

St Mary's University, Twickenham

Access and Participation Plan 2020-2024

INTRODUCTION

From its inception in 1850 as a Catholic college to train teachers to work in 'poor Catholic' schools in London, St Mary's has had a history of inclusion as part of its mission. We work hard to prepare our students for rewarding lives, successful careers and social commitment, through excellent, research-informed teaching and by providing every student with the support they need to flourish whilst they are studying with us. St Mary's University believes in the transformative possibilities of Higher Education for every member of our diverse student body; this is a key tenet of our 9-year strategy, 'Vision 2025'. The powerful sense of community that characterises St Mary's is a product of our ethos, the strong partnership we enjoy with our Students' Union and the core values that underpin what we do: inclusiveness, generosity of spirit, respect and excellence. As a relatively small, campus university, with a strong community spirit and a friendliness often reported by students, but also being within very easy reach of all that central London has to offer, we are able to provide students with both the nurturing environment and the challenge they require to develop their potential in their chosen field of study. As a University, we are strongly committed to widening participation in Higher Education and we welcome the opportunity this Access and Participation Plan (APP) gives to set out how we intend to address issues of student access, success and progression. Through our Widening Participation Strategy (2015-2020) and the substantial structural and operational changes we have made to our WP offer during 2018-19, we have developed an ambitious approach to widening access and improving outcomes. In 2020 we will update and relaunch this strategy, using evidence from research and experience to ensure we demonstrate continuous improvement. We will work within a Theory of Change structure and consistently measure impact across the full range of access and success actions and initiatives, by adopting both external evaluation frameworks¹ and a range of internal evaluation methodologies. As is the case across the sector, we recognise that our Access and Participation Plan may require some amendment when the impact of any implementation of the Augar Review recommendations, and/or the UK withdrawal from the EU, become apparent.

1. ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

A. Introduction

In this section, we provide data to demonstrate our current performance in access, success and progression across target groups and, where appropriate, compare this against national statistics in line with the OfS key performance measures and national targets. The undergraduate data is primarily sourced from the OfS dashboard² while the PGCE analysis is an internal analysis based on the HESES dataset, using the OfS rebuild instructions/ algorithm³.

We recognise that the size of our student cohort, particularly when characteristics are disaggregated, means the statistics we present are necessarily largely descriptive and can rarely imply statistical significance; there will also be much greater annual variability than with larger student bodies. Nevertheless, we will use the data we have, together with research literature and sector evidence, to inform our ambitions and strategy in the coming years.

In our assessment of current performance, the data for the whole student cohort is presented first, then each target group is considered in relation to access, success and progression, reflecting the strategic, lifecycle approach we have adopted. Our key target groups are BAME students, disabled students, care leavers, mature students and students from areas of low participation and/or high deprivation, but we also acknowledge where intersections of disadvantage exist. Finally we consider commuter students, as local and national research acknowledges that multiple indicators of disadvantage in HE may exist for these students.

¹ Including current OfS self-assessment tools, NERUPI framework and forthcoming TASOS outputs

² <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

³ OfS 2019

B. Whole Cohort Student Data

i. Access: Student Numbers

After an increase in UG entrants in 2015/16, our recruitment numbers have fallen, most significantly in 2017 (Table 1), and this was reflected in both our agreed recruitment forecasts⁴ and a slight decrease in predicted absolute WP spend for 2019/20⁵. PGCE numbers remained stable in the period examined⁶.

Table 1: Number of new, home fee-eligible, first-year students (from HESA data)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
UG	1322	1378	1312	1108
PGCE	347	338	333	343

ii. Success: Good Honours

Significant improvements are evident in the proportion of 1st class and 2:1 degrees awarded since 2014/15 (Table 2). In 2016/17 our proportion of good honours was brought into line with the rest of the sector (76% of UK graduates in 2016/17⁷). This was achieved through sustained work on assessment practices and student preparedness and a change to our degree award calculation algorithm to achieve parity with sector common practice. This change reduced disadvantage across different groups of students, but the positive effect of our initiatives to improve student performance, regardless of degree algorithm, continue to be evident in our continued, but smaller increase in 2017/18.

Table 2: Proportion of graduates attaining good honours (from internal data)

	Classification	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
UG	First Class or 2:1 degrees	59.7%	61.2%	72.7%	75.4%

iii. Success: Retention

Our previous APP acknowledged the challenges we face in relation to overall student retention (Table 3), although we have previously outperformed sector averages⁸. Attrition is not, however, associated with specific categories of disadvantage at St Mary's, but occurs across the board and, as a relatively small institution, each individual withdrawal affects our retention proportions significantly. The OfS dashboard highlights statistically significant differences in non-continuation, for some years only, where gender intersects with deprivation or POLAR quintiles, which will be addressed below. The observed trend is for the majority of withdrawals to occur in Yr1, therefore this is a key focus for our updated Retention Strategy (submitted to OfS in Feb 2019) and will continue to drive our actions for improvement.

Table 3: Withdrawals by level of study (from internal data)⁹

	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
	Successful	Withdrawn	Successful	Withdrawn	Successful	Withdrawn
UG	93.1%	6.9%	93.2%	6.8%	91.1%	8.9%
PGCE	95.6%	4.4%	89.2%	10.8%	94.1%	5.9%

iv. Progression

St Mary's has very high absolute performance on the percentage of students in employment or further study 6 months after graduation; highly skilled employment has also been increasing since 2014 (from 69.9% to 74.3%)¹⁰ and over

⁴ Agreed with HEFCE March 2018

⁵ In our APP 2019/20 gross WP spend was decreased but % of higher fee income increased

⁶ PGCE is our only postgraduate provision which meets the criteria for inclusion within the Access and Participation Plan.

⁷ OfS data and analysis report: differences in student outcomes

⁸ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/continuation-and-transfer-rates/>

⁹ This includes students who withdrew at any time in the year, though students 'withdrawn pending appeal' are excluded.

¹⁰ DLHE data

98% of PGCE students are in highly skilled employment or further study every year. However, a statistically significant UG progression gap is identified by the OfS for black compared to white students for 2016/7 (addressed below).

C. Assessment of Performance by Student Group

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

a) Access

While we recognise the limitations of using POLAR4 measures as a proxy for socioeconomic disadvantage, we have continued to report our performance on this dimension for continuity of data. In addition we have examined Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data and we are committed to using a wider range of additional measures when planning strategy and delivery and examining our progress from 2020 onwards.

St Mary's is located in a PQ/IMD 5 area, with immediate surrounding areas also in the same quintiles and we attract a large proportion of our students from a relatively small, relatively affluent local area (Richmond and Kingston). Perhaps because of this, St Mary's has consistently recruited low numbers of PQ/IMD 1&2 students at both undergraduate and PGCE level. However, we acknowledge that we need to work more proactively with easily commutable boroughs (eg. Hounslow, Hillingdon, Croydon and Wandsworth) to increase recruitment from areas less represented in HE and the activity we have instigated in these areas more recently has meant that the proportion of entrants from PQs 1&2 at undergraduate level has been slowly increasing (Table 4), but we have not reached sector average (27.4%)¹¹. Therefore, reducing the gap in participation rates between the lowest and highest POLAR quintiles will continue to be an outreach and recruitment priority and will feature in our key targets. Similarly, until 2016/17, participation from IMD Q1 was slowly increasing (Table 5). We will continue to monitor this data and if the data for 2016/17 appears to represent a change in direction, rather than random annual variability, we will consider the addition of a target to address this.

Table 4: Proportion of students in POLAR4 Quintiles Q1 to Q5

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
P4 Q1&2	16.83%	19.27%	19.30%	18.10%	20.22%
P4 Q3,4&5	83.17%	80.73%	80.70%	81.90%	79.78%

Table 5: Proportion of students in IMD quintiles 1 and 5

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
IMD Q1	13.8%	13.5%	14.1%	15.2%	12.1%
IMD Q5	26.4%	25.6%	24.5%	23.3%	24.7%
Gap	12.6pp	12.1pp	10.4pp	8.1pp	12pp

Examination of UCAS MEM data, which compares our performance against both all UK providers and other low tariff providers, suggests that between 2013 and 2017 the most advantaged students (MEM group 5) were between 3.0 and 3.6 times more likely to be placed at St Mary's University compared to the most disadvantaged students (MEM group 1). St Mary's ratio figures are better than aggregate ratios for all UK providers, but we need to be nearer to the figure for lower tariff providers, typically between 1.8 and 1.9. We are currently preparing data for our OfS transparency return in August 2019 and will use this data, when completed, to refine our approach.

More than half of all new PGCE entrants each year with a known POLAR quintile have been from PQ5 (Table 6) and, although the proportion of entrants from PQ1 has been steadily increasing since 2014, students from PQ1&2 still account for less than 10% of new entrants. Whilst this is a trend observed nationally at PGCE level, it will be addressed in our future recruitment practices.

¹¹ OfS Dashboard

Table 6: Proportion of PGCE students in POLAR4 Q1 and Q5

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
P4 Q1	1.63%	1.52%	1.79%	3.12%
P4 Q5	59.8%	55.2%	57.0%	62.9%

b) Success: Continuation and Attainment

Continuation: Continuation rates for this group are very positive (Table 7). PQ1&2 full-time students' continuation was higher than benchmark in TEF metrics and slightly higher than PQ3-5 students across all years examined.

Table 7: Proportion of continuing students by POLAR4 quintiles

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
P4 Q1&2	94%	92%	90%	94%	90%
P4 Q3,4,5	92%	91%	90%	90%	89%

Examination of IMD data (Table 8) suggests that continuation rates for students from IMD quintile 5 was no more than 5 percentage points higher than those of students from IMD quintile 1 for all years considered. However, in 2016/17 the gap increased to 10 percentage points. This will, therefore, be carefully examined and if increases are observed which suggest this is more than a statistical outlier, an additional target will be considered for inclusion.

Table 8: Proportion of continuing students by IMD quintiles 1 and 5

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
IMD Q1	91%	91%	89%	87%	83%
IMD Q5	96%	96%	92%	92%	93%
Gap	5pp	5pp	3pp	5pp	10pp

Attainment: Across the five years examined, no clear pattern emerges for attainment of 'good honours' across the POLAR4 quintiles (Table 9).

