree' gap impacting on BTEC students' success in attaining a graduate job.

Objectives

Our long-term goals are to eliminate inequalities and ensure equal outcomes for all our students.

Objective Risk 1 To increase the continuation rate of students with a declared Mental Health Condition by establishing an effective, timely, and personalised mental health provision for all students. We will do this by developing staff confidence to identify and respond to the needs of these students in a timely and appropriate manner. Additionally, we will develop a new institutional framework for Student and Staff Wellbeing and continue our ongoing commitment to the Student Minds' University Mental Health Charter. [Success for this objective will be demonstrated by a year-on-year improvement in Year \(Yr\) 1 continuation, until, at a minimum, continuation rates of students with a declared Mental Health Condition are increased to be equivalent to continuation rates for students without a declared disability by 2028/29 \(Baseline year 2020/21: 85.1% Mental Health Condition / 90.1% no declared disability\).](#)

Objective Risk 2 To reduce the continuation gap between FSM eligible and non-FSM eligible students and maintain our above sector average completion performance. We will do this by ensuring FSM eligible students have access to appropriate levels of academic, personal and financial support to ensure timely progression through their programme to the point of graduation. [Success for this objective will be demonstrated by a year-on-year improvement in Yr 1 continuation](#)

for FSM eligible students until, at a minimum, continuation rates are increased to be equivalent to continuation rates for non-FSM eligible students by 2028/29 (Baseline year 2020/21: 87.2% FSM / 92% non-FSM).

Objective Risk 3 To reduce the Yr 1 continuation gap between Males and Females (this will also impact positively on the completion gap). We will do this by improving our understanding of factors affecting Male student continuity and our use of data to target our activity where most needed. We will also ensure our means of communicating to Males, and our induction and transitional support arrangements, take account of Male students' needs. [Success for this objective will be measured by reducing the continuation gap between Male and Female students from 11.4pp to a minimum of 2pp by 2028/29 \(Baseline year 2020/21: Males 86.6% / Females 93%\).](#) The overall aim to improve Male student continuation will also serve to improve continuation rates for the individual Black, Asian and White Male cohorts.

Objective Risk 4 To reduce the continuation gap between A-level and BTEC entry students so that more BTEC entry students have the opportunity to achieve a 'good degree' outcome. We will do this by developing staff to improve their understanding of the learning, teaching and assessment experiences of BTEC and non-traditional entry learners. We will also provide a co-designed, co-produced and co-delivered bespoke induction programme for students with BTEC and non-traditional entry qualifications to support the development of critical thinking, academic skills and assessment literacy. [Success for this objective will be measured by reducing the continuation gap between A-level and BTEC entry students from 10.7pp to a minimum of 4pp by 2028/29 \(Baseline year 2022/23 UH data: BTEC 24.4% / A-level 13.7%*\)](#)

*UH measures by non-continuation.

Objective Risk 5 To work towards the elimination of the 'good degree' awarding gap between White and Black students, White and Asian students and between White Male and Black Male students. We will do this by instigating a four-year anti-racism project focusing on institutional structures, policy reform, staff development and student support. We will work in partnership with students to develop inclusive and culturally sensitive learning, teaching and assessment practices which will be rolled out through a large-scale programme of staff development. Our cross-institutional Race and Ethnicity Equity Success Group and institutional action plan, plus our Education and Student Experience and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committees will be key vehicles for driving this change. [Success for this objective will be measured by reducing the 'good degree' awarding gap between White and Black students, White and Asian students and between White Male and Black Male students, by a minimum of 50% for each group by 2028/29. This will bring the good degree gap between White and Black students down from 17.7pp to 8pp and the good degree gap between White and Asian students down from 12.3pp to 6pp \(Baseline year 2021/22: Black 67.5% / Asian 72.9% / White 85.2%\). The good degree gap between White Male and Black Male students would reduce from 41pp to 20pp \(Baseline year 2022/23 UH data: White Males 84% / Black Males 43%\).](#)

Objective Risk 6 To reduce the 'good degree' attainment gap between FSM eligible and non-FSM eligible students by ensuring they have access to timely and impactful academic skills support to ensure they have the necessary tools and resources to enable them to reach their optimal academic potential. We are committed to doing this by providing effective transition support plus facilitating timely access to personal tutoring and financial support. [Success for this measure will be demonstrated by reducing the 'good degree' gap between FSM eligible and non-FSM eligible students by a minimum of 50% by 2028/29. This will bring the good degree gap down from 11.4pp to 5.5pp \(Baseline year 2021/22: FSM 68% / Non-FSM 79.4%\).](#)

Objective Risk 7 To improve 'good degree' outcomes for IMD Q1 students. We will do this by ensuring the students have access to timely and impactful academic skills support to ensure they have the necessary tools and resources to enable them to reach their optimal academic potential. We are also committed to providing effective transition support plus access to personal tutoring, and financial support. [Success for this objective will be demonstrated by reducing the gap in good](#)

degree outcomes between IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 students by a minimum of 50% from 14.8pp to 7pp by 2028/29 (Baseline year 2021/22: IMD Q1 69.9% / IMD Q5 84.7%).

Objective Risk 8 To decrease the 'good degree' gap between A-level and BTEC entry students. We will do this by working with our secondary school and Further Education partners to give high quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to students about BTEC qualifications and university entry. We will also provide targeted, timely and easy to access academic skills support with inclusive assessments delivered in an inclusive, engaging and accessible learning environment. Staff knowledge about BTEC routes will be improved to enable appropriately tailored personal tutor support. [Success for this objective will be measured by reducing the 'good degree' gap between A-level and BTEC entry students by a minimum of 50% from 16pp to 8pp by 2028/29 \(Baseline year 2022/23 UH data: BTEC 64% / A-level 80%\).](#)

Objective Risk 9 To reduce the 'good degree' awarding gap between Male and Female students with a focus on Black Male and Asian Male students. We will do this by reviewing pedagogic approaches and assessment design on programmes with the largest gaps. We will provide activities to improve confidence in accessing academic skills support and improving sense of belonging. We will encourage Black Male and Asian Male students to engage in a targeted leadership and empowerment programme for racially minoritised students. [Success for this objective will be measured by eliminating the gap in 'good degree' outcomes between Male and Female students by 2028/29 \(Baseline year 2021/22: Male 73.3% / Female 79.7%\).](#)

Objective Risk 10 To increase progression into graduate employment or further study for students with a declared Mental Health Condition so that is equivalent to, or higher than, that of students without a disability. We will do this by providing tailored career development support for students with a declared Mental Health Condition, which will include access to trained careers coaches and the Careers Studio (space, resources and advice) two-years post-graduation. [Success for this objective will be demonstrated by reducing the Graduate Outcomes gap between students with a declared Mental Health Condition and those without a declared disability by a minimum of 50% from 6pp to 3pp by 2028/29 \(Baseline year 2020/21: 66.8% Mental Health Condition / 72.8% no declared disability\).](#)

Objective Risk 11 To increase rates of progression into graduate employment or further study for IMD Q1 students. We will do this by improving the number of good degree awards (see Risk 7) and by providing career development support which is cognisant of the needs of students with socio-economic constraints. The support will include access to virtual internships and the careers studio two-years post-graduation. [Success for this objective will be measured by reducing the Graduate Outcomes gap between IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 students by a minimum of 50% from 5.8pp to 3pp \(Baseline year 2020/21: IMD Q1 69.7% / IMD Q5 75.5%\).](#)

Objective Risk 12 To improve progression rates for Male students by introducing targeted career development and further study interventions, including mentoring to increase the number of Male students progressing to graduate level employment or further study. [Success for this objective will be measured by eliminating the Graduate Outcomes gap between Male and Female students by 2028/29 \(Baseline year 2020/21: Male 69.9% / Female 74.1%\).](#)

Objective Risk 13 To reduce the progression gap into graduate employment or further study between BTEC and A-level entry students. We will do this by improving the number of 'good degree' awards (see Risk 8) and providing further study and career development advice on programmes there are high numbers of BTEC entry students. [Success for this objective will be measured by reducing the Graduate Outcomes gap between BTEC entry and A-level students from 8.6pp to a minimum of 3pp by 2028/29 \(Baseline year 2020/21: BTEC 70.5% / A-level 79.1%\).](#)

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

The thirteen risks identified by the assessment of performance across the continuation, awards and progression parts of the student lifecycle have been grouped into six ‘at risk’ student groups for the purposes of planning the interventions. The six groups are: *Students who are Male; Students who identify as Black or Asian; Students with BTEC/non-traditional entry qualifications; Students who declare a Mental Health Condition; Students from Indices of Multiple Deprivation Q1; and Students who have been eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)* (Figure 1). Overlaps and intersections between these groups are referenced within the interventions.

Students who are Male	Students who identify as Black or Asian	Students with BTEC/non-traditional entry qualifications	Students with a declared Mental Health Condition	Students from Indices of Multiple Deprivation Q1	Students who have been Free School Meal eligible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation • Awards • Progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation • Awards • Progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation • Progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awards • Progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation • Awards

Figure 1. UH’s Six at Risk Student Groups and Associated Lifecycle Stage

The interventions for the six at risk groups (IS1-IS5*) are preceded in the plan by an over-arching institutional intervention comprised of nine initiatives. Seven of these apply to all students at Herts (one of which will be led by the Students’ Union, known as Herts SU) and two are specific to widening participation students specifically, although there is potential for all students to benefit. Our rationale for identifying an over-arching institutional intervention is that the various initiatives will collectively benefit large numbers of students in our identified risk groups given that 82% of our UK-domiciled, UG students (FT and PT) have at least one of our risk characteristics (Male, Asian, Black, FSM, MH, IMD Q1, BTEC) and 47% had more than one (UH data, 2021/22).

* There are only five intervention strategies because two of the risks have been combined into one intervention.

Overarching institutional intervention to benefit all six 'at risk' groups				
Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross-link
Induction Framework (enhanced)	Extended induction and transition period from 1 week to 4 weeks. To support students to settle into the university and develop a sense of belonging. The framework links our pre-arrival initiatives to start of university activities, considers 'reinduction' to support between year progression and 'outduction' to support progression to highly skilled employment.	Coordinated approach at institutional, School and programme level involving professional and academic teams. Steering group: 12 x 1.5hr meetings, 25 members.	Improved sense of belonging and increased sense of mattering. Students are confident and knowledgeable about the university and study expectations. Students are confident and knowledgeable about support services and how to access them.	Supports all other intervention strategies.
Herts Personal Tutoring Framework (enhanced)	Redevelopment of the existing Personal Tutor Framework (PTF). We will re-develop the personal tutor toolkit to include guidance on the unique challenges faced by at risk student groups; create a more joined up approach between academic and professional services; provide staff training in inclusive tutoring, and link students and personal tutors within the student record system so tutors can access useful information about their tutees and provide early intervention to reduce risks of withdrawals.	PTF Academic Lead and Evaluation: 0.6 FTE. PT leadership within schools: 1.0 FTE. Development of guidance sheets for each student group 0.05 FTE. Tailored support for at risk student groups. Development of mandatory online training module: 0.2 FTE.	Improved student experience of personal tutoring; increased continuation and attainment rates against baseline; decreased withdrawals for personal reasons and academic failure; increased student sense of mattering to the institution, increase tutor confidence and knowledge about supporting their tutees needs.	Supports all other intervention strategies.
Herts Academic Skills Framework (new)	An institutional framework to facilitate personalised, high quality academic skills support for all students. The framework will link central and school-based teams to ensure timely and impactful academic skills support.	Proportion of Central Herts Academic Skills team: 3.0 FTE.	Reduced withdrawals for academic failure; improved academic performance; reduced awarding gaps; equity of access to academic skills development. Increased staff confidence in identifying and responding to students' needs.	Supports all other intervention strategies.
Herts Career Development Framework (new)	An institutional framework articulating careers, employment and entrepreneurship support for students. Supporting students from transition to two years after graduation with tailored career development support including access to employers and a network of experts. Priority access and ring-fenced opportunities for priority groups.	Career Development Framework Lead: 0.4 FTE. Careers Managers x4: 0.2 FTE. 25 Careers Coaches Data Analyst: 0.4 FTE.	Early engagement with key career development activities; enhanced tracking of careers registration data across different levels of study; increased engagement in internships and/or placements; improved graduate outcomes for at-risk groups.	Supports all other intervention strategies.

Herts Wellbeing Framework (new)	An institutional framework to improve the mental health and wellbeing of staff and students across the University community. Covers all aspects of university life and aligns with Student Minds' University Mental Health Charter.	Staff resource: 2.5 FTE.	Improved student mental health and wellbeing; improved NSS 'communication of mental health and wellbeing services' score; high level of awareness about the framework.	Supports all other intervention strategies.
Data4Learning (D4L) and MyLearning Dashboards (enhanced)	Enhancement of the D4L (staff-facing) and MyLearning (student-facing) Dashboards. Improved use of learner analytics to identify and action academic disengagement or lower than expected performance. We will improve staff training in using the D4L Dashboard and improve student-facing communications to ensure all students are aware of how to use the MyLearning Dashboard to review their progress.	Ongoing development of Data4Learning dashboard: 0.1 FTE. Student retention team: 2.0 FTE. CPD training sessions for personal tutors, module and programme leaders: 0.05 FTE. Regular student communications: 0.05 FTE.	Improved academic performance; increased student retention rates; decreased withdrawals for personal reasons and academic failure; enhanced student engagement.	Supports all other intervention strategies.
Herts SU led initiative				
Herts Unfiltered (enhanced)	Listening project. Peer-led insight gathering throughout the year with a focus on understanding students' concerns and barriers to success.	Student Insight Assistants: x 10.	Increased student engagement in academic and non-academic activities and services; improved sense of mattering and /belonging.	Supports all other intervention strategies.
Widening participation specific initiatives				
Widening Participation Student Panel (new)	Student panel for consultation and feedback. Led by the access and participation team in partnership with Herts SU. 25 paid student roles, meeting once a month to co-create and feedback on WP initiatives. Mediated through hybrid meetings, polls and other mechanisms.	Staff Leads: 0.2 FTE. Training and support for panel members. 25 paid student members.	Student-informed and co-created widening participation initiatives and activities.	Specific intervention.
Herts Guide to Success (new)	Co-produced student e-handbook. To support WP students to transition successfully into Herts, preparing them for academic study, helping them to navigate university services, and access co-curricular activities like societies and sports.	Development and maintenance costs: 0.2 FTE.	Increased knowledge and understanding about studying at university; improved sense of mattering /belonging; increased self-efficacy; increased retention.	Specific intervention.
Total cost of activities and evaluation for the four years of the plan £7,494,000				

Evidence base and rationale: We have reviewed the evidence and consulted with students and staff at the University to inform the design of these interventions and to determine best practice. More detail can be found in Annex B.

Intervention strategy 1 (IS1): Male students

Objective Risk 3: To reduce the continuation gap between Male and Female students to a minimum of 2pp by 2028/29

Objective Risk 9: To eliminate the 'good degree' gap between Male and Female students by 2028/29

Objective Risk 5: To reduce the 'good degree' gap between White Male and Black Male students from 41pp to 20pp

Objective Risk 12: To eliminate the Graduate Outcomes gap between Male and Female students by 2028/29

Risks to equality of opportunity (continuation): this risk may be a function of having limited opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills that match their expectations and ambitions.

Risks to equality of opportunity (progression): Females are identified as being at risk of low progression in the EORR (downloadable matrix), however, it is Males who are at risk at UH.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross-link?
Institutional				
1.1 Cross-University Research Group (new)	Research into male student engagement and study behaviours. Exploration of factors influencing male outcomes such as performative masculinity, peer pressure, earning demands and the impact of previous educational experiences on the male experience of HE. Findings will be used to inform and improve educational and student support practices.	Research group: x10 0.05 FTE. Herts SU focus groups. Data Analyst: 0.1 FTE.	Evidence generated to inform activities that may increase male continuation; degree attainment; and overall student experience.	Specific intervention.
1.2 Differentiated communications for Male Students (new)	Developing an approach to communication that recognises the perspectives and interests of male students. To include communications about studying, support services and co-curricular activities.	Staff resource: 0.05 FTE. Targeted campaigns with Herts SU.	Increased male student engagement with support services.	Specific intervention.
Learning, teaching, and academic support				
1.3 Focus on Programme Level Attainment by Sex (new)	Review of pedagogic approaches which recognise male perspectives. Targeted at programmes with largest gaps and drawing on the findings from the cross-university research group.	Staff resource: 0.4 FTE across programme and Learning and Teaching Excellence team. Development of data dashboards.	Increased male student attainment across each level of study.	This will contribute to IS2.
Student				
1.4 Academic Societies (new)	Herts SU-led academic societies project. This will target the bottom 20% of academic programmes in terms of male outcomes to ensure they have well-resourced academic societies in place that meet the needs of male students.	Staff resource: 1.0 FTE.	Improved continuation, award and progression outcomes for male students on targeted programmes.	Specific intervention.

