

Bridgwater and Taunton College, University Centre Somerset

Access and participation plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

University Centre Somerset (UCS) delivers the Higher Education remit of Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC). BTC is a large Tertiary College providing high quality academic and vocational Further and Higher Education, including a high proportion of apprenticeships to meet local, regional and national needs, supported by industry standard equipment. This Access and Participation Plan sets out an analysis of under-represented groups in Higher Education at BTC/UCS. The purpose is to identify any gaps between under-represented groups and their peers at each stage of the student lifecycle. The plan then sets out the action that BTC/UCS will take to reduce or eliminate these gaps to the extent that this is possible for one organisation, given the complexity of factors involved. BTC/UCS is fully committed to promoting, maintaining and supporting equality of opportunity in all aspects of its work. BTC/UCS aims to create an environment where all individuals are inspired to achieve their full potential and gain a feeling of self-esteem and respect for and from all others.

1. Assessment of performance

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access

In contrast to the national picture, BTC/UCS attracts significantly more students from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2 than those from Quintile 5. Using ILR data, on average over the last six years 39% of full time first year Higher Education (HE) students came from Quintiles 1 & 2. This is in comparison to 14% from Quintile 5. In 2018-19, 36% of full time first year HE students were from Quintiles 1 and 2 in comparison to 17% from Quintile 5.

The same pattern is seen for part time first year students. On average over the last six years 42% came from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 & 2, whilst 12% came from Quintile 5. In 2018-19, 38% of part time first year HE students were from Quintiles 1 and 2 in comparison to 12% from Quintile 5.

The online OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard¹ provides details of participation of the most and least represented groups in HE. The 'Access and Participation Key Performance Measures' section that shows 'Access for under-represented groups' clearly shows that BTC/UCS students demonstrate the opposite pattern to the national picture. For full time students, the POLAR4 Quintile 1 students range from 30% of the BTC/UCS student population in 2013-14 with Quintile 5 being 12% to 2017-18 where Quintile 1 were 23% with Quintile 5 being 13%. Although the gap has narrowed, there are still substantially more Quintile 1 students than Quintile 5. The opposite is true for the category of 'All English Higher Education providers' for whom Quintile 1 students have only increased marginally from 11% in 2013-14 to 12% in 2017-18. This is in contrast to Quintile 5 students who have remained at between 31% and 30% between 2013-14 and 2017-18.

The ILR data shows a steady decrease in the percentage of full time POLAR4 Quintile 1 students from 30% in 2013-14 to 25% in 2015-16 and 2016-17, dropping further to 23% in 2017-18 and an increase in

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

the percentage of Quintile 5 students. It is therefore important that there remains a focus on supporting POLAR4 Quintile 1 students to access Higher Education at BTC/UCS, to avoid a further decrease in the percentage of Quintile 1 students, despite being above sector levels. This is in line with the strategic objectives of the College and good practice will continue to be considered as part of the evaluation in responding as effectively as possible to this challenge.

The contrast between BTC/UCS data and 'all English HE providers' for part time students reflects the same picture as above, with BTC/UCS having a greater percentage of Quintile 1 students than Quintile 5. However instead of the decreasing trend for full time Quintile 1 students, for part time students the percentage has been increasing since a dip in 2015-16 when 19% were Quintile 1 to 2017-18 when 25% were Quintile 1. At the same time the data shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of part time Quintile 5 students at BTC/UCS. They increased from 5% in 2013-14 to 14% in 2015-16, dropped to 6% in 2016-17 and then grew exponentially to 22% in 2017-18. The percentage of part time Quintile 1 students at BTC/UCS remains substantially above the norm for the sector. As with the full time students, the part time Quintile 1 students are in the minority for the rest of the sector. They were 17% in 2013-14, dropped marginally to 16.9% in 2014-15 and 2016-17 and increased marginally to 17.5% in 2017-18. This is in contrast to Quintile 5 part time students within the rest of the sector who were 20% of the part time student population in 2013-14, increased to 21.4% in 2014-15 and have since dropped slightly to 20.5% in 2016-17 and 2017-18.

So although there are proportionately more POLAR4 Quintile 1 full time and part time students at BTC/UCS than are seen on average in the rest of the sector, a focus on supporting them to access HE is still important. A commitment statement has been made in relation to the access of POLAR4 Quintile 1 potential learners.

In the OfS data dashboard Access section that explores statistically significant differences, the table shows that there is a statistically positive significant difference above the sector for BTC/UCS for 2017-18 in relation to the deprivation quintile for full time 18 year olds from Quintile 1. This was also statistically significant in 2013-14 and 2014-15. There has not been a statistically significant gap recorded in relation to Quintile 1 for 18 year olds at BTC/UCS since 2013-14. BTC/UCS has consistently maintained a higher proportion of Quintile 1 learners accessing HE qualifications.

This is in the context of the national Key Performance Measures (KPM) set by the OfS to: Eliminate the gap in participation at higher-tariff providers between the most and the least represented groups, (Participation of Local Areas (POLAR4) Quintiles 5 & 1 respectively) by 2038-39.

For 18 and 19 year olds, the related OfS target is: To reduce the gap in participation between the most and least represented groups from a ratio of 5:1 to a ratio of 3:1 by 2024-25. The Augar Review Report² states that if nothing is done, it will take 120 years to close this gap.

Although BTC/UCS is not a higher-tariff provider and given that the TEF data shows that BTC/UCS students are predominantly local and stay locally after graduating, BTC/UCS is making a significant contribution to the reduction of the gap between POLAR4 Quintiles 1 & 5 such that Quintile 1 students are accessing Higher Education at all. The College also engages with higher-tariff universities at Further Education level who offer workshops or interventions to attract such students to apply to them.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-18-review-of-education-and-funding-independent-panel-report>

In relation to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), the OfS dashboard also shows that there is an 8 percentage point (pp) gap in 'Access' between full time students on the IMD from Quintile 1 in comparison to Quintile 5 students. There is a much wider gap of 16.9pp for part time 'Access' of those on the IMD who are from Quintile 1 in comparison to Quintile 5. This has therefore been identified as an area of focus within this plan with a target being set.

Success

Continuation/Non-continuation

The ILR shows that continuation rates do not seem to be affected by Quintile. Quintile 1 full time young students show an improvement of 3% in continuation from 2014-15 to 2017-18.

In the KPM 3 section of the OfS access and participation data dashboard the continuation of under-represented groups shows a gap of 5pp for full time BTC/UCS students in 2013-14 but does not have data for other years. The gap for all English HE Providers increases from 4pp in 2012-13 to 4.6pp in 2013-14 and rises to 5pp in 2016-17. It is noted that the 5pp gap for BTC/UCS is not considered statistically significant, whereas the gaps for the sector are considered to be statistically significant. There is no part time data presented for BTC/UCS.

The OfS Access and Participation Dataset shows that the continuation gap for IMD full time students in year 5 (the most recent available) is 18pp, whilst the part time gap is 20.1pp. Despite the apparently high gap, this is not highlighted as statistically significant given the very small numbers. This will not therefore become a key area of focus with a target, but will be monitored instead through a commitment related to the provision and evaluation of the HE Bursary Fund.

The OfS Access and Participation Dataset also shows that the POLAR4 Quintile 5 to Quintile 1 continuation gap for full time students is 10.1pp whereas the part time gap is -3.6pp in year 5 (the most recent available). There is therefore a gap to be addressed in relation to full time POLAR4 Quintile 1 students and a target has been set in relation to this. The part time students are continuing at a higher rate than their peers so there is no action necessary in relation to part time POLAR4 Quintile 1 students.

The OfS national KPM is: Reducing the gap in non-continuation between the most and the least represented groups (POLAR4 Quintiles 5 & 1 respectively).

The OfS national KPM is: To eliminate the unexplained gap in non-continuation between the most and least represented groups by 2024-25, and to eliminate the absolute gap (the gap caused by both structural and unexplained factors) by 2030-31³.

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) year 4 data gives a contextual benchmark for each HE Provider. In the data provided for BTC/UCS the overall benchmark for continuation is 86% for full time students. (Numbers for part time continuation are too small to be reportable). BTC/UCS achieved an 86.2% continuation rate, aggregated over three years within the TEF, therefore slightly above the benchmark.

³ Some of the factors that contribute to the non-continuation and attainment gaps are structural, such as entry qualification, subject of study, age of students etc. However once such structural factors are taken into account, there remain significant unexplained differences which are referred to as the unexplained gap. (Regulatory Notice 1; OfS 2019.05 page 19, paragraph 83b and footnote 18.)

The TEF continuation benchmark for HE students from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 & 2 is 84.4%. BTC/UCS achieved 84.5%, marginally above the benchmark. There is therefore a small gap between the general benchmark (86%) and the POLAR4 Quintiles 1 & 2 benchmark (84.4%), a gap of 1.6pp as well as a gap within BTC/UCS due to a rate of 86.2% overall compared to 84.5%, a gap internally of 1.7pp for POLAR4 Quintiles 1 & 2. So although BTC/UCS would aspire to exceed the TEF benchmark, the TEF data does not show a significant area of concern over the three years considered. However, as stated above the individual year OfS Access and Participation Dataset shows a 10.1pp continuation gap which will therefore become an area of focus with a target being set.