Table 9: Proportions of Good Honours by POLAR4 Quintiles

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
P4 Q1	75%	55%	65%	70%	75%
P4 Q2	67%	63%	60%	76%	80%
P4 Q3	60%	59%	62%	75%	82%
P4 Q4	62%	53%	58%	70%	71%
P4 Q5	67%	65%	62%	79%	77%

The marked increase across all categories between 15/16 and 16/17 has been explained in the overall student data commentary, but comparison of 2016/17 and 2017/18 show continuing improvements, with higher proportions of students in PQs 1-3 achieving good honours than in PQs 4&5, and students in PQ2 performing consistently strongly. Although this success means that this is no longer a priority target for improvement, we will continue to monitor and address any emerging trends. However, the OfS dashboard data identifies statistically significant attainment and/or continuation gaps where POLAR quintiles intersect with gender, therefore this will be the focus for attention (see section 1.6 below).

IMD data suggests a less positive, but improving gap in attainment between students from IMD quintiles 5 and 1, with the former consistently being awarded a higher percentage of good honours degrees than the latter (Table 10). Therefore we will address this attainment gap as one of our key targets.

Table 10: Comparison of percentage of good honours degrees for IMD quintiles 1 and 5

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
IMD Q1	52%	43%	54%	61%	68%
IMD Q5	70%	66%	67%	79%	80%
Gap	22pp	23pp	13pp	18pp	12pp

c) Progression

Table 11 shows the highly variable percentage point difference in progression rates between PQ1 compared to PQ5 and PQs1&2 compared to PQs3-5 (a negative difference is observed where PQ1 students outperform PQ5 students). For IMD quintiles, the progression gap between IMD Q5 and IMD Q1 students appeared to be narrowing, until a significant gap appeared in 2016/17. As with other progression measures, important information and insight may be accessible when new employability data becomes available and so this will be closely scrutinised during 2019/20 to contextualise this and identify it as a trend or an outlier result.

Table 11: Percentage point difference in progression across POLAR4 quintiles and IMD Quintiles

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Difference P4 Q5: P4 Q1	5pp	10pp	-5pp	0pp	-15pp
Difference P4 Qs3,4&5: P4 Qs1&2	6pp	2pp	-4pp	1pp	0pp
Difference IMD Q5: IMD Q1	20pp	18pp	17pp	4pp	24pp

According to St Mary's TEF data, full-time PQ1&2 students perform above their benchmark on highly skilled employment but their rate (64.7%) is still slightly below those of PQ3,4&5 students (68.8%), therefore this will not be a key focus for us until new employability data is available, but will continue to be closely monitored and a new target may be added following this.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

a) Access

The proportion of BAME students joining St Mary's has remained relatively stable since 2014/15, with a small decrease in 2017/18 (Table 12). For PGCE, the difference remains larger, but shows a steady narrowing of the participation gap between white and non-white students since 2014/15.

Table 12: UG and PGCE Access Proportions - Ethnicity

		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
UG	BAME	30.9%	32.2%	31.7%	27.9%
	White	69.1%	67.9%	68.4%	72%
Sector comparison – %white students		71.6%	70.5%	69.6%	68.9%
PGCE	BAME	15.41%	17.68%	20.06%	21.74%
	White	84.59%	82.32%	79.94%	78.26%

Table 13 shows the access rates disaggregated to ethnicity groups. In some cases this data compares favourably with the national picture; we have recruited a higher overall proportion of black students than the sector since 2014/15 and a significantly higher proportion than exists in the population (3.3%¹²). However, we recognise that we recruit a lower proportion of Asian students than the sector average (which has increased from 11.9% to 13.7% since 2013/14) and that our BAME recruitment compared to London universities is less favourable¹³. One of our key targets for outreach

¹² OfS dashboard

¹³ <https://public.tableau.com/profile/david.kernohan#!/vizhome/shared/78DGPQM4Q>

and access work will therefore be to reduce the recruitment gap between white and BAME students, with a particular focus on Asian students due to our local area demographic.

Table 13: Proportion of home fee, first-year students, by ethnicity (from HESA data)

		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
UG	Asian	8.7%	10.4%	8.4%	7.4%
	Black	11.7%	11.9%	12.8%	11.3%
	Mixed	7.7%	6.8%	6.9%	6.3%
	Other Minority Ethnic	2.4%	2.4%	3.2%	2.9%
	White	69.5%	68.5%	68.6%	72.2%
PGCE	Asian	6.1%	8.1%	8.3%	9.4%
	Black	3.2%	3.1%	5.1%	7.8%
	Mixed	4.8%	5.0%	5.1%	3.9%
	Other Minority Ethnic	1.0%	1.9%	1.9%	2.9%
	White	85.0%	81.9%	79.6%	76.1%

b) Success: Continuation and Attainment

Continuation: Table 14 shows the continuation rates of UG students by ethnicity, both comparing white students and students of other ethnicities and disaggregating different ethnic groups.

Table 14: Continuation rate by Ethnicity

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
White	89%	91%	90%
Other ethnicities	90%	85%	84%
Disaggregated			
Black	89%	82%	86%
Asian	96%	89%	83%
Mixed	88%	85%	87%
Other	85%	80%	80%

The St Mary's TEF Year 3 metrics identified that continuation of full-time BAME students is 1.7 percentage points above benchmark, whilst continuation of part-time BAME students is 7.1 percentage points above. Although differences in non-continuation rates are not statistically significant between ethnic groups, a decrease in the success of Asian students since 2014/15, together with their relatively low access figures, means that we will prioritise strategies and actions to support this student group, which will be reflected in our targets for 2020 onwards.

Attainment: Table 15 shows the percentage point difference in attainment across ethnicities

Table 15: Proportion of students attaining Good Honours degrees, by ethnicity

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
White	69%	64%	67%	77%	80%
Black	41%	48%	44%	56%	63%
Asian	45%	57%	50%	54%	69%
Mixed	55%	55%	45%	75%	84%

Whilst interventions addressing BAME attainment since 2015/16 appear to have had some success and the proportion of all BAME groups achieving good honours has increased, a statistically significant attainment gap has been identified between white students and all other ethnicities¹⁴ (including where this intersects with POLAR4 Quintiles 4

¹⁴ OfS Dashboard

and 5). Although we were above TEF benchmark and above sector average for black students achieving good honours (23pp in 2017/18), notable gaps are observed between white and both black and Asian students (Table 16); these will be key targets for 2020 onwards.

Table 16: Percentage point attainment gaps in attainment between white and black and white and Asian students

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Difference White: Black	27pp	16pp	23pp	21pp	17pp
Difference White: Asian	23pp	7pp	17pp	23pp	11pp

c) Progression

Table 17 shows the gap in progression to employment by ethnicity between white and BAME students.

Table 17: Progression Gap by Ethnicity

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Difference White: All BAME	16pp	12pp	12pp	15pp	17pp
Difference White: Black	5pp	10pp	15pp	24pp	28pp
Difference White: Asian	25pp	20pp	15pp	5pp	11pp

Of significant concern is the increasing progression gap between white and black students since 2012/13 (Table 17), which the OfS dashboard highlights as becoming statistically significant in 2016/17. This is in contrast to the progression gap between white and Asian students which has dropped over the same time period, despite a rise in 2016/17. Graduate outcomes may be correlated with the proportion of students receiving good honours degrees, therefore we are optimistic that improvements in attainment will impact on progression outcomes, though we will not have the data to examine this until mid-cycle of this APP. Therefore, reducing the progression gap between white and black students will be the focus within our overall work to improve progression for all BAME students into highly skilled employment.

1.3 Mature students

a) Access

Table 18 shows a slow but steady reduction in the gap between the proportion of young students and mature students joining St Mary's since 2013/14 at both UG and PGCE levels. Our proportions also match average proportions and trends across the sector (27.4% is sector average for 2017/18¹⁵). However, closer examination reveals that the proportion of 'mature' 21-25 year old UGs has been larger than the total proportion of all students 26 and over, for every year examined (despite slight increases in 2017) and a similar pattern is evident for PGCE, particularly when age intersects with gender. Although we acknowledge this is a sector-wide issue, we will nevertheless set ourselves a target to increase recruitment of mature students.

Table 18: Access Proportions of young and mature students

UG	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Young Under21	81.5%	80.7%	80.2%	76.4%	73.8%
Mature 21 and over	18.5%	19.3%	19.8%	23.6%	26.2%
Mature 21 - 25	10.4%	11.7%	12.9%	14.9%	14%
Mature 26 and over	8.1%	7.5%	6.9%	8.7%	12.2%

PGCE	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Young 21-24	67.2%	61.2%	55.7%	52.4%

¹⁵ OfS Dashboard

Mature 25-29	21.2%	22.7%	25.7%	27.9%
Mature 30 over	11.1%	16.1%	18.6%	19.7%

b) Success: Continuation and Attainment

Continuation: Continuation rates are generally better for young students than mature students, though the gap has fluctuated across the years examined. Table 19 shows that the overall difference in continuation rates between young and mature students is relatively small. However the same pattern emerges for continuation as for access; those classified as mature, but aged 21-25 have similar continuation rates to young students (with the exception of an anomalous year in 2015/16), but when comparing young students to those aged over 26, the gap is much larger. This suggests we should explore strategies and initiatives to reduce barriers to continuation for the older mature student cohort who are the most likely to be in categories such as commuting students, students with caring commitments or with non-traditional qualifications, for whom sector research identifies additional challenges when studying¹⁶.

Table 19: Continuation Gaps across age categories

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Difference Young: Mature	3pp	4pp	3pp	9pp	4pp
Difference Young: Mature 21- 25	-1pp	2pp	2pp	9pp	1pp
Difference Young: Mature 26-30	20pp	10pp	5pp	5pp	15pp
Difference Young: Mature 31-40			10pp	15pp	0pp

Attainment: Mature students' achievement compares favourably with young students when considered as a group (Table 20). However the very low numbers of these students in each annual cohort means that annual variability is likely to be high and identification of causality extremely problematic. We will adopt measures to investigate this further as part of our APP commitment, but it will not form one of our key quantitative targets.

