

# UCB (University College Birmingham) Access & Participation Plan

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## Introduction and strategic aim

### Introduction

University College Birmingham (UCB) is a Higher Education (HE) institution in the heart of England's second city, Birmingham. UCB has a broad offer of provision, including Further Education (FE), HE, apprenticeships and a sixth form centre opening in September 2024. We are home to a diverse student body exceeding 10,000 learners, 70% of which are studying HE programmes. Our students represent over 90 countries, and we foster a vibrant learning environment renowned for its career-focused approach.

UCB specialises in vocational courses across HE and FE, alongside a growing portfolio of apprenticeships. This commitment to practical skills development is highly respected by employers and industry leaders, ensuring graduates are well-equipped for the modern workplace. Investments exceeding £180 million have been in the last decade to enhance our campus, creating modern facilities and practical learning environments. This commitment ensures students have the resources and infrastructure necessary to translate theory into tangible skills, propelling them towards a fulfilling career.

UCB holds unique specialisms in areas such as Aviation & Airport Management, Aesthetics and Culinary Arts Management. With a history of offering Culinary Arts training dating back over 100 years, traditionally we have been best known for our College of Food, but in recent years other disciplines have attracted interest for their approach to skills-based learning. These include portfolio growth in Health and Social Care, Engineering, Sustainable Construction and Digital, ensuring the continued focus of career-focused provision that supports the growing skills needs both regionally and nationally.

UCB further enhances its provision through strong partnerships. Many of our degrees are accredited and awarded by the University of Warwick which is ranked 9th in the UK by The Guardian 2024 League Table<sup>1</sup>, Warwick's prestigious Russell Group status provides extra social capital for our students studying on their awards. Beyond accreditation, UCB works closely with the University of Warwick to support widening access and progression to HE in the West Midlands region, working with businesses and schools to raise aspirations and provide solutions to workforce development.

In relation to our size and shape, UCB is a relatively small provider with approximately 7,000 enrolled HE students in 2023/24. Of our circa 6,000 undergraduate students, approximately 1,000 students are international fee payers, although this number is set to decline in line with the sector. Our postgraduate intake is disproportionately international, accounting for over 80% of our PG students. Our international students come from a wide variety of countries, but we have particularly strong markers in Nepal, India and China. International students are particularly attracted to specific curriculum areas such as Culinary Arts and Business. Our dedication to excellence resonates with international students, as evidenced by UCB's recent success in the international category at the 2023 Whatuni Student Choice Awards<sup>2</sup>. UCB does not currently deliver any trans-national education activities, other than Flying Faculty in Hong Kong.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Guardian University Guide 2024 – the rankings | University guide | The Guardian](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Whatuni Student Choice Awards 2023: the winners](#)



In relation to home students, UCB is a very local institution, with around a third living within just a 5-mile radius (the red area on the map to the left), whilst two thirds are from within a 25-mile radius (light grey). 70% of our students reported as living “at home” during term time, which is significantly higher than the HE sector overall (41%), comfortably within the top quintile of “at home” students across all UK providers. This percentage has been steadily growing around 2% each year over the past decade.

UCB’s local foothold provides a number of advantages, not least our knowledge of the local area and challenges students from those communities are likely to face. We are well networked with our local schools and colleges and get to know students who progress from our own FE or (in future) sixth form provision very well. As our students are likely to remain in the region following graduation, we are also able to utilise our strong regional employer networks to understand the skills they require, and ensure those skills are reflected in our curriculum. These networks are often the source of student placement and internship opportunities. Working with employers to develop local talent for the workforce also directly contributes to our civic engagement and commitment to improving the region. It is estimated that our regional impact on the economy equates to circa £88 million per annum ([Link here](#)).

UCB serves the communities on our doorstep. This commitment manifests in our dedication to providing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of background. This core principle drives our efforts to ensure that underrepresented groups have the support and resources they need to thrive in our institution. We predominantly enrol students from within local authority districts such as Birmingham and Sandwell. Deprivation within such districts is high, with 43% of the Birmingham population living within the 10% most deprived LSOAs in England.<sup>3</sup>

Birmingham and the West Midlands are regions of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities and, being a local recruiter, UCB reflects the makeup of the community we serve. In the 2021 census data, 30.6% of West Midlands residents under the age of 25 were from a BME background. In 2021/2, 44.5% of UCB’s enrolments were from a similar background: 13.9% higher than the region, and 18.5% higher than the HE sector’s proportion.

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<sup>3</sup> [Index of Deprivation 2019 | Birmingham City Council](#)

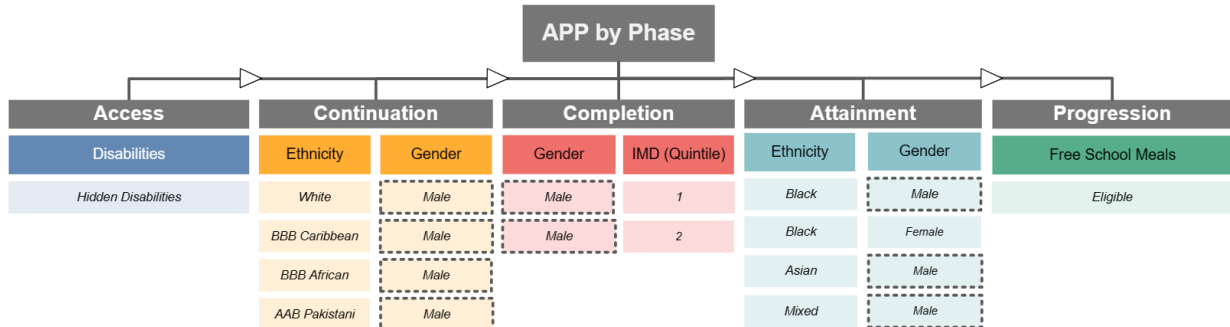
This is especially notable with those from the Black community. Here, 16.3% of UCB’s cohort were from a black background, 10% and 9.5% higher than the region and sector respectively. Proportionally, UCB’s Black community is 250% larger than both.

Typically (see table below), students from a BME background enter higher education with 10 fewer tariff points than their non-BME peers. Similarly, “at home” students usually enter higher education with 15 fewer tariff points (1.9 A-Level grades) than those who relocate to study. Proportionally, whilst the “BME – at home” cohort makes up just 15% of HE students across the sector, it represents 42% of UCB’s intake.

	BAME	White	Total
At Home	118	130	<b>122</b>
Not At Home	132	141	<b>137</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>128</b>

Whilst UCB is proud of the make-up of our student body, it nevertheless requires additional academic and student support. Broadly, it is these needs that UCB’s 2025/6 Access & Participation Plan aims to address.

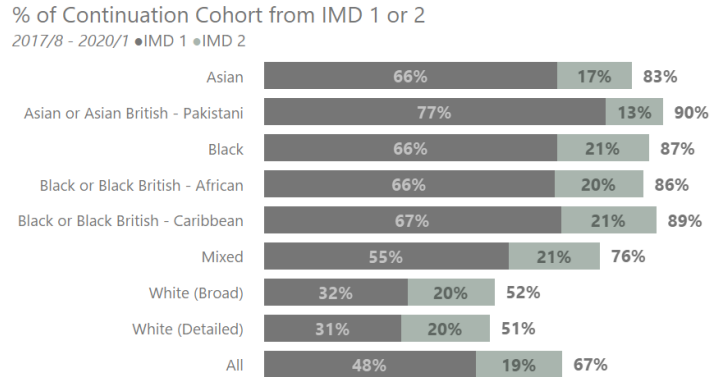
Whilst developing UCB’s new plan, five distinct groups have been identified for each pillar of the student’s higher education journey. Throughout this paper, these groups will be referred to as the “focus groups”, and are outlined in the process flowchart below:



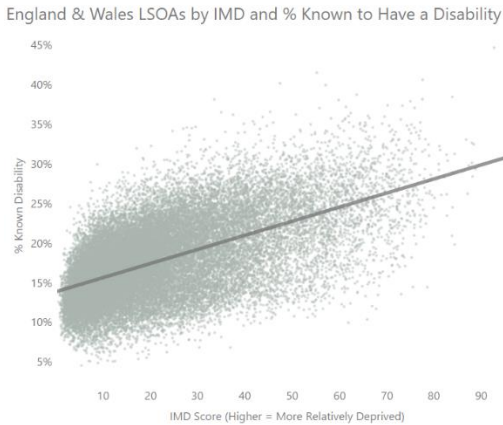
Whilst UCB is typically overrepresented in terms of characteristics such as ethnicity and IMD, it is underrepresented with disabilities – especially that of hidden disabilities. Outside of access, disability as a factor was disregarded during statistical modelling. However, due to relatively small numbers, there is a concern that, as access improves for those declaring hidden disabilities, issues such as additional support needs may emerge. However, to date, students known to have a disability have typically outperformed their peers once on course, so UCB should be well placed to meet these needs.

Other, non-access, related markers (on-course and progression) convey broadly similar themes of ethnicity (BME) and deprivation (lower IMDs), with gender (particularly that of male) running throughout (only progression omits it).

Regardless of the exact focus groups at each stage, a great degree of overlap exists. The below table outlines the focus ethnicity groups by the percentage of each that comes from either IMD 1 or 2. In each case, students defined as from a BME background are significantly more likely to come from more deprived backgrounds, and this aligns with a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government piece published in 2020<sup>4</sup>. Given that Free School Meals (progression) is linked to income and deprivation, further overlap would be expected here also.



In addition, the below chart combines IMD19 data and disability data from the census (by LSOA) to explore the moderate correlation (R2: 0.37) between the two measures. As a result of this correlation, UCB's activities related to on-course metrics will also improve.



Whilst the five focus groups do not initially appear to be similar in nature, the multitude of overlaps in characteristics – Disabilities (Access), BME (factors for Continuation & Attainment), IMD (Completion) and Free School Meals (Progression) - suggests that they are. As a result, this should lead to a holistic progression across all stages as the 2025/26 plan is developed and implemented.

## Risks to equality of opportunity

Annex A provides more detail regarding how the focus groups were identified.

### Risk 1.1 - Access

UCB currently has a lower proportion of students known to have a disability. This lower proportion is mostly attributable to below-average numbers of students sharing or having diagnosed “hidden disabilities” such as “social communication/autistic spectrum disorder” and “mental health condition”.

### Risk 1.2 - Continuation

The focus group of male students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (White, Black & Black British Caribbean, Black & Black British African or Asian & Asian British Pakistani) currently demonstrate the highest risk of non-continuation for UCB.

<sup>4</sup> [People living in deprived neighbourhoods - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/ethnicity-facts-figures)

### Risk 1.3 - Completion

The focus group of male students from either IMD quintile 1 or 2 currently demonstrate the highest risk of non-completion for UCB.

### Risk 1.4 - Attainment

The focus group of BME males, and black female students currently demonstrate the highest risk of failing to attain a good degree outcome.

### Risk 1.5 - Progression

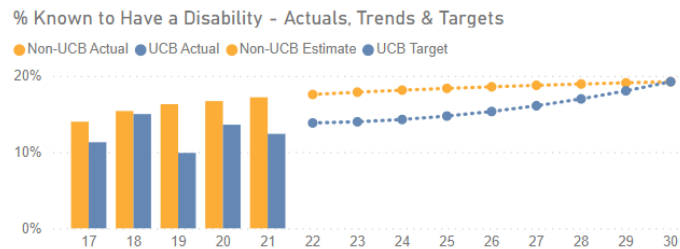
The focus group of those who were in receipt of free school meals currently demonstrate the highest risk of poor progression outcomes.

## Objectives

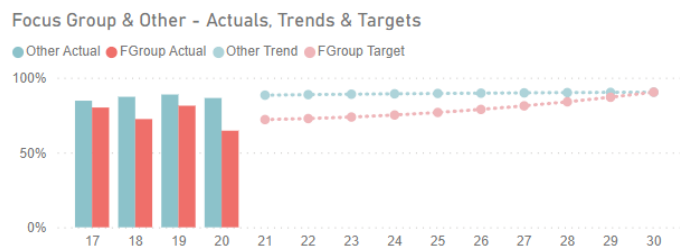
### Objective 1.1 – Access & Disabilities

(See chart below) Whilst the sector has grown proportions of those known to have a disability over time, this growth has begun to slow with a clear logarithmic trend suggesting a proportion of 19.3% by 2030.

**[Objective 1.1]** (PTA\_1) In order to achieve parity with the sector, UCB will increase the proportion of disabled students studying on its programmes - 19.3% by 2030 by working in partnership with Into University, Aimhigher West Midlands and awareness raising campaigns for staff and students. This represents an increase of c.0.8% per academic year, with targets being phased in exponentially to allow teams to fully embed interventions and processes.



### Objective 2.1 - Continuation & Males – White, Black & Black British Caribbean, Black & Black British African and Asian & Asian British Pakistan



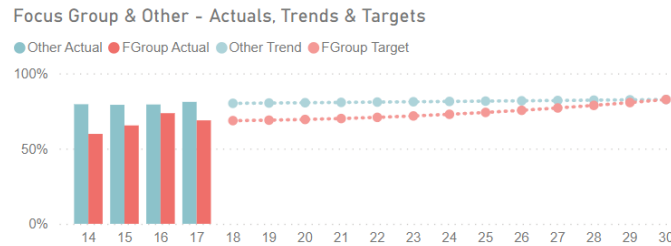
(See chart above) The current continuation rate trend for UCB’s non-focus group is broadly flat (c.0.4% a year), with a slight power trend suggesting a rate of 90.3% by 2030/1.

**[Objective 2.1]** (PTS\_1) With the aim of achieving parity between the focus and non-focus groups, UCB will look to increase continuation rates for “Males – White, Black & Black British Caribbean, Black & Black British African and Asian & Asian British Pakistani” to 90.3% by 2030/1 by targeting curriculum, assessment, academic skills development and financial, mental health and engagement support towards



focus groups. This represents an increase of c.1.9% per academic year, with targets being phased in exponentially to allow teams to fully embed interventions and processes during the initial phase of the new APP period.

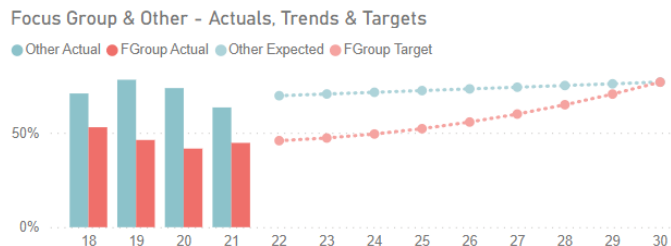
### Objective 3.1 – Completion & Males from lower IMD1&2 quintiles



(See chart above) The current completion rate trend for UCB’s non-focus group is broadly flat (c.0.4% a year), with a slight exponential trend suggesting a rate of 82.6% by 2030/1.

**[Objective 3.1] (PTS\_2)** With the aim of achieving parity between the focus and non-focus groups, UCB will look to increase completion rates for “Males from lower IMD1&2 quintiles” to 82.6% by 2030/1 by targeting curriculum, assessment, academic skills development and financial, mental health and engagement support towards focus groups. This represents an increase of c.1.1% per academic year, with targets being phased in exponentially to allow teams to fully embed interventions and processes during the initial phase of the new APP period.

### Objective 4.1 – Attainment & BAME Male & Black Female graduates



(See chart above) Here, UCB currently has two challenges: 1) to reverse an overall declining attainment position and 2) ensure that the gap between the focus group and non-focus groups does not widen as interventions to overcome point 1 take effect.

Here, whilst this aspect falls outside of APP, it has been presumed that, overall, UCB’s attainment rate for the non-focus group will recover to a position like 2019/20’s – 76.8%.

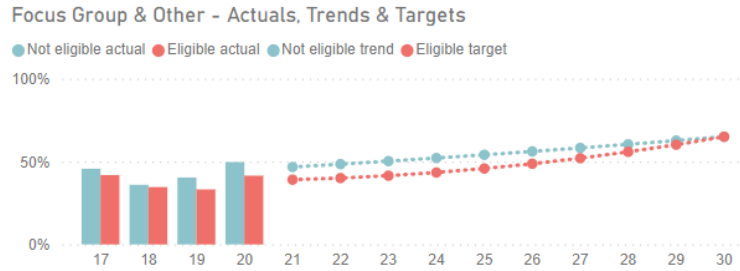
**[Objective 4.1] (PTS\_3)** with the aim of achieving parity between the focus and non-focus groups, UCB will look to increase attainment rates for “BAME Male & Black Female graduates” to 76.8% by 2030/1 through the interventions outlined above, plus intervention activities with classification borderline students at Level 5 (Foundation Degree) and Level 6 (Bachelor’s Degree students). This represents an increase of c.3.5% per academic year, with targets being phased in exponentially.

### Objective 5.1 – Progression & Free School Meals

Sector progression rates are currently c.26% higher than UCB’s overall. Whilst this falls outside the aims of APP, UCB continues to attempt to improve progression outcomes to close this gap regardless of

demographics. As a result, current trends suggest an expected outcome for the not-eligible cohort of 65% by 2030/1.

**[Objective 5.1] (PTP\_1)** With the aim of achieving parity between UCB’s eligible and not-eligible cohorts, UCB will look to increase progression outcomes of those eligible for free school meals to 65% by 2030 by targeted employability support, including the Warwick/ UCB Award and incentives to progress to postgraduate study. This represents an increase of c.2.4% per academic year, with targets being phased in exponentially to allow teams to fully embed interventions and processes during the initial phase of the new APP period.



## Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

### Approach to interventions

Whilst we have identified student characteristics for the purpose of the APP, in order to avoid unnecessary and potentially deleterious profiling, we will be targeting those programmes with the highest concentrations of students with the identified characteristics. These are referred to below, but what our research has shown us (as outlined in Annex A) is that there are a small number of key programmes that feature in all areas of APP objectives: Sport and Nutrition, Digital, Business, Health and Hospitality. Creative programmes feature only in UCB's progression data, as it has a high proportion of students who were in receipt of free school meals: the only key characteristic identified in progression (although this clearly intersects with IMD data).

Many of our interventions will be implemented across the whole student body (such as CASE ASET and Kick Start), but there will be an increased focus on those programme areas identified as at highest risk. Furthermore, we retain a strong focus on access despite the fact our student body is highly reflective of our local community, other than disabilities (and specifically hidden disabilities) for which we have bespoke interventions outlined below. However, our core mission as a local provider situated in one of the most deprived (and diverse) wards in the country, is to ensure that students from a wide range of backgrounds, who may not have considered studying at a higher level, feel confident to apply and study for undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. Therefore, we continue to participate in WP interventions such as Aimhigher (Uniconnect) and are supporting an Into University facility in East Birmingham in collaboration with our academic partners, the University of Warwick.

One of the areas that we have identified as requiring development is our approach to whole-provider evaluation, and hence we are committing to cross-University (staff, student and stakeholder) training in evaluating interventions, specifically using the Theory of Change model as recommended by [TASO - Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education](#). This training will be rolled out in the academic year 2024/25 in collaboration with the Student Guild and our evaluation activities will include all members of our community and inform our approach to the ongoing review and development of access and participation interventions across the life of this APP. As can be seen from the intervention strategies below, a number of interventions are owned by the Student Guild, in collaboration with members of the University's Executive Management Team, as in many cases the Guild are best placed to reach the focus groups identified under the Plan. In order to facilitate this, the University will buy out the time of two Student Officers at 0.4FTE per academic year per Officer, allowing the Guild to appoint a further member of staff to backfill the officers' duties. This spend has been accounted for under the research and evaluation funds for the APP on the accompanying Fees and Investment Template.

This plan involves a total investment of over £13 million over 4 years.