Attainment

The OfS Access and Participation Dataset does not provide any data for IMD Quintile 1 or POLAR4 Quintile 1 attainment in comparison to peers. This is presumably as the numbers are too small and individuals could be identified. This is not therefore an area of high priority.

Progression to employment or further study

The TEF benchmark for employment or further study for the general student population is 93.8%, BTC/UCS students entered employment or further study at a rate of 95.3%, 1.4% above the benchmark. The benchmark for POLAR4 Quintiles 1 & 2 is 93%. The BTC/UCS rate is 98.5%. This is higher than the students from Quintiles 3, 4 & 5 who achieved 93.7% as well as being above the general student benchmark. There is therefore no gap to close as these students are getting into employment or further study significantly above the benchmarks and therefore above students from the most represented groups.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access

ILR data shows very small numbers of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students each year. This is analysed and monitored internally but given the risk of identifying students it is not being reported here.

The OfS data dashboard does not have any data for BTC/UCS in relation to access of BAME students. It does state that there is a consistent rate of Asian 18 year olds nationally of 8.2% between 2013-14 and 2017-18; a consistent rate of 3.6% of black 18 year olds in the population nationally between 2013-14 and 2017-18; a rate of 3.2% for those of mixed heritage; a rate of 1.1% for 'other' ethnic categories; this is all in comparison to the general population being 84% white.

BTC/UCS has a predominantly White British student population, reflecting the profile of the local region. Statistics derived from Somerset County Council's analysis of the local demographic, based on the 2011 census data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)⁴ show the local population are 94.6% 'White British' and have only 2% with a non-white ethnic origin (which is significantly below the national average of 14%). The TEF year 3 and year 4 Contextual data both state that BTC/UCS has a 96% white population and therefore 4% non-white. BTC/UCS therefore has a larger percentage of non-white HE students than are represented in the local population, in line with its inclusive strategic aims.

⁴ <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-datasets/>

Although good practice in how to attract BAME students will be considered in order to ensure that all students feel able and encouraged to apply, this is not a major area of focus within this plan as the rate is already double the local population and the TEF shows that BTC/UCS students tend to be local.

Success

Continuation/Non-continuation

There does not appear to be a direct correlation between ethnicity and non-continuation at BTC/UCS. The ILR shows young white British students at BTC/UCS continued less well than other ethnicities until 2017-18, but there is a negligible difference in 2017-18. The exact data is withheld to avoid being able to identify individual students as the number of non-white students is very low with most categories of 'other ethnicities' only having one or no students in each of the last five years. This picture is in direct contrast to the national picture where data indicates that in general non-continuation rates for BAME students are higher than for white peers.

The TEF year 4 data provides a continuation benchmark for white students of 86.3% (in comparison to the general population benchmark of 86%). White BTC/UCS students continued at a rate of 86.4% (so above the benchmark for white students). Overall the core metrics showed continuation of 86.2% (so above the benchmark of 86%). No benchmark or BTC/UCS data is provided for BAME students due to low numbers and data protection requirements. There is not therefore any evidence to indicate that there is a continuation issue for BAME students. However it is noted that there is a national issue, so is an area to be monitored and for good practice to be considered and shared within BTC/UCS in relation to supporting the continuation of BAME students. No target will be set as the numbers are too small and individual students could otherwise be identified.

Attainment

ILR data shows that white students get a greater number of 'good degrees' (1st or 2:1), and higher level Foundation Degrees (Distinction or Merit) than Black or Minority Ethnic groups. The numbers of students from ethnic minorities are very low at BTC/UCS and therefore there can be significant impact in attainment outcomes caused by single figure numbers. ILR data shows that on average over the last five years (2013-14 to 2017-18), there was a gap of 16pp between white students achieving good degrees in comparison to BAME students. In 2017-18, the gap reduced significantly to 2pp.

The national KPM is: Reducing the gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between white students and black students. The related OfS national KPM is: To eliminate the unexplained gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between white and black students by 2024-25, and to eliminate the absolute gap (the gap caused by both structural and unexplained factors) by 2030-31.

The OfS access and participation data dashboard KPM section shows a gap for the sector in degree outcomes (1st or 2:1s) between white and black students (relevant to KPM 4). However there is no data shown for BTC/UCS. The full time data for all English HE Providers shows a gap of 24.6pp in 2013-14 and 2014-15, rising slightly to 24.7pp in 2015-16 before reducing to 23.8pp in 2016-17 and 23.1pp in 2017-18. The gaps are even greater nationally for part time students, having reduced from a high of 36.9pp in 2013-14 to 35.1pp in 2017-18. These national figures are all noted as being statistically significant gaps.

Although the national data clearly indicates an issue for BAME students across the sector, there is much less of an issue at BTC/UCS. Attention will continue to be paid to this area with a commitment to support those from BAME backgrounds to achieve good degrees, but with the numbers being so small and the risk of identification of individuals, no targets will be set within the Access and Participation Plan (APP).

Progression to employment or further study

Numbers are too small to be reported in the TEF for BAME students.

1.3 Mature students

Access

The ILR data shows that the majority of students at BTC/UCS are aged between 21 and 24, although this is just less than half (49% over the last six years and also 49% in 2018-19) of the total number of students. 38% of students over the last six years are aged 25-39, although at 42% in 2018-19. 14% of students over the last six years are aged 40+ (4% higher than the sector), although there were less in 2018-19 (9%). The trend over the last six years has been a decline in the percentage of 40+ year old students (apart from a spike in 2017-18 of 16%, which was back at the same level as in 2013-14). There has been an increase in the percentage of 25-39 year olds over the last six years (from 36% in 2013-14 to 42% in 2018-19).

The OfS data dashboard Access section that explores access proportions of young (under 21) and mature full time students (21 and over), indicates that the number of full time mature students at BTC/UCS has increased steadily from 42% in 2013-14 to 46% in 2014-15 and 2015-16, increasing slightly to 47% in 2016-17 and overtaking the young students in 2017-18 to reach a level of 53%. This is different to the all English HE Providers rates where there are a greater proportion of young full time students and many less mature students (24.7% in 2013-14 rising slowly to 27.8% in 2017-18). Regulatory Notice 1 (OfS 2019.05; p.20 para 85) states that there is a decline in the number of mature students in HE. This is highlighted as an area to be addressed nationally.

In relation to part time students, the BTC/UCS proportions of mature versus young students are even more evenly matched. In 2013-14 there were 51% mature students at BTC/UCS, rising slightly to 52% in 2014-15, rising further to 57% in 2015-16, decreasing to 52% in 2016-17 and maintaining this rate of 52% in 2017-18. This is in stark contrast to the national picture in which mature part time students accounted for a steady rate of between 88.9% in 2013-14 and 87.4% in 2017-18.

It is clear therefore that BTC/UCS have significantly more full time mature students and significantly more part time young students than the majority of HE Providers. There is not therefore any gap to be closed in relation to mature students accessing HE at BTC/UCS.

Success

Continuation/Non-continuation

In a comparison using ILR data between full and part time mature (aged 21+) and young students, full and part time mature students have lower continuation rates. Part time mature continuation is deteriorating as a trend (from 90% continuation (the best continuation of these groups) in 2013-14 to 62% (the worst continuation of these groups) in 2017-18), although it improved in 2016-17 and then

deteriorated again. Part time young students are continuing well (86% continuation in 2017-18) and have done better than other groups since 2014-15 when they achieved 84% continuation. Young part time students' continuation rate has been between 76% and 88% over the last five years. It became the best for continuation in 2014-15 (84%). It was 86% in 2017-18 (the highest group). The second highest continuation rate in 2017-18 was for young full time students (75%).

The TEF year 4 data provides a continuation benchmark for mature students of 87% (in comparison to the general population benchmark of 86%). The BTC/UCS rate for mature students was 87.2%, so slightly above the benchmark. As the benchmark and the BTC/UCS data show mature students continuing at a higher percentage than the general student population the TEF data does not indicate any gap to close. This will continue to be monitored internally to establish if action is needed to support mature learners to continue.

Attainment

The OfS Access and Participation Dataset for attainment shows that that mature students are attaining better than young students. For full time mature undergraduates aged 21 and over the gap is -9.9pp. For full time mature undergraduates aged 21-25 the gap is -15.4pp. There is therefore no gap to close as mature students are attaining well.

Progression to employment or further study

The TEF benchmark for mature students entering employment or further study is 93.8% (slightly less than for young students which is 93.9%). The BTC/UCS rate for mature students is 94.8%. This is above the benchmark so there is no gap to close.

1.4 Disabled students⁵

Access

BTC/UCS is seeing a rising trend in the disclosure of students with a disability. For young full time students this is rising from 19% in 2014-15 to 31% in 2018-19. Rates of disclosure for full time mature students increased from 16% in 2013-14 to 34% in 2017-18, but dropped slightly to 26% in 2018-19. Part time students have a lower rate of disability disclosed than full time students. The rate fluctuates each year without a specific trend. It ranges from 8% to 20% over the last six years. It was 12% in 2018-19 for both young and mature part time students.

