

Name of Provider: Brunel University London  
UKPRN: 1000961



# **Access and Participation Plan**

**2020/21-2024/25**

## Foreword

*Brunel University London has an enviable reputation for both encouraging aspiration and providing high quality, research-led teaching to a very diverse student population. Enabling all students to realise their potential, irrespective of their social or cultural backgrounds, is important to us, and we aspire to be recognised across the world as an engine of social mobility. These words are built on solid foundations of: outreach to focus aspirations, attainment and access to higher education; supporting students to achieve academically; and of preparing them for successful futures. This Access and Participation Plan sets out how we will continue to underpin our valuable work with the community at large whilst re-doubling our efforts on the activities that will provide even better outcomes and success for our students in future years.*



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## 1. Assessment of performance

This section is based on a comprehensive analysis of student data across five years, and considers outcomes across the whole student lifecycle for each underrepresented group. The data includes home students on undergraduate and integrated master's programmes (with the exception of Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) which only includes English students). The overwhelming majority of our undergraduates (97%) are studying full-time and the focus is therefore on them. Students on initial teacher training programmes are considered separately. Unless otherwise stated, the data source is the Office for Students (OfS) Access and Participation Dataset (April 2019).

### 1.1 Context

We have a very diverse student population (Table 1) with a large proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students and students from IMD Quintiles (Q) 1 and 2 areas. Our students come mainly from State Schools (94.3% in 2017/18) and we exceed both the benchmark (93.0%) and location-adjusted benchmark (91.7%) (*HESA data*). In recent years we have seen an increase in the number of commuter students, and in 2018/19 45% of undergraduates live more than five miles away from campus and 26% more than ten miles.

*Table 1: Summary Undergraduate Home Entrants data for 2017-18 (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).*

Total	Female	BAME	Mature	Disabled	POLAR4 Q1	IMD Q1	<25k income	Care Leavers
3110	1450	2150	270	320	110	670	699	15
100%	46.6%	70.2%	8.6%	10.3%	3.7%	<sup>1</sup> 21.7%	<sup>2</sup> 58%	0.5%

<sup>1</sup>percentage of English entrants (n = 3080). <sup>2</sup>Proportion of those declaring household income.

Brunel's non-continuation rate of 7.8% (2016/17) compares favourably with England at 9.8%. The transfer rate is higher at Brunel (5.3%) compared to England (3.1%) (*HESA data*) and whilst we are pleased to be able to facilitate students making the right choice and staying in HE, the combined non-continuation/transfer rate represents a reduction of 13.1% in the first year Home student population and is of concern to us. We have therefore analysed both the non-continuation rate and attrition rate (non-continuation plus transfer) for all students groups to best understand their experiences.

For all students, the achievement of a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2.1 classification has increased by 3.8% in the last five years from 71% in 2013/14 to 74.8% in 2017/18. This rise is broadly in line with sector trends; in 2013/14 this proportion was 1% above sector, in 2017/18 it was 1.2% below (*HESA data*). Our internal evaluation suggests these

improvements reflect an increased institutional focus on learning, teaching and student support over the past nine years which has also resulted in a reduced attainment gap.

Brunel compares well to benchmark for employment (including professional) and higher study outcomes, with particularly good outcomes for Disabled students and POLAR4 Q 1 and 2 (*TEF Subject Level Pilot 18-19 provider level data*). In terms of earnings, Brunel graduates are significantly above benchmark for all categories (*TEF Subject Level Pilot 18-19 provider level data*), and analysis by the Economist ranked Brunel 9<sup>th</sup> in the UK for 'value added' to students' earning power.<sup>1</sup>

Male students are more likely to leave, with a non-continuation rate of 9.5% compared to 6.2% for Females, both of which are lower than the sector (-1.9% and -2.4% respectively). Whilst both Male and Female students have seen improvements in degree outcomes, a gender gap is evident (7% in 2017/18) which is higher than the sector average (3.8%). Professional employment and higher study (positive outcomes) overall are improving (+14% over five years), but there are persistent gaps with Males more likely to be in professional employment or higher study than Females, with the exception of the latest year of data (Table 2).

Table 2: Progression outcomes by gender (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

Gender	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Male	58%	63%	71%	74%	69%
Female	54%	57%	64%	66%	70%
Gap	4%	6%	8%	7%	<sup>1</sup> 0%

<sup>1</sup>Including rounding and suppressed data.

Whilst A-levels remain the predominant entry qualification (63%, 5-year average), we have seen an increase in the proportion of students with BTEC qualifications (16%, 5-year average) (*Brunel data*). Entry qualifications remain a significant variable in terms of attrition and degree attainment, although the gaps have reduced considerably in the last year. BTEC students had a first-year attrition rate of 16.1% compared to 8.7% for A-level students in 2017/18 (22% and 10.3% for 2016/17; *Brunel data*), and the proportion of BTEC entrants achieving 1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 degrees in 2017/18 was 18% below that of A-level entrants (reduced from 30% in 2016/17; *Brunel data*). Professional employment outcomes are also better for A-level (49.5%) than BTEC entrants (40.5%), and A-level entrants are more likely to go onto further study (16.4% vs. 12.7%) (*2016-17 Brunel data*). These patterns are in line with the sector as noted in the March 2018 HEFCE report "Differences in Student Outcomes" and OfS analysis.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

### 1.2.1 Access

Approximately a fifth of our students are from IMD Q1 areas, in line with the sector average and within 1% of the associated 18 year old population. A further 30% are from IMD Q2, resulting in 50.5% of entrants in 2017/18 being from IMD Q1-2 compared to the sector average of 41%. Our BAME students are more likely to be from IMD Q1-2 areas than White students (59.2% vs 29.7% in 2017/18) and our Female students are slightly more likely to be from IMD Q1-2 areas than Male students (52% vs 48% in 2017/18).

The proportion of young student entrants from POLAR4 Q1 areas has remained between four and five percent over the past five years, significantly lower than the sector and 14% lower than the associated proportion of the wider 18 year old population, resulting in a current undergraduate population (young and mature) of 4.2% from Q1 (8.1% are from Q2 areas) (*Brunel data*). Our offer rate to POLAR4 Q1 students has increased since 2015, reducing the gap between this and the average offer rate to -0.4% in 2018 from -2.9% in 2016 (*UCAS*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.economist.com/news/britain/21726100-our-new-guide-answers-which-british-universities-do-most-boost-graduate-salaries>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/differences-in-student-outcomes/>

*data*) but this appears to have had a limited impact on our overall population. White students are more likely to be from POLAR4 Q1-2 areas than our BAME students (18.6% vs 7.9% in 2017/18) and the gender split is equal, with 12% of Male students from POLAR4 Q1-2 areas compared to 11.5% of Female students.

It should be noted that there are few POLAR4 Q1 areas in West London and Western Home Counties, Brunel's core catchment areas. 65% of students are from London and 35% from the six local boroughs, and we believe this results in our relatively low POLAR4 Q1 population. However, these areas contain deprived neighbourhoods as indicated by the proportion of IMD Q1 entrants to Brunel, and as further illustrated below by the outcomes analysis, POLAR4 is not an indicator of disadvantage for our students.

For those declaring household income (about 60% of students), the majority (58%) come from households with income of £25,000 or less, a proportion that has remained fairly consistent over the past five years.

### 1.2.2 Success – Continuation

Attrition rates are highest for IMD Q1 students (10.5% in 2017/18) and lowest for IMD Q5 students (6.1% in 2017/18) (*Brunel data*), indicating that students from deprived areas are more likely to leave Brunel in their first year. The non-continuation rates for IMD Q1 students are lower than, but not significantly different to, other quintiles.

In the latest year of data (2017/18), attrition is lowest for POLAR4 Q1 (5.5%) and highest for Q3 (12.7%) (*Brunel data*). There are no consistent patterns or significant differences in non-continuation rates by quintiles over the past five years, indicating that POLAR4 status is not a significant factor in Brunel students' likelihood of dropping out from HE within their first year. However, lower household income appears to be correlated with an increased rate of attrition (Table 3).

Table 3: Attrition by household income (Source: Brunel data).

Household Income	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Five-year aggregate
£0-£25,000	13.1%	11.9%	12.5%	13.6%	10.6%	12.5%
£25,001-£50,020	8.9%	8.1%	5.9%	8.2%	8.6%	8.1%
£50,021 and above	10.3%	7.4%	7.0%	7.6%	3.5%	7.5%

### 1.2.3 Success – Attainment

Students from POLAR4 Q1 areas are the most likely to obtain a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 degree, and in 2015/16 there was a significant gap of 15.2% to POLAR4 Q5. Differences in attainment by POLAR4 quintiles have narrowed in the last two years, resulting in no significant gaps in 2017/18 (Table 4). IMD Q1 students are significantly less likely to obtain a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 classification compared to IMD Q5 students and the gap has remained at ~15% for the last five years (Figure 1). There is also a significant gap between IMD Q1-2 and IMD Q3-5 students, which may reflect variations in the ethnicity of these groups as noted above.

Table 4: Attainment of a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 degree by POLAR4 Quintile (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset). \* indicates gap is significant.