Table 20: Percentage of good honours degrees by age category

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Young Under21	65%	60%	61%	74%	77%
Mature 21 and over	62%	68%	63%	66%	77%
Disaggregated					
Mature 21-25	51%	66%	60%	63%	75%
Mature 26-30	N ¹⁷	N	65%	N	80%
Mature 31-40	N	N	N	70%	N

c) Progression to employment or further study

At the progression stage, outcomes for mature students are generally more favourable than for young students, though this has reduced slightly since 2014/15 (Table 21). Previous TEF data showed mature students tend to have higher rates of both employment and highly skilled employment and are positively flagged on all metrics except part-time employment or further study, where they still outperform the benchmark by 0.6 percentage points. When the new employability data becomes available, we will examine recent outcomes disaggregated across age categories to identify emerging trends or whether additional intervention is needed to support mature students into employment.

Table 21: Percentage point progression gaps between young and mature students

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
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¹⁶Thomas, L & Jones, R (2017): Student engagement in the context of commuter students
<https://www.lizthomasassociates.co.uk/projects/2018/Commuter%20student%20engagement.pdf>

¹⁷ In all data tables, N denotes that data has been suppressed because N<5 and there may be a risk identifying individual students

Difference Young: Mature	-16pp	-14pp	-17pp	-8pp	-7pp
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1.4 Disabled students

a) Access

We are proud of our achievements in recruiting disabled students. As Table 22 shows, the average proportion of students with a declared disability across all UK HEIs has risen steadily from 11.8% to 14.6% since 2013/14, the proportion of St Mary's undergraduates has risen more quickly, from 10.3% to 18.2% of the UG student body¹⁸. By far the largest group have been those with cognitive and learning disabilities, but the numbers of students with mental health issues represents the steepest rise, from 0.5% of the St Mary's student population in 2013/14 to 4% in 2017/18.

Table 22: Access Proportions by Disability

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
No Known Disability	89.7%	90.4%	85.2%	84.7%	81.8%
Declared Disability	10.3%	9.6%	14.8%	15.3%	18.2%
Disaggregated to categories					
Cognitive And Learning	6.9%	6.3%	8.4%	8.7%	8%
Mental Health	0.5%	1.2%	2.1%	2.2%	4%
Sensory Medical And Physical	1.3%	0.9%	1.7%	2.1%	2%
Multiple Impairments	1.1%	0.7%	1.8%	1.6%	2%
Social And Communication	0.4%	0.6%	0.9%	0.8%	1%

b) Success: Continuation and Attainment

Continuation: Because numbers are very small, annual variation is expected in rates of continuation for disabled students compared to non-disabled students, but a difference of 5pp has emerged twice since 2012/13 (Table 23), where the sector average rests around 1pp.

Table 23: Percentage continuation rates disaggregated by disability type

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
No Known Disability	92%	90%	89.6%	88.9%	88.8%
Disabled	92%	94%	85%	89%	84%
Disability Type					
Cognitive And Learning	92%	97%	87%	90%	84%
Mental Health	N	N	N	85%	80%
Sensory Medical And Physical	N	N	N	N	80%

Alongside the range of measures we are putting in place to reduce non-continuation for **all** students at St Mary's, some additional measures will also be implemented to ensure that any continuation gap between disabled and non-disabled students is eliminated. In addition, the non-continuation gap between students with a mental health condition and those with no known disability was identified as 9% in 2016/17¹⁹. Furthermore, because this disability category is perhaps the most variable with time (students are more likely to develop mental health conditions than other forms of disability) and the least likely to be declared, recorded figures are likely to be conservative. For this reason, despite the small numbers involved, we will focus on this target group and improving continuation for disabled students will be a key target.

Attainment: The small percentage point difference in attainment between disabled students and non-disabled students fluctuates somewhat because of the very small cohort size, but students with a declared disability have outperformed students without a disability for 3 of the 5 years recorded (Table 24). When data is disaggregated, the

¹⁸ OfS Dashboard.

¹⁹ OfS Dashboard It should be noted, however, that because this is the only year reported, conclusions may be unreliable.

very small numbers make conclusions unreliable, but degree attainment will also be examined in a more detailed and sophisticated way in future.

Table 24: Percentage of good honours degrees (disaggregated by disability type)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
No Known Disability	65%	60%	61%	73%	76%
Disabled	62%	68%	66%	68%	81%
Disability Type					
Cognitive And Learning	57%	69%	62%	64%	85%
Mental Health	N	N	N	N	70%
Sensory Medical And Physical	N	N	N	N	N
Multiple Impairments	N	N	N	N	75%
Social And Communication	N	N	N	N	N

c) Progression to employment or further study

Whilst our TEF data identified that students with no disability had slightly higher performance on both employment or higher study and highly skilled employment and both were above benchmark, OfS dashboard data identifies an increasing progression gap between disabled and non-disabled students (Table 25), which reached 11 percentage point in 2016/17. For this reason, and because our good access record demands that we address any continuation or progression concerns, we will examine our performance in more detail and set a key target for reducing the progression gap. Furthermore, although our graduating cohorts of disabled students are currently too small to be reported without the risk of identifying individual students in all disability categories except cognitive and learning disabilities (suppressed in Table 25), we will further examine the disaggregated data for different disability groups when the new employability data becomes available and target specific groups if variable outcomes are identified.

Table 25: Progression rates of disabled and non-disabled students and disaggregated rates for cognitive and learning disabilities

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
No Known Disability	61.0%	68.0%	69.0%	72.0%	73.0%
Disabled	62.0%	63.0%	65.0%	66.0%	61.0%
Disability Type					
Cognitive And Learning	66.0%	66.0%	66.0%	70.0%	68.0%

1.5 Care leavers

a) Access, Success and Progression

Because there are consistently very small numbers of care leavers within our cohort (Table 26), all percentage rate comparisons can be extremely misleading when comparing the care leaver cohort of <30 with the number of students who are not care leavers. Furthermore, attempting to draw firm conclusions about success is extremely problematic and there can be huge annual variations, especially for attainment and progression, when graduating cohorts can be <10. For this reason, we will outline our strategies for improving outcomes in section 2, but we cannot set realistic or meaningful quantitative targets for this group. However, from 2019, we are improving our data collection and our support in relation to care-experienced and estranged students, who face largely the same barriers as care leavers. Therefore we will conduct internal reviews and evaluate our performance in a qualitative way in relation to care leavers and analyse outcomes quantitatively for this larger group and include these in future.

Table 26: Access Proportion of Care Leavers to Non-Care Leavers

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
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Care leaver	2.2%	1.4%	1.4%	2.4%
	30	20	20	29
Not known to be a care leaver	97.8%	98.6%	98.6%	97.6%
	1349	1438	1371	1185

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

Intersections of disadvantage will be largely examined in relation to our targets for each of the major categories, and, because numbers are extremely small for all of these intersectional categories and therefore highly variable and not reliable, we will usually set ourselves institutional aims, rather than quantitative OfS targets to improve outcomes. However, a statistically significant difference in continuation is identified in the OfS dataset²⁰ for first degree students between males from POLAR quintiles 1 & 2 and compared with quintiles 3,4 and 5 (Table 27) and therefore we will address percentage difference in continuation rates between males in PQs 1&2 and PQs 3,4&5 in our key targets.

Table 27: Continuation: deprivation quintiles and gender intersection

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Difference Males PQ1&2: PQ 3,4,5	2pp	-1pp	10pp	5pp

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

Commuter Students

In 2018, we conducted internal research to examine outcomes for students who commute to St Mary's, using a comparison between term-time postcode and St Mary's postcode as a measure. Table 28, which shows withdrawal according to distance from campus²¹, indicates that continuation reduces as distance increases, with a slight increase after 20 miles. However, it must be noted that we have only 2 years' complete data for this group²² and commuting time may be more significant than distance, especially in London, therefore we will conduct further research to analyse the experiences for this group to inform future action and targets.

Table 28: Continuation by distance from campus

	2015		2016		2017	
Distance from campus	Successful	Withdrawn	Successful	Withdrawn	Successful	Withdrawn
0-1.99 miles	95.4%	4.6%	94.6%	5.4%	96.4%	3.6%
	1382	67	1360	77	1247	47
2-4.99 miles	94.3%	5.7%	91.3%	8.7%	95.2%	4.8%
	508	31	542	52	496	25
5-9.99 miles	91.2%	8.8%	87.7	12.3%	92.3%	7.7%
	727	70	724	102	671	56
10-19.99 miles	92.2%	7.8%	86.8	13.2%	91.3%	8.7%
	532	45	537	82	494	47
20-39.99 miles	90.2	9.8%	90.2%	9.8%	95.6%	4.4%
	174	19	174	19	174	8
Grand total	93.5	6.5%	91%	9%	94.4%	5.6%
	3323	232	3337	332	3082	183

²⁰ OfS Dashboard

²¹ Distances over 40 miles for a daily commute were assumed to be incorrect and excluded

²² It is important to note that this data is indicative rather than absolute as data for 2017 is not full-year (because of the research date). It also includes a small number of L3 students who are outside the scope of the APP, but are likely to progress to L4 without changing living status

2. STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Target groups

Based on our assessment of current performance, our location, sector research and local and national priorities, our strategic focus for targeting access and participation work across the student life cycle will be:

- Students from areas of low-participation in HE.
- BAME students, particularly black and Asian students
- Disabled students, particularly those with declared mental health conditions
- Care-experienced students
- Mature students, particularly older mature students

In addition, we will include:

- Estranged students, who we will define according to the definitions set by Student Finance England, and consider alongside care-experienced students due to their similar experiences through HE²³
- Male students, where gender intersects with POLAR measures

Because research suggests that all of the above groups are over-represented in some broader categories, where the needs of multiple target groups intersect and can be supported in similar ways, we will also give particular focus to:

- Commuting students. We will define these as either students who live some distance from campus, or students who have not left their family home whilst studying²⁴

For each of these groups we will focus specifically on the lifecycle stage identified in our assessment of current performance as requiring improvement. However we will also continue to monitor all target groups across the student lifecycle to avoid unintended negative consequences emerging at one stage whilst attention is being paid to another.

In the following aims and objectives, we will seek to reduce gaps between underrepresented groups and their peers wherever this is feasible. However, our institutional size and the very small cohorts in some categories mean that there can be significant year-on-year variability, which makes observed gaps unreliable and quantitative targets misleading. Where this is the case, we will present our target in terms of percentage improvements (rather than ratio gaps) or note institutional objectives and actions towards improving performance, but not set quantitative targets.

