

Bridgwater & Taunton College, University Centre Somerset

Access and participation plan 2025-26 to 2028-29

Introduction and strategic aim

University Centre Somerset (UCS) delivers the Higher Education (HE) remit of Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC). UCS resides within a large Tertiary College providing high quality academic and vocational Further and Higher Education. We work closely with local employers as a lead partner for our regional Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and boast being one of the largest college providers of apprenticeships in the UK to meet local, regional and national workforce and sector needs.

Our Vision: Transforming lives and communities through innovative learning and partnerships.

Mission Statement

As a leading college of further and higher education, we will:

- Deliver inspirational teaching, learning and skills development;
- Maintain a culture that promotes a supportive, inclusive and safe environment;
- Build highly effective partnerships that positively impact our students;
- Positively influence the educational landscape.

Values

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.

UCS is about fostering ambition and unlocking potential. We value individual talents, aspirations and the unique paths each of our students take on their journey to success. Our maxim is “Degrees for Real Life.” Which draws upon our strong and mature relationships with our local employer partners and our commitment to providing employment ready graduates who have, both the academic qualifications and the industry ready skills and attributes to meet the required sector standards of the respective labour market.

In a nationwide first, UCS gained consent from both the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) and its university partner, University of the West of England (UWE), to deliver nursing degrees locally within Somerset. This has positioned the College as the first FE institution to join the Council of Deans of Health, contributing our voice in shaping health policy and education on a national scale. Our work and success with the NHS to tackle local workforce needs and skills gaps within the region was recently recognised with a Queens’ Anniversary Prize in February 2024.

Our ambition is to be “an inclusive learning organisation acting as a catalyst for positive change”, this is written into the BTC Strategic Planning Framework 2022-27 but also espoused in everything we do. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is a cross-cutting theme of our strategic plan, with whole college training undertaken in 2023-24. We have a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination, harassment, and race crimes, and we take these issues extremely seriously. As such,

all our staff undertake mandatory training in these areas, which is updated annually. We believe that everyone, students and staff alike, are equal and deserving of respect, and we are committed to ensuring that everyone feels safe and supported. At UCS, we celebrate diversity and embrace differences, we are proud of our inclusive community, which is made up of diverse and growing community creating a vibrant learning environment.

Our vision for this Access and Participation Plan (APP) is to remove barriers, mitigate risks and build a sustainable pathway to HE for a range of learners, promoting all the different HE modes of study that we have available, including Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, Foundations Degrees, Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ) and Single Registerable Modules (SRMs). The aim is to offer engaging and supporting opportunities at each step of the learner journey in order to limit the risks to Accessing, Continuing, Attaining and Progressing in HE. We recognise that our students do not meet a traditional HE student profile, as highlighted through our APP, and so we have developed flexible HE pathways for inclusion that are high performing and still accessible.

Risks to equality of opportunity

In identifying the key risks to equality of opportunity we have taken a full organisational overview as a starting point and have used the Equal Opportunities Risk Register (EORR) to undertake a RAG rated review of our HE provision. This has been taken to our EDI committee for consideration in the wider organisational context so that we can apply the same principles to the analysis of risk for all our student cohorts. We have consulted staff via our HE Conference event and undertaken two HE Student workshops to engage student views on our identified risks. Our student panel represented the following student characteristics: mature and young students, student in receipt of Disabled Student Allowance (DSA), free school meal student, first in family, commuter students, residential student, students who have declared a mental health need, student with a physical impairment. As a result of this the following risk areas have been identified as the key priorities for this Access and Participation Plan.

Risk 1

The mental health of students is a nationally identified risk and part of the Office for Students (OFS) EORR., UCS has worked hard to address disparities in continuation and progression between our disabled and non-disabled, part-time and full-time cohorts over the course of our 2020-2025 APP. The headline data as published in our 2023 interim evaluation report, indicates some success (as detailed in Annex A). However, we understand there is more work to be done, particularly in terms of our data analysis and understanding the disability profile of our students to ensure interventions can be targeted for maximum effectiveness. UCAS application data indicates an increasing number of students declaring a mental health issue at application stage. We are also seeing an increase in the number of requests for extenuating circumstances that reference mental health as an on-course challenge. This intersects across all demographics and courses. Our evidence suggests this is a multifactorial issue that has become a high priority due to other associated EORR risks including the ongoing impact of coronavirus and cost of living pressures. In terms of the student lifecycle, we have identified mental health as a key continuation and progression risk for us to address. We also note that Mental Health is likely to have a bigger impact on students from TUNDRA and Polar Quintiles 1 and 2, due to the additional challenges associated with having low socio-economic status. Addressing this risk, we aim to improve continuation rates for these cohorts.

Risk 2

UCS attracts a higher than average number of students from TUNDRA and Polar Quintiles 1 - 3 (as detailed in Annex A). In fact, in this respect our student demography is the opposite to the national picture. However, it is clear from both local and national reports that students in receipt of free school meals in Somerset are far less likely to progress into HE than elsewhere in the UK. There are lower proportion of students eligible for free school meals at UCS than those who were not eligible. Evidence as provided in Annex A, suggests this is a function of insufficient skills and knowledge, information and guidance and their perception of HE. In terms of the student life cycle, we have identified that this cohort represent a key access risk for us to address, particularly given our local demographic and agenda of addressing local skills and employability needs. As an FE College and post 16 education, BTC has reduced the attainment gap between our FSM and non-FSM students to within 2%, our next step is to support their progression onto the several Higher Education options available to them.

Risk 3

As a provider UCS attracts an above average proportion of mature students. This may be attributed to the extensive work that has been undertaken to create a community centred HE offering that is responsive to needs of our local employers and creates opportunities for local people. However, our data indicates that we are seeing a widening of continuation rates between our mature and non-mature students. Evidence suggests that this is the result of a number of risk factors that have a greater impact on the mature cohort than their younger counterparts; cost pressures, ongoing impacts of coronavirus, insufficient academic support (particularly in terms of previously undiagnosed neurodiversity/additional learning needs). In terms of the student life cycle we have identified that this creates a continuation risk for mature students.

In identifying our objectives, we have created a Theory of Change, using the TASO template, for each identified risk.

Objective PTS_1

UCS will decrease the continuation gap between part time disabled students and non-disabled students by 6 percentage points (pp) by 2029.

We will achieve this through a focus on early intervention via enhanced student tracking and monitoring and creating an individualised approach to ensure targeted support and considering the particular impact of mental health as a risk to student continuation. Recognising the need to work collaboratively, we will seek to create positive partnerships with relevant local third-party organisations to signpost appropriate mental health resource for our students to build resilience and self-help strategies. This will be underpinned by the UCS Elevate programme and our existing student support structure.

Objective PTP_1

UCS will reduce the progression gap for disabled and non-disabled students to 1pp by 2029. We will do this by developing a UCS Graduate careers offer that supports all students to recognise their progression routes and for our disabled students, that they do not have to be limited by their disability. We will also engage with our extensive employer network to create a greater understanding of being a disability confident employer and the advantages of disability confidence to their business, through the design and delivery of workshop events. We already have an established skill's development hub which links employers to students so we see this as a natural extension of that work. We will also develop a CreaTech (Creative technologies) skills hub to promote the possibilities of self and flexible employment within the CreaTech industries.

Objective PTA_1

UCS will reduce the gap between Free School Meals and non- Free School Meals applicants by 6.4 pp by 2029. We have set this target in the context of the latest data which shows further widening of the gap for UCS entrants. We will do this by creating a UCS outreach programme that builds on existing good practice, our partnership with Uni Connect (Next Steps South West), our partnerships and Links with HEIs (such as UWE, University of Exeter and Plymouth University), our relationships with our local schools and through the BTC Multi Academy Trust. We will create an innovative approach that supports learners on their journey from school, to our FE and then to our HE provisions with interventions at each stage of the journey.

Objective PTA_2

Recognising that parents and carers are one of the key influences on a young person's decision to progress on to HE, and that parents and carers from economically underrepresented groups are may not have equal opportunity to information and knowledge about HE. UCS will work in partnership with local schools and our FE colleagues, to deliver 400 parent interactions between 2025 and 2029. We will achieve this through the development of a programme of events designed to inform and engage parents in understanding HE offerings and the diverse HE pathways open to their young person, dispel myths and widen access for underrepresented groups.

Objective PTS_2

UCS will eliminate the continuation gap between mature and non-mature students by 2029. Our latest data indicates this is achievable with the gap at 6.8pp in 2020-21 and 2.8pp in 2021-22. We will achieve this by enhanced monitoring and tracking of student data to ensure early identification of students at risk of not continuing on programme to ensure early intervention and support. We have identified that mature learners can have unidentified additional learning support needs that have been undiagnosed at school. We will work with our learning support team to ensure early intervention and support for DSA applications for these learners. We will remain committed to delivery modes that allow for part time work alongside study and also work with our extensive employer network to ensure the diversity of our HE offer particularly in relationship to Higher and Degree Apprenticeships which offer a sustainable alternative to mature learners where the cost of living poses a significant risk. We will also work in partnership with our local employers' network to identify suitable paid part-time employment for learners as well as ensuring the continuation of our bursary scheme.

Intervention Strategy 1: Early Intervention Initiative

Objectives and targets: To decrease the continuation gap between part time disabled students and non-disabled students by 6 percentage points (pp) by 2029

Risks to equality of opportunity

- Mental Health
- Insufficient personal support
- Insufficient academic support
- Ongoing impact of coronavirus
- Cost pressures

Related objectives and targets

Objectives PTP_1, PTS_2,

Related risks to equality of opportunity

- Continuation on programme of study
- Achievement
- Progression from higher education

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Risk Analysis	<p>Undertake a full analysis of existing and new student cohorts to create a comprehensive and granular profile of disabled students identifying students at high risk of continuation challenges. This will include a review of students who have declared mental health issues at any stage of their learner journey with UCS and collation of this information. The information will be regularly updated and reviewed to ensure currency.</p> <p>Enhanced existing activity Target Group: All Students</p>	<p>Administrative costs – staff time to undertake the analysis and continued monitoring.</p>	<p>Share data with Course Tutors, trainer assessors and learning coaches in order to identify students to monitor for potential additional support.</p>	<p>PTP_1, PTS_2</p> <p>IS5</p>
DSA Drop-in	<p>DSA drop in sessions to be run in first term to help students already identified as needing additional support at application and those who have not declared additional needs at application stage, access additional support. This builds on and extends our existing activity in this area to streamline and enhance efficacy and speed up the process of identifying need.</p> <p>New Activity Target Group: All Students with a Disability</p>	<p>Administrative costs and ALS staff time to support drop in sessions. 0.4 ALS support to help DSA applications (existing)</p>	<p>Applications made for DSA where appropriate with additional support where necessary. Early identification of additional needs that can be highlighted to course tutors, trainer assessors and learning coaches for monitoring.</p>	<p>PTP_1, PTA_1, PTS_2</p> <p>IS5</p>

<p>Early Intervention</p>	<p>Early Intervention Strategy via centralised and ongoing student tracking via Markbook, attendance registers and Extenuating Circumstance request to trigger intervention and support to avoid continuation crisis point. Referral strategies and resources to be created in collaboration with 3rd sector partners to build on internal welfare support capacity for student identifying a Mental Health need. This will be applied to all student groups in recognition that any student at any time is vulnerable to a mental health issue that may require support. New and Building on Activity Collaborative Target Group: All Students</p>	<p>Administrative costs and HE Team time to undertake centralised monitoring. Active IQ L2 Award in Mental Health Awareness training undertaken by 140 UCS/BTC staff Administrative costs to create resources and establish 3rd sector partnerships working collaboratively with existing BTC/UCS student engagement team to ensure access to mental health support services.</p>	<p>Targeted and tailored information that allows tutors, trainer assessors and learning coaches to track, support and monitor progress to ensure timely early interventions. Targeted signposting to relevant support and information, empowering students. Building two-way relationships with our local third sector to support mental health needs.</p>	<p>PTP_1, PTA_1, PTS_2 IS5</p>
<p>UCS Elevate</p>	<p>Development and use of the UCS Elevate programme in order to maintain physical, social, emotional and mental wellbeing and development in order to underpin the Objective. Existing activity Target Group: All Students</p>	<p>UCS Elevate materials and tutor-based information sharing via the HE Community of Practice, led by the HE Teaching and Learning Coach</p>	<p>UCS Elevate creates sustainable personal management strategies for students</p>	<p>PTP_1, PTA_1, PTS_2 IS2 IS5</p>

Bursary Fund	<p>College bursary fund to support students experiencing financial difficulty which may be a factor contributing to poor mental health.</p> <p>Existing activity Target Group: Eligible Students</p>	Bursary Fund (See FIT document)	Financial support to minimise continuation risk	<p>PTP_1, PTA_1, PTS_2</p> <p>IS5</p>
University Mental Health Charter	<p>We are already signed up to the Association of Colleges mental health charter. We will aim work towards UCS being in a position to sign up to the University Mental Health Charter.</p> <p>New Activity Target group: All Students</p>	Staff resource and management time	Demonstrate whole organisational approach and Commitment to supporting mental health of our student body	ALL

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£225,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Mental health is a growing area of concern as detailed in Annex A, our UCAS application data shows a rise in declarations of mental health disabilities and our internal extenuating circumstances data indicates that our existing students are increasingly citing mental health issues as a barrier to their learning. Our OfS APP data indicates we have made good progress in closing gaps between our disabled and non-disabled students, but it suggests that our disabled learners still do not continue or progress as well on our programmes as our non-disabled learners. We cannot be complacent in the progress we have made and the next phase of our APP Strategy is to critically integrate this data further to truly understand the profile of our disabled students at a granular level, particularly in relation to mental health disabilities. This will allow us to provide targeted support to improve the continuation and progression rates and close gaps between this cohort and their non-disabled peers.