POLAR4	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Quintile 1	70%	87%	93%	82%	80%
Quintile 2	78%	72%	84%	79%	79%
Quintile 3	77%	78%	81%	81%	79%
Quintile 4	72%	76%	74%	78%	77%
Quintile 5	74%	79%	78%	82%	80%
Q1 to Q5 Gap	4%	-8%*	-15%*	-1%	-1%

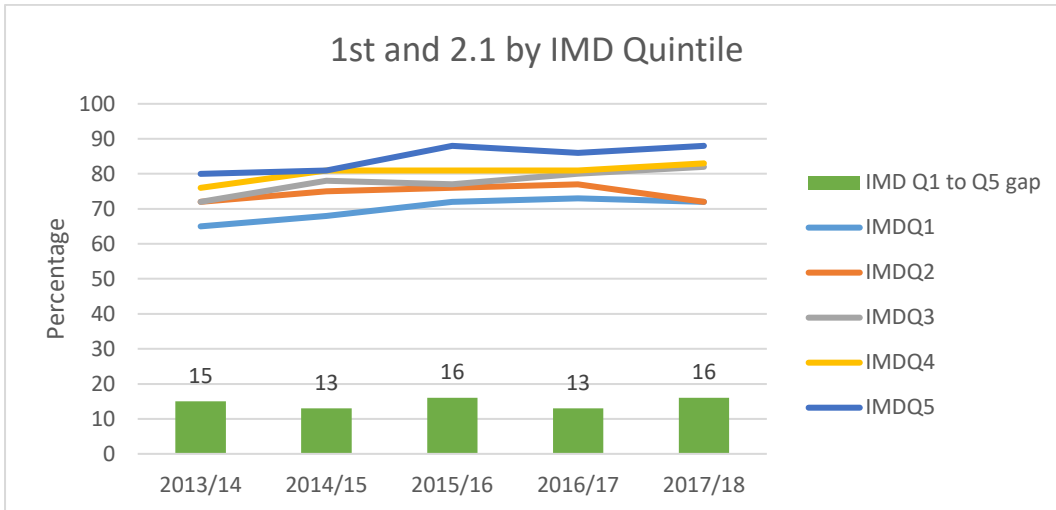


Figure 1: Attainment by Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintiles (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

Students from low household incomes are the least likely to obtain a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 degree, across all ethnicities (Table 5).

Table 5: Attainment of a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 degree by household income for 2017/18 (Source: Brunel data).

Household Income	Asian	Black	White
£0-£25,000	70.4%	61.6%	76.5%
£25,001-£50,020	75.4%	73.9%	85.4%
£50,021 and above	71.4%	76.9%	92.3%

#### 1.2.4 Progression

In the last two years progression to professional employment or higher study has been highest for POLAR4 Q1 students and lowest for POLAR4 Q4-5, but there have been no significant gaps between quintiles in the last four years. In contrast, students from IMD Q1 areas are the least likely to progress to professional employment or higher study, and the gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 has been increasing over the last five years (Table 6).

Table 6: Progression outcomes by Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintiles (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).  
 \* indicates gap is significant.

IMD	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Quintile 1	49%	54%	59%	65%	63%
Quintile 5	60%	66%	76%	78%	79%
Q1 to Q5 gap	11%*	11%	16%*	13%	16%*

Progression to professional employment or further study is lowest for students from low household incomes (Table 7), but varies with ethnicity. It should be noted that the number of students declaring a household income of over £50,021 is low (~7%).

Table 7: Progression outcomes by household income for 2016/17 (Source: Brunel data).

Household Income	Asian	Black	White	Overall
£0-£25,000	56.7%	60.3%	75.9%	62.5%
£25,001-£50,020	65.5%	63.5%	71.5%	68.3%
£50,021 and above	62.5%	50.0%	69.6%	63.9%

#### 1.2.5 Comparison of Measures of Socio-Economic Disadvantage

From the analysis above it is evident that POLAR4 is a poor measure of disadvantage in our student body, and a direct comparison of POLAR4 and IMD quintiles (Figure 2) shows they correlate poorly.

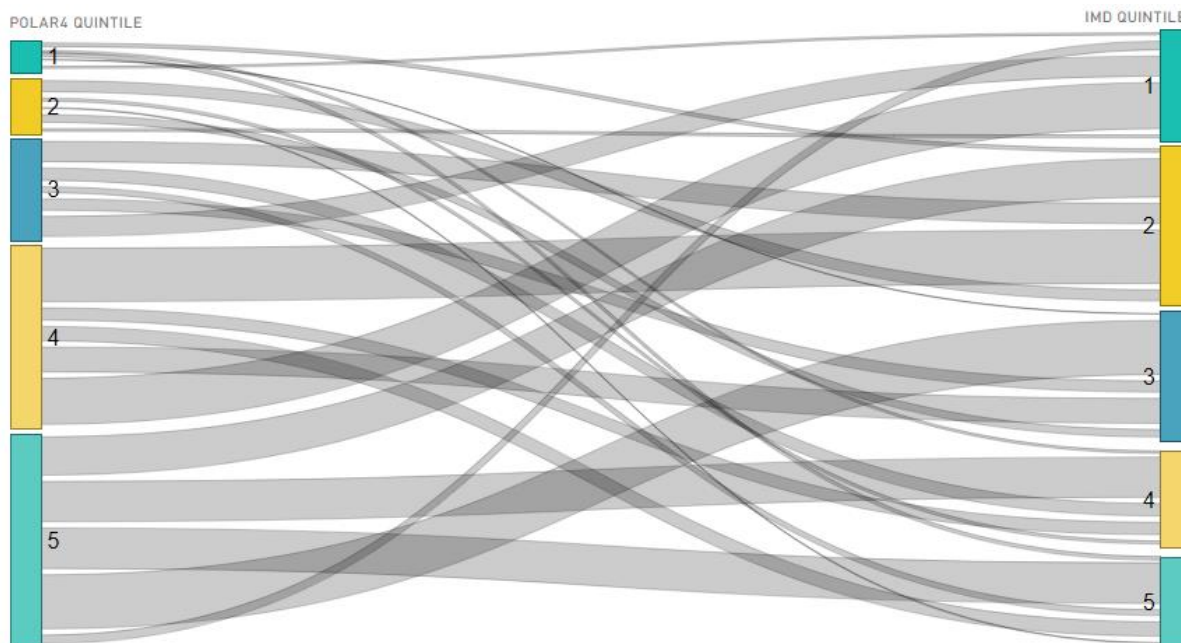


Figure 2: Sankey diagram of relationship between POLAR4 and IMD Quintiles (Source: Brunel data).

Further analysis of household income demonstrates that POLAR4 Q1-2 have the lowest percentage of students from low household incomes (5 year average), whereas for IMD the data reflects the expected disadvantage with Q1-2 having the highest percentage of students from low income households (Table 8).

Table 8: Percentage of students from low income (<£25K) households by IMD and POLAR4 quintiles; five year average 2013/14-2016/17 (Source: Brunel data).

Measure of disadvantage	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
IMD	74.9%	68.6%	56.9%	50.6%	41.9%
POLAR4	51.4%	52.1%	62.4%	64.5%	62.1%

Based on our analysis we are proposing to use IMD as our key internal measures of disadvantage going forward, as we believe this will be more meaningful than POLAR4 to identify disadvantaged students within our population. However, as POLAR4 Q1-2 provide measures of underrepresentation we will continue to analyse access and outcomes using both IMD and POLAR4 quintiles to ensure we remain evidence-based in our approach.

### 1.3 Ethnicity

#### 1.3.1 Access

Brunel University London has been ranked the third most diverse university in the UK in terms of ethnicity<sup>3</sup> and in 2017/18 had a Home BAME population of 70.2% made up of Asian (37%), Black (18%) and Mixed/Other (15%).

#### 1.3.2 Success - Continuation

Attrition for different groups may vary year on year, but a consistent picture is the high attrition of Black students, particularly Black Male students (19.8% in 2017-18) (Figure 3), although the non-continuation data confirms that students leaving us continue in HE elsewhere. Attrition is also consistently higher for Males than Females (all ethnicities), 15.7% vs. 8.7% in 2017/18.

<sup>3</sup> Gamsu and Donnelly, IPR Policy Brief 2017

Further intersectional analysis with entry qualifications highlights that students of all ethnicities entering with BTECs are significantly more likely to leave than students entering with A-levels (19.9% vs. 8.3%, 5 year average), and this may contribute to the higher attrition rate for Black students as they are more likely to have BTEC qualifications than White students (21% vs. 13%, five year average, *Brunel data*).

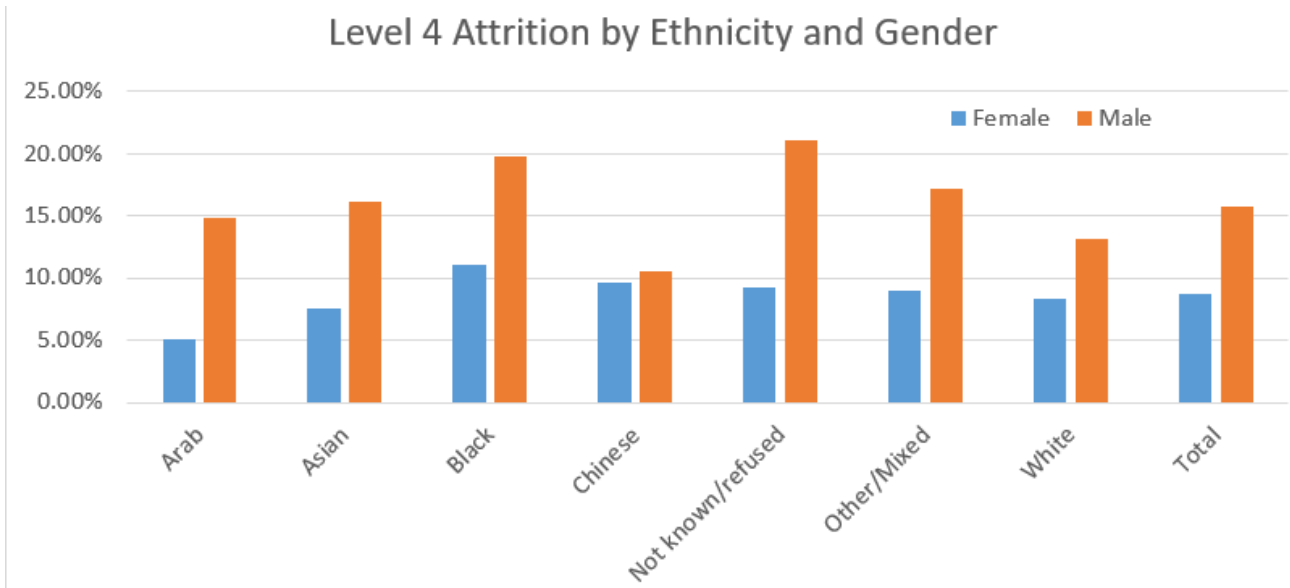


Figure 3: Level 4 attrition by ethnicity and gender 2017/18 (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

### 1.3.3 Success – Attainment

Good degree outcomes for Black and Asian students remain below that of White students with a BAME/White attainment gap of 12% in 2017-18, slightly below the sector average of 13.2%. The intersection of IMD and ethnicity shows that attainment is highest for White students from IMD Q3-5 areas and lowest for BAME students from IMD Q1-2 areas, resulting in a gap of 18.1% in 2017-18.