The ILR identifies a growing trend in students declaring a mental health condition. An analysis of those who have declared a disability reveals that 10% of disabled students in 2013-14 and 36% in 2017-18 were disabled due to mental health issues, although this dropped slightly in 2018-19 to 34%. Mental health became the largest single declared type of disability in 2017-18 and is still higher than any other individual type of disability despite the slight drop in 2018-19. The rise in mental health issues declared at BTC/UCS is in line with the rise in the sector as shown when considering the data dashboard statistics below and comparing BTC/UCS statistics with the sector.

⁵ Disabled students are considered by the OfS to be those in receipt of the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) and those who have declared a disability but are not in receipt of DSA. (Reg Notice 1, OfS 2019.05; p.21)

On average over the last six years, 11% of students have declared Asperger's Syndrome. A significant number of students declare other medical conditions (averaging 37% over the last six years.) The percentage of students with dyslexia rose marginally from 6% in 2013-14 to 10% in 2018-19, an average of 7% over six years.

The data dashboard exploration of access proportions section shows that BTC/UCS has a higher proportion of disabled students than all English HE Providers. BTC/UCS had 20% full time disabled students in 2013-14, dropping slightly to 18% in 2014-15, rising to 23% in 2015-16, dropping very slightly to 22% in 2016-17 and rising more significantly to 32% in 2017-18. In comparison, all English HE Providers had a proportion of 11.8% full time disabled students in 2013-14 rising slowly to only 14.6% in 2017-18.

The part time statistics vary to the above. The BTC/UCS proportion of part time disabled students was 21% in 2013-14, dropped to 7% in 2014-15, rose to 18% in 2015-16, dropped slightly to 15% in 2016-17 and rose very slightly to 17% in 2017-18. This is in comparison to the all HE Providers statistics which were 10.3% in 2013-14 rising very gradually and steadily to 14.8% in 2017-18. The number of part time disabled students are therefore higher at BTC/UCS but there is not such a significant difference as there is for full time disabled students.

In relation to disability type, the dashboard shows the proportions of different types of disability. BTC/UCS had 6% of those with cognitive or learning difficulties in 2013-14 and 2014-15 rising to 10% in 2015-16 and then falling slightly to 8% in 2016-17 and 6% in 2017-18. In comparison, all English HE Providers had 6.2% in 2013-14 and dropped very slowly to 5.5% in 2017-18. There are therefore more students with cognitive or learning difficulties at BTC/UCS than across the sector.

BTC/UCS data on the dashboard shows that there are students with sensory, medical or physical impairment that are not appearing at all in the all English HE Providers data. There was 1% in 2014-15 rising to 5% in 2015-16, rising slightly again to 6% in 2016-17 and dropping to 4% in 2017-18. It is very noticeable that BTC/UCS is supporting students with sensory, medical or physical impairment, when this is clearly not happening across the whole sector.

The proportion of total BTC/UCS students shown on the data dashboard (disabled and non-disabled) with mental health conditions has risen from 2% in 2015-16 to 3% in 2016-17 and 2017-18. This rise is in line with the sector, who had 1.4% in 2013-14 rising slowly to 3.5% in 2017-18.

As BTC/UCS has a higher proportion of disabled students than the sector, access for disabled students to HE is not a major area of focus within this plan.

Success

Continuation/Non-continuation

ILR data shows a 6.9pp gap in continuation between full time disabled and non-disabled students. It also shows a 6.3pp gap between part time disabled and non-disabled students. There is very variable data for the continuation of those in receipt of DSA over the last five years.

The TEF year 4 data provides a three year aggregated continuation benchmark for disabled students of 85.6% (in comparison to the non-disabled benchmark of 86.2%). BTC/UCS disabled students had an 85.7% continuation rate, so very slightly above the benchmark. So although there is no gap to close

between BTC/UCS disabled students and the benchmark, there is a small gap between disabled and non-disabled students of 0.5pp.

The reasons for the gaps identified in the ILR data need to be understood and addressed. Continuation of disabled students is therefore an area of focus within this plan with a target set.

Attainment

ILR data shows that over the last five years on average 60% of students with no learning difficulty or disability achieved 'good degrees' (first or upper second), in comparison to 53% of those with a learning difficulty or disability, a gap of 7pp. The gap was slightly wider in 2017-18, when of those students with no learning difficulty or disability 71% achieved 'good degrees' in comparison to 61% of those with a learning difficulty or disability, a gap of 10pp. There is therefore a gap to be addressed, whilst being mindful of the focus within the sector of avoiding grade inflation.

In preparing students at level 5 to continue and succeed well at level 6 in their Honours Degree the number of Distinctions and Merits at Foundation Degree have been analysed. Over the last five years on average there was a gap of 6pp between students with no learning difficulty or disability achieving a Distinction or Merit in their Foundation Degree, in comparison to those with a learning difficulty or disability. In 2017-18 there was a smaller gap of 4pp. The gap in Foundation Degree attainment is therefore less than at Honours Degree level, but there is still a gap to be addressed.

Over the last five years on average there was a gap of 7pp between students with no learning difficulty or disability on HNC/HND courses achieving a Distinction or Merit, in comparison to those with a learning difficulty or disability. In 2017-18, there was an increased gap of 13pp. There is therefore a gap to be addressed.

The OfS access and participation data dashboard does not have any data for BTC/UCS in its KPM section relating to gaps in degree outcomes of disabled students. However the section for all English HE Providers does have statistically significant data. This shows a national picture of a gap between full time disabled and non-disabled undergraduates of 3.4pp in 2013-14, falling to 2.8pp in 2015-16, rising slightly to 3pp in 2016-17 and falling slightly back to 2.8pp in 2017-18. The part time picture shows more significant national gaps (again with no BTC/UCS data available). The gap for part time disabled students is 4.1pp in 2013-14 rising to 4.9pp in 2014-15, reducing slightly to 4.3pp in 2015-16, rising to 5.3pp in 2016-17 and falling again to 4.4pp in 2017-18. All these gaps are noted as significant.

The National KPM is: Reducing the gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between disabled students and non-disabled students. The related target is: To eliminate the gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between disabled students and non-disabled students by 2024-25.

In order to close the gap internally and contribute to closing the national gap between disabled and non-disabled students, a focus on attainment and 'good degrees' as well as distinctions and merits at level 5 is appropriate. A target has therefore been set.

Progression to employment or further study

The TEF Year 4 benchmark for full time disabled students entering employment or further study is 90.9% (lower than for non-disabled students which is 94.4%). Full time BTC/UCS disabled students entered employment or further study at a rate of 94.2%. The non-disabled students were at a rate of 95.6%. So although disabled students at BTC/UCS are above the benchmark for getting into employment or further study they are slightly below the non-disabled population. There is a gap of

1.4pp. This shows considerable improvement from the TEF year 3 data in which there was a 3.7pp gap. However the TEF year 4 data still shows a 3.7pp gap between part time disabled and non-disabled students.

There is therefore a gap to be addressed and it is therefore appropriate to aim to close the gap between disabled and non-disabled students entering employment or further study, starting from this 3.7pp gap.

In relation to progression into highly skilled employment or further study a significant percentage of students at BTC/UCS do not state their salary when completing the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey (DLHE). The evidence to show how many have entered highly skilled employment is impacted by this non-disclosure. However, taking the results at face value, the rate for both disabled and non-disabled students entering highly skilled employment is below the TEF year 4 benchmarks and is therefore an area of focus within BTC/UCS.

It should be noted that the less than national average availability of highly skilled employment locally is an issue for the predominantly local students at BTC/UCS who stay locally after graduation. There is also the fact that extremely worthwhile courses that support the NHS and significant local care sector are successfully undertaken, but do not result in salaries that qualify as 'highly skilled' whilst fully meeting student and employer needs. Taunton Deane shows one of the highest concentrations of people in the country living in supported medical/care conditions. There is therefore a need to support this sector, but that impacts on statistics that measure highly skilled employment based on salary.

TEF year 4 data: 61.7% of full time disabled students entered highly skilled employment in comparison to 65.1% non-disabled, a gap of 3.4pp. The BTC/UCS core metrics benchmark in the TEF was 68%, the full time disabled benchmark was 65.2%. So both full time disabled and non-disabled students were below the core metrics benchmark and disabled students were 0.1% below the disabled students' benchmark.

There is a marked difference in the highly successful situation for part time disabled students. 79.5% of part time disabled students entered highly skilled employment in comparison to 66.1% non-disabled. Part time disabled students are therefore getting into highly skilled employment 13.4% better than non-disabled students. They are also exceeding the core metrics part time TEF benchmark of 74.6% and the disabled students' benchmark of 71.2%. There is therefore no issue to address in relation to part time disabled students entering highly skilled employment. There is an issue for full time disabled students closing the gap of 3.4pp in comparison to non-disabled students. There is further work to be done to understand the reasons for the difference in progression between full time and part time disabled students and to close the gap between full time disabled students and the non-disabled. A target has therefore been set.

1.5 Care leavers

Access

There are a very small number of students who declare they are care leavers at BTC/UCS. There have been just 12 students who declared themselves to be care leavers over the last five years. Efforts are already being made at Further Education level within the College to work with the lead for care leavers from Somerset County Council. This has resulted in a better joint identification of care leavers at the College and collaborative activities to support them.