## Intervention Strategy 1 Access

**Objective:** UCB will increase the proportion of disabled students accessing Higher Education programmes to the expected sector level - 19.3% by 2030

**Target** To eliminate the difference between the sector proportion of students with disabilities and those enrolled at UCB with known disabilities (PTA\_1)

### Risk to Equality of Opportunity

Access - knowledge and skills, perception of HE, application success rates on course - insufficient academic support, insufficient personal support, ongoing impact of coronavirus, capacity issues

**Evidence base and rationale** - As noted above, UCB is committed to widening participation and this is reflected in our student demographics, whereby there are no under-represented target groups, other than those with disabilities, specifically hidden disabilities. This is particularly the case in courses such as Aviation (-7.8%), Education, Creative subjects and Computing but is the case across all provision other than Culinary Arts. Representation of disabled students is not below the national average according to census data, but is below the sector average, and it seems highly unlikely that this is the case when looking at our student profile. Therefore, we consider the issue at UCB to be likely to be related to sharing of information about hidden disabilities, whether that be due to barriers to sharing or a lack of diagnosis for the individual student. A recent literature review indicates that disabled applicants are often reluctant to share information about their disability in case it results in them being rejected (Claricoats (2024)). Lack of sharing or diagnosis will then create problems for all on course elements of the APP as students will not be accessing the support that we can offer students or signpost them to. Our data shows that those who do share this information and receive support, fare better through the student journey. Therefore, there are two key components to our approach to access activities: continuing with and enhancing our more general approach to WP through activities such as Into and Aimhigher; and implementing activities to encourage students to share or be diagnosed with disabilities at all points in the student journey, whether at application stage or whilst on programme. At UCB we have also committed to the University Mental Health Charter in collaboration with Student Minds, and the Disabled Student Commitment to which we are already signatories.

Activities	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross Intervention?	University wide?
Establishment of Into University in Lea Hall, East Birmingham in collaboration with University of Warwick	£500,000 over 5 years (2024-2029) direct funding Staff time: support for students to provide mentoring for Into students (training and transport)	See Annex B1.1 for <a href="#">Into impact report</a> . Proven increase in access to HE programmes for pupils from under-represented groups, including disabled	N	Yes - student mentors from across UCB

(UoW). Launch date Autumn term 2024.	Support for Into fundraising activities Support for cross-institutional activities with UoW (Transport and staff costs)	students, through awareness and aspiration raising Impact on student mentor employability rates		
Continued support for work with Aimhigher West Midlands (AHWM) outreach and UniConnect programme	Staff time: support for outreach activities Employer support where appropriate (e.g. UniFest) £35,000 annual subscription to AHWM	See Annex B 1.2 for AHWM annual report and link to website <a href="#">here</a>	N	NA
Student co-created programme of workshops delivered to feeder-colleges/schools in collaboration with Student Guild	Guild staff time Development of training and recognition Student remuneration	See Annex B 1.3 Student anxieties about transition to HE reduced Awareness and aspiration-raising amongst prospective students	N	Yes
Disability sharing (disclosure) and diagnosis campaign with Student Guild Improvements to sharing (disclosure) processes	Staff time Development and production of campaign assets Development of streamlined sharing (disclosure) process and systems, including a review of the language used when students are asked to share (disclose) Resource to support diagnosis	See Annex B 1.4 for details. Increase in percentage of students sharing hidden disabilities or seeking diagnosis, improving access to support and improved continuation, completion, attainment and progression Increase in consent to share notifications for Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)	2, 3,4, 5	Yes – aimed at all students.
University College Birmingham Access Fund	See Continuation			
Co-created training for academic and professional services staff in collaboration with the Student Guild	Guild staff time Student remuneration	Greater confidence and literacy amongst staff and better alignment of recruitment/induction material to student needs	N	Yes
Online orientation programme (pilot intervention) in	Guild staff time Development of resources	Student anxieties about transition to HE reduced Sense of belonging	2	Yes

collaboration with the Student Guild				
The Disabled Student Commitment <a href="#">Access here.</a>	Staff time: Development of training packages and resources related to Disability under relevant legislation Working group to oversee implementation Training for academic, CASE and support staff on identifying and referring students with possible hidden disabilities.	See Annex B 1.5 Increase in students being referred with disabilities Increase in student confidence in sharing known disabilities and seeking support Increase in applications for Disabled Students' Allowance Improved quality of experience for disabled students and staff Improved disabled student voice and increased opportunities for co-creation and co-production for activities related to the disabled student experience.	2,3,4,5	Yes, will include students across the University.
University Mental Health Charter Mapped against the domains of the UUK Mentally Healthy Universities Model	Mental Health Charter Programme annual fees 2024 £3,218 (x 3 years) Staff attending programme activities Mental Health First Aid training Working group to oversee implementation of action plans Some inputs unknown until programme commences but University is committed to achieving the Award	See Annex B 1.6 From Student Minds Research ( <a href="#">Link</a> ) – Develops whole provider approach to supporting good mental health and empowers staff and students to manage their own wellbeing. Student Minds also cite improved student recruitment, retention, satisfaction, progression, attainment and employability for students. Increased disclosure of hidden disabilities leading to access to appropriate support	2,3,4,5	Yes will apply to all staff and students. Also whole provider delivery approach.
Transition days for disabled students	Staff time - Admissions and Marketing & Student Guild Student Ambassador time	See Annex B 1 generally. Many of the sources referenced refer to the benefits of transition days in improving access for disabled students. Student anxieties about transition to HE reduced Sense of belonging Increased understanding of student needs at institution for staff and students	2,3,4	Yes

		Increases in continuation, completion and attainment		
Total investment over 4 year plan (year 1)	£1,440,076 (£361,317)			

## Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation Include type of evidence you intend to generate e.g. empirical (Type 2).	Summary of publication plan When evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take.
Into University	Increase in access to HE programmes for pupils from low Polar target schools Improved progression for student mentors	Into University undertakes Type 2 evaluation (Into University Impact report <a href="#">Link</a> ) Quantitative data on GO outcomes for mentors Qual and quant measure of impact of programme involvement on mentors (Type 2)	Into University publishes annual reports on their website UCB staff to co-publish at conferences and in journal papers 2027
Aimhigher West Midlands	Increased representation of students from target schools in HE	Aimhigher undertake empirical research on behalf of the collaboration (Type 2)	Aimhigher publishes inputs and outcomes on <a href="#">website</a>
Student co-created programme of workshops	Student anxieties about transition to HE reduced Awareness and aspiration-raising amongst prospective students	Quantitative data on characteristics of participants and programme impact (Type 2)  Research by <a href="#">TASO</a> suggests small causal impact on aspiration and participation (Type 3)	Guild-hosted conference Summer 2026 in collaboration with UCB Sixth Form Written outcomes report and evaluation to be shared open-access thereafter
Disability disclosure campaign	Increase in number of students with known disabilities Sharing (disclosure) process more user friendly (currently students are deterred by need to disclose multiple times) Increased access to support services for disabled students Increased access to DSA Increase in continuation, completion and attainment	Initial analysis to test assumption that non-disclosure is the cause of below sector representation of students with hidden disabilities (Type 3)  Quantitative data on impact on disclosure levels, including other characteristics, support received, and impact on continuation, completion and attainment (Type 2)	UCB Teaching and Learning Conference (inclusivity strand). External conferences and journal papers as appropriate. Annually: initial report Autumn 2026

		Qualitative from students who access services (Type 2)	
Co-created training for academic and professional services staff	Greater confidence and literacy amongst staff and better alignment of recruitment/induction material to student needs	Quantitative data from internal staff EDI survey to assess confidence in relevant aspects (Type 2) Guild-administered student pulse survey to test fulfillment of disabled student needs month-to-month (Type 2)	Initial outcomes report to be shared with internal stakeholders; reviewed annually thereafter
Online orientation programme (pilot)	Student anxieties about transition to HE reduced Sense of belonging	Guild-administered student survey to assess belonging via validated TASO question-set (Type 2) Qualitative feedback to be gathered at each gateway point during orientation (Type 2)	UCB Inclusivity/Teaching and Learning Conference Autumn 2026 Survey data to be shared across APP governance structure
Disabled Student Commitment	Improved institutional culture, including staff awareness of obligations under equality legislation and anticipatory duty Increase in students being diagnosed with disabilities Increase in student confidence in declaring known disabilities Increase in access to support Improved outcomes for students Increased involvement of disabled students and staff in co-creating learning experience	Quantitative data on impact on disclosure levels, including other characteristics, support received, and impact on continuation, completion and attainment (Type 2) Qualitative from students who access services Qualitative and quantitative data on institutional culture (Type 2)	Through Advance HE DSC website, conferences and potentially publications. First report Autumn 2026
University Mental Health Charter	Staff and students empowered to manage their own wellbeing Improved staff confidence to respond to mental health concerns Improved health behaviours Increased sharing (disclosure) Effective mental health services Improved student recruitment	Quantitative data on impact on disclosure levels, including other characteristics, support received, and impact on continuation, completion, attainment and progression. (Type 2) Qualitative from students who access services during the application stage and first semester of studies, before gathering data from broader University community. (Type 2)	Through UMHC website and networks. Conferences and publications as appropriate. First report Autumn 2026



	<p>Improved continuation and completion</p> <p>Improved student satisfaction</p> <p>Improved attainment</p> <p>Improved progression</p>	<p>Qualitative data on institutional culture and staff confidence (Type 2/ potentially Type 3) Pulse survey and NSS data on student satisfaction</p>	
Transition days	<p>Student anxieties about transition to HE reduced</p> <p>Students better able to plan what support they may need</p> <p>Disabled students more likely to enrol and disclose</p> <p>Sense of belonging improved amongst disabled students</p> <p>Increased understanding of student needs at institution</p>	<p>Quantitative data on students who attend transition days on-course success (Type 2)</p> <p>Qualitative data from disabled students attending transition days as to impact on disclosure, sense of belonging (Type 2)</p> <p>Causal evaluation (Type 3)</p>	<p>Shared internally through APP governance structure</p>

## Intervention Strategy 2 Continuation

**Objective:** UCB will increase continuation rates for “Males – White, Black & Black British Caribbean, Black & Black British African and Asian & Asian British Pakistani” to 90.3% by 2030/1.

**Target** To eliminate the difference in continuation rates between males of specified ethnicities and all other students (PTS\_1)

**Risk to Equality of Opportunity On course** - insufficient academic support, insufficient personal support, mental health, progression

**Evidence base and rationale** – Students with these characteristics at UCB tend to be studying programmes in Sport and Nutrition, Digital, Business and Health. Furthermore, these programmes tend to have students with the characteristics identified throughout the APP on-course indicators. Our continuation activities are also designed to impact across the student journey at UCB, and include measures to provide financial support, which can be a major challenge for our students, as well as targeted academic and engagement support, sense of belonging activities, and curriculum review to ensure inclusivity and authenticity. The majority of these interventions are University wide to ensure all our students have the ability to succeed, however, there will be enhanced interventions in the programmes with the highest concentration of at-risk students. Our Centre for Academic Skills and English (CASE) ASET diagnostic tool and subsequent interventions are offered to all students on all programmes, with bespoke support plans developed at the individual and programme level to improve students’ academic skills providing positive impacts across the APP on-course measures (See annex B 2.1). Staff from across the University, including academics, CASE, Library and the Graduate Advantage team in Hired work together to support skill development. The Kick Start enhanced provision is designed to target those with the lowest household incomes, which intersects with the at-risk groups identified under the continuation element of the APP. Evaluations of Kick Start have identified that the financial support provided has a strong impact of sense of belonging (see annex B2.3.2), is disproportionately accessed by BME students, and is linked to improvements in retention and attainment (see annex B 2.3.1). Furthermore, 69.9% of fees for Guild clubs and societies memberships is met through Kick Start (Guild data June 2024) providing students with additional health and wellbeing support and sense of belonging. Our Student Engagement Team works closely with academic departments to ensure all students are monitored for engagement, and interventions implemented to support students at risk of disengaging. This is designed to impact on all on-course metrics of the APP. UCB’s inclusive curriculum and authentic assessments are also designed to support on-course outcomes and increase students’ sense of belonging.

Activities	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross Intervention?	University wide?
CASE ASET Diagnostic tasks undertaken with students to inform:	Staff time Enhanced support for students in the target groups by identifying subject areas and courses where the focus cohort is most prevalent	See annex B 2.1 Students are better supported, directed to appropriate support- and have a greater understanding of their	3,4,5	Yes, applies to all students, but we will provide extra support in target areas.

<p>Content of Graduate Advantage sessions (see below)</p> <p>Identification of at-risk students for intervention by Student Engagement Team</p> <p>Provision of 1:1 academic support by Academic Development Tutors and Academic Librarians</p> <p>Signposting students to additional support</p> <p>Students understanding of their own needs and expectations in HE</p>	<p>Examples include the HECoS CAHs<sup>13</sup> of Computer Science (11-01-01) and Sports &amp; Exercise Science (03-02-01).</p>	<p>individual learning needs to succeed in their discipline, and greater confidence that they can achieve.</p> <p>Students encouraged to take ownership of skills development</p> <p>Enhanced opportunities to track learning gain for cohorts</p> <p>Improvement in continuation rates for students in the target group</p>		
<p>Graduate Advantage</p>	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Advantage involves assessing the accessibility, skills and employability needs of a programme cohort and designing regular interventions to address needs</p>	<p>See Annex B 2.2</p> <p>Increased academic success of participants – continuation, completion, attainment and progression</p>	<p>3,4,5</p>	<p>Yes, but increased focus will be made on identified courses</p>
<p>Kick Start</p> <p>Financial support</p>	<p>£300 for every student per annum, plus £800 for students with the lowest household incomes</p> <p>BME students and students from lower IMD quintiles are more likely to receive the higher levels of support (See Annex B 2.3.1)</p>	<p>Kickstart was evaluated by an independent organization (Type 2) in 2023 and the findings can be found at Annex B 2.3.2</p> <p>The findings suggest that the impacts are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to get started and engage with studies</li> <li>Increased wellbeing due to reduced stress and anxiety</li> <li>Increased sense of belonging</li> </ul>	<p>1,3,4</p>	<p>Yes applies to all students, but enhanced support for those with lowest household income.</p>

		Regression analysis has also shown that higher level funding has a positive impact on retention, rates of withdrawal and attainment (see annex B 2.3.1). Increased membership of Guild Clubs and Societies		
Hardship funding John Slaughter Fund	Funding Administration time	Students are provided with support to remain on course supporting on-course metrics n( see Student Information below)	3,4	Yes
University College Birmingham Access Fund	Funding Administration time	Students are provided with support to help with the contribution fee towards obtaining equipment from the DSA OR to help pay for diagnostic test for dyslexia/ADHD to support an application for DSA	1,3,4	Yes, but support is means tested and priority given to certain groups of students. The fund is finite.
Mental Health Counsellors	Staff costs	Students are provided with support for wellbeing to increase likelihood of remaining on course	3,4	Yes
Student Engagement Officers and Tutors - monitoring, contacting and signposting at risk students to relevant support	Staff costs 5 Student engagement officers are employed centrally to monitor student engagement using learner analytic tools. 4 student engagement officers are employed in the Business School to support programmes with at risk students.	See annex B 2.4 Reduction in withdrawals due to both personal circumstances and academic failure.	3,4	Yes – applied to all students extra monitoring and support made available from identified courses

Inclusive Curriculum: review curriculum in target programmes	Staff time Review and enhancement of inclusive curriculum and launch of new IC during 2024/ 25 academic year	See annex B 2.5 Curriculum better reflects diversity of study body Students are able to relate to learning materials Enhanced sense of belonging Improvements in mental health and wellbeing Improved rates of continuation, completion and attainment	3,4	Yes
Authentic assessments Review assessment diet in target courses	Staff time Pre-Launch Moderation form requires academic staff to address authentic assessments and inclusivity Consultation with sector experts, students and stakeholders and service users to ensure assessments are both inclusive and developing sector relevant skills Review of assessment diet across the programmes during development/ periodic review to ensure relevance and inclusivity	See annex B 2.5 Students are able to demonstrate individual strengths reducing likelihood of withdrawal due to academic failure Students are more confident and aware of their skill development increasing likelihood of completion, good degree and progression into graduate outcomes.	3,4,5	Yes, all programmes are expected to demonstrate variety and currency of assessments to the workplace during validations, revalidations and module changes.
Formation of Guild- administered student groups for each academic school	Guild staff time and digital infrastructure	Increased sense of belonging and peer-based support	4	Yes
Guild-administered PSHE mentoring programme targeted to focus group	Guild staff time Development of programme	See Annex B 2.6 Increased understanding of students' social capital and motivations for study Greater academic resilience	3	Yes

Guild-administered exit interviews to students who withdraw	Guild staff time Data-sharing agreement	See Annex B 2.7 Increased institutional understanding of reasons for student withdrawal Greater confidence amongst withdrawing students to provide authentic feedback	3	Yes
University Mental Health Charter	See Access			
Disabled Student Commitment	See Access			
Total investment over 4 year plan (year 1)	£9,817,514 (£2,343,565)			

### Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
CASE ASET & Graduate Advantage	Students are better supported, directed to appropriate support- and have a greater understanding of their individual learning needs, and greater confidence that they can achieve. Students encouraged to take ownership of skills development Enhanced opportunities to track learning gain for cohorts Improvement in continuation rates for students in the target group Impact on completion and attainment and progression.	Type 2 Quantitative data on continuation and attainment rates for target cohorts (Type 2)  Qualitative feedback from students (Type 2)  Analysis of target group submissions to identify evidence of impact (Type 3)  Impact on GO data (Type 2)	Initial report Spring 2027 Share findings with sector/ journal publication
Kick Start & Hardship/Access funds	Increased wellbeing due to reduced stress and anxiety Increased sense of belonging Improved retention, reduced withdrawals and improved levels of attainment for students	Qualitative feedback from students (Type 2) Data on access to funds, and on-course metrics (continuation, completion and attainment by characteristic (see annex B 2.3.1 & 2.3.2) (Type 2 potentially Type 3) Analysis using the <a href="#">Financial support evaluation toolkit from Office for Students</a>	Internal reports annually from 2025 Conference/ sector event presentations 2026

Inclusive curriculum/ authentic assessments	Students are able to demonstrate individual strengths reducing likelihood of withdrawal due to academic failure Curriculum better reflects diversity of study body Students are able to relate to learning materials Enhanced sense of belonging Improvements in mental health and wellbeing Improved rates of continuation, completion and attainment	Qualitative feedback from students (Type 2) Course metrics on continuation, completion, attainment (Type 2)	Sector event/ conference presentation 2026 onwards
Student engagement officers and tutors	Disengaged students are identified and proactively supported. Student cases are triaged between relevant professional services and academic teams. Improved retention, improved levels of attainment.	Learner analytic data including attendance, engagement with the VLE, usage of the online library, and presence on campus (Type 2) Student engagement records including contact made and associated outcome (Type 2) Attendance, withdrawal, and attainment data (Type 2)	Attainment report including attainment by engagement (determined by learner analytics), risk factors for reduced engagement, all dissected by study level and demographic.
Guild-administered student groups	Increased sense of belonging and peer-based support	Guild-managed online qualitative communities amongst participating students once per semester (Type 2/ 3) Engagement tracking of group participants (Type 2)	Early data to be shared ad hoc with Disability Support team Engagement data to be summarised in annual Guild report to governing board
Guild-administered PSHE mentoring programme	Increased understanding of students' social capital and motivations for study Greater academic resilience <a href="#">TASO</a> identified positive impacts on aspirations and attitudes and behaviours and outcomes	Qualitative feedback from participants (Type 2) Quantitative data on continuation and attainment rates for target cohorts (Type 2)	Guild-hosted conference Summer 2026 in collaboration with UCB Sixth Form Written outcomes report and evaluation to be shared open-access thereafter
Guild-administered exit interviews	Increased institutional understanding of reasons for student withdrawal	Uptake data Periodic audits of common theme areas (Type 2)	Data and reports to be shared semesterly with Student Services and Standards Subcommittee

to students who withdraw	Greater confidence amongst withdrawing students to provide authentic feedback  <a href="#">Dropouts-or-stopouts-or-comebackers-or-potential-completers-Non-continuation-of-students-in-the-UK.pdf (hepi.ac.uk)</a>		Departmental-specific data to be shared monthly with relevant teams
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### Intervention Strategy 3 Completion

**Objective:** UCB will look to increase completion rates for “Males from lower IMD1&2 quintiles” to 82.6% by 2030/1.

**Target** To eliminate the difference in completion rates between males from lower IMD quintiles and all other students (PS\_2)

**Risk to Equality of Opportunity On course - insufficient academic support, insufficient personal support, mental health, ongoing impact of coronavirus, cost pressures, progression**

**Evidence base and rationale** - Students from this background tend to study programmes in Sport and Nutrition, Business, Digital and Hospitality. These programmes feature throughout the APP on-course objectives. Accordingly, many of the activities that are designed to address continuation and attainment, also feature under completion, including Kick Start, CASE ASET, student engagement officers and tutors, Advantage and the Disability Commitment and Mental Health Charter. However, from our Exceptional Circumstance and Exit data we also acknowledge that the major barriers to completion are medical, mental health, and family issues.