The significant attainment gap between Black and White students continues to be a particular concern, but it is encouraging that the gap has reduced and is smaller than the sector gap of 23.1% (Figure 4). However, we note that progress has slowed with the attainment gap remaining largely unchanged over the past three years. Intersections between ethnicity and structural factors such as entry qualifications (BTEC) and socioeconomic backgrounds (IMD Q1-2) may be contributing to the gap (see Table 9).

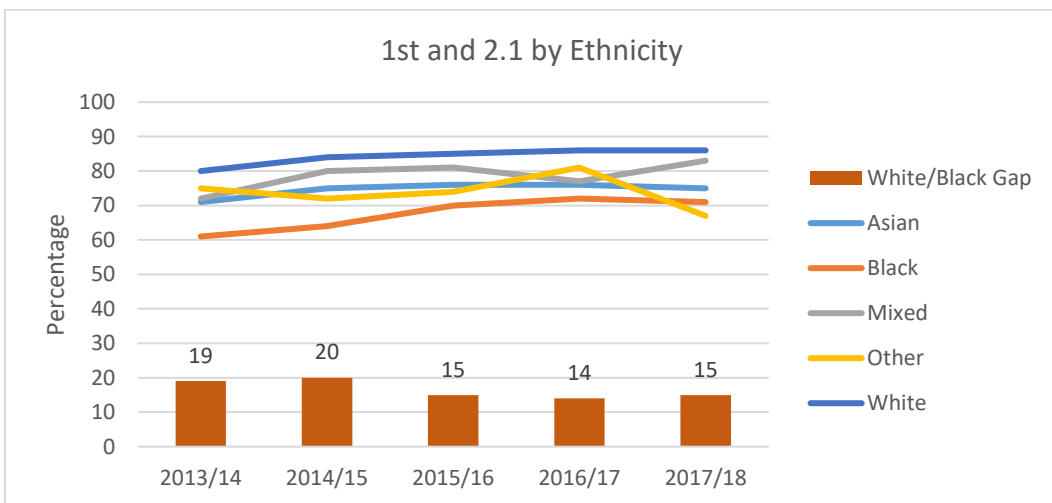


Figure 4: Attainment data for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2.1 classification by ethnicity (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

The 1<sup>st</sup>/2.1 attainment gap is more pronounced for BTEC than A-level entrants (Table 9), which is noted nationally. However, this is smaller than the gap between BTEC and A-level entrants of the same ethnicity, and clearly highlights BTEC qualifications as a significant driver of the attainment gap.

Table 9: Attainment by ethnicity and qualification; average 2014/15 - 2017/18 (Source: Brunel data).

Entry Qualification	Asian	Black	White
A-level	78.1%	76.4%	86.9%
BTEC	49.7%	52.4%	66.0%

### 1.3.4 Progression

Progression rates have improved for all ethnicities but there continue to be significant gaps in progression to professional employment or higher study for Black and Asian students compared to White students (gaps of 13% and 12% respectively in 2016/17), which are larger than the sector gaps (3.8% and 4.8% respectively). For all ethnicities the positive outcomes for Males are better than Females, but the gender gap is greatest for Asian students (Table 10).

Table 10: Progression outcomes by ethnicity and gender; average 2012/13 - 2016/17 (Source: Brunel data).

Positive Outcome	Asian		Black		White	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Professional Employment	46.1%	38.4%	47.6%	41.1%	56.5%	53.7%
Employment and Further Study	5.5%	5.9%	1.9%	4.1%	4.7%	5.9%
Further Study	18.0%	17.3%	13.1%	15.0%	11.8%	12.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>69.7%</b>	<b>61.6%</b>	<b>62.6%</b>	<b>60.2%</b>	<b>73.0%</b>	<b>72.5%</b>

## 1.4 Age

### 1.4.1 Access

The majority of students are <21 years old ('young') on entry (91.4%), with mature students (>21 years on entry) most heavily represented in the subject areas of Allied Health (45% mature) or Nursing (100% mature, n = 26) (TEF 18-19 subject level pilot data). Mature students are more likely to be Black (+6%) or White (+8%) and less likely to be Asian (-14%). Our mature student population is much lower than the sector average and has reduced by 3.6% over five years, and although not statistically significant the reduction is of concern to us. It is therefore pleasing to note that Home and EU students entering foundation level programmes with our on-campus Affiliate College (London Brunel International College, LBIC) are more likely to be mature (9/58=16% and 11/60=18%, respectively in 2018/19) (Brunel data).

### 1.4.2 Success - Continuation

The non-continuation rate for mature students is significantly higher than for young students (13% vs. 7.3%), but the gap has reduced over five years by 7% (Table 11). Subject level data shows that non-continuation rates for mature students are lower within subject areas that have a higher population of mature students, such as Allied Health (6.3%) and Nursing (8.9%) (TEF 18-19 subject level pilot data).

Table 11: Non-continuation rates by age group (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset). \* indicates gap is significant.

Age on Entry	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Change over 5 years
Under 21	4.6%	6.9%	6.6%	6.1%	7.3%	+2.7%
Age 21 and Over	17%	9%	11%	12%	13%	-5%
Gap	13%*	2%	4%	6%	5%	-7%



### 1.4.3 Success – Attainment

Achievement of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2.1 degrees has increased over time for mature students, resulting in a reduction of the gap to near zero over the past four years, and 9% below sector average in 2017/18 (Figure 5).

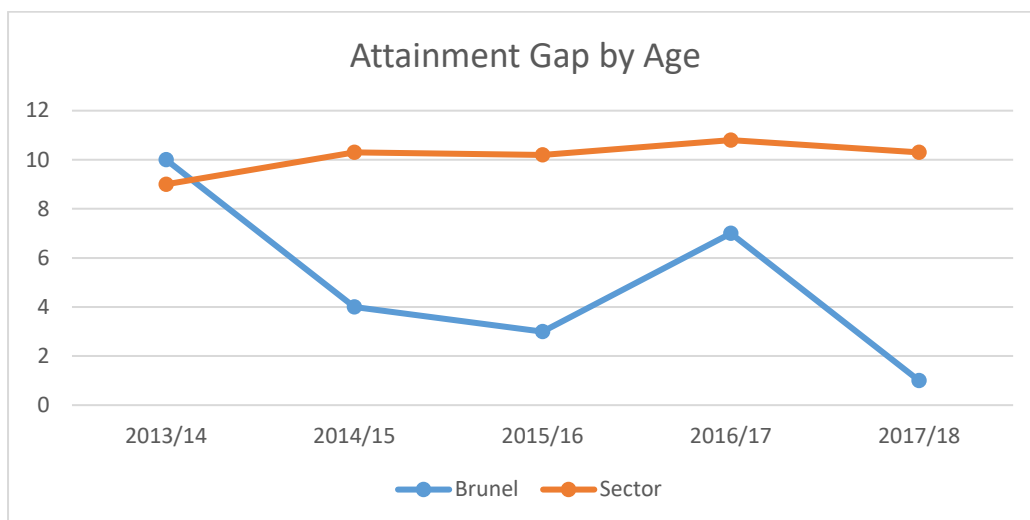


Figure 5: Attainment gap between young and mature students, Brunel compared to the Sector average (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

However, the attainment gap between Black and White mature students is double the gap for young students (~30% compared to 15%), and has not been reducing over the past five years (Table 12). The numbers of Black mature students are low for each year of data (n~60 per year), but the pattern remains a concern.

Table 12: Attainment of a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2.1 degree by age group and ethnicity (Source: Brunel data).

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Mature (&gt;21)</b>					
Black	50.0%	46.7%	50.0%	46.3%	50.9%
White	79.1%	82.2%	78.1%	84.0%	82.4%
<b>Young (&lt;21)</b>					
Black	60.8%	59.5%	68.3%	70.4%	67.2%
White	79.2%	81.9%	83.1%	83.6%	83.4%

### 1.4.4 Progression

Mature students are consistently more likely to progress to professional employment or higher level study than young students, but this is primarily influenced by older students (26+ on entry) with those aged 21-25 on entry performing more similarly to young students (Table 13).

Table 13: Progression outcomes by age on entry (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset). Age groups where all data has been suppressed have been excluded (41-50 and >50 on entry). N = 10 or fewer students in the population.

Age on Entry	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Under 21	54.9%	59%	66.9%	69.3%	68.7%
21 - 25	64%	59%	68%	73%	65%
26 - 30	75%	80%	85%	80%	85%
31 - 40	N	75%	75%	N	85%

## 1.5 Disability

### 1.5.1 Access

The proportion of entrants with a declared disability has remained between 10-11% over the last five years. Analysis of our internal data show that disclosure rates increase as students progress through their studies, and our current declared disabled student population is 13.4% in 2018/19. We have seen a drop in the percentage of students in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) to 6.2% in 2017/18 from 9.2% in 2012/13 (*HESA data*), which is most likely due to the national changes to DSA in this period. We have committed to mitigating the effects of these changes and our inclusive approach ensures students can receive tailored support regardless of whether they claim DSA or not.