“Encouraging early disability disclosure is crucial, especially for students with complex needs or from lower socio-economic backgrounds, to facilitate participation in transition programmes”¹. Furthermore, a 2019 survey of 1,773 disabled students showed that only 40 per cent were aware of DSA before starting their course.²

Data as presented in Annex A also indicates that students from TUNDRA and Polar quintiles 1 and 2 are more likely to experience mental health challenges. Our student profile is predominately from Quintiles 1-3 for these measures and therefore interventions to support mental health issues are likely to have a big impact on our learners.

We want to be sure that continuation and progression success for all our students by ensuring the effective deployment of resources at an early stage to avoid students reaching a crisis point. Despite the existence of established welfare support within our organisation we recognise that we cannot do this alone. Therefore, we want to work collaboratively with our local 3rd Sector to develop sustainable and mutually beneficial support arrangements.

One of the things we do very well as a small provider, is really get to know our students by providing an intimate learning environment. The rationale behind this particular strategy is that it builds upon what is already good practice, our established pastoral ethos, which utilises the existing staff resource, by formulating a sustainable strategy that underpins and formalises support.

¹ TASO Supporting disabled students – mapping reasonable adjustments and transition support 11/04/2024 [New report: Supporting disabled students – mapping reasonable adjustments and transition support - TASO](#)

² DfE, 'Evaluation of Disabled Students' Allowances', 2019 (available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-disabled-students-allowances-dsas>External link (Opens in a new tab or window))

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Risk Analysis	Granular understanding of student profile to ensure targeted and appropriate evaluation. Particularly in respect of Mental Health needs	TYPE 1 Data analysis High quality detailed student profile data that provides a "Baseline" for impact analysis	An annual evaluation will be undertaken for all activity to ensure it is on track and effective. An interim evaluation report will be published half way through the plan cycle and at the end of the plan. These will be presented at the UCS HE conference, published in the UCS Research and Scholarship Showcase and on the UCS website. Findings will also be shared, where appropriate, through established partnerships with the Association of Colleges and our University Partner provider networks.
ALS Drop-in	Increase in successful ALS applications increasing number of eligible students getting timely support.	TYPE 2: Successful ALS applications year to year Annual continuation gap analysis disabled and non-disabled students Annual completion gap analysis for TUNDRA quintile 1 & 2 students	
Early Intervention Initiative	Close Continuation Gap between disabled and non-disabled students	TYPE 1 Anonymised data on referrals to 3 rd sector interventions via student engagement team for Mental Health Support to track success of initiative. TYPE 2: Annual continuation gap analysis disabled and non-disabled students Annual completion gap analysis for TUNDRA quintile 1 & 2 students TYPE 2: Annual monitoring of NSS data	

UCS Elevate	Sustainable personal Management Strategies	Qualitative data to enhance the quantitative methods above collected via Learner Voice focus groups with students. This will inform development of the initiative.	
Bursary Fund	Additional Financial Support	Type 2 Analysis of recipients to create profile data for monitoring.	
University Mental Health Charter	Charter programme joined	Charter adopted	

Intervention Strategy 2: UCS Graduate Careers

Objectives and targets: To reduce the progression gap for disabled and non-disabled students to 1pp by 2029

Risks to equality of opportunity

- Mental Health
- Progression from Higher Education
- Ongoing impact of coronavirus
- Cost pressures

Related objectives and targets

Objective PTS_1, PTS_2,

Related risks to equality of opportunity

- Insufficient Personal Support
- Insufficient Academic Support

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
UCS Graduate Careers	<p>Creation of an inclusive Graduate Careers offer that includes support for disabled students to recognise that their progression routes do not have to be limited by their disability, this will be particularly impactful for students with mental health issues.</p> <p>New Activity Collaborative Target Group: All Students</p>	<p>New outreach 1 X FTE post to include Graduate careers support delivery and co-ordination with third sector partners and employers.</p>	<p>Close the progression gaps between disabled and non-disabled students with an aim to eliminate this completely by 2029</p>	<p>PTS_1, PTA_1, PTS_2</p> <p>IS5</p>
Promoting Disability Confidence	<p>Linking with the LSIP, this is an innovative approach focussed on the end point of the student journey. This will be a pilot strategy with a view to trialling its success to assess the potential for future development. Delivery will start by sourcing and hosting workshops to local employers on understanding Disability Confidence and the business benefits to a diverse workforce, as well as understanding Mental Health issues facing employees, in order to open up graduate opportunities locally for Disabled Students.</p> <p>New Activity Collaborative Target Group Disabled Students</p>	<p>Resource development working with relevant 3rd sector organisations Administrative costs in event organisation and feedback evaluation. Venue costs (in kind)</p>	<p>Assess whether this is a viable strategy by analysing engagement from local business community by tracking numbers of employers engaging and collating feedback. Aim to establish a programme of events that involves local employers and eventually links in to a UCS careers fair.</p>	<p>PTS_1, PTA_1, PTS_2</p> <p>IS5</p>

<p>CreaTech Skills Hub</p>	<p>Supporting our Graduate Careers offer by developing skills Hub for the CreaTech industries which can support and empower students into flexible working and self-employment to accommodate their Mental Health needs. This will provide information graduates need to develop a skill set for self-employment, give access to resources and industry connections, enhancing skills and knowledge delivered through UCS ELEVATE.</p> <p>New Activity Collaborative Target Group CreaTech Students</p>	<p>Administration Costs Venue costs (in kind) Academic specialists staff time</p>	<p>Close the progression gaps between disabled and non-disabled students with an aim to eliminate this completely by 2029, by creating supported opportunities and additional skill set for self-employment, flexible working and</p>	<p>PTS_1, PTA_1, PTS_2</p> <p>IS5</p>
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Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£225,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Our OfS APP data indicates that our disabled learners do not progress as well from our programmes as our non-disabled learners, we recognise mental health as a disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if they: 'Have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Our aim is to create a disability confident environment in which all students can thrive and realise their full potential.

We also know that our student profile is based around local students who want to learn and progress locally. Of all our 23/24 applicants for L4 and above courses, 66% came from Somerset postcode with 52% being from the immediately local TA postcodes. Of the offers accepted firm from these applicants, 77% came from a Somerset postcode with 61% being from the closest TA postcodes.

Feedback from our consultations with staff and students has highlighted the perceived need for a defined graduate career offer and support. Our progression data from the Graduate Outcome Survey (see Annex A) also suggests we have work to do in improving the progression outcomes. This is why we have committed to the creation of two new support initiatives, UCS Graduate Careers and The CreaTech Skills Hub, and the investment in staffing that comes along with this. Whilst all students have the potential to benefit we see this as being particularly impactful for disabled students, in line with the OFS' Disability in Higher Education Advisory Panels aim to "build an excellent student experience for disabled students".

As a provider we have an established relationship with a number of local employers including large organisations such as the NHS, EDF and the MOD and we are to become the training provider of choice for the new Agritas Gravity Project which will create around 4000 new jobs, with a further 500 in the supply chain. As part of this project we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bristol University. This puts us in a unique position to think innovatively about the progression stage of the student journey and to work with local employers to create a Disability confident local employment market, that understands mental health as a disability. This is a bold strategy and as such we want to use this opportunity to pilot it and see if we can create something in the mid-term that could have a long-term impact not just for our graduates but for the local labour market and our communities.

Evaluation

	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
UCS Graduate Careers	Annual continuation gap analysis disabled and non-disabled students	TYPE 2: Annual Progression gap analysis disabled and non-disabled students using OFS data dashboard and Graduate outcome Survey data.	An annual evaluation will be undertaken for all activity to ensure it is on track and effective. An interim evaluation report will be published half way through the plan cycle and at the end of the plan. These will be presented at the UCS HE conference, published in the UCS Research and Scholarship Showcase and on the UCS website. Findings will also be shared, where appropriate, through established partnerships with the Association of Colleges and our University Partner provider networks.
Promoting Disability Confidence	This is a pilot approach the outcome will be to assess whether this works as a strategy to improve progression outcomes.	TYPE 1 Number of sessions delivered Number of employers engaging Feedback from each session as an ongoing development tool	
CreaTech Skills Hub	Annual continuation gap analysis disabled and non-disabled students	TYPE 2: Annual Progression gap analysis disabled and non-disabled students using OFS data dashboard and Graduate outcome Survey data. TYPE 1: Review of initiative: Number of students engaged, qualitative impact data via student feedback.	

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

Intervention Strategy 3 : UCS Outreach: a learner journey focussed approach

Objectives and targets: To reduce the gap between Free School Meals and non- Free School Meals applicants by 6.4 pp by 2029

Risks to equality of opportunity

- Knowledge and skills
- Information and Guidance
- Perception of HE

Related objectives and targets

Objective PTA_1

Related risks to equality of opportunity

- Insufficient Personal support
- Insufficient Academic support
- Cost Pressures

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Targeted outreach	<p>It is our aim to create an outreach programme that can support learners on a full journey from Level 2 to level 6.</p> <p>Raising aspiration and attainment through targeted interventions with a wide range of local school partners in order to augment and complement the work already delivered through Uni Connect. By extending outreach work beyond the Uni Connect targeted schools, we can reach more FSM students across Somerset.</p> <p>Develop sustainable transferable skills that underpin attainment for this cohort through a workshop programme delivering key organisational and study skills.</p> <p>Work with the BTC MAT schools to understand what schools want to support their own initiatives</p> <p>New Activity Collaborative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Group FSM pupils 11-18 year olds but available to all 	<p>1 x New FTE Outreach post</p> <p>1x New 0.4 Outreach and Evaluation Co-ordinator post</p>	<p>Creation of a sustainable and viable programme to support working with school partners to raise aspiration and attainment among their FSM cohort to create opportunity, with a view to reduce the gap between Free School Meals and non- Free School Meals applicants to UCS by 5 pp by 2029</p>	<p>PTA_2 IS4</p>

<p>Bridges to HE</p>	<p>Collaborative Project in Partnership with Exeter University delivering information sessions to BTC A level students about Higher Education life, pathways, funding, finance, scholarships, campus visits and taster sessions.</p> <p>New Version of Previous Activity delivered in direct partnership with Exeter University rather than via Uni Connect activity.</p> <p>Target Group A level cohort</p>	<p>A level tutorial time</p> <p>Outreach coordinator organisation of sessions</p> <p>Co-delivery of sessions by FTE outreach post working with Exeter University staff and student ambassadors</p>	<p>Sustainable ongoing project and collaboration between UCS and a Russell Group University for the benefit of BTC Students</p>	<p>PTA_2 IS4</p>
<p>Promoting Alternative Pathways</p>	<p>Break down Barriers and challenge perceptions of HE Using a range of methodologies including (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Experiential learning through Masterclasses and Campus visits. -Relatable influencers (“someone like me”) -Meet the teacher drop in sessions -Talk to the employer drop in sessions <p>Demonstrate the benefits of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships as a different approach to HE.</p> <p>New Activity Collaborative</p> <p>Target Groups FSM pupils 11-18 Year olds but available to all</p>	<p>1 x New FTE Outreach post</p> <p>1x New 0.4 Outreach and Evaluation Co-ordinator post</p> <p>Marketing administration creating “relatable Influencers”</p> <p>Lecturer time Drop in session</p> <p>Employer liaison organisation via curriculum areas / course leaders</p>	<p>Create an understanding of the different pathways for HE and to expand this offering as a viable alternative for students</p> <p>Retain full time delivery models for degree programmes that allow for part-timework alongside study.</p> <p>Reduce the gap between Free School Meals and non- Free School Meals applicants to UCS by 5pp by 2029</p>	<p>PTA_2, PTS_2 IS4</p>

<p>Outreach Capacity Building</p>	<p>Create CPD programme for FE colleagues within the organisation, conducting schools' outreach, to be deliver outreach content to create a sustainable and long-term strategy. We will also work to support Curriculum colleagues to build subject specialist outreach such as Cyber First Status for computing. Building on Existing Activity Collaborative Target Groups FSM pupils 11-18 Year olds</p>	<p>Development of CPD materials</p> <p>Staff time delivering and undertaking CPD</p> <p>Outreach role working with curriculum colleagues</p>	<p>Building Capacity to work with school partners to raise aspiration and attainment among their FSM cohort to create opportunity, with a view to reduce the gap between Free School Meals and non- Free School Meals applicants to UCS by 5pp by 2029</p>	<p>PTA_2 IS4</p>
<p>Sustained commitment to Attainment raising</p>	<p>As an organisation BTS supports its learners to achieve their English and Maths GCSEs. In the summer exam cycle of 2024, we supported 937 for Maths GCSE and 823 for English. This is an annual College wide commitment which involves all staff supporting, invigilating and delivering this opportunity. Existing Activity Target Group: Students without Grade 4 or above at GCSE English and / or Maths including adult learners</p>	<p>Staff time additional support and revisions sessions</p> <p>Support staff time invigilating and supporting learners needing special access arrangements</p>	<p>Whole College approach to raising aspiration for learners</p>	<p>IS1, IS5</p>

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£180,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Research by NEON indicates that in 2021/22 young people in receipt of free school meals (FSM) in Somerset were 52% less likely to progress in to HE than the in the top performing area. The South West region has the lowest participation rate in the whole of the UK for this cohort and Somerset is the third worst area in the UK with only 14% of FSM learners progressing into HE. UCS wants to target access for the FSM cohort as an absolute priority as it is intrinsic to the BTC/UCS values to improve the lives and opportunity for local people and communities. That young people from our County in receipt of FSM, do not progress into HE at the same rate as elsewhere in England is something we need to do more to address.