1.5 Career Mentoring (new)	An alumni and employer mentoring programme for recent male graduates at high risk of lower progression outcomes. Alumni mentors with relevant lived experience will be recruited to ensure they are relatable to the male target groups. Aim for 100 mentees.	Mentoring Coordinator: 0.8 FTE Graduate Success Consultants. x50 Volunteer alumni and employer mentors.	Increased numbers of male graduates securing graduate employment.	Specific intervention.
Total cost of activities and evaluation for the four years of the plan		£828,000		

Evidence base and rationale: We have reviewed the evidence and consulted with students and staff at the University to inform the design of these interventions and to determine best practice. More detail can be found in Annex B.

Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
We do not intend to evaluate each activity within the strategy. We will focus our efforts on evaluating new activity, those with an emerging evidence base or those which require most resource. As such we will evaluate activities 1.2, 1.4, and 1.5 to establish whether they lead to the intended outcomes. We will also examine the extent to which each activity contributes to the overall objective by evaluating the whole intervention.			
Whole Intervention	Increased Male Continuation. Eliminate Male/Female awarding gap. Eliminate Male/Female Graduate outcomes gap	Empirical (Type 2)	Initial findings will be shared in 2029-30. Report to steering group. Presentation at internal conferences. Findings shared to repository on external website.
1.2 Differentiated Comms	Increased male student engagement with support services.	Empirical (Type 2)	Yearly internal reports. Findings and best practice shared to repository on external website.
1.4 Academic Societies	Improved continuation, award and progression outcomes for male students on targeted programmes.	Empirical (Type 2)	No publication. Findings will contribute to whole intervention evaluation.
1.5 Career Mentoring	Increased numbers of male students securing relevant work opportunities	Empirical (Type 2)	Blog posts and student spotlights added to repository on external website.

Intervention strategy 2 (IS2): Students who identify as Black or Asian

Objective Risk 5 - To reduce the 'good degree' awarding gap between White and Black students, White Male and Black Male students and between White and Asian students, by a minimum of 50% for each group by 2028/29. This will bring the good degree gap between White and Black students down from 17.7pp to 8pp and the good degree gap between White and Asian students down from 12.3pp to 6pp. The good degree gap between White Male and Black Male students would reduce from 41pp to 20pp.

Risks to equality of opportunity: may be a function of insufficient academic and personal support; lack of information and guidance; inaccurate perceptions of higher education; low application success rates; and lack of opportunity to progress into graduate employment or further study.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross-link?
Institutional				
2.1 Herts Against Racism (new)	A comprehensive four-year anti-racism project. Addressing racism by focusing on five areas: 1) Structures (Conduct reviews and reforms of existing structures and practices to ensure equity and inclusivity are embedded at all levels); 2) Policy Reform (Develop and implement policies that actively combat racism and discrimination. Regularly review and update these to reflect evolving best practice and legal standards); 3) Staff Development (Provide comprehensive anti-racist education and cultural competency professional development opportunities for all staff members); 4) Student Support (Enhance support systems for students from diverse backgrounds, focusing on mentorship, academic resources, and mental health services); 5) Student voice (Establish student-led forums to ensure their voices are central to our efforts). Herts Against Racism aims to set a standard for anti-racist practice in higher education, fostering a community where every individual is empowered to succeed without prejudice or discrimination.	Leadership, administration support and cross-institutional membership of an anti-racism group: 0.4 FTE centrally. 0.2 FTE from each academic school. 0.1 FTE Careers service. 0.2 FTE EDI team. EDI Committee: 5x2 1hr meetings, 20 members.	Reduction in awarding gap between racially minoritised students and White students.	Specific intervention.
2.2 Race and Ethnicity Equity Research Fund (new)	A fund to facilitate research into issues relating to race and ethnicity equity. Financial support for staff-student partnership research into the lived experience of racially minoritised students in HE. Findings will be used to inform and improve educational and student support practices.	Staff resource: 0.05 FTE. Financial support fund.	Findings used to inform interventions that reduce the awarding gap.	Specific intervention.

<p>2.3 Race and Ethnicity Equity Student Advocates (existing)</p>	<p>Student partnership and advocacy work. Paid student roles to help facilitate student voice and co-production activities which contribute to our understanding of how best to address the awarding gap. They will work with staff to identify where improvements in practice can be made and will be supported by a comprehensive training programme.</p>	<p>Staff resource: 0.1 FTE. 5x Advocates.</p>	<p>Findings from projects and partnership work used to inform interventions that reduce the awarding gap.</p>	<p>Specific intervention.</p>
<p>Learning, teaching, and academic support</p>				
<p>2.4 Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Practice (enhanced)</p>	<p>Further development of inclusive practice in learning, teaching and assessment (LTA). Annual school-based review events to identify challenges and share good practice. Tailored workshops delivered for all UG programmes (110+) across two academic years, using the inclusive teaching curriculum design toolkit, prioritising those with the most substantial awarding gaps between Black and White students or between Asian and White students.</p>	<p>Learning and Teaching Specialists: 0.2 FTE. Programme teams: 0.1 FTE.</p>	<p>Curricula that recognise the experiences of racially minoritised students; staff knowledgeable about designing curricular to support positive outcomes for racially minoritised students.</p>	<p>Specific intervention.</p>
<p>2.5 Module Awarding Gap Action Plans (new)</p>	<p>Implementing module-level awarding gap actions. Exam board papers to include awarding gap data at module level, enabling timely actions to be set in the Continuous Enhancement Process (CEP). Benchmark will be set for highest number of students / largest gaps for priority oversight by Academic Quality. A minimum of 20 modules will be reviewed in the first year.</p>	<p>Module leaders, Academic Quality and L&T Specialists: 0.05 FTE.</p>	<p>Reduction in module-level awarding gaps.</p>	<p>Specific intervention.</p>
<p>Student</p>				
<p>2.6 Leadership Programme for Racially Minoritised Students (enhanced)</p>	<p>A leadership and empowerment programme for racially minoritised students. Working with third-party providers, this two-day programme will be offered to racially minoritised students as an opportunity for them to develop an understanding of the beliefs and motivations which drive their behaviours and choices,</p>	<p>Staff resource: 0.05 FTE. External provider costs.</p>	<p>Improved self-efficacy, confidence and self-belief. Improved</p>	<p>Specific intervention.</p>

	and which can contribute to their success as students. For piloting with up to 50 students in 2024-25 with a view to increasing numbers thereafter.		attainment and progression outcomes.	
2.7 Dissertation Support Project (new)	A targeted approach to improving academic success. Development of dissertation support for racially minoritised students at 2:2 average at the end of level 5. Aim to work with 30 students in the first year.	Learning and Teaching Specialists: 0.1 FTE. Programme teams: 0.1 FTE.	Improved self-efficacy; improved attainment outcomes.	Specific intervention.
Total cost of activities and evaluation for the four years of the plan		£4,274,000		

Evidence base and rationale: We have reviewed the evidence and consulted with students and staff at the University to inform the design of these interventions and to determine best practice. More detail can be found in Annex B.

Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
<p>We do not intend to evaluate each activity within the strategy. We will focus our efforts on evaluating new activity, those with an emerging evidence base or those which require most resource. As such we will evaluate activities 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 to establish whether they lead to the intended outcomes. We will also examine the extent to which each activity contributes to the overall objective by evaluating the whole intervention.</p>			
Whole Intervention	Reduction in awarding gap between racially minoritised students and White students	Empirical (Type 2)	Initial findings will be shared in 2029-30. Report to steering group. Presentation at internal conferences. Findings shared to repository on external website.
2.1 Herts Against Racism	Reduction in awarding gap between racially minoritised students and White students	Empirical (Type 2)	Progress reports at the end of 2026-27 and 2028-29. Identified areas of good practice shared externally.
2.4 Inclusive Practice Development	Staff are knowledgeable about designing and delivering curricular (including assessment strategies) that support positive outcomes for racially minoritised students.	Empirical (Type 2)	Publication of findings after two years of the intervention (publication 2027-28).
2.5 Module Awarding Gap Action Plans	Reduction in module-level awarding gaps	Empirical (Type 2)	Internal publication of findings and sharing of good practice.
2.6 Leadership Programme	Improved attainment and progression outcomes	Empirical (Type 2)	End of programme reports shared to repository on external website.
2.7 Dissertation Support Project	Improved attainment and progression outcomes.	Empirical (Type 2)	End of project reports shared to repository on external website.

Intervention Strategy 3 (IS3): Students with BTEC entry qualifications

Objective Risk 4: To reduce the continuation gap between A-level and BTEC entry students to a minimum of 4pp by 2028/29

Objective Risk 8: To reduce the 'good degree' gap between A-level and BTEC entry students by a minimum of 50% to 8pp by 2028/29

Objective Risk 13: To reduce the Graduate Outcomes gap between BTEC entry and A-level students to a minimum of 3pp by 2028/29

Risks to equality of opportunity: this risk group is not identified in the EORR but our data shows that there are overlaps with other risks e.g., substantial numbers of racially minoritised students enter with BTEC and/or a history of FSM. For Black/Black British males that are FSM eligible, 58% have a BTEC compared to 37% who have A Levels. Proportionately, more students who were eligible for FSM have BTEC qualifications than those who were not eligible for FSM.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross-link?
Institutional				
3.1 Entry Qualifications Outcomes Dashboard (new)	Improved access to outcomes data. Development of a data dashboard for tracking student outcomes by entry qualification supported by data literacy training for academic and professional staff.	Staff resource: 0.05 FTE.	Student outcomes monitored to ensure appropriate targeting of resource and intervention activity.	Specific intervention.
Learning, teaching, and academic support				
3.2 Staff Development: Supporting Students with Non-traditional Entry Qualifications (new)	Staff development to improve knowledge and understanding about learning, teaching and assessment experiences of students entering higher education with non-traditional entry qualifications. Development of an online staff training package and embedded sessions in the University's professional development programme for teaching staff. Targeted to staff where there are high numbers of BTEC/Non-traditional entry students.	Staff resource: 0.05 FTE.	Improved understanding of curriculum design and assessment practices for students with non-traditional entry qualifications.	Specific intervention.
Student				
3.3 Herts Academic Skills Tailored Transition Programme for BTEC/Non-A Level Entry Students (new)	A non-accredited transition programme for non-traditional entry qualification students. A co-produced, co-delivered course designed for students joining Herts with BTEC and other non-traditional entry qualifications. Sessions delivered throughout first year of study to support students with L4 academic study skills, study resilience and confidence in seeking support.	Staff resource: 0.2 FTE. Academic Skills Tutor. Students.	Increased knowledge and understanding of L4 study requirements; improved knowledge of university processes and support mechanisms; increased sense of belonging; increased confidence in seeking help and support.	Specific intervention.
Total cost of activities and evaluation for the four years of the plan		£116,000		

Evidence base and rationale: We have reviewed the evidence and consulted with students and staff at the University to inform the design of these interventions and to determine best practice. More detail can be found in Annex B.

Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
We do not intend to evaluate each activity within the strategy. We will focus our efforts on evaluating new activity, those with an emerging evidence base or those which require most resource. As such we will evaluate activities 3.2 and 3.3 to establish whether they lead to the intended outcomes.			
3.2 Staff Development: Supporting Students with Non-traditional Entry Qualifications	Students with non-traditional entry qualifications have outcomes equitable to A-Level entry students.	Empirical (Type 2)	Publication of findings after two years of the intervention (publication 2027-28)
3.3 Herts Academic Skills Tailored Transition Programme	Increased sense of belonging/mattering. Increased academic attainment.	Empirical (Type 2)	Conference submission. Findings shared to external repository on external website

Intervention strategy 4 (IS4): Students who declare a Mental Health Condition

Objective Risk 1 - To increase the continuation rate of students with a declared Mental Health Condition from 85.1% to be equivalent to, or more than, the continuation rates students without a declared disability by 2028/29

Objective Risk 10 - To reduce the Graduate Outcomes gap between students with a declared Mental Health Condition and those without a declared disability by a minimum of 50% to 3pp by 2028/29

Risks to equality of opportunity (continuation): may be a function of insufficient academic and personal support; may also be linked to capacity issues (such as service availability) which can impact negatively on mental health.

Risks to equality of opportunity (progression): may be a function of having insufficient opportunity to progress to an outcome students consider to be a positive reflection of their higher education experience.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross-link?
Institutional				
4.1 Disability Student Advocates (existing)	Student advocate programme. Paid student roles to help to raise awareness of the needs of students with disabilities, including those with Mental Health Conditions. They will work with staff to identify where improvements in practice can be made.	Staff to lead training and support: 0.2 FTE. 7x Student Advocates.	Disability support that is informed by the lived experiences of students.	Specific intervention.
4.2 'Amplifying the mental health of Black university students' (new)	Research into student mental health. Participation in a five-year research project, in conjunction with the Universities of Durham, Nottingham, and East London, to amplify the social and cultural experiences influencing Black students' mental health and wellbeing at university.	Research lead; review of current provision; co-ordination of student contribution. 30 hours.	Enhanced insight into the mental health of Black students in HE; improved outcomes for Black students with mental health issues.	Specific intervention.
4.3 'Herts Minds' Student Led Support Group (new)	Mental health student-led support group. Co-produced and co-delivered initiative which will offer compassionate and confidential spaces for students to share their experiences and support one another. Tailored to meet the needs of different student demographics and intersections.	Staff 0.2 FTE. Support group materials and supplies.	Improved continuation outcomes for students with Mental Health Conditions.	Specific intervention.
4.4 Wellbeing Advisors (new)	Academic school-based advisor roles. School-based advisors providing first point of contact for wellbeing support for students, enabling early identification of issues and appropriate onward signposting. Overseen by a central co-ordinator.	Staff: 2.0 FTE (included within overarching Institutional objective)	Increased continuation rates for students with Mental Health Conditions; students with Mental Health Conditions feel supported.	Specific intervention.
Learning, teaching, and academic support				
4.5 Mental Health and Wellbeing	Student and staff education and training sessions. A rolling programme of approximately 55 sessions (online and	Workshops delivered by university staff and	Increased staff knowledge and understanding; increased student confidence of	Specific intervention.

Development Programme (existing)	in-person per year) focused on recognising and responding to mental health and wellbeing issues.	through external partners: 0.2 FTE.	managing own mental health and wellbeing.	
Student				
4.6 Art Therapy (existing)	Weekly therapeutic art group. Art used as a therapeutic medium to build mental health and resilience for those students who have difficulty engaging with traditional talking therapy. Minimum of 70 students per year subject to meeting referral criteria.	Staff: 30 hours.	Students who find it difficult to engage in talking therapy access an alternative therapy.	Specific intervention.
4.7 Men's Suicide Prevention Support Group (new)	A dedicated space for men to come together, share their experiences, and find mutual support in a safe and non-judgmental environment. This group will focus on addressing the unique challenges men face with their mental health.	Staff: 30 hours.	Improved mental health awareness. Increased self-efficacy.	Specific intervention.
4.8 Career Development Programme (new)	A dedicated programme for students with declared Mental Health Conditions. To include access to trained Careers Coaches to support with action planning and application, a programme of workshops, guest speakers and online resources and access to the careers' studio (space, resources and advice) two years post-graduation.	5x Career Coaches.	Increased number of students securing positive graduate outcomes.	Specific intervention.
4.9 Employer resources (enhanced)	Development of employer briefings about inclusive recruitment practices and equitable work environments. Co-created with students with declared Mental Health Conditions to ensure student perspectives are reflected in the resources.	Student/graduate-led project funds. Talent Consultants to liaise with employers.	Improved inclusive recruitment practices	Specific intervention.
Total cost of activities and evaluation for the four years of the plan		£472,000		

Evidence base and rationale: We have reviewed the evidence and consulted with students and staff at the University to inform the design of these interventions and to determine best practice. More detail can be found in Annex B.

Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
<p>We do not intend to evaluate each activity within the strategy. We will focus our efforts on evaluating new activity, those with an emerging evidence base or those which require most resource. As such we will evaluate activities 4.5 and 4.8 to establish whether they lead to the intended outcomes. We will also examine the extent to which each activity contributes to the overall objective by evaluating the whole intervention.</p>			
Whole intervention	<p>Increased continuation for students declaring a Mental Health Condition. Increased graduate outcomes for students declaring a Mental Health Condition.</p>	Empirical (Type 2)	<p>Initial findings will be shared in 2029-30. Report to steering group. Presentation at internal conferences. Findings shared to repository on external website.</p>
4.5 Mental Health and Wellbeing Development Programme	<p>Increased staff awareness to better support students. Increased student confidence to better manage own emotional and mental wellbeing.</p>	Empirical (Type 2)	<p>Findings shared to repository on external website. Will contribute to whole intervention evaluation.</p>
4.8 Career Development programme	<p>Increased number of students engaging with the Career Development Programme.</p>	Empirical (Type 2)	<p>Findings shared to repository on external website when graduate outcomes data available (2027-28). Will contribute to whole intervention evaluation.</p>

Intervention strategy 5 (IS5): Students who have been eligible for Free School Meals and Students from Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile 1

Both FSM and IMD quintile 1 are measures of socio-economic status with moderate correlations to low income. Both require a social capital aspect to their intervention as well as an economic one. Because of these commonalities the interventions for the two at risk groups have been combined into a single intervention strategy. However, the objectives and targets remain distinct to allow monitoring of the risk-specific outcomes and for variation in approach in the future should it be required. A full rationale for the adoption of this approach is set out in Annex B.

Objective Risk 2: To improve Yr 1 continuation for FSM eligible students until, at a minimum, continuation rates are increased to be equivalent to, or more than, non-FSM eligible students' continuation by 2028/29

Objective Risk 6: To reduce the good degree gap between FSM eligible and non-FSM eligible students by a minimum of 50% by 2028/29 i.e., from 11.4pp to 5.5pp

Objective Risk 7: To reduce the gap in good degree outcomes between IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 students by a minimum of 50% to 7pp by 2028/29

Objective Risk 11: To reduce the Graduate Outcomes gap between IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 students by a minimum of 50% to 3pp

Risks to equality of opportunity (FSM continuation and good degrees): may be a function of insufficient academic and personal support; limited opportunity to develop necessary knowledge and skills; lack of information and guidance; inaccurate perceptions of higher education; low application success rates; limited choice of course type and delivery; environments that are not conducive to good mental health; the ongoing impact of COVID-19; capacity limits; increased cost pressures; and lack of opportunity to progress successfully.

Risks to equality of opportunity (IMD good degrees): Whilst IMD is not identified separately in the EORR, the risks are likely to be similar to those identified for FSM and Low Income and are therefore seen in all twelve risk areas.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross-link?
Institutional				
5.1 Widening Participation Characteristics Dashboard (enhanced)	Development of new data visualisation and tracking processes. This will facilitate student outcome monitoring for the FSM characteristic (IMD and other characteristics already in existence). As FSM data is not currently held by the University this will be a development that will be reliant on the new FSM data feed from UCAS.	Access to FSM data. Staff: 0.5 FTE.	FSM and IMD Q1 student outcomes for continuation and good degrees can be easily accessed and progress monitored.	Specific intervention.
5.2 UH Bursary (revised)	UH Flagship Bursary of £1000 for Level 4 students with an assessed household income of <£30,000. The eligibility criteria for this bursary have been amended for 2024/25 by raising the household income threshold from 25k to 30k and removing the POLAR4 requirement. We anticipate that this will capture more FSM eligible and IMD Q1 students than previously.	Webpage bursary information. Administration. 0.1 FTE. Bursary allocation.	More FSM/IMD Q1 students receiving the UH Bursary; increased continuation rates; increased % of 'good degree' attainment.	Specific intervention.

Learning, Teaching and Academic Support				
5.3 A Transition Programme for WP Students in their First Year of UG Study (new)	Co-designed and co-delivered non-accredited transition programme. To aid students to successfully transition through their first year, including content on how to navigate support services, understanding and seeking feedback, life skills for independent living and managing issues such as social anxiety and isolation. This innovative new course will be co-designed with a small team of WP student partners and targeted to recipients of the UH Bursary (low income) and other at groups including FSM eligible students. Digital device access and the best format for delivery will be considered during the co-production period.	Course content design, administration and delivery: 0.5 FTE. 0.5 FTE.	Increased awareness and uptake of support services; increased confidence in abilities; increased self-efficacy. Improved continuation rates.	IS3.
Student				
5.4 Student Opportunity Fund (enhanced)	Funded co-curricular opportunities for WP students. A fund which offers L5 and L6 WP students the opportunity to receive up to £1000 to undertake a co-curricular opportunity to enhance the development of their Graduate Attributes and improve employability. It is anticipated that the inclusion of UH Bursary students will also increase the number of FSM eligible and IMD Q1 students who can access the fund.	Management and allocation of fund.	More FSM/IMD Q1 receiving funds than previously; students gain new skills, knowledge and/or experiences which enhance their graduate outcomes.	Specific intervention.
5.5 Virtual Internships (new)	Virtual internships offer. Funded opportunities for FSM and IMD Q1 final year students who have not had a professional work experience opportunity, to take part in a flexible, professional, virtual internship. Students will receive a certificate, digital badge and an employer reference on completion.	Internship costs (min of 250 per year). Internships Officer 0.3 FTE.	Increase in students securing positive graduate outcomes	Specific intervention.
5.6 Graduate Access (new)	Access to Careers Studio. The Studio provides space, resources and expert advice for students. Two named Careers Development Consultants (CDC) will offer bespoke support to IMD Q1 and FSM students.	Career Development Consultants: 30 hours.	Increase in students securing positive graduate outcomes.	Specific intervention.
5.7 Join the Dots - The Brilliant Club (new)	Supporting successful transition to university. A minimum of 30 IMD Q1 and FSM students take part in a series of university preparation activities, delivered through self-paced and live sessions by a third-party provider. Sessions are built on the principles of community, connections, and coaching and		Increase in academic self-efficacy. Increase in study strategy use.	Specific intervention.

	help students develop key university study strategies and access university support as needed.		Improved sense of belonging.	
Total cost of activities and evaluation for the four years of the plan		£4,283,000		

Evidence base and rationale: We have reviewed the evidence and consulted with students and staff at the University to inform the design of these interventions and to determine best practice. More detail can be found in Annex B.

Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
We do not intend to evaluate each activity within the strategy. We will focus our efforts on evaluating new activity, those with an emerging evidence base or those which require most resource. As such we will evaluate activities 5.2,5.3,5.4, 5.6,5.7, 5.8 to establish whether they lead to the intended outcomes.			
5.2 UH Bursary	Increased continuation rates for FSM students. Increased good degree attainment for FSM and IMD Q1 students.	Empirical (Type 2)	Report to internal steering groups each academic year. Cumulative findings shared to repository on external website
5.3 Transition Programme	Increased uptake of support services. Increased confidence in abilities. Increased self-efficacy. Improved continuation rates.	Causal (Type 3)	Conference submissions and findings shared to findings repository on external website. Findings first available 6 months after first year of programme (approx. 2026-27).
5.4 Student Opportunity Fund	Participants gain new skills, knowledge and/or experiences which enhances employment and further study opportunities.	Empirical (Type 2)	Conference submissions and findings shared to findings repository on external website.
5.5 Virtual Internships	Increase in students securing positive graduate outcomes	Empirical (Type 2)	Findings shared to repository on external website when graduate outcomes data available (2027-28).
5.6 Graduate Access	Increase in students securing positive graduate outcomes	Causal (Type 3)	Findings shared to repository on external website when graduate outcomes data available (2027-28).
5.7 Join the Dots	Increase in academic self-efficacy. Increase in study strategy use. Improved sense of belonging.	Empirical (Type 2)	End of programme reports shared to repository on external website.

Whole provider approach

Introduction

Our whole provider approach (WPA) draws on the work of the University of York's Centre for Research on Education and Social Justice (CRESJ) which explored the meaning of WPA in higher education (HE) (Thomas, 2024⁸). In this work, WPA is described as an approach that focuses on widening access and student experience interventions across the student lifecycle, with the involvement of staff from across the institution, not just professional widening participation staff. It also highlights the importance of working in partnership with students and the necessity of operating in an 'enabling environment' to facilitate institutional transformation. The four dimensions of an 'enabling environment', as set out by Thomas, have been used to articulate the WPA at Herts, with minor adaptations to fit our context (see below).

The structures, policies, procedures and initiatives detailed within the dimensions all significantly contribute to demonstrating due regard under the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010. These include, but are not limited to, EDI key performance indicators, development of an EDI strategy, EDI Governance structures, commitment to various charter marks and completion of equality impact assessments.

Dimension 1 - Institutional and senior leadership commitment to access and success

Our institution-wide commitment to access and participation is recognised within our vision to 'power the potential' of our students. This commitment is underpinned by institutional-level key performance indicators (including working towards the elimination of the race awarding gap and exceeding TEF benchmarks for continuation, completion, and progression), and is implemented via the University's Student Engagement and Success Plan. Our access and participation activities align with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) work, recognised through our Bronze awards for the Race Equality Charter and Silver Athena Swan. The current development of an EDI strategy will ensure a WPA to EDI, with clear connections to the institutional strategy, sustainability and wellbeing. This work drives forward the equity agenda at Herts, helping the University to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and to become a place where students and staff feel individually valued and respected. Our FACES values (Friendly, Ambitious, Collegiate, Enterprising and Student-focused) further reflect the institution's commitment to creating an enabling student-staff community which works together in an ambitious and enterprising way to support student success.

The University's Access and Participation Steering Group (APSG), advises on access and participation policy and operational matters. The APSG has representation from across the institution including the Access and Participation team (AP), Academic Schools, EDI, Herts SU, Student Finance, Careers and Employment and Student Wellbeing (including Disability). The APSG functions as a subsidiary group of the Education and Student Experience Committee and is chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education and Student Experience (PVC-ESE). As a member of the University's senior leadership team, the PVC-ESE plays a key role in engaging other senior leaders (including the Board of Governors) in the access and participation agenda. The PVC-ESE also chairs a Student Advisory Group which meets regularly throughout the year to inform the strategic direction of our education provision. The group's membership includes representation of students from different backgrounds and experiences and includes a Race and Ethnicity Equity Student Advocate, a disabled student representative, a student parent/carer, a mature student representative, and the chair of the student LGBTQ+ society, as well as senior staff from across the University who are invited to listen and respond to student issues and ideas.

⁸ Thomas (2024). A whole provider approach to widening access and student success in higher education. Available at <https://tinyurl.com/39faw9zr> [Accessed 24 July 2024].

Dimension 2 - Alignment of institutional organisation, policies and processes to support access and success.

The AP team are a highly experienced centrally situated team who work across the student lifecycle, from primary school through to university, to achieve equitable outcomes for at risk students. The AP team sits in the Centre for Learning, Access and Student Success which provides expert support across the institution for learning and teaching, digital capabilities and academic skills. Within the AP team, the Access team works closely with targeted partnership primary and secondary schools and further education colleges (FE) from across Hertfordshire, delivering a sustained and progressive approach. The Priority Groups and Student Outcomes team provide targeted support to our key priority groups including Refugee Learners, Care Experienced, Young Adult Carers, Estranged and Low-Income students. This team also work closely with the academic and student success teams in the University's Academic Schools and with all key central services including Student Wellbeing, Student Finance, Library and Computing Services, and Careers and Employment. The Evaluation and Impact team supports all our access and participation data and evaluation activity (see 4. for more information).

Our approach across the student lifecycle, from access to transition into and through the levels of study and on to graduate employment or further study, is designed to meet the needs of our diverse student population. This is facilitated by various institutional policies and processes including:

- **Contextual admissions** – we offer eligible students a tariff reduction of up to one grade below our standard entry requirements (equivalent to 8 UCAS points). FSM eligibility aligns with our support of FSM students as outlined in IS5. Care leavers are also eligible.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Teams (EDITs)** - each Strategic Business Unit (SBU) and Academic School has an EDIT and an EDIT action plan to ensure that EDI related issues for staff and students are actioned and progress is monitored. Action plans link to the Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter marks and also cover broader staff and student EDI issues.
- **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)** - our revised EIA process will facilitate equitable policy and decision-making processes in a structured and robust way to uphold the rights and experiences of students with protected characteristics.
- **Education and Student Experience Objectives** – these institutional objectives recognise our students' diverse experiences and intersectional identities through focusing on individual needs, sense of belonging, equity, celebration of diversity and empowerment.
- **Financial support** - our Financial Support Strategic Group make recommendations concerning the Financial Support Policy and the annual budget. They identify priorities relating to student hardship and cost of living support and manage the criteria and distribution processes for financial support.
- **Learning and Teaching Policy** – this institutional policy recognises the importance of offering versatile ways for students to connect with their learning around their busy, complex lives. Our Herts Learning Principles, which underpin all curricular, prioritise student learning through coherent design that offers choice for personalisation where appropriate, while focusing on building strong communities and harnessing technology to promote success. Our Herts Learning Principles are complemented by our Herts Experience Principles which draw on the Student Futures Manifesto and help students integrate into our community whilst recognising their individuality.
- **Wellbeing Framework** - the development of a new framework and our self-assessment work on the Mental Health Charter has identified institutional actions including ensuring that wellbeing initiatives are co-created with students and that existing work with external partners such as NHS services and charities, is further enhanced to enable students to access specialist support where required.
- **Support to study** - Young Adult Carers (YAC) are eligible for a specially designed Study Needs Agreement (SNA) from the Disability Team which recognises their ongoing caring responsibilities and the impact they may have on their ability to study effectively. This practice reduces the number of times YAC students are required to repeat information about their personal circumstances and helps to reduce assessment-related anxiety.
- **Support for deferral** - the University's centrally managed assessment deferral process allows the Access and Participation team to corroborate students' requests for extenuating circumstances without revealing sensitive or private information about the student's situation. This practice reduces the number of times our priority group students are required to share information about their personal circumstances and helps to reduce assessment-related anxiety.

Dimension 3 - Staff and students with relevant skills, knowledge, understanding and support to engage with the access and success agenda.

Our commitment to working in partnership with students is explicitly articulated in the University's Strategic Plan and is visible in all decision-making processes from the creation of new programmes to the development of student-facing services and the design of physical and online learning environments. Initiatives such as our Student-Staff Partnership Network and our annual Learning and Teaching, EDI and Student Success conferences, provide valuable fora for sharing learning and good practice about partnership working.

We recognise the importance of empowering our student partners through shared knowledge and understanding and are committed to valuing the expertise and time that they give to making Herts the vibrant and transformative place that it is. We therefore offer numerous paid partnership roles including those of the Race and Ethnicity Equity Advocates, Careers Coaches, and Access and Participation Ambassadors, all of which are supported by robust training and development programmes to enable students to engage with the access and participation agenda in an informed manner. Herts SU is also an important focus for facilitating student-partnership opportunities at Herts with elected Officers, Student Representatives and School Community Organisers all playing an important role in ensuring the experiences of students with diverse backgrounds and experiences are understood by the University. In addition to student-staff partnership opportunities, we also provide a variety of student feedback and contribution mechanisms including module feedback surveys, the student voice panel and membership of key committees and working groups including the Board of Governors.

We also understand the importance of supporting staff and students to be digitally skilled and confident in order to engage fully with the work of access and participation, as well as to study effectively (Digitally capable and confident is one of our six Graduate Attributes). Staff digital skills are developed through a range of skills resources and workshops, and through access to expert learning support. Students are encouraged to complete the Get Started with Herts Digital Checklist within four weeks of starting to help them get to grips with the everyday digital tools they will need whilst studying, such as connecting to Eduroam and accessing their timetable. They are also encouraged to use the Jisc Digital Discovery tool to assess their digital capability and the Herts Digital Learner Profile to understand their strengths and areas for development. Our Library SkillUP module, which is open to all students, contains a comprehensive suite of self-guided resources to support the development of digital skills. Students can also access personalised support through our Student Technology Mentors who are available three days a week in our Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) during term time. Further support is available through our 'Digital Foundations' offer, weekly 'Digital Wednesdays' and annual 'Digital Skills Week' initiatives. In support of these initiatives, our LRCs operate a laptop loan system which all students can access. In addition, we provide approximately 40 free laptops to priority student groups each year.

Staff engagement with the access and participation agenda is also facilitated through our work on the inclusive curriculum. 'Developing Inclusive Practice' is one of four modules within the PGCert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education which is a probationary requirement for staff new to teaching in Higher Education. Inclusive practices are also supported by use of our Inclusive Curriculum Checklist which helps staff to provide inclusive and accessible teaching materials and assessments. Programme teams are required to engage with the inclusive curriculum approach as part of the University's Continuous Enhancement Process and External Examiners are asked to comment on inclusivity within their annual reports.