Disaggregation of the disabled student population shows that the majority of disabled entrants have cognitive and learning disabilities (between 4-5% of the student population) (Table 14) and that the rates of disclosure for mental health conditions has increased by 1% over the last five years, although we are aware that many more students are likely to have mental health conditions that they choose not to disclose.

Table 14: Disability type for 2017/18 entrants (Source: OfS Access and Participation Dataset).

Year	Cognitive And Learning	Mental Health	Sensory Medical And Physical	Multiple Impairments	Social And Communication	No Known Disability Type
2017/8	4.2%	2.5%	1.7%	1.3%	0.7%	89.7%

### 1.5.2 Success – Continuation and Attainment

Students with a declared disability have a lower attrition rate than those without (9.1% vs 13.0%, five year average 2013/14 – 2017/18), although their non-continuation rate is slightly higher than non-disabled students (8.8% vs 8% in 2016/17). This gap has reduced by 3.2% in the last five years and is no longer significant. Students declaring a mental health condition consistently have the highest non-continuation rates (9.2% in 2016/17) in line with sector trends (13.2% in 2016/17).

Students declaring a disability have better attainment than those without for the last four years and there are no significant gaps for any particular groups of disabled students.

### 1.5.3 Progression

Students with a declared disability have consistently better progression outcomes than those without (75% vs 68.2% in 2016/17), which is primarily driven by positive outcomes for students with cognitive and learning disabilities. The number of students with other types of disabilities are small and limit the analysis, but we note that patterns are more varied.

## 1.6 Care Leavers

With a particular focus on access and support for Care Leavers over the past few years, we have increased and maintained this population, which now stands at over 60 undergraduates (0.7% of population). Whilst numbers are too small for meaningful year-on-year analysis, we are monitoring carefully the attrition rate of this group of students using aggregated data. Over the past four years, Care Leavers have had an average attrition rate of 19.1% compared to 14% for non-care leavers (*Brunel data*). Degree outcomes data show 62% obtaining a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 degree, which is lower than the 71% of non-care leavers (five year average, 2013/14 – 2017/18, *Brunel data*). Based on three years of data (2014/15-2016/17), 23/33 students are in professional employment or studying (70%). This compares favourably with non-care leavers, of which 70.7% are in professional employment or studying.

## 1.7 PGCE students

Our one-year Primary and Secondary Teacher Training programmes have a collective annual intake of about 175 students. Characteristics of the student entrants show little year on year variation, and a summary of the population characteristics for the last five years is presented in Table 15.

Table 15: Summary PGCE population data for 2013/14-2017/18 (Source: Brunel data).

Total entrants over 5 years	Female	BAME	Mature 25+	Disabled	POLAR4 Q1	IMD Q1	Home/EU
878	662	501	333	97	18	103	872
100%	75.2%	57.1%	37.9%	11.0%	2%	<sup>1</sup> 12%	99.3%

<sup>1</sup>percentage of English entrants

Overall, outcomes for PGCE students are very good. The overall attrition rate is 8.8 %; 90% achieve a PGCE award; and 94% are in graduate employment (5 year average). Outcomes by characteristic are shown in Table 16, which shows very little variation between student groups.

Table 16: PGCE student outcomes data for 2013/14-2017/18, including overseas (with the exception of IMD which is just home students). Figures have been rounded to the nearest percentage. (Source: Brunel data).

	Numbers	Attrition	Attainment	Graduate work or study
Male	214	9%	88%	96%
Female	662	6%	92%	98%
Young (<25)	542	7%	91%	98%
Mature (25+)	333	9%	88%	95%
Asian	285	9%	90%	96%
Black	97	7%	90%	96%
White	261	7%	91%	98%
Disabled	97	8%	89%	97%
Non-disabled	781	7%	91%	97%
IMD Q1	103	6%	92%	97%

## 1.8 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

We have initiated monitoring of other groups of students who are underrepresented in HE, and students are able to self-declare during enrolment if they belong to one or more groups. The data has not been collected for long enough to allow for meaningful analysis, but we anticipate that over the next five years we will develop a picture of entry patterns and outcomes for these students. We are also working to develop processes to verify the status of these students to ensure that the correct support is offered.

There are currently 54 estranged students; 125 young carers; 19 children of military families; <10 Refugees; and small numbers from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the student population. We want to improve our support for these student groups and are working with external bodies to develop our practices. Our plans to support estranged students are outlined in the Stand-Alone Pledge<sup>4</sup> and we are signatories to the Armed Forces Covenant, in addition to holding a Silver Employer Recognition Scheme award since 2016. We are engaging with the London Hub of the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance and actively working to create links with RAF Northolt, and will build on this activity to support children of military families to access and succeed in HE. We are supporting Refugees to get a university education by offering five Sanctuary scholarships covering tuition fees and accommodation for the duration of the programme.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk/champion-institutions/20-london/64-brunel-university>

## 1.9 Summary





























Brunel attracts a diverse student body, with 78% of the Home undergraduate population falling into one or more of the following categories: low household income; POLAR4 Q1; BAME; mature; disabled; and Care Leavers. However, the proportion of mature entrants (8.6%) and students from the lowest-participation neighbourhoods (3.7% and 8.1% from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2, respectively) are low by comparison to the sector; although as noted above IMD is a better measure than POLAR4 of relative disadvantage of our students.

Non-continuation rates overall compare favourably with the sector, but there are identified gaps for mature, Black (in particular Male), IMD Q1, low household income and Care Leaver students. Attainment gaps in achievement of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2.1 classifications are noted for IMD Q1, Care Leavers and low household income; though no concerns are evident for POLAR4 Q1 students. The largest attainment gap is noted for Black students, and whilst we have been successful in reducing the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2.1 gap (15% in 2017/18) to significantly below that for the sector, progress has slowed over the past three years and we are aware that there may be an impact of the inequality resulting from structural factors such as qualifications on entry and socio-economic disadvantage. Professional employment/higher study is a strength for Brunel, and we compare well against the sector. However, there are gaps by gender, ethnicity and IMD.

A notable outcome of this analysis is the need to better understand the intersection between BTEC qualifications and retention, attainment and progression, as this may address many of the observed differences in outcomes.

Table 17 summarises our analysis of performance and highlights where increased focus is necessary in order to ensure equality of opportunity for all students across access, success and progression. For groups with no significant gaps we will maintain our current efforts to ensure that gaps do not open up, as well as targeting work to support smaller groups of students where data analysis is not yet possible.

*Table 17: Summary of outcomes for each underrepresented group for each life cycle stage. Red indicates significant gaps in outcomes, yellow indicates gaps that are not significant and green indicates no gaps.*

Underrepresented group	Access	Continuation	Attainment	Progression
<b>POLAR4</b>				
<b>Household Income</b>				
<b>IMD</b>				
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
<b>Age</b>				
<b>Disability</b>				
<b>Care Leavers</b>				

## 2. Strategic Aims and Objectives

Our Brunel 2030 vision drives the University's strategic direction, including the ambition to enable students to realise their potential irrespective of social or cultural backgrounds, and we are proud to be signatories to the Social Mobility Pledge.<sup>5</sup> The focus on 'success for all' builds on a long history of widening access and successful participation of students from diverse backgrounds. Brunel has made significant contributions over the past decade in improving life opportunities for underprivileged and underrepresented students, and our diverse student body has, overall, very good outcomes compared to the sector. However, we take an absolute rather than a relative approach to equality, and therefore we want to achieve more.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.socialmobilitypledge.org/>

Our strategic ambitions for the next five years are shaped by the drive for continuous improvement to:

- Embed a whole-institution approach
- Engage 'Students as Experts'
- Improve evaluation and understanding of what works
- Increase engagement with external stakeholders

The objectives and accompanying targets set out in this plan reflect the University's strategy to focus activity and investment on where the largest gaps have been identified, whilst continuing to ensure that progress is maintained elsewhere. Our ambition is to eliminate all gaps by 2030/31, and to have made significant progress within the lifespan of this plan to address the identified gaps for students from the lowest participation (POLAR Q1-2) and most deprived areas (IMD Q1), mature students, Black students and Care Leavers as set out below.

In order to meet our objectives, previous OFFA Agreement targets have been revised and refined<sup>6</sup> to ensure that all targets are outcomes focussed and contributing to closing identified gaps. To successfully deliver on our ambition we will further develop our partnerships with schools and colleges, and continue to engage actively with sector networks,<sup>7</sup> third sector and voluntary organisations,<sup>8</sup> and employers.<sup>9</sup>

Our work over the next five years will directly address the OfS' Key Performance Measures and priority areas, including the attainment gap between Black and White students; POLAR4 Q1-2 and mature student participation; and success for mature and Care Leavers.

## 2.1 Access

**Aim:** To reduce the gap in participation in HE for students from underrepresented groups.

**Objectives:**

- To significantly increase the number of POLAR4 Q1-2 entrants by 2024/25
- To significantly increase the number of mature entrants by 2024/25
- To support students in receipt of pupil premium to meet or exceed their GCSE English and Maths targets, ongoing from 2020/21

## 2.2 Success

**Aim:** To ensure that all students, regardless of background, have an equal opportunity to succeed during their studies at Brunel University London.

**Objectives:**

- To eliminate the non-continuation gap between mature and young students by 2024/25
- To reduce the attrition rate for Care Leavers by 2024/25
- To reduce the attainment gap between White and Black students by 2024/25
- To reduce the attainment gap between White and Asian students by 2024/25

## 2.3 Progression

**Aim:** To improve the progression rates of students from underrepresented groups into professional employment or higher study and to reduce the gaps between these groups and other students.

**Objectives:**

- To reduce the progression gap between White and BAME students by 2024/25

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<sup>6</sup>No new targets were set in the 2019/20 Access and Participation Plan; pending further guidance from the OfS.

<sup>7</sup>AccessHE; AccessHE National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO); National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL); Linking London; National Education Opportunities Network (NEON); Forum for Access and Continuing Education (FACE); HEAT; Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance.

