

University Centre Peterborough (UCP)

Access and participation plan 2026-27 to 2029-30

Introduction and strategic aim

University Centre Peterborough (UCP) is the higher education arm of Inspire Education Group (IEG), operating across two campuses in Peterborough and Stamford. UCP's overarching aim is to deliver transformational, inclusive higher education that meets the needs of underrepresented students in our region, enabling individual success while contributing to broader social mobility and economic growth. UCP's commitment to student engagement and continuous improvement was recognised in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), where we were awarded Silver. The TEF panel particularly commended our strong culture of student voice, our use of formative and summative feedback, and our integration of employer perspectives into curriculum delivery and assessment design.

Our mission is to raise aspirations and address educational inequality through inclusive, community-rooted higher education. This mission is operationalised through strategic plans (IEG, 2024; UCP, 2022) that prioritise student partnership, equitable access, and improved graduate outcomes. Strong employer and civic engagement, through networks such as Opportunity Peterborough and local Chambers of Commerce, supports curriculum relevance, authentic assessment practices, and the embedding of employability initiatives, including placements, mentoring, and professional networking.

UCP offers a broad range of foundation degrees, undergraduate programmes, degree apprenticeships, top-ups, and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), validated by The Open University and Pearson, with teacher education programmes delivered in partnership with Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU). Our curriculum is co-designed with local employers, students, and other stakeholders, and is regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with regional priorities and national policy agendas, including those set by the Office for Students (OfS), Department for Education (DfE), and wider local and national strategies.

Delivery models include full-time (typically over one or two days), part-time, and hybrid formats, designed to accommodate students who are employed or have caring responsibilities. There are currently 511 students enrolled across all programmes, the majority of whom study full-time. Further details about the composition of our student body, alongside relevant contextual indicators, are provided in Annex A.

UCP's student population reflects the structural inequalities that characterise our local region. Operating within a designated higher education 'cold spot' (HEFCE, 2015), UCP recruits primarily from DfE Educational Investment Areas, including Peterborough, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, and neighbouring local authorities such as Norfolk and Northamptonshire. Over 44% of our full-time students live in areas categorised within the most deprived IMD quintiles (Q1 and Q2), many are first in their family to access higher education, and the vast majority remain living at home while studying. A substantial proportion balance their studies with employment and/or caring responsibilities. Disabled students constitute a significant portion of our community, particularly those with declared mental health conditions. Ethnic diversity varies between campuses in accordance with local demographics, though Asian and Black students remain underrepresented. Furthermore, 16% of students identify as white but not White British, reflecting the evolving nature of local white ethnic minority communities.

Until July 2024, UCP enrolled a large cohort of "registered" subcontracted students via partnerships with the Addict Dance Academy in Leicester and the Eastern School of Performing Arts in Stamford. These students, due to the specialised nature of their provision, exhibited markedly different demographic and academic profiles compared to UCP's directly taught students. While these cohorts were included in metrics published by the OfS, UCP has, wherever possible,

disaggregated these groups from its core datasets to provide a more accurate portrayal of its current provision.

This Access and Participation Plan (APP) has been developed in close collaboration with students through structured consultations, Student Officer representation, and targeted discussion groups, particularly with students from underrepresented backgrounds. Their insights have shaped the plan's strategic aims, identified key barriers to access and success, and informed the design of proposed interventions.

Risks to equality of opportunity

UCP analysed data sets at each stage of the student journey to identify factors that may create barriers to equality of opportunity for different student groups. This involved examining differences in continuation, completion, attainment, and progression rates based on characteristics such as age at entry, disability, ethnicity, eligibility for free school meals, IMD quintiles, and POLAR quintiles. The assessment included a detailed review of student performance across various characteristics, comparing outcomes to relevant comparator groups over a four-year period. Where possible, UCP disaggregated registered students from taught students to remove the influence of former performing arts partnerships. Where data was available, UCP also explored how the intersection of multiple characteristics might influence these risks. Unless stated otherwise, objectives, risks and analysis pertain to full-time (FT) students due to the low numbers on part-time pathways. A summary of this analysis is provided in Annexe A.

The table below shows the points in the student lifecycle where the most at-risk groups face the greatest challenges to equality of opportunity. We have also aligned our identified risk indicators with the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) to understand sector-wide challenges, inform our interventions and examine their relevance within UCP's context.

Access	<u>Risk 1</u> FT Eligibility for Free School Meals <u>EORR</u> 1,2,3,5 & 10	<u>Risk 2</u> FT Ethnicity: Black and Asian Heritage <u>EORR</u> 1,2,3,5 & 10
Continuation	<u>Risk 3</u> FT Sex: Male & IMD <u>EORR</u> 1, 6, 7, 8 & 10	<u>Risk 4</u> FT Ethnicity: Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage <u>EORR</u> 1, 6, 7 & 10
Completion	<u>Risk 5</u> FT Sex: Male <u>EORR</u> 1, 6, 7, 8 & 10	<u>Risk 6</u> FT Ethnicity: Asian and Black <u>EORR</u> 1, 6, 7, 8 & 10
Attainment	<u>Risk 7</u> FT Sex: Male <u>EORR</u> 5, 6,7, 8 & 10	
Progression	<u>Risk 8</u> FT Age: Young <u>EORR</u> 7, 9, 10 & 12	

Risk 1: Students who were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) have lower rates of progression into higher education at UCP than students who were not eligible.

Our understanding of the experiences of FSM-eligible students, along with research literature, indicates that these students encounter significant barriers to progressing to higher education. These challenges include lower levels of knowledge and skills required for progression (EORR 1), limited access to information and guidance on higher education options (EORR 2), the perception that higher education is not intended for students from low-income backgrounds (EORR 3), limited choice of course type (EORR 5) and cost pressure - that the cost of living crisis may have made students from these backgrounds less likely to apply to higher education (EORR 10).

Risk 2: Students of Black and Asian heritage have lower progression rates into higher education at UCP than white students.

We have identified that there are lower proportions of Black and Asian students accessing higher education at UCP than is reflected in the local demographics and significantly below all registered providers. Evidence suggests that the reasons for this may include lower levels of knowledge and skills required for progression (EORR 1), limited access to information and guidance on higher education options (EORR 2), the perception that higher education is not intended for students from ethnic backgrounds (EORR 3), limited choice of course type (EORR 5) and cost pressure - that the cost of living crisis may have made students from these backgrounds less likely to apply to higher education (EORR 10).

Risk 3: There is a gap in continuation rates between male and female students

Male student continuation rates are lower than both the national sector average and the continuation rates of female students at UCP. Research suggests that factors such as reduced sense of belonging, knowledge and skills (EORR 1), inadequate academic and personal support (EORR 6 and 7), mental health challenges (EORR 8), and financial pressures (EORR 10) may contribute to this trend. The issue becomes even more pronounced when considering male students from deprived backgrounds (Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019), where continuation rates decline further.

Risk 4: There is a lower continuation rate of students from Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage backgrounds when compared to White students

Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage continuation is significantly lower than White students at UCP. Research suggests that factors such as reduced sense of belonging, knowledge and skills (EORR 1), inadequate academic and personal support (EORR 6 and 7), mental health challenges (EORR 8), and financial pressures (EORR 10) may contribute to this trend. Intersectional data with deprivation is limited, with low numbers.

Risk: 5 Male students have a lower rate of completing their studies compared to female students

Male students are less likely to complete their studies than female students. Evidence suggests that the reasons for this may include lower levels of knowledge and skills required for progression (EORR 1), inadequate academic and personal support (EORR 6 and 7), mental health challenges (EORR 8), and financial pressures (EORR 10) may contribute to this trend. Research evidence indicates that a reduced sense of belonging impacts male completion.

Risk 6 Black and Asian students have a lower rate of completing their studies compared to white students

Black and Asian students are less likely to complete their studies than White students. Evidence suggests that the reasons for this overlap with risk 7 and may include lower levels of knowledge and skills required for progression (EORR 1), inadequate academic and personal support (EORR 6 and 7), mental health challenges (EORR 8), and financial pressures (EORR 10) may contribute to this trend. Research evidence indicates that a reduced sense of belonging impacts ethnically minoritised students' completion.

Risk 7: Male students have lower academic attainment compared to female students

Male students attain a lower percentage of degree outcomes of 2:1 or above than female students. The cause of this gap is likely to be related to: access to academic and personal support (EORR 6 and 7), mental health (EORR 8), financial pressures (EORR 10), and limited choice of course type and delivery mode (EORR 5).

Risk 8: Students aged 21 and under (young) on commencement of their course have lower rates of progression into highly skilled employment or further study when they graduate compared to older students.

Students under the age of 21 are significantly less likely to progress into highly skilled employment or further study compared to older age groups. Research and insights from the student experience at UCP suggest that this may be due to younger students having less professional work experience, making it more challenging to secure roles that align with their qualifications (EORR 12). Financial constraints may also force them to take on part-time jobs, limiting their ability to engage in extracurricular activities that support career development (EORR 10, EORR 7). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a lasting impact on young people, reducing opportunities for pre-university work experience and limiting placement availability during their studies (EORR 9)

Objectives

The following objectives have been developed in response to the key risks identified above and are designed to deliver measurable improvements in equality of opportunity by 2030. Baselines for these objectives are presented in our assessment of performance in Annex A.

Access

Objective 1: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the enrolment of students who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 18%, thereby reducing the access gap between FSM-eligible students and their non-FSM peers. This objective will be achieved through targeted marketing campaigns, pre-entry initiatives to raise aspirations, and enhanced information, advice, and guidance (IAG) sessions. Additionally, support for knowledge and skills will be strengthened through collaborations with local schools, colleges, and UniConnect, as well as the provision of financial support and contextual offers.

Objective 2: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the proportion of Asian and Black students, thereby reducing the access gap between these students and students of other ethnicities.

Our targets are disaggregated as:

- 2.1 Increase the enrolment of Asian students to 12%
- 2.2 Increase the enrolment of Black students to 5%

This will be achieved through targeted marketing campaigns, pre-entry initiatives to raise aspirations, and enhanced information, advice, and guidance (IAG) sessions. Additionally, support for knowledge and skills will be enhanced through collaborations with local schools, colleges, and community groups, alongside financial support and contextual offers.

Continuation

Objective 3: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rate for male students (intersecting with IMD Q1 or 2) to 87%, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between male and female students. This objective will be achieved by addressing disparities in prior attainment and strengthening both academic and personal support services. Additional measures will include enhanced mental health provision and targeted financial support to mitigate barriers that may impact student retention.

Objective 4: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rate for Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage students, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between these students and white students. Our targets are disaggregated as:

- 4.1 Increase the continuation rates for Asian students to 89%
- 4.2 Increase the continuation rate of Black students to 85%
- 4.3 Increase the continuation rate of Mixed Heritage students to 85%

This objective will be achieved by addressing disparities in prior attainment and strengthening both academic and personal support services. Additional measures will include enhanced mental health provision and targeted financial support to mitigate barriers that may impact student retention.

Completion

Objective 5: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rate for male students to 85%, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between male and female students. This objective will be addressed through targeted interventions to improve academic preparedness, expand financial support, enhance mental health services, and strengthen personalised academic and pastoral provision.

Objective 6: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rate for Asian and Black students, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between them and other ethnicities.

- 8.1 Increase the completion rates for Asian students to 85%
- 8.2 Increase the completion rate of Black students to 80%

This objective will be addressed through targeted interventions to improve academic preparedness, expand financial support, enhance mental health services, and strengthen personalised academic and pastoral provision.

Attainment

Objective 7: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the attainment rate for male students to 80%, thereby reducing the gap in attainment rates between male and female students. This objective will be achieved by addressing curriculum choice, strengthening both academic, personal and mental health support services. Additional measures will include targeted financial support to mitigate barriers that may impact student attainment.

Progression

Objective 8: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the positive progression rate for young students to 72%, thereby reducing the disparity in progression outcomes between young and mature students. This objective will be achieved through targeted interventions that address key barriers identified, specifically: personal support, cost pressures and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19.

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

Intervention Strategy 1 (IS1) – Access - EORR 1,2,3,5 & 10

Objectives and targets

Objective 1 - By 2030, UCP aims to increase the enrolment of students eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 18%, thereby reducing the access gap between FSM-eligible students and their non-FSM peers. Objective 2 - By 2030, UCP aims to increase the proportion of Asian and Black students, thereby reducing the access gap between these students and students of other ethnicities. Objective 2 targets are disaggregated as: 2.1 Increase the enrolment of Asian students to 12% 2.2 Increase the enrolment of Black students to 5%

Risks to equality of opportunity: Knowledge and skills, information and guidance, perception of higher education, limited choice of course type delivery and cost pressures

Related objectives and targets: This intervention strategy amalgamates the objectives and targets previously outlined in Objective 1 and Objective 2. The activities and inputs will be adjusted as necessary to ensure direct relevance to both FSM eligible students and Asian and Black students

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Marketing & IAG Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop targeted marketing materials and open events with panels featuring underrepresented studentsContinue finance and student-loan information, advice and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">School Outreach team (marketing)Admissions TeamStudent Support Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased enquiries and applications from FSM-eligible and Black and Asian candidatesNarrow the FSM eligible and Black and Asian students access gap	No

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish face-to-face and virtual one-to-one meetings with course leaders and admissions Develop career-advisor events addressing barriers faced by underrepresented students 			
Financial Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to promote low-income bursary, care leaver bursary, and student finance one-to-one meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial support bursaries & subsidised travel Student Support Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased enquiries, applications, and acceptance rates among FSM-eligible and Black and Asian applicants Narrow the FSM and Black and Asian access gap 	Yes, with continuation, completion and attainment
Contextual Admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue contextual offers and further develop IAG meetings with course leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions Team Participation in UCAS stakeholder groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased support for HE access and applications Reducing the FSM eligible and Black and Asian students access gap. 	No
Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue development of degree apprenticeships, micro-credentials, LLE, HTQs, and other short qualifications, and revalidate all programmes for full-time, part-time, and hybrid delivery as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Staff Support Staff Employer boards Student Council and student reps Programme validation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded flexible, accessible HE pathways and tailored programme options—boosting participation. Curriculum realigned to local labour market needs with alternative qualifications (HTQs, micro-credentials) and strengthened employer partnerships. Narrow the FSM and Black and Asian access gap 	Yes, it is proposed that this also supports continuation, completion, attainment and progression

Knowledge and skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue college and school progression events and further develop a guest-speaker programme for applicants, parents and teachers • Further engage employers to foster career aspirations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and outreach team • Academic staff • Employers • UCP Futures team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness of HE pathways and linked career opportunities among students, parents, and teachers • Enhanced decision-making skills, confidence, and support networks for post-16 and post-18 progression • Narrow the FSM eligible and Black and Asian students access gap through informed engagement and guidance. 	No
Subject tasters/events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design subject-specific events with underrepresented student ambassadors • Continue school events and campus visits • Develop transition events to ease entry into higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Ambassadors • Academic Staff • Support Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced subject knowledge, academic readiness, confidence, and sense of belonging in HE environments • Improved transitions and reduce access gap via targeted academic enrichment and support for underrepresented students 	No
Staff Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop training for HE admissions, support, and teaching staff around social mobility and the barriers students face accessing higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCAS conferences • UCP / IEG staff development programme • Communities of practice (Advance HE, QAA, Uniconnect) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heightened staff awareness and confidence in addressing barriers faced by FSM-eligible and Black and Asian students • Adoption of more inclusive admissions, teaching, and support practices aligned with access and participation objectives • Cultivation of an institutional culture committed to social mobility & widening participation 	Yes, it is envisaged that elements of this will also support continuation, completion and attainment

Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a pairing of HE and Level 3 leads with students for collaborative engagement • Expand Student Ambassadors and skills-transfer projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course leaders • Student Ambassadors • Targeted resources monitored by AWAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of HE pathways, expectations, and skills, increasing confidence, self-efficacy, and aspirations through structured engagement with HE staff and students • Narrow the access gap for target groups 	No
Uniconnect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue delivering targeted professional enrichment • Continue providing outreach and employability workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HE engagement officer • Academic staff • Student Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased HE & career awareness: Better understanding of pathways and opportunities. • Improved readiness & confidence: Enhanced employability skills and progression readiness. • Raised aspirations & positive HE perceptions: Higher parental/carers engagement and aspirations. 	No

Total 4 year cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £330,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale:

The TASO toolkit, relevant research, and insights from UCP staff and students were instrumental in evaluating existing data and current practices, and in identifying areas for further and enhanced activity. Analysis of the Office for Students (OfS) data dashboard for University Centre Peterborough (UCP) reveals that students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and Black and Asian students are significantly less likely to access higher education compared to their peers and to aggregated data from other registered Higher Education Institutions. Furthermore, all UCP students are commuter students based at one of two campuses, each situated in areas with distinct local ethnic demographics, which were considered during the analysis. Research indicates that while FSM status and ethnicity can intersect with other characteristics, such as sex, deprivation or being first in family, these specific intersections were not identifiable in UCP's data due to low numbers.

Research consistently demonstrates that a sense of 'belonging' is critical throughout the entire learner journey, and we suggest it plays a significant role in shaping pre-entry decisions, particularly for students with limited prior exposure to higher education environments.

The Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) highlights several potential reasons for these disparities, including gaps in knowledge and skills, inadequate information and guidance, perceptions of higher education, limited course delivery options, and cost pressures. The TASO toolkit and other research were used to examine and evaluate these factors and the impact of current and proposed activities on mitigating them. We consulted our student body and subsequently co-created inputs within our plan. For further details, please see **Annex A**

Evaluation

The evaluation of this intervention strategy will focus on tracking enquiries, UCAS reports, applications, and enrolments from students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and Black and Asian students, alongside engagement with outreach events, financial support services, and contextual admissions. Activity-level evaluation will include attendance at targeted events, uptake of bursaries and one-to-one support, and feedback from participants and stakeholders such as schools, parents, and career advisors.

Evaluation of Uni Connect activity is conducted by the Uni Connect partnership and shared with UCP to inform planning and continuous improvement. These insights will be integrated into the broader evaluation of this intervention strategy. The Access and Participation Working Group (AWAS) and Student Council will monitor and assess the implementation and impact of this strategy, with findings reported to the UCP governing body to inform continuous improvement. For further details, please see **Annex B**

Intervention Strategy 2 (IS2) – Continuation - EORR 1, 6, 7, 8 & 10

Objectives and targets

Objective 3: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rate for Full-time male students to 87%, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between male (intersecting with IMD quintiles 1 & 2) and female students. Objective 4: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rate for ethnically minoritized students, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between ethnically minoritised and white students. Objective 4 targets are disaggregated as: 4.1 Increase the continuation rates for Asian students to 89% 4.2 Increase the continuation rate of Black students to 85% 4.3 Increase the continuation rate of Mixed Heritage students to 85%

Risks to equality of opportunity: Knowledge and skills, Insufficient academic and personal support, mental health and cost pressures

Related objectives and targets: This intervention strategy amalgamates the objectives and targets previously outlined in Objective 3 and Objective 4. The activities and inputs will be adjusted as necessary to ensure direct relevance to both FT Male students intersecting with IMD quintiles 1 & 2 and Asian, Black and Mixed Heritage students

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Personal Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Canvas VLE signposting and develop • Expand the 'Belong' Strategy • Continue support for Student Officers and Reps • Further promote SpectrumLife, sustain Chaplaincy, and improve access to counselling, wellbeing, and safeguarding. • Maintain access to funded Additional Learning Support (e.g. dyslexia). • Strengthen data-informed support strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Support teams • ILT Team • HE Managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement with academic and wellbeing support • Better retention through early and tailored support • Improved continuation rates through targeted interventions 	Yes, elements will support completion and attainment

Academic Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue one-to-one and EAL support. Develop targeted support for students with referrals, deferrals, repeat study, or returning from intermission • Continue academic coaching and 'soft-skills development sessions' through 'Potentially database • Develop success recognition at key points in the student journey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Staff • HE Managers • Student Support Team • UCP Futures Team • Potentially software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved academic skills and self-management among target groups through personalised support • Higher continuation rates among target groups 	<p>Yes, elements will support completion and attainment</p>
Teaching & Learning / Programme development / Knowledge and Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing staff training on inclusive practice and characteristic-based risks. • Re-validation processes to prioritise inclusive curriculum and assessment design. • Continue tutorials to support academic transition • Develop welcome-back activities for returning and progressing students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Staff • HE Managers • Student Support Team • Academic Office • UCP Futures Team • SELT Committee • EDI Committee • Programme validation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced staff capability to address socio-economic and demographic barriers • Better reintegration and sustained engagement of returning or referred students from target groups • Reduced continuation gaps for target students 	<p>Yes, elements will support access, completion and attainment</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop targeted academic support for referral assessment • Further development of UCP Futures for career aspirations, internships, placements and PT employment 			
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Annual HE Bursaries (Low Household Income and Care Leavers). Continue Hardship Funds and food vouchers • Further promotion of paid student officer positions to encourage students from target groups to apply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Support Team • HE Course Leaders • HE Managers • Financial support bursaries & subsidised travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness and uptake of financial support among target groups • Greater target group participation in leadership through paid roles • Improved continuation for target groups 	Yes, with access, completion and attainment

Total 4-year cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £190,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale:

UCP recognises persistent and significant continuation gaps across key student groups, most notably among male (intersecting with low quintile IMD) and ethnically minoritised students.