Due to the limitations of space, this section will only identify an indicative selection of actions or initiatives that we will undertake in relation to each target group, and some strategies and projects will be aimed at more than one target population. Where appropriate we will also build on and develop work that we are already undertaking and has been detailed in our Access Agreement 2018/19 and APP 2019/20. Furthermore, because of the lifespan of this APP we note that, whilst our intentions to improve outcomes will remain consistent between 2020 and 2025, our actions and strategies may change as we will adopt a 'research and learn' approach.

2.2 Aims and Objectives

2.2.1 Students from areas of low-participation in HE and areas of high deprivation.

We recognise that the POLAR4 measure has some flaws, particularly in London. Therefore, although we have chosen to use this data to inform our APP to enable consistency with current priorities, we have also examined IMD data and, from 2019/20, we will seek to triangulate the measures we use in more effective ways, including more individualised approaches to identify socio-economic disadvantage, such as household income and free school meals.

Access: Although the proportion of entrants from PQs 1&2 at both undergraduate and PGCE level has been slowly increasing, we recognise that improving access for students from areas of social disadvantage should be one of our key aims. Whilst our stated target focuses on POLAR4 quintile data, we anticipate that the way we use data to

²³ www.standalone.org

²⁴ <https://www.lizthomasassociates.co.uk/projects/2018/Commuter%20student%20engagement.pdf>

prioritise our work and the actions we will take will also impact on young people from low IMD quintiles (see Outreach action below). We will therefore set ourselves the target to:

- **increase the percentage of students from POLAR4 Quintiles 1&2**
 - from 20% in 2017/18 to 22.5% in 2024/25
 - from 2025 onwards we will continue to improve access for students from socio-economically deprived backgrounds, using appropriate data and working proactively to ensure that socioeconomic status is not a barrier for any student wishing to study at St Mary's

Actions to address the aims:

- Our WP and Outreach team will undertake a range of sustained engagement programmes with both pre-16 (Key Stage 3&4) and post-16 learners (Key Stage 5). These will be appropriate to the age of participants and will include work to raise awareness of the career options available through HE study, support to achieve their aspirations and to improve attainment. We will use a rubric which triangulates POLAR quintiles with free school meals, GCSEs outcomes and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data to target the most appropriate schools and colleges for work and undertake intensive and sustained outreach and recruitment activity within the areas which serve most LPN and BAME learners. In addition, we will closely examine transport links to focus on areas that are easily commutable and leverage our relationship with Catholic Schools and other faith schools in all these areas.
- Using data from HEAT (Higher Education Access Tracker) we will assess the relationship between outreach programmes, disadvantage, attainment and patterns of progression into HE. We will also continue to work with the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) and other partner organisations, including Aimhigher London South, AccessHE and Linking London to enhance our reach into socio-economically disadvantaged communities. Some of this work will also support us in meeting our targets with other groups (eg. BAME learners).
- We will examine national data to identify curriculum programmes most popular with students from our target populations and those most likely to ensure good progression outcomes. We will work with academic departments to expand and develop our programme offer to attract students from LPNs and other target groups. We are currently exploring ways to enhance our Business Management and Law portfolio, increasing the options for extra-mural opportunities (study abroad, extended work placements etc.), introducing Early Years Education and introducing a 'top-up' degree for learners who have already completed Foundation Degrees or HE Diplomas
- We will increase awareness of the career progression routes available from the curriculum programmes we currently offer and increase the information we provide for students, pre- and post-choice at 16 and 18, in our target LPN areas.

Success: We will aim to reduce the gap in attainment between students from IMD quintiles and set ourselves a key target to:

- **Reduce the attainment gap between students from IMD quintiles 1 and 5**
 - from 12pp in 2016/17 to 2pp in 2024/25
 - to eliminate the attainment gap by 25/26
- We recognise that the success of all our students from disadvantaged students is of the utmost importance and the redesign of the validation and revalidation process for all academic programmes (see section 3) will ensure that issues of disadvantage and inclusivity are addressed at each stage of programme and assessment development.
- The staff development programmes which will be delivered to examine and eradicate unintentional bias in our curriculum processes will include socioeconomic disadvantage as a key priority group (see initiatives for BAME and white working-class males below) as will all departmental projects to develop both staff awareness of differential attainment and the results of sector research on effective measures to address this.²⁵

²⁵ UUK and NUS report <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>

- Our Head of WP and Student Engagement and Retention Project officer will work with academic departments and support services to design and deliver appropriate initiatives and support activities to maximise the progress and potential of all disadvantaged groups, including those from low IMD quintiles

2.2.2 BAME students, particularly black and Asian students

Access: Although our current BAME recruitment compares favourably to the national population, we will endeavour to reflect our local London population demographic more closely. Therefore we will aim to reduce the gap in participation between white and BAME students, particularly Asian students and set ourselves a key target to:

- **increase the participation rate for Asian students**
 - from 7.5% in 2017/18 to 13.5% in 2024/25
 - from 2025 onwards we will continue to improve access for Asian students so that ethnicity is not a barrier for any potential student and our aim would be for our student population demographic to reflect the appropriate national population wishing to access HE by 2030

Actions to address the aims

- We will continue in partnership with the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, where we contribute to the Compass Project for young women, most of whom identify as Muslim. Many participants have the potential for HE, but do not always see it as a place they could flourish, so are offered mentoring relationships, exposure to university campuses and information and guidance. We will also use the experience gained to work with similar populations in other areas
- Our marketing team will carefully examine our practices to ensure that they are appealing and accessible to a diverse population. This includes our documentation, recruitment campaigns and social media presence. We will also undertake a careful analysis of the recruitment events we attend and seek to ensure that we are focusing sufficient resources on events and activities which will attract a diverse audience from our target populations
- Many of the recruitment and outreach activities detailed above for LPN learners will also be replicated to target our local populations of BAME learners. This will include examining and developing our curriculum offer to ensure that we have sufficient appeal for BAME learners in terms of both the course profile and the curriculum. We will also increase our culturally appropriate recruitment activity in local neighbourhoods with large Asian populations and ensure we engage a culturally diverse range of student Ambassadors at recruitment events.

Success: We will continue the work we have begun increasing the proportion of all BAME student groups achieving good honours and supporting BAME continuation and we will work to:

- **eliminate the attainment gap between white and black students**
 - from 17pp in 2017/18 to 0pp in 2024/25
- **eliminate the attainment gap between white and Asian students**
 - from 11pp in 2017/18 to 0pp in 2024/25
- **reduce the continuation gap between white and Asian students**
 - from 7pp in 2016/17 to 2pp in 2024/25
 - to eliminate the continuation gap by 2025/26
- **reduce the continuation gap between white and BAME students**
 - from 6pp in 2016/17 to 1pp in 2024/25
 - to eliminate the continuation gap by 2025/26

Actions to address the aims

- We recognise that the success of our BAME students must be a key priority. As part of our complete redesign of the validation and revalidation process for all academic programmes, we have embedded consideration of diversity and inclusivity at each stage of programme and assessment development. This means consideration of

any impact on our BAME recruitment at programme proposal stage, through to unconscious bias in marking and assessment strategies.

- To support this work, we will deliver a broad range of staff development programmes to examine and eradicate unintentional bias in our curriculum processes and will use networks such as our BAME student experience group to inform and shape this work. In 2018/19 this group commissioned research, using an external consultant to solicit the views of black and Asian student focus groups. The findings will be analysed in 2019/20 and will then be used to inform curriculum delivery and extra-curricular activity from 2020 onwards. For example we will initiate a number of departmental projects to develop both staff awareness of differential attainment and the results of sector research on effective measures to address this.²⁶
- We will commit a proportion of our APP to funding the development and delivery of new, innovative initiatives and projects, designed and led by academic programmes, which explicitly address our key success targets. These will be developed within our Theory of Change framework and will be carefully evaluated to assess impact
- In 2019/20 we will deliver a number of mentoring programmes for black and Asian students at levels 4 and 5 in relation to outreach work, academic success and employability. We will commission this at the pilot stage from an external provider in order to increase the cultural and ethnic diversity of our delivery staff. From 2020, once initial evaluations are complete, we will expand this to a greater number of students at each level.
- Our Student Ambassador and Student Engagement and Retention Project staff will work with St Mary's Students Union (SMSU) and with black and Asian student ambassadors and programme representatives to design and deliver initiatives to support the retention of black and Asian students, such as increasing the range and scope of inclusive clubs, societies and activities addressing the interests and needs of BAME students

Progression: Despite performing above benchmark on employment for BAME groups according to our TEF submission data, some differential outcomes have become apparent when ethnicity data is disaggregated, most concerning is the notable progression gap between white and black students. We will therefore address this urgently and set ourselves the target to:

- **reduce the gap between white and black students progressing into highly skilled employment**
 - from 28pp in 2016/17 to 14pp in 2024/25
 - from 2025 onwards we will continue to focus on further reducing the progression gap between white and black students, prioritising actions internally and working with employers to eliminate disadvantage for black graduates
- **reduce the gap between white and BAME students progressing into highly skilled employment**
 - from 17pp in 2016/17 to 9pp in 2024/25
 - from 2025 onwards we will continue to focus on further reducing the progression gap between white and BAME students, prioritising actions internally and working with employers to eliminate disadvantage for BAME graduates

Actions to address the aims

- We have recently approved a new Employability Strategy which sets out a bold vision for how we will enhance our students' career-preparedness. This will include measures such as employability champions, the development of professional development portfolios for students, individualised joint work by personal tutors and employability advisers, and a range of internships, industrial year programmes, work placements, volunteering, shadowing and mentoring opportunities offered within each academic programme
- We will also be launching a new St Mary's Skills Award that enables students to have their employability-related learning and skills development (gained through study, co and extra-curricular activities) verified by the University, which they can share with potential employers and recruiters.
- Careers Registration will be implemented through the new Student Record System (see Strategic Measures, section 3) for 2021/22. This will enable us to collect data about career readiness and prior experience for all

²⁶ UUK and NUS report <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>

students across every programme and therefore analyse patterns and target our resources more strategically for maximum benefit for our black students, both in relation to our careers advice service and access to our work-based learning modules (CWL). We can then offer specific curriculum-specific interventions for students with low career-readiness. We will also implement 'Be SMART', a tailored intervention for BAME students to enhance their access and ability to undertake highly skilled work experience. This can include micro-placements and shadowing experiences for those students least likely to be able to access full work experience placements.