Our approach to inclusive practice has been informed by the University's participation in a number of sector-wide collaborative projects including the HEFCE/OFS funded project 'Value-added scores and inclusive curriculum discussions to drive institutional change' (2017-19); the Advance HE funded project 'Engaging students in meaningful and inclusive cultural change' (2022); our work on 'Academic leadership at the programme level to address the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic attainment gap'; and the design and implementation of our Race and Ethnicity Equity Student

Advocate Programme (case studies published in the UUK and NUS report 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: #CLOSINGTHEGAP' (2019)).

Dimension 4 - Access and success activity underpinned by data, evidence, evaluation and learning.

The University's Student Performance and Monitoring Group (SPMG) is a cross-institutional group which scrutinises student outcomes data and reports on trends and concerns to the senior leadership team and key stakeholders through the University's committee governance structure. For example, concerns about continuation outcomes for specific student groups has led to the development of a retention initiative which includes the establishment of a cross-university student retention team. The access and participation team has a well-established data and evaluation function which is represented in the SPMG and has a strong ethos of data-informed and evidence-based practice. Access to institutional data is facilitated by our Student Information and Planning team through bespoke access and participation data dashboards which are subjected to continual review and enhancement as new requirements emerge. Our evaluation and 'What Works' approach is detailed in the evaluation section of the plan and we are committed to taking this forward along with a more nuanced approach to the use of theories of change to inform our intervention and evaluation activity.

The University recognises the value of establishing collaborative relationships with other providers and third-party organisations for sharing learning, generating evidence and undertaking evaluation in a mutually beneficial way. Externally, we are the lead partner in the Aspire Higher Uni Connect programme for Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire which was established in 2017. We also have a well-established consortium partnership with the four Hertfordshire further education (FE) colleges offering a range of extended and foundation degrees for those wishing to study locally or with insufficient grade profiles to gain entry at degree level. In addition, our membership of the University Alliance provides opportunities for collaboration and learning with other providers; recent examples of collaborative projects in support of access and participation include 'Embedding inclusive assessment attributes' and 'Understanding the needs of commuting students'. We also appreciate the value that third party organisations can bring to our work and have worked with many partners in delivering access and participation activity. Most recently we partnered with the Brilliant Club who were asked to facilitate a stakeholder consultation to support the development of the new APP and to assess readiness for implementation across the institution. As part of this consultation, researchers from the Brilliant Club's evaluation consultancy team conducted online interviews with key stakeholders at the university to explore points of alignment and contention across the university, with regards to the strategic approach to APP work. The recommendations have been key to informing this work going forward. The University will continue to collaborate with the Brilliant Club through the 'Join the Dots' programme and the establishment of a partnership with Herts' Doctoral College.

Internally, we promote collaborative approaches to working across the institution and are especially cognisant of the importance of working in partnership with Herts SU, our students' union. Membership of the Union on the APSG ensures the student voice is represented on all access and participation matters and the Union is active in partnering or leading on activities that promote success for priority groups of students.

Summary

The articulation of the WPA through the four 'enabling environment' dimensions has enabled us to identify strengths and areas for future development. These developments include commitments to address systemic inequalities, avoid deficit approaches and realise the assets that students of all backgrounds bring to the institution. We also seek to develop support for priority groups not currently in receipt of targeted support such as those from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boating and Military Families and to increase our work with commuting and mature students. In addition, we will improve data collection associated with accessing support services and processes such as exceptional circumstances and appeals. Finally, we will continue to collaborate with others to ensure our access and success activity is underpinned by data, evidence, evaluation and learning.

Student consultation

To ensure that students' views and experiences were central to the development of the new Plan, we appointed a Student Consultation Lead (SCL) for the duration of the development period. The SCL's role was to work directly with students to gather insight and intelligence to inform our understanding of students' experiences of studying at Herts, the risks to equality identified and the suitability of the planned interventions.

The consultation was undertaken in two phases. In Phase 1, the SCL conducted a content analysis of existing student insight and feedback data⁹ followed by semi-structured interviews and a small focus group. The content analysis, drawing on a total of 9000 student responses, identified recurring and prominent aspects about students' Herts experiences which they had enjoyed or had found challenging. The interviews and focus group allowed for further exploration of these, and other, issues¹⁰. In terms of barriers to success, three key themes emerged which are reflective of the risks identified in the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (Table 3):

Table 3: Barriers to success

Barriers	Description
Availability of information and guidance	Awareness gaps on support for disabled students and general wellbeing provision, lack of visible IT support, not knowing where to seek academic support as well as insufficient and inaccurate pre-arrival information.
Cost of living	The negative impact finances are having on wellbeing, programme related costs, ability to travel to campus for both learning and extra-curricular activities.
Community and belonging	A lack of time and spaces which promote student collaboration, disparities in provision across the University's two campuses, restrictions to accessing co-curricular opportunities because of timetabling and a lack of relatable role models at the university.

The interviews and focus group discussions served as a platform to gather students' opinions on the objectives and proposed interventions for Phase 2 of the consultation. These sessions allowed students to suggest actions they believed the University should undertake to mitigate the identified risks. The proposed actions were then incorporated into the draft intervention strategies. During this process, our two Race and Ethnicity Student Advocates played an active role in the development of IS2 participating in staff meetings and a theory of change workshop, attending external events on decolonising the curriculum and closing the awarding gap, and meeting with external suppliers about potential intervention activities. Our team of student Career Coaches, recent graduates, as well as feedback from yearly national careers service surveys, feedback weeks and local surveys helped shape the new Carer Development Framework and inform our progression-based activities. Additionally, the Herts SU president participated in an intervention strategy workshop as part of the steering group.

When the draft intervention strategies were ready, an online survey was constructed to gather students' opinions on key aspects of each intervention. The survey was distributed to a cohort of students all of whom were in receipt of targeted support from the access and participation team (n=1568). There were 101 responses (6.5%). Four of the respondents participated in a follow-up interview to provide more detailed feedback. The results of the survey and interview were used to further inform the intervention strategies. Table 4 (see appendix 1) summarises the initial proposed activities, student feedback from the consultation and survey and whether/how the proposed actions have been responded to in the plan.

⁹ On campus Accommodation Survey 2023-24; Educational Gain Survey 2023-24; Herts SU Community Project Report 2023-24; Herts SU Start of Term Survey 2023-24; Herts SU Student Academic Satisfaction Survey 2022-23; Herts SU Diverse Adversities 2021-22; Herts SU Disabled Students' Experience Survey 2021-22.

¹⁰ Participants included our two Race and Ethnicity Advocates and representation from our Widening Access and Student Success Student Ambassador Programme.

Evaluation of the plan

Herts is committed to producing robust evaluative evidence to inform its access and participation work and our Access and Participation Evaluation Strategy (APES) provides a framework for doing this. The development of the strategy was informed by an assessment of our evaluation performance using the OfS Evaluation Self-assessment Tool. The self-assessment showed positive change since the first assessment was undertaken in 2018 with Advanced scores in all areas bar Evaluation Design which was classed as Emerging. Acting as the Evaluation Lead for our Uni Connect partnership has given us considerable experience in evaluating access activity, as demonstrated by our consistent use of Type 2 evaluation in this area of our work. However, we recognise the need to embed Type 2 more firmly in our participation and progression work. Other areas identified for development include increasing our evaluation capacity in order to meet OfS expectations of provider activity, extending our work with academic colleagues to embed a 'What Works' approach across the institution; and increasing the dissemination of evaluation externally.

The APES builds on our existing strengths and experience in evaluating access and participation activity whilst ensuring we respond to the OfS' expectation that providers generate and publish rigorous and objective evidence of what does and does not work in raising school attainment, improving access to and success in higher education, and securing good graduate outcomes (OfS, 2022). The intended outcomes of the strategy are to:

- Establish a consistent and effective approach to the evaluation of access and participation activity across the institution.
- To embed a 'What Works' culture amongst staff who design and implement access and participation initiatives.
- To increase the volume and quality of our evaluation output.
- To disseminate learning derived from evaluation activity in a timely, accessible, and purposeful way.

The APES comprises five elements: Theories and Models for Working; Resources and Tools; Data as Evidence; Staff Training and Development; and Dissemination of Learning. The strategy is informed by a set of principles which under-pin our approach to evaluation. These encapsulate our desire to create a culture of co-created and evidence-informed evaluation, which is ethical in its delivery and developmental in nature.

Culture We are ambitious in our commitment to create an evidence-based and impact focused evaluation culture across the institution. Colleagues and students will be supported to develop their evaluative skills and the generation of Type 2 levels of evidence (including the use of comparator groups) will become standard. Opportunities to conduct Type 3 levels of evidence will be explored when suitable resource and expertise is available; this will include consideration of opportunities for third-party collaboration and external partnership.

Co-creation We will continue to work with students as partners to co-produce interventions and evaluation plans and create opportunities for students to engage in all aspects of evaluative activity.

Learning We will take a proactive approach to learning from each-other, our students, and our external partners, by seeking and being open to feedback, engaging with relevant external networks such as NERUPI, TASO and FACE, attending and presenting at sector events, reading and disseminating evaluation reports and findings, and attending to our own development and training needs in relation to our evaluation practice.

Ethical We will adopt an ethical approach to all aspects of our evaluation activity, regardless of whether formal ethics approval is required. This will include being open and transparent about evaluation activity and outputs, ensuring participants are rewarded for time and effort where appropriate and committing to sharing our findings regardless of how successful or not an intervention has been.

The APES is complemented by our Evaluation Toolkit and Evidence Library which are internally available resources. Together, these provide guidance and information to help colleagues develop and share their evaluation knowledge and practice. The resources in the Evaluation Toolkit comprise internally developed resources plus materials sourced from OfS and sector networks, including NERUPI, TASO and FACE. The Evidence Library is a repository for access and participation-related reports and evaluation findings, enabling colleagues to share their work and learn from each-other. The library will undergo further development to become an externally available resource which will provide a means for publication of evaluation outcomes to the sector. An external version of the Evaluation Toolkit is also being developed primarily to help promote a culture of evaluation in our partnership secondary schools across Hertfordshire.

Access to data is essential to our evaluation work. The University has developed several Tableau data dashboards for use in our access and participation work, including one that enables us to look at Free School Meals in combination with other characteristics including Disability, IMD and entry qualification. The various dashboards, along with externally available sources of data such as those provided by the OfS, will help us to monitor the effectiveness of our intervention strategy activities. We are also long-standing members of HEAT (approx. seven years) and our use of HEAT data in relation to our widening access evaluation activity in particular, is of critical importance.

At Herts, we are committed to understanding whether the interventions we deliver are successful, so that we can maximise outcomes for our students. We draw on the OfS' standards of evidence when developing our evaluation plans and wherever available we use tools that have already been validated. We also recognise the importance of investing in the future of our evaluation work in order to achieve the objectives we have set ourselves. We currently have a small, dedicated staff resource for data and evaluation, which will plan to expand to support the achievement of the new plan's objectives. Staff within the team are actively encouraged to develop their knowledge and skills through formal study, attendance at network events and conferences and membership of evaluation specific organisations such as NERUPI, the Evaluation Collective and TASO. Participation in innovative new learning opportunities, such as the Advance HE supported Peer Evaluation programme run by NERUPI in 2023 have been invaluable in extending our understanding of the value of working in partnership with other providers to further enhance our evaluation work. We are also committed to using third-party support to complement our internal evaluation resource where the additional skills and capacity are deemed to be beneficial.

Accountability for our main evaluation activity will sit with our Access and Participation Steering Group (APSG). This group has representation from across the provider and has strategic oversight of our key evaluation activity. From an ethical perspective, we work within University policies and protocols to ensure we are safeguarding our participants and producing work that is ethically sound.

Provision of information to students

Publication of Access and Participation Plan 2025/26-2028/29

This plan will be published on our access and participation webpages: herts.ac.uk/about-us/supporting-our-students/widening-access-and-student-success/access-agreement. We will also publish an accessible summary of this plan for current and prospective students and other key stakeholders such as parents/carers and school partners.

Fee information

Fee information is provided at application stage within our Prospectus and the Programme Pages of the University's external website: herts.ac.uk/study/fees-and-funding/fee-information/how-much-are-my-fees. Information is also held in our Application Guide pages, which stores our Fee and Finance Policy. Applicants are then made specifically aware of the fees for their programme at the point of receiving an offer to study at the University. They are emailed detailed information about

the programme, which outlines the fee, and at this point they also receive a direct link to the Fee & Finance Policy.

Financial support

The University focuses financial support on improving continuation for economically disadvantaged students and targeted priority groups. Formal evaluation of our main access and participation bursary (the University of Hertfordshire (UH) Bursary) across three cohorts since 2019 demonstrates that recipients have better continuation rates than the wider university population. Recipients also identified that receiving financial support was an important factor in them continuing with their studies.

Information on the financial support offered at the University can be found on the University's website here: <https://www.herts.ac.uk/study/fees-and-funding/financial-support/scholarships-grants-bursaries>. Terms and conditions for each of the bursaries are published on our webpages. Information on our financial support offering is also included in our access/outreach events that take place in secondary schools and further education colleges. The access and participation bursaries offered by the University are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: Access and participation bursaries.

Bursary	Eligibility Criteria	Amount
University of Hertfordshire (UH) Bursary	UGs with a household income of £30,000 and under	£1000 for first year of UG study
Priority Group Bursaries		
Care Leaver Bursary	Care Leaver UG under the age of 25	£1,800 per year of UG study
Independent (Estranged) Student Bursary	Independent (Estranged) UG students under the age of 25	£1,800 per year of UG study
Displaced/Refugee Learner Bursary	UG students with a 'Home' fee status and one of the following UK refugee statuses: Refugee, Indefinite Leave to Remain, or Humanitarian Protection (as identified by the University's Student Immigration Team (Advice & Compliance))	£1000 per year of UG study
Young Adult Carer Bursary	UG Young Adult Carers under the age of 25	£500 per year of UG study
Care Leaver and Independent (Estranged) Student Graduation Bursary	Graduate Care Leaver and Independent (Estranged) UG students	£1000 on completion of degree
Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) Computer Bursary	DSA eligible students who have had a DSA assessment to support with costs for specialist computer equipment such as: laptop	£200

Financial support is also available to students through our Student Opportunity Fund which awards up to £1000 to students to benefit from a variety of transformational experiences to complement their curriculum learning and support their personal growth and development. In addition, we pay for dyslexia assessments cost (£95) for our priority groups. For hardship funding, students can apply for the funds detailed in Table 6.

Table 6: Access to hardship funding

Hardship Award	Eligibility Criteria	Amount
Placement Bursary Fund	UK-domiciled and overseas students undertaking an unpaid work placement as part of an integral part of their programme. Targeted at specific programmes.	£250
Short Term Assistance Grant (STAG)	Discretionary short-term financial assistance for both Overseas and Home students in financial hardship.	£250
University Financial Assistance Fund (UFAF)	UK-domiciled students who find themselves in unexpected financial difficulties	Up to £2,500

In addition to the above hardship awards, financial education is provided via workshops and a financial skills course hosted on BlackBullion that aids students in managing their money effectively. Our bursaries and hardship awards have been, and continue to be, reviewed annually to ensure a meaningful level of support is provided to as many students in need as possible. We will also regularly review information provided to ensure accessibility for all.

Appendix 1 - Table 4 Summary of initial proposed actions, student consultation and feedback and final outcome

Initial proposed actions	Student consultation and feedback¹¹	Outcome in the Plan
Additional support from Wellbeing, particularly during exam times	64% of students rated support for mental health and wellbeing as very important. Students said this would be better delivered by people who do not teach so that it is not 'too close to home' – integral to this was being able to access this support on their 'home' campus.	IS4 details the University's approach to supporting student mental health and wellbeing, including new mandatory training for staff and new school-based wellbeing advisor roles. Access to 'home' campus-based support will be considered as part of the operationalisation of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
Increased academic skills support for students entering with BTEC qualifications and staff training on supporting non-A level entry students.	57% of students rated tailored induction for BTEC and other non-A level students as important or very important to their success at university. Example feedback: <i>"Greater time explaining how to answer assignments for those of us who do not have previous essay experience (have not studied at A level)"</i> .	IS3 incorporates staff training on supporting students entering with non-A level qualifications. Induction and academic skills development support for non-traditional entry qualification learners are identified in the enhanced Personal Tutor Framework. Student feedback will be used to develop the contents of the transition programme for BTEC/Non-traditional entry students.
Offer varied peer mentoring options to cater to different student preferences with payment for the mentors.	62% of students indicated having a peer mentor with similar life experiences was important or very important. Students also expressed a desire to meet more advanced students on their programme. Example feedback: <i>"Two postgrad students have mentored me and I have found their assistance in learning new technology to be invaluable."</i>	A small scale, new lived experience peer mentoring scheme led by Herts' SU will be piloted in 24/25 and if successful may be more widely offered and incorporated into the APP at a later stage.
More sharing of success stories from students from under-represented backgrounds so that students can see recognisable role models.	55% of students who identified as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic indicated that leadership workshops for students of colour is very important. Diversity within the university community was further referenced for making students feel valued and supported contributing to student success.	Co-creation of the leadership programme in IS2 will allow us to create a range of mixed-media resources to provide impactful and inspirational stories about student success at Herts.
Increase opportunities for community building including making more social space on campus and ensuring parity of provision across campuses.	78% of students said social spaces on campus to spend time between timetabled activity is important or very important to their success. The importance of parity across campuses came through clearly in qualitative feedback, with students wanting both activities and services to be available regardless of which campus they study on. Example feedback: <i>"It would help if there were more things to do on the De Havilland Campus as majority activities are held at the other campus."</i>	The Campus Commercial Panel, chaired by the Secretary and Registrar regularly review space across campus. Reflections from this consultation, including the need for social space will be taken forward by the Herts SU president as an item for discussion on the panel in 2024/25.