We know from the work undertaken by NSSW (Uni connect) that the interventions that have the biggest impact on learners are those that build over a series of events, are hands on and relatable, and that engage early. We see aspiration raising and attainment raising as intrinsically linked for the FSM cohort. Aspiration creates a rationale to attain. With the Uni Connect project coming to an end in its current format there is an opportunity for us to build on and extend outreach to engage those at highest risk of not having equal access to Knowledge and Skills, Information and Guidance and where the perception of HE is at its most distorted.

We have been a partner in the Bridges to HE Project with The University of Exeter for two years and have worked with them to develop an ongoing strategy post Uni Connect to deliver a sustainable outreach programme to benefit A level students at BTC. This activity supports our outreach vision by introducing a Russell Group University, information about scholarships, finance and funding, the opportunity for campus visits and to meet student ambassadors. It is part of the University of Exeter's widening participation and outreach strategy and is a truly collaborative partnership initiative.

Evidence from a wide range of sources (detailed in Annex B) suggests that students from lower income backgrounds, as well as first in family students, are more likely to worry about the costs of HE. In fact, recent research by UCAS identified that 48% of young people they surveyed cited that their choices were restricted by not having enough money. As a provider, we already deliver a diverse range of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships. We have recently received £296,254 from the OFS Degree apprenticeships funding competition: Wave 2 to further develop our Degree Apprenticeships in Nuclear Scientist and Nuclear Engineer and Registered Nurse Degree. These "non-traditional" pathways to Higher Education offer a real and viable alternative for this cohort, assuming they are aware of them, which is why outreach to schools remains such an important pillar of our Access and Participation Strategy.

Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Targeted outreach	<p>Create sustainable opportunities for FSM students to experience HE</p> <p>Close the gap in the number of FSM and non-FSM applicants to UCS.</p>	<p>Type 1: No of FSM students in receipt of outreach interventions to create baseline data for annual monitoring.</p> <p>Type 2: Annual monitoring of UCS UCAS applications data for FSM applicants.</p> <p>Type 2: Monitor progression pathways to evaluate success, students progressing from level 2 to BTC level 3 and then to UCS level 4 onwards.</p>	<p>An interim evaluation report will be published half way through the plan cycle and at the end of the plan. These will be presented at the UCS HE conference, published in the UCS Research and Scholarship Showcase and on the UCS website.</p> <p>Project reporting at midway point and annual monitoring of impact with review and recommendations.</p> <p>Findings will also be shared, where appropriate, through established partnerships with the Association of Colleges and our University Partner provider networks.</p>
Bridges to HE	<p>Create Opportunities for BTC A level students to access HE</p>	<p>Type 1: No of students participating in the project</p> <p>Type 2: Collaborative evaluation activity with the University of Exeter</p>	
Promoting Alternative Pathways	<p>Close the gap in the number of FSM and non-FSM applicants to UCS.</p>	<p>Type 1: No of FSM students in receipt of outreach interventions to create baseline data for annual monitoring.</p> <p>Type 2: Monitor progression pathways to evaluate success, students progressing to Higher and Degree Apprenticeships with UCS</p>	
Outreach Capacity Building	<p>Increased Capacity for outreach</p>	<p>Type 1: Number of staff trained</p> <p>Number of sessions delivered by them</p>	
Sustained commitment to Attainment Raising	<p>Increased students achieving GCSE grade 4 and above for Maths and English</p>	<p>Type 1: GCSE results data</p>	

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

Intervention Strategy 4: Parent and Carers Information and Knowledge Sessions

Objectives and targets: To deliver 400 parent interactions between 2025 and 2029.

Risks to equality of opportunity

- Knowledge and skills
- Information and Guidance
- Perception of HE

Related objectives and targets

Objectives PTA_1

Related risks to equality of opportunity

- Insufficient Personal support
- Cost Pressures
- Mental Health
- Limited choice of Course type and delivery mode

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Parents and Carers Engagement Sessions	<p>Working with School and College Partners to Develop and support delivery of a programme of events designed to inform and engage parents in understanding HE offerings and different pathways for their young person, dispel myths and widen access</p> <p>Including: Student Finance Budgeting HE Pathways</p> <p>New activity Collaborative Target Group: FSM students but available to all</p>	<p>1 x New FTE Outreach post 1x New 0.4 Outreach and Evaluation Co-ordinator post</p>	<p>Improve knowledge and understanding of parents by offering accessible information about the diverse range of HE pathways their Young person can access as alternatives to “traditional” provision such as apprenticeships and HTQs</p> <p>Improve understanding of key potential barriers to supporting an HE pathway for their young person such as student finance. Reduce application gap between non-FSM and FSM applicants.</p>	<p>PTA_1 IS3</p>

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£40,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale

It is widely recognised within the HE sector, that Parents and carers have an increasing role in the decision making process of young people for their post 18 pathways. Latest research by UCAS “Inside the minds of GenZ” reveals learners like two-way conversations about their future and that involving parents is crucial as they are pivotal in a young person’s decision-making process about their future.

Further research that shows that the decision-making process can be particularly difficult for students who are “First in Family” (FiF) to attend HE provision. In turn, research from the Higher Education Policy Institute³ suggests that students from more socio-economically disadvantaged families are more likely to be FiF or First Generation HE Students. The same research recommends that: “Universities should deliver specific outreach engagement for the parents of groups that are under-represented in higher education. This should address misconceptions that fuel parents’ concerns, with particular attention given to common misconceptions around student finance.”⁴

This evidence combined with the fact that Somerset has the third lowest rate in England for the progression of FSM students into HE indicates that extending strategies to increase the knowledge and understanding of parents has to be considered. As we already have existing partnerships with so many local schools we believe this is a natural extension of our outreach vision.

Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Short name of activity	Short description of outcomes	Type of evidence you intend to generate e.g. empirical (Type 2).	When evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take.
Parents and Carers Engagement Sessions	To deliver 400 parent interactions between 2025 and 2029	Type 1: Number of Parents/Carers reached Type1: Session evaluation Feedback including a self-declaration as to whether child in receipt of FSM Monitor Feedback for programme development. Monitor Feedback for evidence of changing opinions of HE Type 2: Annual Application data monitoring of FSM applications.	An interim evaluation report will be published half way through the plan cycle and at the end of the plan. These will be presented at the UCS HE conference, published in the UCS Research and Scholarship Showcase and on the UCS website. Findings will also be shared, where appropriate, through established partnerships with the Association of Colleges and our University Partner provider networks.

³ HEPI report 146 First-in-Family Students; Harriet Coombes 2021

⁴ HEPI report 146 First-in-Family Students; Harriet Coombes 2021 pg 41

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

Intervention Strategy 5: Mature Learner Support

Objectives and targets: To eliminate the continuation gap between mature and non-mature students by 2029

Risks to equality of opportunity

- Cost pressures
- Ongoing impacts of coronavirus
- Insufficient academic support (particularly in terms of previously undiagnosed neurodiversity/additional learning needs)
- Mental Health

Related objectives and targets.

Objectives PTS_1, PTP_1

Related risks to equality of opportunity

- Insufficient Personal Support
- Limited Choice of Course Type and Delivery mode

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Risk Analysis	<p>Undertake a full analysis of existing and new student cohorts to create a comprehensive and granular profile of disabled students identifying students at high risk of continuation challenges. This will include a review of students who have declared mental health issues at any stage of their learner journey with UCS and collation of this information. The information will be regularly updated and reviewed to ensure currency.</p> <p>Enhanced existing activity Target Group: All Students</p>	<p>Administrative costs – staff time to undertake the analysis and continued monitoring</p>	<p>Share data with Course Tutors, trainer assessors and learning coaches in order to identify students to monitor for potential additional support.</p>	<p>PTS_1, PTP_1</p> <p>IS1</p>
ALS Drop-in	<p>ALS drop in sessions to be run in first term to help students already identified as needing additional support at application and those who have not declared additional needs at application stage, access additional support. This builds on and extends our existing activity in this area to streamline and enhance efficacy and speed up the process of identifying need.</p> <p>New Activity Target Group: Mature Students who may have self-diagnosed</p>	<p>Administrative costs and ALS staff time to support drop in sessions. 0.4 ALS support to help DSA applications (existing)</p>	<p>Applications made for DSA where appropriate with additional support where necessary. Early identification of additional needs that can be highlighted to course tutors, trainer assessors and learning coaches for monitoring.</p>	<p>PTP_1, PTA_1</p> <p>IS1</p>
Early Intervention	<p>Early Intervention Strategy via centralised and ongoing student tracking via Markbook, attendance registers and Extenuating Circumstance request to trigger intervention and support to avoid continuation crisis point.</p> <p>New Activity Collaborative Target Group: All Students</p>	<p>Administrative costs and HE Team time to undertake centralised monitoring.</p>	<p>Targeted and tailored information that allows tutors, trainer assessors and learning coaches to track, support and monitor progress to ensure timely early interventions. Targeted signposting to</p>	<p>PTS_1, PTP_1, PTA_1,</p> <p>IS1</p>

			relevant support and information, empowering students.	
Promoting Alternative Pathways	<p>Work with local employers to actively promote higher apprenticeship opportunities for mature learners where they are paid, and flexible pathways such as HTQs and Micro-credentials, in order to mitigate some of the barriers to learning.</p> <p>Where appropriate, ensure maintenance of two day a week delivery mode for Degree courses to allow students to work and engage with organisations such as NHS bank to highlight part-time working opportunities linked to our courses.</p> <p>Enhanced Existing activity – greater offer</p> <p>Target Group: All Students</p>	<p>Outreach and Marketing resources</p> <p>Student engagement time in facilitating recruitment days.</p>	Alternative routes as a viable pathway for mature learners to mitigate barriers that this cohort is particularly vulnerable to such as cost pressures, family and work commitments.	PTS_1, PTA_1, IS1
UCS Elevate	<p>Development and use of the UCS Elevate Tutorial programme in order to maintain physical, social, emotional and mental wellbeing in order to underpin the Objective.</p> <p>Existing activity</p> <p>Target Group: All Students</p>	UCS Elevate materials and tutor-based information sharing via the HE Community of Practice, led by the HE Teaching and Learning Coach	UCS Elevate creates sustainable personal management strategies for students	PTS_1, PTP_1, PTA_1, IS1
Bursary Payments to eligible students	College bursary fund to support students experiencing financial difficulty which may be a factor contributing to poor mental health.	Bursary Fund	Financial support to minimise continuation risk	PTS_1, PTP_1, PTA_1, IS1

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

£225,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Using the OFS A&PP data dashboard we note a continuation gap between our mature and non-mature learners of 6.8pp. The latest available data shows that this gap has closed to 2.8% in 2021-22. However, using the EORR for this cohort it is clear that this cohort are particularly vulnerable to multiple risks: Mental Health, Ongoing effects of Covid 19 and Cost of living.