- We already have links with the National Mentoring Consortium, whose service is specifically provided for careers and employment support for BAME students. We will pilot a project with this organisation in 2019/20 for roll-out in 20/21 and then use this, and other specialist organisations, to expand our mentoring possibilities for discrete target groups (as identified above). All of these initiatives will be evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively using pre-and post- mentoring measures, including career-readiness data, which will be updated annually. This will ensure we both understand students' perceptions and that we can compare their outcomes with similar cohorts of students who have not accessed the same employability experiences.

2.2.3 Disabled students

Success: We have a retention strategy to improve continuation rates for all students. In order to ensure that disabled students, particularly students with mental health conditions, are supported to fulfil this we will:

- **reduce the gap in continuation between students with declared disabilities and non-disabled students**
 - from 5pp in 2016/17 to 2.5pp in 2024/25
 - to eliminate the continuation gap by 2030

We will also carefully examine and track outcomes for students with mental health conditions and although quantitative targets are unreliable with this small cohort, we will set ourselves an internal ambition to reduce the non-continuation rate of students with mental health conditions

Actions to address the aims

- We provide a range of measures to support our students from pre-entry to graduation and beyond. All applicants declaring a disability at UCAS application stage are contacted, registration documents and evidence of disability are completed by email and support arrangements are agreed pre entry, so that it is in place immediately for the semester start. We have a range of priority and adapted accommodation and have extended the opening hours of our Wellbeing Centre and increased the number of specialist study skills tutoring hours provided for students with dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD. We will continue to offer for DSA assessments and free dyslexia screening and, if appropriate, will refer students for a full assessment and contribute towards the costs of this assessment.
- We will continue to consolidate, develop and promote our assistive technology suite and the range of software available, together with appropriate individual and group training to students and to staff, access to learning materials and loan specialist equipment
- We will harness the potential of student societies which represent and support students with disabilities, whether declared or not. For example 'No Ordinary Society' is an inclusive society celebrating the uniqueness and individuality of the St Mary's student population, which won the 'Best Society of the Year' award in 2018. It is supported by the Senior Disability Adviser and promotes awareness of disability issues, challenges stereotypes and stigma and improves student wellbeing. No Ordinary Society will continue to work closely with the Student Wellbeing Service promoting and participating in wellbeing events for all students.
- We have recently purchased 10 specialist sports wheelchairs and these will be available for use by SMSU student-led clubs and within the curriculum to increase the sporting opportunities we can offer to wheelchair users, increase inclusive sport and support engagement. In addition these will provide us with much more flexible curriculum opportunities to examine inclusive and disability sport in our sport, education and health programmes.
- We will develop a range of interventions to support the rising number of students who present with, or develop, mental health issues at university. Our Well-being Service already provides specialist mental health mentoring to students with a mental health condition or on the autistic spectrum, to help them understand their condition and

develop strategies to minimise its impact on their ability to study. In 2019/20 we will work with specialist organisations to expand our offer of 'train the trainer' sessions in mental health first aid, for staff and students and in 2020 we will develop or commission on-line training materials in mental health first aid and will ensure that staff undertake some mental health training as part of their induction or continuing professional development.

- Disabled students and students with mental health issues (who declare at UCAS) are, and will continue to be, prioritised as the first group of students invited to attend our residential pre-session programme, 'Get Set for Success'. This proactive approach gives them opportunities to work with their peers and Student Ambassadors, explore the campus and identify access issues, meet key staff, to increase their confidence, sense of belonging and knowledge of opportunities for support from their very first days with us. The programme is fully accessible and previous participants, together with other current disabled students are encouraged to enlist as paid Student Ambassadors for this programme. Alongside this, we will also develop and deliver a range of additional pre-session support to enhance the induction of this, and other target groups (see section 3 university strategy)

Progression: A percentage difference between non-disabled and disabled students progression into highly skilled employment. As previously stated, the numbers are low, but the gap appears to have increased over recent years, therefore one of our key targets for this APP will be to:

- **reduce the gap in progression to highly skilled employment between disabled and non-disabled students**
 - from 11pp in 2016/17 to 5pp in 2024/25
 - from 2025 onwards we will continue to focus on further reducing the progression gap between disabled and non-disabled students, prioritising actions internally and working with employers to eliminate disadvantage for disabled graduates

We will also examine employability data in relation to disaggregated disability categories. Although cohort numbers can become extremely small when this is done, we will endeavour to include new ambitions for specific groups, if variable outcomes are identified.

2.2.4 Care-experienced students

Success: Numbers are extremely small for this highly disadvantaged group, which means that data will be subject to annual variability. From 2019, we will include care-experienced and estranged students in our targets and, although we are unable to set realistic quantitative targets for this APP, support can be highly individualised, therefore we will adopt an institutional target to closely monitor access and success for this group and initiate interventions in future, if required. We will, therefore, set ourselves the institutional aim to increase the number of care-experienced and estranged students continuing and achieving good degrees.

Actions to address the aims

- We are continuing to develop our relationship with the Virtual School for Richmond, Kingston and Hounslow, and our relationships with key feeder schools and colleges, to ensure that learners who are care-experienced are enabled to make informed decisions and transitions are successful and this will be supported by participation in networks such as NNECL, AccessHE and First Star.
- Throughout 2018/19, we have examined and redesigned our support for Care Leavers, including widening the definition of eligibility to include care-experienced students and students estranged from their families, following recommendations from the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)²⁷ and Standalone²⁸. We will relaunch provision in 2019 as 'St Mary's Cares' with new comprehensive website content and social media contact direct to students and a coherent package of measures which will address their specific financial,

²⁷ Moving On Up: Pathways of care leavers and care-experienced students into and through higher education (2017). See in particular recommendation for HE on pp.81-2: <file:///C:/Users/20171/Downloads/HERACLESFinalreport.pdf>

²⁸ New Starts: The challenges of Higher Education without the support of a family network. <https://www.standalone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/StandAloneUNITEfoundation.pdf>

academic, pastoral and progression needs, including a dedicated financial bursary, guaranteed accommodation, automatic registration on our paid student ambassadors scheme, bespoke academic and careers guidance, summer financial support, access to internship opportunities with enhanced financial support and financial support to attend graduation. We will establish enhanced induction with academic and pastoral staff and care-experienced peers to enhance transition, a mentoring scheme for care experienced students and bespoke support for life post-graduation including a financial graduation award to facilitate the move to employment. This will be continuously monitored and evaluated to assess impact on continuation and attainment and we will refine our offer based on the findings. We are also preparing to sign the Standalone Pledge to provide exemplary support for estranged students.

- First Star Academy is a major outreach project for St Mary's and, being externally funded, currently represents WP spend above our fee-income investment in the APP. The academy has supported 30 looked after young people aged 14 since summer 2017; who have spent one day per month and four weeks each summer on St Mary's campus, supported by peer mentors drawn from St Mary's students in a programme which includes academic support, life skills and emotional resilience. These students will be applying to HE in 2021 which will give us the first real opportunity to evaluate the transition outcomes for this group. However, as well as delivery for this small group of students, the experience gained through First Star will play an invaluable role in forming our strategy for care-experienced students and improving outcomes. The Academy Director sits on our WPSIG work streams and will work closely with our Head of WP to develop high quality and effective initiatives. Because of our involvement in the First Star Academy, we will also continue to be involved in the national planning work for the Care Leavers Covenant, which we expect to adopt at an early stage.

2.2.5 Mature students

Access: Although recruitment of all mature students over 21 is increasing year-on-year, this is largely accounted for by the 21-25years age groups. Therefore we will examine the experiences of this group carefully and set ourselves a target to:

- **Increase the participation rates for mature students at UG level**
 - from 20% in 2015/16 to 26.5% in 2024/25

Actions to address the aims

- Using evidence from sector research to inform our approach²⁹, we will give fresh emphasis to work with mature learners, including the development of a strategy for the recruitment and retention of mature students, reviewing the flexibility of our provision, increasing the accessibility of information and events, bespoke induction events, increased opportunities for mature student representation in programme and assessment design, the expansion of our 2-year degree offer extended teaching hours and other changes needed to make St Mary's a more appealing and rewarding option for mature learners
- We will increase the range and scope of our community engagement activities to include initiatives designed to appeal to mature learners and publicise our curriculum offer. Alongside a series of bespoke 'Returning to Study' events at local venues, and working in consultation with our local University of the 3rd Age, we will align our short course offer with our undergraduate degree offer, increase access and publicity for our 'public square' lectures and expand the availability of this content online

Success: Continuation and achievement figures are good for mature students as a category, but appear to be less good for older students (26+), though the very small cohort sizes make statistical analysis problematic. Therefore we will not set quantitative targets for this category in our APP, but will set ourselves institutional aims to both reduce the non-continuation gap between young students and mature students aged 26+ and increase the numbers of mature students aged 26+ over achieving good honours degrees.

Actions to address the aims

²⁹ Million+/NUS report 'Never too Late to Learn' (2012), http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/documents/Never_Too_Late_To_Learn_-_FINAL_REPORT.pdf

- We will continue to develop our relationship with our SMSU 'I'mMature Society', or mature ambassadors, programme and faculty reps to undertake a close examination of our offer for mature learners. This will include reviewing the publicity we use to promote pastoral and academic support available and ensure that it is sufficiently inclusive, particularly for older learners, as this has traditionally been a very small part of our population.
- We recognise that mature students are more likely to have competing priorities when undertaking their programme and accessing the campus. Therefore university-wide initiatives (described in section 3 below) such as the improved use of TEL, expanded online materials, learning capture, extended opening hours for services, 'twilight' and virtual sessions for academic as well as pastoral support will particularly impact this group. In addition, research has identified the importance of 'zero-spend' social and relaxation spaces for mature students, who are most likely to be commuting to university and therefore the commuter lounge we are opening in 2019 has been designed with a range of facilities and spaces (kitchen area, lockers etc.) which research suggests will facilitate the engagement of this target population.³⁰

Progression: We will examine employability data in relation to disaggregated age categories and include new targets for specific age groups if variable outcomes are identified. We will promote our internship opportunities more explicitly to older learners, who can sometimes be overlooked

2.2.6 Intersections of disadvantage

We have also identified gaps in success where POLAR quintiles intersect with ethnicity and gender. Ethnicity/POLAR disparity will be encompassed within the BAME and POLAR targets above, but in addition we will address the intersection between gender and deprivation in first degree undergraduates and:

- **reduce the gap in continuation rates between males from POLAR quintiles 1&2 and quintiles 3,4&5**
 - from 5pp in 2017/18 to 2.5pp in 2024/25
 - to eliminate the continuation gap by 2030

At PGCE level we will also highlight the intersection between gender and age and set ourselves an internal aim to increase the proportion of male students age 26 and over at PGCE.