Activities	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross Intervention?	University wide?
Kick Start	Financial support is available annually See continuation			
Student Engagement Officers and Tutors	Student engagement tutors continue to engage throughout studies See Continuation			
CASE ASET	See Continuation			
Authentic Assessments	See Continuation			
Graduate Advantage	See Continuation			
Guild-administered exit interviews to students who withdraw	See Continuation			
Level 6 academic preparedness campaign in collaboration with Guild	Guild staff time Student remuneration Development of programme	Greater academic preparedness for project/dissertation assessment formats Greater academic confidence	N	Yes
Social action hubs in high-density student postcodes in collaboration with Guild	Guild staff time	Greater access to belonging activities Increased aspirations to complete studies	N	Yes

		Greater access to advice and wellbeing support		
Joint University-Guild social prescribing programme	Student Guild staff time and digital infrastructure Wellbeing staff time Student Engagement Officers	Re-engagement of students at risk	N	Yes
Disabled Student Commitment	See Access			
University College Birmingham Access Fund	See Continuation			
University Mental health Charter	See Access			
Total investment over 4 year plan (year 1)	NA: accounted for in Access and Continuation (Student Guild time accounted for under research and evaluation in Fees and Investment Template)			

## Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Level 6 academic preparedness campaign	Greater academic preparedness for project/dissertation assessment formats Greater academic confidence	Quantitative data from annual transitions student survey (2024-25 cohort to provide benchmark) (Type 2) Academic confidence to be tracked monthly in Guild pulse surveys (Type 2)	Data to be summarised and shared with Academic Board and Subcommittees; disaggregated raw data to be anonymised and shared with relevant Departments
Social action hubs in high-density student postcodes	Greater access to belonging activities Increased aspirations to complete studies Greater access to advice and wellbeing support	Participation and characteristics quantitative data Signposting/support referrals to be recorded and monitored (Type 2)	Guild-hosted conference Summer 2026 in collaboration with UCB Sixth Form Open access outcomes evaluation report
Joint University-Guild social	Re-engagement of students at risk	Comparison of Guild engagement data and learner analytics for target cohort (Type 2/3)	Regular meetings between involved teams

prescribing programme	The Welsh government supports this approach to student wellbeing which is currently being evaluated by by <a href="#">Wallace et al.</a>		
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## Intervention Strategy 4 Attainment

**Objective:** UCB will look to increase attainment rates for “BAME Male & Black Female graduates” to 76.8% by 2030/1 PTS\_3

**Target** To eliminate the difference in attainment rates for BAME Male and Black Female graduates by 2030 PTS\_3

**Risk to Equality of Opportunity On course – access to academic support, access to personal support, mental health, progression**

**Evidence base and rationale** - Students from this background tend to study programmes in Business, Sport and Nutrition, Health and Hospitality. These courses feature throughout the APP as having the highest concentration of the focus groups. As noted in relation to Completion above, many of the same interventions are also designed to have an impact on Attainment. However, to supplement this we are also committing to expand the intervention trialed in the Business School aimed at supporting those with borderline classifications at Level 6 to support the ambition and ability to achieve the higher classification. This support will be particularly targeted at programmes with the highest concentration of the focus groups identified above but would be expanded to all other provision is the intervention has a positive evaluation. It is important to expand this intervention as UCB has experienced a decline in student achievement across all groups, which has accounted for the close in the attainment gap between Black and Minority Ethnic students and the rest of the student body.

Activities	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross Intervention?	University wide?
Kick Start	See Continuation	BME students are more likely to receive the higher Kick Start payment (annex B 2.3)		
CASE ASET	See Continuation			
Student Engagement Officers and Tutors	See Continuation	See Annex B.4.1		
Targeted support for classification borderline students (revised programme)	Staff time supporting students on programmes with high concentrations of focus group for students on borderline classifications in Level 5 & 6	Increase in good degree classifications	N	Initially target programmes
Peer tutoring (pilot intervention)- with Student Guild	Guild staff time and digital infrastructure Student remuneration	See Annex 4.3 Greater academic confidence in student's programme area Increased academic literacy	N	Initially targeted to identified programme areas
Formation of Guild-administered student groups	See Continuation			

Student-led inclusive education evaluation panels led by Guild	Guild staff time Development of review process and panel training Student remuneration	Greater student-centeredness within programmes and delivery Increased student belonging	N	Yes
University Mental Health Charter	See Access			
Total investment over 4 year plan (year 1)	£453,377 (£110,000)			

## Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation Include type of evidence you intend to generate e.g. empirical (Type 2).	Summary of publication plan When evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take.
Targeted support for borderline students	Increase in attainment of good degrees	Measurement of good degrees against historic data and non-target cohorts including demographic data (Type 2)	UCB Inclusivity/ Teaching and Learning Conference Autumn 2027 and annually Sector presentation 2026/7 onwards
Peer tutoring (pilot)	Increase in good degree classifications <a href="#">Collings et al 2014</a> and <a href="#">Yomtov et al 2017</a> have shown increased integration of students being mentored (Type 2), reducing chances of withdrawal	Quantitative data from participants at start and finish of tutoring programme (Type 2)	Relevant data to be anonymised and shared with SMT Analysis after first and second semesters to determine ongoing viability; reporting to be shared with Academic Board
Student-led inclusive education evaluation panels	Greater student-centeredness within programmes and delivery Increased student belonging	Qualitative feedback from students in relevant programme areas (Type 2) Belonging to be tested via monthly Guild pulse survey (Type 2)	Annual report to Academic Board summarising common themes Regular liaison with Deputy Deans in relevant Schools Guild Pulse data to be shared quarterly (initially with Student Voice Working Group)

## Intervention Strategy 5 Progression

**Objective 5:** UCB will look to increase progression outcomes of those eligible for free school meals to 65% by 2030.

**Target** To eliminate the progression outcomes between students eligible for free school meals and non-eligible students PTP\_1

**Risk to Equality of Opportunity** On course – access to academic support, access to personal support, mental health, ongoing impact of Coronavirus, cost pressures

Progression from HE

**Evidence base and rationale** Whilst those eligible for FSM in the last six years only feature in our progression data, we know that there are risks for these students whilst they are on course also. Indeed, students in this focus group tend to studying in the same programme areas identified in the previous 4 objectives: Business, Sport and Nutrition, Health and Hospitality. The only exception is Creative courses where outcomes are not generally considered graduate level despite being highly skilled, which previously resulted in the closure one of the University’s most popular programmes. Addressing on course issues, such as access to academic and personal support whilst at UCB, can contribute to progression opportunities following graduation. For example, more support will be put into place in programmes with high numbers of students from FSM backgrounds (which intersect with the other APP target areas), both in terms of academic and pastoral support, as well as from our careers service, Hired. Postgraduate study opportunities, such as Masters programmes at UCB, Warwick and elsewhere, and opportunities available under the LLE will also be promoted more heavily through careers events, our Hired Teams and by academics in tutorials.

Our Hired Team is particularly critical to progression outcomes for our students. Our Hired Plus initiative includes a dedicated VLE site with resources and support including advertising of graduate level roles. Workshops are also offered around CVs & applications, interview support including mock assessment centres, networking skills and 'speed networking' with employers. Students also have access to the careers team for dedicated careers support even if there is no placement on the course and available job roles are advertised on HiredConnect. Students have access to workshops from the careers team at all levels of study and across all courses. Hired Connect has a wealth of information including CV builder, mock interviews, career mapping tools and 'pathways' of learning for students to access.

From September 2024 we are also piloting the ‘Warwick Award’ for students studying on Warwick accredited programmes with a view to developing a UCB Award for delivery during the course of the APP. The Warwick Award has been delivered at the University of Warwick since 2022 and is designed to develop employability skills amongst students who can gain credits towards a certificate upon graduation.

Activities	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross Intervention?	University wide?
Warwick Award Employability support based around 12 core	Staff time from Warwick and UCB IT integration with Warwick 2024/5 pilot of Warwick Award at UCB	Warwick data shows that about one third of students receive an Award.	4	Initially focused on Culinary Arts, Hospitality and Aviation, but will be

<p>skills. Link to award can be found at Annex ,B 5.1</p>	<p>Development of UCB Award for those not on Warwick Awards with increased focus on programmes concentration of students eligible for FSM</p>	<p>Students have enhanced skills for gaining graduate level employment relevant to skills gaps in the region Increased confidence for graduates seeking employment Opportunity for students to take ownership of skills development Increased learning gain</p>		<p>expanded to more programmes. All programmes to access UCB Award.</p>
<p>Hired Interventions Link to Hired webpage is <a href="#">here</a> <a href="#">HiredPlus initiative</a></p>	<p>Work placement and internship support – extra resource on sourcing opportunities for identified programmes</p> <p>Careers Fairs - develop stronger links with a greater number of employers relevant to identified programmes</p> <p>Unitemps– student employment agency</p> <p>Implementation of Lightcast (<a href="#">link here</a>) Labour Analytics software. All programmes strong regional employment for programmes and data from job adverts used to</p>	<p>See Annex B 5.1 Students will have relevant work experience increasing confidence, strengthening CV and leading to potential employment opportunities with the provider Students network with employers from their sector and gain advice and guidance to strengthen applications and improve success rate in gaining employment Students gain well paid employment to complement their studies, providing experience and skills for CV and improving employment outcomes, but also helping with continuation and completion by offsetting financial pressures Students have the skills that labour market intelligence is informing us employers are seeking.</p>	<p>2,3,</p>	<p>Yes. Hired Service is open to all students and graduates and covers all areas of provision</p>

	inform skills development on programme	Enhanced success in job applications and graduate outcomes.		
Guild-administered reverse mentoring programme between focus group and local employers	Guild staff time Structured training and monitoring programme	See Annex 5.2 Development of skills, confidence, professional network, and relevant experience	N	Initially only open to target group
Targeted co-developed employability confidence programme in collaboration with the Guild	Guild staff time Student remuneration	Decreased transition anxiety Greater confidence and literacy navigating job market Increased access to employability support	N	Target group only
'Guild Engagement Record' to evidence engagement and associated skills development with the Student Guild	Guild Digital Infrastructure	Greater confidence to identify and articulate transferable skills	N	Yes
Targeted offboarding programme during final 6 months of courses with nominated Guild point of contact (pilot intervention)	Guild staff time Development of resources	Decreased transition anxiety Greater confidence and literacy navigating job market Increased access to employability support	N	Initially only open to target group
Incentives to progress into PG study at UoW or UCB	Awareness raising of PG opportunities and financial support with a minimum 20% discount for alumni	Increase in students progressing to PG study Increase is progression	N	Yes, all current students are entitled to a discount on PGT programmes at UCB.
Total investment over 4 year plan (year 1)	£2,834,567 (£672,788)			

## Evaluation



Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation Include type of evidence you intend to generate e.g. empirical (Type 2).	Summary of publication plan When evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take.
Warwick Award	Students can demonstrate skills relevant to regional skills gaps Increased confidence for graduates seeking employment Opportunity for students to take ownership of skills development	Quantitative - tracking of student uptake; tracking of specific skills completion (Type 2) Qualitative – student views on benefit of Award Follow-up study with employers to measure differences in performance of Warwick Award students (Type 2) Graduate Outcomes data (Type 2)	Regular progress meetings with Warwick Feedback to EMT, SMT, AMT at UCB Pilot report Spring 2026, first outcomes report 2027/28
Hired interventions	Increase in students accessing work experience and internship opportunities leading to improved academic and employment prospects where appropriately supported ( <a href="#">Millward and Ferreira, 2023</a> ) (Type 1)	Number of students accessing work experience and internship opportunities Qualitative and survey data from students accessing work experience and internships Outcomes for students accessing work experience Numbers of students accessing careers fairs Numbers of students gaining employment with No. of students accessing paid work through Unitemps Graduate outcomes for students employed through Unitemps Impact of activities on student confidence Review of impact of Lightcast on programme development and outcomes (All Type 2)	Annual reporting internally Potential sharing at sector events
Guild-administered reverse mentoring programme	Improvement in student skills, confidence, professional network, and relevant experience <a href="#">Waddington et al's small scale study</a> (Type 2) suggests increases on student empowerment and decreased imposterism <a href="#">Type 1 research</a> has also identified benefits	Analysis of reflective diary entries from participants Quantitative data from employers Number of participants Tracking of outcomes and progression amongst participants (potentially Type 3)	UCB Inclusivity/Teaching and Learning Conference Autumn 2026 Data to be shared with UCB employability support teams  UCB Inclusivity/Teaching and Learning Conference Autumn 2026 Data to be shared with UCB employability support teams

Employability confidence programme	Decreased transition anxiety Greater confidence and literacy navigating job market Increased access to employability support	Quantitative data from annual transitions student survey (Type 2) Number of students accessing employability support (Type 2)	Data to be summarised and shared with Academic Board and Subcommittees; disaggregated raw data to be anonymised and shared with relevant Departments
'Guild Engagement Record'	Greater confidence to identify and articulate transferable skills	Usage tracking (Type 2) Qualitative feedback from users (Type 2)	To feature in Guild annual engagement reporting to governing body
Targeted offboarding programme during final 6 months of programme	Decreased transition anxiety Greater confidence and literacy navigating job market Increased access to employability support	Quantitative data from annual transitions student survey (Type 2) Qualitative feedback to be gathered at each gateway point during offboarding (Type 2) Cross-reference with student support booking data (Type 2)	Survey data to be shared across APP governance structure
Progress to PGT and PGR opportunities	Increase in students accessing PGT programmes Improvement in Graduate Outcomes	Numbers of students accessing PGT programmes GO data (Type 2)	GO publicly available



## Whole provider approach

UCB's University and Teaching and Learning strategies are currently under review as we have reached the end of the current cycle. However, the statements held within each in relation to inclusivity and student success remain current as we move into the next iterations. We are also developing a Digital Strategy to support other University strategies, which also contains a strong focus on inclusivity.

The mission of UCB under the current University Strategy is to 'promote and provide the opportunity for participation in the learning process by those with the ambition and commitment to succeed and to maintain a learning community that meets the diverse needs of our students, the economy and society at large'. It is an expectation that all staff and stakeholders commit to this vision and that it permeates our approach to everything we do. This is reflected in UCB's commitment to both the University Mental Health Charter (UMHC) and the Disabled Students' Commitment (DSC). We are joining the 2024 cohort for the UMHC and are auditing our entire institution in line with the DSC. Both schemes are supported and promoted by the governing body, EMT, SMT and the Student Guild.

Our commitment to widening access and participation as an institution is reflected in the membership of not only the Access, Participation and Equality of Opportunity (APEO) Group, which includes, HR, Executive Management, Professional Services, Academics and the Student Guild, but also the vast array of other committees and groups which have inclusivity under their terms of reference. The APEO reports to Academic Board, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, and the Board of Governors.

UCB has also recently appointed a Head of EDI sitting within the HR Department, with responsibility for ensuring we take an inclusive approach to education as well. The appointee has significant experience in both staff and student EDI. They will take a major role in supporting the APP going forwards and will have a management dotted line to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching Learning and Digital) as well as the Director of HE Quality.

Pillar 1 of our Teaching and Learning Strategy is to provide 'accessible and inclusive teaching and learning across a wide range of vocationally led programmes'. We committed to achieve this through creating a positive learning environment; development of a diverse and inclusive curriculum; providing aspirational personalised learning journeys; co-creating sector relevant assessments; providing equitable access to resources; and promotion of health and well-being for all. These commitments will continue to be features of our strategy moving forward, and our progress to date has very much been based on a cross-University approach.

For example, the extensive development of our curriculum has been informed by sprint events, which include academic staff, students, stakeholders such as employers, placement providers and service users, and professional service staff working together to develop programmes that are inclusive. As an example of this we have moved to an extensive menu of authentic assessments within programmes that provide students with different learning styles and strengths to achieve their best, whilst also developing and assessing the skills and behaviours that employers tell us they value. Programmes also have to be mapped against our Inclusive Curriculum requirements, which we have developed in consultation with our University of Warwick partners.

As another example, the development of aspirational, personalised learning journeys which we are continuing to enhance to enable a greater diversity of learners to access higher education, involves academics working closely with support services such as our digital learning team (DICE) to develop asynchronous materials, IT services to ensure we have an appropriate infrastructure, and student support services to ensure support is available in new and flexible ways.

In promoting health and wellbeing for all we are now using academics and students to work alongside professional service staff and others to improve student wellbeing. For example, we are establishing a Health Hub that will be supported by staff and students from allied health professions, sports and psychology, and work alongside our central student support functions.

Our Quality Enhancement Processes also ensure that our programme teams are focused on addressing APP outcomes. Our annual quality process involves programme leaders scrutinising their student performance data with their teams, and producing action plans against any issues, including performance gaps, which are regularly reviewed for progress. Heads of Department then produce a departmental level action plan based on the key issues from the programmes in their area, and Executive Deans form a School action plan for higher level actions. These are scrutinised and monitored through the APEO which reports to Academic Board.

UCBs Digital Strategy is being developed to provide support to our teaching and learning ambitions, including inclusivity and personalised learning. Amongst other things, one of the key pillars of the strategy is inclusivity, with us committing to: ensuring University systems are designed to optimise access and reduce barriers; ensuring all students have the opportunity to engage in educational activities through technology; ensuring our digital systems, architecture and platforms are delivered in collaboration with stakeholders, focusing on the curriculum; and ensuring that students, staff and visitors have excellent access to digital services throughout the University campuses. Furthermore, we are committing to using innovative technological teaching approaches to support a more flexible, blended and personalised approach that will be fit for our current curriculum delivery, but also new models such as the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) and vocational learning.

When considering a whole-provider approach, it is also worth noting that UCB not only provides Level 4-7 HE provision, but also has a long-established FE College provision, a new Sixth Form starting in September 2024 and Apprenticeship provision across FE and HE levels. Apprenticeships are proven to aid social mobility through providing a debt free way to access education and upskills adults through partnerships with employers. Our EMT, SMT, boards and committees have representatives from across these different areas providing significant opportunities to more fully understand the learning journeys, backgrounds and challenges our students face before accessing HE. This assists us in planning for transition from compulsory education to HE and put in place programmes of activities to support our students. We take great pride in the achievements of our students that progress from Level 2 study to completion of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in one institution.

A cross-University representation of staff has been involved with the creation of the APP and, as outlined below, our students have also been involved in informing our direction. Following approval of the plan we will be socialising its contents with all staff and stakeholders, and it will form part of our intensive induction for new academic staff. This will be led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Teaching,

Learning and Digital, supported by the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Director of HE Quality.

