



The Open University Access and Participation Plan 2019/20

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Ambitions and strategy.....	4
2.1. Curriculum and innovation	5
2.2. Digital inclusion.....	7
2.3. Student employability.....	8
2.4. Equality and Diversity	8
2.5. Working across the institution.....	9
2.6. Research and scholarship	10
2.7. Target groups.....	11
2.7.1.Students from low socio-economic backgrounds.....	11
2.7.2.Black African and black Caribbean students.....	12
2.7.3.Disabled students.....	13
2.7.4.Carers, care leavers or care experienced learners.....	14
2.7.5.Students with low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs).....	14
2.7.6.Students in secure environments	14
2.8. Collaborative Working	15
2.8.1.Validation.....	15
2.8.2.Social Partnerships Network.....	16
2.9. Ensuring continuous improvement through evaluation.....	16
2.10.Monitoring the delivery of the plan	17
3. Assessment of current performance.....	18
3.1.Students from low participation neighbourhoods	18
3.2.Ethnicity.....	18

3.3.Disabled students	19
3.4.Low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs)	20
4. Access, student success and progression measures.....	21
4.1.Widening access	21
4.2.Module completion	21
4.3.Success.....	21
4.4.Progression	21
4.4.1.Postgraduate study.....	21
4.4.2.Careers and employability	22
5. Delivering our objectives	23
5.1.Institutional accountability.....	24
5.2.Supporting inclusivity	24
5.3.Students with low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs)	24
5.4.Students with mental health issues.....	24
6. Investment.....	25
6.1.Countable expenditure	25
6.2.Evaluation of financial support.....	25
6.3.Provision of information to students.....	26
7. Glossary	27

1. Introduction

The Open University (OU) is the largest provider of part-time higher education (HE) in the UK with over 174,000 students studying through distance learning across the four nations of the UK. The OU mission is to be ‘open to people, places, methods and ideas’ and our open access policy enables this aspiration to be fulfilled. Our demographic has been changing and the average age of an OU student has now dropped to 28. Initiatives that are undertaken to widen participation to the OU therefore have adult and part-time learners as their focus, recognising the intersectionality of characteristics experienced by many of our students. Reflecting our UK-wide approach, we have institutional targets that transcend national boundaries, in addition to nation-specific targets, as set out in this Access and Participation Plan (APP) for England, the [Outcome Agreement for Scotland](#) and the [Widening Access and Participation Plan](#) for Northern Ireland. Whilst the OU in Wales is not required to submit a Fee and Access Plan, they will be required to account for public funds in relation to progressing Higher Education Funding Council for Wales’ (HEFCW) and Welsh Government priority areas in the future.

The OU aims to promote educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. Our ambition is to ensure that every one of our students is enabled to achieve equitable outcomes through personalised open learning.

There are several challenges that we, as an organisation face, in order to achieve these aims which reflect the unique environment within which the OU operates and which challenges the current metrics relating to success, that are widely used across the sector.

The majority of adult learners study part-time and for many OU students, combine their studies alongside full and part-time employment and other financial and personal commitments. Research by Butcher (2015) suggests that part-time students disproportionately represent many widening access and success characteristics:

- Low disposable income
- Disabled
- Have caring responsibilities
- First in family
- Geographically immobile

Adult learners also follow a non-linear pathway through their education dipping in and out of education as other pressures and commitments take priority. This is particularly relevant for the majority of OU students who study on a module by module basis and can opt to delay registering for another module if they choose. Students are also able to transfer to another qualification pathway, which provides an additional layer of complexity in reporting the data. This presents additional challenges when making comparisons across the sector.

Equally important is the measure of successful outcomes for adult learners, who may not necessarily feel the impact of their studies immediately. It may be several years before they are in a position to change jobs or careers or for an opportunity to arise in their own workplace that reflects their graduate skills. Similarly progression to further study is not likely to be immediate as most OU students will have studied for at least six years alongside their other commitments and any contemplation of further study requires careful personal consideration. As a result data presented in the Destination of Leavers from HE (DLHE) Survey will not necessarily reflect successful outcomes for adult learners.

This APP responds to the Office for Students' (OFS) guidance on developing APPs within the context of the OU. It has been developed in consultation with colleagues across the institution through the Widening Access and Success Steering Group and the student consultative structure. This structure makes use of online forums and face to face meetings to consult with students on a range of topics as and when needed. The online forum was used for the APP consultation.

In order to deliver its social justice mission, the OU invests a considerable amount of resource over and above the proportion of its additional higher fee income to support our students to access and succeed in HE. This commitment is strategically embedded across the institution. The Ambitions and Strategy section reflects this and highlights a selection of the initiatives that we are already undertaking. We take this opportunity to present our ambitions to address the disparities that a review of our data has highlighted.

2. Ambitions and strategy

The OU launched its 'Students First Strategy for Growth' in 2016, with a clear and explicit commitment to delivering its social justice mission in a challenging external environment:

Our primary purpose is to create educational opportunities and social mobility for all who seek to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential.

By seeking to support students more effectively, so that more people achieve a qualification, with a continued commitment to widen access and success, this renewed aspiration complements the University's core values, which are: 'Inclusive, innovative and responsive'. The Learning and Teaching Vision & Plan states:

Measures of success will not just relate to recruitment but also to reducing the retention, progression, completion and attainment gaps for students from low socio economic backgrounds, especially black and minority ethnic (BME) students for whom the attainment gap in particular continues to widen.

Principle 6 acknowledges that the OU has led the way on widening access to HE in the UK, and remains committed to accessibility, inclusivity and equality. Our Equality Objectives (2016-20) are delivered through an Action Plan which highlights efforts underway to close the satisfaction and degree awarding gap for black and disabled students.

In order to achieve our ambitions we strategically embed widening access and success into everything that we do. Our data shows however, that more needs to be done to enable students to achieve equitable outcomes, whatever their background. In order for us to address these challenges we will need to build on existing knowledge within the sector and our own monitoring and evaluation practices to understand the specific needs of students from a range of demographics from which we can then recommend and implement actions to drive our ambition. Our aim is to develop a co-ordinated approach across the institution to addressing the disparities that our data reveals.

The following sections will present current and planned activity that we are undertaking to support all of our students to achieve our ambitions.

2.1. Curriculum and innovation

As a key element in the University's new Curriculum Plan, we are innovating in the Level 0 space in order to better prepare part-time students, particularly those entering with low prior educational qualifications (PEQs), to succeed. Last year we introduced an online diagnostic course to support student decision-making in starting HE at the right level. This has already attracted 50,000 users. In addition, a badged open course introducing learners to distance education has attracted 5,000 learners. The impact of these innovations is being evaluated, and we are exploring ways to re-purpose elements of our Access programme (see Glossary) to support, at a shorter duration, effective preparation.

Recognising these challenges we are committed to better preparing students from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in HE and to achieve equitable outcomes. Our approach is specifically tailored to meet the needs of our adult learners coming into HE with low PEQs and lacking in confidence.