We know that at Equal Considerations date 2024, UCAS applications for mature students were down by 5% nationally. UCS has a solid track record of attracting students from this cohort but there is a need to ensure we avoid complacency and can continue to do this by easing the barriers and risks to this cohort that occur at all stages of the student journey.

As a provider we already offer flexible delivery modes to try and reduce barriers to study. If a mature student can find the appropriate pathway to HE study on, that reduces the risks impacting on their learner journey they are more likely to remain on course and continue. In addition to 2 day a week delivery, Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, we are also part of the Modular Acceleration Project to prepare for fully using the Lifelong Learning Entitlement from 2025 for HTQs and Micro-credentials, which will offer even greater flexibility to our mature learner cohort.

As outlined above, and to add value to our Plan, we can seek to eliminate the continuation gap between our mature and non-mature learners by using the diverse range of interventions we are proposing to meet our other objectives.

Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Risk Analysis	Granular understanding of student profile to ensure targeted and appropriate evaluation. Particularly in respect of Mental Health needs	TYPE 1 Data analysis High quality detailed student profile data that provides a “Baseline” for impact analysis	<p>An interim evaluation report will be published half way through the plan cycle and at the end of the plan. These will be presented at the UCS HE conference, published in the UCS Research and Scholarship Showcase and on the UCS website.</p> <p>Findings will also be shared, where appropriate, through established partnerships with the Association of Colleges and our University Partner provider networks.</p>
ALS Drop-in	Increase in successful ALS applications increasing number of eligible students getting timely support.	TYPE 2: Successful ALS applications year to year Annual continuation gap analysis mature and non-mature students	
Early Intervention Initiative	Eliminate the Continuation Gap mature and non-mature students	TYPE 2: Annual continuation gap analysis TYPE 2: Annual monitoring of NSS data	
Promoting Alternative Pathways	Eliminate the continuation Gap mature and non-mature learners by getting them on to the best fit course for their circumstances	Type 2: Analyse Mature student numbers for alternative pathways: Higher Apprenticeships Degree Apprenticeships HTQs Micro Credentials Against Annual Continuation Gap data	
UCS Elevate	Sustainable personal Management Strategies	Qualitative data to enhance the quantitative methods above collected via Learner Voice focus groups with students. This will inform development of the initiative.	
Bursary Fund	Additional Financial Support	Type 2 Analysis of recipients to create profile data for monitoring.	

Whole provider approach

EDI is one of our cross-cutting themes for BTC and UCS so there is a whole college approach in relation to inclusivity and equality. The EDI Policy sets out the approach and this is monitored by the cross-college EDI Committee. UCS APP and activity is a standing agenda item on the college EDI Committee which is chaired by the Deputy Principal and has staff representatives from across both the college and UCS community, as well as student representation.

Our APP forms part of the whole college ethos for Equality of Opportunity and aligned with meeting our specific public duties under the Equality Act. There are reporting mechanisms through from the EDI committee through the HE Senate and through to Governors. Therefore, the strategic approach is accountable under the whole institutions governance, mean our approach must be dynamic, challenging and aim 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.

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. This includes Admissions, Learning Resource Centres, Additional Learning Support, Wellbeing, Safeguarding, Counselling, Student Engagement and Student Support teams Their work takes account of a number of policies including the UCS Admissions policy, Contextual Offer Statement, UCS Additional Learning Support Policy, UCS Student Engagement Policy, the Assessment Framework, Academic Regulations and 7-ways Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment and the UCS Student Support Funding Policy.

Furthermore, as an organisation we are committed to our wider communities and have therefore developed strategies within our plan that can contribute to the sustainability of communities through flexible employer responsive HE pathways, that lead to “Degrees for Real Life”, meeting skills and knowledge gaps within the local area and leading to employment and community growth.

Student consultation

Two student consultation events were held (24/05/2024 and 03/06/2024) and were attended by a total of five students.

These students between them represented the following groups:

- Mature learners
- Disabled learners (physical and mental health)
- Commuter students
- Free school meals students
- First in family learners
- Younger learners
- Learners in college residential accommodation

Students were presented the rationale for the objectives and initiatives identified for the 2025-29 Access and Participation Plan and asked for their thoughts, observations and feedback. They were also asked whether there were any areas they felt had been missed or could be improved upon. All of the students engaged fully in the consultation and contributed to the discussion.

Student monitoring and evaluation will be integrated into our provision review, through learner voice and student forums, which will seek feedback on some of the interventions noted in this plan.

This feedback will be an important part of our plan evaluation strategy and will be included in our interim evaluation reporting.

Evaluation of the plan

Our commitment to high quality evaluation of our intervention strategies is underpinned by the plan to appoint an Outreach and Evaluation Co-ordinator role which will have a responsibility for supporting the planning, implementation and evaluation of the activities delivered as part of our APP.

As a small provider we recognise that there are limitations to our evaluation constrained by cohort sizes and available resource. However, we still believe we can evaluate to inform our own APP continuous development cycle, staff CPD, student experience and also to contribute to the body of evidence available for providers of a similar profile to our own.

This means our evidence base will be focuses on Type 1 and Type 2 evidence. Our cohort sizes and available resource will not accommodate Type 3 evidence generation and it would be counterproductive to try. We have developed robust theories of change to underpin our intervention strategies and will incorporate plan evaluation into our quality cycle to ensure that activity and progress against targets is regularly reviewed, assessed and reported.

We intend to utilise the skills knowledge and experience of colleagues to underpin our evaluation as well as arrange of qualitative and quantitative measures through surveys, PowerBI, ProMonitor, Pro Solution and student voice and forum. This wide raging approach should enable us to collect high quality data. At all times we will adhere to the established protocols of GDPR, data sharing agreement. We will also follow the guidance of our Research Scholarship and Ethics Committee when designing evaluation resources.

Provision of information to students

In order to improve the efficacy of our bursary support we are introducing an automated system that directly draws upon information provided by students to Student Finance England to ensure those entitled are offered the appropriate support even if they are aware of this or not. This consists of a grant of a minimum of £300 for all eligible students, payable during the current academic year, larger grants may be available per student depending on the number of applications received to the bursary support fund. Should allocated funds for this bursary as set out in the FIT document be utilised, more funds will be made available. Bursaries are paid per term in equal instalments. Eligible students studying on a part time programme will receive a pro rata amount.

Eligibility criteria for students

- 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 the current academic year.
- Do not already hold a higher-level qualification such as a Degree, Foundation Degree, CertHE or HNC/D.
- If students receive full or part sponsorship (for example from an employer or parent) for their tuition fees they are not eligible for this bursary.
- The College 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.

All information relating to our fees and bursary support will be made available on our website and is fully detailed in our HE Support Funding Policy and Annual Fee Summary and Fee Policy.

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

As a relatively small provider we have deemed it appropriate, to ensure both the credibility and trustworthiness of our APP, to have adopted a mixed approach to identifying and prioritising our key risks to equality of opportunity. This has meant drawing from several sources of data available to us which includes the Access & Participation Data dashboard provided by the OfS, as our primary data source, our own internal data held at UCS and sector wide reports that demonstrate regional variance and issues in terms of risk to equality of opportunity. This has enabled us to demonstrate a breadth and depth to the context that underpins our theories of change and to fully evaluate risk, where there may be limited data available from one particular source.

As part of this exercise, we have utilised the EORR and its inherent framework and undertaken a bespoke RAG rating exercise to look at the identified risks from a whole provider perspective, as well as at cohort level, this can be viewed in appendix A1. This has enabled us to look beyond the data alone to ensure we have fully considered sector risks in our College Based Higher Education and demographical context. We have also referred closely to the previous and ongoing work in evaluating our current plan where progress against our existing targets has been analysed, the published report can be found here. <https://www.somerset.ac.uk/getfile/655> (p8-16).

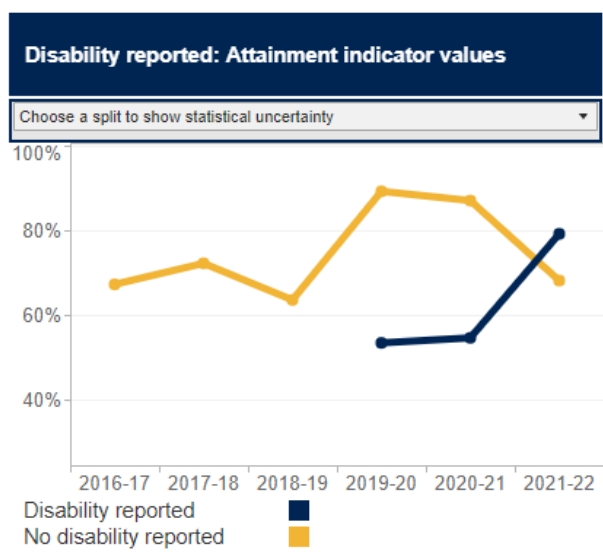
Additionally, as a successful applicant for OFS Wave 2 and Wave 3 funding to increase the number of Level 6 Degree Apprenticeships in England, we have aligned our plan proposals with this area of strategic development noting in particular the need for us to provide a diverse delivery mode for students entering higher education, which include degree apprenticeships and HTQs, to widen participation amongst these and future cohorts.

Our Identified Risks:

1. Disability

In our current APP we have focussed on reducing the gaps between our disabled and non-disabled students. The OFS Access and Participation Data Dashboard indicates that we have demonstrated success in eliminating the gaps for “good degree” attainments, as well as continuation rates for full time disabled students, as indicated figure 1 and figure 2 below:

UCS Data



National Data

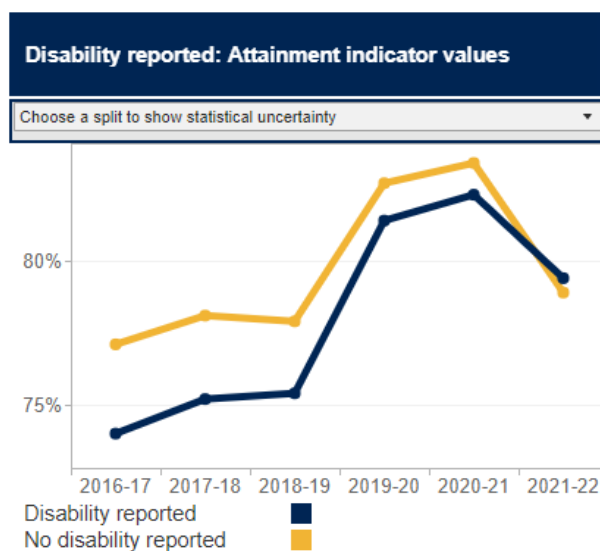


Figure 1: – OFS Access and Participation Data Dashboard Disability reported: Attainment

Aim	Ref No.	Target Group	Description	Baseline data	2020-21 Milestone	OFS DATA FOR ACTUAL PROGRESS AGAINST BASELINE DATA	2021-22 Milestone	OFS DATA FOR ACTUAL PROGRESS AGAINST BASELINE DATA
Success								
Reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS 1	Disabled	Reduce the percentage difference in degree attainment (1 st and 2:1) between disabled and non-disabled students	10pp gap	9pp	32.6pp *	7pp	-11.1pp
Reduce the continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	PTS 2	Disabled	Reduce the continuation gap between full time disabled and non-disabled students	6.9pp gap	6pp	-2.4pp	5.5pp	-4.5pp

Figure 2: – UCS interim evaluation of Access and Participation Plan 2020-25 progress against milestones

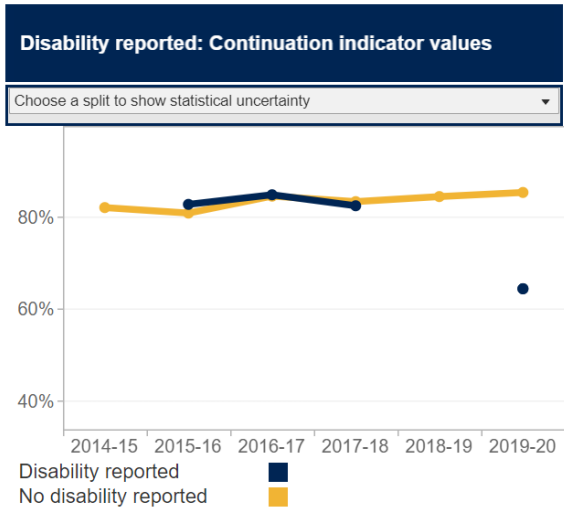
However, our own data indicates this trend has not continued, in fact our own internal data from 2022-23 indicates that from the 79.2% good degree attainment rate achieved by disabled students in 2021-22 this decreased to 58% in 2022-23. As illustrated by table 1 below, we strongly believe there may have been data anomaly during 2021-22 in the OFS data, which can be attributed to the different learning environments inherent to the COVID response during the pandemic. Our 58% from our internal data in 2022-23, is more representative of the data set prior to the pandemic spike, as such we feel that good degree attainment for our disabled students remains a key priority.