A whole provider approach will also be taken to implementation and evaluation of the plan. Cross-University teams will be established to steer implementation and evaluation of the interventions outlined above under the leadership of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Digital). These working groups will be accountable to the APEO, which in turn reports to Academic Board and the Governors and will include academics, professional services, members of Student Guild (and in turn students) and other stakeholders as appropriate. As outlined below, training will be provided to staff, stakeholders and the Guild on Theory of Change methodologies.

## Student consultation

We are committed to student involvement in the development and oversight of access and participation at UCB. The Student Guild has representation on UCB's Access, Participation and Equality of Opportunity (APEO) Committee which has oversight of our current Access and Participation Plan. Both the Equalities and Education Officers are members of the Committee, which reports into Academic Board. The Guild Director and Officers contribute to regular discussions about the impact of activities ongoing as part of UCBs current APP. Guild members sit on a wide variety of other University groups and committees, where Equality of Opportunity is discussed. For example, the Education Officer is a member of all validation and approval panels, with a key focus on EDI.

During the development of the APP the Guild worked with the PVC (Teaching Learning and Digital) to gather feedback from the at-risk groups identified through the EORR analysis. They Guild undertook targeted activities to gather the student voice, in relation to the APP and equality more broadly, including: discussions with 3 Liberation Representatives and 4 members of the Afro-Caribbean Society in the context of the Access and Participation Plan; the Guild's Pulse Survey (quantitative questions completed by 467 Asian students, 174 Black students, 30 Mixed Ethnicity students between Feb - April); short structured conversations about new students' expectations at welcome events in September and February; relevant Guild Assemblies amongst Course Representatives and Liberation Representatives; and gathering student feedback on UCB priorities during the Guild elections ballot. Information from these events have fed into the APP.

The Director of the Student Guild, Education Officer and Equalities Officer were provided with copies of the draft APP, prior to submission. They were asked to particularly focus on the objectives and intervention strategies presented to ensure they met with the barriers and challenges that had been fed back through their research. A follow-up meeting was held to gather feedback, make clarifications and discuss any amendments required. As a result of these discussions a number of interventions were identified that the Student Guild could lead on and it was agreed that the Guild would be financially supported to release two officers to support the plan.

To further embed students in evaluation activity, the Student Guild have agreed to continue to be involved in the APP implementation plan, which will include the implementation of the evaluation. Staff will work with the Guild during Summer 2024, and staff and students will receive training and upskilling in Theory of Change evaluation approaches, including how to measure non-tangible outcomes during 2024/25 academic year. The Guild will continue to participate in oversight groups for the new plan and will support with socialisation of the new APP with the whole University community.

During the next academic year, we will continue to work in partnership with the Guild to engage with the student community and receive real-time continual feedback on how interventions are being received, allowing for adjustments or changes to be made in a timely fashion, rather than waiting for formal evaluations to be completed.

## Evaluation of the plan

It is widely acknowledged that our sector's approach to understanding what works in terms of access and participation is still developing. At UCB we are committed to ensuring that where we invest valuable resource, whether financial or in staff time, we are able to measure the impact we have. For our students we predict that there will be readily quantitatively measurable outcomes that we can identify through internal and to some extent external data sources (such as NSS, GO etc), but many less tangible outcomes such as sense of belonging and student's confidence, that were identified through our evaluation of Kick Start for example. Therefore, we regard the gathering of qualitative data directly from our community in collaboration with our stakeholders including Student Guild, is of critical importance to help us to understand our data, particularly where it might be difficult to unpick causality and correlation.

At UCB we have dedicated resource within our Strategic Planning and Reporting team who work closely with the PVC Teaching, Learning and Digital (PVC TLD), and academic and professional service teams to measure the impact of interventions using our data visualisation software (Power BI) which draws on data from cross-University functions. We also gather bespoke quantitative data for specific interventions such as CASE ASET to allow regular reporting and evaluation. It is acknowledged that national data is always subject to a time lag, so it important to have robust internal measures to assist with understanding our current student cohorts and for forecasting.

The interventions referred to above have been developed using Theory of Change principles, starting with the articulation of the desired, long-term change an intervention needs to achieve, identification of the desired outcomes, the justifications for outcomes, the added value provided, the short-term outputs expected, and the inputs required. In our commitment to a whole-provider approach to the APP, we will be rolling out training during 2024/25 to our whole University community, to ensure that staff, Guild members and students are well placed to contribute to evaluation activities. Where appropriate we will employ our students to contribute to these evaluation activities.

UCB is building a comprehensive evaluation plan for the APP, with individual interventions evaluated in terms of both process and outcomes. Each intervention will have an evaluation 'owner', coordinated by the PVC TLD and Director of HE Quality, and overseen by the APEO, Academic Board and Governing body. We will also continue to work with our partners at University of Warwick and share progress, learning and outcomes through our inclusivity community of practice.

As our findings emerge, we will share them through our internal conferences at UCB, at relevant sector events (such as QAA, JISC, Advance HE etc) and via external conferences and publications online and in journals. In order to enhance our institutional understanding and ability to learn from others we will also join the Forum for Access and Continuing Education (FACE) network in 2024/25.

## Provision of information to students

We are committed to providing prospective students with clear, accessible and timely information relating to fees and finance, including hardship funding and scholarship opportunities, such as UCB's Kickstart programme.

Students must meet all of the following criteria to be eligible for funding under the Kickstart programme:

- Be considered a new student studying a full-time, undergraduate course which is not an online only course
- Have a student status of Home or Channel Isles (i.e. not be considered an International student); and
- Be paying fees at the maximum (£9,250) rate.

All eligible students will then receive £300 per annum funding to all students at the start of each of their years of study. Students whose household income is less than £25,000 per annum will receive an additional £500 per annum paid at the start of their second semester in each year of study. Kickstart is not available during a placement year since no tuition fees are charged during placement, but if only half the year is spent on placement, then the student is entitled to 50% of the funding they would be entitled to for a standard year of study.

Kickstart has been offered for several years at UCB and is advertised to students through a variety of fora, including the website ([link here](#)), open days and induction. Kickstart funding can be used to pay for food and drink on campus, or to buy learning materials, laptops, uniforms, Guild society memberships and other resources to support their studies.

Other financial support provided by the University is only made available to successful applicants in the form of one-off payments rather than regular payments in each year following individual assessment of eligibility. Details are set out below:

Fund and purpose	Eligibility	Level of Support
<p><b>University College Birmingham Hardship Fund</b> Provides successful applicants with financial support in cases of unexpected exceptional changes in circumstances.</p> <p>Priority is given to specific groups of students provided they meet the eligibility criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students with dependent children,</li></ul>	<p>Applicants must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• be an undergraduate or postgraduate student fully enrolled and studying on a full time course at UCB</li><li>• be classed as a 'home' student for fee and funding purposes.</li><li>• have applied for all public funds for which they are eligible prior to applying to the fund</li></ul>	<p>A maximum level of support in any academic year of £800</p>



<p>especially single parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mature students with existing financial commitments</li> <li>• Disabled students with disabilities</li> <li>• Students who previously were in care or care leavers</li> <li>• Students who were homeless or living in a 'foyer' for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have made arrangements to cover all fees and made adequate provision to cover living costs but are now in demonstrable need of financial support as a result of <b>unexpected, exceptional changes in circumstances</b></li> <li>• if in their final year, have a minimum of four weeks left on the course</li> </ul>	
<p><b>University College Birmingham Access Fund</b> Provides successful applicants with funding to cover the £200 contribution required to obtain equipment from the DSA OR to help to pay for a diagnostic test for dyslexia/ADHD to support their application for DSA</p> <p>Priority is given to eligible students in the following groups:</p> <p>Students with children (especially lone parents) • Disabled students (especially where Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) is unable to meet particular, individual costs) • Care leavers and students from Foyers or those who are homeless • Students that are estranged from their family</p>	<p>Applicants must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be an undergraduate or postgraduate student fully enrolled and studying on a full time course at UCB</li> <li>• be classed as a 'home' student for fee and funding purposes.</li> <li>• have a household income below £30,000 as assessed by Student Finance England (if applying for support with diagnostic testing)</li> <li>• have applied for all public funds for which they are eligible prior to applying to the fund</li> <li>• if in their final year, have a minimum of one semester left on their course</li> <li>• if applying for support with a diagnostic test to have had an assessment and confirmation from</li> </ul>	<p>Support towards £200 equipment fee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if household income amount is assessed as less than £30,000 per annum, the full £200 fee</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if household income is above £30,000 per annum, £100 (50% of the fee)</li> </ul> <p>Contribution towards the cost of a diagnostic test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if household income is £25,000 or below – 100% of the cost of a diagnostic assessment up to £500</li> <li>• if household income is £25,000 - £27,500 – 50% of the cost of a diagnostic assessment up to £500</li> <li>• if household income is £27,500 - £30,000 – 25% of the cost of a diagnostic assessment up to £500</li> </ul>

<p>The amount of funding available is finite and not all applicants who meet the eligibility criteria will necessarily receive funding.</p>	<p>University College Birmingham's Disability and Neurodiversity Support team (DNS) that an external assessment is required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if applying for the £200.00 contribution fee, to have been assessed as eligible for the equipment support under DSA</li> </ul>	
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We also clearly signpost students to other forms of support provided by third parties which they may be eligible to receive based on their circumstances. Links to our website information on financial support can be found [here](#).

In Spring 2024 a large group of management staff received training from a legal firm on CMA compliance guidance, ensuring that staff from across the organisation are clear on our responsibilities to be transparent with students about a variety of matters including course costs. Accordingly, we ensure that information about total costs associated with study are very clear for students (for example, costs in addition to tuition, any contribution to trips, professional uniforms or equipment). However, many of these associated costs can be met through the use of Kickstart funds.

Information on the costs of study and other necessary financial information for students during their time of study are included in a plethora of student facing communications including: UCB's website and prospectus; direct communications with applicants, entrants and enquirers; information provided at Open Days and Applicant Days and other direct, tailored communications to local education partners or agencies. Academic staff as well as student support staff are also expected to refer students to relevant financial support advice and resources where appropriate. Links to our website information on student fees can be found [here](#).

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

### Identification of Focus Groups

The initial section of Annex A outlines the broad methodology used to identify the focus groups outlined in the “Risks to equality of opportunity” section of this paper for the on-course and progression pillars. It then outlines the attainment analysis in more detail as illustration. Following this, it discusses the findings at each stage.

Finally, Access, which was assessed differently, is then subsequently outlined.

### On-Course & Progression

Broadly, the analysis of the on-course and progression pillars followed a similar methodology:

- 1) A stepwise binary logistic regression to assess the impact of several multiple characteristics (e.g. Gender, IMD, Free School Meals) from recent years against the success metric (e.g. whether the student attained a good degree outcome or not).
- 2) Using the output of the modelling to estimate the probability for each combination of characteristics (even if this combination has not yet presented itself to UCB) of failing to continue, complete, attain or progress.
- 3) Assessing which step of the stepwise modelling to stop at (see example below).
- 4) Identifying the initial 20% of UCB’s cohort in terms of risk probability to act as the “focus group” (following the pareto principle).

Forward stepwise logistic regression is a method to find the best subset of variables for predicting the binary outcome. It starts with no variables, then iteratively adds the one that improves the model the most, based on a statistical test. This continues until no more variables significantly improve the model's fit. A model is produced for each step and, from this, the resulting coefficients it produces for each variable can be used to predict the good degree probability of each individual combination.

For each pillar, the modelling process produced between 2 and 6 steps. Whilst each subsequent step introduced an enhanced level of accuracy to the model, the increase in granularity also introduced exponentially increasing complexities to the holistic messaging the institution wanted to introduce. Notable discussions were held to discuss this trade-off.

For example, step 3 resulted in 30 characteristic combinations for attainment, and it was felt that the messaging around embedding a focus group of “Black males from all IMDs, Asian males from IMDs 1-4, and black females from just IMD” would be unmanageable for staff to recall. Step 2, the step UCB progressed with, was “BAME Males & Black Females”. This not only resulted in simpler holistic messaging but was also one where the demographics observed significant overlap with the step 3 group anyway.

Once the step choice was made, characteristic combinations were included into the focus group, starting with those predicted to be most at risk, until c.20% of the enrolled cohort was accounted for.

### Attainment Example

For attainment, the binary outcome was whether they attained a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1 (a good degree) and the following characteristics were used in the modelling. Note, the same characteristics were used for all on-course and progression models:

- TUNDRA Quintile
- IMD Quintile
- Mature
- Known Disability (Yes or No)
- Known Disability Detailed (e.g. Cognitive or learning difficulties, Mental Health Condition)
- Ethnicity Broad (BAME Yes or No)
- Ethnicity Medium (Asian, Black, Mixed, White, Other)
- Ethnicity Detailed (e.g. Asian & Asian British Bangladeshi, Asian & Asian British Indian)
- Gender
- Care Leaver
- Receiver of Free School Meals
- Parents Attended University

For attainment, five regression steps were produced:

- Step 1 - Ethnicity Medium (4)
- Step 2 – Gender (8)
- Step 3 – IMD (40)
- Step 4 - Care Leaver (80)
- Step 5 - Ethnicity Detailed (640)

At step 1, for example, it is possible to predict that a black student is less likely to get a good degree outcome (52%) versus a white student (75%). Conversely, the below table outlines the combination that would be most and least at risk when assessing this using the step 5 model. However, at this level of granularity, it is rare UCB sees enrolments matching this exact demographic makeup.

Characteristic	Least at risk	Most at risk
IMD	5	1
Ethnicity	Mixed – White & Asian	Asian Other
Gender	Female	Male
Care Experience	No	Yes
Good Degree Probability	6%	91%
Typical Enrolments per Year	0.6	0.3

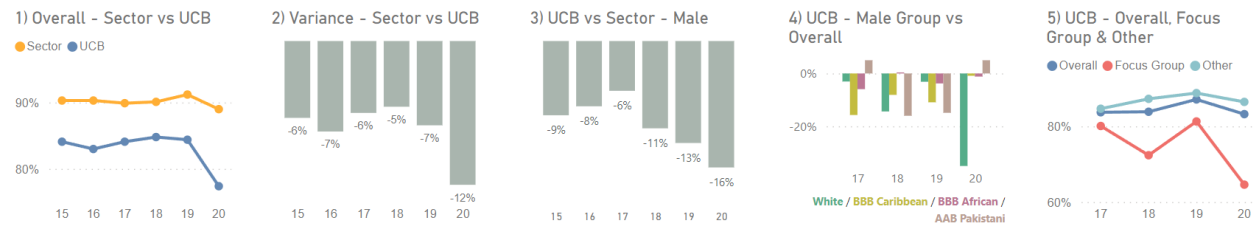
The table below outlines the results of the above for attainment, with rows highlighted blue outlining the combinations that made up the 20%. As a single group, they would currently be predicted to be 27%

less likely to attain a good degree outcome in comparison to their peers. In focusing on this group specifically, it is believed the gap should close over time.

Ethnicity Medium	Gender	Probability	UCB's Attainment Average	Variance from Average	Exact Average	Typical Proportion of Intake	Running Total	Probability of Group
Black	Male	71%	35%	36%	68.1%	4%	4%	55%
Asian	Male	60%		25%	59.8%	7%	11%	
Mixed	Male	55%		19%	56.0%	1%	12%	
Black	Female	48%		13%	50%	13%	25%	
White	Male	41%		6%	39%	11%	36%	28%
Asian	Female	36%		1%	36%	19%	54%	
Mixed	Female	31%		-4%	31%	5%	59%	
White	Female	21%		-14%	22%	41%	100%	

Using this methodology, the section below details the focus groups that were chosen for each pillar.

### Continuation



(See chart 1 above) UCB's continuation rate overall is notably lower than the sectors'. In 2020, this was 77.4% vs the sector's 89% - a gap of 11.6%. Whilst this gap was exasperated by the effects of COVID-19 (2020/1 being the first full year of the pandemic), prior years still observed gaps of 5-7% (see chart 2 above).

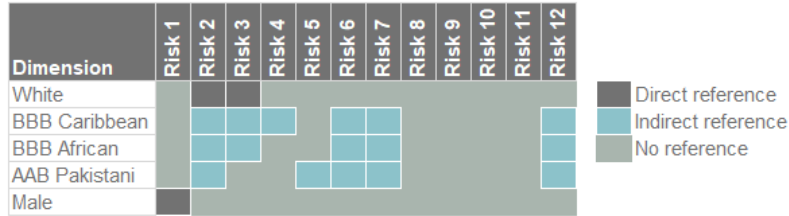
The results of the stepwise logistic regressive modelling outlined the following groups to be most at risk:

- **Males – White, Black & Black British Caribbean, Black & Black British African, and Asian & Asian British Pakistani**

(See chart 3 above) Non-continuation disproportionately affects male students. When compared against the sector equivalent, which improved 0.1% each year prior to COVID, non-continuation for UCB male students declined 0.8%.

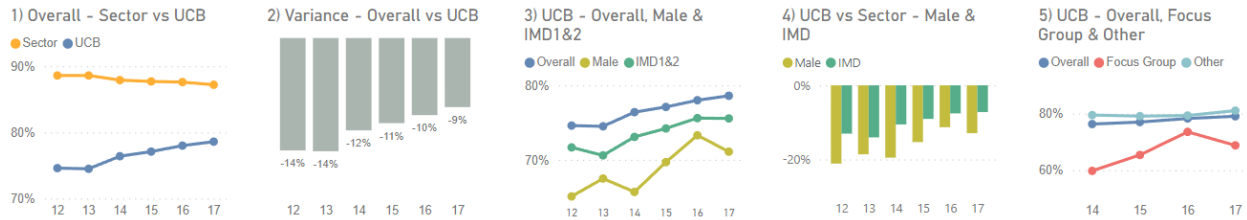
(See chart 4) Comparing individual focus groups against UCB overall highlights random results across year, though the majority remain adverse to the overall. (See chart 5) However, when combined, this group has been declining by c.3.8% each year, whilst the non-focus group has been increasing by 0.7%. Here, whilst the focus group saw a significant decrease in 2020 of 17%, the non-focus group was relatively unaffected (-2%).

The focus group characteristics can be found in many risks of the EORR, with "Knowledge and Skills" (Risk 1) and "Information and Guidance" (Risk 2) standing out as the key risks.



It is therefore imperative that UCB works to understand and improve progression outcomes for this disadvantaged group.

### Completion



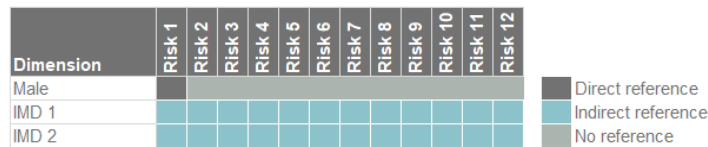
(See chart 1 above) UCB’s completion rate overall has observed notable improvements in recent years. Whilst the sector’s overall rate has been declining by c.0.4% each year between 2012-2017, UCB’s has been rising c.0.9% over the same period. (See chart 2 above) As a result, whilst UCB’s completion gap was 14% behind the sector in 2012, this has closed to 9% in just 6 years.

The results of the stepwise logistic regressive modelling outlined the following groups to be most at risk:

- Males from lower IMD quintiles (1 & 2)

Chart 3 above assess these characteristics (Male & IMD) separately. Whilst both are currently lower than UCB’s overall completion rate, both already outpace UCB’s overall growth rate (0.9% vs 1.5% & 1.0%, respectively). In addition, (see chart 4 above) when comparing these characteristic groups against the sectors’ equivalents, notable progress is already being made in closing completion gaps (c.1.9% & c.1.4% per year, respectively).

The focus group characteristics can be found in many risks of the EORR, with “Knowledge and Skills” (Risk 1) standing out as the key risk.

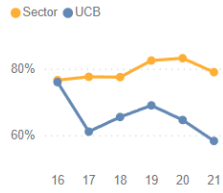


(See chart 5 above) When assessing the focus group outlined above against other UCB students, the former has been improving c3.4% each academic year, whilst the non-focus group has remained broadly flat. UCB’s rate overall has been steadily increasing, and almost all this improvement can already be attributed to this underrepresented group.