The four-year average continuation rate for full-time male students stands at 81.2%, compared to 89.3% for females—an 8.1 percentage point gap that exceeds the national average (OfS, 2019). This disparity is further magnified for males from the most deprived areas (IMD Quintile 1), whose continuation rate is just 76.4%, in contrast to 87.9% for females from the same quintile. While course type influences outcomes, continuation gaps remain consistent across disciplines, with males persistently underperforming. Similarly, ethnicity-based disparities are evident. The four-year average continuation rate for full-time students at UCP reveals significant gaps between white and ethnically minoritised students. Continuation rates are: White – 89.1%, Black – 78.6%, Asian – 80.4%, and Mixed Heritage – 75.6%. All are below the sector averages reported across providers (White

– 90.2%, Black – 84.8%, Asian – 89.6%, Mixed – 88.35%). Although internal data shows recent improvements for Asian students—reaching 89% in 2022–23 and 100% in 2023–24—small cohort sizes, particularly among Black students, necessitate cautious interpretation of year-on-year trends.

The Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) attributes these gaps to a complex interplay of factors. These include disparities in prior educational attainment, insufficient academic and pastoral support, mental health challenges, and socio-economic disadvantage. These risks are often compounded by intersectional vulnerabilities, such as being the first in the family to enter higher education. The data suggests both male and ethnically minoritised students at UCP are disproportionately affected by these structural and institutional barriers, which impact their continuation outcomes. Addressing these inequalities remains a key institutional priority, informing the design of targeted interventions and inclusive practices within the UCP Access and Participation Plan. For further details, please **see Annex A**

Evaluation

The evaluation of this intervention strategy will focus on tracking continuation rates for the target students, alongside engagement with academic, well-being, and financial support services. Activity-level evaluation will include monitoring attendance at coaching sessions, uptake of support services, and feedback from participants.

The Access and Participation Working Group (AWAS) and Student Council will monitor and assess the implementation and impact of this strategy, with findings reported to the UCP governing body to inform continuous improvement. For further details, please see **Annex B**

Intervention Strategy 3 (IS3) – Completion - EORR 1, 6, 7, 8 & 10

Objectives and targets

Objective 5 By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rate for Full-Time male students to 85%, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between male and female students. Objective 6 By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rate for Asian and Black students, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between them and other ethnicities. This is disaggregated as: 6.1 Increase the completion rates for Asian students to 85% 6.2 Increase the completion rate of Black students to 80%

Risks to equality of opportunity: Knowledge and skills, Insufficient academic and personal support, mental health and cost pressures

Related objectives and targets: This intervention strategy amalgamates the objectives and targets previously outlined in Objective 5 and Objective 6. The activities and inputs will be adjusted as necessary to ensure direct relevance to both FT Male students and Asian and Black students. NB The activities, inputs and outcomes mirror those for continuation and as such are described in IS2 (Continuation).

Activity and Descriptions	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
As described in IS2	As described in IS2	As described in IS2	IS2

Total 4 year cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £150,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale:

UCP's internal data highlights a persistent and significant disparity in completion rates between male and female full-time students and among different ethnicities. Across three academic years, female completion has steadily increased from 83 % to 92 %, while male completion has risen modestly from 75 % to 80.3 %. Over the same period, UCP's internal data disaggregated by ethnicity shows completion rates of 75.6 % for Asian students, 66.4 % for Black students, 86.3 % for those of Mixed Heritage, and 85.5 % for White students, compared to national four-year averages of 87.3 % (Asian), 81.1 % (Black), 84.3 % (Other) and 88.7 % (White) (OfS, 2023). In both cases, UCP's gender gap—exceeding ten percentage points—and the attainment gap for Asian and Black cohorts, surpass national trends and point to localised challenges requiring targeted action.

The Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) identifies overlapping and distinct drivers of these disparities. Lower levels of academic preparedness, financial pressures, and limited engagement with support services are common barriers, while male students are notably less likely to seek academic or well-being assistance (Maggs, 2022), and Black and Asian students report cultural obstacles and reduced senses of belonging (Stevenson, 2012). Intersectional factors, including socio-economic disadvantage and first-generation status, may further amplify the risk (Reay, 2017), but UCP does not have substantial enough data to support intersectionality.

Informed by the TASO Toolkit (TASO, 2023) and student–staff co-design, UCP has enacted a comprehensive suite of interventions. Core measures include personalised coaching, peer-assisted learning and skills workshops; language and one-to-one support for EAL learners; and embedding inclusive curriculum design. Wellbeing and resilience are supported through enhanced mental health services (SpectrumLife, UCP Counselling) and streamlined referral pathways, while financial hardship funds and the Belong at UCP programme seek to alleviate economic stress and foster institutional belonging. For further details, please **see Annex A**

Evaluation

The evaluation of this intervention strategy will focus on tracking continuation rates for the target students, alongside engagement with academic, well-being, and financial support services. Activity-level evaluation will include monitoring attendance at coaching sessions, uptake of support services, and feedback from participants.

The Access and Participation Working Group (AWAS) and Student Council will monitor and assess the implementation and impact of this strategy, with findings reported to the UCP governing body to inform continuous improvement. For further details, please **see Annex B**

Intervention Strategy 4 (IS4) – Attainment - EORR 5, 6,7, 8 & 10

Objective 7: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the attainment rate for Full-Time male students to 80%, thereby reducing the gap in attainment rates between male and female students. This objective will be achieved by addressing curriculum choice, strengthening both academic, personal and mental health support services. Additional measures will include targeted financial support to mitigate barriers that may impact student continuation.

Risks to equality of opportunity: Limited choice of course type or delivery, insufficient academic support, insufficient personal support and cost pressures

Related objectives and targets: (Some crossover with completion and continuation objectives as outlined below)

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Personal Support:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further development of the attendance and engagement policy• Early identification and support for at-risk students, supported by	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student Support Team• Course leaders• HE Managers• Academic Office• Student Council• ILT team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved early identification of at-risk students• Improved attainment through data-driven,	Yes, with completion and continuation

	<p>data-informed interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop culturally competent mental health services through 'SpectrumLife' • Further develop wider wellbeing, safeguarding, and chaplaincy support, including external referrals • Further foster social interaction and community-building (belonging) 		targeted support for at-risk students.	
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Annual HE Bursaries (Low Household Income and Care Leavers). • Continue Hardship Funds and food vouchers. • Financial Literacy sessions • Further promotion of paid student officer positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Support and financial support package 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced financial barriers to engagement and success • Improved attainment for target groups 	Yes, with access completion and continuation
Academic Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue one-to-one and EAL support. Develop targeted support for students with referrals, deferrals, repeat study, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Staff • UCP Futures • Employer Boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved academic skills and self-management among target groups through personalised support 	Yes, elements with completion and continuation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> or returning from intermission Continue academic coaching and 'soft-skills development sessions' monitoring through 'Potentially' Guest speakers reflective of a range of backgrounds 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised motivation and aspiration through exposure to diverse, relatable role models Higher attainment rates among the target group 	
Teaching and Learning / Programme development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing staff training on inclusive practice and characteristic-based risks. Further embedding accessibility and inclusivity in programme and assessment design. Re-validation processes to prioritise inclusive curriculum and assessment design. Further development of UCP Futures for career aspirations, internships, and placements, Further embedding Graduate Attributes into the programmes objectives and teaching Continue development of degree apprenticeships, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HE Managers CPD programme for staff Academic Staff UCP Futures Academic Office SELT Programme validation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced staff capability to address socio-economic and demographic barriers Increase motivation and career readiness Reduced attainment gap for target students 	Yes, elements with completion, continuation and progression

	micro-credentials, LLE, HTQs and other short qualifications			
Mentoring Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop peer-assisted learning/mentoring • Continue library workshops and 1-1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Ambassadors • Library staff • Student Officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved academic confidence and skills application through peer-supported learning. • Increased engagement with academic resources and independent learning strategies. • Reduced attainment gap for target students 	Yes, elements with completion and continuation

Total 4 year cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £50,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale:

The full-time four-year average attainment data highlights a significant gap between male and female students at UCP, as well as in comparison to national averages. At UCP, attainment rates are: Male – 73.3%, Female – 85.8%, resulting in a 12.5% gap. A gap is also present for ‘all providers’, but it is a lot less: Male – 78.7%, Female – 81.7%, resulting in a 3% gap. The Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) identifies several contributing factors to these gaps, including limited choice of course type or delivery, insufficient academic support, insufficient personal support, and cost pressures.

Using evidence from the EORR, the TASO toolkit (TASO, 2023), and sector research, UCP has co-designed targeted interventions with students and staff to address these barriers. The intervention strategy aims to improve attainment outcomes for male students through enhanced academic support, inclusive teaching practices, mental health provision, and financial support 1. For further details, please see **Annex A**

Evaluation

The evaluation of this intervention strategy will focus on tracking attainment rates for male students at UCP, alongside engagement with academic, well-being, and financial support services. Activity-level evaluation will include monitoring attendance at coaching sessions, uptake of support services, and feedback from participants.

The Access and Participation Working Group (AWAS) and Student Council will monitor and assess the implementation and impact of this strategy, with findings reported to the UCP governing body to inform continuous improvement. For further details, please see **Annex B**.

Intervention Strategy 5 (IS5) – Progression - EORR 7, 9, 10 & 12

Objective 8: By 2030, UCP aims to increase the positive progression rate for young students to 72%, thereby reducing the disparity in progression outcomes between young and mature students.

Related objectives and targets: (Some crossover with continuation, completion and attainment objectives as outlined below)

Activity and Descriptions		Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Personal Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• VLE further developed in response to student feedback• Continue the Futures Hub to provide 1:1 guidance and online resources• Continue progression events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ILT Team• UCP Futures• Potentially software	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced engagement and access to progression resources and events• Increased positive progression for the target group	No

Teaching and Learning / Programme development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability modules and graduate attributes are further developed during re-validation • Further develop career readiness activities, including psychometric testing • Further develop work placements and internship projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Office • Academic Staff • HE Managers • UCP Futures Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved preparedness for the job market • Increased positive progression for target groups 	We envisage that employability modules will impact on access, continuation, completion and attainment
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCP will further develop peer-assisted learning, in-semester internships, and employer–student steering groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Leaders • Student Ambassadors and Reps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened career readiness • Increased positive progression for target groups 	Yes, elements with completion and continuation
Knowledge and Skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic and Transitional Support • Develop employer, guest and motivational speakers from diverse backgrounds • Employability and skills development with stakeholders such as the Lincolnshire Institute of Technology • Further develop 'Potentially', a skills audit database, at enrolment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCP Futures ad career readiness programme • Partnership opportunities with LloT • SELT • Alumni support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved academic performance and skill acquisition • Strengthened soft skills development, improving employability for 'young' learners • Increased positive progression for target groups 	Yes, elements with completion and continuation

	to identify and develop students' 'soft skills'			
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Annual HE Bursaries (Low Household Income and Care Leavers). Continue Hardship Funds and food vouchers Paid student roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Support and financial support package 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced financial barriers to engagement and success Increased awareness and uptake of financial support among target groups Greater target group participation in leadership through paid roles Improved progression for target group 	Yes, access, continuation, completion and attainment

Total 4 year cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy: £200,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale:

The full-time four-year average progression data at UCP reveals a significant disparity between young and mature students. Young students progress at a rate of 60.2%, compared to 83.8% for mature students—a gap of 23.6 percentage points. Nationally, this gap does not exist, with both groups progressing at approximately 72% (OfS, 2023). This suggests that younger students at UCP face unique institutional and structural barriers to achieving positive outcomes after graduation.

The Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) identifies multiple contributory risks, including limited access to personalised support, cost pressures, and the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on educational confidence, mental health, and engagement. We have observed that young students may also lack career readiness and social capital, which are essential for effective post-graduation transitions and that this may intersect with social class (Bathmaker et al., 2013).

UCP has drawn on evidence from the TASO Toolkit (TASO, 2023), internal data analysis, and consultations with students and staff to co-design targeted interventions. These include embedded employability-focused modules, peer mentoring, personalised academic coaching, and tailored support through the Futures Hub and Canvas VLE. Further activities, such as progression events, internship opportunities, and 'belonging' at UCP events, aim to develop graduate attributes, build confidence, and enhance preparedness for the labour market. These interventions collectively aim to increase the positive progression rate for young students to 72% by 2030, closing the gap with mature students and aligning with national averages. For further details, please see **Annex A**

Evaluation

The evaluation will focus on tracking improvements in the positive progression rate for young students, alongside engagement with key interventions such as mentoring, coaching, and employability activities. Graduate outcome destination data (alongside internal data tracking), engagement analytics, and student feedback will form the primary basis of measurement.

Oversight will be provided by the Access and Participation Working Group (AWAS), and Student Council, with findings reported to UCP's governance structures. For further details, please see **Annex B**.

Whole provider approach

Introduction: Widening participation is an institutional priority embedded across the student lifecycle. The Access and Participation Plan plays a crucial role in this priority and undergoes a comprehensive review process. It is initially scrutinised and endorsed by various UCP committees and sub-committees—most notably the Academic Board, AWAS, and the Student Council—before receiving final ratification from the UCP Council, the institution's governing body.

Key Strategies and Policies: The following key strategies and policies have been used to prepare this Access and Participation Plan:

- UCP Higher Education Student Charter
- UCP Higher Education Accreditation of Prior Learning/Experience Policy
- UCP Higher Education Student Attendance Policy
- UCP Higher Education Fitness to Study Policy
- UCP Higher Education Recruitment and Admissions Policy
- UCP Strategic Plan 2025-2030
- UCP Higher Education Recruitment and Admissions Policy
- UCP Student Engagement Policy
- UCP Teaching and Learning Strategy
- IEG Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Plan
- IEG Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- IEG Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commitment Statement
- IEG SEND Policy
- IEG Strategy 2024-2030

*All public facing policies and strategies can be found [here](#)

Institutional Commitment to EDI: The policies above outline a whole-provider approach to achieving our institutional objectives, with a significant emphasis on addressing equality of opportunity for all student characteristics. The Inspire Education Group (IEG) explicitly commits to the Public Sector Equality Duty as mandated by the Equality Act 2010, which requires the elimination of discrimination and the advancement of equality of opportunity. This commitment extends beyond mere legislative compliance, aspiring for IEG to be recognised as a leader in equality, diversity, and inclusion. The institution's core values, such as being 'Inclusive' – providing opportunities for all, respecting and celebrating diverse communities, intrinsically link with and underpin the Access and Participation Plan objectives. This foundational alignment ensures that the APP's focus on addressing access, success, and progression gaps for various student groups directly supports IEG's overarching mission to transform lives regardless of identity or background.

Operationalisation of EDI Commitment: Operationalising this commitment, IEG has established an EDI Strategic Lead, an EDI Committee, and an EDI Coordinator, supported by five Special Interest Working Groups (SIGs), which include a dedicated Race, Religion & Culture (or Anti-Racism) group. These groups are tasked with developing and implementing action plans to raise awareness and ensure robust practices, such as anti-racist practices and zero tolerance for discrimination. Furthermore, the EDI framework mandates regular monitoring of attendance, retention, and achievement rates across different groups and characteristics, through Self-Assessment Report processes and the Annual EDI Report. Specific actions include delivering and embedding the Unison Anti-Racism Charter, providing anti-racism and unconscious bias training for all staff, developing a Race Equality Policy, and undertaking ethnicity pay gap reporting. This analytical approach, which includes disaggregating student performance data by EDI characteristics, is crucial for identifying achievement gaps and implementing targeted mitigation strategies.

Inclusive Environment and Student Success: The collective efforts aim to cultivate an inclusive environment, empowering students from all backgrounds to succeed and progress. IEG's strategies ensure that diversity is celebrated and seen as a powerful asset, fostering an environment where all voices are heard and valued.

UCP Strategic Plan and EDI Considerations: The UCP Strategic Plan highlights the institution's intent to "value and celebrate the diversity of our student body and provide a personalised experience", aiming for "every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers". By embedding EDI considerations into every aspect of the student lifecycle, from curriculum design and teaching practices that positively acknowledge contributions from all cultures to recruitment and admissions processes that consider contextual data to mitigate socio-economic impacts on attainment, UCP systematically works towards enhancing student experience, ensuring a sense of belonging, and promoting successful progression for all students. This continuous cycle of monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation, informed by data and student feedback, underscores UCP's ambition to go "beyond legislation" in championing equality of opportunity.

UCP Learning, Teaching, Assessment & Student Outcomes Strategy: The UCP Learning, Teaching, Assessment & Student Outcomes Strategy is underpinned by principles of inclusion and fairness, explicitly committing to embedding EDI in all aspects of the curriculum. This involves regularly examining course content and resources to ensure they do not discriminate, directly or indirectly, against any student group, and actively including positive acknowledgement of the contributions made to society by all cultures. A key component of this strategy is the systematic tracking of progress for all groups of students to identify and eliminate gaps in achievement rates, retention, and attendance. This data-driven approach informs the continuous planning and development of the curriculum with inclusive strategies, aiming to provide a diverse range of learning opportunities tailored to individual learning styles and support needs. Furthermore, all staff receive mandatory EDI training, including anti-racism and unconscious bias training, to ensure EDI objectives are actively embedded in teaching and learning practices. By cultivating graduate attributes such as "a global perspective and cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness", the LTA strategy directly contributes to IEG's overarching goal of empowering students from all backgrounds to thrive academically and personally. This strategy aligns coherently with the broader UCP Strategic Plan and Access and Participation Plan, ensuring a cohesive effort towards equality of opportunity throughout the student experience.

UCP Recruitment and Admissions Policy: UCP demonstrates its commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion—core priorities within its Access and Participation Plan—through the implementation of its HE Recruitment and Admissions Policy. This policy underpins the use of contextualised admissions, drawing on data such as POLAR4 quintiles and care leaver status to identify applicants who may not meet standard academic thresholds but possess significant potential. A holistic assessment process values a range of academic, professional, and personal experiences and is further supported by UCP's Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) policy, which facilitates flexible entry routes. Collectively, these practices are designed to minimise barriers, broaden participation, and address structural inequalities from the outset of the student journey.

Pre-entry Support: UCP demonstrates its commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion for progression to HE through targeted marketing and tailored information, advice and guidance. Outreach events such as open days will be supported by students from underrepresented

backgrounds, fostering aspirational identification and lived experience. Our IAG provision offers clear guidance on finance and student-loan options, demystifying funding pathways to reduce economic barriers. Admissions activities include face-to-face and virtual one-to-one meetings with course leaders and admissions officers, ensuring personalised support that clarifies entry requirements and streamlines the application process. Careers and progression events for parents, carers and schools address the specific obstacles faced by underrepresented students, providing tailored guidance on University admissions, finance and career planning. Collectively, these measures are designed to redress participation gaps and promote equitable progression to HE for all prospective students.

Events: UCP delivers a diverse events programme designed to support underrepresented learners' progression to higher education. Open days are co-hosted by student ambassadors, including those from underrepresented backgrounds, to foster aspiration and provide real insight into HE life. Progression events for schools, parents and carers offer clear guidance on university admissions, finance, and future pathways. Subject taster sessions immerse potential applicants in hands-on workshops that build academic confidence and subject knowledge. Transition workshops equip students with key skills such as research, academic writing and time management, helping them prepare for the demands of higher study. Our Uni-Connect events bring together guest speakers, employers and lecturers to broaden career awareness, raise aspirations and support students in awareness of HE. UCP also hosts community engagement activities, such as the annual ISLAH conference, which promotes inclusion, cultural understanding and academic opportunity through collaboration with the local community. Additionally, we support early career researchers through events at UCP.

Diverse pathways into and through Higher education: UCP offers a range of flexible and diverse pathways into higher education, including full-time, part-time, online, blended delivery modes, degree apprenticeships, micro-credentials and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs). These options are co-designed with students, employers and academic staff, and are revalidated to align with local labour-market needs. In addition, the Access to HE courses delivered by IEG provide foundational study that maps onto UCP's Level 4 programmes.

Student Support Throughout Their Studies: UCP provides a comprehensive, inclusive support offer that underpins students' success from entry through to progression. Academic support is delivered through one-to-one tutorials, academic coaching and targeted provision for those undertaking referrals, repeat study or returning from intermission. Where appropriate, we use Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and Statements of Reasonable Adjustment (SORA) to ensure an equitable learning experience for all students. We use 'Potentially' software to track and develop essential skills such as time management and encourage self-efficacy.

Wellbeing is championed by our dedicated Wellbeing Team, with services including counselling, safeguarding, and access to 'SpectrumLife'. The Chaplaincy offers additional pastoral support, while our "Belong" culture initiatives foster social connection and reinforce a strong sense of community and student identity.

Students with disabilities benefit from funded Additional Learning Support (ALS), assessments for specific learning differences such as dyslexia, and the implementation of reasonable adjustments (SORA) to ensure full access to teaching and assessment. Financial pressures are eased through

a combination of hardship funds, food vouchers, annual bursaries for low-income households and care leavers, and broader financial support advice.

Employability runs through every stage of the student journey via the Futures Hub, curriculum-integrated employability modules, and practical experience opportunities such as placements, internships and mentoring. All support services are clearly signposted on the Canvas VLE and reinforced by co-curricular activities, including motivational speakers and industry panels, ensuring every student has the resources they need to thrive.