Recognising the specific challenges that this presents we continue to deliver and develop innovative curriculum. Our core introductory Level 1 (Sector Level 4) modules are designed specifically to support our open access policy, embedding skills development and confidence building within module materials

Our Access modules also offer a unique tutoring model to support students through one to one tutoring and materials designed to develop study skills and confidence in academic ability. Access modules are Level 0 and 30 credits. They are offered at half the University standard module fee and some students are eligible for a full fee waiver if they have a household income of less than £25,000 and no previous HE experience. We know that students on our Access programme often present two or more Widening Access and Success characteristics, notably low socio-economic status, low previous educational qualifications and disability. The unique one to one telephone tutoring model is designed specifically to support students presenting these characteristics. Students are gradually supported into an online environment, in order to prepare them for the online components of the full degree programme. We offer three Access modules

- Y031 Arts and Languages
- Y032 People, Work and Society
- Y033 Science, Technology and Maths

These broad subject areas support students to decide on the right qualification pathway for them. Our data suggests that students who have undertaken an Access module do better on the first year of their degree than students who have entered directly onto the first year. The University is currently undertaking a review of its curriculum, however the Access Programme is not in scope of this review. We will continue to evaluate the impact of our Access modules and the financial support that we offer to ensure that it is fit for purpose and meets the needs of our students.

The University's "Open" Programme comprises of a suite of qualifications, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, which allow students to construct a personalised qualification from a range of modules across all faculties in the University. This enables them to choose a flexible study path which focuses on personal interests and/or career-related skills in a multidisciplinary way. The Open Programme is the OU's largest degree programme in terms of student numbers and module choice, and has been available for almost 50 years (until 2000, the Open degree was the only qualification that the OU offered).

Overall, the demographics of students on Open qualifications broadly reflect that of the OU 'average'. However, recent data has highlighted that there are three groups of students that appear to be overrepresented on the Open Programme – students with a declared disability, credit transfer students and students in secure environments. As a result, we have identified these student groups as a priority in terms of further data analysis and investigation.

Across the institution faculties are supported to ensure the needs of their students are being met. Services for disabled students include conversion of inaccessible library materials, embedded image descriptions for students with visual impairments, adjustments to assessments, mediated literature searching and postal loans for housebound students. The library's e-resources are tested for accessibility and we work with platform providers, who value the OU Library's expertise in this area, to improve accessibility features where necessary.

Library Services is committed to making sure students get an equivalent experience but also get the rich university experience of using an academic library like any other student would. This includes liaising with external organisations to improve the accessibility of subscription resources, which is beneficial for all students. Alternative arrangements have been set up so that students in secure environments can have a study partner who is able to conduct searches on their behalf. Care is also taken to ensure skills materials are accessible to disabled students, so they have the opportunity to develop their independent study skills.

Library Services supply hardcopy materials and do directed literature searches for students in secure environments who do not have internet access. Online material is adapted and made available on an off-line 'Virtual Campus'. Advanced Creative Writing offers a 'mock forum' for students in secure environments or with disabilities that prevent them from participating online, ensuring parity of experience across the cohort.

We undertake to ensure equal access to our teaching for all our students by taking their varying needs into account at all stages of our teaching, from module production to the arrangements at exams. In module production, an academic member of staff is assigned as Equality and Diversity lead. This role is to liaise between the module team and experts elsewhere in the University on the design of teaching materials for maximum usability across all groups.

2.2. Digital inclusion

The OU's blended approach to learning offers many opportunities to access HE for those students for whom traditional face to face HE is not suitable and for those students, such as those with caring responsibilities, who require flexible study patterns that can be tailored to their own personal circumstances. We use and develop technology innovatively to provide a leading edge student experience which enhances digital literacy skills that can be transferred into the workplace. We pride ourselves on being accessible to all but we are also mindful that digital approaches to learning present challenges for some students. We seek to ensure that no student is disadvantaged as a result and the current period of reflection on our offer is part of this process.

A recent survey of OU students who had recently studied an Access module sought to explore their experiences of the print and online aspects of the modules and in particular whether the transition to online learning prepared them for future study with the OU. Whilst it is evident that learning styles play a large part in the responses, the specific issues that were raised related to access to reliable broadband and also access to a PC or laptop. This is a particular issue for students from low socio-economic backgrounds and also some adult learners for whom technology can be challenging. There is often an assumption that our students are already digitally literate and Smart phones are a household accessory. Given the diversity of our student cohort, this should not be taken for granted. Access modules are designed to specifically support students into online learning in order to prepare them for further online learning. This not only supports their continued engagement with learning at the OU but also equips them with some of the skills necessary to engage with the digital world of work and society.

Whilst technology opens up opportunities for disabled students, it also presents challenges in terms of physical equipment required to enable students to engage with the online material. For those with mental health difficulties online learning may present the safe environment to learn that a traditional face to face university may not but we must also be mindful that other disabilities, including migraine, fatigue (including screen-induced fatigue) may impact upon the level of engagement with online materials. As an institution, we continue to ensure our disabled students are assisted through reasonable adjustments, to be able to fully engage with the materials. Our Securing Greater Accessibility (SeGA) team support the development and delivery of our learning and teaching through supporting the faculties in addressing accessibility issues. SeGA have implemented the Measuring Accessibility Practices and Perceptions (MAPP) project: a cross-sectional investigation of OU staff **knowledge, skills, attitudes** and **support context**, in relation to accessibility. The survey data is intended to provide a high level training needs analysis and to provide data towards a longitudinal project to measure change and to continually inform

practice and professional development. SeGA are also currently involved in the HEFCE-funded project [Embedding and Sustaining Inclusive Practices in STEM](#) (Inc STEM) investigating how STEM curricula can be more inclusive and accessible through case study examples of good practice, both at the OU and across UK HE. This project has extended the MAPP survey to the two partner institutions and the data will be analysed to inform the sector.

Online learning also presents particular challenge for our students in secure environments where internet access is not available and electronic submission of assignments and engagement with online tutorials and discussion forums is not possible. Our CAMPUS website enables offline resources to be accessible to students in secure environments and we will continue to offer alternative formats to these students and ensure that their needs are represented as we develop new and existing curriculum.

Library Services is also leading a programme on digital capabilities – a known enabler in digital inclusion - for all OU people to ensure maximum participation and success for all in our digital world of work and society. They have worked with the Access programme since its inception to ensure that digital literacy is addressed, in addition to module teams to ensure that these skills are embedded across the curriculum at the appropriate level for students.

2.3. Student employability

The OU recognises student employability development as an entitlement for all its students inclusive of our widening participation cohorts. Our [Student Employability Policy](#) explicitly drives the embedding of student employability skills within the curriculum such that students are able to recognize, record and articulate the employability skills that they already have and are developing through study.

As an institution we acknowledge we need to do more in this area, especially with regards to the need for a more holistic strategy and consistency. We are investing in enhancing employability and career progression as a Strategic Priority. Under the specific aim to increase the number of students achieving positive personal and career development outcomes, a programme of work is underway which is focussing on :-

- Enhancing and increasing personalised support to maximise the chances for student success according to their stated goals;
- Increasing the visibility of employability benefits in all curriculum areas;
- Growing scholarship and research in employability;
- Bringing the employer perspective more directly into the University in order to positively align students' employability outcomes to current industry needs;
- Developing sustainable institutional infrastructure ensuring that there is appropriate cohesion and effort across the institution to deliver enhanced employability and career progression.

2.4. Equality and Diversity

Equality and Diversity (E&D) and widening access and success are interlinked at the OU with institutional targets regarding the degree awarding gap for black and disabled students formally owned and reported

through the Equality and Diversity Scheme. The Widening Access and Success Research and Evaluation team undertake research, scholarship and evaluation that contributes to achieving the E&D Objectives but specifically work with faculties to share knowledge and good practice that is borne out of this activity. The Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is a member of the Widening Access and Success Steering Group, with the senior responsible owner for the objectives to reduce the black and disabled degree awarding gap also a member of the group.