<sup>8</sup>IntoUniversity; Generating Genius; Hillingdon Young Carers; REACH; HE Race Action Group; Unite Foundation.

<sup>9</sup>We engaged with over 400 employers, including 80 for Professional Mentoring, in 2018/19.

- To reduce the progression gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 by 2024/25

### 3. Strategic measures

#### 3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

With a diverse student body where underrepresented groups constitute 78% of Home/EU and 56% of the total population, Access and Participation work is at the heart of education at Brunel, and is the responsibility of the Vice-Provost (Education). We recognise that to make a difference it is necessary to engage academic and professional staff from across the institution and to take an inclusive and embedded approach. We have therefore introduced 'Life Cycle Leads' to oversee activities across each stage, which is resulting in greater interaction and coordination of activities both within and between the life cycle stages, and between professional and academic staff.

The Brunel 2030 vision - enabling all students to realise their potential irrespective of social or cultural backgrounds - forms the backdrop to all our activity and influences our policies and strategies, including:

- The **Education Strategy** (2017-2020) sets the direction for successful outcomes for all students as we take an inclusive approach. Our learning and teaching is interactive and team-based to promote engagement and development of graduate attributes, with authentic assessment practices to support Progression and life-long learning. Skills for employability and the opportunity to broaden horizons through work placements, internships, study abroad and field trips are embedded in programmes. Our forthcoming Employability Strategy will further outline our activities in this area and has been developed alongside our Access and Participation Strategy, ensuring that the needs of students from underrepresented groups are prioritised.
- The **Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Students** (2018) recognises that good mental health and wellbeing is essential to students' academic success, their engagement with a positive student experience and for the career of their choice upon graduation.
- The **Policy for Transgender Students** (2019) was co-created with students to ensure that students who have indicated that they wish to live in a gender other than their sex at birth, are protected, supported and represented across all levels of the University.
- The **Dignity at Study Policy** (2013) is currently being reviewed to improve the mechanisms by which students can report instances of sexual violence, bullying and harassment, which we know have an impact on students' wellbeing and their success. In 2018 we launched a 'Report and Support' portal for people to be able to anonymously report concerns<sup>10</sup> alongside first responder training (outcome of an EU-funded research project).

The **Equality and Diversity Strategy** (2015-2020) sets out how we will provide an enabling culture in which all students and staff feel that they can excel, and inspires us to work together to maximise the benefits of our diversity. The Strategy sets out our proposals for not only fulfilling our legal and ethical duties in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, but also promoting a culture where the diversity of our students is valued. To this end, each College has an Associate Dean (Equality and Diversity) who are academic representatives on the Access and Participation Committee, providing a strong link with the Student Equality and Diversity Manager and between the University's work in these two areas.

The aim of this Access and Participation Plan is to have a positive impact on equality and diversity within the University as we improve access, success and progression. Our equality and diversity values are at the core of developing a robust and inclusive outreach offer; enhancing the support for protected and underrepresented groups; and enabling positive, successful student outcomes.

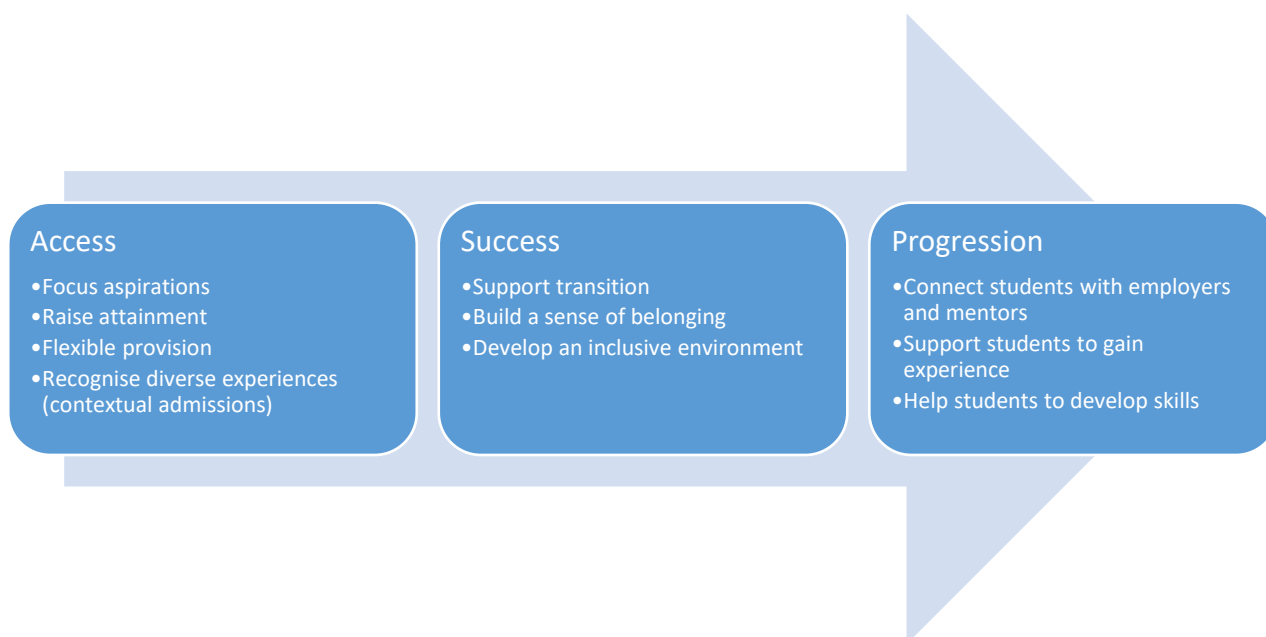
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<sup>10</sup> <https://reportandsupport.brunel.ac.uk/>

The University is committed to upholding our Public Sector Equality Duty, and will produce Equality Impact Assessments for all projects and activities undertaken during the lifespan of this plan, with particular attention given to the target groups set out within this plan. As we refresh policies and strategies we will continue to take a proactive approach to the challenges and opportunities offered by being one of the most diverse universities in the UK. This includes our ongoing work to develop and communicate a shared understanding of values and acceptable behaviours so that all students have the opportunity to excel in a supportive environment.

### 3.2 Overarching Theory of Change

Our Access and Participation work is anchored within the broader institutional strategies and priorities, and can be summarised in an overarching theory of change that is based on evidence and best practice:



Where our inspiration for activities has been drawn from sector evidence and reports, links to the reports can be found within the footnotes of the relevant activity section.

### 3.3 Activities

#### 3.3.1 Access

The activities set out below directly support our objective of reducing gaps in participation in HE from underrepresented groups, specifically POLAR4 Q1-2 and mature students, whilst maintaining the numbers of Care Leavers, Disabled and those from IMD Q1-2 areas; and indirectly by raising attainment of students from underrepresented groups in receipt of pupil premium.

Short Term Expected impact: 1 to 2 years	Medium Term Expected impact: 3 to 5 years	Long Term Expected impact: 5+ years
Contextual admissions; work with Key Stage 5 students and community groups	Development of flexible provision; work with Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students	Work with primary school children; work with local schools/teachers/parents

Our diverse student population reflects the considerable success of our outreach work to date. We aim to build on our current activities to offer a sustained outreach package to primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and community groups that will engage students from target groups in multiple activities to focus

Name of Provider: Brunel University London  
UKPRN: 10000961

aspirations<sup>11</sup> and raise attainment.<sup>12</sup> We will support the national effort to increase participation from POLAR Q1-2 areas through wider targeted outreach and an improved contextual admissions process<sup>13</sup> from 2019/20 (**Target PTA1**).

We are continuing to develop an increasingly flexible provision that enables a range of routes into HE, including foundation programmes, apprenticeships, Foundation Degrees and pathways from FE via the HCUC-Brunel West London Institute of Technology (opening September 2020), and see this as key to attracting a greater number of mature students as well as providing routes to professional employment<sup>14</sup> (**Target PTA2**).

We will offer a curriculum of STEM activities covering KS1-KS5 that will help to raise interest in STEM subjects, support skills development and encourage students from underrepresented groups into STEM degrees. Our particular focus on STEM aligns with the identified need in the Industrial Strategy<sup>15</sup> to tackle shortages in STEM skills, and our commitment is evidenced by ongoing sponsorship of UTC Heathrow. We will capitalise on the investment made in our STEM Learning Centre to support students from underrepresented groups to access and benefit from innovative technology and equipment, and are in the process of appointing a curriculum designer to create a STEM programme that will support our ambition for sustained engagements and multiple interactions with selected schools.

Brunel's most longstanding attainment raising activity (since 2003) is the highly regarded and nationally recognised Urban Scholars programme.<sup>16</sup> This Saturday-school programme focuses specifically on interventions with identified gifted and talented students in receipt of pupil premium from the Greater London area and Milton Keynes. It is based upon proven techniques in realising aspirations and channelling talent through successfully improving core subjects and critical thinking skills, and is supported by a body of evaluative evidence from parallel research undertaken by our Education Department in previous years. The success of the programme is evidenced by part funding from charitable donations, notably The Moody's Foundation. The Scholars are assisted to access the highest tariff institutions and courses such as Medicine, which Brunel does not offer, and this programme directly contributes to improving access to the HE sector as a whole (**Target PTA3**). We are currently piloting 'Young Scholars' with over 700 primary school children and their parents, recognising that parents are key to developing the aspirations of young children.

We will use student ambassadors at the heart of our activities to ensure their expertise is utilised, support their employability and enable them to act as role models to prospective students. We will continue to work in partnership with the third sector and other higher education providers (LSE; Royal Veterinary College; Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance) to co-deliver activities and identify best practice through engaging with external networks. Our support for schools and colleges will continue with many of our staff acting as governors, and by providing professional development activities for teachers.