Actions to address the aims

We recognise that the success of white working-class males in HE is a significant issue that needs addressing. As part of the implementation of our new curriculum framework and the redesign of the validation and revalidation process for all academic programmes, we have embedded consideration of diversity and inclusivity at each stage of programme and assessment development. This means giving thorough consideration to any impact on this population group throughout the whole process, from ensuring a broad enough range of programmes attractive to this group at programme proposal stage, through to the avoidance of unconscious bias in marking and assessment strategies.

- To support this work, our staff development programmes will recognise this demographic group as one currently disadvantaged within education and measures will be put in place to ensure that any unintentional bias or discrimination is recognised and eradicated in the same way as we approach work with other disadvantaged groups³¹
- We will identify programmes which have higher numbers of males from PQs 1 and 2 and target these for additional development work and support, including student academic development, mentoring and internship opportunities
- We will maximise the potential of relevant external relationships, including sporting organisations and employers to enhance our curriculum delivery and the opportunities available for these students

³⁰ Thomas, L & Jones, R (2017): Student engagement in the context of commuter students
<https://www.lizthomasassociates.co.uk/projects/2018/Commuter%20student%20engagement.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.sunoutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ReportWhiteBritishWorkingClassmaleresearch5March-2.pdf>

2.2.7 Commuter students

In response to our internal investigation, national research by Thomas and Jones³² and the 2018 HEPI report on commuter students³³, we have introduced consideration of this group into our WP targets. We will use planning for the new SRS to enhance data collection on students' living status to improve its accuracy and include consideration of how students travels to campus and journey time, for example by including information provided by the annual Travel Survey. In addition, we will regularly survey the use of our commuter lounge throughout the first year to monitor its use and ensure it is meeting the needs of this population. Other interventions designed to promote a sense of belonging and previously described in this APP in relation to Mature, Disabled, BAME and LPN students are also being developed with due regard for this student group, as research suggests many of these categories, and the needs associated with them, intersect. These initiatives include programme and assessment design, learning capture, enhanced TEL, SMSU clubs, societies and campaigns, employability initiatives and internships etc.

³² ibid

³³ HEPI Report No.114, *Homeward Bound: Defining, understanding and aiding 'commuter students'*. <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2018/12/13/homeward-bound-defining-understanding-aiding-commuter-students/>

3 STRATEGIC MEASURES

This section will address three key measures: our whole-provider strategic approach, our student consultation mechanisms and our developing evaluation strategy.

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

We work hard to offer an enriching and inclusive experience for all with whom we engage, through our stimulating outreach programmes, our academic curriculum and enrichment offer and our outstanding support services. Since 2018 we have been undertaking an ambitious and stretching process of change in the way we address issues of inclusion and it is our mission to place widening participation at the heart of what we do. This has included establishing the Centre for Teaching Excellence and Student Success (CTESS), where WP and Outreach are now based alongside Academic Professional Development and Quality and Standards, enabling us to fully align our Quality Processes and our academic staff CPD needs with our inclusive WP work.

- We have also recruited Associate Deans for Student Experience within our faculties and created a strategic and operational framework to drive, monitor and evaluate our whole-institution, student lifecycle approach to WP. This has raised the profile of WP and will continue to improve knowledge and understanding of our students' lived experience and enable us to demonstrate a clear and explicit commitment to WP in all areas of university life.

3.1.1 Widening Participation Strategy and Implementation

From 2020, we will continue to refine and embed the roles and organisational processes established during 2018-19 so that we can deliver our ambitious aims for 2020 and beyond. Directly reporting to the Pro Vice Chancellor for Academic Strategy and the Academic Board, the Widening Participation Strategy & Implementation Board will continue to engage members of staff from academic programmes, academic and professional support services, Students' Union role holders and other student representative in the planning, delivery and impact evaluation of WP strategies, activities and initiatives. This group will lead the development of a new Widening Participation Strategy for when our existing one ceases in 2020, which will be fully aligned with our 5-year APP and supported by investment from student higher fee income, OfS success and disability grants and other sources of income. This approach will therefore enable us to redefine and refine our approach into a unified and inclusive lifecycle pathway for all traditionally disadvantaged or under-represented student groups.

- Our whole institution approach will be further enabled by a number of critical structural developments and the investment we will have made in each exemplifies the importance we attach to ensuring that our students, particularly our disadvantaged students are at the heart of our offer. The most significant of these will be our new Student Record System, our Institution-wide Curriculum Framework and our new Student at Risk processes, each of which will be outlined in more detail in the sections below. Many of our developments have been directly informed by the concept of the 'mindful university', as articulated by Seldon and Martin (2017).³⁴

3.1.2 Data-driven Structural Review

St Mary's recent systematic review of the production and use of student data has led to improvements in the accuracy, frequency and strategic use of recruitment figures, withdrawal rates and attainment data, as well as key WP indicators and measures. These are now regularly examined in relation to access, engagement, retention and success and, alongside improved mechanisms for student feedback within programme review processes, are now utilised to inform and drive planning to improve the quality of the student learning experience. Continued regular examination of these will enable us to evaluate the impact of different strategies and initiatives in relation to access, retention and Attainment for our whole student population and for specific target groups.

- We are currently developing an entirely new Student Record System (SITS) and the need to identify, monitor and report on our WP target student groups is being considered at each stage of its development. Implementation begins in 2019/20 and, by 2020/21, this will become a key vehicle for enabling us to identify and respond swiftly to

³⁴ Seldon, A. and Martin, A. HEPI Occasional Paper 18, Sept 2017 <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2017/09/21/positive-mindful-university/>

student issues at institutional, programme and individual student level. Furthermore it will significantly enhance our tracking capability, enabling us to evaluate the impact of our WP initiatives, actions and financial support more quickly, thoroughly and effectively.

- We will undertake a full review of the performance of students who enter with different types of L3 qualifications to explore where this intersects with our target group populations and where disadvantage may be occurring. When this Review of Assessment and Feedback is completed and all data is analysed, we will use the findings to inform and refine our curriculum, assessment and support processes to ensure that disadvantage is eliminated.
- We will refine and improve the use of our new electronic attendance monitoring system (launched in 2018/19) which records student attendance and presents summary report of attendance to staff in departments

3.1.3 Student Engagement

- All students have Personal Tutors and we have redesigned our personal tutoring policy. In 2019/20 we will relaunch our newly commissioned Personal Tutoring Dashboard and increase guidance and training for students and staff, so that all parties can understand, embrace and be empowered to approach WP issues and work together to maximise outcomes. The dashboard will display key information about tutees, enabling Personal Tutors to provide more individualised and specific support for students.
- We have designed a process for identifying 'Students at Risk' of non-continuation and/or under-achievement by monitoring a range of data points; these include attendance records, non-submission or late submission of assessments, repeated requests for extenuating circumstances etc. Although this data has always been available, it has not always been used in a consistent or 'joined-up' way, so the process we have designed will facilitate the sharing of data with programme teams and personal tutors on a regular basis and in a way that encourages collective responsibility. As part of this, we will develop protocols for sharing data across the university to achieve balance between providing sufficient information to drive improvement but avoid deficit model approach to WP students and breach confidentiality requirements, particularly where cohorts are very small
- Our SMSU has been very heavily engaged with access and participation work throughout 2018/19 and works very closely with our Head of Widening Participation. The sabbatical structure has been redesigned for 2019/20 to more effectively and flexibly respond to the specific interests and needs of our traditionally disadvantaged and under-represented student groups. In acknowledgement of the findings of internal research that students in the main WP categories were the least likely to engage with the SU and a perception that the sporting presence was predominant, the responsibilities of the 3 sabbatical posts has changed to redress this. Responsibility for clubs and societies has been separated so that we will now have an Education President, a Sport President and a Student Life President (who will have responsibility for non-sport societies within their portfolio). We will continue to work closely to deliver on a wide range of our objectives including disability sport, mature student engagement, commuter student projects and mental health and well-being initiatives for 2020 and beyond.
- Our Student Engagement and Retention Project Officer and our Student Ambassador staff will work in a consultative way with a range of student reps to design activities and initiatives to meet the academic and pastoral needs of a wide range of students in WP population groups to address issues of continuation and achievement (as detailed in section 2 above).
- We will increase the availability and use of a range of Technology Enhanced Learning resources to facilitate active engagement both on and off campus for the benefit of all students who experience barriers to learning. In particular, we intend this to support students who have a disability or illness and may be unable to attend scheduled sessions, students with a cognitive disability or language barrier who benefit from content repetition, or carers whose responsibilities prevent them from attending on occasion. We have initiated a 'Learning Capture' project throughout 2018/19, which has informed our new university-wide policy and we will review and refine what we offer more widely throughout 2019/2020 and beyond. We are mindful of sector research suggesting this impacts on attendance³⁵, therefore our intention is to use TEL to enhance, rather than replace, face-face contact.
- Induction and transition processes will be further developed so that they become a more structured and consistent programme focusing on both academic and social integration, extending across the first semester and integrating

³⁵ Eg. Edwards, M.R. & Clinton, M.E. High Educ (2019) 77: 403. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0275-9>

a wider range of practices highlighted as best practice in the sector³⁶ eg. extended use of transition and academic support mentors³⁷, social events, co-curricular activities, site visits and group-based learning. We will be mindful of the need for all groups of our population to develop a sense of belonging and therefore our Equality and Inclusion (students) Committee will ensure that the schedule includes a broad range of activities, at different times of day to meet the differential needs of groups such as mature students, commuter students, students with disabilities and BAME students³⁸

- We will expand our current pre-sessional and transition offer to include a range of residential, non-residential day, evening and on-line activities for students to undertake before registration and in the summer break. These will be designed to enhance both continued engagement with St Mary's and also their learning and employability skills.
- Our own research and research in the sector shows that membership of clubs and societies has a positive impact on student retention and progression. We will continue to delegate a proportion of our Access and Participation investment to the Students' Union, who will continue to collaborate with the Head of Widening Participation to develop a range of student-led opportunities to address the specific interests of our identified target populations.
- Student Life Coordinators, with an in-depth knowledge of the support and wellbeing services available at St Mary's work closely with the SU, Wellbeing team and Sports St Mary's to build programmes of events and activities that enhance students' university, social and living experiences, particularly focused on the needs of for our disadvantaged or under-represented groups and students who do not live on campus.