2.5. Working across the institution

The Widening Access and Success Research and Evaluation team work collaboratively across the institution to ensure the needs of our widening access and success students are met supporting Equality and Diversity objectives under the Equality Act 2010, as well as other widening access and success students. Our faculty roadshows embed this further, presenting performance data for specific programmes of study which compare programme level data with institutional averages. The data presented focuses upon registrations, module completion and module attainment for our widening access and success students namely

- Low socio-economic status
- Disabled
- Black and minority ethnic
- Low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs)

This is further supported by our widening access and success intranet site which aims to provide resources to support faculties in identifying what the particular challenges students from widening access and success backgrounds face and offer practical support in how to address these challenges. Our ambition is to develop these resources further within the next year. The Widening Access and Success Steering Group oversees this activity and consists of senior members of the University including:

- Director, Access, Careers and Teaching Support
- Associate Director, Curriculum and Access, Learning and Teaching Innovation
- Head of Equality, Diversity and Information Rights
- Director of Teaching and Learning
- Head of Quality Enhancement and Learning Analytics
- Assistant Director, Widening Access and Success Services
- Director of Operations, Student Recruitment and Fees
- Heads of Student Success (faculty representatives)
- Vice President, OU Students Association
- Chair of SeGA Coordination Group

This institution-wide approach ensures that any agreed targets and objectives are embedded and owned across the institution and can be monitored accordingly. Working groups support the high level

objectives of the Widening Access and Success Steering Group. The Widening Access and Success Steering Group reports into the Student Experience Committee.

Further collaborative working to meet the needs of widening access and success students is also evident in the curriculum development and design process. Colleagues from Widening Access and Success Research and Evaluation team, Equality and Diversity and Securing Greater Accessibility (SeGA) work collaboratively to develop resources for use within Learning Design workshops with a view to ensuring that the diverse needs of our students are considered in the early stages of curriculum development. Widening access and success, equality and diversity and accessibility are further embedded within our curriculum system and the teams work together to ensure curriculum development teams are considering widening access and success and equality and diversity students in their curriculum and module design.

Students are represented across the institution as members of Boards of Study and represented across a range of committees and steering groups. The Inclusion Group is led by the OU Students Association and has student representation across many of the Equality and Diversity protected characteristics. Our Student Consultation Forum provides a vehicle for consulting with students on a variety of issues, policies and strategic documents, including the APP.

2.6. Research and scholarship

Research and scholarship is integral to ensuring that the needs of our students are met. Our Widening Access and Success Research and Evaluation team provide the hub for this activity and use their knowledge and expertise to support colleagues across the University in meeting the needs of our students based on the evidence that our research and scholarship activity provides. The team undertake both externally funded and internal research and scholarship projects with this aim in mind, evaluating the specific provision of our Access modules for widening access and success students with a view to communicating findings and recommendations across the institution. In addition to communication with faculties, the team also host a programme of free seminars open to both internal and external colleagues with a view to sharing academic insight and practical recommendations relating to a range of widening access and success students. Our approach is to ensure that practical outcomes can be taken away and adapted within different institutional contexts and to provide a platform for discussion and dialogue with a view to sharing practice.

This programme of events is also enhanced by our international biennial Widening Participation conference which similarly aims to bring both academics and practitioners together, to network, share practice, discuss and debate. The subscription-based Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning journal is also managed through the Widening Access and Success Research and Evaluation team with academic rigour ensured through its blind peer-review process and international editorial board. The journal offers a supportive environment for both established and newer researchers to publish academic and innovative practice papers in the field of widening participation and lifelong learning. We work with organisations across the sector to publish special editions of the journal which have a specific focus. Collaborations

include the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (publication of papers from their annual conference) and the predecessor to the OFS, the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) (Financial Support), SEEC (recognition of prior learning) and a special edition presenting papers written as part of a programme of development for newer researchers managed through the OFS, Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Newcastle, New South Wales.

Our newly formed Scholarship and Innovation Centres will strengthen the understanding of the needs of our students across the University. Widening access and success will be incorporated into the priority themes that are currently being developed and contribute to a consistent approach to addressing some of the challenges that our data has revealed.

Evaluation is embedded within all initiatives that are being undertaken across the institution. Systemic evaluation is undertaken through the Student Experience on a Module Survey and the National Students' Survey and findings are acted upon accordingly. The OU's quality enhancement systems – the Annual Quality Review, the six yearly Periodic Programme Review and the involvement in external examiners within and across modules and programmes, ensures that our offer is rigorously evaluated.

Recommendations from such reviews are translated into an action plan which is monitored for progress at regular Board of Studies meetings.

OU students on average, take six years to complete their undergraduate qualification and therefore the impact of any initiatives implemented to address these imbalances is not likely to be immediately realised. Our targets reflect this position.

2.7. Target groups

Aligned to the priorities set out in the OFS Guidance and recognising that the majority of our students are mature, our Widening Access and Success Strategy is tailored to addressing the challenges faced by students representing the following characteristics (See Glossary for specific definitions):

- Students from low socio-economic backgrounds (POLAR3 quintile 1) and no previous HE experience)
- Black African and Black Caribbean students
- Disabled students (specifically those with physical, mental and learning difficulties)
- Carers, care leavers or care experienced learners

In addition to OFS target groups, given the particular relevance to our context we also prioritise:

- Students with low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs)
- Students in secure environments

2.7.1. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds

The primary aim of the OU is to enable students from non-traditional backgrounds to enter HE through its open entry policy. We recognise that for some students financial barriers are one of the main reasons

that HE is inaccessible. We specifically support students from low socio-economic backgrounds to access and be successful in HE through several initiatives.

Our Access programme prepares students for HE study prior to registering on a full degree programme and are offered at half the price of a standard OU module (£761). Eligible students may also apply for a full fee waiver if they meet the criteria of having a household income of less than £25,000 and have no previous HE experience.

Other financial support packages are available and detailed on the [fees and funding](#) section of our website. Financial information is also provided by telephone through our Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSC). Details of how to apply, other financial planning options are also available via the fees and funding webpage.

Students receiving benefits or with a household income of less than £25,000 can apply for an [OU Bursary](#) of up to a maximum value of £3,000 to help with costs or students may also be eligible for financial help with study-related costs like travel, childcare and internet access. To be eligible students need to be registered and have funding in place for their chosen course, plus meet the following criteria:

- Have a gross household income of not more than £25,000 per year or be in receipt of a [qualifying benefit](#).
- Be ordinarily resident in the UK.
- Be new to the OU
- Be registered towards an [undergraduate qualification](#).
- Have completed their enrolment on their first Open University module, have their funding in place, and have started study by day 14 of module start.
- Be studying a minimum of 30 credits per year.
- Hold no existing higher education qualification.

Students **must also meet at least two** of the following:

- Have a declared disability.
- Be from an ethnic minority.
- Be a care leaver within the last five years.
- Be a female intending to study a science, technology, engineering or maths (STEM) qualification.
- Be a male intending to study nursing or subjects allied to medicine, arts, social science, law, education or languages qualification.

2.7.2. Black African and black Caribbean students

Our inclusive approach seeks to ensure that the needs of students from whatever background are supported to access and succeed in HE. Learning Design workshops support module development teams to develop inclusive curricula that reflects different ethnicities, religions and other Equality and Diversity protected characteristics. This continues through our Stage-gate process which provides module and

curriculum teams the opportunity to reflect on their proposed approach, ensuring that it is inclusive and that consideration has been given of the impact on students of all backgrounds, of particular design decisions. Module team chairs are responsible for ensuring diversity within module design and delivery, and critical readers are employed that specifically review module and curriculum content for inclusive and diverse content. The Equality and Diversity team provide bespoke training and guidance for module and curriculum teams in terms of ensuring inclusivity, and the team are also making progress towards a submission for the Race Equality Charter. Our race champion, provides accountability at a senior level for ethnicity-related targets within the Equality and Diversity Scheme and widening access and success.