### 3.3.2 Success

The activities set out below support our objective of eliminating gaps in non-continuation for mature students, reducing attrition rates for Care Leavers and halving ethnicity attainment gaps, whilst maintaining outcomes for other underrepresented groups.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/university-aspirations-2018/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/536f4e79-4e32-4db0-a8a2-66eb4e2b530b/raising-attainment-in-schools-and-colleges-to-widen-participation-ofs-topic-briefing.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/543e665de4b0fbb2b140b291/t/5b4457fb70a6ade52de65f16/1531205646268/Research+into+the+use+of+contextualised+admissions+University+of+Exeter+report.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://oro.open.ac.uk/50339/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/cbass/education/research/bace/urban>



Short Term Expected impact: 1 to 2 years	Medium Term Expected impact: 3 to 5 years	Long Term Expected impact: 5+ years
Transition and retention programmes; targeted pastoral support	Improving approach to data analysis (embed in processes); inclusive environment and culture change	Inclusive curriculum

Our strategy is to maximize the engagement of academic departments and professional services with students; we believe such engagement is key to successful transition into university: to engender a sense of belonging; to deliver an inclusive and positive student experience; and a joined-up approach to academic support and mental health and wellbeing.

We take a structured approach to supporting all students to transition to University, which we believe is key to retention,<sup>17</sup> with additional enhancements for those at higher risk of non-continuation. We will offer pre-arrival induction activities for all students, and develop pre-sessional residential programmes (supported by online resources) for those most at risk of leaving HE (**Target PTS1, PTS2**). Whilst we already offer pre-sessional residential programmes, we will review our provision in partnership with students to ensure that the support is specifically tailored to the needs of the different student groups. We will continue to arrange specific days (Intro2Uni Day; Asperger’s Transition Day) targeted to disabled students and their parents.

As well as the targeted provision, all entrants have access to the Brunel Buddy Scheme to help students settle into University life, and the Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PALs) whereby second or third year students (peers) assist first-year students in the same subject area with their learning. PALs complement the embedding of Academic Skills sessions within programmes. Evaluation of our pre-sessional programme and PALs scheme demonstrates that attrition rates for those that engage with these opportunities are consistently lower than those not engaging.

We will continue to provide targeted pastoral support for Care Leavers and mature learners, and for looked-after-children, estranged students and young carers. We believe that investing in ongoing support will improve not only retention (**Target PTS1; PTS2**), but also attainment and progression. We will continue provision of a Hardship Fund which can be critical in aiding the retention of disadvantaged groups.

Brunel University London is committed to responding to the Universities UK Step Change Framework (2017)<sup>18</sup> and will provide sufficient opportunity, resource and strategic guidance to embed positive mental health and wellbeing awareness, messages and interventions into all areas of University life as set out in our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Students.<sup>19</sup>

We will continue to focus on closing ethnicity attainment gaps<sup>20</sup> by developing inclusive curricula, using the student voice to guide our activities (for example, through the curriculum review projects<sup>21</sup>) and engaging staff and students in conversations about inclusive education. We will work with our Students Union to deliver activities to support a sense of belonging for Black and Asian students.<sup>22</sup> In line with guidance from the OfS, we will also target specific support and interventions to students where appropriate<sup>23</sup> (**Target PTS3; PTS4**) and

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/student\\_transition\\_in\\_higher\\_education.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/student_transition_in_higher_education.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/brunel-2030/our-university-community>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/understanding-and-overcoming-the-challenges-of-ethnicity-targeting/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/student-success/documents/pdf/Student-Success-Project-Year-Two-Report-2017-18.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/what\\_works\\_summary\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/what_works_summary_report_0.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d21cb263-526d-401c-bc74-299c748e9ecd/ethnicity-targeting-research-report.pdf>

we have pledged our support for the 2019 NUS/UUK report on closing the BAME attainment gap at UK universities (#ClosingtheGap).<sup>24</sup>

We believe that BTEC entrants benefit from all supporting activities, but we have piloted an inclusive ‘academic socialisation’ approach in a large subject area where the curriculum is diversified to draw on the strengths of the student cohort with good outcomes, and are exploring ways in which this can be adapted to other subject contexts.

In order to support a joined-up approach, our Access and Participation priorities will be embedded into our annual education review processes (from 2020/21) and we will seek to improve our approach to data analysis, allowing us to identify students in need of support and to target interventions effectively by 2021/22.

### 3.3.3 Progression

The activities set out below support our objective of halving the gap in progression of students from underrepresented groups into professional employment or higher study participation, specifically Black and Asian students and those from IMD Q1 areas, whilst maintaining progression outcomes for other underrepresented groups.

Short Term Expected impact: 1 to 2 years	Medium Term Expected impact: 3 to 5 years	Long Term Expected impact: 5+ years
Post-graduation support; final year mentoring	Skills development embedded in the curriculum; international experiences	Recognising and reflecting on experiences; summer internships

We strongly believe in the value of work-based experience to develop the attributes and attitudes required for professional careers, and will continue to facilitate and diversify opportunities for students from underrepresented groups through our sustained engagement with alumni and employers.<sup>25</sup>

We intend to develop our processes to support students to recognise the value of work-based experience other than the one-year thick-sandwich placement, including internships, volunteering and entrepreneurship, and will encourage students to reflect on the skills they have developed. We have expanded our Professional Mentoring programme to include on-line mentoring, resulting in a 34% increase in capacity, and are piloting targeted post-graduation support for those requiring additional help to successfully secure graduate level employment. These initiatives will contribute to closing the IMD Q1 and BAME progression gap (**Target PTP-1; PTP-2**).

Brunel has a very international student community with students from over 110 countries on campus, and we want our students to build on this by undertaking international experiences during their studies. These activities have been shown to have benefits for academic success as well as graduate outcomes<sup>26,27</sup> and we will support students from underrepresented groups to access these opportunities in line with our pledge to the ‘Go International: Stand Out campaign’<sup>28</sup> (**Target PTP-1; PTP-2**).

We will work to continue to embed employability and skills development<sup>29</sup> within the curriculum via employer engagement and research-led teaching, taking a joined-up approach with both our professional services and

<sup>24</sup> <https://universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/Routes-to-high-level-skills.aspx>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/app3.gone-international-mobile-students-and-their-outcomes.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> [https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/30779/7/widening-participation-in-uk-outward-student-mobility\\_Redacted.pdf](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/30779/7/widening-participation-in-uk-outward-student-mobility_Redacted.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/International/go-international/stand-out/Pages/faq.aspx>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2016/higher-education-in-england-provision-skills-and-graduates.pdf>

academic activities. The student voice is at the heart of our Access and Participation activities, and we will continue to employ students across a range of roles to ensure their expertise is utilised and support their professional development.

### 3.3.4 Financial Support

We will focus our financial support towards retention and attainment, as the Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit quantitative analysis has shown that our current approach is effective with retention and attainment rates of recipients in line with the reference group. Use of the survey tool indicated that students were unaware of the support on offer before they arrived, which suggests it is not an effective recruitment tool, in line with sector findings.

Based on the assessment of performance we will prioritise financial support for mature students, low income students and students from IMD Q1-2 areas, as well as increasing support for Care Leavers. We are aware that many students will not disclose their household income, and we may therefore inadvertently be disadvantaging those who do not, or those not accessing student loans such as some Muslim students or mature students. We will therefore seek to develop an approach by 2020/21 where students are able to apply for funding during their studies to undertake activities.

We will continue to provide a Hardship fund, and monitor the characteristics of the students accessing the fund in order to be alert to any emerging trends of hardship amongst the student population. To ensure that we are not creating disadvantage as we increase our use of Bring-Your-Own-Device examinations,<sup>30</sup> we will continue to invest as necessary in loan laptops.

A summary of the financial support funded through our Access and Participation Plan is set out in Table 18.

*Table 18: Summary bursaries/scholarships. All financial support is subject to specific eligibility criteria that is made clear to entrants.*

Scholarship/Bursary	Value per year	Awarded to each entrant group
<b>Brunel University London Bursary</b>	£1,000 - £3,000 cash	208
<b>Care Leaver Bursary</b>	£2,000 cash	Unlimited
<b>Urban Scholars</b>	£3,000	Unlimited
<b>Mature Student Scholarship</b>	Full fee waiver	10
<b>PGCE</b>	£2,500 cash	20
<b>Sanctuary Refugee Scholarship</b>	Full fee waiver + accommodation	<sup>1</sup> Up to 5
<b>Unpaid Placement Bursary</b>	£3,000 (placement year only)	50

<sup>1</sup>Not included in bursary and scholarship forecast as also available to postgraduate students

## 3.4 Student Consultation

Our ongoing partnership and successful collaboration with the Union of Brunel Students, including in the delivery of the Student Success Project,<sup>31,32</sup> has led to the belief that our efforts to improve access, success and progression perform best when we use ‘Students as Experts’. A diverse range of students have been involved in the development of our Access and Participation work which they contribute to as delivery partners; critique via feedback (both through Union representatives and other channels such as focus groups and surveys); and lobbying the University to develop new activities in certain areas. Students have contributed to our thinking at every step, and as a result of sustained student engagement this Plan and our Access and Participation Strategy reflect the priorities and activities that are important to our students. In particular, they

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/education-innovation/Digital-Assessment-Brunel>

<sup>31</sup> [https://issuu.com/brunel/docs/student\\_success\\_report\\_1617](https://issuu.com/brunel/docs/student_success_report_1617)

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/student-success/documents/pdf/Student-Success-Project-Year-Two-Report-2017-18.pdf>

endorse using students as experts to co-deliver the Plan, which ensures authenticity in the delivery of activities and provides students with leadership and development opportunities.

Our Students Union are highly engaged and have taken the opportunity to give their own contribution to this plan (Annex A) which shows both the benefits of their work to date and their priority areas for future work.