Regulatory Notice 1 (OfS 2019.05; p.20 para 85) refers to the importance of addressing the access, success and progression of care leavers relevant to the context and gaps identified by individual HE Providers.

Good practice in this area will be considered to see in what other ways these potential students can be supported to be able to enter HE. However this will not be a targeted activity within the APP. It should be noted that bursaries are targeted with priority going first to care leavers.

Success

Continuation/Non-continuation

Given the extremely low numbers it is not statistically relevant to consider continuation on an annual basis as there have been between 1 and 3 care leavers a year. However on average over five years less than half of these students continued to their second year (42% continued). Further work needs to be done to understand the barriers and to address them. There is work being done at Further Education level within BTC/UCS to work collaboratively with Somerset County Council and the regional National Collaborative Outreach Programme, Next Steps South West, to better identify and support care leavers.

Attainment and Progression to employment or further study

Numbers are too small to be able to comment on attainment or employment without revealing identities.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

The OfS dashboard identifies intersections of deprivation quintile and ethnicity within the 'explore access proportions' of the Access section. BTC/UCS has higher levels of white students from Quintiles 1 & 2 than the sector. BTC/UCS had 27% in 2013-14, dropping to 25% in 2015-16 and increasing to 26% in 2017-18. The sector had less white students from Quintile 1. They were 20.8% in 2013-14 rising only very slightly to 20.9% before returning to 20.8% in 2017-18. This does not indicate an issue for BAME students.

Analysis of intersections is difficult due to the very low numbers with publicly available data being suppressed for data protection reasons in some instances. However the focus in this area will be addressed in two ways. Firstly, 'Access' of those on the IMD in Quintile 1 will be addressed through the Next Steps South West NCOP project as part of the focus of that project on POLAR4 Quintiles 1 & 2. Secondly, the financial bursaries are aimed at supporting students with intersections of low family income and other disadvantage as specified in the HE Student Support Funding policy. This focus is reflected in the 'Success' achievement target, as the College is committed to supporting students within this category too, through tutorials, although the main focus in the 'Success' stage of the student lifecycle is on disabled students.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

Access

Gypsy/Roma community

The numbers of students declaring themselves to be from the Gypsy/Roma community is very small at Further Education level within the College and these students do not seem to be accessing Higher Education at all. It is noted that their qualification level is too low to enter HE, despite BTC/UCS not having high tariff entry requirements. Work will continue to be done at Further Education level to support these students but without specific targets attached. Good practice will be explored to see what can be done to support these students to aspire to and gain access to HE. However this will not be a main focus of this APP.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

2.1 Target groups

In response to the analysis of performance and consideration of the national KPMs and gaps both nationally and at BTC/UCS, the target groups for this APP are:

- Access of students on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) from Quintile 1 into Higher Education
- Success (continuation) of POLAR4 Quintile 1 full time students
- Success (continuation) of disabled students
- Success (attainment) of disabled students
- Progression of disabled students into employment or further study

2.2 Aims and objectives

The BTC/UCS Mission Statement is: We will transform the lives of our students and inspire our customers and communities to achieve success by:

- Delivering outstanding and aspirational teaching, learning and skills development
- Creating exciting partnerships with our students, staff, community and employers
- Providing a welcoming, safe, inclusive and supportive environment

The BTC/UCS Values are: Together, we are:

- Passionate and excited about learning
- Inclusive and supportive
- Responsive to student, employer and community needs
- Always aspiring to the highest standards
- Professional and enterprising
- Innovative and creative
- Friendly and welcoming

The over-arching strategic aims include:

- To inspire all of our students to achieve their full potential
- To grow and deliver a highly responsive, innovative and dynamic curriculum

The Equality Policy states: The College is fully committed to promoting, maintaining and supporting equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. The College aims to create an environment where all individuals have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, and gain a feeling of self-esteem

and respect for and from all others. The College expresses its opposition to all forms of inequality and discrimination.

BTC/UCS aims to Widen Participation, identifying potential inequalities in outcomes and taking action to address them across the student life-cycle.

The strategic aims and objectives set out below are in line with the mission, values and aims and are in accordance with the equality policy and aim to Widening Participation. They reflect the performance analysis section above.

The BTC/UCS strategic aims in this Access and Participation Plan are:

1. To reduce the access gap between students on the IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 students
2. To reduce the continuation gap between POLAR4 Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 students
3. To reduce the continuation gap between disabled and non-disabled students
4. To reduce the attainment gap in good degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between disabled and non-disabled students
5. To reduce the progression gap for students from under-represented groups, with a focus on disabled students

The BTC/UCS strategic objectives and targets are:

- a) To reduce the access gap between students on the IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 students, from an 8 percentage point (pp) gap for full time and a 16.9pp gap for part time students to a 4pp gap for full time and 8pp for part time students by 2025. The aim is to continue to reduce this gap between 2025 and 2030-31 working towards a situation where there is no gap. Or that any reasons for why this proves not to be possible are clearly identified and all reasonable steps are taken to minimise any residual gap. (Targets Investment Plan Reference Numbers: PTA_1 and PTA_2)
- b) To reduce the continuation gap between full time POLAR4 Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 students from 10.1pp to 4pp by 2025. The aim is to continue to reduce this gap between 2025 and 2030-31 working towards a situation where there is no gap. Or that any reasons for why this proves not to be possible are clearly identified and all reasonable steps are taken to minimise any residual gap. (Targets Investment Plan Reference Number: PTS_4)
- c) To reduce the continuation gap between disabled and non-disabled students from 6.9pp for full time and 6.3pp for part time to a 3pp gap for both full and part time students by 2025. The aim is to continue to reduce this gap between 2025 and 2030-31 working towards a situation where there is no gap. Or that any reasons for why this proves not to be possible are clearly identified and all reasonable steps are taken to minimise any residual gap. (Targets Investment Plan Reference Numbers: PTS_2 and PTS_3)
- d) To reduce the percentage difference in good degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between disabled and non-disabled students from 10pp to 0pp by 2024-25 in line with the OfS national Key Performance Measure. (Targets Investment Plan Reference Number: PTS_1)
- e) To reduce the percentage difference of progression into employment or further study between full time disabled and non-disabled students from 3.7pp to 0pp by 2024-25. (Targets Investment Plan Reference Number: PTP_1)

ILR data as shown in the OfS Access and Participation Dashboard/Dataset and Graduate Outcomes Survey data will be used to measure these targets.

3. Strategic measures

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

Using a theory of change model, BTC/UCS continues to reflect on and evaluate its approach to widening participation and closure of gaps between under-represented groups and their peers in relation to access, success and progression. The detailed analysis carried out as part of this plan has led to a greater understanding of the impact of activities undertaken in line with current policies and interventions. This plan builds on and further develops the thinking and areas for focus outlined in the APP for 2019-20 as was intended.

There will be a focus on continuous improvement informed by effective evaluation and ongoing consideration of the research of others in identifying effective interventions which can be adopted. The strategic approach is therefore dynamic, challenging and aimed to keep activities up to date with the latest thinking in the sector, to ensure effectiveness of the approaches and value for money in achieving impact, not simply repeating activities that have been tried before without evidence of their effectiveness.

The plan involves sustained engagement with:

- Raising attainment and aspirations in school age children via sponsorship of the Bridgwater Multi Academy Trust
- Raising attainment and aspirations at FE level within Bridgwater and Taunton College
- Engagement with employers to maintain/increase access by mature students

Alignment with other strategies

There is a whole college approach at BTC/UCS in relation to inclusivity and equality. The Equality and Diversity Policy sets out the approach and this is monitored by the cross-college Equality and Diversity Committee. The committee includes representation from BTC/UCS in relation to HE students and the APP and includes students as full members of the committee.

BTC/UCS are committed to inclusivity and equality across all stages of the student lifecycle and there are a number of other policies and approaches that underpin these activities and set expectations in relation to the fairness and equality of opportunity for all.

For Access, this includes the Marketing, Admissions and Academic teams involved with recruitment and admissions in line with the HE Admissions Policy.

For Success, this includes the Academic, HE Study Centre/Learning Resource Centre, Additional Learning Support, Wellbeing, Safeguarding, Counselling, Student Engagement and Student Support teams in relation to supporting students to achieve once they have started their studies. Their work takes account of a number of policies including the HE Additional Learning Support Policy, HE Student Engagement Policy, the Assessment Framework, Academic Regulations and 7-ways Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment and the HE Student Support Funding Policy. Research suggests⁶ that financial support can assist disadvantaged students to continue their studies and to achieve, and that it has greater impact in relation to this than on attracting

⁶ <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180511112320/https://www.offa.org.uk/egp/impact-offinancial-support/>

students into HE. This aligns with the feedback received from BTC/UCS students in the evaluation questionnaire where they indicated the positive impact of the funding. This policy sets out the BTC/UCS approach to financial support. The hardship fund has been removed as all eligible students have been funded through the bursary so it was unnecessary. The intended outcome for the HE Bursary is to support students from low income families and particularly those with intersections of disadvantage (as shown in the prioritisation below) to continue and achieve. The intended outcome of the Diagnostic Support Fund and DSA Technology Support Fund is to support disabled students to continue and achieve. The first is aimed at those who are likely to be eligible for DSA but who need financial support to afford to have the diagnosis that provides the evidence to enable them to apply for DSA and hence receive appropriate support during their studies. The second is to assist those who need expensive higher specification equipment to actually obtain this, when they might otherwise not have been able to afford to do so. Impact will continue to be evaluated annually, taking account of internal and external research to inform good practice and any resultant changes that are needed to this policy and its bursaries.