2.7.3. Disabled students

Financial support for students declaring a disability is offered via the Disabled Students' Allowance, for which further information can be found on the [Supporting students with disabilities](#) page. Our [Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund](#) also offers financial support for students whose disability is as a result of being injured in, or due to, military service. To be eligible students must be starting OU study in the applicable academic year, be eligible for a UK fee and be disabled as a result of, or in, military service. A link providing details of how to apply for the scheme is included on the web page and further information provided through our Disabled Students Team.

Support to enable study and success for disabled students is embedded within institutional practice. The Auxiliary Aids & Services team provide equipment loans and organise professional communication support workers and other non-medical helpers to provide assistance for disabled students throughout their studies including support at tutorials and residential schools. The team is also responsible for the online facility used by students to tell us about their additional requirements and the support they need at residential schools.

The Alternative Formats and Auxiliary Aids & Services teams work with external service providers and funding bodies and many others across the University (including Central Academic Units (CAUs), and the Learning Innovation and other teams within Academic Services to provide a wide range of support options for our disabled students.

The Alternative Formats team provide anticipatory adjustments to module materials (such as comb-bound books and Daisy talking books) and a wide range of alternative formats as bespoke individual reasonable adjustments. The team manages a purpose-built Audio Recording Centre and a team of volunteer readers in support of the award-winning production of Daisy talking books.

In 2012, 4269 students used Daisy talking books, by 2016 this figure had increased by 17% to 5012 students. In addition, the team has responded to an increasing amount of individual reasonable adjustment requests, mainly providing printed versions of online items. In 2012, 92 students received a reasonable adjustment request, by 2016 this figure had increased by 1525% to 1495 students.

The team is the primary contributor to the online StudentHome Help Centre for disabled students, which covers the requirements of study and the support available. The team is also responsible for the

online facility used by students to declare their disability and additional requirements and tell us about the support they need.

A number of support schemes are offered to disabled students to help with the diagnosis for Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia etc.), contribute to costs towards DSA equipment and fee waivers for disabled veterans.

2.7.4. Carers, care leavers or care experienced learners

We aim to personalise our offer to ensure caring or care experienced students receive a study experience that enables them to achieve equitable outcomes. Our current data collection ask students to self-identify as being a carer or care leaver, although, given the age demographic of our student cohort the term care experienced learner is preferred. We are considering adding this terms to our data collection systems. The numbers declaring their status is small and an objective under the University's Equality Scheme aims to increase the number of students declaring their carer status from 7.2% to 20% by 2020. Colleagues working within our Welsh office have recently completed a project aimed at increasing the number of students declaring their carer status and we are looking to implement some of the recommendations at an institutional level. This work is being implemented via the Widening Access and Success Steering Group. As a consequence of the above, this APP does not present data on carers or care leavers.

2.7.5. Students with low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs)

Our open entry policy naturally attracts students with low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs). Our Access programme aims to support students to develop study skills and confidence in their own academic ability. Support for students on other OU modules is designed in during the learning design process and continued through the development of modules and subsequent delivery. Learning design workshops ensure that all students' needs and the possible impact of a particular design approach may have on them, are considered and alternative approaches explored.

The reduced module fee and fee waiver scheme provides low financial risk for students who have been out of education for some time and those with low previous educational qualification to start with Access, to get a taster of degree level study, to develop confidence and become familiar with distance learning prior to committing to a full degree.

2.7.6. Students in secure environments

The OU has provided courses to students in prison since 1972. The partnership between The OU and The Prison Services was set up to facilitate access to HE for those prisoners who had not previously had the opportunity to study at this level and who had demonstrated their potential and motivation. We currently have an annual agreement with the Ministry of Justice to deliver HE across the secure estate. We offer more than 200 courses across all faculties in approximately 150 prisons (covering all security categories) in the UK and Ireland. Many students continue their studies when released into the community. Currently all students receive their study materials in print format, but many modules are

also available via a secure intranet platform (the Virtual Campus) and as the IT infrastructure develops in prisons we hope to use this to support the development of digital literacy.

The University financially supports students in secure environments students to study on Access modules through the OU Students Educational Trust (Ouset) alongside funding from the Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) and a three year financial support programme for students in secure environments undertaking their first Level 1 (Sector Level 4) module having completed an Access module, through the Garfield Weston Foundation.

It has been necessary to offer financial support to our students in secure environments (specifically those in prisons) as a consequence of the changes to fees and funding which has resulted in the number of those students decreasing. There is currently no alternative funding arrangement in this environment and individuals either have to self-fund or apply for a student loan from the Student Loans Company (SLC). Students in secure environments must be within six years of release to be eligible for a student loan. This has the unintended consequence of excluding many longer term prisoners from engaging with HE. Research by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) suggests that engagement with HE has a positive effect on the likelihood of reoffending and therefore enabling access to HE for students in secure environments benefits both the individual and society more generally. In partnership with the Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) and the MOJ we aim to explore alternative arrangements for students in secure environments in order to increase student numbers. Due to the specific and unique circumstance of students in secure environments, they are not included in the Assessment of our Performance or the associated targets.

2.8. Collaborative Working

APP Guidance requires institutions submitting plans to outline how they intend to work with schools to improve attainment. Given that prior attainment is not a prerequisite for OU students and our core market is not school leavers, activity to encourage more disadvantaged adults into HE is built on the relationships that we have established through the Social Partnerships Network (SPN) and through reaching out to young adults through our validated partnerships.

2.8.1. Validation

The OU's validation service has expanded significantly in the last two years with now over 40 partners. 18 of these partners are Further Education Colleges and many others niche providers, all of whom support the University's objective of expanding educational opportunities for all and increasing the number of students with OU awards. These partnerships play an important part in the University's overall provision as it supports access to those for whom our core supported-distance learning model is not the right mode for them. A list of academic partnerships can be found on the register of collaborative provision <http://www.open.ac.uk/about/main/sites/www.open.ac.uk.about.main/files/files/ecms/web-content/about-register-of-collaborative-provision.xls>

2.8.2. Social Partnerships Network

The OU is founder and coordinating member of the [Social Partnerships Network \(SPN\)](#). Work to attract students to the OU, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is primarily done at scale through this network. The network members work together to develop strategies and activities that lead to the creation of a more diverse educational system, able to meet the needs of learners from any background, supporting lifelong learning, social mobility and workplace learning to improve economic growth. There are currently 11 partners all of whom share a firm commitment to widening access and social inclusion. Together they have a combined potential reach to over seven million people. The Social Partnerships Network (SPN) work collaboratively to host events that encourage policy-makers and employers to support adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds into HE. The main challenge for the network is how to measure its impact given the informal nature of the outreach work.