¹¹ Survey results from a sample of 101 access and participation bursary recipients

<p>Improvement of personal tutoring as this is varied depending on the school of study and the tutor assigned.</p>	<p>Students feel that personal tutors are important to their success, they emphasised that having a personal tutor they can get to know and who is present in their school is crucial so they can provide clear guidance and support.</p>	<p>The 'overarching institutional interventions' includes our enhanced personal tutoring framework within which proactive engagement with tutees is key. The framework will also ensure all tutors receive the training for the role to promote parity of experience.</p>
<p>Improved communication of financial support, being clear on who is eligible and what is available.</p>	<p>70% of students indicated that clear information about how to access financial support as very important, with comments asking for direct and targeted information about specific.</p>	<p>We will take a whole-provider approach to supporting every student to access the financial support for which they are eligible. We will review content on the external website and student intranet to ensure students can access the information they need in the format they want. Student ambassadors will continue to review student-facing communications. Accessibility of the platform used to deliver hardship applications will also be reviewed. These actions will be taken forward by the University's Financial Support Strategic Group.</p>
<p>More variety of hardship funding, to include support for placements, internships, field trips and access to extra-curriculars like sport on campus.</p>	<p>Additional financial support for internship type activity was rated as important or very important by 84% of students. Student feedback supported the effectiveness of the Student Opportunity Fund to address this barrier. Example feedback: <i>"The student opportunity fund, which allowed me to go on two summer schools trips, motivated me to work a lot harder on my studies."</i></p>	<p>IS5 includes the Student Opportunity Fund which enables students to request funds to support co-curricular activity. The fund has previously supported students on summer schools, internships, voluntary placements and joining sports teams. The new virtual internships will support students without professional work experience to take part in a free virtual internship with a global host company.</p>
<p>Support for transition into university that stretches across the first academic year.</p>	<p>53% of students rated in-person programme preparation as important or very-important (compared to 45% for online), suggesting in-person interaction is the favoured method of delivery for this intervention. Multiple students shared their own experience of the benefits of pre-arrival support to their success at Herts. Example feedback: <i>"I had a pre-arrival event the week before I'd moved into the halls and I think that it had helped me in terms of settling into uni life."</i> <i>'I also think more of a clear understanding of what each academic level should look like would have been good"</i></p>	<p>The new Herts Success guide will benefit all six 'at risk' groups supporting students to prepare for academic study, navigating university spaces and services. IS3 further details a specific transition programme which will be co-produced and delivered throughout students first year of study for those entering Herts with non-traditional entry qualifications. Qualitative feedback will be used in the development of the content for the programme, particularly when considering the more unique challenges faced by students who are in the 'at risk' groups.</p>
<p>More support for accessing university systems and help to develop digital skills.</p>	<p>Students want to see specific training on university systems, like accessing the online library delivered during the induction period.</p>	<p>The University is committed to supporting students to develop relevant skills, namely for students to be digitally capable and confident. Initiatives to develop knowledge and access to digital systems are detailed in the whole provider approach.</p>

Annex A: Further information and analysis relating to the identification and prioritisation of key risks to equality of opportunity

Introduction

The assessment of performance was undertaken as described in the 'Risks to Equality of Opportunity' section of the plan. We also considered our performance in relation to the sector generally and for continuation, attainment and progression we considered it in relation to a selected group of comparable providers. This group consisted of nine providers¹² within our regional geography and with similar student demographics and types of activity. For the sector comparison, we used data from the OfS Shape of Provision dashboard (2022/23). Comparative outcomes are presented in Table 1 and in Figures 1, 2 and 3, each accompanied by a brief narrative in the relevant section.

NB The use of UH in this annex refers to the University of Hertfordshire.

Scope

Herts has a UK-domiciled, UG population of approximately 11, 937 students of which 9,765 (82%) are full-time students¹³. The assessment of performance focused on the UK-domiciled, full-time UG population to ensure the largest benefit to the most students. UG apprenticeship students were not included in the assessment of performance due to the different delivery framework for apprenticeship programmes and the relatively small numbers (403 apprentice learners in 2022/23). However, the institution's strategic approaches to learning, teaching and assessment; digital capabilities and student support will benefit apprentice learners alongside all other Herts students.

Access

The University's longstanding commitment to WP is evident in the size and shape of its provision¹⁴. Of the UG population, 78% are under 21 years of age, 13.5% declare a disability, and 36% are from Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Quintile (Q)1 and Q2. In 2021/22, 34% of the total UK-domiciled, UG student population had a declared household income of less than £25,000¹⁵. Compared to the sector average¹⁶, Herts has a considerably higher percentage of BTEC entry students (27% v 16%); is much more ethnically diverse (47% identifying as Black, Asian, Mixed or Other v 26%) and has a substantially higher percentage of Free School Meal (FSM) eligible students (28% v 18%). Table 1 illustrates how Herts compares to the sector as a WP institution. In terms of intersectionality, Black/Black British students are consistently the ethnic group with the highest number of FSM eligibility (30% n=604 in 21/22). Of these, 58% have a BTEC (n=151 in 21/22) compared to 37% who have A Levels (n=97 in 21/22). The majority of FSM eligible students (51%, 968) in 2021/22 were from IMD Q1 and Q2 areas.

Since 2018-19, the population of students from TUNDRA Q5 has been over 30%, compared to Quintile 1 which has remained around 5%.¹⁷ In terms of access rates, in 2020-21 TUNDRA Q1 students entered at a rate of 7.6% compared to Q5 at 41.4%.¹⁸ This gap is also present in the 4-year aggregate at 6.7% for Q1 and 42.8% Q5.¹⁹ However, the local context and recruitment patterns for the University are largely responsible for these continued gaps as explained below.

¹² Middlesex; London City; Brunel; Kingston; Westminster; Anglia Ruskin; Bedfordshire; Greenwich; London Southbank.

¹³ UH Student Population data for 2023 / Accessed March 2024

¹⁴ OfS Size and Shape of Provision Data Dashboard / Four-year aggregate / Accessed April 2024

¹⁵ UH Student Funding and Financial Support / Accessed March 2024

¹⁶ All sector average comparisons are taken from the OfS Size and Shape of Provision Data Dashboard

¹⁷ TUNDRA MSOA Data, OfS Size and Shape of Provision <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/size-and-shape-of-provision-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/>

¹⁸ TUNDRA Indicator for young (under 21) entrants <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/>

¹⁹ Access Indicator Values for TUNDRA quintile <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/>

Table 1 Sector comparison

4 Year Aggregate Population – UG Full-time		
	UH	Sector
BTEC Entry	27%	16%
Black, Asian, Mixed or Other	47%	26%
Free School Meals Eligible	28%	18%
IMD Q1 and 2	36.4%	32%
TUNDRA Q1	5.6%	9.9%

Source: Office for Student Size and Shape of Provision Dashboard

The University of Hertfordshire is in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, in the Southeast of England. Our recruitment of UK-domiciled students is predominantly local, from Hertfordshire and into Bedfordshire. These two counties have high areas of TUNDRA Q3, Q4 and Q5, particularly in our key recruitment areas: Luton, Enfield, Hatfield, Stevenage, Barnet, Central Bedfordshire, St Albans, North Hertfordshire, Brent, Hertsmeare, Watford, and Redbridge. Where there are pockets of TUNDRA Q1 and Q2, such as Stevenage and Central Bedfordshire, the University is already providing targeted outreach and attainment raising work through our Uni Connect partnership, Aspire Higher. Once TUNDRA Q1 students enter the university, their continuation and attainment rates are higher than Q5 students. In 2020-21, TUNDRA Q1 students had a continuation rate of 92.1% compared to Q5 students at 90%. The 4-year aggregate for continuation shows continuation at 91.1% for Q1 and 90.8% for Q5. For attainment, TUNDRA Q1 students have continually higher rates of good degrees than Q5 students. The 4-year aggregate is 77.7% for Q1 students and 72.8% for Q5 students. We will therefore not be identifying TUNDRA as a risk characteristic but will monitor for changes to the data or our local context.

Given the University's strong record in enabling access for WP students, and its success towards achieving the two access targets in our current APP, there are no access objectives in the new plan. However, we will continue to monitor our access data closely to identify new or developing risks and respond to as appropriate.

Continuation

The analysis of Continuation data identified four key areas of differential performance: **Students who declare a Mental Health Condition, Students who have been Free School Meal eligible; Students who are Male; and Students entering with BTEC²⁰ qualifications.**

Continuation rates for students declaring / not declaring a disability remained broadly similar between 2015/16 and 2020/21 except for 2017/18 and 2018/19 when a gap appeared only to close again in the last two years of the period. In 2020/21 the gap was just 0.6pp with disabled students outperforming non-disabled students (above sector average for both data sets). However, the disaggregated data shows that students with Mental Health Conditions had the lowest continuation rate in 2020/21 (decreased from 91.4% in 2019/20 to 85.1% in 2020/21 compared to no disability at 90.1%).

Low continuation for students with Mental Health Conditions is consistent with the sector picture²¹. However, UH student outcomes are 1.9pp below the sector average of 87%. UH intersectional data for continuation by Mental Health Condition and Sex shows a similar three-year trend pattern for both Male and Female students although Male/Mental Health Condition continuation was substantially lower in 2022/23 than in previous years. In terms of the comparator group, UH Mental Health Condition continuation is fourth highest behind Kingston, Brunel, and Greenwich.

²⁰ BTEC entry refers to students who enter with one or more BTEC qualification.

²¹ Sector comparison data, OfS Access and Participation Dashboard <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/>

Students eligible for FSM (87.2%) have consistently lower rates of continuation than non-FSM eligible (92%) students (4.8pp gap in 2020/21). In relation to the comparator group, UH FSM eligible continuation is equal fourth highest behind City, Kingston, Brunel and equal with Greenwich.

Male students consistently have lower rates of continuation than Female students (86.6% versus 93% in 2021/22, a 6.4pp gap); this gap has persisted since 2015/16. Although, Female continuation is higher than Male continuation across the sector, UH Male continuation is 3.4pp below the sector average of 86.9% indicating lower than average performance. Local data (UH 2022/23) shows that Male Yr 1 continuation rates may be stabilising whilst Female Yr 1 continuation rates have decreased for two consecutive years, suggesting that a new trend may be emerging. In relation to the comparator group, UH Male continuation is fourth highest behind City, Kingston, and Brunel.

UH intersectional data shows that continuation by race and sex is lowest for Asian Male (22.3%) and Black Male (22%) students.

BTEC entry students have consistently lower Yr 1 continuation rates compared to A-Level entry students. According to UH data, the non-continuation rate (UH uses a non-continuation measure²²) for BTEC entry students has increased (14% - 24%) and the gap has widened (4.5pp – 11pp), year-on-year over the last four years (2019/20 to 2022/23). By comparison, non-continuation for A-level entry students has increased from 9.2% to 13.7% across the same period. There is no sector or provider group comparison data for this group.

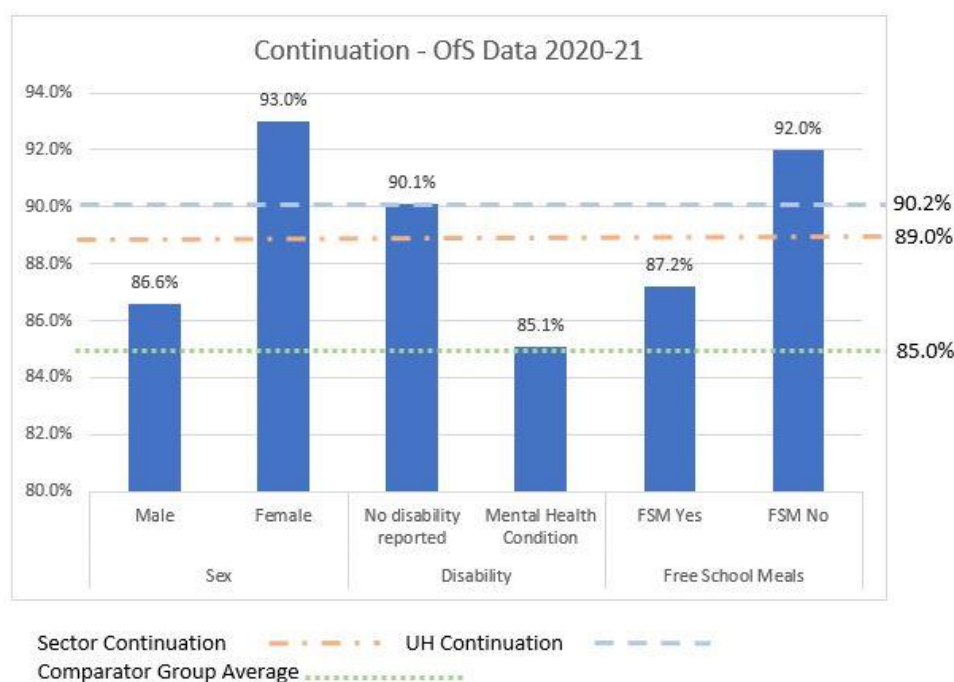


Figure 1. Continuation data for 2020-21 for student groups with differential outcomes (OfS Access and Participation Dashboard).

Completion

The analysis of completion data identified the following groups as most at risk **Students who have been Free School Meal eligible and Students who are Male.**

For FSM eligible students, completion fell by 8pp in five years (since 2012/13) leaving a gap of 9pp

²² UH uses a non-continuation measure based on whether Level 4 students stay on programme > 1 year and 15 days

between FSM (81.4%) and non-FSM eligible (90.4%) students in 2017/18. UH FSM eligible completion (81.4%) is 1.1pp below the sector average of 82.5%. In relation to the comparator group, UH FSM completion is sixth highest behind Brunel, City, Kingston, Westminster and Middlesex.

Males were also less likely to complete than Females (83.5% versus 90.7%, a 7pp gap). The gap has persisted over the last six years. This is consistent with the sector where Female completion rates are consistently higher than for Males. However, while UH 4 yr aggregate completion rates are above sector for Females (91.2% v 89.9%) they are below sector for Males (83.4% versus 84.7%). In terms of the comparator group, UH Male completion is fourth highest behind Brunel, City, and Kingston.

Although the assessment of performance identified risks within the completion data, they will not take the form of separate objectives because of the expectation that interventions that focus on Yr 1 continuation and awards will have a positive impact on the completion metric too. We also recognise that for some students, getting the right support will potentially result in an increased completion rate if it entails stepping off their studies temporarily.

Attainment

The analysis of awards data highlighted the following students to be most at risk: **Black/Black British and Asian students; Students who have been eligible for Free School Meals; Students from Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile 1; Students entering with BTEC qualifications; Students who are Male.**

Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, the percentage of 'good degrees' awarded increased for all declared races, with the highest percentage being consistently awarded to White students. The awarding gap between White students (85.2%) and Black students (67.5%) students was 20pp in 2019/20, 13pp in 2020/21 and 18pp in 2021/22 indicating that the improvement seen in the pandemic year of 2020/21 has since receded. The awarding gap between Black and White students was 2pp below the sector average of 20pp in 2021/22. UH data for 2022/23 shows a further widening of the gap between White and Black students, which now stands at 29pp,

Whilst not as large, there was also a substantial 'good degree' gap between Asian students and White students at 12.3pp in 2021/22. This was an increase on 2020/21 when it was 8.3pp. UH outcomes are 1.9pp below the sector average of 74.8%. UH data for 2022/23 shows an increase in gap to 18pp.