The HE Student Support Funding policy 2020-21 maintains the existing support that is in place following positive student feedback about its effectiveness in helping them to be able to continue studying. A simplified version of the recommended evaluation has been carried out that is more fit for purpose for the smaller numbers involved. It will continue to be evaluated internally whilst also using external reference points to learn from the sector as part of continuous improvement. The policy, supported by those students who have benefited from it provides the following support:

HE Diagnostic Support Fund – This aims to provide financial support for eligible HE students who are undertaking a full diagnostic assessment that is being conducted by the College. Funds available: A grant of £250 per eligible student to pay for the full diagnostic assessment when conducted by the College. Once the finances available to support this fund have been exhausted there will be no further funding available. Eligibility criteria: Must be studying a Higher National, Foundation Degree, BA/BSc or top up programme in 2020/21; must not have had a previous DSA diagnostic assessment with Bridgwater and Taunton College.

DSA Technology Support Fund – This aims to provide financial support for eligible HE students towards the cost of higher specification equipment, as identified by their Technical Needs Assessment (TNA). Funds available: A grant of £200 per eligible student to pay for the first £200 required towards higher specification equipment as identified by the TNA. Once the finances available to support this fund have been exhausted there will be no further funding available. Eligibility: Must be studying a Higher National, Foundation Degree, BA/BSc or top up programme in 2020/21; Must have had their Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) confirmed with Higher Specification equipment identified as part of the TNA.

HE Bursary Fund: This is a means tested bursary to support HE students from low income backgrounds with costs directly related to their studies. This fund is only available to students who are studying an eligible course in 2020/21 and who have not received an HE Bursary from BTC/UCS during their studies. Funds available: A grant of up to £600 per eligible student, payable during the academic year 2020/21. Applications will be considered on priority basis. Funds are paid per term in equal instalments. Eligible students studying on a part time programme will receive a pro-rata amount. Once the finances available to support this fund have been exhausted there will be no further funding available. Eligibility criteria: Students must have a household income threshold of £25,000 or less as assessed by Student Finance England (SFE); students must be entitled to and approved to

receive, or are in receipt of, the full student Maintenance Loan for 2020/21; do not already hold a higher level qualification such a degree, foundation degree, CertHE or HNC/D; if students receive full or part sponsorship (for example from an employer) for their tuition fees they are not eligible for this bursary; BTC/UCS will prioritise applications based on the conditions specified. This means that there is a limited amount of funding. Eligible students within the groups identified will receive funding before those who are not; students who have previously received an HE Bursary from the College are not eligible to apply.

Prioritisation of funding:

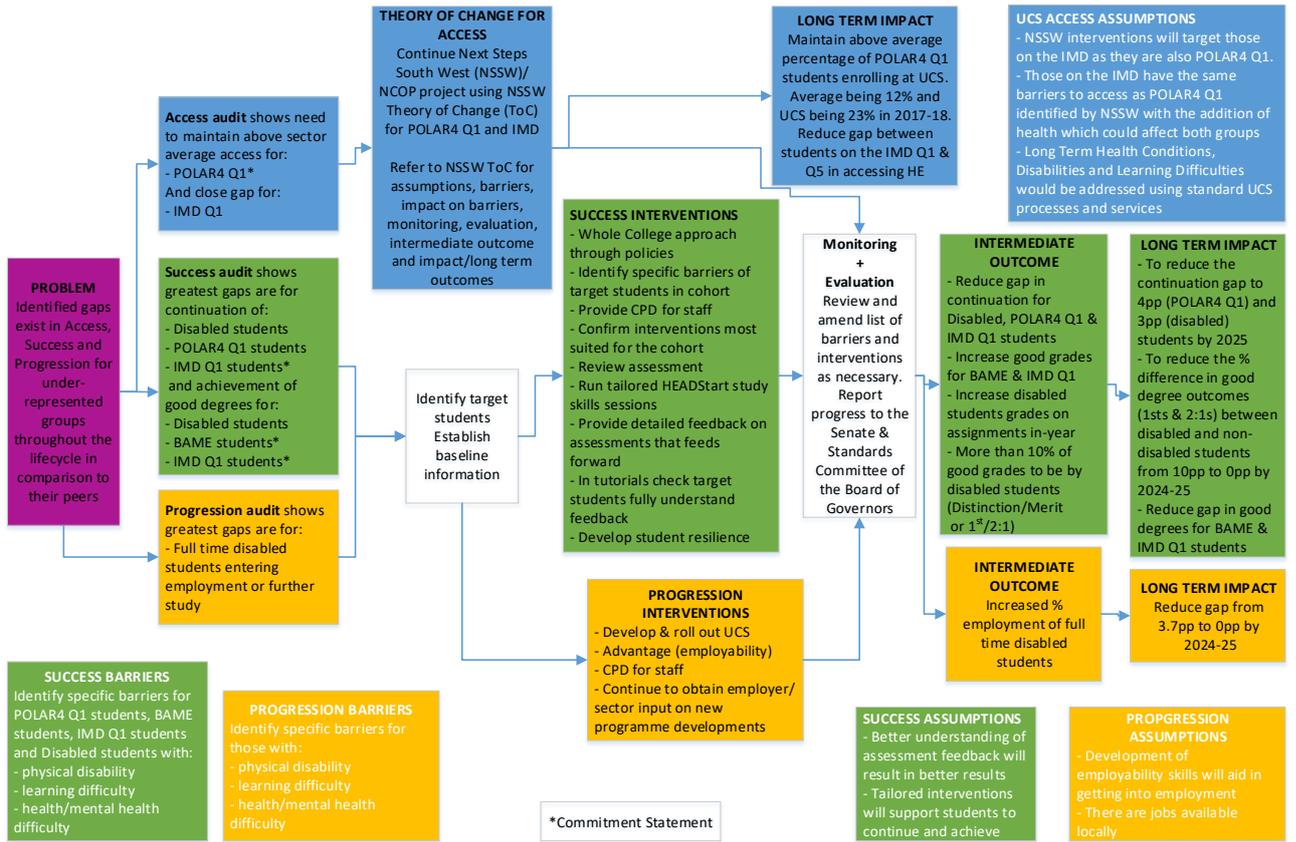
Funds are granted on a priority basis to identified priority groups. High priority students are those who are:

- Care leavers:
To be eligible as a care leaver you must:
 - Have been in local authority care for a minimum of three months
 - Be a permanent resident in the United Kingdom and be a 'home' student for fee purposes
 - Have proof of being in care from an official source, such as a local authority
 - Be enrolled on an undergraduate course at Bridgwater and Taunton College
 - Not already hold a previous HE qualification
 - Have not been adopted
- Registered as disabled
- From Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups
- Students with children, especially single parents
- Carers with responsibility for caring for others

For Progression, this includes the Academic teams, Careers Guidance team and Student Support teams. In addition to Professional Development Planning taking place on every Foundation Degree, the Careers Guidance Team is working on developing their links with academic teams to increase the use of this service by HE students. There are also plans to redevelop the 'BTC Advantage' with its focus on the development of employability skills for an HE-focused version 'UCS Advantage' to be rolled out across HE programmes at BTC/UCS. The Human Resources team also maintain HR policies which reinforce the focus on health and wellbeing across the college.