3.1.4 Alignment with other strategies

a) Curriculum, pedagogic and student support

- A new Inclusive Curriculum Framework, based on sector research and good practice³⁹, has been designed to meet the needs of our students, to maximise their learning and achievement and prepare them for progression to employment. The overarching objective of the curriculum framework to provide students with the values, academic experiences and life skills that will not only serve them during HE and in the workplace but will enable them to make a positive contribution to their communities and society.
- The curriculum framework will drive the development of inclusive new programmes, curriculum content, assessment of skills and knowledge and enhancement activity, as well as shaping induction and transition work and employability delivery. We will work with programme teams and students to embed our inclusive curriculum framework across the university from 2020/21.
- Following the creation of a new Equality and Inclusion (students) Committee, working closely with the Equality and Inclusion (staff) committee, a new E&I strategy will be developed during 2019/20, informed by recent sector research eg. JISC (2018)⁴⁰. This will be closely aligned with APP ambitions and strategy, particularly in relation to the areas which intersect (disability, ethnicity and gender)
- We will develop the role of 'WP and Inclusion Champions', academic staff who will take a lead on developing this work across Faculties and Institutes and enhancing collaborative working and communication. This role (and the Employability Champion role described in section b, below) has have been informed by the development of similar champions at other HEIs including Plymouth, Salford, and Lancaster universities and will be aligned with our workload planning and our career progression models, both currently being reviewed and refined.
- A new Director of Student Operations post has recently been created to coordinate processes and improve communication in many services which relate to our APP agenda. This post will manage Student Services,

³⁶ Thomas, L, *et al.*, (April 2017) **Supporting student success: strategies for institutional change**. What Works? Student Retention & Success programme.

³⁷ Based on models such as PASS (eg. at Manchester University), PALs (eg. at UEA and Bournemouth University) and the 'Transitions' programme (at UCL).

³⁸ Evans, C., Muijs, D., & Tomlinson, M., (2015) **Engaged Student Learning. High Impact Strategies to Enhance Student Achievement**. Higher Education Academy. See: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/engaged-student-learning-high-impact-strategies-enhance-student-achievement>

³⁹ Eg. Hocking, C., (2010) Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education: a synthesis of research, https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/inclusive_teaching_and_learning_in_he_synthesis_200410_0.pdf

⁴⁰ JISC, (Updated March 2018) **Supporting an inclusive learner experience in higher education. Looking at elements of the student experience where institutional practices and policies can make the learner experience much more inclusive**: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/supporting-an-inclusive-learner-experience-in-higher-education>

Registry, SMSU and the Chaplaincy and will work closely with Widening Participation to deliver on our aims. Responsibilities will include activities such as a systemic overhaul of academic regulations and improvements to academic misconduct, reassessment, leave of absence and extenuating circumstances processes, which can disproportionately affect some groups of students and increase existing disadvantage.

- We will work with student representatives to ensure that our policies and procedures are fully accessible, understandable and usable by all of our student body, that processes are easy to navigate and supported by sufficient electronic information
- New validation and revalidation processes have been designed to enhance ongoing curriculum and assessment review, which include explicit expectations about improving inclusivity. These include Course Design Intensives based on pioneering work undertaken by Oxford Brookes and Anglia Ruskin Universities⁴¹, which will require programmes to work with students and professional service staff to interrogate and update module design, pedagogy and assessment to increase diversity and address issues of disadvantage and representation in relation to widening participation. We will involve a range of students in the co-creation of curricula and in the validation and revalidation of our programmes and for this we will ensure both training and remuneration. The new process will be operational for 2019/20 with a view to having all new and revalidated programmes designed for delivery from 2020 using this process
- We will ensure that we offer a range of UG programmes which do not make offers solely on entry grades, but which use interviews, auditions and personal statements to contextualise the offers we make and, wherever possible we will ensure direct entry to our L4 programmes, particularly for mature students⁴². However, where Level 3 qualifications are significantly below tariff, we will continue to use our Foundation Year (below) to ensure that every applicant who has the potential to succeed in HE, regardless of their formal Level 3 qualifications, is given the opportunity to do so.
- In 2017/18 we introduced a Foundation Year at level 3. This programme offers an introduction to chosen undergraduate programmes, with academic skills development content embedded within modules, together with enhanced pastoral support, more timetabled contact than at level 4 and specific employability and progression skills modules. From a very small cohort of 30 in a limited range of subjects in the first year, the programme grew to offer this pathway to almost all UG degree programmes in 2018/19 and the cohort trebled. As part of our contextualised offer, all applications for FY are carefully reviewed and, if appropriate, students are given the offer to transfer immediately to L4. In 19/20, when 2 cohorts of students have progressed to our UG programmes, we will undertake a full empirical evaluation of the contribution of FY to students' continuation and success at level 4 and 5 and use the results of this to refine our FY provision from 2020. We will also undertake an analysis of admissions to this programme and use this to drive contextual recruitment efforts to UG programmes
- Collaborative work between CTESS and Organisational Development will be implemented to deliver academic professional development and staff development activities promoting positive attitudes to diversity and inclusive teaching and assessment methods, such as 'sensitive marking' strategies.
- Major pedagogical work will be undertaken with academic programmes, involving Learning development staff, academic professional development and Quality Standards will be undertaken to embed effective and inclusive teaching approaches into programme design, assessment and delivery

b) Employability

In addition to the work detailed in section 2 in relation to our target populations, we will continue to deliver employability activities to our whole student population.

In 2018/19 our new Employability Services department was created to integrate the Centre for Workplace Learning and the Careers Service, which oversees both our careers work and the delivery of our bespoke workplace learning modules. Since then, we have developed a new Employability Strategy which will underpin all of our target group employability interventions and a new mechanism for overseeing and monitoring its delivery. In addition, employability

⁴¹ <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/ocsl/d/courses/teaching-and-learning/course-design-intensives/>

⁴² Million+/NUS report 'Never too Late to Learn (2012)', http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/documents/Never_Too_Late_To_Learn_-_FINAL_REPORT.pdf

forms a key strand of our Curriculum Framework, which will be implemented from 2020. The outcome will be that every student on every programme will have the opportunity to benefit from work experience, professional development and graduate level employment planning and will have the opportunity to achieve our proposed Employability Skills Awards⁴³. This will be of particular importance for our WP students as sector research (eg. Brightside and HEPI) suggests that they may not have the social capital or opportunities to develop their employability skills in the same way as other, more privileged students⁴⁴.

- The Employability Service also works with academic staff and tutors to facilitate their employability work with students and embed it more fully within the curriculum framework
- We will also introduce the role of 'Employability Champions' (equivalent to WP and Inclusion Champions described previously) to lead on the development of employability work within academic departments.
- We will continue to offer a range of paid summer internships (sponsored by Santander or supported by our APP financial commitment) in small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to students at level 5-7 and recent graduates not currently in employment. The internships are specifically designed to enhance the experiences of students who may lack the social and cultural capital required to access holiday work placements through other sources. In addition, we will continue to develop shorter and more flexible internships throughout the year for final year students and recent graduates most at risk of not securing graduate level employment upon completion.
- Internal paid internships are available in a number of areas and we will seek to expand this provision specifically for our target group students
- We will continue to deliver our student entrepreneurship programme, aimed primarily at our target groups, to stimulate the entrepreneurial aspirations of students and provide them with opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and experience to enable them to positively impact on the workplace as employees or in their own businesses. Delivery will include both accredited in-curriculum entrepreneurship modules and an extra-curricular programme of workshops and activities with access to business, funding, mentoring and finance specialists.
- Research establishes a link between international travel opportunities and employability⁴⁵, therefore St Mary's International Department will continue to increase the ways we encourage our target group students to participate in mobility opportunities and support them throughout the whole process, including the promotion of short-term opportunities, fostering academic engagement and collaborations to increase opportunities for embedding mobility in the curriculum, using more diverse marketing channels and providing accessible information to parents and guardians. We have also created an International Student Ambassador Scheme to offer students the opportunity to both mentor and be mentored in advance of and after their mobility activities and we will both increase and enhance this scheme and ensure that as wide a range of WP students as possible are represented.

c) Collaboration

We will continue to collaborate with the complex and varied partnerships and networks detailed in previous sections of this report in relation to Outreach work. In addition we will in collaborative projects with other Universities via the University's membership of AdvanceHE, the Higher Education Development Group (HEDG), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), OfS, UUK and other sector bodies, including those linked to our mission as a Catholic University, such as the Cathedrals Group of universities. We are also developing a more strategic approach to the development of collaborative partnerships with other HE providers both in the UK and overseas which develop new opportunities for our students, build additional capacity for investment (including in WP), and which enable us to diversify even further the range of students who study on programmes validated by St Mary's (eg. the delivery of PGCEs via Glyndwr University and Carmel College) or delivered through formal franchise relationships

d) Financial support

In response to the regulatory authority's advice, student opinions and the outcomes of national research, the university conducted an investigation into the effectiveness of scholarships and bursaries in 2016/17 and we have adjusted our

⁴³ In designing this award we will draw on practice and research into similar awards elsewhere in the sector, such as the successful skills award scheme which has been running for several years at the University of East Anglia (UEA).