In terms of the comparator group, UH Asian students' attainment was fourth highest behind City, AR, South Bank; UH Black students' attainment was second highest behind City; UH Mixed students' attainment was ninth highest above only Middlesex; UH Other students' attainment was fifth highest behind City, Anglia Ruskin, South Bank, and Brunel; and UH White students' attainment was third highest behind City and South Bank.

UH intersectional data for race and sex, highlighted Black Male students as being the most at risk group within the awards risk group. This is evidenced by a gap of 42.2pp between White students overall (85.2%) and Black Males (43% n=83) and a gap of 41pp between Black Males and White Males (84% n=371).

'Good degree' awards have risen since 2016/17 for both FSM (6pp) and non-FSM (7pp) recipients. However, non-FSM students had considerably higher 'good degree' attainment at 79.4% compared to 68% for FSM eligible students in 2021/22, a gap of 11.4pp. FSM attainment at UH is 1.7pp below the sector average (69.7%). In relation to the comparator group, UH FSM attainment was fourth highest behind City, Anglia Ruskin, and South Bank.

There has been a persistent awarding gap between IMD Q1 (69.9%) and Q5 (84.7%) over the last

six years. The gap was 14.8pp in 2021/22 in favour of Q5, a reduction on the previous year when the gap was 17.1pp. The 2021/22 sector gap was 17.8pp making outcomes at UH above the sector average. In relation to the comparator group, UH IMD Q1 attainment is third highest behind City and London Southbank.

There was a 6.4pp gap between Male (73.3%) and Female (79.7%) 'good degrees' in 2021/22 (in favour of Females). This was larger than the sector gap of 3.6pp. At UH, for the last three years, Females have had higher percentage of good degrees, 7pp higher than males in 2022/23. Male good degree performance has fallen by 10pp since 2020/21 whilst Female has fallen by 9pp. In terms of the comparator group, UH Male attainment was third highest behind City and South Bank.

UH data shows that the 'good degree' gap between A-level (83.3%) and BTEC entry (69.3%) students was 14pp in 2021/22 increasing to 16pp 2022/23. There is no sector or provider comparison data for this group.

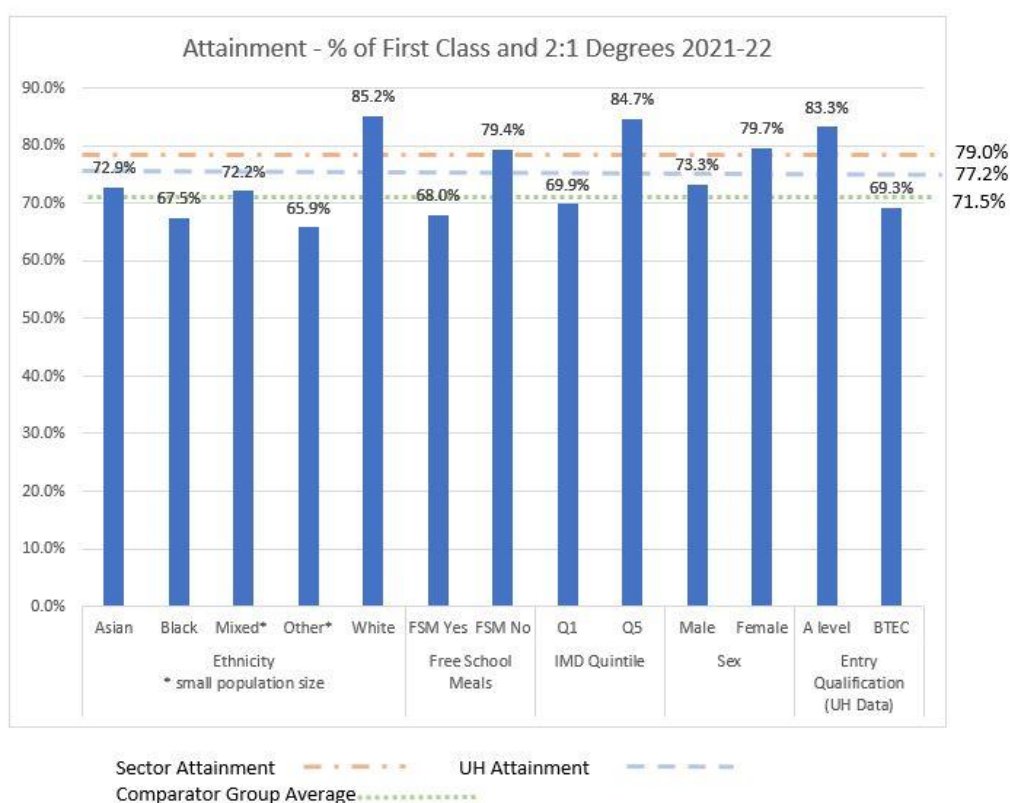


Figure 2. Percentage of students with First class and 2:1 degrees for groups with differential outcomes (OfS Access and Participation Dashboard 2021-22, UH Internal Data 2021-22).

Progression

The analysis of Progression data highlighted the following students to be most at risk of differential outcomes: **Students who declare a Mental Health Condition; Students from Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile 1; Students who are Male; and Students with BTEC Entry Qualifications.**

Students declaring disabilities have slightly lower progression rates than students who do not, a gap of 2pp in 2020/21 which was an improvement on the 2019/20 data where the gap was 5pp. However, progression for students with a Mental Health Condition is the lowest of the declared disabilities at 66.8% in 2020/21 compared to 72.8% for no disability reported (a gap of 6pp). The sector average progression rate for students declaring a Mental Health Condition is 70.4%, making UH progression for these students below the sector rate (3.6pp difference). The comparator group

data shows that UH Mental Health progression is sixth highest behind Anglia Ruskin, Brunel, Westminster, Middlesex, and Greenwich.

UH intersectional data for progression for Male students with a declared Mental Health Condition was 50% for 2020, a fall from the previous two years although the percentage has fluctuated, and the numbers are small. It increased again to 72.2% in 2021. Progression for Females with Mental Health Conditions was 25pp higher at 75% in 2020 and then increased again to 84.2% in 2021. The progression gap between Male and Females with Mental Health Conditions in 2021 was 12pp. Although the most recent data may be indicative of improving progression rates for Males who have declared Mental Health Conditions, the gap remains substantial and one that we will need to remain alert to from both a mental health and a male perspective.

There was a 5.8pp progression gap between IMD Q1 (69.7%) and Q5 (75.5%) in 2020/21. The gap has been present for four years. The sector gap is 10.8pp making UH performance above the sector average. In relation to the comparator group, UH IMD Q1 Progression is fourth highest behind Kingston, City and Middlesex.

Progression rates for Male students have stayed fairly stable across the last four years with Female students consistently outperforming Males although the gap in 2020/21 reduced to 4.2pp (Male 69.9% and Female 74.1%). The gap in Male and Female progression is inconsistent with the sector where Males typically outperform Females. This may be explained by the dominance of Females in our Health and Education provisions, particularly the former which has a high percentage of Female students (84.2% n=2906 with a UH Graduate Outcomes (GO) indicator of 98.9%). In terms of the comparator group, UH Male progression is sixth highest behind City, Brunel, Greenwich, Kingston, and Westminster.

UH Intersectional data for sex and race shows fluctuating rates of progression for Male students of Asian, Black and White backgrounds. This fluctuation of progression by sex and race is present to a greater extent for Males than for Females although across the sexes there are changes year on year. Additionally, small cohorts and changing response rates make trends and patterns more difficult to determine with confidence. However, given the importance of race and sex as an intersection in the continuation and attainment data, it will require continued monitoring for any sustained differentials in outcomes between groups.

UH data (2020/21) shows a progression gap between A-level (79.1%) and BTEC entry (70.5%) students which has increased over the last three years (3.3pp 2018 / 6.8pp 2019 / 8.6pp 2020). There is no sector or provider comparison data for this group.

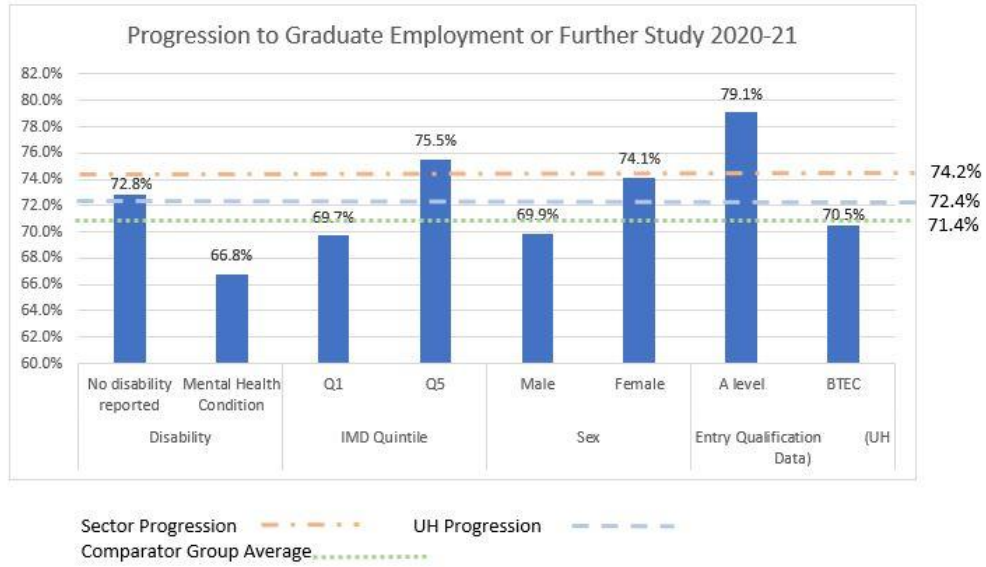


Figure 3. Rates of progression to Graduate Employment and Further Study for characteristics with differential outcomes (OfS Access and Participation Dashboard 2020-21, UH Internal Data 2020-21).

See below (Table 1) for a summary of the assessment of performance data.

Annex A cont.

Table 1 Access and Participation Assessment of Performance Summary

Lifecycle stage	Gap	Notes
Continuation		
Disability (Mental Health Condition) 85.1% (n=190) No declared disability 90.1% (n=3340) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2020/21)	5pp	OfS data (2020/21) shows students with Mental Health Conditions have the lowest continuation of all the disability categories. UH is 1.9pp below sector average. UH data shows Mental Health Continuation was markedly lower (10pp) in 2022/23 than in previous years.
FSM 87.2% (n=110) Non-FSM 92% (n=1970) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2020/21)	4.8pp	There is a completion gap of 9pp in favour of non-FSM eligible students. UH completion for FSM is 1.1pp below sector average.
Males 86.6% (n=1750) Females 93% (n=2200) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2020/21)	6.4pp	There has been a persistent gap since 2015/16. UH Male continuation is consistent with the sector average which is 86.9% but the gap between Male and Female at UH is 6.4pp, almost double that of the sector average gap of 3.6pp. UH 2022/23 data shows that Male Yr 1 continuation rates may be stabilising whilst Female Yr 1 continuation rates have decreased for two consecutive years, suggesting that a new trend may be emerging.
Male/Asian 22.3% (n=91) Male/B/BB 22.0% (n=69) Overall non-continuation 18.6% (n=634) (UH SIP Reporting, 2022/23)	3.7pp 3.4pp	UH intersectional data shows non-continuation has increased over last three years for Asian Male and Black Male students. It has been benchmarked against the UH overall average. N.B. OfS measures as continuation so in their terms the rates would be expressed as a decrease.
BTEC entry 24.4% (n=315) A-Level entry 13.7% (n=206) (UH SIP Reporting, 2022/23).	10.7pp	Non-continuation for BTEC entry students has increased (14% - 24%) and the gap has widened (4.5pp – 11pp), year-on-year over the last four years (2019/20 to 2022/23). By comparison, non-continuation for A-level entry students has increased from 9.2% to 13.7% across the same period. N.B. OfS measures as continuation so in their terms the rates would be expressed as a decrease.
Completion		
FSM 81.4% (n=910) Non-FSM 90.4% (2350) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2017/18)	9pp	Completion for FSM eligible fell by 8pp in five years (since 2012/13) leaving a gap of 9pp between FSM and non-FSM eligible students in 2017/18. UH FSM eligible completion (81.4%) is 1.1pp below the sector average (82.5%).
Males 83.5% (n=1970) Females 90.7% (2460) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2017/18)	7pp	Completion gap of 7pp between Males (lower) and Females (higher), a gap which has persisted for last six years. Females outperforming Males is consistent with the sector. However, UH 4 yr aggregate completion rates are below sector for Males (83.4% versus 84.7%).
Attainment		
White students (85.2% n=1520) Black students (67.5% n=630) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2021/22)	17.7pp	Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, the percentage of 'good degrees' awarded increased for all known ethnicities, with the highest percentage being consistently awarded to White students. The awarding gap between White and Black students was 20pp in 2019/20, 13pp in 2020/21 and 17.7pp in 2021/22 indicating that the improvement seen in the pandemic year of 2020/21 has since receded. UH was

		2.3pp below the sector average of 20pp in 2021/22. UH data for 2022/23 shows the gap between White and Black students as 29pp.
White students overall (85.2% n=1520) Black Males (43% n=83) (UH, 2022/23)	42.2pp	UH intersectional data for race and sex, highlighted Black Male students as being the most at risk group within the awards risk group. This is evidenced by a gap of 42.2pp between White students overall (85.2%) and Black Males (43% n=83) and a gap of 41pp between Black Males and White Males (84% n=371).
White Males (84% n=371) Black Males (43% n=83) (UH, 2022/23)	41pp	
Asian students (72.9% n=860) White students (85.2% n=1520) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2021/22)	12.3pp	The 'good degree' gap between Asian students and White students was 12.3pp in 2021/22. This was an increase on 2020/21 when it was 8.3pp. UH is 1.9pp below the sector average of 74.8%. UH data for 2022/23 shows an increased in gap to 18pp.
FSM (68% n=610) Non-FSM (79.4% n=1840) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2021/22)	11.4pp	Non-FSM students had higher 'good degree' attainment at 79.4% compared to 68% for FSM eligible students in 2021/22. FSM attainment at UH is 1.7pp below the sector average (69.7%).
IMD Q1 (69.9% n=550) IMD Q5 (84.7% n=560) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2021/22)	14.8pp	There has been a persistent awarding gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 over the last six years. The gap was 14.8pp in 2021/22 in favour of Q5, a reduction on the previous year when the gap was 17.1pp. The 2021/22 sector gap was 17.8pp making outcomes at UH above the sector average.
BTEC entry (64% n= 630) A-level entry (80% n=971) (UH SIP Reporting, 2022/23)	16pp	The 'good degree' gap between A-level (83.3%) and BTEC entry (69.3%) students was 14pp in 2021/22 increasing to 16pp 2022/23.
Males (73.3% n=1340) Females (79.7% n=2080) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2020/21)	6.4pp	There was a 6.4pp gap between Male and Female attainment in 2021/22 (in favour of Females). This was larger than the sector gap of 3.6pp, making UH performance below the sector. At UH, for the last three years, Females have had higher % of good degrees, 7pp higher than males in 2022/23. Male good degree performance has fallen by 10pp since 2020/21 whilst Female has fallen by 9pp.
Progression		
Disability - Mental Health Condition (66.8% n=110) No disability (72.8% n=1170) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2020/21)	6pp	Students declaring disabilities have slightly lower progression rates than students who do not, a gap of 2pp in 2020/21 which was an improvement on the 2019/20 data where the gap was 5pp. However, progression for students with a Mental Health Condition is the lowest of the declared disabilities at 66.8% in 2020/21 compared to 72.8% for no disability reported. The sector average progression rate for students declaring a Mental Health Condition is 70.4%, making UH below the sector rate (3.6pp difference).
Males – Mental Health Condition (72.2% n=13) Females – Mental Health Condition (84.2% n=64) (UH SIP Reporting, 2021)	12pp	UH intersectional data for progression for Male students with a declared Mental Health Condition was 50% for 2020, a fall from the previous two years although the percentage has fluctuated and the numbers are small. It increased again to 72.2% in 2021. Progression for Females with Mental Health Conditions was 25pp higher at 75% in 2020 and then increased again to 84.2% in 2021. The progression gap between Male and Females with Mental Health Conditions in 2021 was 12pp. Although the most recent data may be indicative of improving progression rates for Males who have

<i>NB Data sourced from ED01 UH Graduate Outcomes Results (First degree/FT/UG) and combined by SIP with other institutionally held data to identify intersections. Agreement on future sourcing and reporting of intersectional data will be required taking account of the move to reporting GOs via the B3 dashboard.</i>		declared Mental Health Conditions, the gap remains substantial and one that we should remain alert to from both a mental health and a male perspective.
IMD Q1 (69.7% n=310) IMD Q2 (75.5% n=340) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2020/21)	5.8pp	There was a 5.8pp progression gap between IMD Q1 (69.7%) and Q5 (75.5%) in 2002/21. The gap has been present for four years. The sector gap is 10.8pp making UH performance above sector.
Males (69.9% n=860) Females (74.1% n=1260) (OfS A&P Dashboard, 2020/21)	4.2pp	The gap in Male and Female progression is inconsistent with the sector where Males typically outperform Females. This may be explained by the dominance of Females in our Health and Education provisions, particularly the former which has a high percentage of female students (84.2% n=2906) with a Graduate Outcomes (GO) indicator of 98.9%. UH performance is below sector.
White Males (79.2% n=213) Asian Males (73.2% n=145) Black/Black British Males (73.6% n=81) Overall (78.3% n=1316) (UH SIP Reporting, 2021) <i>NB Data sourced from ED01 UH Graduate Outcomes Results (First degree/FT/UG) and combined by SIP with other institutionally held data to identify intersections. Agreement on future sourcing and reporting of intersectional data will be required taking account of the move to reporting GOs via the B3 dashboard.</i>	+0.9pp 5.1pp 4.7pp	UH Intersectional data for sex and race shows fluctuating rates of progression for Male students of Asian, Black and White backgrounds. This fluctuation of progression by sex and race is present to a greater extent for Males than for Females although across the sexes there are changes year on year. Additionally, small cohorts and changing response rates make trends and patterns more difficult to determine with confidence. However, given the important of race and sex as an intersection in the continuation and attainment data, it will require continued monitoring for any sustained differentials in outcomes between groups.
BTEC entry (70.5% n=391) A-level entry (79.1% n=758) (UH SIP Reporting, 2020/21)	8.6pp	UH data shows a progression gap between A-level and BTEC entry students which has increased over the last three years (3.3pp 2018 / 6.8pp 2019 / 8.6pp 2020).