2.9. Ensuring continuous improvement through evaluation

The OU is a large organisation with a social justice mission. Widening access and success is embedded within our business as usual (BAU) activity. The Widening Access and Success Research and Evaluation team not only act as the academic hub for research and evaluation but link their work and the commitments in the APP, institutionally via the Widening Access and Success Steering Group. Through this mechanism, the impact of discrete projects aimed at supporting students to succeed are monitored and reported through the Widening Access and Success Action Plan, overseen by the Widening Access and Success Steering Group and managed by the Widening Access and Success Research and Evaluation team. The Widening Access and Success Research and Evaluation team communicate their knowledge and expertise across the University through faculty and student resource support centres (SRSCs) roadshows, with a view to supporting colleagues in identifying action to address some of the challenges identified within the APP. The team present internal annual reports on these projects and also progress against the targets committed within the APP. They are also responsible for developing and disseminating resources for use by module and curriculum teams, via the Widening Access and Success intranet site and promote their own research and evaluation work through the Access Observatory. They host the Widening Access and Success seminar programme and use the outputs of these to inform practice across the University.

Our current approach to evaluation of the impact of our widening participation initiatives that are not BAU use baseline data to determine impact on the defined measure. For example for the black attainment gap project a baseline of current attainment levels will be set prior to the implementation of specific interventions. The same measures will be reported following one complete academic year to ascertain whether improvements have been made to the baseline data. Our approach also involves the analysis of qualitative data through the Student at the End of a Module (SEAM) survey.

Our Student Experience on a Module Survey (SeAM) and the National Students' Survey provide systemic evaluation of our provision. Our practice is reviewed and improved in line with feedback but with a

particular awareness of the impact that proposed changes may have on widening access and success students. An Equality Analysis is undertaken for any major changes proposed. The OU's quality enhancement systems – Quality Monitoring and Enhancement (QME), the six yearly Periodic Programme Review (PPR) and the involvement of external examiners within and across modules and programmes, ensures that our offer is rigorously evaluated. Recommendations from these reviews are translated into action plans which are monitored for progress at regular Board of Studies meetings. Students are represented across a number of University committees and Boards of study which ensures that the needs of students are reflected in our provision.

The University has just announced a new Pro Vice-Chancellor Students. Part of this role is to provide focus for the University in the effective implement of the research and evaluation process outlined above. This will ensure executive level accountability for student success, something which has not been visible in recent years. The Widening Access and Success Research and Evaluation team is a key instrument to deliver in this space.

2.10. Monitoring the delivery of the plan

The University's Widening Access and Success Steering group will monitor the delivery of our APP and a working group will act as the operational arm to enable successful delivery of our targets. The working group will meet regularly throughout the year to ensure progress is being made against each of the actions. The steering group consists of senior management from across key areas of the University including, Academic Services, Marketing, faculties, Equality and Diversity, Accessibility, Students Registration Support Centres, each of the UK nations and student representation. It meets three times a year and formally reports to the University's Student Experience Committee. The group receives data reports on registrations, completions and attainment for our widening access and success students and following APP Guidance will also include progression between module and onto postgraduate study or higher skilled employment. This latter measure however is challenging for the OU as often the impact of HE study on adult learners may not be felt for some time, given the need to meet existing financial and personal commitments which restricts the take up of immediate employment opportunities (Butcher, 2015).

An action plan identifies high level activity being undertaken to support students from widening access and success backgrounds across the institution with evaluation embedded within. The action plan is monitored for progress as a regular item on the Widening Access and Success Steering Group agenda. The Widening Access and Success Annual Report aggregates this work and is used as an internal document disseminated widely across the institution.

Students are engaged in monitoring the delivery of the plan through representation on the Widening Access and Success Steering Group and other University committees, such as the Student Experience Committee, who receive reports on the progress of the APP. Students will be invited to be involved in the project teams to be established to deliver the targets. A newly established Student Voice project will also

be pivotal to monitoring the delivery of the plan. The new PVC-Students will be crucial in building close relationships between this executive level role and the project.

3. Assessment of current performance

In assessing our performance we have focused upon OFS priorities namely students from areas of low HE participation and with no previous HE experience, ethnicity and disability. All data relates primarily to mature students, given that this is our core cohort and is based on 2016/17 data.

This APP reports on data for students studying in England only, from the 25% Fee Liability point (see Glossary) and on undergraduate courses only. Previous Access Agreements reported new registration data from module start. This change in definition has impacted upon the target set for new widening participation registrations which will differ from the target agreed with existing Access Agreements.

Students at the OU study on a module by module basis and may not study continuously year on year. Student loans are available for up to four times the period ordinarily required to complete the full time equivalent and in addition to discretionary years, students could study with the support of a student loan for up to 16 years. It is possible for students who self-fund to spread their studies over a longer timeframe. As a result our data focuses upon attainment at a modular level, using modules at sector Levels 5 and 6 as a proxy for the final degree classification (pass or good pass of 2:1 or above). The data reveals the following trends for the identified student groups:

3.1. Students from low participation neighbourhoods

The WP (widening participation) flag on OU systems defines these students as coming from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3 see glossary) and with no previous HE experience. The OU has a high proportion of new WP students coming into the University, well above the sector data for mature, part-time students (HESA, 2018). **The current OU proportion is 16.9%.** Data relating to the awarding of good module passes for WP students compared to other students suggests an improvement from 2012/13 to 2016-17. **The good module passes gap has reduced from -8.6 percentage points to -4.7 percentage points. The module completion gap for this cohort also suggests an improvement of 2.1 percentage points from -6.9 percentage points in 2012/13 to -4.8 in 2016/17.**

3.2. Ethnicity

Registration data

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students make up 13.5% of new student registrations and 12.5% of new and continuing students. The tables below disaggregates this data further by ethnicity.

Student group	New student registrations as a proportion of BAME students %	*New student registrations as a proportion of all students %	New and continuing student registrations as a proportion of BAME students %	New and continuing students as a proportion of all students %

Black	33.6	4.5	35.5	4.4
Asian	36.9	5.0	34	4.3
Minority ethnic	6.7	0.9	6.5	0.8

*These figures compare to 4.5% across the sector (ECU, 2018). The proportion of all black students at the OU (England only) is 4.4% compared to 7.9% in the sector.

Module completion and attainment data

Module completion data

The module completion gap at the OU is moderately high for black students (-7.6 percentage points) although it is at its lowest level since 2013/14, following a spike at -9.1 percentage points in 2014/15. There is a very low gap for Asian, Arab/Gypsy Traveller and other BAME students (-0.7 and -2.9 percentage points respectively).

Module attainment data

Analysis of module attainment data reveals substantially high attainment gaps for good passes for all BAME students (-10.3 percentage points for Asian, -13.0 for Arab/Gypsy Traveller and other but most notable for black students at -20.6 percentage points. There is also a high gap in passes for black students and moderate gaps for other BAME students. These gaps have been relatively consistent over the past four years.

The reported sector degree attainment gap in 2016/17 is 25.3 percentage points (ECU, 2018).

3.3. Disabled students

In 2016/17 the OU had 17.3% of disabled students (England only) which compares to 13.8% across the sector. The proportion of new students declaring a disability has increased by 4.8 percentage points from 2012/13 to 2016/17 primarily as a result of more students declaring mental health issues. Our data suggests that a gap exists in the completion of modules for disabled students compared to non-disabled, of those most notably students declaring mental health issues (-16 percentage points) but also for those with physical disabilities (-9.3). This has been the trend since 2012/13 with no significant deviations. There are consistent gaps for students with learning difficulties for completions, passes and good passes. The gap in completions for students with learning difficulties has decreased from -5.6 percentage points in 2012/13 to -4.4 percentage points in 2016/17 after a peak in 2015/16 at -6 percentage points. The pass gap for students with learning difficulties has also improved from 2012/13 from -4.9 percentage points to -4.1 percentage points in 2016/17. The average gap from 2012/13 to 2016/17 is – 4.9 percentage points. There is also a gap in the good passes awarded for students with learning difficulties which currently stands at -7.6 percentage points compared to -7.7 percentage points in 2012/13. This peaked in 2014/15 at -8.6 percentage points.