Governance and Oversight: From the 5th June 2020, the UCP Council assumed oversight of UCP as outlined in the Articles of Association. The UCP Council monitors returns and UCP's achievement of KPIs, which the APP is part of. The governing body includes independent members, staff, IEG nominees and a student member. The latter ensures that strategies and plans address the students interests. The Academic Board is the academic authority and as such operates to promote the academic and professional work of UCP across all of its campuses and safeguards the standards of its awards. The purpose of the Academic Board is to provide oversight of academic activity and related activities and the resources needed to support them. It has delegated responsibility from the UCP Council to monitor academic standards and the direction of academic matters in accordance with the UK higher education sector regulatory requirements.

The Academic Board receives papers and updates from committees such as AWAS, which has direct responsibility for monitoring the impact of interventions within the APP. UCP's whole provider approach ensures that specific departments and managers have targets which relate to the achievement of the APP priorities.

Financial Support: Financial constraints have been consistently identified through both research and student consultation as a significant barrier to accessing and succeeding in higher education. Evidence shows that targeted financial support, such as bursaries, is strongly associated with improved access, continuation, and completion outcomes. This Access and Participation Plan outlines intervention strategies and theories of change that specify the student groups expected to benefit from financial support, along with the intended impact on their access, progression, and success.

UCP offers the following financial support and bursaries:

Low Income Bursary

Households with assessed income under £30,000 will receive this bursary if the eligibility criteria below are met. Full-time undergraduates paying fees over £6,500 receive £500. Part-time students receive a pro-rata payment based on credits and course fees. Payments are made at the start of semester 2 of each academic year of study.

To be eligible for this bursary, you must:

- Be a registered UCP student
- Have your tuition financed via Student Finance England (SFE)
- Have an SFE-assessed household income under £30,000 and receive an SFE maintenance loan
- Have validated bank details held by SFE
- Be fully enrolled and in attendance at the time of payment
- Have given consent on the SFE application for financial information to be shared with UCP
- Be studying on an undergraduate course where the full-time fee is £6500 or above

- Part-time students will be eligible if the annual course fees are more than £3250 and equate to at least 60 credits

Care Leaver Bursary

Current or former care leavers may receive the UCP care leavers bursary if the eligibility criteria below are met. Full-time undergraduate students with annual tuition fees above £6,500 are entitled to £500. Part-time students will be eligible if the annual course fees are in excess of £3250 and equate to at least 60 credits. Payments are made in November of each academic year of study.

To be eligible for this bursary, you must:

- Be a registered UCP student.
- Have your tuition financed via Student Finance England (SFE)
- Have validated bank details held by SFE
- Be fully enrolled and in attendance at the time of payment
- Have given consent on the SFE application for financial information to be shared with UCP
- Be studying an undergraduate course where the full-time fee is £6500 or above
- Part-time students will be eligible if the annual course fees are more than £3250 and equate to at least 60 credits
- Be under 25 years of age on the first day of the first academic year (1st September).
- Qualify as a care leaver under Student Finance England guidance.
- Receive a Student Finance England maintenance loan.
- Have validated bank details held by Student Finance England.
- Have given consent on the SFE application for financial information to be shared with UCP

Student Ambassador Bursary

Full-time undergraduates acting as Student Ambassadors may receive a tax-free bursary of up to £1,000 per year. You can apply to become a Student Ambassador in the second year of your course.

To be eligible for this bursary you must:

- Have an excellent attendance record
- Be on target for a first or 2:1 degree classification
- Be studying at either Level 5 or 6 on a full-time programme at either our Stamford or Peterborough campus.

Please note that this bursary is competitive and will be awarded based on both your application and interview. Limited positions are available.

Subsidised Travel

If your household income is below £30,000, the cost of college transport will be reduced by up to 50% of the total weekly cost and reflect the days of travel to UCP for study. For example, a student attending for 3 days will pay 50% of the total cost for a week's travel.

Student consultation

At UCP, student voice is central to shaping our Access and Participation Plan (APP). Students are represented on key governance bodies, including the Academic Board, Student Experience Committee, and, from 2025–26, the Access and Participation Working Group. This ensures their perspectives inform strategic decisions.

To support the development of this APP, we engaged students through both formal structures and direct consultation. In Semester 2 of 2025, senior UCP managers attended the Student Council to explain the APP and gather feedback on:

- Our proposed intervention strategies.
- Whether we had missed anything important or if strategies would be effective.
- How students could be more involved in co-creating activities.
- Ways to strengthen students’ sense of belonging at UCP, emphasising that belonging (feeling accepted, valued, and supported academically and socially) plays a key role in student success (Kelly et al., 2024).

We also explained how students would be involved throughout the APP's delivery. In the short term, we asked for their immediate feedback to further refine and develop our APP. We held two further meetings with student officers to support ongoing APP development before its submission.

In the medium and long term, students will contribute in the following ways:

- The Student Council will play a key role in monitoring progress against the plan.
- The Student Officer will join AWAS
- Student Ambassadors will be actively involved in delivering the plan, including information, advice, and guidance (IAG) and broader engagement initiatives.
- The Student Council, alongside Student Officers and Ambassadors, will participate in the evaluation of the plan and its outcomes.
- Student representatives and the wider student body will provide ongoing feedback through surveys, focus groups, and active participation in initiatives aimed at improving continuation, attainment, and progression outcomes.

Through these formal governance structures and targeted direct engagement activities, students will contribute directly to the strategic oversight, continuous improvement, and accountability of our access and participation initiatives.

Our consultation process was designed to capture student insights at each stage of the student journey, ensuring our interventions were responsive and impactful from pre-entry to progression to graduate outcomes. The table below highlights how student feedback, gathered through direct engagement, has directly shaped our interventions:

Student Journey Stage	Impact of student feedback
Access	Marketing and IAG

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be strengthening the promotion of Access to HE routes as legitimate and valued pathways into higher education, both as progression and safety-net options. • We will also be developing early-stage financial information provision in schools, including specific guidance on maintenance loans and support funding, as many students and families lack awareness before application. <p>Financial Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will also ensure this support is communicated earlier in the student journey, particularly within schools, to raise awareness among those eligible for Free School Meals. <p>Contextual Admissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will also provide additional targeted support for EAL students during the admissions process to ensure clarity of expectations, application requirements, and available support. <p>Knowledge and Skills Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will also be promoting Access to HE routes as a viable and important progression pathway, particularly for students without traditional qualifications. <p>Subject Tasters / Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be incorporating visits from former students, particularly from underrepresented groups, into these outreach events to serve as relatable and motivational role models. <p>UniConnect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will also be enhancing perceptions of higher education by embedding real-life success stories and role models from former students across our outreach activities. <p>Staff Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will include developing staff confidence in supporting EAL students during admissions and transition, recognising the nuanced barriers they may face.
Continuation	<p>Personal and Pastoral Student Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will introduce mechanisms for recognising and celebrating student success to reinforce motivation and self-efficacy. • We will implement responsive, data-informed interventions tailored to individual needs at key transition points. <p>Teaching and Learning / Programme Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will enhance the personalisation of face-to-face feedback to strengthen belonging. • We will develop structured support to prepare students for the academic and personal demands of the next level of study. <p>Mentoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will incorporate aspiration-raising activities and positive role models, particularly for male students, to challenge limiting ideologies. <p>Knowledge and Skills Development</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will deliver tailored coaching, EAL support, and motivational guest input to develop academic and employability skills, especially for those re-engaging with study. <p>Academic/Support Intervention Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement responsive, data-informed academic and pastoral interventions tailored to individual student needs at key transition or risk points
Attainment	<p>Knowledge and Skills Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasise time management and other graduate attributes as essential skills linked to academic attainment and progression. <p>Programme Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed structured development of independent learning strategies into core curriculum delivery to build student resilience and autonomy.” Increase opportunities for low-stakes formative feedback and consider staggered assessments to allow students to build competence and confidence over time. Ensure clear and embedded links between academic content and employability, including work experience or project-based learning opportunities. <p>Pastoral Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align mental health and wellbeing support more explicitly with recognition schemes such as the UCP Award, reinforcing the importance of holistic student development
Progression	<p>Programme Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure employability development is tailored to specific disciplines and includes embedded projects and classroom-based visits from employers Role of Potentially to be explored and embedded throughout the course <p>Academic Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate attributes and skill development recognised to be important
Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mixture of points that have fed into the continuation, progression and attainment stages

Evaluation of the plan

Introduction: UCP’s evaluation strategy has been shaped by the OfS Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool, which we completed at the outset of developing this plan. The process enabled us to reflect on our current practice across five dimensions — from strategic context to learning from evaluation — and identify areas of strength and development. The tool highlighted our strong culture of reflective practice and student involvement, while also identifying the need for greater consistency in evaluation design and data tracking. These insights have directly informed the structure, priorities, and resourcing of our evaluation approach.

Approach to Evaluation: UCP’s evaluation begins with a clear Theory of Change for each major activity, articulating the assumptions, inputs, and intended outcomes that underpin our work. We employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative trend analysis of applications,

enrolments, continuation, completion, attainment, and progression rates with qualitative insights from students, staff, Uni Connect, and other stakeholder feedback. This iterative process ensures that data and participant feedback directly inform ongoing adaptations, driving continuous improvement.

Evaluation Methodologies: Our quantitative methods include pre- and post-intervention comparisons of key performance metrics, such as FSM-eligible applications. Qualitative enquiry is conducted through thematic analysis of focus group transcripts, bespoke student surveys, and stakeholder interviews. By triangulating these data sources and applying guidance from TASO's small-n evaluation toolkit and the OfS Financial Support toolkit, we check emerging patterns and identify any unintended consequences.

Evidence Types and Standards: In accordance with OfS standards, UCP generates Type 1 evidence through detailed narrative accounts and Theory of Change documentation, and Type 2 evidence via statistical analysis of student data. We acknowledge that Type 3 causal evaluations are not feasible at our institutional scale; instead, we plan collaborative studies with other CBHE partners to enable comparative analyses and strengthen our evidence base.

Self-Assessment and Capacity Building: Each year, UCP will complete the OfS Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool, reviewing strategic context, alignment with evidence standards, methodological rigour, implementation quality, and our application of learning. Results will be benchmarked as Emerging, Good, or Advanced and reported to the Access and Participation Working Group (AWAS), with specific targets set for year-on-year improvement.

Governance and Reporting: Oversight of evaluation rests with AWAS and the Student Council, who receive regular reports on progress and recommend adjustments where evidence indicates limited impact. Findings are reported to the Academic Board and subsequently to the UCP Council (Governing Body).

Student and Partner Involvement: We intend to recruit a student member to AWAS, ensuring that student perspectives shape our assessment framework. We will also share updates at the Student Council. External Uni Connect evaluations are integrated into our evidence base to align with sector best practice and avoid duplication of effort.

Dissemination of Findings: UCP is committed to sharing evaluation findings in ways that support both internal learning and sector-wide improvement. We will do this through internal briefings, comprehensive documentation, and detailed reports that inform practice and build capacity for more rigorous evaluation in future cycles. Externally, we will share insights through both formal and informal channels across the College Based HE network, contributing to collaborative learning and strengthening the collective evidence base for access and participation.

Provision of information to students

University Centre Peterborough (UCP) is committed to providing timely and accessible information on tuition fees and financial support to both current and prospective students.

- Online Information: Prospective students can find comprehensive details on tuition fee rates for all programmes on the UCP website, along with information regarding student loans, bursaries, and other financial support options: <https://www.ucp.ac.uk/fees-and->

bursaries/fees/. Tuition fee rates are also clearly displayed on each course page on the UCP website.

- External Partnerships: We ensure that timely and accurate information is provided to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and Student Finance England (SFE), enabling them to maintain up-to-date databases for potential applicants.
- Targeted Advice Sessions: We offer tailored advice sessions for applicants and prospective applicants through both on-campus and off-campus activities.
- Promotional Events: During Open Days and Applicant Days, UCP staff actively promote the university's offerings, including highlighting our available bursaries.
- Digital Engagement: Our Digital Marketing team manages UCP's student-focused social media channels (including email, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok). These channels are used to deliver regular, engaging communications to all student audiences, with a particular focus on reaching students from underrepresented groups.
- Student Support Services: A comprehensive information and advice service is available through UCP's admissions and student support teams. This service provides budgeting advice and details of financial support, including emergency financial support through the Hardship Fund.
- Careers and Employment Support: UCP offers student careers and jobs advice through our Futures Hub.
- Bursaries: Information about bursary opportunities and eligibility is available on the UCP website, in the UCP prospectus, and within the Access and Participation Plan, which is also accessible online.

** Unless otherwise stated, the support outlined in this agreement applies to full-time UK undergraduate students only.*

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

UCP has undertaken a detailed assessment of performance to identify the most significant indicators of risk to equality of opportunity for its current and prospective students. Our analysis has drawn on a range of data sources, including the Office for Students (OfS) Access and Participation Data Dashboard, Student Outcomes and TEF Dashboards, internal performance monitoring, National Student Survey (NSS) feedback, Graduate Outcomes data, and insights gathered through staff and student consultation processes.

We have mapped our identified indicators of risk to the OfS' Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) to consider what the related risks of equality of opportunity are for the sector as a whole and how they relate to UCP in our provider context. Where we do have limited data, we have used the EORR to consider how identified risks to national groups may affect our UCP students and potential students. The assessment of performance in this annex only gives information on student groups and associated lifecycles where we have identified an indicator of risk from our data to the equality of opportunity of our students and our potential students.

As a relatively new provider of higher education, UCP recognises that its datasets are still maturing. Several constraints limit detailed analysis of historic trends, including small cohort sizes, suppression in disaggregated and intersectional data, and year-on-year variations. These challenges are amplified by the localised nature of our recruitment and by institutional changes over the past five years. In particular, UCP has undergone significant changes in its programme portfolio, including the termination of a large franchise partnership which previously contributed a substantial proportion of the overall student body.

As a result, the data published by OfS includes outcomes for students who were enrolled under legacy arrangements that are no longer part of UCP's provision. We have therefore removed these franchise students from our internal analysis where possible, to ensure that the assessment of risk reflects the current institutional context. While the aforementioned limitations remain, the combination of multi-year aggregations, internal tracking, and qualitative feedback enables a meaningful understanding of patterns and disparities across student groups.

This analysis has enabled UCP to identify key risks to equality of opportunity across the student lifecycle, which is presented in the form of a two-column matrix: (1) the identified risk and (2) a contextual explanation relevant to UCP's provision. These indicators have been prioritised as objectives based on their significance, persistence, and capacity for meaningful intervention within the scope of the plan. Although intersectional analysis was explored, it was mostly not possible to draw statistically valid conclusions due to small cohort sizes across combined characteristics. As such, the assessment predominantly focuses on single characteristic indicators of risk while remaining sensitive to intersectional disadvantage through qualitative insight and sector evidence.

In cases where risks could not be robustly measured due to small numbers, UCP has drawn upon the sector-level Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) and national data to ensure we are not overlooking groups who may be at risk within our student body. We have also aligned our risk indicators with institutional priorities and local demographic data to ensure our intervention strategies are both evidence-based and contextually grounded.

In parallel, UCP has also identified areas for development in our internal data capability, particularly in relation to management systems that can easily report on underrepresented groups throughout all the stages of the student lifecycle. To address this, we have begun implementing improved internal tracking processes—for example, by monitoring students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) from application through to progression. These enhancements will support more precise evaluation of outcomes, better inform future iterations of the APP, and ensure that emerging risks can be identified and addressed in a timely and evidence-based manner.

Access

Risk	Explanation and Rationale
Age (Mature / Young)	<p>The UCP timeline on the APP dashboard reveals a significant and growing disparity in enrolment between mature and young students. In 2022/23, only 16.7% of mature students (aged 21 and over) were enrolled, compared to 83.3% of young students (under 21). This gap has widened over time: mature student enrolment has declined from 49.2% in 2017/18 to 16.7% in 2022/23, while young student enrolment has remained consistently high, rising from 50.8% in 2019/20 to a peak of 83.3% in 2022/23. The four-year and two-year aggregated data further highlight this divergence, with mature student enrolment averaging 23.3% over the last two years, compared to 76.7% for young students.</p> <p>However, this data must be interpreted with caution. When disaggregating this data by mode of study, the percentage of young students compared to mature is much closer, within only a 1.2% majority of young students on a 'first degree' (over the 4-year average). While 'other undergraduate' numbers show that young students comprise 94.6% of the cohort in 22/23.</p> <p>This can be attributed to two primary factors.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The APP dashboard figures include students from former franchise partners, which severely skews the representation of UCP's current student body. Internal MIS data, which excludes franchise provision, presents a contrasting picture: in 2024/25, 70.25% of enrolled students were mature, while 29.75% were young. This reversal underscores the importance of contextualising national data with institutional realities. 2. Our course offer has changed significantly over the last 2 years. A substantial proportion of UCP's cohort is enrolled in counselling programmes, where qualification entry requirements mean that students are mature by the time they are eligible to apply for higher education and thus influencing the student age demographics. <p>Given this internal data, excluding Franchise, age will not be set as a target metric. However, we will continue to monitor age-related trends to ensure inclusive access and participation.</p>
Eligibility for free school meals	<p>The UCP timeline on the APP dashboard shows a consistent underrepresentation of students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). In 2022/23, only 12.7% of enrolled students were FSM-eligible, down from 19.4% in 2019/20. This downward</p>

<p>Risk / Objective 1</p>	<p>trend is evident across the available 3-year period, with the two-year average at just 13.0%. In contrast, students not eligible for FSM consistently made up the vast majority of enrolments, reaching 87.3% in 2022/23.</p> <p>However, this data must be interpreted with caution. As with other indicators, the APP dashboard figures include students from former franchise partners, which may distort the representation of UCP's current student body. While internal UCP data on FSM eligibility is not currently disaggregated from franchise provision, the trend in the dashboard data still highlights a persistent access gap for FSM-eligible students.</p> <p>This needs to be further contextualised. Research shows that FSM eligibility is a strong indicator of socio-economic disadvantage and is associated with lower progression rates into higher education. According to <u>Holt-White and Cullinane (2023)</u> 53% of disadvantaged high attainers go on to attend university, compared to 67% of non-FSM high attainers. Although intersectional analysis (e.g. FSM status by ethnicity or gender) is not currently available in our dataset, we recognise the importance of monitoring these patterns. Given the consistent underrepresentation of FSM-eligible students, this characteristic will be set as a target metric. We will continue to monitor and address this gap through targeted outreach, support, and evaluation of impact.</p> <p>By 2030, UCP aims to increase the enrolment of students eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 18%, thereby reducing the access gap between FSM-eligible students and their non-FSM peers</p>
<p>Ethnicity</p> <p>Risk / Objective 2</p>	<p>The UCP timeline on the APP dashboard highlights a persistent underrepresentation of Asian and Black students in higher education enrolment. According to OFS data, the proportion of Asian students has fluctuated significantly, from 11.2% in 2019/20 to a low of 2.9% in 2022/23. Black student enrolment has remained consistently low across the same period; in 2022/23 it was 1.6%. These figures contrast with the demographic composition of UCP Peterborough local communities.</p> <p>To ensure a more accurate understanding of our student body, UCP used internal MIS data that excludes franchise partners. In 2022/23, Asian students made up 6.49% of the Peterborough campus cohort, while the Stamford campus reported 100% White enrolment. Additionally, 16% of UCP's students identify as coming from white backgrounds but other than White British, reflecting local white ethnic diversity.</p> <p>UCP also examined intersectionality, including IMD quintiles, and found no significant impact on ethnicity-based access.</p> <p>Geographic context is important: Peterborough, where one of UCP's campuses is based, had a population that was 14.3% Asian, 4.1% Black and 75.4% White in the 2021 Census (ONS), while South Kesteven (home to the Stamford campus) was 95.8% White, 1.8% Asian and .61% Black. Despite these differences, UCP maintains that ethnicity should remain a priority area for access work.</p>

	<p>Given the persistent underrepresentation and local demographic context, Asian and black ethnicity will be set as a target metric.</p> <p>By 2030, UCP aims to increase the enrolment of Asian students to 12% and Black students to 5%, thereby reducing the access gap between these groups and students of other ethnicities.</p>
Sex	<p>The UCP timeline on the APP dashboard highlights a persistent access gap between male and female students. The four-year average for full-time enrolment shows 78.4% female and 21.6% male students. The proportion of male students has declined over time, from 30.4% in 2019/20 to 20.6% in 2022/23. This trend is also reflected in internal MIS data, which excludes franchise partners: in 2022/23, 34.78% of students were male, compared to a national average of 43.1%, while 65.22% were female, above the national average of 56.9%.</p> <p>The gender gap varies across course types. For example, in “Other Undergraduate” programmes, only 12.4% of students were male and 87.6% were female. In First Degree programmes, 34.9% were male and 61.0% were female. Although the part-time four-year average shows a higher proportion of male students, this is based on a small cohort, primarily from engineering programmes, which, like the industry, are male-dominated.</p> <p>UCP initially attributed the gender imbalance to its former franchise partner, which offered dance programmes with predominantly female enrolment. However, internal data confirms that the gap persists across the current provision (64.97% female, 35.03% male in 24/25). Intersectional analysis with IMD quintiles shows that the gender gap remains consistent regardless of socio-economic background.</p> <p>However, this will not be set as a target, due to the nature of UCP’s programme portfolio. A significant proportion of UCP students are enrolled in counselling programmes and are predominantly female. This is reflective of the industry, which is female-dominated (84% female). UCP’s gender profile is therefore reflective of broader sectoral patterns.</p>
Disability	<p>The UCP timeline on the APP dashboard highlights a relatively high proportion of students declaring a disability compared to the sector average. The four-year average for full-time enrolment shows 21.3% of students at UCP reported a disability, compared to 17.4% across all providers.</p> <p>However, this data must be interpreted with caution. The APP dashboard includes students from former franchise partners, which may obscure the current institutional picture. Internal MIS data, which excludes franchise provision, shows significantly higher rates of disability declaration: 29.59% in 2022/23, rising to 35.47% in 2023/24, and 33.92% in 2024/25. This suggests that UCP is serving a higher proportion of disabled students than the APP dashboard indicates.</p> <p>Internal disaggregated data also reveals variation in the types of impairments reported. For example, in 2019/20, 7.9% of students reported cognitive or learning difficulties, and 4.4% reported mental health conditions. While data for other years is incomplete, these figures suggest that a range of support needs are present within the student body.</p> <p>It is also important to consider that disability status may not be disclosed at the point of entry, and local demographic factors may influence disclosure rates. We have found that the proportion of students declaring a disability tends to</p>