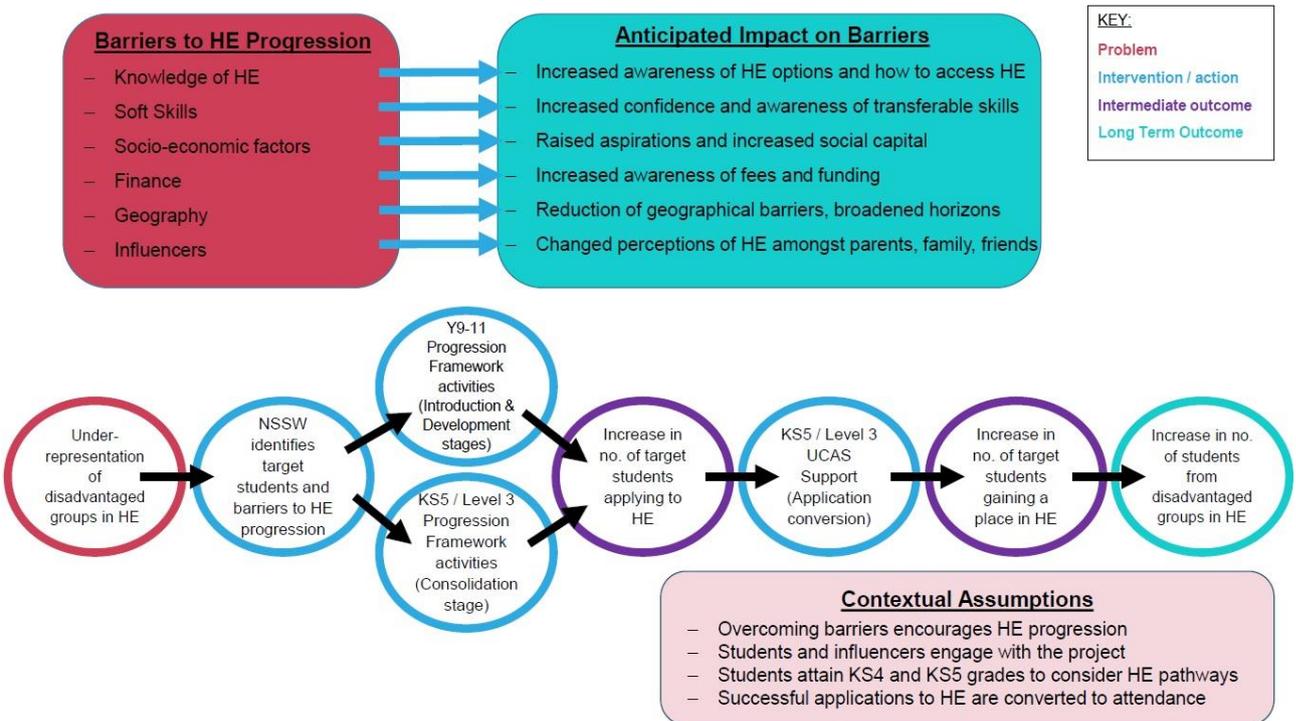
Strategic measures

The over-arching Theory of Change for BTC/UCS for different stages of the lifecycle is as follows:



NSSW Theory of Change Phase 2

The NSSW Theory of Change below is designed to impact on strategic measures a) and d) below.



Under the sub-heading of each of the strategic objectives, the related strategic measures are identified below. These provide added detail related to the Theories of Change above. This section also confirms the commitments that BTC/UCS is making.

a) Commitment 1: A commitment to maintain the participation of POLAR4 Quintile 1 students in Higher Education above the sector average and in order to avoid a further decrease. (BTC/UCS: 23% Quintile 1 in 2017-18, the sector: 12%)

This commitment will be actioned through the existing mechanisms of NSSW and their theory of change above. This focus is being carried out as a commitment rather than a target as the evidence shows that BTC/UCS has proportionately much greater numbers of POLAR4 Quintile 1 students than the average HE Provider. However, ILR data shows a decline over time and therefore a focus to maintain the above sector average is appropriate. The OfS guidance states that in such cases a specific target is not necessary. The intention is therefore confirmed above to maintain the participation in HE of an above sector average proportion of POLAR4 Quintile 1 students. This focus is already taking place through NSSW activity supported by BTC/UCS and will continue. The focus will increasingly align with the Outreach Hub as this is developed and it replaces NSSW after July 2021. Evaluation of the activity will be carried out by NSSW, although BTC/UCS will monitor participation of its own students from 2020-21 so that the need for continued action can be assessed. The approach will be re-evaluated following the closure of NSSW in July 2021 and Outreach Hub activity will be monitored and evaluated each year until 2024-25. The need for further action will be evaluated in 2024-25 to ascertain what might be required from then until 2030-31.

b) Commitment 2: A commitment to monitor and support BAME students to obtain good degrees (1st or 2:1). The results of BAME students will continue to be monitored. Where it is noted that any action is needed, this will be discussed individually with the students in question to see what form of support might be required. It is anticipated that the tutorial approach used at BTC/UCS will enable any support needs to be identified and actioned. The assignment results of BAME students will be monitored to see if they are on track in relation to grades on entry. If required, support will be provided through tutorials and through signposting to the HEADStart Study Skills sessions run by the HE Study Centre and Learning Resource Centres on each campus. The impact of interventions will be measured to evaluate their effectiveness. This will include the monitoring of final classifications gained. This work will commence in 2020-21 and will continue thereafter with the aim of reducing any gaps and ultimately eliminating any gaps. If gaps still persist then the aim will be to understand the reasons for this, with all reasonable steps taken to eliminate them by 2030-31. This area of focus is being handled as a commitment statement, rather than as a target as the number of BAME students is so small that individual students would be identifiable. In addition, the results will be impacted on very significantly by individual student circumstances rather than being statistically significant. However, action on an individual basis is still warranted and will therefore be carried out.

c) Commitment 3: A commitment to supporting the success of students from Quintile 1 on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). In particular to support them through the availability of bursaries, to be monitored and reported through the 'Success' stage of the student lifecycle. The activities related to Quintile 1 students on the IMD is a commitment rather than a target, as the data shows the continuation gap as not statistically significant due to the very small numbers. It would not be appropriate to set this as a target as individual students would be identifiable. Nevertheless, the continuation gap will be monitored to support

the success of students from Quintile 1 on the IMD in comparison to those in Quintile 5 with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the bursaries offered and their impact on continuation. Attainment will also be monitored through the same actions as identified in section b) above for BAME students. Monitoring and identification of any necessary actions or interventions will be carried out during 2020-21 and thereafter. The aim being to reduce any gaps, working towards eliminating gaps as far as is possible through reasonable interventions by 2030-31. If the number of additional factors affecting IMD Quintile 1 students which are outside the control of BTC/UCS continue to affect these students, then the aim will be to identify such issues as far as possible and to take what steps are possible to support the success of these students.

d) Target related to the reduction in the access gap between students on the IMD in Quintile 1 and Quintile 5.

In addition to supporting the above collaborative activity with NSSW, BTC/UCS will also continue to carry out the following activities:

Maintain collaboration using NCOP (Next Steps South West) Theory of Change – Those actions to be implemented by that project with baselines, activities and evaluation as detailed by NSSW
Engage with the Outreach Hub as this develops
Continue with collaboration and facilitation of outreach work by high tariff universities within FE at Bridgwater and Taunton College
Continue with sponsorship of Bridgwater Multi Academy Trust to support Governance, pre-16 attainment & aspirations
Continue to raise attainment, confidence & aspirations at Further Education level within Bridgwater and Taunton College – This work will be undertaken as a natural part of providing high quality Further Education, using the BTC Advantage, rather than being funded by this APP
Maintain lower tariff entry requirements for Foundation Degrees with higher tariff for three year Honours Degree routes to allow students to develop and prove their capability to Top Up to level 6 on successful completion of levels 4 and 5
Continue development of curriculum in consultation with industry that meets local needs
Continue development of part time as well as full time routes
Continue to have delivery concentrated into two or two and a half days a week to allow for other student commitments
Continued development of block release delivery models that work for particular employers and their mature learners
Development of degree and higher apprenticeships that avoid students taking on student loans
Evaluate – using empirical evidence and narrative evidence from staff and student feedback/questionnaires; take account of externally published research; identify position in relation to milestones and target; adjust approach accordingly; disseminate findings

It is intended to continue to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions over time, building on successes and learning from the sector to develop the approach. As a core member of the Next

Steps South West (NSSW) NCOP Consortium, BTC/UCS is collaborating both strategically and operationally with other HE providers in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. The NCOP Outreach Hub expansion in Phase 2 will facilitate relationship-building with a broader range of regional stakeholders, employers and third sector organisations e.g. the HotSW and CloS Careers Hubs, the Enterprise Advisor Network and local councils, which will enable BTC/UCS to capitalise on NSSW-forged relationships to develop broader, partner-led WP activity. Advances in the development of outreach evaluation theory and practice, established through NSSW and shared with the consortium, will promote institutional progress in this field.

Being a collaborative partner of the NSSW NCOP provides benefits which include:

- access to NSSW staff with expertise and experience in WP outreach work that they are willing to share
- access to Outreach Hub funding to build economies of scale and increase viability of jointly delivered outreach projects
- opportunities to deliver activities initiated and fine-tuned by NSSW, to a wider WP audience
- evaluation of activities by the NSSW Evaluation Team, enhancing capacity and current expertise at BTC/UCS.
- opportunities to capture best practice for outreach, communications and evaluation, and implement institutionally
- Workshops run by Exeter University and the University of Plymouth to share good practice in effective evaluation across the South West.

Each partner-led project proposal will be subject to NSSW procedures, which require explicit identification of which barriers to HE will be addressed, SMART targets, a finance profile, project collaborators, shared aims, and rigorous evaluation of impact, through outcomes-based evidence.

The funding from NSSW is not sufficient to cover the management costs involved and BTC/UCS therefore supports the project 'in kind' to make up the shortfall.

e) Target related to reducing the continuation gap between POLAR4 Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 students.

The barriers, anticipated impact on barriers, interventions and intended outcomes are shown on the Theory of Change diagram above.

f) Target related to reducing the continuation gap between disabled and non-disabled students.

The barriers, anticipated impact on barriers, interventions and intended outcomes are shown on the Theory of Change diagram above.

g) Target related to reducing the attainment gap in good degrees between disabled and non-disabled students.

The OfS Topic Briefing on raising attainment in schools and colleges to widen participation with its links to other informative research has informed the approach. The literature review has also included two particular reports which have informed the plan in relation to Success attainment. These are the Models of Support for students with disabilities report by HEFCE Nov 2017, and Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as a route to excellence Jan 2017. In relation to Success, and in line with the effective good practice identified, the plan is to build on the use of detailed tutorial initial consultations to identify barriers that students have and look to create alternative assessment methodologies and 'lean assessment' to help support learners to engage and support their achievement. The approach will also consider the use of assistive technologies to help retain disabled students and to work with various e learning approaches. CPD for staff and the further development of good practice in Teaching Learning and Assessment will be fundamental in this approach.