Table 1:- UCS Good Degrees Data 2022-23

Includes Level 4 HNCs, Level 5 Foundation Degrees and Level 6 Honours Degrees				
Characteristic	Awarded Students	Number of Good Degrees from Awarded Students	% Good Degrees from Awarded Students	% of students who are Awarded a Good Degree with Characteristic
Total Students	228	164	71.9%	
Disability	50	29	58.0%	17.7%
Non-Disability	178	135	75.8%	82.3%

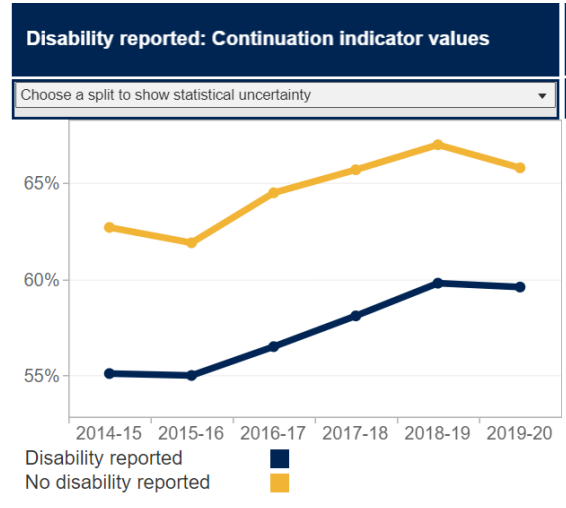
Furthermore, using the 2019-20 data available on the data dashboard for part time students, we have identified that a continuation gap persists between our part-time disabled students and their non-disabled counterparts. Although, this data indicates that our part-time disabled students have a continuation rate of 64.3%, which is above the national average of 59.6%, there was still a 21-percentage point (pp) disparity for continuation between them and their non-disabled cohort compared to a 6pp disparity demonstrated in the national data as shown below.

UCS Part- time Students



No disability reported: 85.3% continuation
 Disability reported: 64.3%

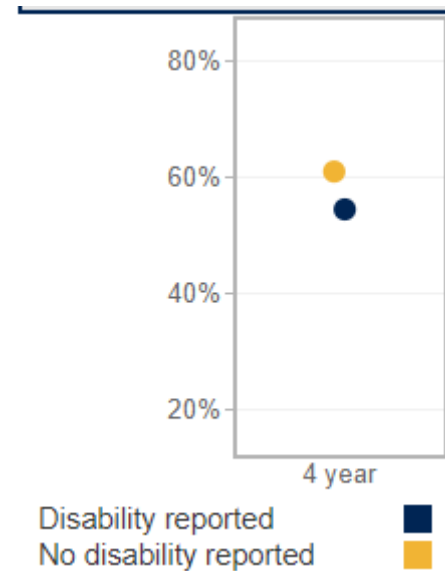
National Part-time Students



No disability reported: 65.8%
 Disability reported: 59.6%

Figure 3: – OFS Access and Participation Data Dashboard disability reported Continuation Indicator

Furthermore, in terms of progression, our OfS 4-year aggregate data to 2022 indicates that there is 6.5 pp gap in progression success between our disabled and non-disabled full-time learners.



Mental Health Specifically

We believe that the increased prevalence of mental health conditions at UCS, mimics that of the national picture. Data from the OfS shows the proportion of full-time, first-degree UK-domiciled undergraduate students disclosing a mental health condition has increased rapidly in recent years, from 0.9 per cent in 2010-11 to 5.1 per cent in 2018-19.⁵ The Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted this even further, with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), noting that around 65% of disabled adults said coronavirus-related concerns had affected their wellbeing, leading to a legacy of increased stress and anxiety.⁶ This has added another layer of complexity as we have disabled students experiencing mental health issues the genesis of which can be traced back to the Covid-19 pandemic, on top of general mental health concerns in an increasing turbulent world.

⁵ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/disabled-students/>

⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsondisabledpeopleingreatbritain/march2020todecember2021>

When our OFS Access and Participation raw data is disaggregated by category, we can see a significant rise in mental health being declared as a percentage of our disabled student cohort. This has risen steadily from 10.7% in 2016⁷ to 25.3% in 2019 and the figure has remained consistently above 20% of the cohort since then. As shown but figure 4 below.

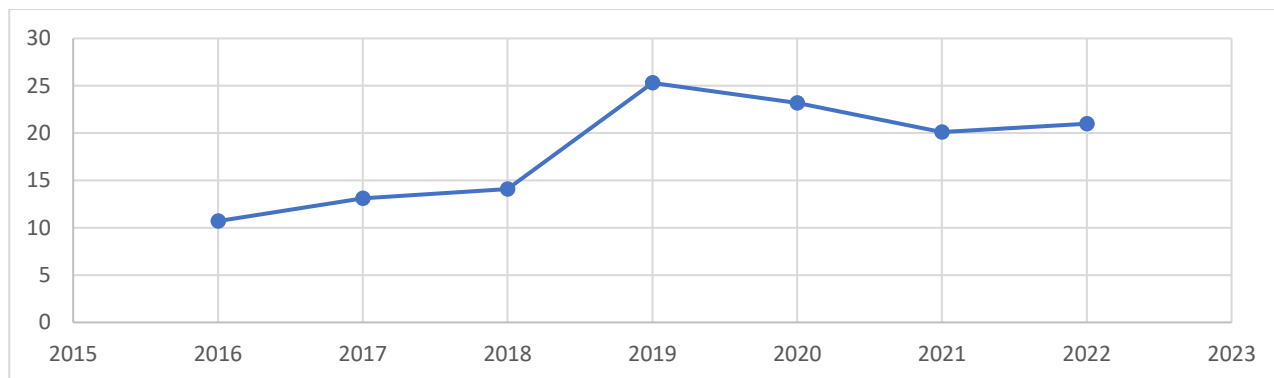


Figure 4:- Trend data UCS Mental Health declared as Percentage of whole disabled cohort

Furthermore, when disaggregated further, our OfS Access and Participation data illustrates that mental health is the second largest group within the disabled student cohort as shown in figure 5 below.

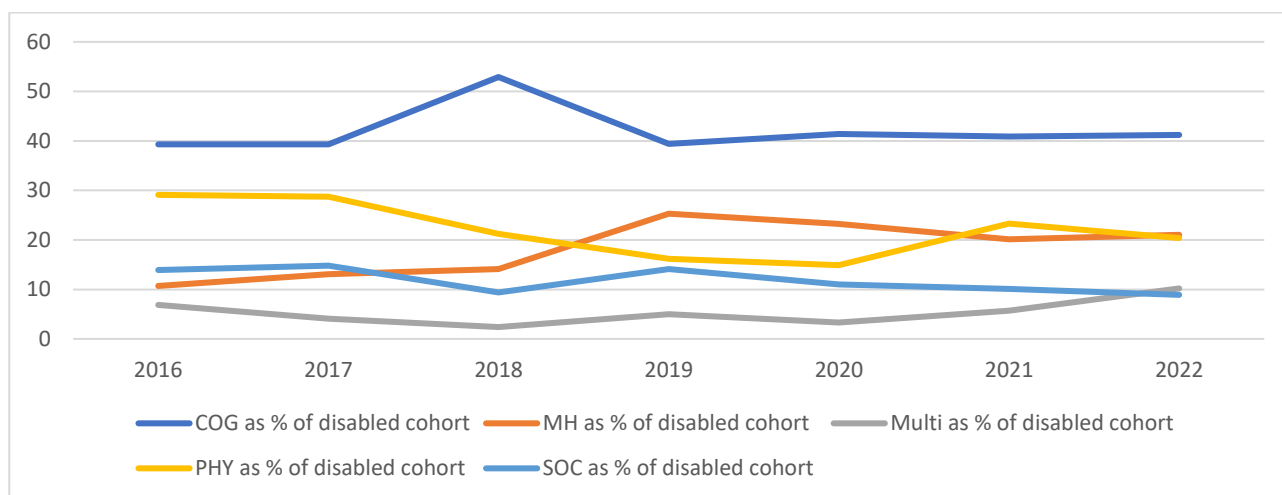


Figure 5:- Disaggregation of Disabled Cohort by percentage of whole disabled cohort at UCS

Our local data also indicates that we are seeing a significant rise in the declaration of mental health issues in their UCAS application. It also indicates an upward trend in declarations of disability in general rising by 12 pp between 20/21 and 23/24 as shown in Table 2 below. In conjunction to this, when analysing the requests received from UCS students, for Extenuating Circumstances (ECs) for extensions to assessment deadlines, such a prevalence is further illustrated. Our data for 2020-21 demonstrated that 39.3% of extenuating circumstances requests related to “*other illness which included mental health*”. To further monitor this trend, the data collected for 21-22 made “*mental health*” as the reason for the request, a category in its own right. As such 30.8% of all ECs for 2021-22 were submitted citing mental health issues as the primary reason for their request. This rose to 34.5% in 2022-23 as shown in table 3 below. It is also interesting to note that there were 354 extenuating circumstance requests from 164 students indicating the repeat nature for some students experiencing mental health issues.

⁷ Data has been considered from 2016 as this is when Bridgwater & Taunton College was created following the merger of Bridgwater College and Somerset College of Arts & Technology

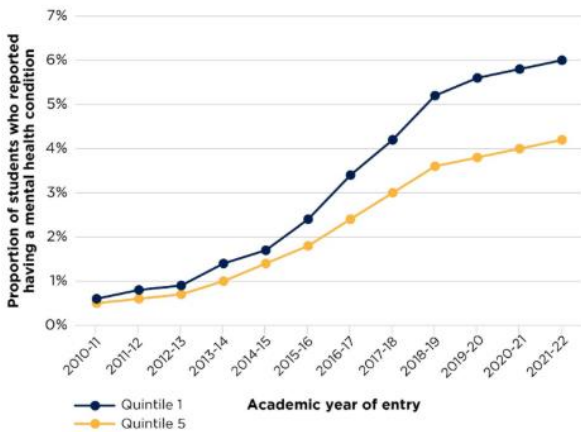
Table 2:- UCAS Applications declaring disability and mental health

Application Year	% of total applicants with an offer to study at UCS declaring a Disability	% of Disability declarations using the mental health descriptor
2020/21	12.84%	42.85%
2021/22	12.53 %	44.64%
2022/23	13.76%	49.33%
2023/24	24.85%	47.93%

Table 3:- UCS Extenuating Circumstances Summary 2022-203

No. of ECs	No. of Students that applied	Mentions of Mental Health
354	164	122

Data published in OFS Insight 20 (October 2023)⁷ indicates that students from TUNDRA Quintile 1 are more likely to have a mental health issue than those from TUNDRA Quintile 5 as demonstrated in figure 6 below taken from this report:



This is of significance to us as a provider, as we attract a significantly higher proportion of applicants from TUNDRA Quintile 1 than the national average. Our OFS Access and Participation data illustrates that in 2021/22 50 % of our under 21 applicants came from this Quintile as opposed to 12.3% nationally (See figure 7). This means that the impact of students experiencing mental health issues is likely to be a more significant issue for our learners than the national picture.

Figure 6:- Mental health by TUNDRA quintile

UCS Data

National data

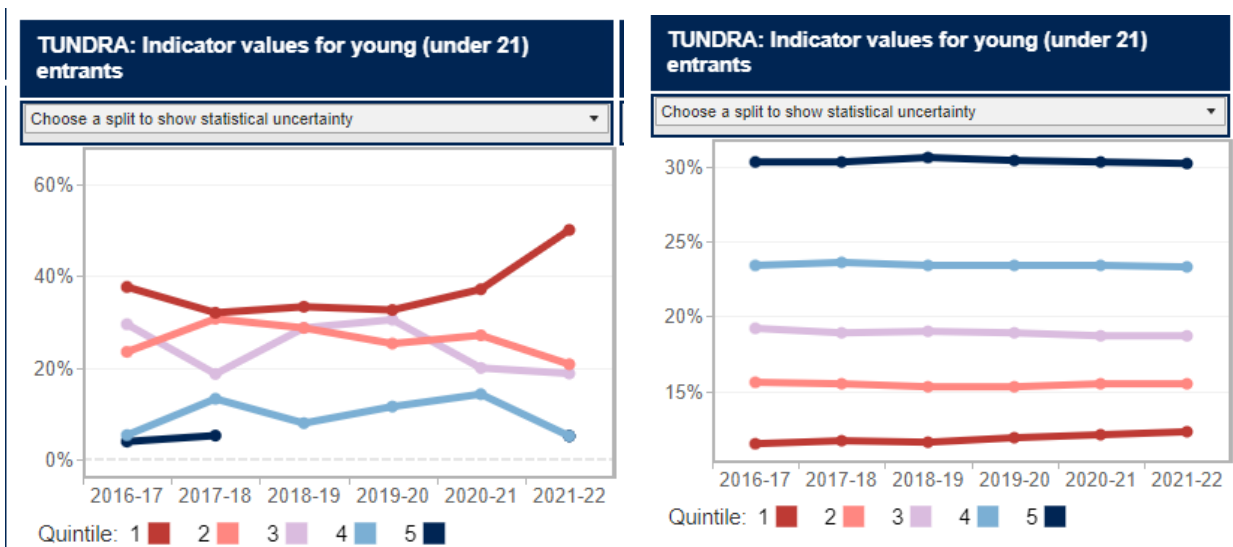


Figure 7:- OFS Access and Participation Data Dashboard – TUNDRA indicator for Entrants

2. Free School Meals

Official Statistics for the OFS shows that: “In 2021-22, 18.6 per cent of full-time first-degree entrants to higher education were eligible for free school meals (FSM) when they were in key stage 4. This represents a slight decrease from the previous year, when the proportion was 19.6 per cent”⁸.