	<p>increase when franchise partners are excluded from the data. We also need to be mindful that there is a growth in the number of students citing mental health issues in internal data from surveys.</p> <p>This will not be set as a target, as UCP already performs above the sector average in this area. However, we will continue to monitor disaggregated disability declaration and survey rates and ensure that appropriate support structures are in place to meet the needs of all students for access.</p>
Continuation	
Risk	Explanation and Rationale
<p>Sex (Male) intersecting with IMD</p> <p>Risk / Objective 3</p>	<p>On the OfS APP dashboard, male continuation rates at UCP reveal a significant divergence from national trends, particularly when examining sex in conjunction with socioeconomic background. Female students from the lowest two quintiles (Quintiles 1 or 2) at UCP achieved a 4-year average continuation rate of 87.9%, which is only slightly below the national average of approximately 88% for the same group—indicating that UCP is broadly aligned with national performance for disadvantaged female students. However, the picture is markedly different for male students from the same socioeconomic background. At UCP, their 4-year average continuation rate was 76.4%, which falls well below the estimated national average of around 83.0%, resulting in a substantial gap of 8.6 percentage points. This disparity suggests that while UCP is effectively supporting female students from disadvantaged backgrounds, male students in similar circumstances are underperforming relative to their national peers, highlighting an area for targeted intervention and support.</p> <p>Our student support team monitors withdrawals, short-term extensions (STE), and intermissions. We analysed the years 22/23, 23/24, and 24/25, focusing on male intersections with Polar quintile, age, disability, and ethnicity, looking for trends. These trends varied greatly between academic years. For example, in 22/23, a relatively high proportion of withdrawals were from male, ethnically minoritised students, but in 23/24, there were none. Lower quintile IMD and male did show some intersectionality; for instance, concerning STE in 23/24, 26% were from IMD quintile 1 compared to 16% for quintile 5. However, this percentage was not consistent in other academic years. It is important to note that low numbers can lead to statistical uncertainty, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions.</p> <p>As previously mentioned, OFS data must be interpreted with caution as it includes figures from previous franchise partners. However, internal data also shows similar continuation gaps between males and females, indicating that the issue persists irrespective of whether partner institutions are included.</p>

	<p>Therefore, this will be set as a target.</p> <p>By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rate for full-time male students to 87%, thereby significantly reducing the gap in continuation rates between male and female students and aligning more closely with national benchmarks.</p>
<p>Ethnicity</p> <p>Risk / Objective 4</p>	<p>On the OfS APP dashboard, the 4-year average continuation rates for full-time students at UCP highlight a clear disparity between ethnic groups, both internally and in comparison, to national averages. At UCP, White students had a 4-year average continuation rate of 89.1%, closely aligned with the national average of 90.2%. However, Black students at UCP averaged 78.6%, significantly below the national average of 84.8%. Similarly, Asian students at UCP averaged 80.4%, compared to 89.6% nationally, and Mixed Heritage students averaged 75.6%, well below the national average of 88.35%. These figures reveal substantial continuation gaps between ethnically minoritised and White students at UCP, as well as between UCP's ethnically minoritised students and their national peers.</p> <p>To better understand these disparities, UCP disaggregated the data by course type, but low numbers in the "Other UG" category limited the ability to draw meaningful conclusions. Further analysis using the Student Outcome Dashboard confirmed that while individual percentages varied, the continuation gap between ethnic groups remained consistent. Encouragingly, internal data from 2022–23 shows signs of improvement: Asian students achieved a continuation rate of 89.47% but Black and Mixed Heritage students both recorded 75.00%. This is only one year, and as previously stated, the number of students is relatively small.</p> <p>As outlined in risk 3, our student support team monitors withdrawals, short-term extensions (STE), and intermissions. We analysed the years 22/23, 23/24, and 24/25, focusing on ethnicity intersecting with Polar quintile, age, disability, and sex, looking for trends. The numbers were so low that no statistical certainty could be asserted, making it difficult to draw conclusions.</p> <p>Considering all the data, this will be set as a target,</p> <p>By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rates for ethnically minoritised students, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between ethnically minoritised and White students. The targets are disaggregated as follows:</p> <p>4.1 Increase the continuation rate for Asian students to 89% 4.2 Increase the continuation rate for Black students to 85% 4.3 Increase the continuation rate for Mixed Heritage students to 85%</p>

IMD (discrete)	<p>The OfS APP dashboard highlights a persistent continuation gap at UCP between students from the most and least deprived backgrounds. The 4-year average continuation rate for Quintile 1 (most deprived) students is 81.6%, compared to 90.1% for Quintile 5 (least deprived) students—an 8.5 percentage point gap. This internal gap is mirrored in national data, where the continuation rates are 85% for Quintile 1 and 93.5% for Quintile 5, indicating that UCP is underperforming relative to national averages for both groups.</p> <p>Further analysis using the OfS Student Outcomes Dashboard shows a smaller but still notable gap: 82.1% for students in Quintiles 1 and 2, versus 84.7% for those in Quintiles 3, 4, or 5, a 2.6 percentage point difference. While this suggests some narrowing, the underlying disparities remain.</p> <p>To better understand these gaps, UCP examined intersectionality with sex and ethnicity. The data revealed that among students from Quintiles 1 or 2, female students had a continuation rate of 87.9%, compared to 76.4% for male students—an 11.5 percentage point gap. Among students from Quintiles 3, 4, or 5, the gap narrows, with females at 90.2% and males at 86.6%.</p> <p>Ethnicity-based analysis showed that in Quintiles 1 or 2, White students had a continuation rate of 85.9%, while students from all other ethnicities averaged 82.2%. However, in Quintiles 3, 4, or 5, the gap widened significantly: White students continued at 91.2%, while non-White students had a much lower rate of 67.6%. This indicates that lower quintiles does not impact negatively on ethnicity and IMD—though this figure is based on a small cohort and should be interpreted with caution.</p> <p>We determined that the most appropriate strategy was to set a specific target for male students from lower IMD quintiles, and a separate, discrete target for ethnicity, as the data did not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that lower IMD quintiles were the primary driver of continuation gaps across all ethnic groups.</p> <p>Therefore, IMD was not set as a target/objective.</p>
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Completion

** Completion data is not yet available on the OfS APP dashboard. UCP used internal data applying rules akin to those the OFS uses for completion data.*

Risk	Explanation and Rationale
Sex (male) Risk / Objective 5	<p>Completion data is not yet available for UCP on the OfS APP dashboard. However, internal data (approximating OFS completion criteria) from the past three academic years highlights a consistent gap in completion rates between male and female full-time students. In 2021–22, female students had a completion rate of 83%, compared to 75% for males. This</p>

	<p>gap persisted in 2022–23, with females at 90% and males at 73%, and although male completion improved to 80.3% in 2023–24, females continued to outperform at 92%.</p> <p>Nationally, the 4-year average completion rate stands at 89.8% for females and 84.6% for males, indicating that UCP's male students are underperforming both in comparison to their female peers and to national averages. This persistent disparity underscores the need for targeted support and intervention to improve male student outcomes.</p> <p>This will be set as a target,</p> <p>By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rate for Full-Time male students to 85%, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between male and female students.</p>
<p>Ethnicity</p> <p>Risk / Objective 6</p>	<p>Internal data from 2021–22 at UCP highlights significant disparities in completion rates between ethnic groups, particularly when compared to national benchmarks. Asian students at UCP had a completion rate of 60.0%, which is 27.3 percentage points below the national 4-year average of 87.3%. Black students completed at 62.5%, also well below the national average of 81.1%. In contrast, Mixed Heritage students at UCP performed slightly above the national average (88.9% vs. 85.7%), and White students were closer to the average (81.8% vs. 88.7%).</p> <p>While these figures clearly indicate underperformance among Asian and Black students, it is important to interpret them with caution due to small cohort sizes, which can cause year-on-year fluctuations. For example, in 2023–24, the completion rate for Asian students rose to approximately 98%, suggesting potential improvement, though this is based on a very small number of students.</p> <p>Despite these limitations, the persistent gap in outcomes—especially for Asian and Black students—justifies the need for targeted action to ensure equitable support and success across all ethnic groups.</p> <p>This will therefore be set as a target,</p> <p>By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rates for Asian and Black students, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between them and other ethnicities:</p> <p>6.1 Increase the completion rate for Asian students to 85% 6.2 Increase the completion rate for Black students to 80%</p> <p>These targets reflect UCP's commitment to addressing structural inequalities and ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have the opportunity to succeed.</p>

Attainment	
Disability	<p>The FT 4-year average highlights a 4.5% attainment gap between students who declared a disability and those with no disability. Students with a disability have an attainment rate of 79.7%, while those with no disability have an attainment rate of 84.2%. Though the UCP gap between students with and without a disability is 4.5%, the equivalent gap for all providers is much less at 0.02%.</p> <p>We looked at disaggregated data by type of disability. There is low OfS data for UCP disaggregated by disability type for all but one category (mental health at 80.8%). We cannot meaningfully conclude anything from this. There is also low OfS data for part-time students, so we cannot meaningfully interrogate this. We also examined NSS disaggregated disability data, but again, this only showed mental health as a discrete category.</p> <p>While there is a significant gap over four years, the picture changes when looking at the last 2 years. As previously stated, the four-year average attainment rate for students who reported a disability is 79.7%, compared to 84.2% for those with no reported disability—a gap of 4.5 percentage points. However, when examining the more recent two-year average, the gap narrows to just 1.7 percentage points, with progression rates of 81.0% and 82.7% respectively. This suggests that, nationally, there has been positive movement towards closing the progression gap between disabled and non-disabled students in the most recent years.</p> <p>While earlier data are not available due to low numbers, the recent trend is encouraging and reflects our commitment to inclusive practice. Based on local qualitative information, we also assert that COVID-19 would have had a disproportionate impact on those with disabilities.</p> <p>This will not be set as a target,</p> <p>We will continue to monitor these patterns closely, but have not set this as a target.</p>
Sex Risk / Objective 7	<p>The FT 4-year average highlights a significant gap at UCP in attainment when split by sex. At UCP, male students have an attainment rate of 73.3%, while female students have an attainment rate of 85.8%, resulting in a gap of 12.5%. A gap is also present for all providers, but it is much smaller: male students have an attainment rate of 78.7%, while female students have an attainment rate of 81.7%, resulting in a gap of 3%.</p>

	<p>Our internal data for the last three years also shows that the gap in attainment between males and females consistently shows females performing at a higher rate across all three academic years.</p> <p>In 2021/22, females had a 9.14 percentage point higher Graduate Outcome % than males (83.33% vs. 74.19%). In 2022/23, the gap widened, with females outperforming males by 8.73 percentage points (74.44% vs. 65.71%). In 2023/24, females showed a substantial lead of 20.96 percentage points over males (86.59% vs. 65.63%), marking the largest disparity in the observed period.</p> <p>Given this consistent and significant gap in attainment between male and female students, this will be set as a target,</p> <p>By 2030, UCP aims to increase the attainment rate for Full-Time male students to 80%, thereby reducing the gap in attainment rates between male and female students. This objective will be achieved by addressing curriculum choice, strengthening both academic, personal and mental health support services. Additional measures will include targeted financial support to mitigate barriers that may impact student attainment</p>
Deprivation and Ethnicity	<p>The FT 4-year average for deprivation and ethnicity highlights a gap at Q1/2 between white students and students from all ethnicities other than white. At UCP, white students have an attainment rate of 80.8%, while students from ethnicities other than white have an attainment rate of 75.9%, resulting in a gap of 4.9%.</p> <p>UCP intersectional percentages are above 'all providers' and also have less of a gap. For all providers, students from Q1/2 ethnicities except white have an attainment rate of 69%, while Q1/2 white students have an attainment rate of 78.2%, resulting in a gap of 9.2%.</p> <p>There is no UCP OfS data for ethnicity on its own, making it difficult to draw any conclusions from our own internal data due to low numbers. However, all providers' data also shows significant gaps between white students and students from ethnicities other than white. This data, when disaggregated, highlights further inequalities between 'other than white' ethnicities.</p> <p>As previously mentioned, our numbers are very low, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions. However, we acknowledge that national data highlights an attainment difference based on ethnicity, which we need to be aware of.</p> <p>This will not be set as a target.</p>

	We will continue to monitor these patterns closely, but have not set this as a target.
Progression	
Age Risk / Objective 8	<p>On the OfS APP dashboard, the 4-year FT average highlights a gap in progression between young and mature students: young students have a progression rate of 60.2%, while mature students have a progression rate of 83.8%, resulting in a gap of 23.6%. There was low data for PT and therefore it had been suppressed.</p> <p>We had a suspicion that this might vary depending on the course type, with other UG courses being more vocational and providing direct entry to managerial or professional employment/further study. However, the FT 4-year average split by course type does not support this, with a consistent and sizable gap for both course types. Young students in "Other UG" courses have a progression rate of 58% compared to 77.8% for mature students, and young students in "First Degree" courses having a progression rate of 65.1% compared to 86.7% for mature students.</p> <p>We also assessed the age split available on the student outcomes dashboard. This mirrored the young progression percentage. It also showed a negligible 1.1% difference in the 21-30 and 31 and above categories.</p> <p>We recognise that this data includes franchise partners whose students were predominantly young. However, our tentative internal data for franchise partners shows that their progression outcomes for their students are positive in terms of further study or relevant employment.</p> <p>We also note that the national picture is completely different, with both young and mature students having a progression rate of about 72%. This indicates an inequality in progression due to age at UCP.</p> <p>To address this disparity, we proposed targeted interventions that focus on the key barriers identified by the EORR: personal support, cost pressures, and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. By providing additional personal support, we can help young students navigate their academic and personal challenges more effectively. Addressing cost pressures through financial aid and support programs can alleviate the financial burden on young students, allowing them to focus on their studies. Finally, addressing the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 through flexible learning options and mental health support can help young students adapt to the changing educational landscape.</p> <p>This will be set as a target,</p>

	By implementing these targeted interventions, we aim to increase the positive progression rate for young students to 72% by 2030, thereby reducing the disparity in progression outcomes between young and mature students.
Sex	<p>The OfS APP dashboard's FT 4-year average highlights a gap in progression between male and female students, with female progression being stronger. Male students have a progression rate of 63.8%, while female students have a progression rate of 70.3%, resulting in a gap of 6.5%. However, the OfS student outcomes dashboard presents a contrasting picture, indicating better progression for males than females: male students have a progression rate of 70.9%, while female students have a progression rate of 67.9%, resulting in a gap of 3%.</p> <p>Currently, we do not have reliable internal data to adjudicate this discrepancy, but we anticipate resolving this issue with the future implementation of our new outcomes and employability software.</p> <p>We have considered other influencing factors, such as the significant proportion of our male students enrolled in engineering programmes sponsored by employers, which typically result in graduate employment at the end of the course. In contrast, creative writing courses, which predominantly enrol female students, often lead to graduate-level employment over a longer period.</p> <p>Due to insufficient data, we were unable to split the analysis by PT and FT. We are committed to monitoring this in the future with our enhanced monitoring software. Additionally, we could not split by course type due to low numbers and suppressed data.</p> <p>We also recognise that the OfS data includes franchise partners, which we no longer have. These franchise partners were predominantly female, and we assert that they had good progression to further study or employment.</p> <p>This will not be set as a target,</p>
Disability	<p>The OfS APP dashboard FT 4-year average highlights a gap in progression between students who reported a disability and those who did not. At UCP, students without a disability have a progression rate of 70.3%, while students with a disability have a progression rate of 66.1%, resulting in a gap of 4.2%. Across all providers, students without a disability have a progression rate of 72.8%, while students with a disability have a progression rate of 71%, resulting in a gap of 1.8%.</p>

	<p>However, the OfS outcomes dashboard presents a more positive picture for disabled students, indicating a progression rate of 70.5% for students with a disability and 68.2% for students without a disability, resulting in a gap of 2.3%.</p> <p>Currently, we do not have reliable internal data to adjudicate this discrepancy, but we anticipate resolving this issue with the future implementation of our new outcomes and employability software.</p> <p>We also recognise that the OfS data includes franchise partners, which we no longer have.</p> <p>We recognise that disaggregating this characteristic is important, but we couldn't due to low numbers, but are cognisant of the trends in national data.</p> <p>National data over a four-year average show that students with no reported disability have a progression rate of 72.3%. Students with cognitive or learning difficulties progress at a slightly higher rate (73.6%), while those with multiple impairments (70.1%) and sensory, medical or physical impairments (71.5%) are slightly below. More significant disparities are evident among students with mental health conditions (68.2%) and particularly those with social or communication impairments, who have the lowest progression rate at 61.1%.</p> <p>While we do not currently hold sufficient progression data for UCP students due to low numbers, these national trends highlight the need for continued attention.</p> <p>We are committed to monitoring progression data closely and ensuring that appropriate support is in place to promote equitable outcomes for all students.</p> <p>Given these factors, we have not included this as a target.</p>
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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

** Unless stated otherwise, objectives, risks and analysis pertain to full-time (FT) students due to the low numbers on part-time pathways.*

Introduction

All activities aimed at improving student access and participation at UCP have been designed by integrating an understanding of the specific needs of prospective students within the UCP context, alongside evidence-based practices proven effective in widening participation. Our approach has been informed by existing research literature and resources compiled by TASO to refine and strengthen our intervention strategies.

Key activities and their supporting evidence bases are outlined below, drawing heavily on findings from TASO as a principal reference point to ensure our approach is informed by robust, evidence-based practice.

Table B1 outlines our theory of change. Table B2 presents a summary of the key literature underpinning the design of each activity, while Table B3 outlines the evaluation framework for monitoring their effectiveness. Furthermore, we remain committed to collaborating with our Uni Connect partners to conduct a joint evaluation of the Uni Connect initiatives, measuring their impact in relation to our shared objectives.

Access – Free School Meals Objective 1 (IS1)

To increase the number of Free School Meals (FSM) students progressing to higher education (HE), our strategy will focus on addressing the persistent attainment and participation gaps that FSM-eligible students face. Research shows that disadvantaged students with high academic potential often underperform and are less likely to attend universities due to lower GCSE achievement and reduced confidence in their future prospects ([The Sutton Trust, 2023](#); [Boliver et al., 2017](#)).