## 3.5 Evaluation Strategy

### 3.5.1 Mechanisms and improving practice

Our strategy for evaluation is based on five principles:

- 1) Theory of Change; 2) Proportionality; 3) Ethics; 4) Transparency; and 5) Dissemination

All projects are required to articulate a Theory of Change, which ensures that activities are underpinned by evidence and have defined outcomes and success measures. We are committed to evaluating proportionally, and will not over-invest resources where there is strong and credible evidence to suggest that an intervention will have the intended outcomes. Our practices are ethical, with due regard to appropriate data storage and access in compliance with GDPR. Transparency of the process and outcomes ensures that evaluation is an opportunity to share and improve practice. The process should also support the creation of a strong evidence base that is disseminated widely; recent examples include Brunel's "Decentring Diversity" conference (March 2019), and AUA conference contribution (April 2019).

Over the course of this plan we will enhance our approach as we adapt to evaluating embedded, as opposed to stand-alone, projects and activities. Improving the visual representation of each Theory of Change will facilitate communication, and streamlining ethical approval will support the publication of outcomes and engagement with TASO.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.5.2 How we evaluate

We take a structured, robust and transparent approach to evaluation, and all Access and Participation activities (time-limited projects and ongoing activities) are evaluated annually. We have adapted Sir Michael Barber's Public Value Framework to ensure activities are cost-effective and achieve the anticipated impacts; have clarity about what needs to be achieved; and are using as appropriate a mixture of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods. Any identified improvements are supported by our full-time Impact Evaluation Analyst and progress monitored at mid-year reviews, resulting in a continual cycle of enhancement. Activities not delivering the anticipated impacts are discontinued. Outcomes from the evaluation meetings are shared with all project leads in order to promote best practice as we are developing our evaluation capability.

The evaluation meetings are led by the Vice-Provost (Education), and have provided an institutional overview of the strengths and weaknesses of our Access and Participation work. This has proved useful in identifying and progressing aspects where institutional focus is needed to strengthening our approach to evaluation, and as a consequence we are able to target resources effectively.

We will continue to utilise the resources made available to us by the OfS such as 'Using Standards of Evidence to Evaluate the Impact of Outreach' and the Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit (see section 3.3.4), which we have used internally to support decision making. We will proactively engage with TASO from its inception to ensure that we are continuously improving and strengthening our methodological practices for the duration of this plan and beyond in order to deliver the best evidence possible to the three evaluation types. Our initial focus is on producing strong evidence for Type 2 evaluations for activities by 2021/22, and work towards Type 3 evaluations by 2024/25.

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<sup>33</sup> Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education

### 3.5.3 Self-Assessment of Evaluation

It is clear from the self-assessment that the investment in improving processes for approval and evaluation of activities over the past 18 months have been worthwhile, reflected in our strong scoring areas of: “strategic context” and “learning from evaluation”. We now have a strong foundation on which to build the capacity of activity leads to robustly evaluate using the best evidence available to the relevant evaluation type, placing particular emphasis on developing the methodological skills needed to produce strong evidence for Type 2 evaluations. We will continue to engage with external bodies to promote effective evaluation practices across the sector, such as the AccessHE Evidence and Evaluation Forum which is currently chaired by our Impact Evaluation Analyst, and the recently launched TASO.

### 3.6 Monitoring progress against delivery of plan

The Access and Participation Committee (APC), a sub-committee of Executive Board and chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education), meets four times a year and has responsibility for overseeing the University’s Access and Participation Strategy and the monitoring of progress. With a membership comprising of students, professional and academic staff, APC monitors the Access and Participation work, progress against targets, and the annual reporting to OfS. Regular reports are provided to Senate to ensure a broad understanding by the academic community of our Access and Participation work, and how it supports the broader educational agenda of the University.

Council has ultimate responsibility for monitoring the University’s Access and Participation Plan, and receives briefings and formal updates to ensure members have the necessary information and understanding to be confident in approving the Plan and monitoring returns. With the exception of Executive Board, students are members of all committees considering our Access and Participation work.

Following approval, this Access and Participation Plan will be converted into a delivery plan for each life cycle stage, with progress monitored as data becomes available, and at mid-term and annual reviews and reported through our governance structures as set out above. In addition, the Annual Monitoring Enhancement Conversations with subject disciplines conducted by the Vice-Provost (Education) ensure that we can monitor and review the impact of our curriculum work as it relates to this plan. Where progress is not made or is worsening, we will review the activity and evaluation outcomes to ensure we can put the appropriate actions in place. We are committed to maintaining performance in all areas covered by this plan (not just those with specific targets), and will monitor progress so that interventions can be made where appropriate.

## 3. Provision of information to students

Information on fees and funding, with link to the detailed Student Financial Policy, is available at <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/study/undergraduate-fees-and-funding>. Each course page carries a statement of how fees are likely to change during their course, as well as information on any additional course-related costs. Current students can also receive information via IntraBrunel and from the Student Centre.

Details of bursaries and financial benefits packages and eligibility criteria will be made available in print form and via the University website prior to the June Open Day for entry in September the following year, and information regarding the timing, processes and procedures necessary to receive or apply for a scholarship will be available prior to our September Open Day and will be made available to prospective students and HE advisors within schools and colleges in both print and electronic form. Full details of all our scholarships and bursaries, including eligibility can be found on our website at <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/study/undergraduate-fees-and-funding/scholarships> We undertake to provide timely and accurate information to UCAS and the Student Loans Company so that they can populate their course databases in good time to inform applications. This Access and Participation Plan will be accessible on our external website.

## ANNEX A

# Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25

## Union of Brunel Students

### 1. Introduction

The Union of Brunel Student's strategic themes for 2021 are to create a culture of sustainability, enhance student's everyday needs, demonstrate benefits of Union engagement, tackle non-completion and ensure students are genuine partners in decision-making. The partnership between the Union and the University allows these aims to be delivered through a variety of formal and informal settings. This contribution to the Access and Participation Plan highlights areas where the Union works collaboratively with the University for the benefit of all students, and highlights priority areas for future partnership. Our contribution to the Plan comes from the embedded and collaborative engagement with the University's Access and Participation work that go beyond input through committee membership.

### 2. Engagement with the University

The Union of Brunel Students consists of six democratically elected salaried officers, full time support staff and a number of part time volunteers. Students are active partners in improving access, success and participation across the whole University and the student view is embedded at all levels. The sabbatical officers are embedded throughout Brunel's formal committees. Access and participation discussions take place at Access and Participation Committee, Student Experience and Welfare Committee (co-chaired by the Union President), Senate and Council, all of which Union officers are formal members of.

Before committee meetings the opportunity for discussion of items of interest and to note are encouraged and officers often attend pre-meets. During meetings, officers actively discuss and challenge the agenda items. Discussions held can often turn to the creation of working groups where, again, the officers actively take part. Additionally, officers are encouraged to write papers in collaboration with staff members and present these to the relevant committees. Officers and students are also encouraged to be involved in policy development. A recent example includes the Transgender Student Policy, where our LGBT+ Officer worked closely with the Equality and Diversity Manager of the University. Currently, the full-time Officers are part of consultation groups for the development of new Bullying and Harassment (previously known as Dignity at Study) and Sexual Violence policy.

At a course and department level, students are elected and trained through the Union process to attend and partake in Student Experience Committees and Board of Studies, where opinions and enhancements are highlighted to course leaders. Student representatives are empowered to openly discuss issues such as timetabling and assessment as well as improvements to the overall experience; for example, the allocation of budgets for subject specific student societies to use. We are continually striving to ensure our elected representatives reflect the diversity of our student population, and we are currently reviewing our process alongside the University to ensure that a wide range of students are able to contribute to improving the student experience and to improve engagement with the Representation system.

To support the enhancement of programmes, students or officers are members of the review panels for periodic programme reviews, which take place in each college every five years as well as approval events for new courses. At these events, students are invited to constructively discuss areas of best practice and highlight areas for enhancement. Discussion can highlight the negative effect bottlenecking of assessments can have on a student's mental health and performance, the limitations only written assessments can present, the benefits and difficulties of group work and the fairness of the extenuating circumstances policy, all of which

may negatively impact attainment. The student’s opinions are taken on board to influence change on the course and improve the overall student experience.

*“I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the course reviews I have been part of, I think it provides valuable insight into the operation and organisation of courses. As a student you get to draw on your own experiences with your course and help avoid any issues that you can foresee with the new course. It’s nice to know that in some small way the work I’ve put into the panels may help make a better course for future students and peers.”*

As well as studying, students can engage with a variety of extracurricular activities. With over 50 sport clubs and over 100 societies offered at the Union of Brunel Students, over a fifth of the University’s student population are regularly engaging on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis with the Union. In addition, there are volunteering opportunities for events and campaigns as well as RAG (fund-raising) activities. The students engaging with the Union as a Society or Sport Club members are less likely to drop out of University, which can be proved by data collected of attrition rates (Figure 1).

The University has supported the Union’s work by funding free sports (from September 2017), which together with other initiatives (see section 3.3 below) has seen a large increase in students engaging. This requires us to take more nuanced approach to data analysis by differentiating competitive and social sport members, and so we do not yet have comparable breakdown of attrition rates for 2017/18 (the 2016/17 Sports Member category reflects primarily those engaged in team-based and competitive sports). However, overall the data is similar in that attrition rates for Union-engaged students are lower than for those not engaged.