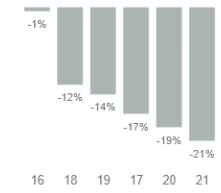
Regardless of the great work that is already being done, it remains essential to understand what further work can be done to achieve parity between the above focus group and the rest of UCB’s cohort.

## Attainment

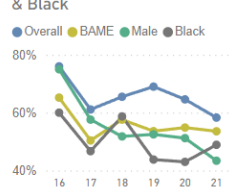
1) Overall - Sector vs UCB



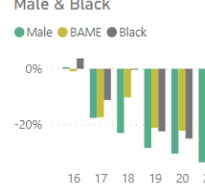
2) Variance - Sector vs UCB



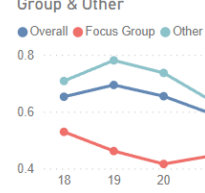
3) UCB - Overall, BAME, Male & Black



4) UCB vs Sector - BAME, Male & Black



5) UCB - Overall, Focus Group & Other



(See chart 1 above) UCB’s attainment rate overall has been declining over time. Whilst the sector’s overall rate has been increasing by c.1% each year between 2016-2021, UCB’s has been decreasing c.2.1% over the same period. (See chart 2 above) As a result, whilst UCB’s held parity with the sector in 2016, a gap of 20.7% now exists.

**The results of the stepwise logistic regressive modelling outlined the following groups to be most at risk:**

- **BAME Male & Black Female**

Chart 3 above assess these characteristics (BAME, Black & Male) separately. Whilst all three dimensions are currently lower than UCB’s overall attainment rate, both Black and Male are declining faster (2.3% & 5.0% respectively, versus 2.1% overall). In addition (see chart 4 above), when comparing these groups against their sector equivalents, gaps in attainment are increasing over time here also.

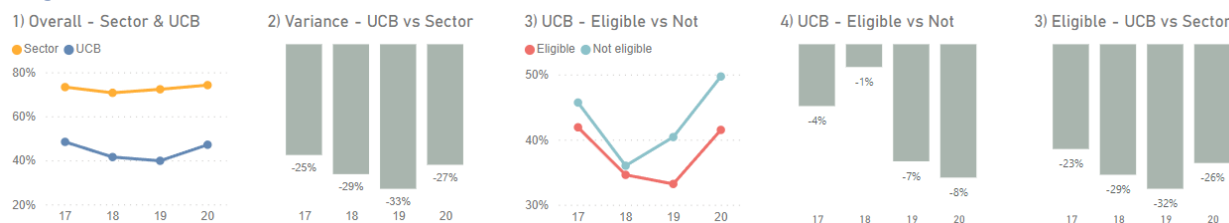
(See table below) When referring to the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register, the noted demographics are most prevalent in the relevant risks of “Information & Guidance” (Risk 2), “Insufficient Academic Support” (Risk 6), and “Insufficient Personal Support” (Risk 7).

Dimension	Risk 1	Risk 2	Risk 3	Risk 4	Risk 5	Risk 6	Risk 7	Risk 8	Risk 9	Risk 10	Risk 11	Risk 12
Black	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference
Asian	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference
Mixed	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference
Male	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference	Direct reference
Female	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference	Indirect reference

(See chart 5 above) When assessing the focus group outlined above against other UCB students, decreases over time are broadly similar<sup>5</sup>. Attainment is a notable issue for UCB, posing the additional challenge of needing to overcome both an overall declining attainment position, whilst also closing a sizable gap (c.19%) to achieve parity between the two groups and achieve the aims of APP.

<sup>5</sup> Focus Group: c.-2.9% Other: c.-2.7%

## Progression



(See chart 1 above) UCB’s progression rate overall is notably lower than the sector’s. In 2020, this was 47.1% vs the sector’s 74.2% (a gap of 27.1%) – over time, this gap has remained broadly the same. Whilst progression rates vary across UCB’s demographic cohorts, this issue broadly affects all UCB’s graduating cohort to some degree.

However, results of our stepwise binary logistic regressive analysis highlighted that those in receipt of free school meals was the main characteristic to have a significant impact on the chance of a student to fail to progress. Modelling suggests being in receipt of free school meals increases this chance of failing to progress by 11.2%.

In addition, this gap has been widening over time, both in terms of UCB’s own gap (c.-1.9% per year) and the result of UCB’s eligible students vs the sector’s (c.-1.2% per year).

Whilst exact results vary from the publication, our internal findings align with general themes found within the Department for Education’s latest “Widening participation in higher education” release<sup>6</sup>

### UCB’s focus group for progression will be those in receipt of free school meals

(See table below) “In receipt of free school meals” does not exist as a characteristic on the EORR. However, it is expected that “from a low household income” would correlate strongly here, which is a characteristic that appears across all EORR risk areas. It is therefore imperative that UCB works to understand and improve progression outcomes for this disadvantaged group.

Dimension	Risk 1	Risk 2	Risk 3	Risk 4	Risk 5	Risk 6	Risk 7	Risk 8	Risk 9	Risk 10	Risk 11	Risk 12
Eligible for Free School Meals												

■ Indirect reference

### Access & Disability

Initial note - to ensure this paper more directly reflects recruitment and access trends, this section focuses specifically on first year students when exploring disabilities<sup>7</sup>. It therefore won’t fully reflect the OfS APP dashboard, though trends and themes are expected to be similar.

(See chart below) Over time, UCB has increased the size of its “known to have a disability cohort” by c.12 additional enrolments each year. In 2021, this proportion was 12.4%. However, as this growth rate

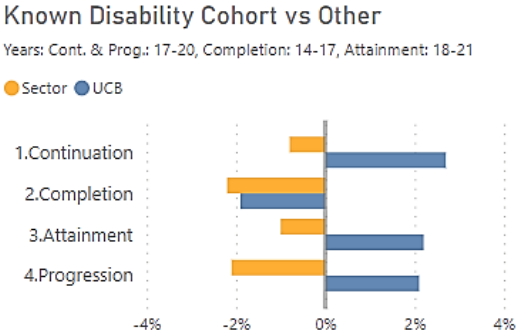
<sup>6</sup> Department for Education 2023, *gov.uk website*, UK government, accessed 06 April 2024, <[Widening participation in higher education, Academic year 2021/22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/widening-participation-in-higher-education)>

<sup>7</sup> Specifically, UK, UG (exc Foundation) as found in the HESA Student Full Person Equivalent via Heidi+





(See chart below) Finally, once on-course, unlike the sector, students with a declared disability typically outperform their peers at other key stages. As a result, UCB believes it is well placed to support any needs as the provider increases the proportion of those with hidden disabilities.



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.

## Intervention Strategy 1 Access

**Objective:** UCB will increase the proportion of disabled students accessing Higher Education programmes to the expected sector level - 19.3% by 2030

We consider that it likely that the under-representation of students with hidden disabilities within our student demographics is explained by a reluctance amongst disabled applicants to inform us of their disability and/or by the fact that they do not yet have a diagnosed disability.

- Claricoats, L. (2024) [Barriers into Higher Education for disabled students](#) [STEER Evaluation Collection] accessed 12 July 2024

This literature review of articles published between 2012 and 2023 relating to the experiences of disabled students in the UK supports our view that disabled applicants are reluctant to tell HEIs of their disability in case this adversely affects their chances of receiving an offer.

- TASO (2023) [What works to reduce equality gaps for disabled students](#) accessed 12 July 2024

This summary report is based upon an extensive review by Professor Carol Evans (Cardiff University) and Dr Xiaotong Zhu (University of Lincoln) of academic literature relating to interventions intended to support disabled students as they enter, study and progress from HEIs. The review evaluated the articles using the OfS categorisation of evidence into Types 1, 2 and 3 and identified (amongst other things) some correlation between the use of support services by disabled students, especially early on, and their remaining on their programme and performing better.

This is confirmed by our own [data as noted in Annex A above](#).

### 1.1 Into University

Into University operates across England in areas of low HE participation with the aim of helping young people in those deprived areas overcome barriers and aspire to enter HE. Their record of improving participation rates in the areas where they work is evidenced through their annual impact reports.

[Link to Into University's Impact Report for 2023](#)

### 1.2 Aimhigher West Midlands

Aimhigher West Midlands (AHWM) has been in existence since 2004, with foundations into driving greater access into Higher Education, and is now one of the longest standing partnerships in the country. It is a vehicle to bid for national collaborative outreach funding, previously NCOP and most recently the UniConnect programme, delivered out of OfS. Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, the partnership has been able to access £8.5m of funding from OfS to deliver collaborative outreach. Members of the partnership are UoB, Aston, BCU, UCB, Newman and Worcester, and each one pays £35k each year to fund the AimHigher platform which operates out of UoB as the “hub” institution. The current OfS Uniconnect budget is allocated to the partnership which then commissions the activity, resources the programme and delivers the targets. Resourcing includes staff at each of the member institutions (including UoB which also acts as the hub) and student ambassadors from all institutions to delivery activity in schools. Aimhigher provides a coordinated approach to outreach activity that benefits local Schools and FE colleges.

Funding from OfS for AHWM was set at £2.4m in the academic year 19/20. There was a national reduction in the scheme in 2021, meaning that the funding for the AHWM partnership was cut to £1.56m. The funding was cut again two years ago, and the recent announcement reduces the funding for the partnership even further so that in 24/25 it will be £688k. A summary of the funding over the last five years is outlined below.

Financial year	AHWM funding from OfS
2019/20	£2,400,020
2020/21	£2,400,020
2021/22	£1,526,272
2022/23	£1,116,363
2023/24	£1,090,601
2024/25	£688,000
TOTAL	£9,221,276

Funding is expected to remain at £688k over the next two years. Staff across the programme are employed on an annual rolling contract basis, and contingency to cover the cost of redundancies is factored into the budgeting for the programme, meaning that while funding has reduced this is not a financial exposure for either AHWM or the University partners.

**Expertise and access to funding** - AHWM is one of the longest standing partnerships in the country and has a strong reputation. The AHWM evaluation and impact strategy has been cited by OfS as sector leading and its delivery model has been used as an example of best practice. The work of the partnership continues to grow including work on understanding the regional ethnicity awarding gap.

**Profile and reputation** – the partnership is a strong vehicle for public affairs engagement in demonstrating our civic responsibility. The annual briefings sent to regional MPs (which includes the number of students engaged with in their individual wards) has led to strong advocacy for both the partnership and the work that the individual institutions to support under-represented students in their constituencies.

**Impact** – the partnership can tangibly demonstrate its impact having worked with over 61,000 unique learners over the past 7 years and is a clear example of all partner universities delivering against their civic

mission. AHWM have worked with over 195 West Midlands schools and delivered over 5,500 activities in the last seven years, many of which are programmes with multiple touch points. Evidence shows that AimHigher learners who engaged twice or more, are 1.3 to 1.5 times more likely to progress to HE compared to target learners who did not engage.

**Reach** - working in partnership with other HEIs in the region allows for budget and resource to go further – for example individual institution’s Outreach teams are able to focus on post-16 activity to drive their own APP targets, while the AHWM resource can focus on pre-16 and the ‘attainment raising’ agenda which remains a key ask from OfS. To deliver this scale of activity across the range of schools and colleges would cost partners significantly more than the £35k subscription to AHWM. In addition, partner schools and colleges in the regional value this collaborative outreach approach, benefiting from the expertise of all AHWM HEIs rather than one single university (the approach being seen as more objective for their students).

[Burgess AP, Horton MS, Moores E. \(2021\) Optimising the impact of a multi-intervention outreach programme on progression to higher education: recommendations for future practice and research. \*Heliyon\*, 7, \(7\).](#)

This academic article looks specifically at the UniConnect programme run by Aimhigher in the West Midlands and established Type 2 evidence that any engagement with UniConnect activities was likely to improve participants’ chances of going onto HE study. It also considers which types of intervention are likely to be most successful (subject to budget) and also concludes that there is little, if any gain, in a participant engaging with more than six activities.

### 1.3 Student co-created programme of workshops

TASO (nd) [Information, advice and guidance \(IAG\) \(pre-entry\)](#) accessed 30 July 2024

A TASO review research found that pre-entry IAG has a small causal impact on aspiration and participation (Type 3)

### 1.4 Disability sharing (disclosure) and diagnosis campaign and improvement of processes

[TASO \(2023\) Summary report: What works to reduce equality gaps for disabled students](#)

This report confirms that how, and how many times, students are asked to disclose their disability can have a significant impact upon how they feel about making that disclosure and whether or not they choose to disclose. For example, a change to the disability question wording on the UCAS application form resulted in a 10% increase in the number of students disclosing (Shaw, 2021)<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Shaw, A. (2021) ‘Inclusion of disabled higher education students: why are we not there yet?’ *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1–19. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1968514> (cited in TASO (2023))

The report also suggests that streamlining the process of disclosure and keeping students informed of how this information will be used should be beneficial, together with directing students to the support that is available to them.

As noted at Annex A above, we know that our students who do choose to share information about their disability generally outperform their peers.

### 1.5 The Disabled Student Commitment

[The Disabled Student Commitment](#) is based upon research carried out by the Disabled Students Commission, which included considerable qualitative research on the experience of disabled students. This endorses the need for improved disability disclosure processes as noted above, but also highlights the need for senior leadership within HEIs to champion changes to improve student experience for disabled students. Of particular importance for our intervention to improve access for disabled students are the improvement of IAG on the delivery of each course, and support with transitioning into Higher Education.

Once students have joined us, we also need to ensure that they are fully supported and that their course of study meets their needs. We will therefore invest in significant training to ensure staff have a full and practical understanding of what they need to do both to support disabled students, and also how they might identify students with hidden disabilities of which they (the students) are unaware. Training is also cited as a key need in the Taso (2023) report cited at 1.4 above.

### 1.6 University Mental Health Charter

The Student Minds Research ([Link](#)) upon which the Charter is based identifies the transition period into University and first year of study as of fundamental importance to students' wellbeing and academic success, and notes that colleagues across HEIs often disregard ensuring that support is in place ahead of admission for students with long term health conditions. Emphasis during the first weeks needs to be on integration and belonging rather than merely the provision of IAG.

[Blake, S., Capper, G., Jackson, A. \(2023\). Building Belonging in Higher Education Recommendations for developing an integrated institutional approach. Pearson & WonkHE](#)

This research found that students with poor mental health were far less likely to feel that they belonged at university, and that their evaluation of almost every aspect of their student experience tended to be less favourable than those who did not identify as having poor mental health. Taking a whole University approach to mental health and wellbeing should help to improve this at all stages of the student experience.

## Intervention Strategy 2 Continuation

**Objective 2.1:** With the aim of achieving parity between the focus and non-focus groups, UCB will look to increase continuation rates for “Males – White, Black & Black British Caribbean, Black & Black British African and Asian & Asian British Pakistani” to 90.3% by 2030.

### 2.1 UCB’S ACADEMIC SKILLS AND ENGLISH TASKS (ASET)

The Academic Skills and English Task (ASET) and Advanced ASET (A-ASET) are online assessment instruments developed in conjunction with subject specialists. They are diagnostic assessments used at both the start of, and throughout a student’s time at UCB. They are taken online and scored using detailed descriptive rubrics. Students also receive feedback on how they can improve in areas where they appear to have issues and areas of strength which can be built on further in their studies. During the assessment, students are required to write a short discursive essay about a topic relating to their course. The test includes three texts which link to the topic; one which provides some support for the topic being discussed in the essay, one including information which refutes it and a third which does not relate to the topic. Students are encouraged to use ideas from the texts to support their discussion if they can. They are also able to use their own ideas and experience to expand their points. The purpose of the texts is to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their referencing skills, as well as critical reading skills. The texts are also there to help students generate ideas to be included in their essays.

In 2023/24 a new level 5 ASET for students on Tourism, Hospitality and Aviation programmes was trialled. At level 5, students are asked to write a short essay making use of sources to write an evaluative essay. The sources provided for level 5 ASET provide information for students to use to help them evaluate a particular issue. This level task requires students to use the sources so that we can see how well students have mastered that skill, as well as how well they deal with referencing.

The tasks are used to inform the teaching team about the cohort’s strengths and areas for improvement in terms of specified academic literacies. This enables the creation of an academic literacies profile of each student in relation to the criteria. This profile can be used to help support lecture content design, providing lecturers with an overview of where their students need support. It can also be used to inform the content of Graduate Advantage sessions (see further below).

In addition, the tasks are used by the Student Engagement team to identify students who are at risk of failing their course because of poor literacy skills.

Finally, results can be used by group tutors to signpost students to additional support both at UCB and externally as highlighted on the supporting document which explains the scores to students. The tasks also provide students with an idea of how their academic writing (and reading) skills conform to the expectations of their department and their specific discipline and level of study. Research has shown that making the requirements of university study explicit early in the learning journey helps the students quickly identify areas which they need to work and can help them to plan their own learning to ensure that they are able to meet these requirements.

To date, whilst the ASET programme has worked with specific courses, this has been to establish best practise and process. As part of 2025/6 APP, UCB now intends to use ASET to work more closely with students who fall into the attainment focus group. To avoid singling out individual students as “problem students,” which could inadvertently lead to other issues, this focus will be applied to subject areas and courses where the focus cohort is most prevalent. Examples include the HECoS CAHs<sup>9</sup> of Computer Science (11-01-01) and Sports & Exercise Science (03-02-01).

[Dolecka, M. et al \(2024\)](#) emphasises not only the need to help students to develop the skills that they require at university, but also the importance of early identification of those who need the greatest help. In some cases, this is in part because their expectations of study differ from the reality. Though numbers in their pilot were comparatively small, they identified that fewer black students expected to take notes at university than their white counterparts, and this correlates with earlier research suggesting that lack of experience in good notetaking may be one factor accounting for ethnicity awarding gaps. The report suggests an even stronger correlation between the need for support with academic skills and being first in family, which is the group most likely to discontinue their studies.

This indicates that we should be alive to the possibility of intersectionality amongst those groups requiring support.

## 2.2 Graduate Advantage

Andrews et al (2023) [Approaches to addressing the ethnicity degree awarding gap](#) notes that though a whole institution approach is essential in order to reduce equality gaps, it is clear from the work carried out to address inequalities within the sector so far, that specific targeted work from the bottom up is also valuable. The TASO report refers to the work carried out by Staffordshire University which identified the subject areas in which the gap was greatest and then devised interventions focused on supporting the groups of students on those programmes.

Our Graduate Advantage scheme brings together School and central expertise to provide similar targeted support at programme level.

## 2.3 Financial Support

### 2.3.1 Kickstart

The UCB Kick-Start Scheme launched in 18/19 and provides students with targeted financial support to spend on educational resources and a range of products and services to complement their studies and enhance their experience.

Students must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the scheme:

- Considered a new student studying a full-time, undergraduate or PGCE course,
- Student status of Home or Channel Isles (prior to 21/22, EU students were also eligible).
- Paying fees at the maximum (£9,250) rate – repeating students and students on a full year placement would not get support.

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<sup>9</sup> Higher Education Classification of Subjects – Common Aggregation Hierarchy



All students who meet the criteria qualify for the standard minimum amount of £300, but support can go up to £800 for each year of study, which does not need to be paid back. Over 40% of UCB students qualify for the higher amount, reflecting our student demographics. The scheme works similar to a bursary, with funds provided as a credit which can be spent to purchase course-related materials and products to support their studies. Some of the funds can also be used on campus in the cafeterias or other selected outlets. Some students may also qualify for an electronic tablet or laptop via the scheme based on their course and whether they are progressing from a UCB or partner institution college course.

Type 3 Analysis using data from 2017/18 and 2018/19 was undertaken in order to establish whether financial support, and Kick-Start specifically, has an impact on student retention, continuation and attainment and whether it has more impact for certain student groups. A comparator group of students who did not receive financial support was used.