Table B1 – Theory of Change

Situation		Aims		
Students who were eligible for free school meals have lower access rates to UCP than those students who were not eligible for free school meals		By 2030, UCP aims to increase the enrolment of students who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 18%, thereby reducing the access gap between FSM-eligible students and their non-FSM peers.		
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Staff time for development, delivery and evaluation</p> <p>Training and development for HE staff</p> <p>Student Officers / Ambassadors' time</p> <p>Financial resources for bursaries</p> <p>Digital and physical resources</p> <p>Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems</p>	<p>Targeted Outreach and Guidance for FSM Students</p> <p>Financial Support and Student Finance Advice</p> <p>Contextual Admissions and Applicant Support</p> <p>Co-created, Flexible Programme Development</p> <p>Progression and Enrichment Activities</p> <p>Subject-specific Tasters and Transition Activities</p>	<p>Targeted marketing and communications materials</p> <p>Student-led and co-designed outreach events (e.g. open days, tasters)</p> <p>1-2-1 information, advice and guidance (IAG) sessions, including finance</p> <p>Career advisor engagement with FSM-informed resources</p> <p>Promotion and delivery of financial</p>	<p>Increased awareness of HE among FSM-eligible and underrepresented students</p> <p>Improved perceptions of HE and sense of belonging</p> <p>Greater confidence and readiness to apply to HE</p> <p>Focused support for FSM learners from career advisors</p> <p>Reduced financial pressures</p>	Students who receive FSM will have increased access rates to UCP and HE

	<p>Inclusivity Staff Development</p> <p>Structured Mentoring and Peer Engagement</p> <p>Collaborative Outreach and Uniconnect Delivery</p>	<p>support resources and bursaries</p> <p>Operationalised and monitored contextual admissions offers</p> <p>Course leader-led academic advice and contextual guidance</p> <p>Development of flexible, employer-aligned and localised curriculum</p> <p>Revalidated and diversified programme delivery models</p> <p>School and college progression events and transition support</p> <p>Parental, carer and teacher engagement in outreach</p> <p>Campus visits and school-based academic tasters</p>	<p>Equitable admissions processes</p> <p>Improved course choice and academic preparedness</p> <p>Expanded access through flexible HE pathways</p> <p>Stronger alignment between HE and labour market needs</p> <p>Earlier and better-informed HE decision-making</p> <p>Greater parental and teacher support for HE aspirations</p> <p>Stronger HE readiness through early academic exposure</p> <p>Enhanced staff capacity to support underrepresented students</p>	
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		<p>CPD and training for HE staff on social mobility and inclusion</p> <p>Institutional embedding of access and participation principles</p> <p>Structured mentoring between HE and FE staff/students</p> <p>Student ambassador-led mentoring and engagement</p> <p>Collaborative enrichment and employability-focused activities</p>	<p>Greater institutional focus on access and participation</p> <p>Improved HE transition through structured mentoring</p> <p>Higher student confidence and engagement</p>	
Rationale and Assumptions	<p>The rationale underpinning these interventions is that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, possess an equal potential to access and succeed in higher education, yet do not have equitable access to the resources necessary to realise this potential.</p>			

	<p>It is assumed that the students who stand to benefit most from these interventions will be able to engage with them effectively. Furthermore, we assume these provisions will address the primary barriers to higher education faced by students eligible for free school meals.</p>
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TABLE B2 Evidence for IS1

Activity	Evidence Base	Summary
Aspiration raising Interventions (pre-entry) with Uni Connect and discreetly	<u>Aspiration-raising interventions (pre-entry)</u> <u>- TASO</u> <u>Office for Students and Public First 2024</u>	<p>The evidence regarding the causal impact of aspiration-raising interventions, such as those implemented in the UCP Pre-16 schools programme, remains inconclusive. Although existing studies associate these broad initiatives with positive outcomes, it is challenging to identify which specific components contribute most significantly to these effects. Our approach will focus on disentangling and clarifying the underlying mechanisms within our programmes to better understand their impact.</p>
Marketing & IAG Activity	<u>TASO Information, advice and guidance (IAG) (pre-entry)</u>	<p>Existing evidence indicates that light-touch Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) can modestly improve students' aspirations and sometimes increase higher education participation, though financial information alone may be insufficient without complementary support. Tailored, early, and integrated IAG interventions appear most effective for disadvantaged students, balancing cost and impact. However, due to limited UK-based research, particularly for specific underrepresented groups, definitive</p>

		conclusions about the most effective IAG approaches remain uncertain
Financial Support	<u>TASO Financial Support (pre-entry)</u>	Financial support can positively influence higher education participation, particularly when it is needs-based and substantial enough to reduce financial barriers. However, its effectiveness is enhanced when combined with personalised information and broader outreach, as financial support alone rarely shifts aspirations or behaviour. While international evidence is promising, UK-specific causal research remains limited, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the most effective forms or thresholds of financial aid.
Contextual Admissions	<u>OFS 2019</u> <u>Boliver, Crawford, Powell & Will Craige, 2017</u>	UK-based evidence on the impact of contextual admissions on improving access for the most disadvantaged students remains limited. However, research from the United States indicates that such practices can be an effective means of promoting a more equitable distribution of higher education opportunities. Evidence shows that students admitted through contextual offers do not experience higher dropout rates or poorer academic outcomes, countering concerns about admitting students with lower grades. This suggests that, with appropriate support,

		students from disadvantaged backgrounds can succeed
Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)	<u>Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education (PDF)- Brennan 2021</u>	<p>This is a broad activity that encompasses areas such as flexible learning, assessment practices and decolonisation of the curriculum. We considered the research evidence base for these as well as local qualitative evidence from student and staff feedback.</p> <p>Flexible study options—such as modular learning, credit transfer, and part-time provision—enhance access to higher education for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, particularly those balancing work, caring responsibilities, or health conditions.</p>
Subject tasters/events and knowledge & skills development	<u>TASO – Summer schools</u>	Enhancing study skills, critical thinking, and subject-specific competencies through outreach programmes—such as tutoring, subject tasters, mentoring, and summer schools—has been shown to improve academic outcomes and increase HE progression (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020; Burgess, Horton & Moores, 2021). These interventions build both cognitive skills and learner confidence, addressing both achievement and self-efficacy, which are essential for successful transition to HE

Table B3 below shows our methods of evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Aspiration raising Interventions (pre-entry) with Uni Connect and discreetly	Short-term outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education Expectations • Knowledge of Higher Education • Sense of belonging 	This intervention will be evaluated using a Type 1 approach. This will involve the collection of descriptive and correlational data to assess changes in learners' higher education expectations, knowledge, and sense of belonging, using TASO's (ASQ) as a benchmark for outcome measurement.	Internal briefings, comprehensive documentation, and detailed reports to guide practice and enable more rigorous evaluations in the future. Share findings as part of formal and informal connections with other CBHE networks
Marketing & IAG Activity	Short-term outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement and interest Medium-term outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher conversion and acceptance rates for FSM applicants 	This intervention will be evaluated using a combination of Type 1 and Type 2 approaches. Descriptive and correlational methods will track engagement and short-term outcomes, such as enquiries and applications from FSM-eligible students. Where possible, comparative and pre/post-analysis will be used to assess the intervention's contribution to medium-term outcomes, including improved acceptance rates and a reduction in the FSM access gap.	

Financial Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More enquiries from FSM-eligible applicants. • Increased applications from FSM-eligible students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher acceptance rates for FSM applicants. • Reduced financial barriers to accessing higher education. • Narrower access gap between FSM and non-FSM students. 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using both Type 1 and Type 2 methods.</p> <p>Descriptive and correlational analysis will track short-term changes in enquiry and application rates among FSM-eligible students. To assess medium-term outcomes, such as improved acceptance rates and reduced financial barriers, pre-post comparisons and trend analyses will be used to evaluate the intervention's contribution to narrowing the FSM access gap.</p>	
Contextual Admissions	<p>Short-Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness and support for FSM-eligible applicants. • More FSM-eligible students applying to HE. <p>Medium-Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher rates of FSM-eligible students receiving offers. • Reduction in the FSM access gap. 	<p>This intervention will be evaluated using a combination of Type 1 and Type 2 approaches. Type 1 evaluation will use descriptive and correlational methods to track engagement with contextual admissions, including enquiries and applications from FSM-eligible students. Where possible, Type 2 evaluation will apply comparative and pre-post analyses to measure the impact of contextual offers on medium-term outcomes, such as increased offer acceptance rates and a reduction in the FSM access gap.</p>	

<p>Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More enquiries from FSM-eligible applicants. • Increased applications from FSM-eligible students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrower access gap between FSM and non-FSM students. 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using both Type 1 and Type 2 methods.</p> <p>Descriptive and correlational analysis will track short-term changes in enquiry and application rates among FSM-eligible students. To assess medium-term outcomes, comparisons and trend analyses will be used to evaluate the intervention's contribution to narrowing the FSM access gap</p>	
<p>Subject tasters/events and knowledge & skills development</p>	<p>Short Term</p> <p>Using TASO's ASQ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic self-efficacy • Cognitive strategies • HE expectations • Knowledge of HE • Sense of belonging <p>Medium Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased application to UCP HE • Increased enrolment at UCP 	<p>This intervention will be evaluated using a combination of Type 1 and Type 2 approaches. Type 1 evaluation will use descriptive and correlational methods to track engagement with admissions, including enquiries and applications from FSM-eligible students. Where possible, Type 2 evaluation will apply comparative and pre-post analyses to measure the impact on medium-term outcomes, such as increased offer acceptance rates and a reduction in the FSM access gap.</p>	

Mentoring	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of HE pathways, expectations, and skills, increasing confidence, self-efficacy, and aspirations through structured engagement with HE staff and students 	<p>This intervention will be evaluated using a Type 1 approach. This will involve the collection of descriptive and correlational data to assess changes in learners' higher education expectations, knowledge, and sense of belonging.</p>	
Uniconnect	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased HE & career awareness: Better understanding of pathways and opportunities. • Improved readiness & confidence: Enhanced employability skills and progression readiness. • Raised aspirations & positive HE perceptions: Higher parental/carer engagement and aspirations. • Improved equitable progression: Higher HE progression rates and reduced equity gaps 	<p>This will be evaluated by Uniconnect</p>	

Access – Ethnicity (Black and Asian) – Objective 2 (IS1)

This outreach activity mirrors those designed for students eligible for free school meals, with a specific focus on addressing barriers experienced by students from Black and Asian backgrounds. At UCP, this activity is informed by a recognition that students from these groups face distinct challenges in accessing higher education. While there are commonalities in disadvantage, ethnically minoritised students often encounter additional structural and cultural barriers that warrant targeted intervention (VNJ Volume 37 May 2022). To ensure these barriers are addressed meaningfully, UCP has sought to develop relationships with local and regional community stakeholders, including schools, community leaders, and cultural organisations.

As highlighted by Arday, Branchu and Boliver (2021), efforts to widen access for ethnically minoritised students have been impeded by the dominance of white-centric discourses in higher education. These discourses can marginalise alternative narratives and obscure the specific needs of ethnically minoritised learners. In response, UCP is committed to designing outreach and marketing materials that are culturally relevant and that explicitly address the barriers faced by ethnically minoritised students. These materials will reflect inclusive imagery, language, and case studies to ensure resonance with their intended audience.

In terms of provision and programme design, research indicates that ethnically minoritised students are more likely to choose institutions closer to home and value flexible learning pathways (Donnelly & Gamsu, 2018). This is particularly relevant in UCP's case, where programme delivery is increasingly designed with local accessibility and flexibility in mind, including part-time and hybrid options. Such adaptations are essential for widening participation among groups who may have significant family or employment responsibilities.

Geography is also a critical factor in shaping UCP's approach. According to the 2021 Census (ONS), Peterborough — the location of one of UCP's main campuses — has a population that is 14.3% Asian and 75.4% White. In contrast, South Kesteven, which includes UCP's Stamford campus, is 95.8% White and only 1.8% Asian. Despite these local demographic disparities, UCP believes that ethnicity must remain a priority strand within its access and participation strategy.

Table B1 – Theory of Change

Situation		Aims		
Black and Asian students have lower access rates into UCP than white students		<p>By 2030, UCP aims to increase the proportion of Asian and Black students, thereby reducing the access gap between these students and students of other ethnicities. Our targets are disaggregated as:</p> <p>2.1 Increase the enrolment of Asian students to 12%</p> <p>2.2 Increase the enrolment of Black students to 5%.</p>		
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Staff time for development, delivery and evaluation</p> <p>Training and development for HE staff</p> <p>Student Officers / Ambassadors' time</p> <p>Financial resources for bursaries</p> <p>Digital and physical resources</p> <p>Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems</p>	<p>Targeted Outreach and Guidance for Black and Asian Students</p> <p>Financial Support and Student Finance Advice</p> <p>Contextual Admissions and Applicant Support</p> <p>Co-created, Flexible Programme Development</p> <p>Progression and Enrichment Activities</p>	<p>Targeted marketing and communications materials</p> <p>Student-led and co-designed outreach events (e.g. open days, tasters)</p> <p>1-2-1 information, advice and guidance (IAG) sessions, including finance</p> <p>Career advisor engagement with ethnicity-informed resources</p>	<p>Increased awareness of HE among Black and Asian students</p> <p>Improved perceptions of HE and sense of belonging</p> <p>Greater confidence and readiness to apply to HE</p> <p>Focused support for Black and Asian learners from career advisors</p> <p>Reduced financial pressures</p>	<p>Increased access rates to UCP and HE for Black and Asian students</p>

	<p>Subject-specific Tasters and Transition Activities</p> <p>Inclusive Staff Development for Widening Participation</p> <p>Structured Mentoring and Peer Engagement</p> <p>Collaborative Outreach and Uniconnect Delivery</p>	<p>Promotion and delivery of financial support resources and bursaries</p> <p>Operationalised and monitored Contextual admissions offers</p> <p>Course leader-led academic advice and contextual guidance</p> <p>Development of flexible, employer-aligned and localised curriculum</p> <p>Revalidated and diversified programme delivery models</p> <p>School and college progression events and transition support</p> <p>Parental, carer and teacher engagement in outreach</p> <p>Campus visits and school-based academic tasters</p>	<p>Equitable admissions processes</p> <p>Improved course choice and academic preparedness</p> <p>Expanded access through flexible HE pathways</p> <p>Stronger alignment between HE and labour market needs</p> <p>Earlier and better-informed HE decision-making</p> <p>Greater parental and teacher support for HE aspirations</p> <p>Stronger HE readiness through early academic exposure</p> <p>Enhanced staff capacity to support underrepresented students</p> <p>Greater institutional focus on access and participation</p>	
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		<p>CPD and training for HE staff on social mobility and inclusion</p> <p>Institutional embedding of access and participation principles</p> <p>Structured mentoring between HE and FE staff/students</p> <p>Student ambassador-led mentoring and engagement</p> <p>Collaborative enrichment and employability-focused activities</p>	<p>Improved HE transition through structured mentoring</p> <p>Higher student confidence and engagement</p>	
Rationale and Assumptions	<p>The rationale underpinning these interventions is that all students, regardless of ethnic background, possess an equal potential to access and succeed in higher education, yet do not have equitable access to the resources necessary to realise this potential.</p> <p>It is assumed that the students who stand to benefit most from these interventions will be able to engage with them effectively. Furthermore, we assume these provisions will address the primary barriers to higher education faced by Black and Asian students.</p>			

TABLE B2 Evidence

Activity	Evidence Base	Summary
Aspiration raising Interventions (pre-entry) with Uni Connect and discreetly	<u>Aspiration-raising interventions (pre-entry) - TASO</u> <u>Office for Students and Public First 2024</u>	<p>The evidence regarding the causal impact of aspiration-raising interventions, such as those implemented in the UCP Pre-16 schools programme, remains inconclusive. Although existing studies associate these broad initiatives with positive outcomes, it is challenging to identify which specific components contribute most significantly to these effects. Our approach will focus on disentangling and clarifying the underlying mechanisms within our programmes to better understand their impact.</p>
Marketing & IAG Activity	<u>TASO Information, advice and guidance (IAG) (pre-entry)</u>	<p>Existing evidence indicates that light-touch Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) can modestly improve students' aspirations and sometimes increase higher education participation, though financial information alone may be insufficient without complementary support. Tailored, early, and integrated IAG interventions appear most effective for disadvantaged students, balancing cost and impact. However, due to limited UK-based research, particularly for specific underrepresented groups, definitive</p>

		conclusions about the most effective IAG approaches remain uncertain
Financial Support	<u>TASO Financial Support (pre-entry)</u>	Financial support can positively influence higher education participation, particularly when it is needs-based and substantial enough to reduce financial barriers. However, its effectiveness is enhanced when combined with personalised information and broader outreach, as financial support alone rarely shifts aspirations or behaviour. While international evidence is promising, UK-specific causal research remains limited, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the most effective forms or thresholds of financial aid.
Contextual Admissions	<u>OFS 2019</u> <u>Boliver, Crawford, Powell & Will Craige, 2017</u>	UK-based evidence on the impact of contextual admissions on improving access for the most disadvantaged students remains limited. However, research from the United States indicates that such practices can be an effective means of promoting a more equitable distribution of higher education opportunities. Evidence shows that students admitted through contextual offers do not experience higher dropout rates or poorer academic outcomes, countering concerns about

		admitting students with lower grades. This suggests that, with appropriate support, students from disadvantaged backgrounds can succeed
Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)	<u>Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education (PDF)- Brennan 2021</u>	<p>This is a broad activity that encompasses areas such as flexible learning, assessment practices and decolonisation of the curriculum. We considered the research evidence base for these as well as local qualitative evidence from student and staff feedback.</p> <p>Flexible study options—such as modular learning, credit transfer, and part-time provision—enhance access to higher education for home students, particularly those balancing work, caring responsibilities, or health conditions.</p>
Subject tasters/events and knowledge & skills development	<u>TASO – Summer schools</u>	Enhancing study skills, critical thinking, and subject-specific competencies through outreach programmes—such as tutoring, subject tasters, mentoring, and summer schools—has been shown to improve academic outcomes and increase HE progression (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020; Burgess, Horton & Moores, 2021). These interventions build both cognitive skills and learner confidence, addressing both

		achievement and self-efficacy, which are essential for a successful transition to HE
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Table B3 below shows our methods of evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Aspiration raising Interventions (pre-entry) with Uni Connect and discreetly	Short-term outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education Expectations • Knowledge of Higher Education • Sense of belonging 	This intervention will be evaluated using a Type 1 approach. This will involve the collection of descriptive and correlational data to assess changes in learners' higher education expectations, knowledge, and sense of belonging, using TASO's (ASQ) as a benchmark for outcome measurement.	Internal briefings, comprehensive documentation, and detailed reports to guide practice and enable more rigorous evaluations in the future. Share findings as part of formal and informal connections with other CBHE networks
Marketing & IAG Activity	Short-term outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement and interest • Improved stakeholder practice Medium-term outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher conversion and acceptance rates for Black and Asian applicants • Narrowing of financial and structural access barriers, 	This intervention will be evaluated using a combination of Type 1 and Type 2 approaches. Descriptive and correlational methods will track engagement and short-term outcomes, such as enquiries and applications from Black and Asian students. Where possible, comparative and pre-post analysis will be used to assess the intervention's contribution to medium-term outcomes, including improved acceptance rates and a reduction in the Black and Asian access gap.	

Financial Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More enquiries from Black and Asian applicants. • Increased applications from Black and Asian students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher acceptance rates for Black and Asian applicants. • Reduced financial barriers to accessing higher education. • Narrower access gap between Black and Asian and other ethnicities. 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using both Type 1 and Type 2 methods.</p> <p>Descriptive and correlational analysis will track short-term changes in enquiry and application rates among Black and Asian students. To assess medium-term outcomes, such as improved acceptance rates and reduced financial barriers, pre-post comparisons and trend analyses will be used to evaluate the intervention's contribution to narrowing the Black and Asian access gap.</p>	
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Contextual Admissions	<p>Short-Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness and support for Black and Asian applicants. More Black and Asian students applying to HE. <p>Medium-Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher rates of Black and Asian students receiving offers. Reduction in the Black and Asian access gap. 	<p>This intervention will be evaluated using a combination of Type 1 and Type 2 approaches. Type 1 evaluation will use descriptive and correlational methods to track engagement with contextual admissions, including enquiries and applications from Black and Asian-eligible students. Where possible, Type 2 evaluation will apply comparative and pre-post analyses to measure the impact of contextual offers on medium-term outcomes, such as increased offer acceptance rates and a reduction in the Black and Asian access gap.</p>	
Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More enquiries from Black and Asian applicants. Increased applications from Black and Asian students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrower access gap for Black and Asian students 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using both Type 1 and Type 2 methods.</p> <p>Descriptive and correlational analysis will track short-term changes in enquiry and application rates among FSM-eligible students. To assess medium-term outcomes, comparisons and trend analyses will be used to evaluate the intervention's contribution to narrowing the Black and Asian access gap</p>	

Subject tasters/events and knowledge & skills development	<p>Short Term</p> <p>Using TASO's ASQ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic self-efficacy • Cognitive strategies • HE expectations • Knowledge of HE • Sense of belonging • Long Long-term increased application to UCP / HE • Increased enrolment in UCP / HE 	<p>evaluated using a combination of Type 1 and Type 2 approaches. Type 1 evaluation will use descriptive and correlational methods to track engagement with admissions, including enquiries and applications from Black and Asian students. Where possible, Type 2 evaluation will apply comparative and pre-post analyses to measure the impact on medium-term outcomes, such as increased offer acceptance rates and a reduction in the FSM access gap.</p>	
Mentoring	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved understanding of HE pathways, expectations, and skills, increasing confidence, self-efficacy, and aspirations through structured engagement with HE staff and students • Narrowed the access gap for target groups by enhancing social capital and awareness of progression and employment opportunities 	<p>This intervention will be evaluated using a Type 1 approach. This will involve the collection of descriptive and correlational data to assess changes in learners' higher education expectations, knowledge, and sense of belonging.</p>	

Uniconnect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased HE & career awareness: Better understanding of pathways and opportunities. • Improved readiness & confidence: Enhanced employability skills and progression readiness. • Raised aspirations & positive HE perceptions: Higher parental/carer engagement and aspirations. • Improved equitable progression: Higher HE progression rates and reduced equity gaps 	This will be evaluated by Uniconnect	
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Continuation – Sex & IMD (Male) - Objective 3 (IS2)

This section of Annex B outlines UCP’s strategic objective to increase the continuation rate for full-time male students from IMD Quintiles 1 and 2 to 87% by 2030. This ambition is driven by persistent disparities in continuation outcomes between male and female students, particularly among those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The rationale underpinning this objective is that while male students possess equal potential to succeed, they often face compounded barriers—academic, personal, financial, and structural—that hinder their progression.

Table B2 provides the core evidence base for the proposed interventions, highlighting the need for more robust UK-specific research while drawing on existing studies to inform practice. These insights are operationalised through the Theory of Change in Table B1, which maps the pathway from inputs to impact, and are supported by a structured evaluation framework in Table B3. Together, these tables ensure that interventions are not only evidence-informed but also systematically monitored for effectiveness and continuous improvement.