3.4. Low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs)

Students coming into the University with low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs) are a particular priority given our open entry policy. We recognise that many students will present multiple widening access and success characteristics and data is being analysed to explore the correlations between the various factors. In order to address this, the University has sustained a commitment to its Access programme over the last five years (see Glossary). Our institutional data suggests that students who start with an Access module do better in the first year of their degree than those who do not although our data also suggests that improvements could be made to retention rates of our Access students. Approximately two thirds of Access students receive a full fee waiver and research suggests that this may inadvertently contribute to passive withdrawals. There are a high number of widening access and success students on our Access programme, significantly those with low PEQS (56%) and disabled students (27%).

There is a noticeable trend over the past 5 years of a larger gap between students with low PEQs and others students completing their modules (-9.4 percentage points). However, this gap is less than those students with low PEQs achieving a good pass (-10.7 percentage points) although this has been decreasing since 2012/13.

We have also explored the intersections between different characteristics particularly around the intersections between ethnicity and low socio-economic status, ethnicity and disability and ethnicity and low previous educational qualifications. We have explored:

- Ethnicity and LSES
- Ethnicity and LPEQs
- Ethnicity and disability

This analysis shows that:

Widening participation students (WP flag) who declare a disability achieve a lower pass rate than those who declare a disability only (-3.4 percentage point gap).

BAME students who declare a disability achieve a lower pass rate than white students who declare a disability (-7 percentage point gap). The gap between White and BAME is larger for students without declared disabilities (-9 percentage points).

Black students with less than 2 A levels have a very low pass rate compared to most other groups, and a 20 percentage point difference in pass rate compared to white students with 2 A levels or above. Having A levels makes a smaller difference to pass rate (-5 percentage point difference) than it does for white (-12 percentage point difference) or to all combined BME students (-6 percentage point difference).

Additional analysis for other intersections will be undertaken during 2019/20 but it is anticipated that our inclusive approach to deliver our targets will have a significant impact on those students who present several widening access and success characteristics.

In response to the current analysis of our data the OU intends to address the relative module completion and attainment gaps of WP students by undertaking the following:

4. Access, student success and progression measures

Measuring success for adult learners at the OU is challenging as what is considered success to the individual learner may not align to the measure of success defined across the sector. With that caveat in mind and based on our understanding of our institutional data we propose the following measures to be met by 2025:

4.1. Widening access

- To maintain the proportion of new WP¹ students registrations (25% fee liability point) at 16.5%.

4.2. Module completion

Reduce the module completion gap for

- Widening participation students by 2 percentage points from -4.8 to -2.8
- Students with low PEQs by 2 percentage points from -9.4 to -7.4
- Students declaring physical disabilities 2 percentage points from -9.3 to -7.3
- Students declaring mental health issues by 5 percentage points from -16 to -11
- Black (African and Black Caribbean) by 3 percentage points from -7.6 to -4.6

4.3. Success

We recognise that the pass and good pass gap for black students is higher than for Asian or other minority ethnic students. However we feel that gaps are significant across all BAME groups and therefore the associated targets have been identified to impact on all BAME students:

Reduce the module pass gap for

- BAME students by 4 percentage points from -7.4% to -3.4%

And the good pass gap for

- BAME students by 3 percentage points from -13.1% to -10.1%

In addition to these targets, under the Equality Scheme, we are aiming to increase the number of students declaring their carer and care leaver status from 7.2% to 20% by 2020. Once we have sufficient numbers declaring their carer and care leaver status we will undertake more detailed analysis.

4.4. Progression

4.4.1. Postgraduate study

The proportion of Black students progressing to postgraduate study at the OU is slightly better than for white students 6.7% compared to 4.9% (although numbers are low). Progression for other students

¹ POLAR3 quintile 1 and no previous HE

groups must be viewed with caution due to the low number of students in the widening participation groups, but numbers are comparable.

- Low socio-economic status 4.0% compared to 5.1%
- Mental health 6.9% compared to 4.9 (a positive gap)
- Physical disabilities 5.7% compared to 5% (a positive gap)
- Specific learning difficulties 3.9% compared to 5.0%

4.4.2. Careers and employability

Our students benefit from OU study long before they attain a qualification. Current mechanisms to measure outcomes therefore potentially miss the impact of studying, even if it is only one module. We are undertaking work to identify the milestones on a qualification that will report on measures of success that are over and above the qualification measure. In terms of careers and employability a survey undertaken in 2014 to almost 7,000 alumni (from which received a 14.4% response rate), revealed a -5 percentage point difference between students with low previous educational qualifications receiving a pay rise following graduation, to those with higher previous educational qualifications. Respondents were asked questions relating to whether their studies had improved their earnings potential, which revealed no significant gaps between those with lower or higher previous educational qualifications. However, in response to questions relating to improvements in career prospects, pay and promotion prospects, job satisfaction and job security directly related to their qualification, there were quite substantial gaps between low and higher previous educational.

- Career prospect improved -8.9 percentage point gap
- Pay and promotion prospects improved -7.4 percentage point gap
- Job satisfaction increased -10.2 percentage point gap
- Job security increased -5.3 percentage point gap

The response from students representing other widening access and success student groups was too low to provide any meaningful data for specific groups. An analysis of students representing one or more widening access and success characteristics compared to other students revealed a significant gap career prospect improvements (-10.35 percentage points) and a slightly smaller gap in improvements to pay and promotion prospects (-5.5 percentage points) and job satisfaction (-5.2 percentage points).

We are aware that the current assessment of progression data does not meet new OFS requirements in terms of identifying progression for widening access and success students. A priority in the first half of 2019 will be to analyse the OU's Employability of Qualifiers' Survey (EQS) which was undertaken in October 2018. This survey is 3 years after completion of study. We ask completers of any OU qualification about their progression to employment, further study and also about the impact of OU study on their employability. We are currently awaiting the data to be transferred from the agency commissioned to undertake the survey but aim to be able to report findings in the spring of 2019. Progression data by widening access and success characteristics will be included in the 2020-21 APP. The

following enhancing career and employability outcomes KPIs will be used in the interim to monitor progress for students with widening access and success characteristics:

- Increase the numbers of qualified students who report positive career development outcomes through their study with the OU
- Increase the proportion of existing undergraduate students who reported that OU study has improved their career prospects
- Increase the proportion of qualified students who felt they have developed at least 5 of the 7 CBI-derived employability skills from studying with the OU
- Increase the proportion of employers who have a good perception about the OU

5. Delivering our objectives

We have identified some generic institutional actions to support inclusivity across the institution, in addition to activity that addresses the specific issues presented by the data. The activities outlined in our Ambitions and Strategy demonstrate the extent of the work that the University already undertakes at each stage of the student lifecycle and the actions identified below aim to build on this.

Activity designed to specifically address the module completion and attainment gaps is being undertaken at both faculty and institutional level. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion team continue to work with individual module teams to deliver training in relation to inclusive practice (i.e. unconscious bias) and to support module teams to develop inclusive curriculum.

A new structure for the Widening Access and Success Steering Group aims to establish targeted project teams that can respond to the specific challenges identified in the APP. Actions to deliver the targets are identified in workshop sessions embedded within the Widening Access and Success programme of seminars.