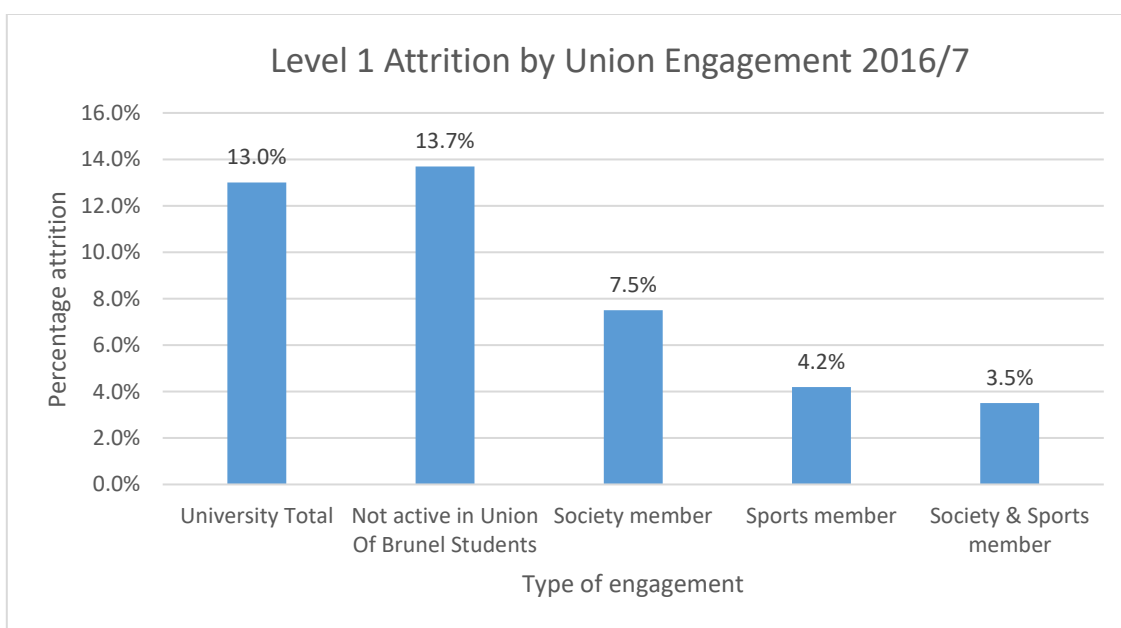


Figure 1. Data showing the percentage of first year attrition for those involved with the Union of Brunel Students’ sports, societies, sports and societies and those who are not, along with the University average.

### 3. Priorities for future Partnership

Throughout the five years that the Access and Participation Plan covers, the Union will develop a new strategic plan (for 2021 onwards) and elect new sabbatical officers each year. The priorities areas for future partnership reflect the team objectives of the 2018/19 officer team and will support work towards the targets identified in Brunel’s Access and Participation Plan.

### 3.1 Liberation

The black attainment gap is a key issue and the Union will continue to work in partnership with the University to identify and address challenges. We feel a key area of work is engaging students, delivering activities that they would be interested to take part in and attend. An example of this is Black History Month which was funded by the Student Success Project where in 2018/19 the campaign held successful and meaningful events which celebrated the success of black people, raised awareness of black issues and created a culture of diverse collective celebration. We engaged with over 500 students through a variety of different events such as a Comedy Night, Food Fayre, Art showcase and film nights. We have also continued to work to diversify the curriculum and during this academic year we looked at the new Engineering Common Level 4 curriculum reading lists and made sure it was diverse.

We are committed to ensuring that the campus is accessible and inclusive for disabled students. Our Disability Officer has been actively involved in recent improvements, including consultation meetings about accessibility for the campus new Learning and Teaching Centre, and lobbied to change some building access around campus.

The Union is also working to improve support and fair representation for mature students. We started a Mature and Part-time student society, which contributes to an effective activities plan for this particular group of students. Examples of this contribution includes passed motions in Student Assembly for improvements in Fresher's Fayre activities to suit mature students, and family friendly spaces on campus for student with children.

### 3.2 Preparing for Success

This year the Union hosted its Third Annual Women in Leadership Conference, which was funded through the Access and Participation Committee. The vision of the conference is to empower and inspire a new generation of women to become leaders in society, especially in light of recent studies showing that women don't apply for jobs unless they are 100% qualified or over qualified, whereas men are confident if they just meet 60% of the criteria. This is particularly useful for women from underrepresented backgrounds to broaden their opportunities and maximise and add to their skillset and confidence. The Conference was attended by almost 90 women and featured panel discussions about liberation in the workplace, being a women in STEM and going into academia and research, as well as skill-based workshops.

*"The student union empowers, engages and motivates students to take charge of their academic and university experiences and wellbeing, which is critical to their success"*

Students have the opportunity to engage in a range of leadership roles via the Union, including full-time and part-time officers, student reps and club and societies committee positions. Students are also central to delivering activities funded via the Access and Participation plan, including as peer assisted learning (PAL) leaders and widening access student ambassadors. A number of students have highly commended the peer assisted learning (PAL) programme, stating it has greatly increased their understanding of their subject.

*"My PAL leaders are really fantastic and they give you so much confidence that you can feel less pressure"*

There are also benefits for the students who act as leaders, sharing their expertise with other students.

*"The benefits to self-development and the fulfilment gained knowing your efforts positively affect another student's academic experience is truly invaluable."*



The Union believes that work to support BTEC student is important to student success. The attrition gap between A-level and BTEC students is still quite high, thus we will push for curriculum changes, such as assessment flexibility, as well as additional academic support. This is likely to be included in our next strategic plan.

The Union has actively worked with the Professional Development Centre to send a student on all expenses paid trip to Silicon Valley. Applications were open to BAME students with an interest in career for tech, broadening their opportunities, supporting and going in line with the University's objective to send students for short placements abroad to increase their networking opportunities and thus employability skills.

### 3.3 Wellbeing

The Union of Brunel Students are dedicated to ensuring that the student body's health and wellbeing is a priority and that mental health remains high on the University's agenda. Sport and physical activity are known to promote a positive mental wellbeing alongside improving overall physical fitness; therefore to promote the participation in sport and activity, Union Sport membership is free giving access to both competitive sports (e.g. TeamBrunel) and social sports activities (e.g. ActiveBrunel). Free sport has seen a 34% increase in membership and more students being able to participate due to the removal of financial barriers; particularly important as students from underrepresented groups tend to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. We try to ensure our wellbeing campaigns also focus on tackling stigmas around disabilities and mental health.

Feedback from students has also highlighted the benefits of free sport:

*"Active@brunel has given an easily accessible and cost effective way for both students and staff to stay active on campus. This contributes positively to social life, mental health, and fitness. We also had 19 different student activators gaining experience delivering sports sessions, as well as CPD funding"*

\*

*"Free Sport helped me financially, it enabled me to join two sports without having to stress about financial implications. I was only able to join one sport in my first year before free sports and it was a financial burden"*

\*

*"Making a whole team of friends that I can socialise with out of team Brunel and becoming fitter and more confident within myself."*

\*

*"Free Sport is great because it allows you to try out a multitude of different sports without having to commit until you feel comfortable in choosing that sport as you don't have to worry about extra cost"*

\*

*"The free sports club membership is a great way to make friends because you all have the interest in the sport you are doing in common. Since I'm on a placement, I don't have much contact with other students. The age of my co-workers is significantly higher than my age so I'm grateful that team Brunel gives the opportunity to join so many teams. I have made a lot of friends and tried out some sports I've never done before!"*

This academic year we secured Funding from Sport England as part of their Active Students Programme to deliver a physical activity programme that engages more BAME students in our sports programmes as they traditionally have low participation. We saw a significant growth of BAME students attending our Active@Brunel sessions, and also BAME student activators, with an increasing BAME students' participation

Name of Provider: Brunel University London  
UKPRN: 10000961

from 12% to 16% in just one year. This is something we will continue working on for the next strategic plan, as our demographics keeps increasing on students from this particular background. The funding also stipulates to work with an FE institution to support them in increasing participation levels, and we choose to work with Uxbridge College to deliver sessions to increase sporting engagement of their BAME students.

*“This year we have tried to put on more activities that would attract more BAME students, as our numbers have shown that this group has previously engaged less with the programme. This included ‘Dance With Cell’, one of our most popular activities across Active@Brunel, which is a Dancehall session suggested by our West Indian society. We are excited to continue improving and growing the programme for students and staff to come!” – Active@Brunel coordinator*

#### 4. Summary

The Union of Brunel students and Brunel University London work closely together on many goals with common themes and strategic objectives that lie within Access and Participation. Students and officers are not afraid to disagree with the University in committees and do not shy away from sharing their thoughts and opinions, being very vocal, which can lead to policy change. The Union actively challenges and pushes for new initiatives such as free sport and refugee scholarships, which are large financial commitments for the University. This emphasises the weight of the student voice in decision-making and ensures that Brunel is an inclusive environment where all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. Thus, a real partnership exists between the Union of Brunel Students and Brunel University London, which continually enhances the student experience.

**Access and participation plan  
Fee information 2020-21**

Provider name: Brunel University London

Provider UKPRN: 10000961

**Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees**

\*course type not listed

**Inflationary statement:**

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,250
Foundation degree		£9,250
Foundation year/Year 0		£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT		£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year		£1,385
Erasmus and overseas study years		£1,385
Other	Final year integrated Masters	£6,330
Other	On study year abroad for part of the year	£5,625

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

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	London Brunel International College Limited 10066544 - LONDON BRUNEL INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE LIMITED	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	London Brunel International College Limited 10066544 - LONDON BRUNEL INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE LIMITED	£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£6,935
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Brunel University London

Provider UKPRN: 10000961

## Investment summary

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

### Note about the data:

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

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£853,975.49	£858,975.49	£863,975.49	£863,975.49	£863,975.49
Access (pre-16)	£448,284.98	£448,284.98	£448,284.98	£448,284.98	£448,284.98
Access (post-16)	£347,981.85	£352,981.85	£352,981.85	£352,981.85	£352,981.85
Access (adults and the community)	£57,708.66	£57,708.66	£62,708.66	£62,708.66	£62,708.66
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£1,922,500.00	£1,950,000.00	£2,051,500.00	£2,051,500.00	£2,051,500.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£29,992,195.00	£30,136,770.00	£30,225,615.00	£30,245,085.00	£30,248,790.00
<b>Access investment</b>	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%
<b>Financial support</b>	6.2%	6.2%	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	9.1%	9.1%	9.5%	9.5%	9.5%