As expected from the criteria for higher level Kickstart payments, students in higher IMD deciles and higher POLAR quintiles were less likely to qualify for the higher amount. Although numbers are small, care leavers were also more likely to receive higher level Kick-Start. 37% of students in IMD decile 1 had higher level Kick-Start compared to 1.9% in decile 10. There was no difference in likelihood for students that had a disability compared to those that did not.

Retention – UCB analysis demonstrated that when financial support grouping and other variables were entered into a regression to see if they had an effect on withdrawal, financial support did have a significant effect on retention ( $p$  value = 0.001) and students who received Kick Start were less likely to withdraw. These findings align with other published research which suggests that financial support impact retention through reducing financial stress; providing access to resources or the purchase of course materials; reducing the need for paid work thus freeing up time ; and feeling invested in their course (Pollard et al, 2019). We tested these assumptions through commissioned research reported below (B 2.3.2).

Continuation – Our analysis showed that Kick Start had a significant effect on whether students who were in their first year of study continued into their second year of study with 100% of new starters continuing in the year of analysis, although the findings were not statistically significant for any specific focus groups.

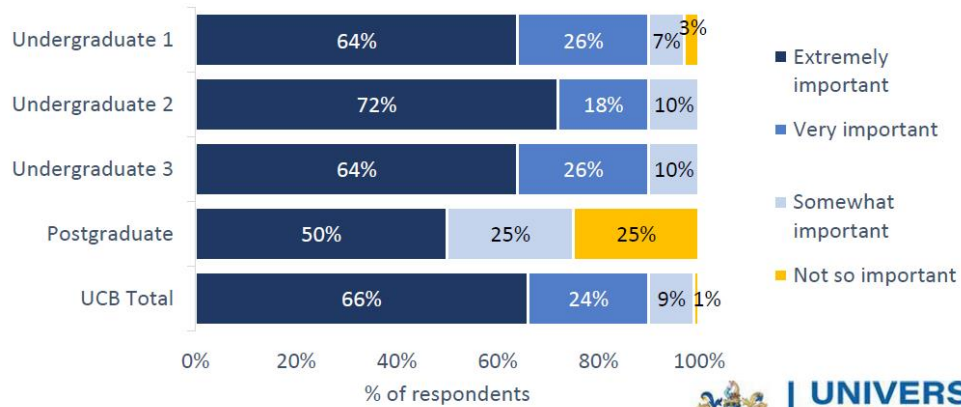
Attainment - Analysis of first degree attainment and good degree attainment showed that the Kick-Start group had the second highest percentage of students with a degree and that when financial support grouping and other variables were entered into a regression to see if they had an effect, financial support did have a significant effect on attaining a degree ( $p$  value <0.001). However, it was also found that financial support did not have a significant effect on whether the students attained a good degree.

Ilie et al (2019) also looked at the impact of bursaries on attainment. They found indications that support improved degree completion, in line with the findings for UCB students. However, they also found that it improved chances of getting a good degree which differs from our findings. This could be due to the amount of bursary offered, as average amounts in the external research ranged from £1000 to £1900, while Kick-Start ranged from £500-£800. The review cites research from Murphy and Wyness (2015) that found “for every £1,000 of financial aid awarded the chances of obtaining a good degree increases by 3.7 percentage points”.

### 2.3.2 Kickstart Student Survey



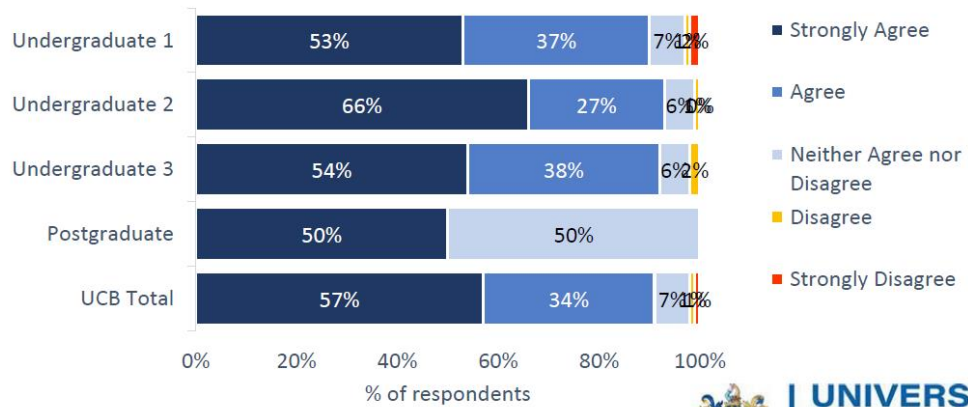
How important has the Kick-Start scheme been in helping you financially to continue your studies?



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BIRMINGHAM

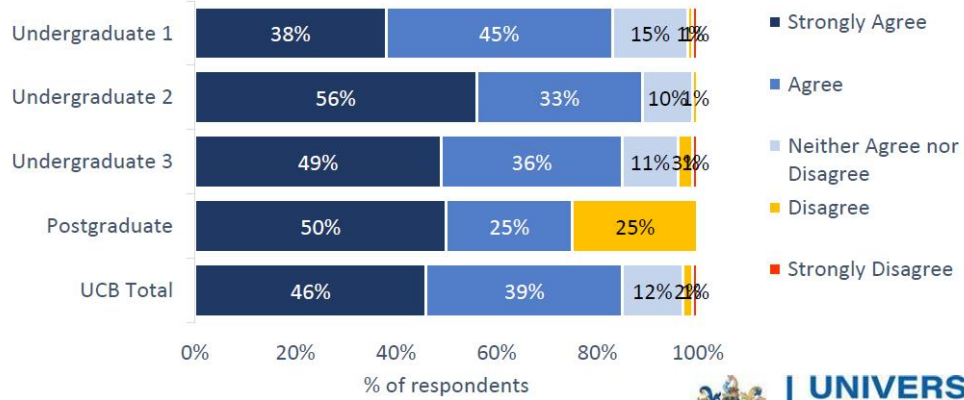


Receiving funds/support via the Kick-Start scheme helps me to afford to participate along with my fellow students

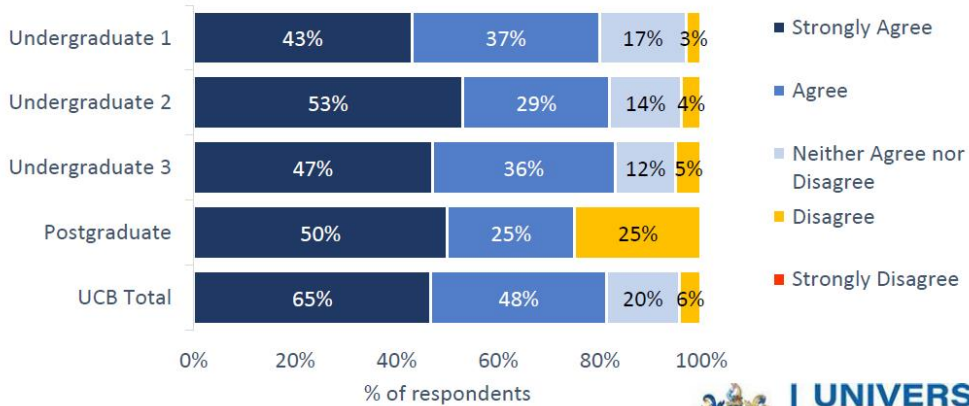


UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BIRMINGHAM

Receiving funds/support via the Kick-Start scheme helps me to feel part of the university community



Receiving funds/support via the Kick-Start scheme helps me to feel less anxious than I would otherwise



## Comments from students

- “One of my biggest worries coming to uni was how I was going to afford all the extra bits I need for studying. When I found out about kickstart and how much they can provide for low-income families I felt a lot less anxious.”
- “The Kick-Start scheme has helped massively over my 3 years of being a student at UCB and I would not have been able to do this course were it not for it.”
- “I absolutely love the kickstart scheme. It has helped me extremely when getting my kit without worrying if I am able to fund it on my own. I don’t have to feel different from my other classmates. I also know exactly what I need for my classes to be fully prepared and make the most out of my education.”



## Comments from students

- “Without kickstart I wouldn’t have been able to afford my university laptop which was vital for my course. I’m really thankful to kickstart.”
- “It’s helped me pay for my uniform and it lifted a lot of stress off my shoulders.”
- “Really appreciate the fact that there are many resources available for the various courses. It helps me feel prepared and organised.”
- “The kick start scheme is an amazing scheme that helps and supports students, I personally found kick start very useful as it allowed me to find and pay for a number of different items that I needed. I would definitely recommend it to others.”



## 2.4 Student Engagement Tutors and Officers

### 2.4.1 The Impact of Student Engagement on Withdrawals and Attainment

A TASO report - Summers (2024) [Using learning analytics to prompt student support interventions](#) recognizes the importance of using learning analytics to identify students at risk of non-continuation so

that they can be offered targeted support interventions to help them in re-engaging and continuing with their studies.

Our Student Engagement team works with learner analytics as described below.

## Background

The Student Engagement team operates as a single point of contact to discuss any issues students may have while studying, aiming to improve communication between students, academic staff and support services and to enhance the student experience for all our higher education (HE) students.

The team use a system called 'STREAM' to track student engagement and interventions. It calculates an 'engagement' score based on activity on canvas, use of Athens, building access, use of printers and interactions with Hired. 'Interventions' are recorded on the system by the team to log student interactions with their team as well as referrals to other services. Interventions can occur from students approaching the team or from the team checking in with a student due to low levels of engagement shown on STREAM. Attendance to lectures/seminars, withdrawal information and attainment/grades are not fed into STREAM and are not included within the engagement score.

The relationship between engagement and student outcomes or attainment has been explored in research at other universities over the last decade. A report for the HEFCE ([Mountfort et al, 2015](#)) stated that one of the most effective interventions to reduce gaps in student outcomes was by boosting their engagement. A recent academic paper by [Summers, Higson and Moores \(2020\)](#) found that student engagement in the first three weeks of higher education predicts subsequent engagement and attainment. Likewise, the relationship between engagement and retention has also been examined, [Roberts, Jalyann, and McNeese \(2010\)](#) found that as student engagement increases so does student retention. [Kahu \(2013\)](#) outlines a socio-cultural model for the role that student engagement has in higher education, identifying that both academic achievement and retention are consequences of engagement.

This piece looks at the impact that student engagement has on student attainment and likelihood to withdraw within the UCB undergraduate population. It also takes a brief look at the impact of interventions on student engagement.

## Methodology

Regression analyses were conducted on the data to determine statistically significant relationships between attainment and engagement. The data only included Undergraduate First Degree HE students who are full time and who have studied at UCB since STREAM was set up (students who started in the 20/21 academic year). This means that foundation students that were doing a top up year on a BA/BSC will be included as they will be counted as starting a new course. There were 2848 students initially in the data, after excluding students who have an 'exemption' (on placement, not started) or were transferred or deferred, this left 2479 students in the sample.

Due to students working online during COVID lockdowns within the 20/21 academic year, some metrics on STREAM are not reliable as they relate to on-campus engagement. In addition, attendance data could not be analysed for the same reason. It is recommended that this analysis be revisited in 12 months to support findings from this report and to include attendance data in the analysis.

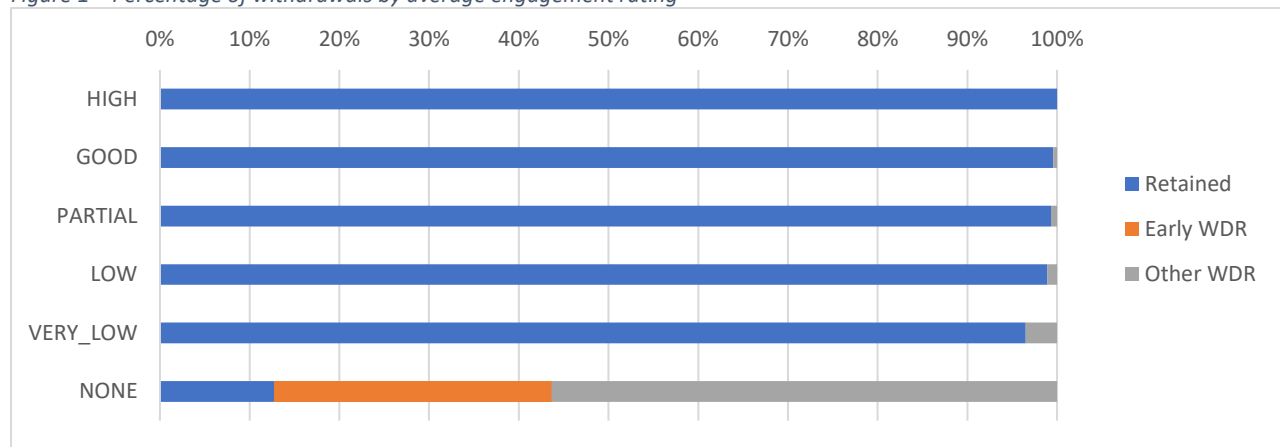
For the analysis below, STREAM's 'average engagement rating' was used to determine engagement. This is the mean average of daily engagement between 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Ratings range from 'High' to 'None'. 'None' rating means that there is an absence of data for that student therefore an engagement rating cannot be calculated. This does not necessarily mean that the student had no engagement, as it averages ratings, so 'spikes' of engagement followed by months of no/little engagement could result in an overall rating of 'none'.

### Withdrawals

For this sample of students, 6.3% of students withdrew at some point in the year, with 3.3% withdrawing 50 days after teaching start/enrolment, 1.5% were before teaching start and a further 1.5% were before the 50 day cut off. For the purposes of this analysis, withdrawals before teaching start were removed as they would not be expected to have engagement. In addition, as average engagement rating continues to calculate after the student has withdrawn, the average rating for the first 2 months of study (October- November) for only September starters have been used for this part of the analysis.

As shown in Figure 1, **87.3% of students who have a 'none' rating ended up withdrawing, in addition, 85.7% of students that withdrew had a rating of 'none'.**

Figure 1 – Percentage of withdrawals by average engagement rating



A binary logistic regression was conducted on the withdrawal data to determine whether there was a relationship between student engagement and withdrawal. For this analysis, withdrawals were made into a binary data type (0 = Retained, 1 = Withdrawn), with no distinction between early and other withdrawals. The regression showed that student engagement does have a statistically significant relationship with whether a student withdraws ( $p < 0.001$ ). The model could accurately predict whether the student would withdraw based on engagement rating 98.7% of the time and that **69% of the variance within the data could be explained by engagement rating, indicating that engagement is a good predictor of whether a student will withdraw.**

### Attainment

As most of the students in the sample were in their first year of study, average module marks were used to look at attainment. Resits that took place before 5<sup>th</sup> August were included in the average figures, so this will include any resits for semester 1 modules but not for semester 2. It is also worth noting that this part of the analysis did not include withdrawn students.

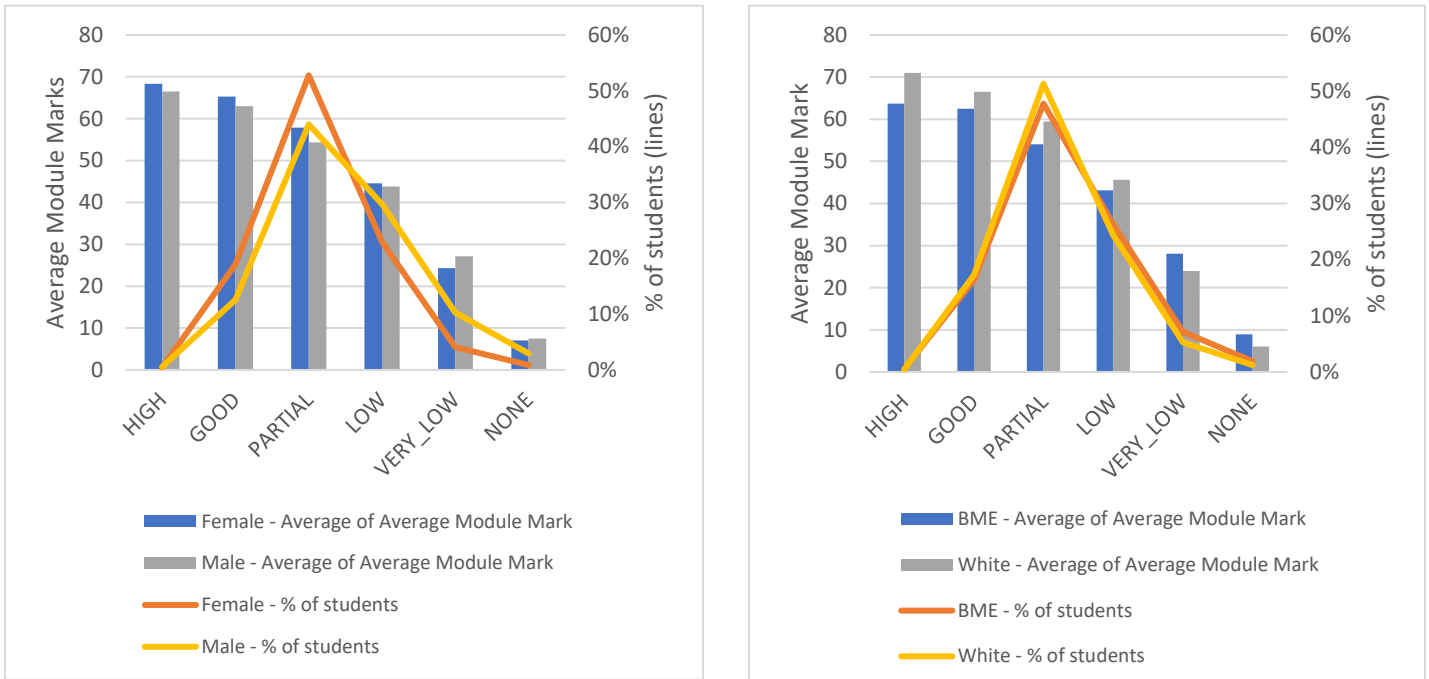
As shown Figure 2 below, the higher the engagement the higher the average mark (note that this is an average of average). Students in the 'high' engagement category score 68 marks on average, while students in the 'very low' category scored 26 marks. **Most students were in the 'partial' engagement category at 50.1%**, followed by the 'low' engagement category at 25.0%. Only 0.5% of students were in the 'high' category.

Figure 2 – Average module marks and student numbers by average engagement rating

Average Engagement Rating	Average of Average Module Mark	No. of students	% of students
<b>HIGH</b>	68	11	0.5%
<b>GOOD</b>	65	400	16.9%
<b>PARTIAL</b>	57	1186	50.1%
<b>LOW</b>	44	593	25.0%
<b>VERY_LOW</b>	26	143	6.0%
<b>NONE</b>	7	36	1.5%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>2369</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Interestingly, there was some variation in engagement levels across different demographic groups.** 72% of female students were partially engaged or above, while this was 57% for male students. 69% of white students had at least partial engagement, while this was 65% for BME students. Looking at age group this was 72% for young students and 64% for mature students. However, when looking at the average module marks by gender and ethnicity, gaps between demographic groups were mostly consistent regardless of engagement rating (see Figure 3 & 4 below). **It is recommended that the differences in engagement between demographics groups be explored further as part of the Access and Participation Plan work.**

Figure 3 & 4 – Average module marks and percentage of students by engagement rating and ethnicity grouping



Note: Students with 'Other' gender are not included in the graphs as there were only 3 students in this group.