Under this structure, we are undertaking a pilot study within the University's Access programme for students studying in the February 2019 academic year, to specifically address the black attainment gap. The project consists of four themes: curriculum; assessment; staff development; and ambassadors/mentoring and actions embedded within each theme will be delivered and contribute to an evaluation of the impact of the project, which is likely to be in the autumn of 2019. It is anticipated that the findings of the project will be disseminated across the institution and areas of good practice implemented at an institutional level.

A similar project is being developed under the Widening Access and Success Steering Group to support students with mental health difficulties, with a view to contributing to reducing the completion gap for these students. A Student Mental Health Working Group has also been established to oversee this activity and identify specific areas of action.

Supported Open Entry is a strategic priority for the University which will form a major piece of work in 2019. Through a project structure we will be exploring options to support students coming to the

University with low previous educational qualifications, to start their HE journey in the most appropriate place to enable them to succeed.

Project teams will also be established to address the other Widening Access and Success student groups' targets, identified in the APP

The specific actions we will be undertaking are:

5.1. Institutional accountability

- Our new PVC-Students will have overall accountability for the APP and the delivery of its targets
- The monitoring of progress towards our targets will be undertaken by the Widening Access and Success Steering Group and reported into the Student Experience Committee, which formally reports to the University's Education Committee.

5.2. Supporting inclusivity

- Widening access and success will be embedded within established systems such as the Curriculum Management Guide, the Curriculum System and Stage Gate for use by curriculum teams to encourage inclusive practice
- The Ambitions and Strategy will be communicated to all institutional stakeholders i.e. associate lecturers, students support teams, curriculum teams, marketing
- Resources to support stakeholders will be developed and made available through the widening access and success intranet site
- Innovation and Scholarship Centres will collaboratively define and embed widening access and success scholarship within their priorities and act upon recommendations
- Chairs of Boards of Study will collaboratively agree priorities for scholarship and act upon findings from discrete projects
- A Widening Access and Success Implementation Plan and Evaluation Strategy will be developed to support each area of activity, delivered through cross-institutional working groups

5.3. Students with low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs)

- We will continue activity to ensure students receive appropriate advice and guidance that enables them to start their educational journey in the right place;
- Alternatives to measure success for mature learners coming to HE from different starting points will be explored i.e. learning gain and distance travelled.

5.4. Students with mental health issues

- Research and scholarship to understand the needs of students declaring mental health issues will be undertaken

6. Investment

Our fee structure sets a single fee for undergraduate courses of the same credit and provides a simple framework which is easy to communicate. The exception to this is the Access Curriculum priced at 50% of the full 30 credit fee. The OU believes this strategy creates the optimum balance of educational and financial considerations, whilst also ensuring the social justice mission of the University. Our Access modules are specifically designed to provide students with a taster of HE study, to develop confidence in academic study for individuals who may have been out of education for some time and who, most often, come with low previous educational qualifications. We financially support students by offering Access modules at half the standard University fee and also offer a full fee-waiver for students who have a household income of less than £25,000 and have no previous HE experience. This level of investment has historically been strategically planned for and has been successful to date, in meeting the demand for Access modules and the fee waiver.

Forecast spend on financial support is £3,105,372. £1,552,686 of this contributes to subsidising the fee for Access at half the University norm to OFS countable students. Half contributes to funding the forecasted 2,062 free places. This overall support package reduces the financial barriers for students, many of whom are from widening access and success backgrounds, entering HE through our Access programme.

Due to successful initiatives undertaken in 2018 to increase the number of students we retain on a qualification, our student numbers have risen. As a result our current Resource Plan reports the level of investment as proportionally lower than previous years. We will undertake some modelling work in 2019 to ensure our investment responds accordingly.

The OU prides itself on keeping its fees as low as possible in order that HE is made accessible to all who have the desire to study. Our fees and financial support package will be reviewed each year and budgets considered with a view to delivery of the University's strategy. Where appropriate, we will increase fees in line with inflation and in accordance with the rates set by the Government.

6.1. Countable expenditure

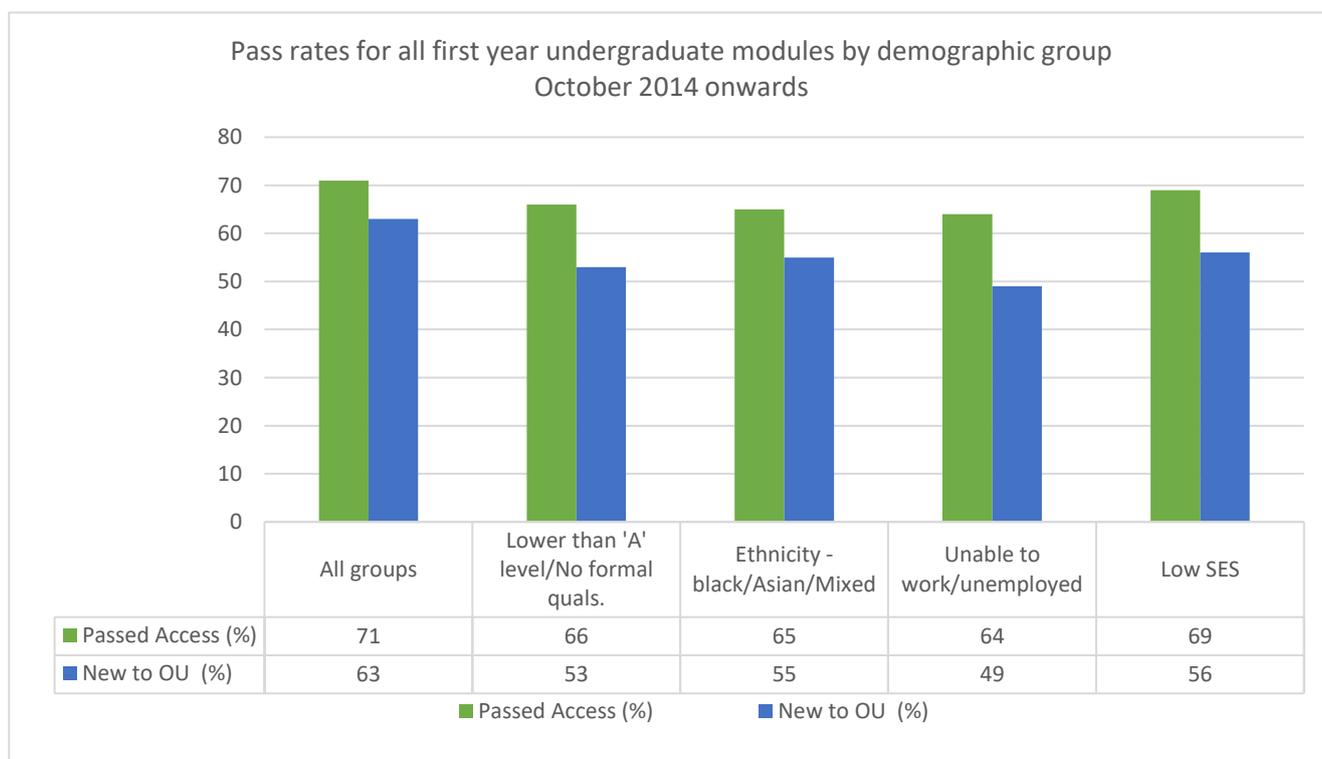
We will have 84,201 part-time students with a regulated fee of whom 13,406 will have fees above the basic level. This will generate £15,121,000 of fee income above the basic fee. For full-time students with a regulated fee we forecast that we will have 158, all of whom will have fees above the basic fee. This will generate £474,000 of fee income above the basic fee. In total fee income above the basic fee will be £15,595,000.