Key

FSM	Free School Meal Eligible
Good degrees	1 st and 2:1 classification
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation

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

Over-arching institutional intervention

The demands of managing study, work and homelife can be challenging for many students in HE, especially where there are additional commitments outside of university, wellbeing or mental health issues, and/or financial pressures. An effective personal tutoring system can provide an essential scaffold of support to help students navigate these demands and complete their university journey successfully. The positive effects of personal tutoring on widening participation students within the early transition phase has been explored by Hayman et al (2020²³). This work, conducted with post-92 students experiencing a student-centred approach to personal tutoring, illustrates that personal tutors can positively impact the transition to university and help alleviate student concerns. Personal tutoring can also impact transition through the enhancement of student connectedness (Thomas, 2012²⁴) and an increase in sense of belonging and mattering (Lochti et al, 2018²⁵; Banahene, 2024²⁶). However, personal tutoring can only be impactful if the framework of delivery is clear and consistently applied, including providing training to undertake the role. Personal tutors who know how to build effective relationships with their students can support their overall transition into university (Calcagno, Walker and Grey, 2017²⁷) which can improve student confidence and subsequent attainment. Effective personal tutoring can also positively impact retention rates (Thomas, 2012) and contribute to the reduction in awarding gaps (UK Advising and Tutoring Association (UKAT)) and Gabi et al (2024²⁸) through the development of critical racial consciousness and an awareness of the intersectionality of students.

At Herts, the **Personal Tutoring Framework** supports students at all stages of their academic lifecycle from pre-arrival to outduction from the university. However, we recognise the “one size fits all” model does not work for such a large and diverse staff and student community; and so, the Framework is designed to be adapted to best fit the needs of the students at programme level without losing the key principles of delivery.

Learner analytics are a common metric associated with higher education. Data metrics can effectively assist staff, in particular personal tutors, to provide targeted and timely support for students, providing the potential to impact their retention and onward success (Foster & Siddle, 2020²⁹; Larrabee Sønderlund et al, 2019³⁰; Lowes, 2020³¹). Foster and Francis (2020³²)

²³ Hayman, R., Coyles, A., Wharton, K., & Mellor, A. (2020). The role of personal tutoring in supporting the transition to university: experiences and views of widening participation sport students. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, (18), 1-29.

²⁴ Thomas, L. (2012). Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change. *Paul Hamlyn Foundation*, 100(1-99), 1-102.

²⁵ Lochti, D., McIntosh, E., Stork, A., & Walker, B. (2018). *Effective personal tutoring in higher education*. Critical Publishing.

²⁶ Banahene, L. (2024) *Diverse students need bespoke personal tutoring*. Available at <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/diverse-students-need-bespoke-personal-tutoring/> [Accessed 31 July 2024].

²⁷ Calcagno, L., Walker, D., & Grey, D. (2017). Building relationships: a personal tutoring framework to enhance student transition and attainment. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 1(2), 88-99.

²⁸ Gabi, J., Braddock, A., Brown, C., Miller, D., Mynott, G., Jacobi, M., Banerjee, P. Kenny, K. & Rawson, A. (2024). Can the role of a personal tutor contribute to reducing the undergraduate degree awarding gap for racially minoritised students? *British Educational Research Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3999>

²⁹ Foster, E., & Siddle, R. (2020). The effectiveness of learning analytics for identifying at-risk students in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(6), 842-854.

³⁰ Larrabee Sønderlund, A., Hughes, E., & Smith, J. (2019). The efficacy of learning analytics interventions in higher education: A systematic review. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50(5), 2594-2618.

³¹ Lowes, R. (2020, July). Knowing you: Personal tutoring, learning analytics and the Johari Window. *Frontiers in Education*. 5:101. Frontiers Media SA.

³² Foster, C., & Francis, P. (2020). A systematic review on the deployment and effectiveness of data analytics in higher education to improve student outcomes. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(6), 822-841.

reported the effectiveness of data analytics to improve student outcomes and Simanca et al (2019³³) described its use in identifying students at risk of failure at module level.

Herts **Data4Learning** dashboard allows staff an insight into near real time student metrics and provides an opportunity for staff to pro-actively work with students to enhance positive outcomes. Foster and Siddle (2020) established that no-engagement alerts effectively identify 'at risk' students, with those receiving an alert being less likely to progress to second year and achieve a 'good degree'. Lack of engagement can result from many inter-related factors; the Data 4 Learning dashboard enables staff, especially personal tutors, to pro-actively engage with students to discuss the factors affecting engagement and work together to identify solutions.

Intervention strategy 1 (IS1): Male students

Sector data³⁴ indicates that female students are outperforming male students in all aspects of the student journey except progression. At Herts, female students do better than males at progression too. The difference in male/female educational performance is not unique to HE with male students underperforming in primary and secondary education as well (HEPI, 2016³⁵). Despite there being a sector-wide issue, there is relatively little literature about it. Studies which have focused on male achievement and engagement in HE, discuss perceived external pressures on men including performative masculinity, peer pressure, external responsibilities and earning demands as well as the impact of previous educational experiences (Waldron, 2022³⁶; Huerta et.al., 2021³⁷). Moran (2023³⁸) discusses toxic masculinity as well as barriers to men seeking help for example, in relation to medical advice. Within HE, barriers to 'help seeking' and a reluctance to utilise support services (e.g., academic skills; personal tutoring; financial support; wellbeing and careers services) and the importance of analytics to identify engagement (or lack of engagement) with support services are identified as important when considering the male student experience (Waldron, 2022¹⁵; Wood et. al., 2023³⁹; Baldasare, 2023⁴⁰). Wood et al and Baldasare, also identified the importance of learner analytics for early warning triggers of non-engagement and/or underperformance to stimulate targeted interventions.

Although there is clearly a need to extend the evidence base on factors influencing male educational performance, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that a problem exists. The use of learner analytics, as in our **Data4Learning** dashboard, and improving our understanding of gender specific help seeking behaviours, as in our **research into male student engagement and study behaviours**, will be important in terms of achieving change.

³³ Simanca, F., Gonzalez Crespo, R., Rodríguez-Baena, L., & Burgos, D. (2019). Identifying students at risk of failing a subject by using learning analytics for subsequent customised tutoring. *Applied Sciences*, 9(3), 448.

³⁴ OfS Access and Participation Dashboard <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/>

³⁵ HEPI (2016). Boys to Men: *The underachievement of young men in higher education and how to start tackling it*. Oxuniprint, Oxford. Available at <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Boys-to-Men.pdf> [Accessed 31 July 2024]

³⁶ Waldron, L. (2022). *Resilient learning communities; Male students in Higher Education: addressing the disparities in outcomes*. Enhancement Themes Conference. Available at <https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/ethemes/resilient-learning-communities/day-1-session-14b---male-students-in-higher-education-addressing-the-disparities-in-outcomes.pptx> [Accessed 31 July 2024]

³⁷ Huerta, A. H., Romero-Morales, M., Dizon, J. P., Salazar, M. E., & Nguyen, J. V. (2021). *Empowering men of color in higher education: A focus on psychological, social, and cultural factors*. Pullias Center for Higher Education. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.11265.38244

³⁸ Moran, C. (2023) *What about men?* London: Penguin Random House.

³⁹ Wood, L. Sáenz, V.B., & E. Campos. (2023). *Improving Outcomes for Men of Color in College: Recommendations for Advancing Success in the "Dual Pandemics"*. MDRC. Available at <https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/improving-outcomes-men-color-college-recommendations-advancing-success-dual> [Accessed 31 July 2024]

⁴⁰ Baldasare, A. (2023) Improving male retention with student success analytics. *Civitas Learning*. Available at <https://www.civitaslearning.com/blog/closing-equity-gaps/how-to-use-analytics-to-identify-opportunities-to-better-engage-male-students/> [Accessed 31 July 2024]

Intervention strategy 2 (IS2): Students who identify as Black or Asian

There is limited evidence on ‘what works’ to reduce awarding gaps between students of different racial backgrounds (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2015⁴¹). TASO (2022⁴²) commissioned impact evaluations of curriculum reform at two different UK universities but found limited causal evidence on the impact of the reform at improving outcomes for minority ethnic students. However, numerous studies and reports⁴³ show that awarding gaps are predominantly caused by structural racism and biased interpersonal interaction based on ethnicity/race. As such, actions taken to reduce/eliminate awarding gaps must work at both institutional and local level (Ernsting et al., 2023⁴⁴). The jointly produced Closing the Gap report (UUK & NUS, 2019⁴⁵) set out five areas on which to focus in order to create change: providing strong leadership; having conversations about race and changing the culture; developing racial diverse and inclusive environments; getting the evidence and analysing the data on the attainment gap; and understanding what works.

Our intervention draws upon this evidence base, addressing the need for institutional leadership and cross institutional change through our **Herts Against Racism** initiative, recognising the importance of working in partnership with students to open up conversations about race through our **Race and Ethnicity Equity Student Advocates** programme, committing to a culture of openness and inclusivity through our staff development activity and seeking to improve our understanding of works through our **Race and Ethnicity Equity Research Fund** and **Module Action Plans**. In addition, our work will seek to unleash the assets of our Black and Asian students through our **Leadership Programme for Racially Minoritised Students** and through our **Dissertation Support Project** (based on the Dissertation Retreats and Student Panels initiative at the University of Southampton)

Intervention Strategy 3 (IS3): Students with BTEC entry qualifications

The literature shows that students entering HE with BTEC qualifications experience higher rates of attrition, repeat-year study and lower degree classifications than their A-level entrant peers (Kelly, 2017⁴⁶). There are also intersectional aspects to the data, for example 37% of Black students entering higher education hold a BTEC qualification (Adams, 2021⁴⁷), meaning that 37% of Black university students may experience higher attrition, repeat-year study and lower degree outcomes as a result of entering via this route. A report by Dilnot (2018⁴⁸) suggests that considering the

⁴¹ Mountford-Zimdars, A., Sabri, D., Moore, J., Sanders, J., Jones, S., & Higham, L. (2015). *Causes of Differences in Student Outcomes* (HEFCE). HEFCE. Available at <https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/publications/causes-of-differences-in-student-outcomes-hefce> [Accessed 7 August 2024]

⁴² TASO (2022) *The impact of curriculum reform on the ethnicity degree awarding gap*. Behavioural Insights Team. Available at <https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/publications/causes-of-differences-in-student-outcomes-hefce> [Accessed 7 August 2024]

⁴³ Advance HE (2021) *Advance HE Anti-Racist Curriculum Project*. Available at <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/anti-racist-curriculum-project>. [Accessed 1st August 2024] / UUK (2024) *Tackling racial harassment in higher education: progress since 2020*. Available at <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/tackling-racial-harassment-higher-0> [Accessed 1st August 2024] / QAA (2023) *Eliminating Differential Outcomes*. Available at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/eliminating-differential-outcomes-and-closing-racialised-awarding-gaps-online-repository-available-now#> [Accessed 1st August 2024]

⁴⁴ Ernsting, F et al. (2023) *QAA Eliminating Differential Outcomes*. Available at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/membership/collaborative-enhancement-projects/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/investigating-the-elimination-of-differential-outcomes> [Accessed 31 July 2024]

⁴⁵ UUK and NUS (2019) *Closing the Gap*. Available at <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-student>. [Accessed 31 July 2024].

⁴⁶ Kelly, S. (2017). *Reforming BTECs: Applied General qualifications as a route to higher education – HEPI*. Available at: <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2017/02/23/3852/> [Accessed 22 July 2022]

⁴⁷ Adams, R. (2021). Kenneth Baker: plan to scrap BTecs is an act of vandalism. *The Guardian* [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jul/29/kenneth-baker-scrapping-btecs-act-of-vandalism> [Accessed 1st August 2024]

⁴⁸ Dilnot, C. (2018). The relationship between A-level subject choice and league table score of university attended: the ‘facilitating’, the ‘less suitable’, and the counter-intuitive. *Oxford Review of Education*, 44(1), 118–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2018.1409976>

alignment of degree assessment methods, so that all students are best able to best demonstrate their learning, is one positive action that could be taken to reduce the gap. This is congruent with the findings of a later study by Dilnot et al. (2022⁴⁹) which indicated that differences in academic outcomes were almost always due to module level performance (assessment) rather than non-academic reasons. The authors recommendations include that universities should be aware that the qualifications with which students enter may have an effect on their progress and that students with different qualifications will be better or worse prepared for different aspects of university and are therefore likely to need different types of support, particularly in terms of academic support. In addition, the authors recommend that universities monitor the outcomes of students with different entry qualifications, in particular taking account of differences in performance by assessment type. The importance of aligning assessment methods with students' previous experience is also reiterated.

Our Herts Academic Skills Tailored Transition Programme for BTEC/Non-A Level Entry Students reflects what is known about enabling these students to be successful in HE. The programme will provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to adapt to university level study and help them to develop resilience and self-support strategies for success. Providing **Staff Development on Supporting Students with Non-traditional Entry Qualifications** will ensure academics know the difference between A-level and BTEC students' prior educational experiences. It will also help them to understand how to realise the positive attributes that students from different entry routes can offer. This will help them to design appropriate learning, teaching and assessment strategies so that all students, regardless of entry route, can access and demonstrate their learning. The development of the **Entry Qualifications Outcomes Dashboard** will enable us to monitor student outcomes by entry qualification, showing us where there is progress or where further work is needed.

Intervention strategy 4 (IS4): Students who declare a Mental Health Condition

The proportion of UK-domiciled students who disclosed a mental health condition to their university has increased rapidly since 2010 and was over 5% in 2020/21 (Lewis and Bolton, 2023⁵⁰). However, in reality this figure may be much higher. In a survey by the mental health charity Student Minds in 2022⁵¹, 57% of respondents reported a mental health issue and 27% said they had a diagnosed mental health condition. In the same survey, 30% of students said their mental health had got worse since starting university and 59% said that managing money was a cause of stress 'often' or 'all of the time' (an increase of thirteen percentage points compared to 2020/21). Of those with a current or declared mental health issue, only 25% said they had talked to their personal tutor, supervisor or mentor about their issue and only 31% said that they had used the university's wellbeing or counselling services.

There is strong evidence that good mental health has a positive impact on a student's overall performance levels, and that students experiencing mental ill health are more likely to withdraw or underachieve (Universities UK (UUK), 2020⁵²). To achieve good mental health, UUK recommend taking a whole university approach, using mechanisms such as empowerment where staff and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own wellbeing. Our **Staff and Student Development** programme will empower individuals to take this responsibility by giving them the necessary knowledge and tools to make informed decisions about their own wellbeing needs.