Check if any further research findings published highlighting effective practice to consider within project or adjustments needed to the following approach
Identification of target students
Establish baseline data to enable evaluation at year end including grade level on entry
CPD for staff – TLA focus from TLA Developers and from Additional Learning Support Team on supporting disabled learners
Tailored tutorials including identification of types of disability & related barriers; signposting to Additional Learning Support (including signposting to bursaries for financial support/DSA); identification of any other actions
Review assessment; consider adjustments – gain EE approval; implement
HEADStart Study Skills sessions run
Explore use of e learning technologies
Monitor grades
Provide detailed feedback to students that feeds forward
Further tutorial(s) – including ensuring grading criteria are clearly understood
Evaluate – using empirical evidence and narrative evidence from staff and student feedback/questionnaires; evaluate impact of financial support; identify position in relation to milestones and target
Consider effectiveness and compare findings with any published by others; make recommendations for any adjustments to the process for the next year; disseminate findings



h) Target related to reducing the percentage difference of progression into employment or further study between full time disabled and non-disabled students.



Check if any further research findings published highlighting effective practice to consider within project or adjustments needed to the following approach
Identification of target students
Establish baseline data to enable evaluation at year end
Consider specific barriers for different types of disabled students enrolled and identify appropriate action to mitigate difficulties
Development and roll out of the UCS Advantage employability programme
CPD for staff
Evaluate – using empirical evidence and narrative evidence from staff and student feedback/questionnaires; identify position in relation to milestones and target
Consider effectiveness and compare findings with any published by others; make recommendations for any adjustments to the process for the next year; disseminate findings

The effectiveness of interventions will be evaluated and judged in relation to whether or not the gaps are being narrowed in line with the annual milestones and ultimate targets for 2024-25. Student opinion will be sought and included within the evaluations in addition to empirical evidence and comparison with literature and sector research findings. The annual evaluation will allow the projects to build on successes, stop any interventions that do not demonstrate impact and learn from the sector to develop the approach further. The annual evaluation will be shared with students via the Students Union and the Student Representatives as well as with key bodies that

also have student representation: the Equality and Diversity Committee, the Senate and the Standards Committee of the Board of Governors.

The interventions recommended by the students in the section below will also be incorporated into this approach, but are identified in the next section to avoid repetition.

BTC/UCS will also be collaborating with Oxford Brookes University in relation to the targets that relate to their Associated College Partners (ACP). This is because analysis of performance for the students on Oxford Brookes-validated franchise programmes at BTC/UCS are reflected in their APP, rather than this BTC/UCS plan. Good practice and interventions identified by Oxford Brookes in their plan to reduce gaps will therefore be supported and implemented collaboratively for BTC/UCS-based Oxford Brookes students. Good practice will also be shared for the benefit of the remainder of the BTC/UCS students.

3.2 Student consultation

Consultation with students

The College takes student views very seriously. This commitment to listening to the student voice is reinforced by the fact that there is an HE Student Governor and HE Student President.

Student feedback is sought in many ways throughout the academic year. Student representatives for each HE programme are elected at the start of the year and are trained. The focus of the training is on representing student views that are widely felt, strongly felt and achievable. Involvement in the production of the APP built on this structure and way of working collaboratively.

Student Executive meetings were created so that one Student Representative could represent a department area. Each department has one Student Executive Member. In this role they are given more responsibility, they work with the Students' Union and the Senior Management Team to create positive change for BTC/UCS. The Student Executives are democratically elected by students. The expectation of the Student Executive role is that they attend executive meetings and play a key part in shaping what will be debated at HE Student Parliament, which is held in the summer term and has a co-created agenda between students and staff, supported by the Student Union and Student Engagement Team. The Student Executive role is the key point of contact for all Programme Representatives in the curriculum area and as such, they play a part in any additional student voice opportunities.

The APP was explained to a range of student representatives from each campus at the HE Student Parliament. Specific questions were asked and discussed, based on the analysis that had been carried out. This student feedback has been incorporated into the thinking and actions included within the plan. Some feedback from the previous year's discussion of the APP is still relevant and has also been used to inform the plan. Key feedback from 2018 was:

To better attract particular groups of students such as male students:

- Many of the actions taken by the College are what the students would expect and should continue or be developed further i.e.:
 - Promoting HE
 - Visiting schools and taking past students on visits to schools to raise knowledge about HE
 - Promoting halls of residence.
 - Promoting HE common room and HE spaces across all campuses
 - Promote socialising and social events
 - SU to develop clubs linked to students' interests

In relation to improving students' knowledge about bursaries their feedback was:

- Even more obvious sharing of information about bursaries and finance would be helpful.
- Have a more obvious information stand about finance and bursaries at Open Days
- Make the one main point of contact for questions relating to bursaries clearer to students

In relation to existing tutorial support, specific learning difficulty support and the counselling service as ways students are supported, students' thoughts included:

- Continue to provide extra support for those applying for Disabled Students Allowance.
- Help address social anxiety by helping students to integrate across courses and help each other.
- Ensure students are all aware of the mental health support/advisor and counselling service.
- Consider study groups and general help for those that struggle – referral is already possible to the Learning Resource Centres for additional study skills support. This may therefore need to be made clearer to all students as a service already in place in addition to the HEADStart study skills programme that all groups are invited to attend and the online study skills resources that exist.

Progression into employment or further study

- Students reported that they had the information and skills they need to progress but that there is more that could be done to support this transition. Examples for consideration included:
 - Inviting more alumni to come back and talk to existing students to assist in preparing them to enter employment.
 - Bespoke careers advice for specific courses
 - Greater opportunity to develop entrepreneurship skills for those wishing to set up their own businesses

Key feedback from the discussions at the HE Student Parliament 2019 which included a range of students from all three campuses and different courses as well as representing male, female, different socio-economic backgrounds, mature, young, those in receipt of DSA and support for learning difficulties and those not in receipt of DSA:

Students were keen to discuss the initial findings from the analysis and to engage in a group discussion about the key areas and what could be done about them, building on what they considered to be good practice that is already in place as well as highlighting further possible developments.

What influences continuation/non-continuation? What can we do to help?

- The 1:1 time spent with tutors at BTC/UCS is really good and this helps
- Support and encouragement from staff and particularly from other students helps you to stay
- Being friendly and comfortable helps, particularly for mature students who have found the experience OK despite being worried about what it would be like to be on a course with younger students.
- A second mature student confirmed this, saying how welcome she had been made to feel and that she was very much part of the group which was really positive
- The sense of belonging was therefore confirmed as being very important
- Some of those who leave are not sufficiently motivated or ready to commit to the workload, they can sometimes mess around and annoy you

What can we do to support under-represented groups to achieve as many 1sts or 2:1s, (or Distinctions and Merits on level 5 Foundation Degrees/HNDs) as their peers?

- Agreed that it is not right to comment for types of under-representation that are not experienced by those in the room – wider views from the sector should be sought as it is also not fair or right to pinpoint a minority of students, label them and ask their views.
- Tutorial support available at BTC/UCS helps everyone, whatever barriers or issues they might have. This approach should continue to be used and built upon to support under-represented groups

What can we do to support students with mental health difficulties as this is rising?

- Referral to Wellbeing Officers helps
- Counsellor helps
- Tutorials and tutors helping/signposting/encouraging helps
- Getting other students to support their peers with mental health problems
- Confidence expressed by the group in the current use of the above mechanisms and that this approach should be continued
- Building on and further developing links between students on different years of the same course to advise and inform their peers about what to expect and how they can best prepare themselves for the next level of study
- Build and develop greater opportunities through the Student Union for students to socialise between courses and therefore be able to support each other

Is the Careers Guidance Team known about and used as well as it could be? Is there more that can be done?

- Not all students were fully aware of what the Careers Guidance Team can offer
- It would help if they tied in directly with lecturers when Professional Development Planning modules are being undertaken so that this additional support and advice can be accessed at this point in time

This helpful feedback has been fully taken into account in the formulation of the APP. The recommended interventions will be acted upon in addition to those mentioned in the section above.

The analysis and feedback from students relating to the APP was taken to the Senate, which oversees all HE at BTC/UCS, and which includes the HE Student President as a full member, as well as the Senior Manager responsible for student engagement and one of the Governors. (The HE Student President was also part of the discussion at the HE Student Parliament). The analysis and its implications was discussed at the Senate and input sought. Further work was carried out in relation to the analysis and planned actions. The analysis and actions were then reported to the Standards Committee of the Board of Governors. Again comments and input were sought. The HE Student President is also the HE Student Governor and is a full member of the Standards Committee.