Table B1 – Theory of Change

Situation			Aims	
Male Students have lower continuation rates at UCP than female students			UCP aims to increase the continuation rate for Full-Time male students (intersecting with IMD Q1 or 2) to 87%, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between male and female students. This objective will be achieved by addressing disparities in prior attainment and strengthening both academic and personal support services. Additional measures will include enhanced mental health provision and targeted financial support to mitigate barriers that may impact student retention.	
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Staff time for academic support, personal support, and evaluation</p> <p>Training and development for HE staff</p> <p>Student Officers / Ambassador time</p> <p>Financial resources for bursaries and wellbeing services</p>	<p>Academic Coaching and Skills Development</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing Support</p> <p>Targeted Financial Support</p> <p>Data-Informed Early Interventions</p>	<p>Inclusive Academic Skills sessions</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing activities and support</p> <p>Student tracking processes</p> <p>Promotion and delivery of financial support resources and bursaries</p>	<p>Increased engagement with academic and wellbeing support services.</p> <p>Greater awareness and usage of digital learning resources.</p> <p>Improved attendance and academic participation.</p>	<p>Increase the continuation rate for Full-time male students to 87%, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between male and female students.</p>

<p>External services (e.g. guest speakers)</p> <p>Digital and physical resources</p> <p>Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems</p>	Inclusive Learning Support Services	Revalidated and diversified programme delivery models	Enhanced retention through early intervention and tailored support.	
	Social Belonging and Community Building	CPD and training for HE staff on social mobility and inclusion	Strengthened academic self-management and timekeeping skills.	
	Peer Leadership and Representation	Inclusive teaching resources developed or disseminated	Increased sense of belonging and peer connection via structured social initiatives.	
	Support for Intermitting and Returning Students	Institutional embedding of access and participation principles	Higher likelihood of seeking mental health and personal support.	
	Transition and Progression Support	Structured mentoring between HE and FE staff/students	Better alignment of support services with male students' needs and preferences.	
	Inclusive Teaching and Learning Practices	Student ambassador-led mentoring and engagement	Improved continuation rates through targeted, data-informed interventions.	
	Assessment and Curriculum Design		Enhanced academic skills and self-management for	
	Digital Learning and Resource Navigation			
	Engagement and Attendance Monitoring			
	Personalised Academic Planning			

	Paid Student Opportunities		<p>low IMD male students via personalised coaching.</p> <p>Increased language confidence and academic integration for EAL and low IMD male students.</p> <p>Strengthened motivation and aspiration through exposure to diverse role models</p>	
Rationale and Assumptions	<p>The rationale underpinning these interventions is that all students, regardless of their sex, possess an equal potential to continue on their study programme, yet do not access the resources necessary to realise this potential.</p> <p>It is assumed that male students will take up the support services offered. Furthermore, we assume these provisions will address the primary barriers to male continuation at UCP.</p>			

TABLE B2 Evidence

Activity	Evidence Base	Summary
Academic Support	<u>Programmes of student support (post-entry)</u>	There is currently insufficient causal evidence to confirm the effectiveness of student support programmes in improving student outcomes. Most existing studies show positive correlations between participation and outcomes like retention or wellbeing, but these are not definitive because participants often differ systematically from non-participants. Only two causal studies, both from the USA, provide stronger evidence: one found improved credit accumulation (but not graduation), and the other showed a significant increase in graduation rates. For wellbeing-focused programmes, the evidence is even more limited, with only three small non-UK studies showing short-term benefits. Overall, more robust, UK-specific, and causal research is needed to determine the true impact and cost-effectiveness of these interventions.
Personal Support	<u>TASO Information, advice and guidance (IAG) (pre-entry)</u>	Personalised support, such as academic advising, mentoring, and structured personal tutoring, has been shown to improve student continuation by fostering a sense of

	<p><u>Thomas, L. (2012 & 2017). Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change.</u></p>	<p>belonging, addressing individual barriers, and supporting academic engagement</p> <p>However, the effectiveness of these interventions can vary depending on consistency, staff training, and institutional culture, with some studies noting limited impact when support is poorly integrated or perceived as generic. Ongoing evaluation is essential to ensure personal support is tailored, inclusive, and embedded within broader teaching and learning strategies.</p>
Financial Support	<p><u>Financial support (post-entry)</u></p>	<p>There is strong international evidence, primarily from the USA, indicating that needs-based grants can enhance retention and completion, though there is weaker evidence for improvements in attainment or degree classification. However, much of this research lacks UK specificity, and UK-based studies tend to show correlation rather than causation, limiting the ability to make definitive claims. Limitations include a scarcity of causal UK studies, outdated data in a changing funding landscape, and inconclusive evidence regarding the</p>

		comparative efficacy of different types of financial support.
Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)	<p><u>Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education (PDF)- Brennan 2021</u></p> <p><u>QAA: Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education</u></p> <p><u>House of Commons Library: Degree Apprenticeships</u></p> <p><u>HEPI: Non-Continuation of Students in the UK</u></p>	<p>Flexible programme designs—such as part-time study, modular learning, blended delivery, and degree apprenticeships—have shown promise in supporting male continuation in UK higher education by accommodating the need to balance study with work and financial responsibilities. Evidence indicates that these routes attract more male learners, particularly older students, and those from non-traditional backgrounds, by offering practical and financially viable pathways</p> <p>However, limitations remain: part-time and flexible learners continue to face lower retention and completion rates, compounded by structural barriers such as less integration into academic and social communities.</p>

Table B3 below shows our methods of evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Financial Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement with student support services (e.g., finance, wellbeing) by male students Greater uptake of hardship funds or bursaries among male students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher continuation rates among male students 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods, in line with OfS guidance. Type 3 methods are not feasible due to the institutional scale.</p> <p>Type 1 methods will involve descriptive analysis of uptake and engagement with financial support among FSM-eligible male students, alongside trends in continuation data.</p> <p>Type 2 methods will include pre- and post-intervention comparisons and basic regression analysis to assess the association between financial support and improvements in male continuation and retention.</p> <p>This mixed-methods approach provides a proportionate but robust basis for understanding impact and informing future delivery.</p>	<p>Internal briefings, comprehensive documentation, and detailed reports to guide practice and enable more rigorous evaluations in the future.</p> <p>Share findings as part of formal and informal connections with other CBHE networks</p>

<p>Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement of male students with academic content due to perceived relevance. • Stronger identification with programme goals and career pathways. <p>Medium-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved continuation/retention rates among male students, • Fewer course withdrawals due to curriculum misalignment, perceived irrelevance, or workload pressures. 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using both Type 1 and Type 2 methods.</p> <p>Descriptive and correlational analysis will track short-term changes in continuation rates among male students. To assess medium-term outcomes, comparisons and trend analyses will be used to evaluate the intervention's contribution to narrowing the continuation gap</p>	
<p>Academic Support</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement of male students with academic support services. • Improved confidence and academic skills reported by male students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher continuation rates among male students utilising academic support. • Reduced withdrawal rates related to academic challenges for male students. 	<p>These outcomes will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive statistics and correlational analysis will track short-term engagement and confidence changes. Pre-post comparisons and trend analyses will assess medium-term impacts on continuation and withdrawal rates, helping to understand the intervention's contribution to reducing male retention gaps.</p>	

Personal Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased uptake of personalised support services by male students. • Enhanced sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy among male students receiving personal support. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved continuation and retention rates for male students benefiting from personalised support. • Reduced withdrawal due to unresolved personal barriers. 	<p>These outcomes will be assessed using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive and correlational analyses will measure short-term changes in engagement and self-reported belonging. Pre-post and trend analyses will evaluate medium-term impacts on continuation and withdrawal, ensuring the support is effectively tailored to male students' needs.</p>	
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Continuation – Asian, Black and Mixed Heritage Objective 4 (IS2)

This section of Annex B outlines UCP's commitment to closing continuation gaps between ethnically minoritised and white students by 2030, with specific targets for Asian (89%), Black (85%), and Mixed Heritage (85%) students. These goals reflect a strategic response to persistent disparities in progression, particularly among students from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds. The approach is grounded in the principle that all students should have equitable access to the support needed to remain and succeed in higher education. This outreach activity mirrors those designed for male students but with a specific focus on addressing barriers experienced by students from Black, Asian and Mixed heritage backgrounds. At UCP, this activity is informed by a recognition that students from these groups face distinct challenges in accessing higher education.

The rationale for these interventions is supported by the evidence presented in Table B2, which highlights the complex interplay of academic, personal, and financial barriers affecting ethnically minoritised students. While causal UK-specific research remains limited, studies outlined in the table provide valuable insights into the importance of tailored support, inclusive teaching, and financial aid. These findings inform the Theory of Change in Table B1 and are embedded within a structured evaluation framework (Table B3), ensuring that interventions are both evidence-informed and continuously assessed for impact.

Table B1 – Theory of Change

Situation		Aims		
Asian, Black and Mixed Heritage students have lower continuation rates than white students		<p>By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rate for ethnically minoritised students, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between ethnically minoritised and white students. Our targets are disaggregated as:</p> <p>4.1 Increase the continuation rates for Asian students to 89%</p> <p>4.2 Increase the continuation rate of Black students to 85%</p> <p>4.3 Increase the continuation rate of Mixed Heritage students to 85%</p>		
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Staff time for academic support, personal support, and evaluation</p> <p>Training and development for HE staff</p> <p>Student Officers / Ambassador time</p> <p>Financial resources for bursaries and wellbeing services</p>	<p>Academic Coaching and Skills Development</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing Support</p> <p>Targeted Financial Support</p> <p>Data-Informed Early Interventions</p> <p>Inclusive Learning Support Services</p>	<p>Inclusive Academic Skills sessions</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing activities and support</p> <p>Student tracking processes</p> <p>Promotion and delivery of financial support resources and bursaries</p>	<p>Increased engagement with academic and wellbeing support services.</p> <p>Greater awareness and usage of digital learning resources.</p> <p>Improved attendance and academic participation.</p>	<p>Increase the continuation rates for Asian students to 89%</p> <p>Increase the continuation rate of Black students to 85%</p> <p>Increase the continuation rate of Mixed Heritage students to 85%</p>

External services (e.g. guest speakers)	Social Belonging and Community Building	Revalidated and diversified programme delivery models	Enhanced retention through early intervention and tailored support.	
Digital and physical resources	Peer Leadership and Representation	CPD and training for HE staff on social mobility and inclusion	Strengthened academic self-management and timekeeping skills.	
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems	Support for Intermitting and Returning Students	Inclusive teaching resources developed or disseminated	Increased sense of belonging and peer connection via structured social initiatives.	
	Transition and Progression Support	Institutional embedding of access and participation principles	Higher likelihood of seeking mental health and personal support.	
	Inclusive Teaching and Learning Practices	Structured mentoring between HE and FE staff/students	Better alignment of support services with ethnically minoritised students' needs and preferences.	
	Assessment and Curriculum Design	Student ambassador-led mentoring and engagement	Improved continuation rates through targeted, data-informed interventions.	
	Digital Learning and Resource Navigation		Enhanced academic skills and self-management for low IMD ethnically	
	Engagement and Attendance Monitoring			
	Personalised Academic Planning			
	Paid Student Opportunities			

			<p>minoritised students via personalised coaching.</p> <p>Increased language confidence and academic integration for EAL and low IMD ethnically minoritised students.</p> <p>Strengthened motivation and aspiration through exposure to diverse role models</p>	
Rationale and Assumptions	<p>The rationale underpinning these interventions is that all students, regardless of their sex, possess an equal potential to continue on their study programme, yet do not access the resources necessary to realise this potential.</p> <p>It is assumed that ethnically minoritised Students will take up the support services offered. Furthermore, we assume these provisions will address the primary barriers to ethnically minoritised continuation at UCP.</p>			

TABLE B2 Evidence

Activity	Evidence Base	Summary
Academic Support	<p><u>Programmes of student support (post-entry)</u></p> <p><u>Variation in Black students' conceptions of academic support (Mimirinis, 2023)</u></p>	<p>There is currently insufficient causal evidence to confirm the effectiveness of student support programmes in improving student outcomes. Most existing studies show positive correlations between participation and outcomes like retention or wellbeing, but these are not definitive because participants often differ systematically from non-participants.</p> <p>Only two causal studies, both from the USA, provide stronger evidence: one found improved credit accumulation (but not graduation), and the other showed a significant increase in graduation rates. For wellbeing-focused programmes, the evidence is even more limited, with only three small non-UK studies showing short-term benefits. Overall, more robust, UK-specific, and causal research is needed to determine the true impact and cost-effectiveness of these interventions.</p>
Personal Support	<p><u>Mentoring, counselling, coaching and role models (post entry)</u></p>	<p>Personalised support, such as academic advising, mentoring, and structured personal tutoring, has been shown to improve student</p>

	<p><u>Thomas, L. (2012 & 2017). Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change.</u></p> <p><u>Learning from the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students</u></p> <p><u>Thwarted ambitions: Barriers to completing university education</u></p>	<p>continuation by fostering a sense of belonging, addressing individual barriers, and supporting academic engagement</p> <p>However, the effectiveness of these interventions can vary depending on consistency, staff training, and institutional culture, with some studies noting limited impact when support is poorly integrated or perceived as generic. Ongoing evaluation is essential to ensure personal support is tailored, inclusive, and embedded within broader teaching and learning strategies.</p>
Financial Support	<p><u>Financial support (post-entry)</u></p> <p><u>Mountford-Zimdars, A., Sabri, D., Moore, J., Sanders, J., Jones, S., & Higham, L. (2015). Causes of differences in student outcomes (HEFCE).</u></p> <p><u>Thwarted ambitions: Barriers to completing university education</u></p>	<p>There is strong international evidence, primarily from the USA, indicating that needs-based grants can enhance retention and completion, though there is weaker evidence for improvements in attainment or degree classification. However, much of this research lacks UK specificity, and UK-based studies tend to show correlation rather than causation, limiting the ability to make definitive claims.</p> <p>Mountford-Zimdars et al. (2015) reviewed multiple studies on post-entry financial support in the UK and found that such support is linked to reduced anxiety about higher education, improved integration into</p>

		<p>university life, decreased necessity to balance work and study, and greater ability to afford essential study materials like textbooks</p> <p>Limitations include a scarcity of causal UK studies, outdated data in a changing funding landscape, and inconclusive evidence regarding the comparative efficacy of different types of financial support.</p>
Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)	<p><u>Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education (PDF)- Brennan 2021</u></p> <p><u>QAA: Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education</u></p> <p><u>House of Commons Library: Degree Apprenticeships</u></p> <p><u>HEPI: Non-Continuation of Students in the UK</u></p> <p><u>Unblocking the Pipeline: Supporting the Retention, Progression and Representation of Black Students</u></p> <p><u>Taking a Strategic Approach to Tackling Racial Inequality in UK Higher Education</u></p>	<p>Flexible programme designs—such as part-time study, modular learning, blended delivery, and degree apprenticeships—have shown promise in supporting ethnically minoritised continuation in UK higher education by accommodating the need to balance study with work and financial responsibilities Evidence indicates that these routes attract more ethnically minoritised learners, particularly older students, and those from non-traditional backgrounds, by offering practical and financially viable pathways</p> <p>However, limitations remain: part-time and flexible learners continue to face lower retention and completion rates, compounded by structural barriers such as less integration into academic and social communities.</p>

Table B3 below shows our methods of evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Financial Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement with student support services (e.g., finance, wellbeing) by ethnically minoritised students Greater uptake of hardship funds or bursaries among ethnically minoritised students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher continuation rates among ethnically minoritised students 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods, in line with OfS guidance. Type 3 methods are not feasible due to the institutional scale.</p> <p>Type 1 methods will involve descriptive analysis of uptake and engagement with financial support among ethnically minoritised students, alongside trends in continuation data.</p> <p>Type 2 methods will include pre- and post-intervention comparisons and basic regression analysis to assess the association between financial support and improvements in ethnically minoritised continuation and retention.</p> <p>This mixed-methods approach provides a proportionate but robust basis for understanding impact and informing future delivery.</p>	<p>Internal briefings, comprehensive documentation, and detailed reports to guide practice and enable more rigorous evaluations in the future.</p> <p>Share findings as part of formal and informal connections with other CBHE networks</p>

<p>Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement of ethnically minoritised students with academic content due to perceived relevance. • Stronger identification with programme goals and career pathways. <p>Medium-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved continuation/retention rates among ethnically minoritised students, • Fewer course withdrawals due to curriculum misalignment, perceived irrelevance, or workload pressures. 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using both Type 1 and Type 2 methods.</p> <p>Descriptive and correlational analysis will track short-term changes in continuation rates among ethnically minoritised students. To assess medium-term outcomes, comparisons and trend analyses will be used to evaluate the intervention's contribution to narrowing the continuation gap</p>	
<p>Academic Support</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement of ethnically minoritised students with academic support services. • Improved confidence and academic skills reported by ethnically minoritised students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher continuation rates among ethnically minoritised students utilising academic support. • Reduced withdrawal rates related to academic challenges for ethnically minoritised students. 	<p>These outcomes will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive statistics and correlational analysis will track short-term engagement and confidence changes. Pre-post comparisons and trend analyses will assess medium-term impacts on continuation and withdrawal rates, helping to understand the intervention's contribution to reducing ethnically minoritised retention gaps.</p>	

Personal Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased uptake of personalised support services by ethnically minoritised students. • Enhanced sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy among ethnically minoritised students receiving personal support. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved continuation and retention rates for ethnically minoritised students benefiting from personalised support. • Reduced withdrawal due to unresolved personal barriers. 	<p>These outcomes will be assessed using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive and correlational analyses will measure short-term changes in engagement and self-reported belonging. Pre-post and trend analyses will evaluate medium-term impacts on continuation and withdrawal, ensuring the support is effectively tailored to ethnically minoritised students' needs.</p>	
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Completion – Sex (Male) Objective 5 (IS3)

This section of Annex B outlines UCP's objective to raise the completion rate for full-time male students to 85% by 2030, aiming to close the persistent gap in outcomes between male and female learners. This ambition reflects a broader institutional commitment to equity, recognising that male students often encounter a combination of academic, financial, and wellbeing-related challenges that can disrupt their progression through to completion.

The interventions proposed are grounded in the evidence summarised in Table B2, which, while highlighting the need for more UK-specific causal research, draws on a range of studies to inform practice. These findings underpin the Theory of Change presented in Table B1 and are supported by a robust evaluation strategy in Table B3, which employs both descriptive and comparative methods to assess impact. Together, these elements form a coherent, evidence-informed approach to improving male student completion outcomes.

NB The Theory of Change model, evidence-based and evaluation strategy mirror objective 3, which is to increase the continuation rate for full-time male students.

Table B1 – Theory of Change

Situation			Aims	
Male Students have lower completion rates at UCP than female students			By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rate for Full-Time male students to 85%, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between male and female students. This objective will be addressed through targeted interventions to improve academic preparedness, expand financial support, enhance mental health services, and strengthen personalised academic and pastoral provision.	
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Staff time for academic support, personal support, and evaluation</p> <p>Training and development for HE staff</p> <p>Student Officers / Ambassador time</p> <p>Financial resources for bursaries and wellbeing services</p> <p>External services (e.g. guest speakers)</p> <p>Digital and physical resources</p>	<p>Academic Coaching and Skills Development</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing Support</p> <p>Targeted Financial Support</p> <p>Data-Informed Early Interventions</p> <p>Inclusive Learning Support Services</p> <p>Social Belonging and Community Building</p> <p>Peer Leadership and Representation</p>	<p>Inclusive Academic Skills sessions</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing activities and support</p> <p>Student tracking processes</p> <p>Promotion and delivery of financial support resources and bursaries</p> <p>Revalidated and diversified programme delivery models</p>	<p>Increased engagement with academic and wellbeing support services.</p> <p>Greater awareness and usage of digital learning resources.</p> <p>Improved attendance and academic participation.</p> <p>Enhanced retention through early intervention and tailored support.</p> <p>Strengthened academic self-management and timekeeping skills.</p>	<p>Increase the completion rate for Full-Time male students to 85%, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between male and female students</p>

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems	Support for Intermitting and Returning Students	CPD and training for HE staff on social mobility and inclusion	Increased sense of belonging and peer connection via structured social initiatives.	
	Transition and Progression Support	Inclusive teaching resources developed or disseminated	Higher likelihood of seeking mental health and personal support.	
	Inclusive Teaching and Learning Practices	Institutional embedding of access and participation principles	Better alignment of support services with male students' needs and preferences.	
	Assessment and Curriculum Design	Structured mentoring between HE and FE staff/students	Improved completion rates through targeted, data-informed interventions.	
	Digital Learning and Resource Navigation	Student ambassador-led mentoring and engagement	Enhanced academic skills and self-management for low IMD male students via personalised coaching.	
	Engagement and Attendance Monitoring		Increased language confidence and academic integration for EAL and low IMD male students.	
	Personalised Academic Planning		Strengthened motivation and aspiration through	
	Paid Student Opportunities			

			exposure to diverse role models	
Rationale and Assumptions	<p>The rationale underpinning these interventions is that all students, regardless of their sex, possess an equal potential to complete their study programme, yet do not access the resources necessary to realise this potential.</p> <p>It is assumed that male students will take up the support services offered. Furthermore, we assume these provisions will address the primary barriers to male completion at UCP.</p>			

TABLE B2 Evidence

Activity	Evidence Base	Summary
Academic Support	<u>Programmes of student support (post-entry)</u>	There is currently insufficient causal evidence to confirm the effectiveness of student support programmes in improving student outcomes. Most existing studies show positive correlations between participation and outcomes like retention or wellbeing, but these are not definitive because participants often differ systematically from non-participants. Only two causal studies, both from the USA, provide stronger evidence: one found improved credit accumulation (but not graduation), and the other showed a significant increase in graduation rates. For wellbeing-focused programmes, the evidence is even more limited, with only three small non-UK studies showing short-term benefits. Overall, more robust, UK-specific, and causal research is needed to determine the true impact and cost-effectiveness of these interventions.
Personal Support	<u>Mentoring, counselling, coaching and role models (post entry)</u>	Personalised support, such as academic advising, mentoring, and structured personal tutoring, has been shown to improve student completion by fostering a sense of belonging,