⁴⁴ <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2017/08/16/new-insights-widening-participation-importance-social-capital-paul-clarke/>

⁴⁵ Universities UK International

policy on these from 2018/19. We have now removed fee waivers (except for very exceptional cases) and replaced them with a suite of fewer, but more rigorously targeted and higher value scholarships and bursaries, including WP Excellence Scholarships, bursaries for students from low-income homes and bursaries for all care leavers and care-experienced and estranged students (see section 4.2 for details). Our care-leavers' scheme has also been extended, both by widening the definition to care-experienced students and including estranged students for 2019/20 and by enhancing the financial support we offer with a range of practical support initiatives (see section 2.2). All financial support for WP groups is intended to underpin our aims and strategy by removing any financial barriers to continuation and success and ensuring that students are not forced to withdraw from their studies or compromise their academic potential due to a lack of money. It is also intended to enhance engagement by reducing the need to undertake part-time work and/or supplying the financial means to undertake extra-curricular activities. Finally we will utilise financial support to improve progression to graduate-level employment by funding students in widening participation categories to undertake graduate-level internships, where financial reasons may prevent them from otherwise taking up these opportunities (particularly for disabled students, students from low income households and students with additional caring responsibilities). We will evaluate the impact of all scholarships and bursaries and other financial support in terms of retention and achievement and intend to continue this strategy from 2020, increasing the range of WP target groups specifically eligible for financial awards (such as students with additional caring responsibilities and disabled students).

3.2 Student consultation

We have designed a number of processes to engage students in planning, monitoring, evaluation and delivery of access and participation work. The Widening Participation Strategy and Implementation Board, which reports in to our Academic Board and works collaboratively with our Academic Development Committee, includes both the SMSU President and the SMSU CEO, both of whom are tasked with ensuring that consultation with students in relation to access and participation is as wide and representative as possible. Each of the 6 WPSIG work streams, which oversee each stage of the WP student lifecycle (Outreach, Recruitment, Academic Success, Well-being and Pastoral support, Engagement and Employability), also include students reps. The WPSIG works closely with the Equality and Inclusion (students) Committee, particularly in relation to issues of ethnicity, disability and gender and this group engages with students, both by having student reps on the committee and by supporting collaborative staff-student BAME, LGBT+ and Women's Networks. Our Student Engagement and Retention Project Officer and Student Ambassador Coordinator also work actively with our student reps, mentors and ambassadors to drive and oversee the work we do in relation to students from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups and both sit as members of the WPSIG. Furthermore, our SMSU is represented by a Sabbatical Officer at each of Senior Management Team, Academic Board and the Board of Governors.

During the development of the APP, initial input was sought from each of the WPSIG work streams, the Equality and Inclusion Committee and relevant professional services (eg. Student Services, Employability etc.) using a Theory of Change approach and including contributions from individual student service users and student groups, through their representatives. This means that the focus of our APP represents the priorities of our students. During the drafting process, several iterations were considered by each of WPSIG, ADC, SMT and amendments made. In particular our students identified that we should prioritise consideration of our black and Asian, disabled and mature students. In addition, they highlighted the need to consider students who do not live on campus as experiencing barriers to full participation and we subsequently included these as a category for action. Finally we are designing 'WP-Specific' webpages on our student intranet, which will both clearly outline our aims and targets and link to our APP, but also publicise support, activities, events, initiatives and financial information in relation to our access and participation activity. We also will use this as an interactive space where students can engage with the ongoing planning and evaluation of our activity in relation to our APP.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

Effective evaluation of impact will be one of our key focusses between 2020 and 2025. This will include not only our existing services and initiatives, but all new projects and developments. We will examine emerging sector research in building social capital⁴⁶ and supporting well-being and belonging and effective approaches to bridging attainment gaps and contribute our own findings wherever possible. This will also inform the development of our approach across the next 5 years and enable us to develop a set of common outcomes for projects and initiatives at each stage of the student lifecycle (from pre-16 to post-graduation) and an evaluation framework and protocol, which will identify the most appropriate evidence for each in order to seek causal explanations for any observed changes. These evaluation reports will then become part of an annual review process which will be reported to the university's Academic Development Committee and Academic Board. This process will also involve a comprehensive programme of staff training to build capability and confidence in impact evaluations, which will be developed by our Academic Professional Development and Organisational Development staff.

We will increase our focus on outcomes and evaluation of impact using Theory of Change modelling to develop and design an evaluation framework and protocol for all our activities across the whole lifecycle from Outreach to Progression and will recruit to an Impact Evaluation Research post in 2019/20 to facilitate this essential work. In 2018/19 we joined the Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI) and we will use this praxis-based network and the tools they have developed to examine and maximise the impact of our WP activity at each stage of the student lifecycle. We have already introduced a process of action planning for all WP activity which is underpinned by a Theory of Change and where evaluation is planned strategically at the design stage and we will begin mapping the NERUPI methodology to our own activities during 2019/20 in preparation for full adoption for 2020. In addition, we are committing resources in 19/20 to develop this aspect of our provision and we are employing consultants (Applied Inspiration) to support us in the mapping and impact evaluation design process, where necessary and to facilitate our collaborative work with other comparable small and/or specialist HEIs. Following our self-assessment of evaluation, it is evident that we could increase the amount of empirical and causal evaluation that we undertake, therefore we will develop an evaluation framework with evaluation protocols identified for a range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies which are commensurate with the scope and scale of the initiative and the amount of investment involved. We will use this to identify appropriate ways to evaluate the impact of our actions and initiatives, within the overarching Theory of Change model and will pilot a number of different evaluation methodologies for different programmes and initiatives during 2019/20, which will drive and inform our continuous improvement.

For example, we will commit to using the OfS Financial Support Evaluation model improve and develop our previous analysis of the impact of WP financial support on student outcomes. In addition, the evaluation framework and protocols which we are committed to developing, will identify the type of evaluation appropriate, based on the type, cost and scope of the activity and will refine the evaluation we already undertake. In this model, a short, one-off, low-cost, off-campus Outreach activity (such as a 'career-choices' workshop) might require only informal stakeholder feedback, whereas a longer term, larger, higher-investment, on-campus Success initiative (such as our peer-mentoring programmes) might require quantitative and qualitative assessment, tracking of student outcomes and pre/post- intervention comparisons or comparison with other similar students groups within the university or across the sector.

Our expectation will be that all WP work will be underpinned by an explicit understanding of 'what works' informed by sector and other research and informed by the findings of TASOS; this will then be used to design and deliver appropriately tailored activities. Wherever possible empirical comparative or counter-factual evidence will be used to measure changes. Because of the complexity of establishing causality, particularly with small cohorts, multi-layered intersections and multi-faceted activities, this type of evidence will be harder to gather, but we will seek opportunities

⁴⁶ Eg. Mc Duff, N., Tatam, J., Beacock, O, and Ross, F., (2018) 'Closing the attainment gap for students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds through institutional change', *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 20, Number 1. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/openw/jwpl/2018/00000020/00000001/art00005>

to work collaboratively with others in the sector, to contribute to the work of TASOS and use the advice of the OfS and TASOS to maximise possible opportunities for detailed impact evaluation.

Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan will be done at least every semester within the WPSIG structure, using action trackers and reporting findings to Academic Board and other University Committees as appropriate. In practice, this will mean that responsibility for leading the monitoring of the APP will rest with the Head of Widening Participation, reporting to the Dean of Learning and Teaching and will be an essential function of the WPSIG structure. An action tracker will be designed to include all key priorities, targets and initiatives and all impact evaluation data will be examined in relation to the action tracker and reported to the WPSIG at regular meetings (avg 6 times per year) and the associated work streams. The WPSIG structure has been explicitly designed to include several representatives from academic faculties, professional services, the SU and other student bodies, to ensure that design, implementation and monitoring of the APP are embedded throughout the provider. Outcomes will be considered by the Academic Board and the Governing Body (3 times per year) to monitor performance against APP targets and to recommend actions if good progress is seen or if performance appears to be worsening. Furthermore, the provisions of the APP, outcomes of evaluation and monitoring and progress against targets will be shared with students by the Student Union, Student Ambassador and Student Engagement staff, to enable student engagement with progress to be as wide as possible and to facilitate student recommendations for change.

4. PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

4.1 Fee levels

Standard full-time course fees for Home/EU undergraduate degrees in 2020/21 will be £9,250 and for Foundation degrees will be between £6,240 and £8,320. Students studying part-time will be charged pro-rata to the full time tuition fee. The fees for accelerated 2-year degrees will be £11,100. Annual increases for new students may be applied in line with inflation and any year-on-year tuition fee increases for returning students will be capped at 5% p.a. or the UK rate of CPI inflation, whichever is the higher. All fees stated are subject to changes implemented following the Government's review of Higher Education Funding and/or any changes following withdrawal from the EU.

4.2 Financial support available

Following a review of all financial support, a new range of higher value scholarships and bursaries became available in 2018/19 and 2019/20 (see Section 3.1.4d, above). A summary of these is below and further details and eligibility criteria can be found by following the links:

- St Mary's Cares Bursary, £3,000 per year of study for all care leavers, care experienced and estranged students (<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/student-finance/scholarships/st-marys-care-leavers.aspx>)
- Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Scholarship, (15 per year), £3,000 per year of study for students with low household income and high academic potential (<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/student-finance/scholarships/excellence.aspx>)
- St Mary's Bursary, (30 per year), £2,000 per year of study for students with very low household income (<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/student-finance/scholarships/st-marys-bursary.aspx>)

These will be evaluated on an on-going basis and further refined to ensure that the nature of the financial support and the eligibility criteria enable maximum impact for those who most need it. In addition we will continue to provide a Hardship Fund of the same value proportionate to our student body as is currently the case. We will use this responsively, to support students in acute financial need, but will also monitor usage throughout each year and act proactively to distribute any in-year underspend in this fund to students from our target groups in financial need.

Information for prospective students about course fees, scholarships and bursaries (including eligibility criteria) is all primarily provided through our website, but also included in our prospectus and in programme information. We also provide UCAS and the Student Loan Company with prompt updates of all necessary information to ensure students can make informed decisions. We are mindful of the needs of different student groups and ensure these are provided for across communication channels. Our Recruitment, Outreach and Student Services Teams visit schools and colleges across England, attending higher education fairs and delivering talks and workshops for learners, further supporting access to information and advice about fees, funding and financial support for prospective students. When students join us, information is publicised through our intranet and social media channels and through our dedicated student finance staff, who are available for student consultations, but who also contact eligible students directly to ensure that uptake of scholarships, bursaries and other financial support is as full as possible. We also review the uptake of financial support throughout the year and are able to respond nimbly when changes occur, to ensure that support funding reaches those students who need it.

Finally, this Access and Participation Plan, together with all previous Access and Participation Plans and Access Agreements, will be available on our website for public access, summarised to facilitate accessibility and publicised to students and staff through our intranet and social media channels.

5. APPENDIX

- Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)
- Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)
- Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)