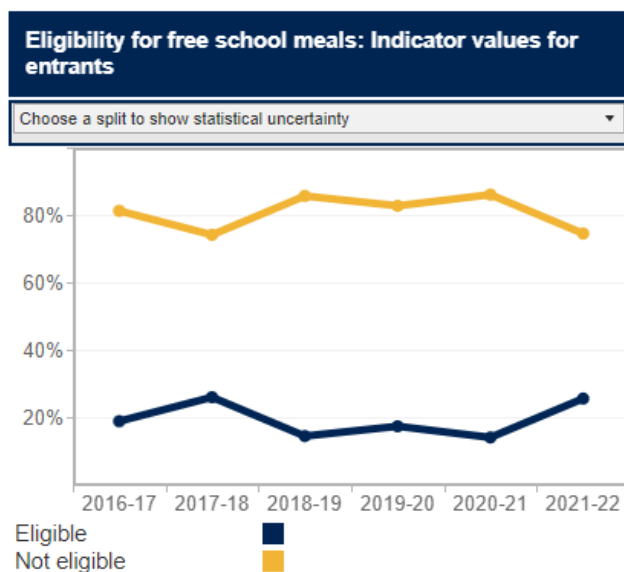
The diagram below is taken from ‘Universities not for everyone: Levelling up and who is missing out on higher education in England’⁹. It indicates that the gap between FSM and non-FSM students progressing into HE is widening as a national picture.



Figure 8: – Number of FSM and Non-FSM learners participating in HE 2011-2022

Whilst, the OFS data dashboard indicated that in opposition to the national trend, UCS was closing the access gap between FSM and Non-FSM entrants in 2021-22, as illustrated in figure 9, the gap still remains significant at 48.8 percentage points. The latest data shows that this has widened again in 2022-23 to 68.4% in 2022-23 as shown in figure 10.

UCS Data



National Data

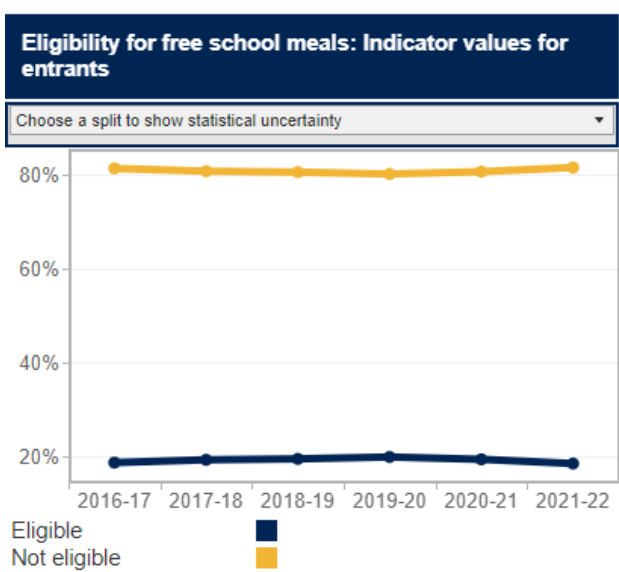


Figure 9:- OFS Access and Participation Data Dashboard – Eligibility for Free School Meals; Indicator values for entrants

UCS Data to 2023

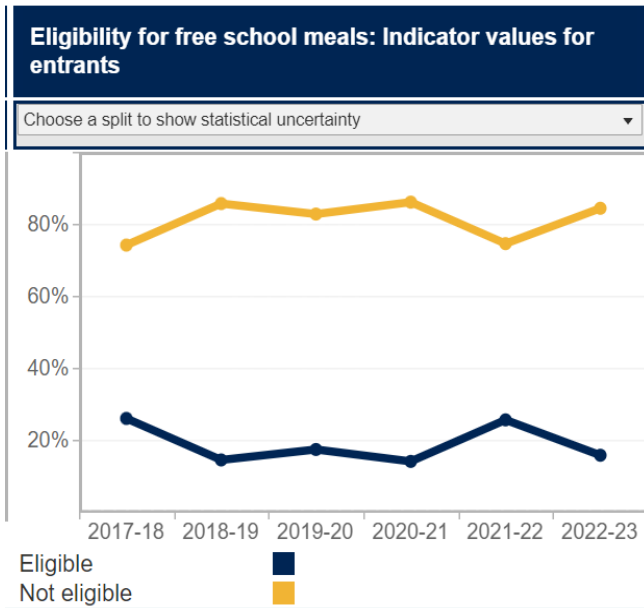


Figure 10: - OFS Access and Participation Data Dashboard – Eligibility for Free School Meals; Indicator values for entrants

When you add this to our local and regional context, we believe that this poses a significant risk to equality of opportunity that must be addressed, even more so now with the impact of the cost of living crisis.

Furthermore, not only is the South West the lowest region for participation in HE by FSM eligible learners at 18.75% in 2021/22. Somerset is the 3rd lowest performing local authority out of 153 with only 14% of FSM learners progressing into higher education. This is 15.2pp lower than the English national average of 29.2% and a staggering 52pp lower than the highest performing local authority.¹⁰ We therefore see it as essential for us at UCS to develop strategies to support widening access for the FSM cohorts which are underrepresented within higher education, locally, regionally and nationally.

3. Mature Learners

“For mature students, university or college can be a second chance to learn, an avenue to a new career, and an opportunity to earn more money. The decision to go into higher education is often a more challenging one for them to make, and the consequences of it greater, than for young students.”⁸

UCS has a non-traditional HE student body and our HE student profile suggests that we attract more mature learners retuning to education and that this number is rising year in year, as shown in figure 11 below.

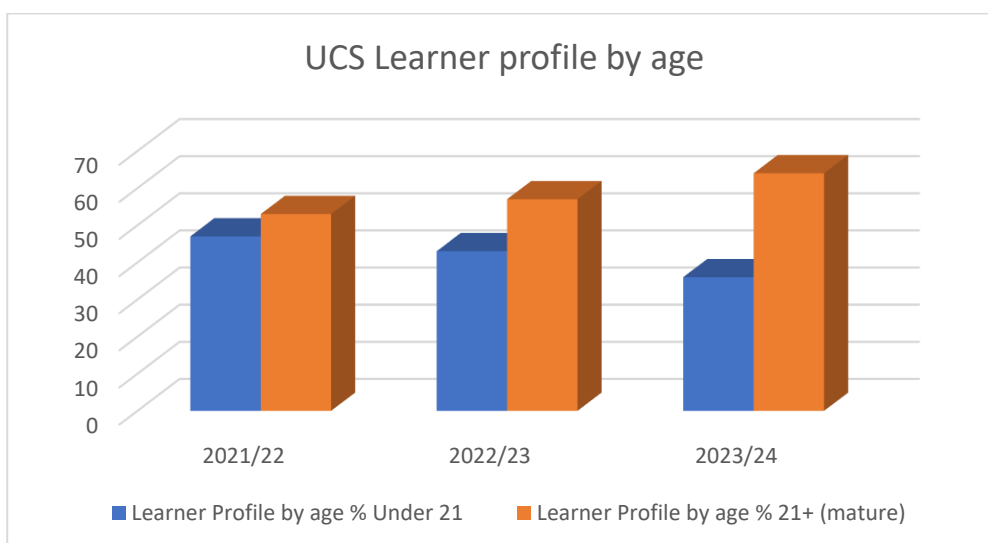


Figure 11 - Percentage of UCS Prescribed learners by age Profile

⁸ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/improving-opportunity-and-choice-for-mature-students/>

The OfS EORR tells us that mature learners face multiple risk factors to their HE experience, so whilst UCS can evidence a good track record in Access for this cohort, removing barriers to continuation, for this cohort has to be a priority for us in order to ensure initiatives are in place for a complex cohort likely to face more than one barrier as identified by our own institutional EORR.

Our ABCS Profile indicates that we have a much higher proportion of Quintile 1 and 2 full time students as indicated by the aggregate data from the OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard in figure 12 below.

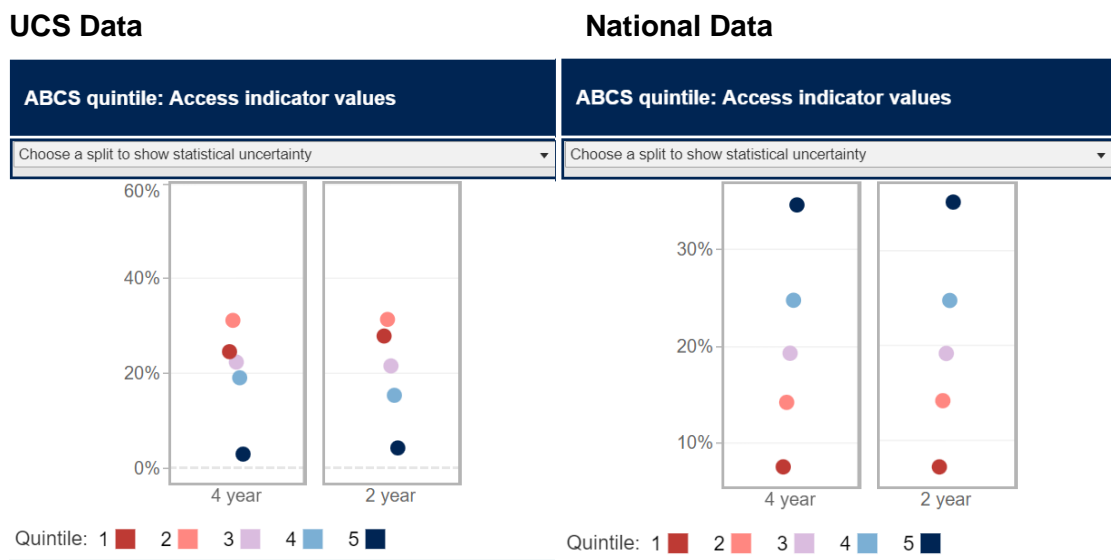


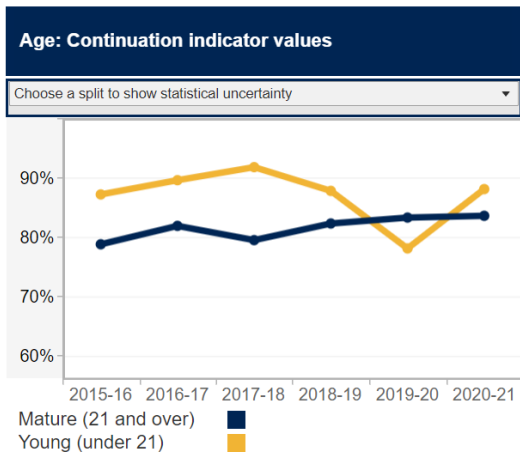
Figure 12 – ABCS Quintile Access Indicator Values

Quintiles 1 and 2 are those students who have characteristics most likely to impact on their participation in Higher Education. As such these students are highly vulnerable to the risks identified in the EORR. If you compare this to the national data it is clear that our student profile is very different to the national picture.

When this is considered alongside the age profile of our students it is clear that we have an above average number of mature learners and an above average number of learners with characteristics most likely to impact their success. As such it demonstrates the importance of focussing some of our intervention strategies around this cohort.

Furthermore, our latest Access and Participation data dashboard data for continuation indications shows a 4.5pp difference in continuation rates between mature and non-mature part-time learners and 2.8pp difference for full time learners (figure 13). This is significant when you consider there is currently a 28pp difference in the profile between the two mature and non-mature cohort across both study pathways.