Looking at engagement by course, the top 5 courses with the highest percentage of students with a 'high' or 'good' engagement rating were:

- Early Childhood Studies (21%)
- Aesthetic Practitioner (16%)
- Sports Therapy (16%)
- Specialist Hair and Media Make-up (16%)
- Hospitality and Tourism Management (16%)

While the 5 courses with the highest percentage of students with 'low', 'very low' or 'none' engagement ratings were:

- Business Enterprise (48%)
- Aviation and Airport Management (34%)
- International Tourism Business Management (27%)
- Culinary Arts Management (18%)
- International Tourism Management (18%)

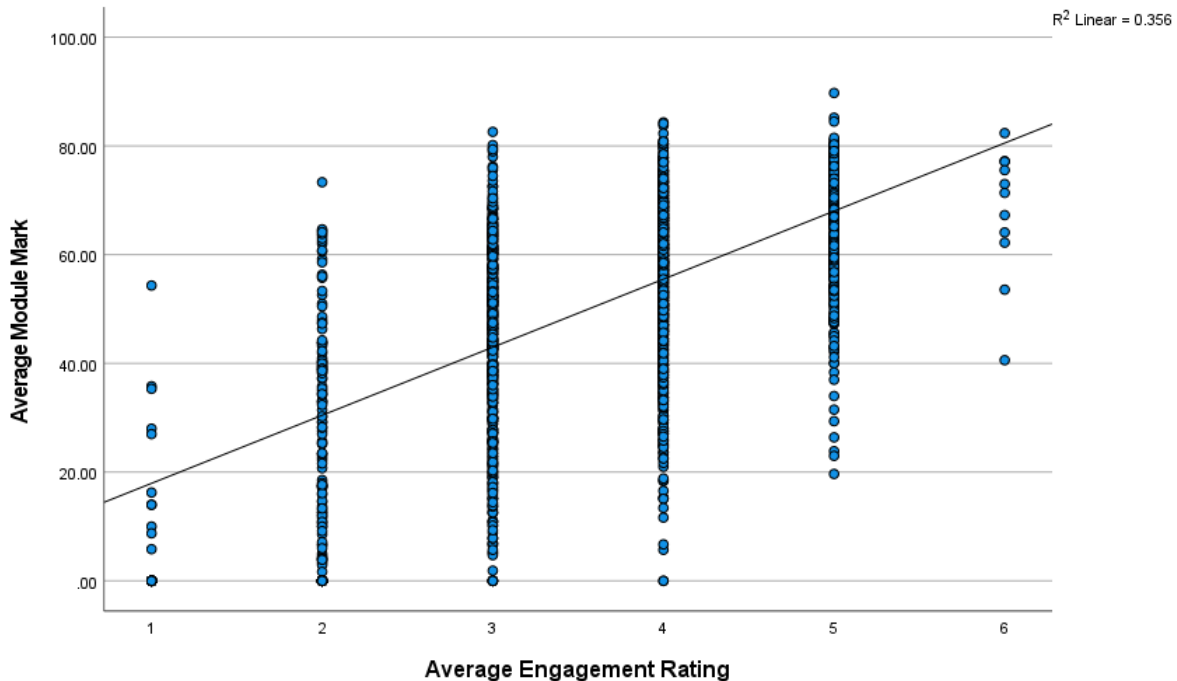
It is worth noting that some courses may have been more affected by lockdowns due to some subjects being more practical based than others, which may explain why some courses have seen higher/lower engagement than others. See Appendix 1 for courses by engagement rate and module marks.

Separate to the withdrawal regression, a simple linear regression was conducted to see if the average student engagement rating can predict average module marks. The regression showed that student engagement does have a statistically significant relationship with average module marks ( $p < 0.001$ ). **It found that with every increase in engagement rating (e.g. from low to partial), average module marks increased by 13 points.** Figure 5 below shows all students plotted against their module mark and engagement rating. We can use the linear best fit line as a guide to predict student's module



performance based on their engagement across the year. For example, if a student has 'low engagement' (3) then the expected average module mark is 42.98.

Figure 5 –Average engagement rating against average module mark with regression line



Note: The bottom axis shows average engagement rating with 1 being 'None' and 6 being 'High'

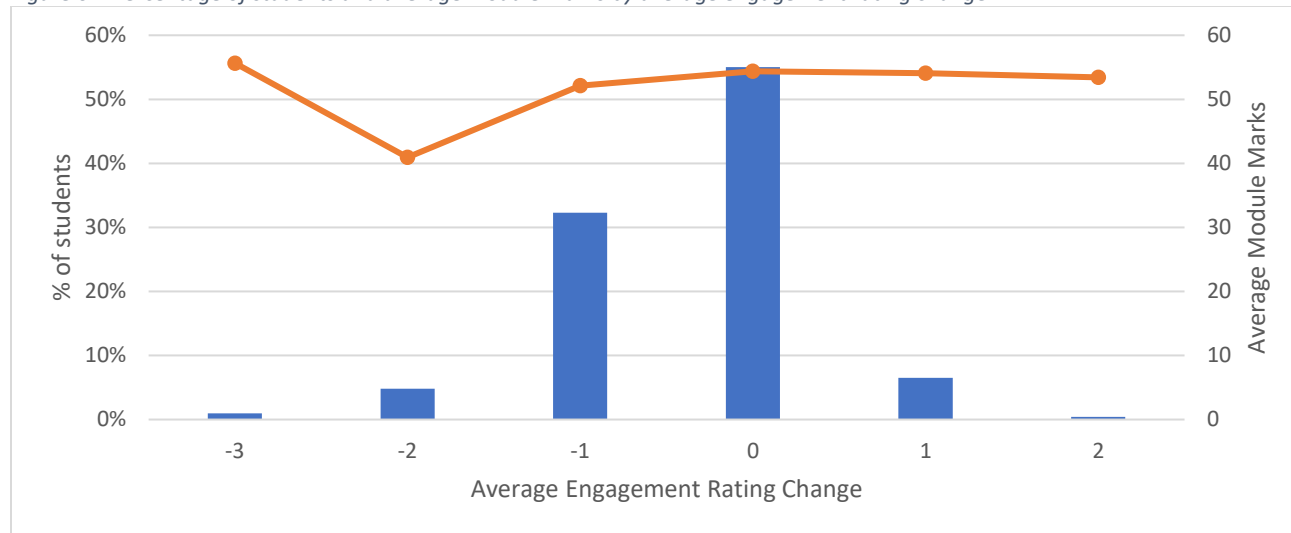
While the relationship was significant, it is worth noting the regression found that average engagement only explained 36% of the variance within the data ( $R^2$  value). This means that 64% of the differences between module marks was due to factors other than engagement that weren't included in this model.

This strong positive relationship between engagement and attainment indicates that if student engagement were to improve, attainment would see a subsequent increase. **It is therefore recommended that we pilot/test some initiatives that we expect will improve engagement and monitor the impact on both engagement and attainment.**

An alternative linear regression was also conducted to see if average engagement within the first three weeks was a better predictor than engagement generally, to align with the methodology in [Summers, Higson and Moores \(2020\)](#) study on Aston. While, the findings were still significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and showed a similar trend to the regression above, the model accounted for less of the variance (15%), see Appendix 2 for regression plot. This could be due to UCB accepting later enrollers than other universities. Similarly, February enrolments, which are not conducted at all universities, were not included in the regression. Additionally, a Kendall's Tau B correlation coefficient was conducted to look at the relationship between engagement in the first 3 weeks and engagement across the entire academic year, there was a moderate positive correlation ( $\tau_b = .491, p < 0.001$ ). So, **while overall engagement was the better predictor of attainment, early engagement has a significant relationship with engagement for the remainder of the year.**

Finally, the engagement change over semesters was analysed for September starters. Ratings for both semesters were coded 1-6 to create a numerical value for each and then the difference between the two values was calculated to examine the amount of change. As shown Figure 6 below, negative rating change is when the student is less engaged in semester two, 0 is no change and positive rating change is when engagement improved in semester two. The graph shows the percentage of students that had each amount of change (blue bars) and the average module mark by amount of change (orange line).

Figure 6 – Percentage of students and average module marks by average engagement rating change



Note: Changes with less than 5 students were removed.

Most students saw no change across semesters (55%). Quite a large number had a decline in engagement by one rating in semester two (32%), however, assuming the -2 group is an outlier, **the decline in engagement appears to have had no particular impact on average module marks.**

### Interventions

For this analysis, interventions have been classed as any interaction between the student engagement team and students. The difference between ‘attempted’ and ‘successful’ interventions are where the student engagement team has spoken with or had a response from the student, e.g. voicemail with no call back vs a phone conversation. This has been determined based on interaction notes on STREAM. Only complete interactions are included. Withdrawn students were included in the analysis, however ratings and interactions in the month of or after their withdrawal date were removed.

Due to engagement fluctuation across the year, interventions and engagement have been analysed on a monthly basis. Using the numerical ratings to calculate rating change (as used in Figure 6), Figure 7 shows the average rating change between the month of intervention and the following month for students who had ‘low’ ‘very low’ or ‘none’ engagement ratings when their intervention took place. It is worth noting that if the intervention was at the start of the month, change in engagement may not be captured completely as some of the rating during intervention month will be post-intervention. Students who did not have an intervention had an average rating change of 0.3, while students that had an unsuccessful/attempted intervention saw a decline in rating of -0.1. Students that had a successful intervention saw an increase in engagement rating by 0.8 on average. **In real terms, this means that students that had a successful intervention increased by nearly 1 rating, e.g. from low to partial.**

Figure 7 – Average change between engagement rating during month of intervention and the following month’s rating by whether the student had an intervention – only includes students with ‘low’ ‘very low’ or ‘none’ engagement

Intervention	No. of students	Month of Intervention								Average Change
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	
No Intervention	2253	0.5	-0.2	0.9	-0.1	1.0	-0.1	0.7	-0.1	0.3
Attempted Intervention	140	0.4	-0.4	0.0	0.3	-1.7	0.0	0.3	-0.1	-0.1
Successful Intervention	86			2.0	0.5	1.5	0.1	0.3	0.7	0.8

While 38% of interventions were successful, students where an intervention was unsuccessful saw a decline in engagement. It is worth considering that there could be a two-way relationship between intervention success and engagement, e.g. if the student is not engaged this could impact whether an intervention is successful as it requires students to respond to calls/emails. **It is recommended we explore ways to improve the success rate of interventions, potentially through communication techniques such as those in the Government’s [Behavioural Insights Team’s EAST nudge model](#).**

### Conclusion & Recommendations

In conclusion, most students have had partial engagement throughout the year. There were engagement gaps between different demographic groups, with the largest being between male and female students, however these did not appear to impact attainment. Student engagement declines slightly in semester two, however this also appears to have no impact on attainment. Successful interventions appear to have a positive impact on engagement.

Student engagement has a statistically significant relationship with withdrawals and attainment. Student engagement is a good predictor of whether the student will withdraw. Engagement has a strong positive relationship with average module marks, so can be used to predict student attainment to a certain extent, however it only accounts for a proportion of attainment, suggesting there are other influencing factors. In addition, when looking at engagement in the first 3 weeks, overall engagement was the better predictor of attainment, but early engagement is positively correlated with engagement for the remainder of the year.

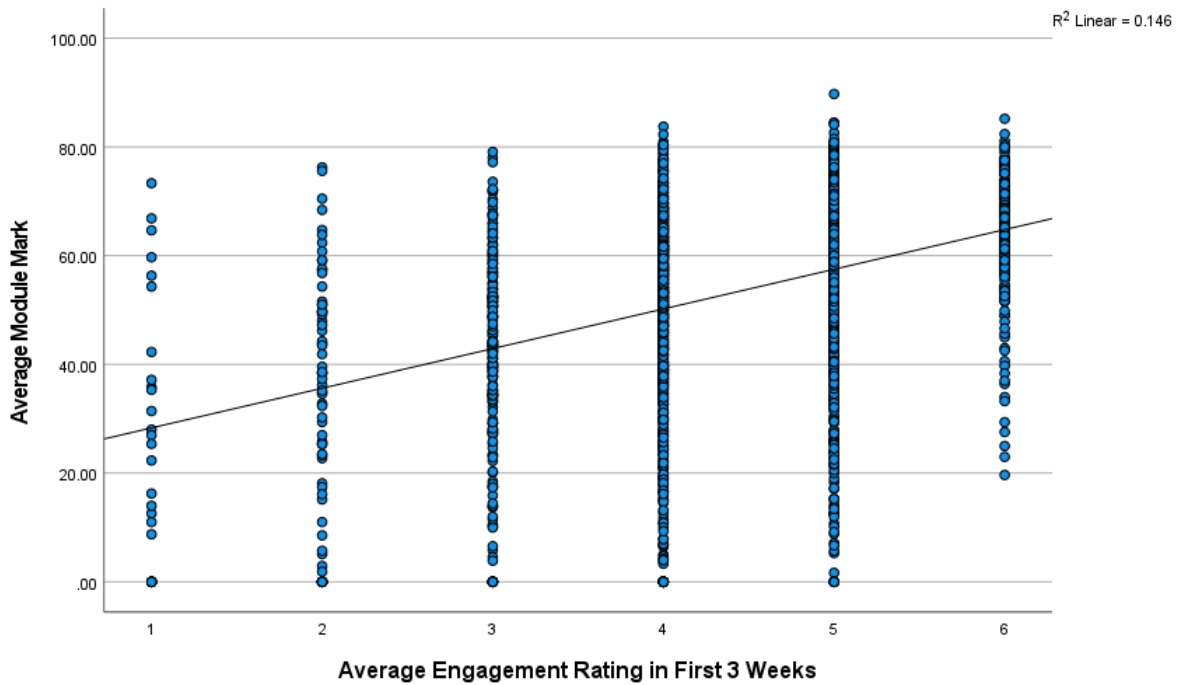
It is recommended that:

- This analysis should be revisited in 12 months to support findings from this report and to include attendance data in the analysis.
- We pilot/test some initiatives that we expect will improve engagement and monitor the impact on both engagement and attainment.
- The differences in engagement between demographics groups be explored further as part of the Access and Participation Plan work.
- Explore ways to improve the success rate of interventions, potentially through communication techniques such as ‘nudge’.

## Appendix 1 – Average module marks by engagement rating and course

Course	HIG H	GOO D	PARTIA L	LO W	VERY LOW	NON E	Grand Total
Youth, Community and Families		60	55	46	54	0	52
Aviation and Airport Management	77	63	58	45	25	16	52
Culinary Arts Management		68	62	45	27	0	56
Early Childhood Studies	74	63	56	48	2		55
Bakery and Patisserie Technology		66	60	35	17		59
Specialist Hair and Media Make-up	67	62	59	45	30		55
International Tourism Business Management		65	57	48	37	5	52
Hospitality and Tourism Management	73	65	61	47	22		58
Hospitality with Events Management		61	55	33	4	36	48
Applied Food and Nutrition		67	61	34	0	9	49
Hospitality Business Management		66	44	45	42		51
Aesthetic Practitioner	64	64	48	29			52
Sports Therapy	62	62	52	35	30	0	49
Business Enterprise	82	61	54	42	25	2	46
Strength, Conditioning and Sports Nutrition	54	62	52	37			52
Marketing Management		63	55	44	11		49
Sports Management		69	58	51	29	14	51
Sport and Fitness Studies		65	51	39	10	5	42
International Hospitality and Business Management		64	59	51	41		57
Digital Marketing		72	59	46	35	27	52
International Tourism Management		68	61	53	23	0	54
International Hospitality and Tourism Management	76	67	51	46	0		54
Events Management	41	74	55	39	17	14	52
Childhood Studies		61	59	50	44		56
Health and Social Care		63	51	39	26	0	48
Food and Nutrition		59	58	32			57
Finance and Accounting			73	64	18		51
Food Development and Innovation		67	59	22		0	52
Marketing with Events Management				23	36		30
Nursing (Adult)		75	72	64			72
Physiotherapy		61	54	53	17		54
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>53</b>

## Appendix 2 – Regression on engagement in the first 3 weeks against attainment



### 2.4.2 Factors influencing Retention report from UCB

The analysis is conducted on 22/23 and 23/24 data including only first degree and foundation students, with different student populations at each level. Hong Kong block students and online courses have been excluded. Factors/independent variables refer to the data that is being analysed to determine whether it has a correlation with retention. A relationship is considered 'significant' when the significance level falls below the scientific threshold for error of 0.05.

### Regression

The regression has been run twice; once with engagement related variables (Figure 1) and once without (Figure 2). This is to allow the Student Engagement Team to see the impact of engagement on retention and to use the version without engagement for identifying student groups that may be more at risk of withdrawal. Students for 2022/23 did not have data on low engagement alerts and time spent at low, but the new engagement methodology (which started from 2023/24) has been applied to 2022/23 to give them an engagement rating. Engagement ratings have been calculated against all UCB students.

Figure 4 – Regression results with engagement variables included

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	Gender	-.218	.198	1.207	1	.272	.804
	Ethnicity	.022	.020	1.242	1	.265	1.022
	Feb/sep	-.232	.360	.415	1	.519	.793
	Kickstart	.968	.222	18.938	1	<.001	2.632
	Age Group	.878	.202	18.864	1	<.001	2.405
	Disability	.688	.369	3.467	1	.063	1.989
	Domicile	-.423	.642	.434	1	.510	.655
	IMD	-.056	.040	1.907	1	.167	.946
	Engagement rating	-.647	.077	69.990	1	<.001	.524
	Low Engagement Alerts	.285	.103	7.632	1	.006	1.330
	successful	.830	.326	6.470	1	.011	2.293
	Time spent at low	-.005	.004	1.313	1	.252	.995
	Constant	-4.868	1.183	16.936	1	<.001	.008

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Gender, Ethnicity, Feb/sep, Kickstart, Age, Disability, Domicile, IMD, Engagement rating, Low Engagement Alerts, successful, Time spent at low.

Figure 5 – Regression results with engagement variables excluded

#### Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	Gender	-.356	.177	4.024	1	.045	.701
	Ethnicity	.028	.017	2.754	1	.097	1.029
	Feb/sep	-.361	.342	1.115	1	.291	.697
	Kickstart	1.169	.206	32.301	1	<.001	3.219
	Age Group	.805	.180	20.113	1	<.001	2.237
	Disability	.676	.333	4.113	1	.043	1.966
	Domicile	-.482	.599	.647	1	.421	.618
	IMD	-.061	.036	2.806	1	.094	.941
	Constant	-6.347	1.080	34.554	1	<.001	.002

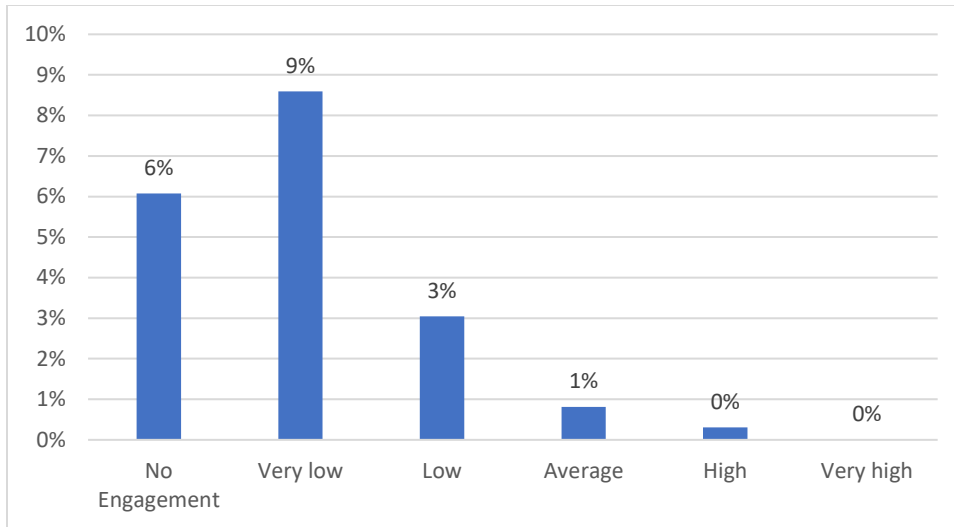
a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Gender, Ethnicity, Feb/sep, Kickstart, Age, Disability, Domicile, IMD.