In addition to having been involved in the development of the plan, students have also been involved, and will continue to be involved, with the ongoing monitoring and annual evaluation of the plan. This will be through the formal evaluation process as well as through the monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) contained within the plan at the HE Senate meetings, attended by the HE Student President. Progress in relation to the plan will also be monitored by Governors, including the HE Student Governor (also the HE Student President), at the Standards Committee of the Board of Governors.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

Introduction/Overview of Evaluation Strategy at BTC/UCS

Following a self-assessment of the evaluation approach used at BTC/UCS in relation to access and participation it became clear that a detailed evaluation strategy needed to be developed. This strategy is outlined below. It captures activities already in place and builds on this to strengthen the approach going forwards. To further develop the approach to evaluation, BTC/UCS will use the 'Standards of Evidence and Evaluation Self-Assessment tool', in a manner that is appropriate and proportionate to its strategic measures.

The BTC/UCS approach to evaluation is narrative (using literature to inform what has been demonstrated to be effective) and empirical (using quantitative and qualitative evidence of outcomes) to assess the effectiveness of the interventions undertaken. This approach is being developed and strengthened to ensure that robust evidence of effective and non-effective practice

can be shared with the sector. BTC/UCS is also working with two of its partner universities to strengthen its approach.

BTC/UCS will continue working with the University of Plymouth and the Next Steps South West (NCOP) team who are able to provide very detailed analysis and evaluation of activities related to the Access component of the BTC/UCS targets. Consideration is being given by the University of Plymouth to share the evaluation skills they have developed in a collaboration across the South West. BTC/UCS would be interested to explore this, as the idea develops, as it has the potential for good practice and specialist expertise to help support the activities taking place within this APP.

The Oxford Brookes University evaluation team will evaluate any activities carried out at BTC/UCS in relation to their franchise students and the results of their evaluation and methodology will also be helpful and has potential to strengthen the approach at BTC/UCS.

BTC/UCS runs a bidding round each year to support small scale research projects. The intention is not only to continue to run this so that staff can bid for funding to run projects of their choice, but to add specific projects related to the APP that staff can apply to run on behalf of BTC/UCS. With the increasing number of staff holding doctorate qualifications there is ever increasing expertise to be developed and supported within BTC/UCS. The intention is to tap into this existing and emerging expertise within the institution in support of access and participation projects.

Aims of the BTC/UCS Evaluation Strategy

Aim 1: To enable BTC/UCS to evidence the impact of its widening participation activity in line with the expectations of the OfS for Access and Participation Plans.

Aim 2: To provide evidence of activity and impact in terms of demonstrable changes in behaviour (such as improved access, continuation, attainment, progression) to the Students Union, the Equality and Diversity Committee, the Senate and the Standards Committee of the Board of Governors to enable them to monitor the effectiveness against targets and milestones

Aim 3: To develop a robust approach to evaluation that enables BTC/UCS to focus and align its activities and resources on the widest access, success and progression gaps for under-represented groups and effective interventions, based on analysis, literature reviews and empirical evidence

Aim 4: To work collaboratively where appropriate and possible with university partners to further strengthen BTC/UCS evaluation

Aim 5: To share effective interventions with the sector, based on robust evidence and evaluative approach

Aim 6: To use the evaluation to ensure that most effort is placed where targets have been identified and so that resources can be effectively focused in these areas.

Objectives of the Evaluation Strategy

The following objectives have been identified in order to meet the strategic evaluation aims:

Objective 1 – Establish clear processes for the collection and processing of data related to participants in access and participation interventions, in compliance with GDPR requirements and ethical clearance considerations for research projects

Objective 2 – Prior to the start of any access and participation project/intervention, establish baseline data requirements and project KPIs that relate to the achievement of BTC/UCS targets to enable effective evaluation to take place at the end

Objective 3 - Conduct timely and effective analysis and evaluation in order to facilitate detailed reporting which enables continuous improvement, using literature and sector-level evidence as well as empirical evidence from the projects/interventions (not just student feedback)

Objective 4 – Engage students in the evaluation process

Objective 5 – Provide in-year progress updates to the Equality and Diversity Committee, Senate and Standards Committee of the Board of Governors as well as producing the full annual evaluation document

Objective 6 – Propose recommendations, changes and improvements in relation to access and participation (in terms of identification of the widest access, success and progression gaps for under-represented groups, what action could be taken if progress is worsening and best practice interventions) and act on those approved by the Senate

Objective 7 – Seek opportunities to collaborate with and identify good practice in evaluation with partner universities

Objective 8 – Evaluate the impact of financial support provided to students to inform future plans through the use of the OfS commissioned Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit in a manner proportionate to the number of bursaries provided and the BTC/UCS strategic measures.

Objective 9 – Disseminate and share findings and approach internally at the Research Symposium and in the BTC/UCS Research Publication as well as externally with the sector

Informing staff and commissioning the APP projects

Key staff are informed about the APP through their membership of the Senate. However information is also circulated through the Equality and Diversity Committee who monitor any gaps across the student lifecycle in relation to WP and Equality and Diversity.

Information will be circulated out to the wider BTC/UCS community through the dissemination of project proposals related to the APP, through the research projects that will be established to run the interventions, monitor and evaluate them and the briefing sessions held with HE staff.

BTC/UCS already runs an annual research and scholarship bidding round through its Research Scholarship and Ethics Committee to support staff to run small scale research projects of their own design. The projects articulated in this APP will be handled in a similar way but with the parameters of the projects clearly defined in accordance with what has been stated in the APP. The projects will be commissioned through the Research Scholarship and Ethics Committee with staff having the opportunity to apply to run them.

Support will be provided to those who are successful in applying to run the projects from the Head of HE. Good practice will also be available from collaborative partner universities. For example good practice in WP, outreach and evaluation workshops run by the University of Plymouth NSSW/NCOP team and Exeter University. There will also be tie-in with Oxford Brookes University in relation to their APP and their students who attend BTC/UCS on franchised courses. Good practice will therefore also continue to be shared, with BTC/UCS benefitting from Oxford Brookes expertise and experience in this area. This will help those running and evaluating the projects at BTC/UCS to learn from the evaluation techniques and good practice established in these universities.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The outcomes and lessons learned from the evaluation of widening participation activities, as well as performance against the KPIs will be incorporated into the annual evaluation of the APP as previously mentioned. This document will be scrutinised by the Senate (and thereby the HE Student President) and presented to the Standards Committee of the Board of Governors.

The Senate meets oversees HE at BTC/UCS. Membership includes the HE Student President, a Governor (as scrutineer), Senior Managers and other related staff. It is chaired by the Principal or Vice Principal. The Senate meets once a term and receives reports in relation to all HE activity. It also monitors progress in relation to the annual HE Enhancement and Action Plan for BTC/UCS. Progress and evaluation related to the APP is reported to the Senate in-year. This enables the Senate to monitor activity and outcomes against milestones and targets three times a year. If there was any failure in progress towards achieving them, the Senate would ask for an action plan to get back on track and progress against the action plan would be monitored in-year. This information is reported thereafter to the Standards Committee of the Board of Governors once a term. They expect to receive updates to enable them to monitor the APP and progress against its targets as well as any necessary action plan to achieve this. This is a standard agenda item for the meeting. The minutes from the Standards Committee are reported to the full Board of Governors so that all Governors are informed.

As shown on the over-arching Theory of Change for BTC/UCS, there are intermediate outcomes and anticipated impact on barriers which will be monitored in addition to the milestones and targets. The Senate will expect a termly progress report in relation to the APP. This will include what activity has taken place and updates in relation to any difficulties encountered with actions taken to overcome them. As the projects progress the intermediate outcomes, milestones and targets will be monitored. The evaluation will be based both on data and on narrative styles of evaluation involving the student participants in the projects. The evaluation is expected to enable the Senate and others to know which interventions are working, which are working better than others and which are not working. This information can then be disseminated and used to inform the further development of the projects.

4. Provision of information to students

Information will be provided to students in the following ways:

- This APP will be published on the University Centre Somerset website.
- Information on financial support will be made clear to students via the website as well as through information provided to them during the application process.
- Tuition fees will be shown via the website as well as via UCAS.

5. Appendix

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Early Childhood Studies and Health & Social Care	£8,200
First degree	Whole college provision excluding line below	£7,800
Foundation degree	Early Childhood Studies and Health & Social Care	£8,200
Foundation degree	Whole college provision excluding line below	£7,800
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	Engineering	£7,800
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	Early Childhood Studies and Health and Social Care	£4,100
Foundation degree	Whole college provision excluding Engineering HNC/HND, Early Childhood Studies and Health and Social Care	£5,200
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	Engineering	£3,900
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Bridgwater and Taunton College

Provider UKPRN: 10000878

Investment summary

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

Note about the data:

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

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£75,000.00	£75,000.00	£75,000.00	£75,000.00	£75,000.00
Access (pre-16)	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00
Access (post-16)	£45,000.00	£45,000.00	£45,000.00	£45,000.00	£45,000.00
Access (adults and the community)	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£135,000.00	£135,000.00	£135,000.00	£135,000.00	£135,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HF1%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HF1)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HF1)	£564,030.00	£564,030.00	£564,030.00	£564,030.00	£564,030.00
Access investment	11.0%	11.0%	11.0%	11.0%	11.0%
Financial support	4.4%	4.4%	4.4%	4.4%	4.4%
Research and evaluation	17.0%	17.0%	17.0%	17.0%	17.0%
Total investment (as %HF1)	32.4%	32.4%	32.4%	32.4%	32.4%