⁴⁹ Dilnot et al. McMillan, L., Wyness, G. (2022) *Educational choices at 16-19 and adverse outcomes at university*. Available at <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/educational-choices-at-16-19-and-adverse-outcomes-at-university> [Accessed 1 August 2024].

⁵⁰ Lewis, J. and Bolton, P. (2023). *Student mental health in England: Statistics, policy, and guidance*. Research Briefing. Available at <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8593/> [Accessed 5 August 2024]

⁵¹ Student Minds (2023). *Student Minds Research Briefing*. Available at https://www.studentminds.org.uk/uploads/3/7/8/4/3784584/student_minds_insight_briefing_feb23.pdf [Accessed 5 August 2024]

⁵² UUK (2020) Stepchange: mentally healthy universities, Available at <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/stepchange-mentally-healthy-universities>. [Accessed 6 August 2024]

Empowerment can also be facilitated by making information readily available and accessible as our **Student Disability Advisor** and **Staff Wellbeing** roles will aim to do. Furthermore, by giving students the agency to create their own solutions as they will be able to do in our student-led initiative, **Herts Minds**, we will empower them to create positive impacts for the whole university community.

We know that the positive impact of experiencing good mental health whilst studying continues into employability (UUK, 2020³⁰). However, we will seek to further complement this effect with our dedicated **Career Development Programme** for students with declared Mental Health Conditions so that we can maximise their chances of progressing onto graduate employment or further study.

Suicide prevention is an important component of our approach to mental health and wellbeing. Our new **Men's Suicide Prevention Support Group** is targeted at male students because the evidence shows that male suicide rates for higher education students are significantly higher compared with those of female students (Nasir and John, 2022⁵³). The group is designed to help students support each other not only through fostering resilience and personal growth, but also by encouraging help-seeking behaviours including talking to their personal tutor or self-referring to the wellbeing services. The need to ensure that students who are experiencing difficulties are identified and signposted to help, and the idea of creating, compassionate communities among staff and students, are both recognised suicide prevention measures (UUK, 2018⁵⁴).

Our **Herts Wellbeing Framework** will provide a clear framework for our whole provider approach, encompassing these and other actions relating to mental health and wellbeing. This will be further complemented by the changes we are making to the **Personal Tutoring Framework** which include the enhanced staff development for Personal Tutors so that they know how to respond to students presenting with mental health issues.

Intervention strategy 5 (IS5): Students who have been eligible for Free School Meals and Students from Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile 1

Socio-economic status is a combination of a person's or family's economic and social position in comparison to others. This status is measured by a person's income, education, and occupation. Free School Meals (FSM) is a commonly used proxy measure for individual socio-economic disadvantage (including household income deprivation) during childhood. One of the advantages of FSM is that when aggregated to the school level, the proportion of pupils with FSM is likely to reflect the relative income deprivation of the school and local area. Another advantage is that it has fewer biases than other measures, particularly for single parent families and those who rent their homes.

One of the disadvantages is that at the pupil level, eligibility for FSM is a fairly crude measure of household income, as it does not distinguish between the poor and very poor or between households just above and far above the eligibility threshold. It is also a snapshot measure and therefore does not reflect rising levels of income. Jerrim (2021), using data from the Millennium Cohort Study (data on over 7,000 children), concluded that the number of years a child (permanent income deprivation) has been eligible for free school meals is the best available marker for childhood poverty (Pearson correlation = 0.69/Strong). However, the correlation between FSM and family income (as opposed to the number of years eligible) is not as good (Pearson correlation = 0.44/Moderate). This is due to the fact that it is a measure focused upon the lower part of the income distribution, and so is not good at distinguishing if a young person comes from a high or

⁵³ Nasir, R. and John, E. (2022) Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales: Experimental Statistics: 2017 to 2020. ONS Available at [Accessed 6 August 2024]

⁵⁴ UUK (2018) Suicide safer universities. Available at <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/features/suicide-safer-universities> [Accessed 6 August 2024]

medium background. Around one-in-five of low-income children will therefore be missed using this measure, while around one-in-five will be incorrectly classified as coming from a low income family.

IMD is a neighbourhood measure of socio-economic status constructed from seven indices of different domains: income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education and training deprivation, barriers to services, living environment / housing deprivation, and crime. Jerrim (2021⁵⁵) identified IMD as a good option for an area level marker with a moderate relationship with low income (Pearson correlation = 0.48). IMD quintiles 1 and 2 are considered the most disadvantaged 40% of children by this measure. However, even when used optimally, it can only capture income deprivation with limited accuracy, missing around 27% of children from low-income backgrounds. Moreover around 30% of children are inaccurately classified as coming from a disadvantaged (permanently 'low-income') background. IMD is also recognised to be biased against (underestimates) those who are from Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds, live in a single parent household or rent. IMD is not comparable across the four constituent countries that form the UK and so is not suitable for those universities with high intake from Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland (not relevant to Herts).

In summary, FSM (low income) and IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) are both measures of socio-economic status with moderate correlations to low income. Both will require a social capital aspect to their intervention as well as an economic one. Because of these commonalities, the interventions for the two at risk groups will be combined into a single intervention strategy. However, the objectives and targets will remain distinct to allow for more granular monitoring of outcomes and for variation in approach in the future should it be required. The rationale for this approach is further strengthened by the data overlap between the two: UH's FSM eligible population has remained consistent at 20% since 2018/19, dropping slightly to 19% in 2021/22. The majority of FSM eligible students (51%, 968) in 2021/22 were from IMD Q1 and Q2 areas. Since 2018/19, this proportion has fluctuated from a low of 40% (n=928 in 2018/19) to a high of 65% (n=1528 in 2020/21).

There are links between FSM eligible students and other students at risk at Herts (e.g., BTEC entry students and students of Black or Asian heritage); it is therefore assumed that IS5 will have a benefit for these groups too. The links are:

- The link between FSM and race - Black/Black British students are consistently the ethnic group with the highest number of FSM eligible students (30% n=604 in 21/22). Proportionately, it is the second highest group to Other Ethnic Background (38% n=201 in 21/22), but the population size for that group is much smaller.
- The link between FSM, race and BTEC - For Black/Black British males that are FSM eligible, 58% have a BTEC (n=151 in 21/22) compared to 37% who have A Levels (=97 in 21/22). Proportionately, more students who were eligible for FSM have BTEC qualifications than those who were not eligible for FSM.

According to the OfS' Risk to Equality of Opportunity Register, students from low-income backgrounds are at risk of unequal opportunities right across the risk register (OfS, 2024⁵⁶) leading to gaps in student outcomes across the lifecycle. Cost has increasingly become a barrier for students from less advantaged backgrounds (Hill et al. 2024⁵⁷). The failure of the maintenance loan to keep up with rising costs has left many students short of money for the day-to-day living

⁵⁵ Jerrim, J. (2021) Measuring Disadvantage. The Sutton Trust. Available from <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Measuring-Disadvantage.pdf> [Accessed 30 May 2024]

⁵⁶ OfS (2024) Students from low income backgrounds. Equality of Risk Register. OfS. Available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/equality-of-opportunity-risk-register/student-characteristics/students-from-low-income-households/> [Accessed 6 August 2024].

⁵⁷ Hill, K., Padley, M., and Freeman, J. (2024) A Minimum Income Standard for Students. TechnologyOne. Available at <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/A-Minimum-Income-Standard-for-Students-1.pdf> [Accessed 6 August 2024].

costs (Jones, 2022⁵⁸) especially rent costs which can 'swallow up' virtually all of the average maintenance loan (Unipol & HEPI, 2023⁵⁹). The impact is compounded for low-income students most of whom have little, if any reserve, to fall back on, are already reliant on working whilst studying, and are unable to rely on help from their family. Even when these students do graduate there remain stark differences in earning outcomes, with FSM graduates likely to earn considerably less (Shearing, 2024⁶⁰).

The Sutton Trust⁶¹ reports that the essential life skills developed by work experience and extracurricular activities support not only employability but are also associated with better academic outcomes. They argue that students from lower-socio economic backgrounds are less likely to engage in these types of activities. One of their key recommendations is that universities should help students to access these opportunities, both through targeted information and advice but also financial support (Montacute, Holt-White and Gent, 2021⁶¹). Research carried out by the University of Winchester, University of Exeter, and London Metropolitan University, found a link between participation in co-curricular activity, and attainment and retention (Sims, Luebsen and Guggiari-Peel, 2017⁶²). Similarly, research commissioned by HEFCE found that one of the four factors in differential student outcomes is social, cultural, and economic capital; impacting how students experience HE, their learning experience, and their engagement in their learning (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015⁶³). Research by the Bridge Group identified the increasing value placed upon extracurricular activities and internships by employers, and that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds participate less in these; a key barrier being the cost of doing so (The Bridge Group, 2015⁶⁴).

The revision to our **Flagship Bursary** will increase the reach of our financial support for students from low-income backgrounds in recognition of the barrier that finance creates for WP students wanting to access HE. Our **Student Opportunity Fund** and **Virtual Internships** initiatives will help students to access the types of extracurricular activities which can in turn lead to a successful and enriching university experience and positive graduate outcomes. The development of new **data visualisation and tracking processes** will improve our ability to assess the impact of these and our other interventions for FSM and IMD Q1 students.

⁵⁸ Jones, A. (2022) Learning with the lights off: students and the cost of living crisis. Available at <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2022/11/01/learning-with-the-lights-off-students-and-the-cost-of-living-crisis/>. [Accessed 6 August 2024].

⁵⁹ Unipol and HEPI (2023) *Rent now swallows up virtually all of the average maintenance loan as the student accommodation market reaches 'crisis point'*. HEPI Blog, 26 October 2023. Available at <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2023/10/26/student-rents-now-swallow-up-virtually-all-of-the-of-the-averagemaintenance-loan-as-market-reaches-crisis-point-in-affordability/> Accessed [6 August 2024]

⁶⁰ Shearing, H. (2024) *How much does uni in the UK cost, and will I earn more if I go?* Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-62237170> [Accessed 6 August 2024]

⁶¹ Montacute, R., Holt-White, E., & Gent, A (2021) *The University of Life: Employability and essential life skills at university*. London: The Sutton Trust

⁶² Sims, S., Luebsen, W., & Guggiari-Peel, C. (2017). Exploring the role of co-curricular student engagement in relation to student retention, attainment and improving inclusivity. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change*. 3(1) pp. 93-109.

⁶³ Mountford-Zimdars, A., Sabri, D., Moore, J., Sanders, J, Jones, S., & Higham, L. (2015) *Causes of Differences in Student Outcomes*. London: HEFCE

⁶⁴ The Bridge Group (2017). *Social Mobility and Careers Services*. London: UPP Foundation

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University of Hertfordshire

Provider UKPRN: 10007147

Summary of 2025-26 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflation statement:

We will not raise fees annually for new entrants

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	Standard UH course fee	N/A	9250
First degree	Students on credit accumulation programme	N/A	9250
First degree	UHOnline courses, for students starting in 25/26	N/A	7335
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	Initial Year Optometry starting 2022/23 and after	N/A	9250
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	9250
Accelerated degree	Accelerated Law (LLB) starting 2022/23 and after	N/A	10500
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	Full year study abroad in year 2	N/A	1385
Other	*	N/A	*

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

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	Hertford Regional College - HRC First Degree/Top up year students starting in 2022-23 and after	10003035	8250
First degree	Navitas UK Holdings Limited	10053304	9250
First degree	Pen Green Centre	10034200	9250
First degree	Pen Green Centre - Pen Green online, for students starting in 25/26 and after	10034200	9250
First degree	Unified Seevic Palmer's College - USP first degree students starting in 2020/21 and after	10005736	9250
Foundation degree	Hertford Regional College - Consortium College Fee	10003035	6165
Foundation degree	North Hertfordshire College - Consortium College Fee	10004690	6165
Foundation degree	Oaklands College - Consortium College Fee	10004835	6165
Foundation degree	Pen Green Centre - Pen Green Foundation degree	10034200	6165
Foundation degree	Unified Seevic Palmer's College - USP foundation degree students starting in 2021-22 and after	10005736	6165
Foundation degree	West Herts College - Consortium College Fee	10007417	6165
Foundation year/Year 0	Hertford Regional College - Consortium College Fee	10003035	6165
Foundation year/Year 0	Navitas UK Holdings Limited	10053304	9250
Foundation year/Year 0	North Hertfordshire College - Consortium College Fee	10004690	6165
Foundation year/Year 0	Oaklands College - Consortium College Fee	10004835	6165
Foundation year/Year 0	West Herts College - Consortium College Fee	10007417	6165
Foundation year/Year 0	West Herts College - Initial Year Law starting 2025/26 and after	10007417	5760
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	Standard UH Campus based course fee	N/A	6935
First degree	UHOnline courses, for students starting in 25/26	N/A	5490
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

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

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	Pen Green Centre - course fee for 2017 onwards	10034200	6935
First degree	Unified Seevic Palmer's College - USP first degree	10005736	6935
Foundation degree	Hertford Regional College - Consortium College Fee	10003035	6165
Foundation degree	Navitas UK Holdings Limited	10053304	6935
Foundation degree	North Hertfordshire College - Consortium College Fee	10004690	6165
Foundation degree	Oaklands College - Consortium College Fee	10004835	6165

Foundation degree	Unified Seevic Palmer's College - USP foundation degree students starting 2021/22 and after	10005736	6935
Foundation degree	West Herts College - Consortium College Fee	10007417	6165
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University of Hertfordshire

Provider UKPRN: 10007147

Investment summary

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

Notes about the data:

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

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

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

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

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

Table 6b - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£1,477,000	£1,612,000	£1,753,000	£1,898,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£1,355,000	£1,355,000	£1,355,000	£1,355,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£195,000	£201,000	£207,000	£213,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£261,000	£264,000	£268,000	£271,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£1,216,000	£1,348,000	£1,485,000	£1,627,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£1,477,000	£1,612,000	£1,753,000	£1,898,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment (as % of HFI)	6.7%	7.1%	7.6%	8.1%
Access activity investment	Total access investment funded from HFI (£)	£1,477,000	£1,612,000	£1,753,000	£1,898,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£1,325,000	£1,325,000	£1,325,000	£1,325,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£1,355,000	£1,355,000	£1,355,000	£1,355,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)	6.1%	6.0%	5.9%	5.8%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£195,000	£201,000	£207,000	£213,000
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University of Hertfordshire

Provider UKPRN: 10007147

Targets

Table 5b: Access and/or raising attainment targets

Aim [500 characters maximum]	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
	PTA_1														
	PTA_2														
	PTA_3														
	PTA_4														
	PTA_5														
	PTA_6														
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
To increase the continuation rate of students with a declared Mental Health Condition to be equivalent to continuation rates for students without a declared disability.	PTS_1	Continuation	Reported disability	Mental health condition	No disability reported	Milestones will be measured in percentage point difference between those with a declared mental health condition and no disability reported. Milestone year refers to the year data is being drawn from.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2020-21	Percentage	5	3.7	2.2	0.9	0
To increase the continuation rate of FSM eligible students to be equivalent to continuation rates of non-FSM eligible students.	PTS_2	Continuation	Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)	Eligible	Not eligible	Milestones will be measured in percentage point difference between those eligible and not eligible for free school meals. Milestone year refers to the year data is being drawn from.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2020-21	Percentage	4.8	3.6	2.4	1.2	0
To reduce the Yr 1 continuation gap between Males and Females to a minimum of 2pp.	PTS_3	Continuation	Sex	Male	Female	Milestones will be measured in percentage point difference between females and males. Milestone year refers to the year data is being drawn from.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2020-21	Percentage points	11.4	9	6.6	4.2	2
To reduce the continuation gap between A-level and BTEC entry students to a minimum of 4pp.	PTS_4	Continuation	Other	Other (please specify in description)	Other (please specify in description)	Target: BTEC Comparator: A-level Source: University internal reporting. Milestones will be measured in percentage point difference between A-level and BTEC entry students. Milestone year refers to the year data is being drawn from.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2022-23	Percentage points	10.7	9	7.3	5.6	4
To reduce the 'good degree' awarding gap between White and Black students by a minimum of 50% to 8pp	PTS_5	Attainment	Ethnicity	Black	White	Milestones will be measured in percentage point difference between White and Black students. Milestone year refers to the year data is being drawn from.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage points	17.7	15.3	12.9	10.5	8
To reduce the 'good degree' awarding gap between White and Asian students by a minimum of 50% to 6pp	PTS_6	Attainment	Ethnicity	Asian	White	Milestones will be measured in percentage point difference between White and Asian students. Milestone year refers to the year data is being drawn from.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage points	12.3	10.7	9.1	7.5	6