UCS Part Time Learners



UCS Full Time Learners

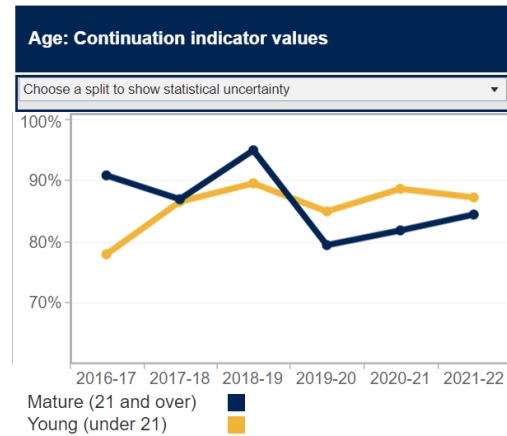
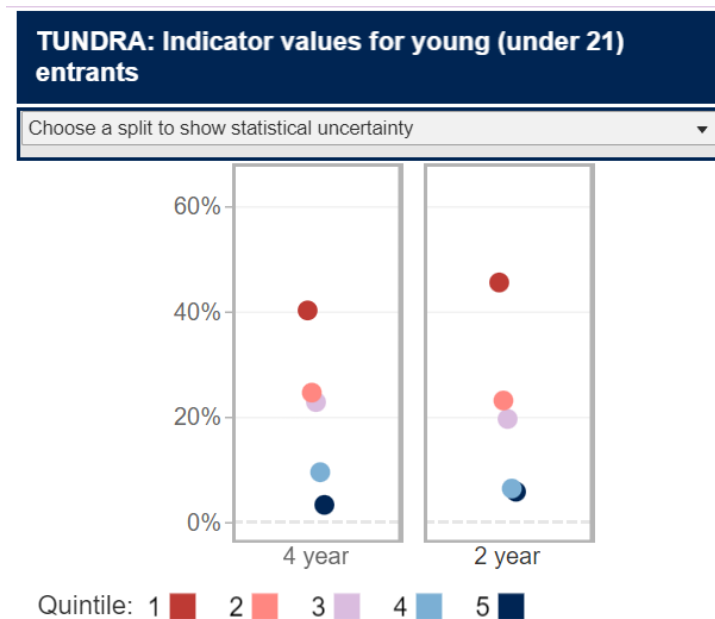


Figure 13 - UCS Age: Continuation Indicator Values

4. Intersectional Impact

In developing our Plan, we have been mindful of the intersectional impact of our planned initiatives so that we can maximise efficacy. Our use of the EORR has allowed us to identify that many of our students are vulnerable to multiple risks and barriers as we attract a great proportion of mature learners and our non-mature learners come predominately from quintiles 1 and 2 as shown in figure 14 below:



We believe that all five of the intervention strategies we plan to implement will benefit our whole student community and in particular have impact on this groups and we have set a specific target linked to our Mental Health intervention strategy to improve continuation rates for this cohort by 5%.

Figure 14 - Aggregated UCS TUNDRA Access Data

Groups not Addressed by our plan Ethnically Diverse Students:

Over the implementation period of our current plan, the ethnicity profile of our local community has changed considerably. However, Somerset still has a predominately “white British” demography.

Office for National Statistics data on Ethnic groups within England and Wales based on the 2021 Census indicate that 96% of the Somerset population is white and therefore 4% is non-white.

As already noted in our plan the majority of our students come from the local area. The ethnicity profile of UCS students indicates that we have a more diverse profile than our local community with 5.76% into the non-white categories. This increases to 16.71% if you include students from “any other white background” as shown in figure 15 below

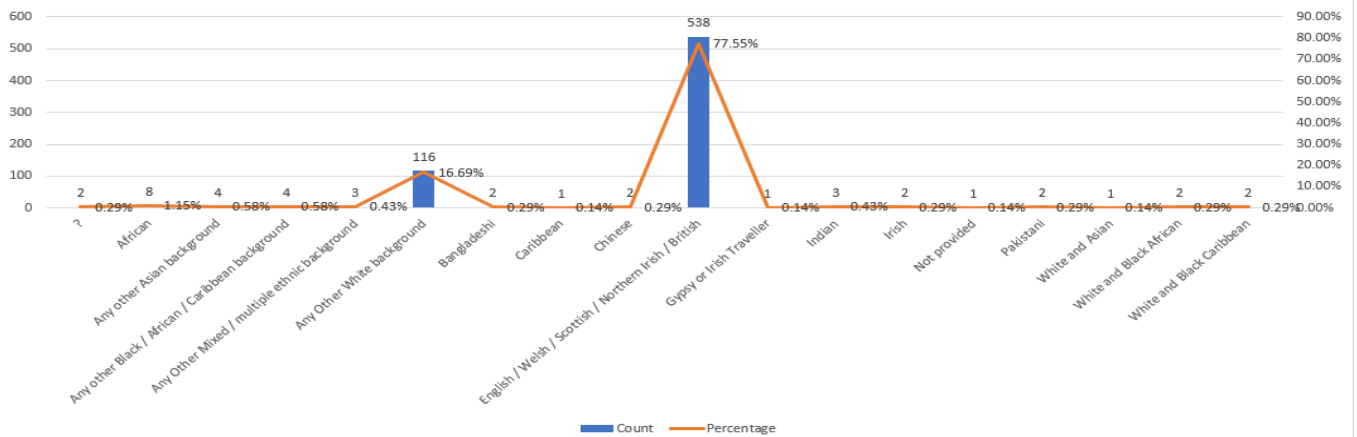


Figure 15 - UCS Student Ethnicity Data 2022-23

UCS therefore has a larger percentage of non-white HE students than are represented in the local population, in line with its inclusive strategic aim. Although we will always seek to widen representation from all underrepresented groups in our student population in line with exemplar practice this does not represent a priority area for us for the 2025-2029 plan cycle.

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

Key Documents

On 27 March 2023 UCAS released figures indicating that; “we could see up to 30% more higher education applicants over the remainder of the decade, intensifying competition for places and posing risks to disadvantaged students.” (UCAS 2023).

In order to design our plan, fit for the challenges the sector faces, we have undertaken a comprehensive literature review of a wide variety of resources in order to consolidate our thinking in relation to our areas of focus and their intervention strategies. We have also employed recommended TASSO models to develop our theories of change which have informed our strategy development as well as reviewing TASSO guidance Robertson et al. (2022), and Mackay & Turner’s (2023) Formative Evaluation of Uni Connect. We also undertook a whole organisation risk rated review using the EORR to identify risks areas specific to our operation and student cohorts. This is appended in full for contextual reference.

It is clear HE providers are operating in a highly complex environment. The context and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic needs to be considered as part of the wider perspective as it not only impacts the students to whom the Access and Participation Plan applies, but also the landscape in which UCS is operating. The changes necessary to provision, the impact of Teacher / Centre Assessed Grading, the missed education that has created knowledge gaps, have all created a challenging and complex backdrop to HE operations, particularly in respect of students’ declaring mental health challenges.

Moss (2023) observes that “Being a student from a so-called disadvantaged background can mean many things. In an educational setting, coming from a disadvantaged background means one’s experiences and achievements will be negatively impacted by one or more factors beyond your control. Students do not choose to be disadvantaged; the onus is on educational institutions to try and eliminate the practical barriers which create this disadvantage”.

Disability and Mental Health

Claircoats (2024) identified that “During the application process to university, students believed that they would jeopardise their chances of being accepted into their chosen Higher Education institution if they were to disclose their disability”. Our Early Intervention strategy is designed to mitigate this so that students who need support, declared, undeclared or as yet unknown, get the help and support they need to ensure continuation and success on their academic journey at UCS.

It is important to remember that Under the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if they: 'Have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. 'Substantial' is defined by the Act as 'more than minor or trivial'. An impairment is considered to have a long-term effect if: 'it has lasted for at least 12 months; it is likely to last for at least 12 months, or it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person.'

On 29th March 2023, John Blake, Director for Fair Access and Participation at the Office for Students (OfS), on the launch of the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register, stated: “...we cannot, for example, consider the risks to access without recognising the impact of the pandemic on education, or recognising that providers need to consider how students’ mental health might affect their likelihood of success in their studies.” This concurs with our institutional EORR analysis and our plan approach to recognise the intersectionality of barriers to our disadvantaged cohorts. For many of our students / potential students, barriers are interconnected and not simple and delineated so our strategy development has taken this into account.

Data from the OfS (2020) shows the proportion of full-time, first-degree UK-domiciled undergraduate students disclosing a mental health condition has increased rapidly in recent years,

from 0.9 per cent in 2010-11 to 5 per cent in 2020/21. “However, surveys of students where responses are confidential have found much higher rates of poor mental health than disclosed to universities. In a 2022 survey by the mental health charity Student Minds, 57% of respondents self-reported a mental health issue and 27% said they had a diagnosed mental health condition”. Lewis and Bolton (2023). Furthermore, The Association of Colleges conducted a mental health survey in March 2023 which highlighted that 82% of colleges are encountering a significant number of learners experiencing mental health difficulties without a formal disclosure.” All-Party Parliamentary Group for Students (July 2023). We have analysed our own data as detailed in Annex A to see this is a trend that appears to be continuing, underpinning our commitment to focus on this as a key target group for this plan.

A research poll commissioned by the OfS and published on 17 March 2023 found that “Rises in the cost of living have had a reported impact on many of the students polled. Almost one in five respondents said that they had considered dropping out of university or college because of such increases.” The poll found that this was more the case for “disabled students (30 per cent of whom had considered it, compared with 14 per cent of those without a disability)”. Additionally, a 2019 survey of 1,773 disabled students showed that only 40 per cent were aware of DSA before starting their course.” Which of course indicated that 60% were not. This has informed our strategy to facilitate DSA support as an intervention strategy for this cohort.

Free School Meals Students

It is a simple fact that the South West Region and Somerset as a county underperform in respect of the progression of FSM eligible students into HE as we have outlined in the data from the OFS and Atherton (2023) as presented in Annex A. This combined with evidence that “Rather than making longer term career decisions and achieving their potential, students are having to think about what will allow them to best support themselves and their families in the short term, sacrificing longer-term educational goals.” (All-Party Parliamentary Group for Students July 2023), creates a compelling case for us to focus intervention strategies on supporting this group to access HE.

Often knowledge, misconception and social capital can impact heavily on this cohort. Research from the Higher Education Policy Institute suggests that students from more socio-economically disadvantaged families are more likely to be First-in-Family (FiF) or First Generation HE Students (Coombes 2022). Therefore, they may lack the same level of knowledge guidance and support from key influencers such as parents and carers. “There is a growing body of evidence that shows that early interventions are crucial to widening higher education participation, as by Key Stage 4 higher-achieving pupils from the most disadvantaged backgrounds fall well behind lower-achieving pupils from the least disadvantaged families (Crawford et al., 2017)”.

Supporting our Parental Engagement strategy is, one of the Key Policy recommendations from the Higher education Policy Institute paper on First in Family Students (Coombes 2022) is that: “Universities should deliver specific outreach engagement for the parents of groups that are under-represented in higher education. This should address misconceptions that fuel parents’ concerns, with particular attention given to common misconceptions around student finance.” Writing on the website Universities UK, graduate Lauren Harper recounts; “I vividly remember my dad thinking that if student finance wasn’t paid back in time the bailiffs would come to our house.” Harper (March 2023).

The evidence relating to this cohort also illustrates the importance of strategies to support and engage students beyond accessing HE which further supports our early intervention strategy and recognition of the importance of engaging strategies that can provide support for intersectional barriers to continuation and success. Coombes (2022) informs us that “First-in-family students have higher non-continuation rates than those with parents who have been through the higher education system...These findings underline the importance of equipping first-generation students with the tools to navigate the university system past the point of admission”. Her report also identifies that;

“We find evidence of a statistically significant difference between FiF status and the likelihood of dropping out of university, once we take into account prior attainment, individual characteristics and socioeconomic status: FiF students are four percentage points more likely to drop out than students whose parents have a degree.” This is further supported by Moss (2023) “Some students need more support from their provider to help them achieve equivalent outcomes based on their academic potential. It is not acceptable that a student who was eligible for FSM should expect – other things being equal – to have worse outcomes than other students attending the same institution, regardless of their entry tariff and the university they choose to attend.”

Mature Students

Our data clearly shows that as a provider UCS has a much higher than average proportion of mature students, and a much higher proportion of students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 than nationally. Robertson and Savestrini (2020) note that: “Financial barriers are often at the core of concerns about higher education opportunities for disadvantaged students” In its 2019 annual review the OfS noted that: “one of the most dramatic changes since the introduction of fees at the £9,000 level has been the rapid decline in the numbers of mature students attending university. Since 2012, the number entering higher education over the age of 25 has halved.”

The literature supports our commitment to interventions to support these learners. A study by TASO (2021) demonstrated that “Evidence shows that mature students are more likely to drop out of their course than younger students. Mature students also tend to have poorer degree outcomes than young students.” We have committed in our plan to close this gap for UCS learners.