6.2. Evaluation of financial support

Our students do not follow the same trajectory as students attending a traditional face to face university. The outcome measures identified in the OFS Evaluation of Financial Support Toolkit therefore do not lend themselves to accurately reporting on successful outcomes for our students who receive financial support. We therefore adopt an alternative approach, evaluating our financial support for students on our Access programme on an annual basis, monitoring continuation and attainment of students who studied

on Access and those who received a fee waiver. We report on student numbers, module completion, module pass rates and progression to and through undergraduate study. This data is collected as part of the University's quality assurance processes (quality monitoring and enhancement, mid-life review and periodic programme reviews). More qualitative evaluation is planned for 2019/20 which seeks to capture the experiences of students on the Access programme, the impact of the funding model and on their progression to further study.

The analysis of data for students who have studied an Access module and progressed to undergraduate study suggests a significant impact on student success as they progress to undergraduate study. Those widening access and success students who have studied an Access module, perform significantly better than those students who have registered directly onto an undergraduate qualification. We continue to monitor this closely and are engaging in scholarship to better understand the nature of this impact.



6.3. Provision of information to students

Information regarding our fees are available to students via our website and through our Student Resources and Support Centre. The homepage of our website provides a link to further information regarding fees and funding opportunities, including information on available bursaries and scholarships. Information regarding the reduced fee on Access and the availability of a full fee waiver for eligible students is also available. The eligibility criteria is made explicit on the website. Students wishing to study an Access module must make telephone contact with the University where further information is provided. The Access and Participation Plan will be accessible to current and prospective students within the [mission page](#) of the main OU website.

7. Glossary

25% Fee Liability Point (FLP)	13 days from registration start and the point at which students are liable to pay their fees.
Access modules	<p>Level 0, 30 credit, designed as a taster of HE to develop confidence and study skills</p> <p>Half the price of standard OU module</p> <p>Full fee waiver available if household income less than £25,000 and no previous HE experience</p> <p>Unique one to one telephone tutoring model</p> <p>Support to develop online learning skills</p>
Black, Asian and minority ethnic students (BAME)	
Black students	Black African, Black Caribbean and Black other.
Asian and minority ethnic students	Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Chinese and Indian, Asian other
Minority ethnic students	Arab, gypsy traveller or other
Care experienced learners	Students who have, at some point in their life, been in some form of formal care.
Care leavers	Students who have recently been in some form of formal care.
Carer	A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.
Completions	Students registered at the 25% FLP and completed their module.
Disabled students	Those with physical, mental or learning difficulties.
Good passes	Students who have passed their module and attained equivalent to a 2:1 or first.
Low previous educational qualifications (LPEQs)	Students with less than 2 A levels.
Passes	Students who have completed their module and passed.
Physical disabilities	<p>Visual</p> <p>Hearing</p> <p>Mobility</p> <p>Manual skills</p> <p>Speech</p> <p>Personal care</p>
POLAR3	Participation of local areas – a postcode based measure to assess the likelihood of going to university. There are two measures within the POLAR category – Young Participation Rate (YPR) (proportion of young people entering HE) and the adult qualified rate (AHE) (adults living in an areas with HE qualifications). The YPR was updated in 2017 and the sector now uses POLAR4. This does not affect the AHE measure and therefore we continue to use POLAR3 data.
Registrations	Students registered at the 25% FLP.
Specific learning difficulties	Dyslexia

Students in secure environments	Predominantly individuals who are studying whilst in prison but also relates to any secure environment which present challenges to access online learning environments.
Widening participation (WP) students	Students from POLAR3 Quintile 1 and with no previous HE experience

Table 3 - Summary of full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants

Institution name: The Open University
Institution UKPRN: 10007773

Validation checks:

1. Please enter statement on increasing your fees by inflation for 2019-20 entrants in subsequent years of study in cell B13.

* course type not listed.

Full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants.

Please enter inflationary statement in the free text box below.

A 2.8% fee increase has been agreed by the Open University's Council for 2019/20 in line with inflationary increases based on the Retail Price Index (RPI-X)

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,000
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Franchise full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		*
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£6,750
Foundation degree		£6,750
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		£6,750
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

Table 8 - Targets and milestones

Institution name: The Open University
 Institution UKPRN: 10007773

Validation checks:

1. All mandatory cells within a row in Table 8a must be complete - rows must have a reference number, lifecycle stage, target type, they must be classified as collaborative or not, they must have a baseline year and baseline data entered, and they must contain milestones up to and including 2019-20.
2. All mandatory cells within a row in Table 8b must be complete - rows must have a reference number, lifecycle stage, target type, they must be classified as collaborative or not, and they must have a baseline year, baseline data, and yearly milestones entered.

Table 8a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16a_01	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	The proportion of all new undergraduate students who have no previous higher education qualification (expressed as Full-time Equivalent) and who live in the 20% of areas with the lowest proportion of 16-74 year-olds with a Higher Education qualification (based on POLAR 3). Baseline year 2010/11.	No	Other (please give details in Description column)	13.6	17.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	Measure is based on the HESA T2b measure but defines students new to the university as those that have never studied with the OU before rather than instance. The target has been revised in line with sector measures that report on students registered at the 25% fee liability point and is therefore slightly lower than in previous years.
T16a_02	Student success	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	Close the gap between the proportion of black students and white students obtaining a 'good pass' on undergraduate modules at levels 2 and 3 from 30.6% to 25.0% by 2022/23	No	2016-17	30.6	28	27	26	25.5	25	
T16a_03	Student success	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Close the gap between the proportion of disabled students obtaining a 'good pass' on undergraduate modules at levels 2 and 3 from 4.8% to 3 % by 2022/23	No	2016-17	4.8	4.25	3.75	3.25	3	3	
T16a_04	Success	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	To reduce the module completion gap for students from LPN from -4.8% to -2.8%	No	2016-17	-4.8	-4.8	-4.4	-3.8	-3.2	-2.8	A new target based on the analysis of institutional data
T16a_05	Success	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	To reduce the module completion gap for students with low previous educational qualifications from -9.4 to -7.4	No	2016-17	-9.4	-9.4	-9.3	-8.5	-8	-7.4	A new target based on the analysis of institutional data
T16a_06	Success	Disabled	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	To reduce the module completion gap for students declaring physical disabilities from -9.3% to -7.3%	No	2016-17	-9.3	-9.3	-9	-8.5	-8	-7.3	A new target based on the analysis of institutional data
T16a_07	Success	Disabled	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	To reduce the module completion gap for students declaring mental health issues from -16% to -11%	No	2016-17	-16	-16	-15	-14	-13	-11	A new target based on the analysis of institutional data
T16a_08	Success	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	To reduce the gap in passes for BAME students by 4 percentage points from -7.4% to -3.4%	No	2016-17	-7.4	-7	-6.3	-5.5	-4.5	-3.4	A new target based on the analysis of institutional data
T16a_09	Success	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	To reduce the gap in good passes for BAME students by 3 percentage points from -13.1% to -10.1%	No	2016-17	-13.1	-12.7	-12.2	-11.5	-10.8	-10.1	A new target based on the analysis of institutional data
T16a_10	Success	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	To reduce the module completion gap for Black students by 3 percentage points from -7.6% to -4.6%	No	2016-17	-7.6	-7.3	-6.8	-6.2	-5.4	-4.6	A new target based on the analysis of institutional data