	<p><u>Thomas, L. (2012 & 2017). Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change.</u></p>	<p>addressing individual barriers, and supporting academic engagement</p> <p>However, the effectiveness of these interventions can vary depending on consistency, staff training, and institutional culture, with some studies noting limited impact when support is poorly integrated or perceived as generic. Ongoing evaluation is essential to ensure personal support is tailored, inclusive, and embedded within broader teaching and learning strategies.</p>
Financial Support	<p><u>Financial support (post-entry)</u></p> <p><u>Mountford-Zimdars, A., Sabri, D., Moore, J., Sanders, J., Jones, S., & Higham, L. (2015). Causes of differences in student outcomes (HEFCE).</u></p>	<p>There is strong international evidence, primarily from the USA, indicating that needs-based grants can enhance retention and completion, though there is weaker evidence for improvements in attainment or degree classification. However, much of this research lacks UK specificity, and UK-based studies tend to show correlation rather than causation, limiting the ability to make definitive claims.</p> <p>Mountford-Zimdars et al. (2015) reviewed multiple studies on post-entry financial support in the UK and found that such support is linked to reduced anxiety about</p>

		<p>higher education, improved integration into university life, decreased necessity to balance work and study, and greater ability to afford essential study materials like textbooks</p> <p>Limitations include a scarcity of causal UK studies, outdated data in a changing funding landscape, and inconclusive evidence regarding the comparative efficacy of different types of financial support.</p>
Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)	<p><u>Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education (PDF)- Brennan 2021</u></p> <p><u>QAA: Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education</u></p> <p><u>House of Commons Library: Degree Apprenticeships</u></p> <p><u>HEPI: Non-Continuation of Students in the UK</u></p>	<p>Flexible programme designs—such as part-time study, modular learning, blended delivery, and degree apprenticeships—have shown promise in supporting male completion in UK higher education by accommodating the need to balance study with work and financial responsibilities. Evidence indicates that these routes attract more male learners, particularly older students, and those from non-traditional backgrounds, by offering practical and financially viable pathways</p> <p>However, limitations remain: part-time and flexible learners continue to face lower retention and completion rates, compounded by structural barriers such as less integration into academic and social communities.</p>

Table B3 below shows our methods of evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Financial Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement with student support services (e.g., finance, wellbeing) by male students Greater uptake of hardship funds or bursaries among male students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher completion rates among male students 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods, in line with OfS guidance. Type 3 methods are not feasible due to the institutional scale.</p> <p>Type 1 methods will involve descriptive analysis of uptake and engagement with financial support among male students, alongside trends in completion data.</p> <p>Type 2 methods will include pre- and post-intervention comparisons and basic regression analysis to assess the association between financial support and improvements in male completion and retention.</p> <p>This mixed-methods approach provides a proportionate but robust basis for understanding impact and informing future delivery.</p>	<p>Internal briefings, comprehensive documentation, and detailed reports to guide practice and enable more rigorous evaluations in the future.</p> <p>Share findings as part of formal and informal connections with other CBHE networks</p>

<p>Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement of male students with academic content due to perceived relevance. • Stronger identification with programme goals and career pathways. <p>Medium-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved completion/retention rates among male students, • Fewer course withdrawals due to curriculum misalignment, perceived irrelevance, or workload pressures. 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using both Type 1 and Type 2 methods.</p> <p>Descriptive and correlational analysis will track short-term changes in completion rates among male students. To assess medium-term outcomes, comparisons and trend analyses will be used to evaluate the intervention's contribution to narrowing the completion gap</p>	
<p>Academic Support</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement of male students with academic support services. • Improved confidence and academic skills reported by male students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher completion rates among male students utilising academic support. • Reduced withdrawal rates related to academic challenges for male students. 	<p>These outcomes will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive statistics and correlational analysis will track short-term engagement and confidence changes. Pre-post comparisons and trend analyses will assess medium-term impacts on completion and withdrawal rates, helping to understand the intervention's contribution to reducing male retention gaps.</p>	

Personal Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased uptake of personalised support services by male students. • Enhanced sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy among male students receiving personal support. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved completion and retention rates for male students benefiting from personalised support. • Reduced withdrawal due to unresolved personal barriers. 	<p>These outcomes will be assessed using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive and correlational analyses will measure short-term changes in engagement and self-reported belonging. Pre-post and trend analyses will evaluate medium-term impacts on completion and withdrawal, ensuring the support is effectively tailored to male students' needs.</p>	
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Completion – ethnically minoritised students (Asian and Black) Objective 6 (IS3)

This section of Annex B outlines UCP's commitment to improving completion outcomes for Asian and Black students, with the goal of reaching 85% and 80% completion rates, respectively by 2030. These targets reflect a strategic effort to address entrenched disparities in degree completion between these groups and their peers, acknowledging the structural and systemic barriers that can disproportionately affect students from racially minoritised backgrounds.

The intervention strategy is informed by the evidence presented in Table B2, which highlights the multifaceted challenges racially minoritised students face, ranging from academic preparedness and financial strain to a lack of culturally responsive support. While causal UK-based evidence remains limited, other studies cited provide a strong foundation for action. These insights are embedded in the Theory of Change (Table B1), which outlines the pathway from intervention to impact, and are supported by a robust evaluation framework in Table B3. This ensures that UCP's approach is not only grounded in evidence but also continuously assessed for effectiveness and equity.

Table B1 – Theory of Change

Situation			Aims	
Black and Asian students have lower completion rates than white students			<p>By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rates for Asian and Black students, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between them and other ethnicities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the completion rate for Asian students to 85% • Increase the completion rate for Black students to 80% 	
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Staff time for academic support, personal support, and evaluation</p> <p>Training and development for HE staff</p> <p>Student Officers / Ambassador time</p> <p>Financial resources for bursaries and wellbeing services</p> <p>External services (e.g. guest speakers)</p> <p>Digital and physical resources</p>	<p>Academic Coaching and Skills Development</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing Support</p> <p>Targeted Financial Support</p> <p>Data-Informed Early Interventions</p> <p>Inclusive Learning Support Services</p> <p>Social Belonging and Community Building</p> <p>Peer Leadership and Representation</p>	<p>Inclusive Academic Skills sessions</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing activities and support</p> <p>Student tracking processes</p> <p>Promotion and delivery of financial support resources and bursaries</p> <p>Revalidated and diversified programme delivery models</p> <p>CPD and training for HE staff on social mobility and inclusion</p>	<p>Increased engagement with academic and wellbeing support services.</p> <p>Greater awareness and usage of digital learning resources.</p> <p>Improved attendance and academic participation.</p> <p>Enhanced retention through early intervention and tailored support.</p> <p>Strengthened academic self-management and timekeeping skills.</p> <p>Increased sense of belonging and peer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the completion rate for Asian students to 85% • Increase the completion rate for Black students to 80%

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems	Support for Intermitting and Returning Students	Inclusive teaching resources developed or disseminated	connection via structured social initiatives.	
	Transition and Progression Support	Institutional embedding of access and participation principles	Higher likelihood of seeking mental health and personal support.	
	Inclusive Teaching and Learning Practices	Structured mentoring between HE and FE staff/students	Better alignment of support services with ethnically minoritised students' needs and preferences.	
	Assessment and Curriculum Design			
	Digital Learning and Resource Navigation	Student ambassador-led mentoring and engagement	Improved completion rates through targeted, data-informed interventions.	
	Engagement and Attendance Monitoring		Enhanced academic skills and self-management for low IMD ethnically minoritised students via personalised coaching.	
	Personalised Academic Planning			
	Paid Student Opportunities		Increased language confidence and academic integration for EAL and low IMD ethnically minoritised students. Strengthened motivation and aspiration through	

			exposure to diverse role models	
Rationale and Assumptions	<p>The rationale underpinning these interventions is that all students, regardless of their sex, possess an equal potential to complete their study programme, yet do not access the resources necessary to realise this potential.</p> <p>It is assumed that ethnically minoritised Students will take up the support services offered. Furthermore, we assume these provisions will address the primary barriers to ethnically minoritised completion at UCP.</p>			

TABLE B2 Evidence

Activity	Evidence Base	Summary
Academic Support	<p><u>Programmes of student support (post-entry)</u></p> <p><u>Variation in Black students' conceptions of academic support (Mimirinis, 2023)</u></p>	<p>There is currently insufficient causal evidence to confirm the effectiveness of student support programmes in improving student outcomes. Most existing studies show positive correlations between participation and outcomes like retention or wellbeing, but these are not definitive because participants often differ systematically from non-participants.</p> <p>Only two causal studies, both from the USA, provide stronger evidence: one found improved credit accumulation (but not graduation), and the other showed a significant increase in graduation rates. For wellbeing focused programmes, the evidence is even more limited, with only three small non-UK studies showing short-term benefits. Overall, more robust, UK-specific, and causal research is needed to determine the true impact and cost-effectiveness of these interventions.</p>
Personal Support	<p><u>Mentoring, counselling, coaching and role models (post-entry)</u></p>	<p>Personalised support, such as academic advising, mentoring, and structured personal tutoring, has been shown to improve student</p>

	<p><u>Thomas, L. (2012 & 2017). Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change.</u></p> <p><u>Learning from the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students</u></p> <p><u>Thwarted ambitions: Barriers to completing university education</u></p>	<p>completion by fostering a sense of belonging, addressing individual barriers, and supporting academic engagement</p> <p>However, the effectiveness of these interventions can vary depending on consistency, staff training, and institutional culture, with some studies noting limited impact when support is poorly integrated or perceived as generic. Ongoing evaluation is essential to ensure personal support is tailored, inclusive, and embedded within broader teaching and learning strategies.</p>
Financial Support	<p><u>Financial support (post-entry)</u></p> <p><u>Mountford-Zimdars, A., Sabri, D., Moore, J., Sanders, J., Jones, S., & Higham, L. (2015). Causes of differences in student outcomes (HEFCE).</u></p> <p><u>Thwarted ambitions: Barriers to completing university education</u></p>	<p>There is strong international evidence, primarily from the USA, indicating that needs-based grants can enhance retention and completion, though there is weaker evidence for improvements in attainment or degree classification. However, much of this research lacks UK specificity, and UK-based studies tend to show correlation rather than causation, limiting the ability to make definitive claims.</p> <p>Mountford-Zimdars et al. (2015) reviewed multiple studies on post-entry financial support in the UK and found that such support is linked to reduced anxiety about higher education, improved integration into</p>

		<p>university life, decreased necessity to balance work and study, and greater ability to afford essential study materials like textbooks</p> <p>Limitations include a scarcity of causal UK studies, outdated data in a changing funding landscape, and inconclusive evidence regarding the comparative efficacy of different types of financial support.</p>
Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)	<p><u>Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education (PDF)- Brennan 2021</u></p> <p><u>QAA: Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education</u></p> <p><u>House of Commons Library: Degree Apprenticeships</u></p> <p><u>HEPI: Non-Continuation of Students in the UK</u></p> <p><u>Unblocking the Pipeline: Supporting the Retention, Progression and Representation of Black Students</u></p> <p><u>Taking a Strategic Approach to Tackling Racial Inequality in UK Higher Education</u></p>	<p>Flexible programme designs—such as part-time study, modular learning, blended delivery, and degree apprenticeships—have shown promise in supporting ethnically minoritised continuation in UK higher education by accommodating the need to balance study with work and financial responsibilities. Evidence indicates that these routes attract more ethnically minoritised learners, particularly older students, and those from non-traditional backgrounds, by offering practical and financially viable pathways</p> <p>However, limitations remain: part-time and flexible learners continue to face lower retention and completion rates, compounded</p>

		by structural barriers such as less integration into academic and social communities.
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Table B3 below shows our methods of evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Financial Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement with student support services (e.g., finance, wellbeing) by ethnically minoritised students Greater uptake of hardship funds or bursaries among ethnically minoritised students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher completion rates among ethnically minoritised students 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods, in line with OfS guidance. Type 3 methods are not feasible due to the institutional scale.</p> <p>Type 1 methods will involve descriptive analysis of uptake and engagement with financial support among ethnically minoritised students, alongside trends in completion data.</p> <p>Type 2 methods will include pre- and post-intervention comparisons and basic regression analysis to assess the association between financial support and improvements in ethnically minoritised completion and retention.</p> <p>This mixed-methods approach provides a proportionate but robust basis for understanding impact and informing future delivery.</p>	<p>Internal briefings, comprehensive documentation, and detailed reports to guide practice and enable more rigorous evaluations in the future.</p> <p>Share findings as part of formal and informal connections with other CBHE networks</p>

<p>Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement of ethnically minoritised students with academic content due to perceived relevance. Stronger identification with programme goals and career pathways. <p>Medium-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved completion/retention rates among ethnically minoritised students, Fewer course withdrawals due to curriculum misalignment, perceived irrelevance, or workload pressures. 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using both Type 1 and Type 2 methods.</p> <p>Descriptive and correlational analysis will track short-term changes in completion rates among ethnically minoritised students. To assess medium-term outcomes, comparisons and trend analyses will be used to evaluate the intervention's contribution to narrowing the completion gap</p>	
<p>Academic Support</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement of ethnically minoritised students with academic support services. Improved confidence and academic skills reported by ethnically minoritised students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher completion rates among ethnically minoritised students utilising academic support. Reduced withdrawal rates related to academic challenges for ethnically minoritised students. 	<p>These outcomes will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive statistics and correlational analysis will track short-term engagement and confidence changes. Pre-post comparisons and trend analyses will assess medium-term impacts on completion and withdrawal rates, helping to understand the intervention's contribution to reducing ethnically minoritised retention gaps.</p>	

Personal Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased uptake of personalised support services by ethnically minoritised students. • Enhanced sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy among ethnically minoritised students receiving personal support. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved completion and retention rates for ethnically minoritised students benefiting from personalised support. • Reduced withdrawal due to unresolved personal barriers. 	<p>These outcomes will be assessed using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive and correlational analyses will measure short-term changes in engagement and self-reported belonging. Pre-post and trend analyses will evaluate medium-term impacts on completion and withdrawal, ensuring the support is effectively tailored to ethnically minoritised students' needs.</p>	
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Attainment – Sex (Male) Objective 7 (IS4)

This section of Annex B outlines UCP's strategic aim to raise the attainment rate for full-time male students to 80% by 2030, addressing the persistent gap in degree outcomes between male and female students. This objective reflects a commitment to ensuring that all students, regardless of gender, are equally supported to achieve strong academic outcomes. The strategy focuses on enhancing curriculum design, academic and personal support, and mental health provision, alongside targeted financial assistance.

The rationale for these interventions is grounded in the evidence presented in Table B2, which highlights the lower engagement of male students with academic and pastoral services and the need for more tailored, accessible, and developmentally framed support. Research underscores the importance of reframing support services, aligning provision with male students' preferences, and embedding interventions within academic contexts. These insights are operationalised through the Theory of Change in Table B1 and evaluated using the methods outlined in Table B3, ensuring that the approach is both evidence-informed and impact-driven.

Table B1 – Theory of Change

Situation		Aims		
Male Students have lower attainment rates at UCP than female students		By 2030, UCP aims to increase the attainment rate for male students to 80%, thereby reducing the gap in attainment rates between male and female students. This objective will be achieved by addressing curriculum choice, strengthening both academic, personal and mental health support services. Additional measures will include targeted financial support to mitigate barriers that may impact student continuation.		
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Staff time for academic support, personal support, and evaluation</p> <p>Staff and student time for mentoring</p> <p>Training and development for HE staff</p> <p>Financial resources for bursaries and wellbeing services</p> <p>Programme validation/revalidation</p>	<p>Academic Coaching and Skills Development</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing Support</p> <p>Targeted Financial Support</p> <p>Data-Informed Early Interventions</p> <p>Inclusive Learning Support Services</p> <p>Social Belonging and Community Building</p>	<p>Inclusive Academic Skills sessions</p> <p>Mental Health and Wellbeing activities and support</p> <p>Enhanced student tracking processes</p> <p>Promotion and delivery of targeted financial support resources and bursaries</p> <p>Revalidated and diversified inclusive</p>	<p>Increased engagement with academic and wellbeing support services.</p> <p>Greater awareness and usage of digital learning resources.</p> <p>Improved attendance and academic participation.</p> <p>Enhanced attainment through early intervention and tailored support.</p>	<p>Increase the attainment rate for Full-Time male students to 80%, thereby reducing the gap in attainment rates between male and female students.</p>

External services (e.g. guest speakers)	Peer Leadership and Representation	programme delivery models	Strengthened academic self-management and timekeeping skills.	
Digital and physical resources	Support for Intermitting and Returning Students		Increased sense of belonging and peer connection	
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems	Transition and Progression Support	CPD and training for HE staff on social mobility and inclusion	Higher likelihood of seeking mental health, personal and academic support.	
	Inclusive Teaching and Learning Practices	Inclusive teaching resources developed or disseminated	Better alignment of support services with male students' needs and preferences incorporated.	
	Assessment and Curriculum Design	Institutional embedding of access and participation principles	Improved attainment through targeted, data-informed interventions.	
	Digital Learning and Resource Navigation	Structured mentoring between HE and FE staff/students	Enhanced academic skills and self-management for male students via personalised coaching.	
	Engagement and Attendance Monitoring	Student ambassador-led mentoring and engagement	Increased language confidence and academic integration for EAL and low IMD male students.	
	Personalised Academic Planning	Belong at UCP events/initiatives		
	Paid Student Opportunities			
	External speakers			

			Strengthened motivation and aspiration through exposure to diverse role models	
Rationale and Assumptions	<p>The rationale underpinning these interventions is that all students, regardless of their sex, possess an equal potential to attain good grades in their study programme.</p> <p>It is assumed that male students will take up the support services offered. Furthermore, we assume these provisions will address the primary barriers to male attainment at UCP.</p>			

TABLE B2 Evidence

Activity	Evidence Base	Summary
Academic Support	<p><u>Male students: engagement with academic and pastoral services</u></p> <p><u>Programmes of student support (post-entry)</u></p>	<p>Analyses indicate that male undergraduates engage less with academic and pastoral support services than their female counterparts—Advance HE reports only 30 percent of male entrants accessed study-skills workshops compared to 45 percent of women—contributing to lower degree attainment rates. When male students do access support, they often perceive it too late or as stigmatising, underlining the need to reframe provision as developmental rather than remedial. The one-to-one retention service at Edinburgh Napier, which targeted men at risk of withdrawal, achieved higher male uptake, indicating that embedded referral systems can be highly effective. Formal support must be reframed as development, offered in informal locations within academic units or libraries, and include competitive or task-oriented elements to align with male students' preferences.</p> <p>Timely availability of support at later stages—acknowledging that men often delay help-seeking—has been shown to reduce withdrawal among at-risk male students by</p>

		up to 20 percent (OfS, 2022). Overall, by implementing developmental framing, robust referral pathways, and male-preferred formats, institutions can significantly improve male academic engagement and narrow the attainment gap.
Personal Support	<p><u>Mentoring, counselling, coaching and role models (post entry)</u></p> <p><u>Thomas, L. (2012 & 2017). Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change.</u></p> <p><u>Male students: engagement with academic and pastoral services</u></p>	<p>Male students engage significantly less with pastoral support services—such as counselling, wellbeing, and financial advice—than female students.</p> <p>Men often lack awareness of available services and perceive help-seeking as a sign of vulnerability, preferring solution-oriented, linear approaches over discursive support, and they tend to delay accessing help until issues become critical.</p> <p>Evidence shows that personalised support—such as academic advising, mentoring, and structured personal tutoring—can help by fostering a sense of belonging, addressing individual barriers, and promoting academic engagement. However, its effectiveness depends on consistency, staff training, and institutional culture; poorly integrated or generic support has limited impact.</p>