**The regression results show that Age Group, Kickstart, Low Engagement Alerts, Successful contact and Engagement rating all have a statically significant relationship to retention. Gender and Disability only had a significant relationship with retention when engagement related variables are not included in the regression.**

## Significant variables

### Engagement rating

Consistent with [previous analysis](#), students with lower engagement ratings were more likely to withdraw.



### Successful Contact

20% of students that had successful contact from the engagement team withdrew compared to 5% of those without contact, however students that would be contacted are likely to have low engagement prior to contact, reflecting the students who require contact rather than the impact of the team’s support.

### Low engagement alerts

The more engagement alerts received the more likely a student is to withdraw. This is due to the reason for low alerts being the fact that students already have low engagement. Interestingly, after 2 alerts, further alerts made no difference to likelihood to withdraw.

<i>No. of Low engagement alerts</i>	<i>% Withdrew</i>
0	6%
1	4%
2	13%
3	12%

### Kickstart

Consistent with findings in the [Impact of Financial Support](#), students that have the additional Kickstart amount based on their household income (£500+) were less likely to withdraw (2%) compared to those that did not have the additional Kickstart amount (4%).

### Age Group

In [previous findings](#), February starting students were more likely to withdrawn than those starting in September. In this run of the analysis, the starting period is not significant, but Age Group is. There is correlation between these two variables and, looking at the data, 17% of mature students start in February compared to 14% of young students. This is likely due to young students continuing from further education without a gap. Mature students were more likely to withdraw at 5%, compared to young students at 3%.

## Gender & Disability

When gender is significant, males were more likely to withdraw than females (4% compared to 3%), this is also consistent with [previous findings](#). Students without a disability were more likely to withdraw (4% compared to 2%).

## Groups with higher withdrawal risk

Based on the regression analyses above, students in the below groups have a higher probability of withdrawing:

- Low, Very Low and No Engagement
- Those requiring contact from the student engagement team
- Those not receiving the additional £500+ Kickstart amount
- Mature
- Males
- Those without a disability

It is worth noting there is a new APP plan to reduce continuation gaps between student groups. Similar to retention, males were identified as having lower continuation than females in the background research for the APP plan, however some other findings may be different as it uses OFS APP data (different years, excludes international students) and does not incorporate internal variables such as engagement and Kickstart. In addition, continuation is not the same as retention as it encompasses withdrawals between course years (dormants) as well in-year withdrawals. However, as the two measures are closely linked, **it is recommended that the continuation target groups in the APP plan should be the focus of engagement activities when looking to improve retention.**

## 2.5 Inclusive Curriculum and Authentic Assessment

Recent work in other institutions has indicated the benefits of taking a whole institution approach to the development of an inclusive curriculum. See, for example, McDuff et al. (2020) which sets out an inclusive curriculum framework based on three principles: the creation of an accessible curriculum; ensuring that students can see themselves reflected in the curriculum and giving students the skills to play a full role in a global, diverse world (p. 88). Our inclusive assessment guide is similarly broad and recommends ensuring that students are given the opportunity to meet their learning outcomes in authentic contexts and ways which resonate with them. This allows us to support a diverse range of students whilst making reasonable adjustments to break down barriers for individual students.

McDuff N., Hughes, A., Tatam, J., Morrow, E. Ross. F. (2020) Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education through the Adoption of an Inclusive Curriculum Framework. *Widening Participation & Lifelong Learning* 22 (2): 83–121

Campbell, P. and Duke, B. (2023). [An Evaluation of the Racially Inclusive Practice in Assessment Guidance Intervention on Students' and Staffs' Experiences of Assessment in HE: A Multi-University Case Study](#). University of Leicester.

This recent QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project study demonstrates that the introduction of inclusive assessment practices can improve the understanding of staff of the barriers to academic



literacy experienced by ethnic minority students, and improve the assessment literacy of Black, South Asian and White students.

[Developing a Set of Inclusive Assessment Design Attributes for use Across the Higher Education Sector \(qaa.ac.uk\)](#) (2022) is another QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project study led by Teesside University which identified nine design attributes of inclusive assessment based upon quantitative and qualitative analysis of improvements in continuation and awarding gaps during the pandemic. The project outputs include a toolkit which can be used by staff and students to evaluate the inclusivity of their assessments/proposed assessment changes.

[Supporting student progression and attainment through sustainable Inclusive Assessment Practices: What Works?](#) This follow-up collaborative project, also led by Teesside University and part-funded by the University Alliance, carried out further quantitative and qualitative research to identify barriers and enablers to the successful implementation of the attributes (University Alliance nd).

[Making the Language of Assessment Inclusive](#) (2023) is a recent QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project led by the University of the West of England which developed a dialogic toolkit to help staff and students to reach common understanding of what assessment and feedback terms mean in their discipline and context. The toolkit also contains a list of commonly used terms that staff and students are confident that students understand and ones that are likely to be more obscure and require discussion with the help of the toolkit.

## 2.6 PSHE Mentoring

TASO (nd) [Mentoring, counselling, coaching and role models \(post-entry\)](#) accessed 20 July 2024

This TASO report reviewed Type 2 research to conclude that ‘programmes involving mentoring, counselling, coaching and advising are associated with better outcomes for students in terms of attainment and retention/completion’, with some less secure Type 3 evidence from overseas. Such interventions are most effective according to TASO’s analysis amongst groups such as BAME students, mature students and students from lower-socioeconomic status groups.

## 2.7 Guild Administered Exit Interviews

Hillman, N. (2004) [Dropouts or stopouts or comebacks or potential completers?': Non-continuation of students in the UK](#) Accessed 20 July 20024

In this Type 1 HEPI policy note, Hillman outlines the complexity of ‘drop-out’ rates from University programmes and the myriad of factors that are reflected in the statistics, and recommends (inter alia) that Universities need to best support student needs including using big data. In particular, Hillman discusses the value of structured exit interviews, where students are willing, as providing ‘a deeper understanding of why students withdraw from specific institutions. It is suggested that some students will be more willing to engage with the Guild than personal tutors or other University representatives.

## Intervention Strategy 3 Completion

**Objective 3.1:** UCB will look to increase completion rates for “Males from lower IMD1&2 quintiles” to 82.6% by 2030/1.

### 3.1 Level 6 academic preparedness campaign in collaboration with Guild

In the Wonkhe/Pearson (2022) report [Students' perceptions of belonging and inclusion at University](#) students were asked if they felt confident in their academic abilities and also if they felt imposter syndrome. Approximately 70% of male respondents said that they felt confident and fewer than 30% reported imposter syndrome; however, the evidence suggests that men are less likely to seek help for mental health issues than women (Sagar-Ouriaghli et al. (2020) and therefore will tend to ignore any anxiety they may feel around their ability to meet the requirements of their course.

### 3.2 Social action hubs in high-density student postcodes in collaboration with Guild

In the same Wonkhe/Pearson (2022) report [Students' perceptions of belonging and inclusion at University](#) over half of the students surveyed the previous year who reported that they felt they belonged to their university also felt that they felt connected to their university community. The report also highlighted that 26% of those who reported only a weak sense of belonging to their university, felt that they were excluded from their community because of their financial circumstances. Males felt this sense of exclusion more than females. Although the report does not break the survey results down by IMD quintiles, it does contain specific quotations from students who felt that they did not belong because they were working class or that they felt excluded because they lacked the resources to join in student community activity.

Social action hubs in the heart of the community in which our students reside should therefore help to reduce costs and build a sense of community. In the Wonke/Pearson report more students said that making more friendships at university would help them to feel a greater sense of belonging than said that joining more clubs would help.

## Intervention Strategy 4 Attainment

**Objective 4.1:** UCB will look to increase attainment rates for “BAME Male & Black Female graduates” to 76.8% by 2030/1.

### 4.1 Academic Tutors Impact of on Attainment

## Addendum 1 – Impact of Student Engagement Team Interactions on Attainment

This analysis is an addendum to the Student Engagement report produced by Lance White in January 2022. This analysis looks at the impact of student engagement alerts and support on attainment.

### Methodology

This analysis looks at alerts and support provided between 18/02/2021 and 07/05/2021. Average module marks before (semester 1 20/21) and after (semester 2 20/21) the support/alert have been used to look at change in attainment.

Modules that run across both semesters have been excluded from the averages as their marks are attributed to semester 2 but could have assessments across the year and could skew the findings. Initial marks have been used in the semester 1 averages to avoid including resits that may have taken place in semester 2, while semester 2 uses final marks which includes resit results. Students that made a submission between 18/02/2021 and 07/05/2021 have been removed. Analysis only includes September starts and students with no modules in semester 1 or 2 have been excluded. Withdrawn or deferred students, students on placement and Hong Kong block students have also been removed.

Students have been split into 4 groups; Supported, Attempted Support, Alert Only and General Population. 'Supported' students received support from the engagement team, the 'Attempted Support' includes students where the engagement team contacted them but either did not hear back or the student declined support, 'Alert Only' is where the student had a low engagement alert but no contact and 'General population' is a sample group matched to the supported group from the remaining students in 20/21 to make the groups more comparable (similar percentage of students for each gender, ethnicity groups and level of study). However, it worth noting that the unmatched general population and the matched population sample did not differ much in their results.

Engagement ratings before and after support/alert have also been compared. The average rating before support was based on the 4 weeks before 18/02/2021 while the average rating after support was based on the 4 weeks after 07/05/2021. Ratings have been coded for analysis (0 'None' – 5 'High').

### Analysis

Looking at average module marks, all students saw a decrease in mark in semester 2. However, students in **the attempted support group saw the largest decrease of 6 marks, supported and alert were similar between 3 and 4 marks and the general population group had the smallest decrease of 2 marks.**

Figure 6 - Average Module Marks for each group

Group	No. of students	Average Semester 1	Average Semester 2	Change
General Population	876	52.13	49.91	-2.22
Alert Only	376	49.34	45.53	-3.81
Attempted Support	99	38.65	32.55	-6.10
Supported	78	44.00	40.38	-3.62

The most likely explanation for some of the decline in scores across the board in semester 2 is an increase in non-submissions. There were 68 students in the above groups that had 0 module marks in Semester 1 and 179 students in semester 1. When non-submissions are removed General population saw a decrease of 0.74, Alert only decreased by 1.98, Attempted support decreased by 4.38 and Supported decreased by 0.51.

Splitting by level, those at level 4 saw only a 1 mark decrease while students receiving support had a decrease of 2, Alert only had a 4 mark decrease and Attempted had a decrease of 9 marks. At level 6, students who received support had the smallest decrease of 2 marks, while attempted support decreased by 3, General population decreased by 4 and alert only decreased by 12. There were very few students at level 5 in the supported and attempted support groups (6 and 8 respectively), so these findings have not been compared.

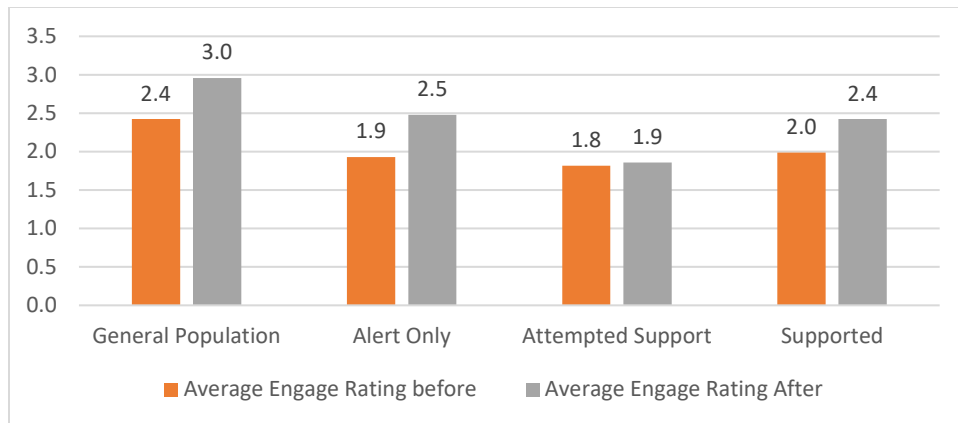
Interestingly, when split by foundation and first degree, the change in marks for supported students was similar (3-4 marks), but the attempted support foundation students saw a decrease of 7 while the BSc/BA students decreased by 5. **Generally, foundation students' marks were lower than BA/BSc students, but particularly in the supported group where there was a difference of 13 marks.**

Figure 7 – Average marks by group split by Foundation and BA/BSc



Looking at the average engagement ratings before and after the support period, **General population, Alert only and Supported groups were all similar with an increase in rating by 0.4-0.6** (around half a rating). Attempted support only increased by 0.1 by comparison. It is worth noting that students could have had increased engagement directly after receiving support or an alert, but the time periods used in this analysis mean this would not be picked up if the interaction was early in the time period. These alerts are similar to those used in Nudge theory which are known for their short-term impact on behaviour ([Weijers & Koning, 2020](#)).

Figure 8 - Average Engagement by group



Is the impact statistically significant?

The average mark data was not normally distributed (non-parametric) so a normal mixed-design ANOVA could not be conducted and there is no statistical test available in this situation. This analysis has used the method suggested by researchers to [align and rank](#) the data to normally distribute it and then conduct the ANOVA. Following a nonparametric mixed-design ANOVA, there was a significant effect of time (pre/post support or alert) and a significant effect of the groupings (both  $p < 0.001$ ), however **there was not a significant interaction between time and grouping ( $p > 0.05$ )**. **These findings were the same even when non-submissions were removed.**

This means that the general decrease in score across semesters is significant and the difference in scores between the groups is significant, but the change in score over time between the groups is not significant - **the support and alerts did not make a statistically significant difference to module marks**. This is not surprising as the difference Attempted support and Supported pre and post marks was relatively small. While a couple of marks could make a difference if the student was borderline between classifications, looking at module marks generally it's a small amount. As small effects need larger sample sizes, it is possible that the statistical analysis needs a larger sample size to pick up on the small impact on module marks. The sample size for the Supported group only just met the margin of error threshold.

Other considerations when looking at the findings are that the logic behind **the student engagement team improving scores is based on improving engagement which in turn improves attainment (as found in previous reports)**, however a similar engagement improvement was seen in all groups.

### Conclusion

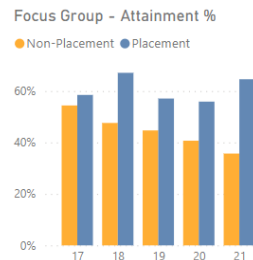
Looking at average module marks the Supported students appeared to maintain their mark average better than the Attempted support group, however the changes were likely too small to be statistically significant.

**It is recommended that the findings of this analysis are treated with caution and revisited once a second year of data has been collected** and that the analysis considers the types of support given (academic, wellbeing etc.). **Additionally, to look at the impact of alerts on engagement, a separate analysis which looks at short-term impact should be commissioned.**

## 4.2 Placements

### HIRED - Placements

The below chart outlines attainment for the focus group split by those who had a placement and those who did not. This does not include those where placements are mandatory as part of the course such as Health programmes.



## 4.3 Peer Mentoring

Yamtov, D., Plunkett, S.W., Efrat, R., and Marin, A.G. (2017) Can Peer Mentors Improve First-Year Experiences of University Students? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* 2017, Vol. 19(1) 25–44 London: Sage

This US study provides Type 3 evidence that mentoring helps improve students sense of integration and support at University.

Collings et al (2014) [The impact of peer mentoring on levels of student wellbeing, integration and retention: a controlled comparative evaluation of residential students in UK higher education](#) Higher Education Volume 68, pages 927–942, (2014)

This study provided Type 3 evidence from a UK University as to the impact of peer mentoring, and demonstrated a positive impact on student integration and suggestions improvements in the intention to stay at University.

Millward and Ferriera (2023) [The Ethnicity Gap in the West Midlands](#) Aimhigher

This report, based on research undertaken with six West Midlands universities, including UCB, looked at lessons learned from attempts to tackle the ethnicity awarding gap across the West Midlands. Based on survey data from the participating institutions and student data, this study also analysed intersectionality with factors such as IMD, sex and disability.

## Intervention Strategy 5 Progression

**Objective 5.1:** UCB will look to increase progression outcomes of those eligible for free school meals to 65% by 2030.

### 5.1 Warwick Award

[Link to Warwick Award.](#)

## 5.2 Reverse Mentoring

Waddington et al (pre-publication) [Leaving egos outside: A 'reverse mentoring' study of BAME psychology students and senior university leaders](#) University of Westminster

Waddington et al's study is a very small scale study (5 participants) so can only provide indicative findings, but does suggest positive impacts of reverse mentoring (students mentoring academic staff) for improving student outcomes, including work readiness. It is also believed to help staff understand the challenges faced by underrepresented groups effectively.

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References are listed by section. In relation to the Intervention Strategies, references for the corresponding section of Annex B are listed together with any references in the main body of the text.

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### Intervention Strategy 2 Continuation

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# Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University College Birmingham

Provider UKPRN: 10000712

## Summary of 2025-26 entrant course fees

\*course type not listed

### Inflation statement:

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree		N/A	9250
Foundation degree		N/A	9250
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND		N/A	9250
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree		N/A	9250
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years		N/A	1385
Other	*	N/A	*

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

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

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree		N/A	6395
First degree	Online fees	N/A	5800
Foundation degree		N/A	6935
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND		N/A	6935
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

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

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

# Fees, investments and targets

## 2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University College Birmingham

Provider UKPRN: 1000712

### 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	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£362,000	£344,000	£361,000	£364,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£1,565,000	£1,648,000	£1,709,000	£1,773,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£115,000	£105,000	£105,000	£105,000

**Table 6d - Investment estimates**

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£167,000	£162,000	£173,000	£176,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£41,000	£40,000	£43,000	£44,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£154,000	£142,000	£145,000	£144,000
<b>Access activity investment</b>	<b>Total access investment (£)</b>	<b>£362,000</b>	<b>£344,000</b>	<b>£361,000</b>	<b>£364,000</b>
Access activity investment	Total access investment (as % of HFI)	3.9%	3.5%	3.6%	3.4%
Access activity investment	Total access investment funded from HFI (£)	£362,000	£344,000	£361,000	£364,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£70,000	£94,000	£94,000	£94,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£1,495,000	£1,554,000	£1,615,000	£1,679,000
<b>Financial support investment</b>	<b>Total financial support investment (£)</b>	<b>£1,565,000</b>	<b>£1,648,000</b>	<b>£1,709,000</b>	<b>£1,773,000</b>
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)	16.7%	16.9%	16.8%	16.8%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£115,000	£105,000	£105,000	£105,000
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)	1.2%	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%

# Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University College Birmingham

Provider UKPRN: 10000712

## 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	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
To eliminate the difference between the sector proportion of students with disabilities and those enrolled at UCB with known disabilities	PTA_1	Access	Reported disability	Disability reported		Collaboration with Student Guild, Into University (partnering with University of Warwick), and Aimhigher West Midlands. To identify the focus groups, a comparison was made between the percentage of UCB entrants vs the sector, to identify lower % disabled students than sector. The gap was then split over 9 years and applied to baseline as exponential targets. The sector data was from HESA Student Full Person Equivalent (FPE) v1 (years 2019-21).	Yes	HESA publications (please include details in commentary)	2021-22	Percentage	12.4	14.7	15.3	16.1	17
	PTA_2														
	PTA_3														
	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	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
To eliminate the difference in continuation rates between males of specified ethnicities and all other students by 2030/31	PTS_1	Continuation	Intersection of characteristics	Other (please specify in description)	Other (please specify in description)	Target group is male students of the specific ethnicities stated in the aim. Comparator group is all other students at UCB. Collaboration with Student Guild. A stepwise binary logistic regression was conducted to identify characteristics with an impact on continuation and then modelling was used to estimate probability of student groups continuing. Exponential targets were set by splitting the gap between the focus groups and the sector by applying to the baseline across a 10 year period.	Yes	The access and participation dashboard	2020-21	Percentage	71.6	76.7	78.8	81.2	83.9