“For mature students, university or college can be a second chance to learn, an avenue to a new career, and an opportunity to earn more money. The decision to go into higher education is often a more challenging one for them to make, and the consequences of it greater, than for young students.” (OfS May 2021). It is likely that this cohort are more vulnerable to external factor and intersectional issues as they balance the demands of the cost of living, family life, work as well as potentially impacts on their mental health. The OFS insight brief (May 2021) also notes research indicates that: “Mature students often have more complex needs than younger students. They are more likely to be disabled, come from more deprived areas, or have family or caring responsibilities.”

Callender (2015) also notes that: “Mature students seem far more averse than young students to taking on debt to study in higher education. Survey research has shown that financial concerns, such as tuition fees and living costs, were among the top reasons those who considered entering higher education as mature or part-time students in the end decided not to.” This supports our ongoing commitment to our bursary, and promoting alternative HE pathways as interventions strategies identified by our plan.

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UCS EORR Institutional RAG rated Review and Action Plan 2024

This document is based on the national EORR Equality of Opportunity Risk Register - Office for Students contextualised for UWC, part of BTC. It is the basis for the production of the UCS APP 2025-29

Area	National Risk	National Risk Summary	Initiatives in place at BTC/ UCS to mitigate this risk	Development Plan for BTC/ UCS to further mitigate this risk	Risk Rating in context of BTC/ UCS
ACCESS	1. Knowledge & Skills	Students may not have equal opportunity to develop knowledge and skills required to be accepted on to HE courses that match their expectations & ambitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very wide curriculum in place across employment sectors • Foundation Degrees with lower UCAS tariff in place in addition to higher tariff Honours Degrees • UCS has a robust contextual offer procedure in place for those who may not have the usual formal qualification required. • Focus on 'Degrees for Real Life' • As part of an FE College, active liaison with Level 3 curriculum teams regarding HE through FE tutorials and interventions by HE teaching teams and NSSW outreach activity • BTC Advantage embedded into every Further Education course, developing transferable skills for all learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop UCS's own outreach offer: Support Curriculum ownership of outreach in order to work with local schools on developing skills for HE and understanding what is on offer to them, how this might influence their GCSE and level 3 choices & how it can lead to employment. • Campus visits and masterclasses by HE teaching staff, outreach and marketing teams. • Provide information, advice and guidance, including budgeting and finance, to influencers such as parents/ carers/ teachers. NB Appropriate information and reassurance for families of those first in family & on Free School Meals & other key disadvantaged 	Medium

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BTC is a MAT sponsor, promoting good governance for improving outcomes in MAT schools. 	<p>groups (i.e. disabled, mature, Gypsy, Traveller or Roma, Boater & Showmen communities, service children, young carers, care experienced) + intersections of two or more risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance offer to Bridgwater and Taunton College Level 3 students – confidence building and understanding of UCS offer. Further Collaboration with Next Steps South West (NSSW), recognising the changing nature and funding of Uni Connect delivery nationally. Support for potential mature students in applying through UCAS 	
	2. Information & Guidance	Students may not have equal opportunity to receive information and guidance to develop ambition or make informed choices about HE options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active partner in the Bridges to HE Project at BTC Active partner in NSSW at BTC and in local schools. Work closely with BTC careers team. BTC Careers team offer additional support through online resources in order to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop UCS outreach programme to create a sustainable HE information and guidance programme including opportunities for bookable campus visits and masterclasses. Information for key influencers. Develop opportunities for mature learners to access advice and guidance such as information evenings / online tutorials and FAQs 	<p>High</p> <p>Especially with refocus and budget cuts to Uni Connect resulting in redefinition of priorities and reduction of year groups eligible.</p>

				(to include how to apply through UCAS). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the role of student ambassadors. 	
	3. Perception of HE	Students may not feel able to apply to HE despite being qualified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCS Marketing campaign Degrees for Real Life • Open Evenings giving access to UCS staff to discuss opportunities • Easy Access to UCS HE admissions team • Taster opportunities for Access and Level 3 learners • Bridges to HE Project giving learners opportunity to engage with a Russel Group University • NSSW outreach work both within BTC and in a number of schools • Foundation Degree option with lower UCAS tariff • HNC and block release option • Wide range of courses across a range of subject sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop online opportunities with application tutorials and course Q&A session as have been used with Nursing. • Raise the profile of the Degree Apprenticeship route in support of LSIP and with our WAVE 2 funding from the OFS for Higher and Degree Apprenticeship funding. • Collaboration with UWE on their “Women Like Me” STEM project. • Use outreach and FAQ on website to “debunk myths” around student finance. • Taster options via Micro credentials and HTQs. • Increase knowledge of our offer through UCS outreach. • Increase number of schools work with and provide CPD to school liaison team to improve UCS messaging. 	High Somerset Rates 143/150 local authorities (DfE 2021/2022) for HE progression at 18 with only 28.2% progressing to HEPs and 0.8% to Higher Apprenticeships against 45% and PTS_1 % Nationally and 34% and 0.8% SW Region

	4. Applications Success Rate	Students may not be accepted despite being qualified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong Contextual Offer opportunities clearly stated in prospectus and on website • Different pathways available from Foundation Degree through to Top-Up. • Degree Apprenticeships • Successful in Modular Acceleration Bid, securing funding to trial micro-credentials for HTQs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that our communications plan for student journey to enrolment reflects opportunity and is clear on entry expectations (For example Maths and English GCSEs as entry requirement for nursing). 	Low
	5. Limited choice of course type and delivery mode	Students may not have equal opportunity to access a sufficiently wide variety of HE courses type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong links with industry and employers to develop relevant programmes. • Wide range of courses offered across a variety of sectors • Full and Part time routes available • Delivery over two days and block release delivery options • Foundation Degrees; Top-up: full 3-year (hons) route; degree apprenticeships; Direct entry HNCs: HTQs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying for Degree Awarding Powers to develop own degrees. • Increase Degree Apprenticeship offer • Development of Micro-credentials for HTQs • Wave 3 Bid expend Degree Apprenticeships in Health care to meet local skills gaps • Offering micro-credentials 	Low
	6. Insufficient academic support	Students may not receive sufficient personalised academic support to achieve a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HE Students have a named tutor • Access to HEADstart programme through LRC, giving support in Academic writing, research, referencing etc. to develop appropriate academic skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As student numbers grow, available support infrastructure will need to keep pace. • Identify those “at risk” early by monitoring attendance and marks to ensure early intervention. • Develop ALS support through targeted CPD 	Medium

ON COURSE		positive outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCS Elevate developing wider professional & personal skills • HE student engagement officer offering support. • Small groups allowing for staff to develop excellent relationships with students. • Student Voice allows for direct feedback on course and academic experience • HE specific ALS member of staff to support additional needs and applications for DSA. 	<p>and information sharing via the HE Teaching and Learning Coach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase teaching staff awareness of teaching techniques that support students with learning differences. 	
	7. Insufficient personal support	Students may not receive sufficient personalised non-academic support or access to extracurricular activities to achieve positive outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Student Union and extra curricula offer that meets the needs of our students. • HE ALS Support - DSA applications. • HE Student Engagement officer. • Launch of UCS Elevate embedding development of personal and employability skills alongside academic progression. • Tutorial Support • Well-being support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional online tutorial resources. • Further Development of UCS Elevate. • Develop support through Faculty structure. • Ensure there are activities available to suit all students as we have a wide-ranging student profile. 	Low
	8. Mental health	Students may not experience an environment that is conducive to good mental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are signposted to Mental health support resources regularly and this starts at induction. • XX Number of staff across UCS and BTC trained as Mental Health Ambassadors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health is widely accepted to become one of the biggest challenges facing young people in the UK today. • Continue to recognise the depth and breadth of the 	Medium

		health and wellbeing	<p>reflecting whole organisation approach towards mental health challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust extenuating circumstances policy. • HE Student Engagement Officer to signpost to help and guidance • Small class sizes and robust tutorial support to allow students to feel supported. • Wellbeing Team with strategies and support in place across the College. • Counselling Team • Looking after physical, social, emotional and mental health is embedded into UCS Elevate in order to help students build resilience. • Staff have access to Mental health training and support for themselves as well as their students. 	<p>problem and actively seek opportunities to build resilience, provide support and signposting to other agencies and our internal support services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training to keep up to date with key issues and initiatives. • Work with Student Union and College wide Student Engagement Team to further enhance and embed what is already being done. • Further explore definitions and types of Mental Health issues experienced by our students to signpost to appropriate support. 	
	9. Ongoing impact of Coronavirus	Students may be affected by the ongoing consequence of the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust Extenuating Circumstances Policy. • Student engagement and tutor support. • Covid related Mental Health issues see 8 above. • Covid related financial issues see 10 below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to declare Covid related illness so this can be recorded on ILP and appropriate support given. • Annual monitoring and intent document which includes identifying academic strategies to overcome educational challenges created by the Covid pandemic. 	Low

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain in person delivery with some flexibility around tutorials and dissertation support. 	
	10. Cost Pressures	Increases in cost pressures may affect a student's ability to complete their course or obtain a good grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCS Bursary scheme. • Courses run on set days (over 2 days where possible) rather than a scattered timetable, to allow for part-time working. • Tuition fees for most courses set lower than university equivalent courses representing good value for money. • Part time working opportunities are advertised on campus. • Computers available for use outside of standard teaching time • Focus on 'Degrees for Real Life' that lead directly to employment, written in collaboration with employers • Currently, largest College provider of levy paying apprenticeships in the UK, providing opportunities for students to avoid paying fees & be paid as an apprentice • At Taunton campus, hot water for making own drinks and fridge in kitchen designated for UCS Student use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widen staff knowledge base to signpost students to financial support. • Reduce barriers to application for financial support by using automatic identification of eligible students. • Further development of degree apprenticeships, as this pathway reduces debt and students get paid. 	Medium

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of subsidised food available in the canteens on each campus 		
	11. Capacity Issues	Student may not have equal opportunity to access limited resources related to HE such as suitable accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCS is in an unusual position as a College to have an accommodation offer. • Expansion of Accommodation offer with Taunton Halls of Residence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst most of our HE students are local to the College need to recognise those courses that attract a residential cohort (MMU, Nuclear, AMEC, Motorsport) and ensure appropriate support is given at application stage to find accommodation. 	Low
PROGRESSION	12. Progression from higher education	Students may not have equal opportunity to progress to an outcome they consider to be a positive reflection of their higher education experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust innovative and ground-breaking employer links and Partnership as recognised through our Queens Anniversary Prize for our work with the NHS. • UCS Elevate developing professional employability skills alongside academic skills. • Personal development planning is integrated into our Foundation Degrees in line with the Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement published by QAA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop undergraduate careers offer. • Support students to improve the social capital through information and guidance. • Develop information and advice on setting up your own business for our creative industry students and develop curriculum to reflect this. • Embed UCS Elevate • Further develop curriculum links with employers 	Medium

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Bridgwater and Taunton College

Provider UKPRN: 10000878

Summary of 2025-26 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflation statement:

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	BSc (Hons) Nursing (both Adult Nursing and Mental Health Nursing)	N/A	9250
First degree	Whole college provision except those explicitly mentioned	N/A	8950
Foundation degree	FdSc Assistant Practitioner (Occupational Therapy)	N/A	9250
Foundation degree	FdSc Nursing Associate	N/A	9250
Foundation degree	Whole college provision except those explicitly mentioned	N/A	8950
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	7800
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

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

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

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	Honours Degree L6 PT 2 Year Top Ups	N/A	4475
Foundation degree	Foundation Degree 3 year PT routes	N/A	5966
Foundation degree	Foundation Degree 4 year PT routes	N/A	4475
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	HNC/HND Top Up 2 year PT route (60 credits in the year)	N/A	3900
HNC/HND	HND 3 year PT route (90 Credits Max in one year)	N/A	5850
HNC/HND	HND 3 year part time route (240 credits over 3 years)	N/A	5200
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

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

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

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Bridgwater and Taunton College

Provider UKPRN: 1000878

Investment summary

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

Notes about the data:

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

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

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

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

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

Table 6b - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£190,000	£215,000	£235,000	£255,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£30,000	£35,000	£38,000	£41,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£130,000	£145,000	£160,000	£175,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£40,000	£45,000	£45,000	£45,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£150,000	£170,000	£190,000	£210,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£190,000	£215,000	£235,000	£255,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment (as % of HFI)	20.1%	19.9%	20.0%	20.1%
Access activity investment	Total access investment funded from HFI (£)	£95,000	£105,000	£115,000	£125,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£30,000	£35,000	£38,000	£41,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£30,000	£35,000	£38,000	£41,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£130,000	£145,000	£160,000	£175,000
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)	13.8%	13.4%	13.6%	13.8%