		<p>Subgroup analyses indicate that younger men and Black male students have particularly low awareness of support services, whereas mature and Asian male students are somewhat more proactive. Initiatives such as Edinburgh Napier's one-to-one service, which attracted 49 per cent male participation by embedding referrals at critical junctures, illustrate how tailored interventions can increase uptake.</p> <p>Reframing support as "development" or "social networking," delivering it in informal, accessible locations, and incorporating competitive or interest-based elements have all demonstrated improved engagement among men.</p> <p>Ongoing evaluation is essential to ensure that personal support remains tailored, inclusive, and embedded within broader teaching and learning strategies. Overall, adapting provision, promotion, and referral mechanisms to align with male students' preferences and ensuring high-quality, personalised support can strengthen both retention and attainment.</p>
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Financial Support	<p><u>Financial support (post-entry)</u></p> <p><u>Mountford-Zimdars, A., Sabri, D., Moore, J., Sanders, J., Jones, S., & Higham, L. (2015). Causes of differences in student outcomes (HEFCE).</u></p>	<p>As stated previously, there is strong international evidence, primarily from the USA, indicating that needs-based grants can enhance retention and completion, though there is weaker evidence for improvements in attainment or degree classification. However, much of this research lacks UK specificity, and UK-based studies tend to show correlation rather than causation, limiting the ability to make definitive claims.</p> <p>Mountford-Zimdars et al. (2015) reviewed multiple studies on post-entry financial support in the UK and found that such support is linked to reduced anxiety about higher education, improved integration into university life, decreased necessity to balance work and study, and greater ability to afford essential study materials like textbooks</p> <p>Limitations include a scarcity of causal UK studies, outdated data in a changing funding landscape, and inconclusive evidence regarding the comparative efficacy of different types of financial support.</p> <p>UK studies emphasise that the mere availability of bursaries is insufficient: proactively communicating eligibility and simplifying application processes are</p>
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		essential, as many male students are less likely to seek out or be aware of financial support.
<p>Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)</p> <p>(Limited Choice of course Type)</p>	<p>Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education (PDF)- Brennan 2021</p> <p>QAA: Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education</p> <p>House of Commons Library: Degree Apprenticeships</p> <p>HEPI: Non-Continuation of Students in the UK</p> <p>The Office for Students annual review (2023)</p> <p><u>Degree Apprenticeships</u></p>	<p>Flexible programme designs—such as part-time study, modular learning, blended delivery, and degree apprenticeships—have shown promise in supporting male attainment in UK higher education by accommodating the need to balance study with work and financial responsibilities.</p> <p>Evidence indicates that these routes attract more male learners, particularly older students, and those from non-traditional backgrounds, by offering practical and financially viable pathways</p> <p>However, limitations remain: part-time and flexible learners continue to face lower retention and attainment rates, compounded by structural barriers such as less integration into academic and social communities.</p> <p>We proffer that programmes co-developed with employers and students align assessments and learning outcomes to actual workplace demands, which boosts</p>

		<p>male students' motivation and can link to higher grades.</p> <p>Office for Students data show that in 2021–22 undergraduate apprenticeships—where curricula are designed jointly by universities and employers—had the highest proportion of first- or upper-second-class honours among all modes of study, outperforming both full-time and part-time routes.</p> <p>Compared to level 6 entrants to 'conventional' higher education, level 6 apprenticeship starters are more likely to be male,</p>
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Table B3 below shows our methods of 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 the evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take.
Financial Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement with student support services (e.g., finance, wellbeing) by male students Greater uptake of hardship funds or bursaries among male students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher attainment rates among male students 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods, in line with OfS guidance. Type 3 methods are not feasible due to the institutional scale.</p> <p>Type 1 methods will involve descriptive analysis of uptake and engagement with financial support among male students, alongside trends in continuation data.</p> <p>Type 2 methods will include pre- and post-intervention comparisons and basic regression analysis to assess the association between financial support and improvements in male attainment.</p> <p>This mixed-methods approach provides a proportionate but robust basis for understanding impact and informing future delivery.</p>	<p>Internal briefings, comprehensive documentation, and detailed reports to guide practice and enable more rigorous evaluations in the future.</p> <p>Share findings as part of formal and informal connections with other CBHE networks</p>

Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)	<p>Short-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement of male students with academic content due to perceived relevance. Stronger identification with programme goals and career pathways. <p>Medium-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved attainment among male students. 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using both Type 1 and Type 2 methods.</p> <p>Descriptive and correlational analysis will track short-term changes in continuation rates among male students. To assess medium-term outcomes, comparisons and trend analyses will be used to evaluate the intervention's contribution to narrowing the attainment gap</p>	
Academic Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement of male students with academic support services. Improved confidence and academic skills reported by male students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher attainment among male students utilising academic support. 	<p>These outcomes will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive statistics and correlational analysis will track short-term engagement and confidence changes.</p> <p>Pre-post comparisons and trend analyses will assess medium-term impacts on attainment, helping to understand the intervention's contribution to reducing the male attainment gap.</p>	

Personal Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased uptake of personalised support services by male students. • Enhanced sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy among male students receiving personal support. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved attainment for male students benefiting from personalised support. 	<p>These outcomes will be assessed using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive and correlational analyses will measure short-term changes in engagement and self-reported belonging. Pre-post and trend analyses will evaluate medium-term impacts on attainment, ensuring the support is effectively tailored to male students' needs.</p>	
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Progression – Age (Young) Objective 8 (IS5)

This section of Annex B sets out UCP's objective to increase the positive progression rate for young students to 72% by 2030, narrowing the gap between young and mature learners. This ambition reflects a recognition that younger students—particularly those transitioning directly from school—face distinct challenges in progressing into graduate-level employment or further study. These include reduced access to personal support, financial pressures, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational and career readiness.

The interventions proposed are underpinned by the evidence presented in Table B2, which highlights the value of structured mentoring, academic coaching, and employer-informed programme design in improving progression outcomes. Research, in table B2, supports the role of personalised support and financial aid in building confidence, social capital, and career readiness. These insights are embedded in the Theory of Change (Table B1) and evaluated through a mixed-methods approach outlined in Table B3, ensuring that UCP's strategy is both evidence-based and responsive to the evolving needs of young learners.

Table B1 – Theory of Change

Situation			Aims	
Young students' progression rate into highly skilled employment or further study is 60.2%, and mature at 83.8%			By 2030, UCP aims to increase the positive progression rate for young students to 72%, thereby reducing the disparity in progression outcomes between young and mature students. This objective will be achieved through targeted interventions that address key barriers identified, specifically: personal support, cost pressures and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19.	
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p>Staff time for academic support, personal support, and evaluation</p> <p>Staff and student time for mentoring</p> <p>Training and development for HE staff</p> <p>Financial resources for bursaries and wellbeing services</p> <p>Programme Development and Curriculum Design</p> <p>Programme validation/revalidation</p>	<p>Academic coaching and personal support</p> <p>Peer-assisted learning and mentoring programmes</p> <p>HE staff training on inclusive practice and career guidance</p> <p>Administering and promoting bursaries and wellbeing services</p> <p>Curriculum workshops embedding employability attributes and inclusive design</p> <p>Programme validation/revalidation focusing</p>	<p>Academic coaching sessions and support plans</p> <p>Mentoring cohorts and formal mentor pairings</p> <p>CPD for HE staff: inclusive pedagogy, wellbeing, careers</p> <p>Bursaries and wellbeing resource packs for eligible students</p> <p>Mental health and wellbeing activities and support sessions</p>	<p>Increased student engagement with support services; improved retention and positive progression rates</p> <p>Enhanced student self-efficacy and time-management; higher attainment</p> <p>Strengthened staff capacity to support underrepresented students; reduced gaps</p> <p>Improved student wellbeing; reduced stress-related dropout</p>	<p>Increase the positive progression rate for young students to 72%, thereby reducing the disparity in progression outcomes between young and mature students.</p>

External services (e.g. guest speakers)	on access and employment outcomes	Revalidated and redesigned curricula with employability modules and attributes further developed	Greater financial stability and wellbeing; lower dropout risk	
Digital and physical resources	Guest-speaker series featuring industry and academic role models	Validated programmes and reports demonstrating inclusive, employment-focused programme changes	Revalidated programmes aligned with employers; higher graduate progression	
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems	Providing and maintaining digital and physical learning resources	Guest-speaker engagement - metrics and feedback summaries	Improved career-readiness and confidence; increased placements uptake	
Connections and relationships with employers	Implementing data systems to monitor and evaluate student progression	VLE pages signposting and content	Broadened exposure to professional role models, raising aspiration and social capital	
Knowledge and Skills Development	Coordinating employer–student initiatives: work placements and internships	Dashboards and reports on student tracking including graduate attributes	Data-driven identification of ‘at-risk’ students; timely interventions and improved progression	
	Delivering skills-development workshops: career readiness and psychometric testing	Employer partnerships and scheduled placements and internships	Deeper employer relationships, sustained placement pipelines and graduate hiring	
		Skills-audit assessments and follow-up workshop		

			<p>Growth in transferable skills; increased employability outcomes</p> <p>Strengthened social capital</p>	
Rationale and Assumptions	<p>The rationale underpinning these inputs is that holistic academic, wellbeing, financial, and employer support improves progression to graduate employment or further study for 'young' students.</p> <p>It is assumed that students will engage with the services offered.</p> <p>It is assumed that staff and external partners deliver provisions effectively to address key progression barriers.</p>			

TABLE B2 Evidence

Activity	Evidence Base	Summary
<p>Personal Support, academic support and the ongoing impact of coronavirus</p>	<p><u>Mentoring, counselling, coaching and role models (post entry)</u></p> <p><u>Thomas, L. (2012 & 2017). Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change.</u></p> <p><u>Male students: engagement with academic and pastoral services</u></p> <p><u>Risk 6 Insufficient academic support</u></p> <p><u>Risk 9: Ongoing impacts of coronavirus</u></p> <p><u>The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's experiences of careers support: A UK-wide and youth-centred analysis</u></p> <p><u>The impact of Covid-19 on recent graduates' career decisions and outcomes</u></p> <p><u>Sandner, 2015</u></p>	<p>Mentoring, counselling, coaching and advising comprise structured relationships in which a more experienced individual provides emotional, academic and career support to a less experienced student.</p> <p>'If a student does not receive the necessary personalised academic support, they may achieve a lower degree attainment than they could have achieved'</p> <p>UK-based evaluations indicate that such programmes are associated not only with higher retention and attainment but also with improved progression rates from higher education into positive graduate outcomes. International trials demonstrate that academic coaching and mentoring can enhance persistence into the second year and bolster metacognitive skills essential for successful completion and onward progression.</p> <p>Crucially, programme efficacy depends on design elements such as intensity, duration and mentor-mentee matching, with low</p>

		<p>mentor-to-mentee ratios, demographic alignment and integration around critical curricular milestones yielding the strongest progression gains.</p> <p>Evidence suggests that personalised support—such as academic advising, mentoring and structured personal tutoring, fosters a sense of belonging and addresses individual barriers, thereby promoting engagement and facilitating progression from degree programmes into employment or further study.</p> <p>However, effectiveness hinges on consistency, staff training and institutional culture; poorly integrated or generic support often fails to sustain motivation and can limit the impact.</p> <p>For young students transitioning directly from school, mentoring, counselling, coaching and advising interventions can enhance academic confidence and social capital, mitigating the risk of non-completion and improving the likelihood of positive post-HE destinations.</p> <p>UCP acknowledge the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns on</p>
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		<p>young people's social, emotional and educational progress. We proffer that this has potential downstream effects on educational engagement and career readiness. UCP aims to build social capital among young students</p> <p>Ongoing evaluation is essential to ensure that personal support remains tailored, inclusive, and embedded within broader teaching and learning strategies.</p> <p>Given these associations, allocating tailored inputs in mentoring, counselling, coaching and advising represents a justified strategy for higher education providers to close progression gaps for 'young' cohorts.</p>
Financial Support	<p><u>Financial support (post-entry)</u></p> <p><u>Mountford-Zimdars, A., Sabri, D., Moore, J., Sanders, J., Jones, S., & Higham, L. (2015). Causes of differences in student outcomes (HEFCE).</u></p>	<p>As stated previously, there is strong international evidence, primarily from the USA, indicating that needs-based grants can enhance retention and completion, though there is weaker evidence for improvements in attainment or degree classification. However, much of this research lacks UK specificity, and UK-based studies tend to show correlation rather than causation, limiting the ability to make definitive claims.</p>

		<p>Mountford-Zimdars et al. (2015) reviewed multiple studies on post-entry financial support in the UK and found that such support is linked to reduced anxiety about higher education, improved integration into university life, decreased necessity to balance work and study, and greater ability to afford essential study materials like textbooks</p> <p>Limitations include a scarcity of causal UK studies, outdated data in a changing funding landscape, and inconclusive evidence regarding the comparative efficacy of different types of financial support.</p> <p>UK studies emphasise that the mere availability of bursaries is insufficient: proactively communicating eligibility and simplifying application processes are essential, as many young students are less likely to seek out or be aware of financial support.</p> <p>UCP contends that financial support reduces the need for paid work, allowing students to focus on their studies and thereby improving their prospects of achieving higher grades.</p>
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<p>Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)</p> <p>(Limited Choice of Course Type)</p>	<p><u>Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education (PDF)- Brennan 2021</u></p> <p><u>QAA: Flexible Learning Pathways in British Higher Education</u></p> <p><u>House of Commons Library: Degree Apprenticeships</u></p> <p><u>HEPI: Non-Continuation of Students in the UK</u></p> <p><u>The Office for Students annual review (2023)</u></p> <p><u>Degree Apprenticeships</u></p> <p><u>Risk 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery mode</u></p> <p><u>TASO, nd</u></p>	<p>Evidence shows stakeholder-informed programme development—through flexible pathways aligned with employer needs—supports student continuation, access and progression</p> <p>We are also cognisant of the impact of placements, internships and volunteering opportunities for positive progression from HE.</p> <p>For example, work experience consistently correlates with improved progression into graduate-level roles, with participants more likely to secure interviews, achieve higher starting salaries, and experience lower unemployment rates after graduation</p>
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Table B3 below shows our methods of 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 the evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take.
Financial Support	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement with student support services (e.g., finance, wellbeing) by young students Greater uptake of hardship funds or bursaries among young students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher progression rates among young students 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using Type 1 and Type 2 methods, in line with OfS guidance. Type 3 methods are not feasible due to the institutional scale.</p> <p>Type 1 methods will involve descriptive analysis of uptake and engagement with financial support among young students, alongside trends in progression data.</p> <p>Where possible, Type 2 methods will include pre- and post-intervention comparisons and basic regression analysis to assess the association between financial support and improvements in young progression</p> <p>This mixed-methods approach provides a proportionate but robust basis for understanding impact and informing future delivery.</p>	<p>Internal briefings, comprehensive documentation, and detailed reports to guide practice and enable more rigorous evaluations in the future.</p> <p>Share findings as part of formal and informal connections with other CBHE networks</p>

<p>Programme Development with stakeholders (students and employers)</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement of young students with academic content due to perceived relevance. • Stronger identification with programme goals and career pathways. <p>Medium-term outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved progression among young students. 	<p>These interventions will be evaluated using both Type 1 and, where possible, Type 2 methods.</p> <p>Descriptive and correlational analysis will track short-term changes in progression rates among young students. To assess medium-term outcomes, comparisons and trend analyses will be used to evaluate the intervention's contribution to narrowing the progression gap</p>	
<p>Academic Support</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased engagement of young students with academic support services. • Improved confidence and academic skills reported by young students. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher progression among young students utilising academic support. 	<p>These outcomes will be evaluated using Type 1 and when feasible, Type 2 methods. Descriptive statistics and correlational analysis will track short-term engagement and confidence changes.</p> <p>Pre-post comparisons and trend analyses will assess medium-term impacts on attainment, helping to understand the intervention's contribution to reducing the young progression gap.</p>	

<p>Personal Support (including the ongoing impact of Covid-19)</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased uptake of personalised support services by young students. • Enhanced sense of belonging and self-efficacy among young students receiving personal support. <p>Medium-term outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved positive progression for young students benefiting from personalised support. 	<p>These outcomes will be assessed using Type 1 and Type 2 methods. Descriptive and correlational analyses will measure short-term changes in engagement and self-reported belonging. Pre-post and trend analyses will evaluate medium-term impacts on attainment, ensuring the support is effectively tailored to young students' needs.</p>	
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Fees, investments and targets

2026-27 to 2029-30

Provider name: University Centre Peterborough

Provider UKPRN: 10068157

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 OfS 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	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£210,000	£220,000	£240,000	£250,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£110,000	£122,000	£125,000	£130,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£40,000	£47,000	£47,000	£50,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£190,000	£200,000	£220,000	£230,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£210,000	£220,000	£240,000	£250,000
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment (as % of HFI)</i>	25.7%	24.2%	25.3%	25.0%
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment funded from HFI (£)</i>	£55,000	£60,000	£70,000	£70,000
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)</i>	£155,000	£160,000	£170,000	£180,000
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£90,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£20,000	£22,000	£25,000	£30,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£110,000	£122,000	£125,000	£130,000
Financial support investment	<i>Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)</i>	13.5%	13.4%	13.2%	13.0%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£40,000	£47,000	£47,000	£50,000
Research and evaluation investment	<i>Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)</i>	4.9%	5.2%	4.9%	5.0%

Fees, investments and targets

2026-27 to 2029-30

Provider name: University Centre Peterborough

Provider UKPRN: 10068157

Targets

Table 5b: Access and/or raising attainment targets

Aim [500 characters maximum]	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone	2029-30 milestone
By 2030, UCP aims to increase the enrolment of students who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 18%, thereby reducing the access gap between FSM-eligible students and their non-FSM peers.	PTA_1	Access	Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)	Eligible			No	The access and participation dashboard	2022-23	Percentage	12.7%	14%	15%	16%	18%
By 2030, UCP aims to increase the enrolment of Asian students to 12% thereby reducing the access gap between Asian students at UCP compared to white students and reflecting local demographics	PTA_2	Access	Ethnicity	Asian		The one objective has split targets dependent on ethnicity as outlined in the APP. The main data source used was the APP dashboard. Ethnicity access profiles are spiky. As described in Annex A - all our students are home students either at our Peterborough campus or rural Stamford campus. The local demographics are very different so this target is very ambitious as it is for both campuses combined. Local ONS data was consulted as well as projected changes to local population.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2022-23	Percentage	2.9%	7%	9%	11%	12%
By 2030, UCP aims to increase the enrolment of Black students to 5% thereby reducing the access gap between Black students at UCP compared to other ethnicities and reflecting local demographics	PTA_3	Access	Ethnicity	Black		The one objective has split targets dependent on ethnicity as outlined in the APP. The main data source used was the APP dashboard. Ethnicity access profiles are spiky. As described in Annex A - all our students are home students either at our Peterborough campus or rural Stamford campus. The local demographics are very different so this target is very ambitious as it is for both campuses combined. Local ONS data was consulted as well as projected changes to local population.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2022-23	Percentage	1.6%	2.6%	3%	4%	5%
	PTA_4														
	PTA_5														
	PTA_6														
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone	2029-30 milestone
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By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rate for full-time male students (intersecting with IMD Q1 or 2) to 87%, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between male and female students.	PTS_1	Continuation	Sex	Male	Female	We have used the four-year average continuation rate as the base data. The target relates to males intersecting with IMD as outlined in the plan.	No	The access and participation dashboard	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage	76.4%	81%	83%	85%	87%
By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rates for full-time ethnically minoritised students, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between ethnically minoritised and White students. The targets are disaggregated for Asian, Black and Mixed Heritage students. This is for Asian.	PTS_2	Continuation	Ethnicity	Asian	N/A	The one objective has split targets dependent on ethnicity as outlined in the APP. The main data source used was the APP dashboard, but UCP also used the student outcomes dashboard and internal MIS data to corroborate. We have used the APP four-year average continuation rate as the base data	No	The access and participation dashboard	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage	80.4	83%	85%	87%	89%
By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rates for full-time ethnically minoritised students, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between ethnically minoritised and White students. The targets are disaggregated for Asian, Black and Mixed Heritage students. This is for Black	PTS_3	Continuation	Ethnicity	Black	N/A	The one objective has split targets dependent on ethnicity as outlined in the APP. The main data source used was the APP dashboard, but UCP also used the student outcomes dashboard and internal MIS data to corroborate. We have used the APP four-year average continuation rate as the base data	No	The access and participation dashboard	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage	78.6%	81%	83%	84%	85%
By 2030, UCP aims to increase the continuation rates for full-time ethnically minoritised students, thereby reducing the gap in continuation rates between ethnically minoritised and White students. The targets are disaggregated for Asian, Black and Mixed Heritage students. This is for Mixed heritage	PTS_4	Continuation	Ethnicity	Mixed	N/A	The one objective has split targets dependent on ethnicity as outlined in the APP. The main data source used was the APP dashboard, but UCP also used the student outcomes dashboard and internal MIS data to corroborate. We have used the APP four-year average continuation rate as the base data	No	The access and participation dashboard	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage	78.6%	81%	83%	84%	85%
By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rate for full-time male students to 85%, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between male and female students	PTS_5	Completion	Sex	Male	Female	Completion data is not yet available for UCP on the OFS APP dashboard. However, internal data (approximating OFS completion criteria) from the past three academic years highlights a consistent gap in completion rates between male and female full-time students.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2022-23	Percentage	73%	77%	80%	83%	85%
By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rates for full-time Asian students, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between them and white students:	PTS_6	Completion	Ethnicity	Asian	White	Completion data is not yet available for UCP on the OFS APP dashboard. However, internal data (approximating OFS completion criteria) from the past three academic years highlights a consistent gap in completion rates between Asian and Black students at UCP in comparison to national averages and white students at UCP.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2021-22	Percentage	60%	70%	80%	83%	85%
By 2030, UCP aims to increase the completion rates for full-time Black students, thereby reducing the disparity in completion rates between them and white students	PTS_7	Completion	Ethnicity	Black	White	Completion data is not yet available for UCP on the OFS APP dashboard. However, internal data (approximating OFS completion criteria) from the past three academic years highlights a consistent gap in completion rates between Asian and Black students at UCP in comparison to national averages and white students at UCP.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2021-22	Percentage	62.5%	68%	74%	77%	80%
By 2030, UCP aims to increase the attainment rate for Full-Time male students to 80%, thereby reducing the gap in attainment rates between male and female students.	PTS_8	Attainment	Sex	Male	Female	We have used the four-year average attainment rate as the baseline	No	The access and participation dashboard	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage	73.3%	75%	77%	79%	80%
	PTS_9														
	PTS_10														
	PTS_11														
	PTS_12														

Table 5e: Progression targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone	2029-30 milestone
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