

Access and participation plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

Ensuring equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education has been at the heart of Royal Holloway, University of London since it first began, being one of the very first institutions in the UK to give women access to higher education. This Access and participation plan details how the College will continue to deliver the vision of our founders over the next five years, ensuring equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups across the student lifecycle.

1. Assessment of performance

A high proportion of degree entrants to Royal Holloway are from state schools (84% in 2017-18 [source: UK performance indications, HESA], and in 2018-19, the following number of new UK students from underrepresented groups joined Royal Holloway [source: internal data] :

- 121 students from POLAR₄ Quintile 1 (5% of the UK cohort)
- 891 BAME students (40%)
- 272 Disabled students (12%)
- 121 Mature students (5%)
- 12 Care Leavers (0.5 %)

The tables in each section below show a summary of gaps that exist at each stage of the student lifecycle for students in each underrepresented group. Following the approach used in the OfS Access and participation data released in March 2019, the tables show a comparison between two groups which are shown in the Split 1 and Split 2 columns, with the gaps for Years 1-3 showing the difference in percentage points between the 2 groups.

For Access and Attainment Year 1 is 2015-16, Year 2 is 2016-17 and Year 3 is 2017-18. For Continuation and Progression Year 1 is 2014-15, Year 2 is 2015-16 and Year 3 is 2016-17

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

For this group of students we have included both POLAR₄ and IMD as different measures of underrepresentation and deprivation. We note that both these indicators show that the largest gaps are for Access and for Attainment, and have set targets accordingly.

POLAR₄

Stage of lifecycle	Split 1	Split 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Is the gap stat sig in latest yr?	3 year trend	OfS KPM
Access	Q1 18 year olds in population	Q1 18 year olds at RH	12.5	12.1	12.8	Yes	↑	●
Access	RH Q5	RH Q1	33.3	34.5	38.1	Yes	↑	●
Continuation	RH Q5	RH Q1	4	-	-1	No	↓	●
Attainment	RH Q5	RH Q1	-3	-7	9	No	↑	
Progression	RH Q5	RH Q1	10	9	-3	No	↓	

Access

Students from POLAR₄ Quintile 1 are currently underrepresented at Royal Holloway and this is a clear area for intervention & focus, particularly as the gaps are widening and as this is a Key Performance Measure (KPM) nationally for the OfS. We note that the sector level gap between Q1 and Q5 is 18.3 percentage points and we are committed to reducing the College gap for the least represented students, as reflected in our targets.

It is, however, worth noting that, “there are very few areas of London that are POLAR₄ quintile 1 or 2” [source: OfS website FAQs]. This has implications for Royal Holloway as internal data shows that 42% of our students between 2012-13 to 2018-19 were based within 25 miles of the College, with a large proportion coming from London. It is therefore our intention to investigate other methods of identifying disadvantage to support POLAR₄ and to provide an increased

understanding of disadvantage in our local context. We are pleased to note that the OfS is “actively exploring the use of Free School Meal and household income data as well as the development of intersectional measures of equality” [source: Regulatory Notice 1, paragraph 104], which will support our understanding of disadvantage in our context.

Our internal applications data shows that there are no significant gaps between students from Quintile 1 and students from all other quintiles throughout our application process. However there is a small, relatively consistent gap in the percentage of applicants that receive offers, of around 3 percentage points. This is an area we are investigating in order to fully understand the root cause of the gap so that we can implement an effective strategy to address it going forwards.

Success

Non-continuation

The gap in terms of continuation between Q5 and Q1 students is small, and was negative in 2016-17. Although this is an OfS KPM, it does not appear to be a significant issue for the College at present, and the HESA UK Performance Indicators show that none of our young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods in the last two years of data did not continue following year of entry.

Attainment

The gap between Q5 and Q1 students was negative for 2015-16 and 2016-17, indicating that students from Q1 were more likely to achieve a good honours degree than their Q5 counterparts, however in 2017-18 the gap widened to 9 percentage points and this has therefore been flagged as a target area for the College.

Progression to employment or further study

The progression gap has narrowed over the last 3 years and was negative in 2017-18. It does not appear to be a cause for concern at present, however we continue to monitor progress in this area.

IMD

Stage of lifecycle	Split 1	Split 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Is the gap stat sig in latest yr?	3 year trend	OfS KPM
Access	Q1 18 year olds in population	Q1 18 year olds at RHUL	15.1	15.3	14.5	Yes	↓	
Access	RH Q5	RH Q1	22.9	22.1	23.2	Yes	↑	
Continuation	RH Q5	RH Q1	4	2	4	No	→	
Attainment	RH Q5	RH Q1	15	10	19	No	↑	
Progression	RH Q5	RH Q1	6	6	5	No	↓	

Access

There are notable gaps in terms of access for students from the most deprived areas identified by the IMD. These are statistically significant and although the gap between 18 year olds from IMD Q1 in the population and those at Royal Holloway has decreased slightly, the gap between Q1 and Q5 students at the College has widened, and this should be an area of targeted intervention.

Our internal applications data shows that students from Q1 apply to us in lower numbers than those from other IMD quintiles, and are 10 percentage points less likely to be made an offer on application than students from Q5. They are also less likely to accept an offer once made, with the result that 16% of Q1 applications result in enrolments, compared to 22% of Q5 applications. As with the POLAR4 applications data we are reviewing our applications process to make sure we understand the reasons for these differences so that they can be addressed as we move forwards.

Success

Non-continuation

The gap in continuation is relatively small compared to other gaps for this group of students, and has not increased over the last three years. However compared to other groups within the College it is one of the largest gaps for continuation and, given the vulnerability of this group of students, this is an area to be monitored going forwards.

Attainment

The gap of 19 percentage points between the most and least deprived students, although not statistically significant, is a cause for concern and is a target for the College.

Progression to employment or further study

Students from Q1 are less likely than their counterparts in Q5 to progress to employment or further study, forming part of a pattern of under-achievement for this group of students.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Stage of lifecycle	Split 1	Split 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Is the gap stat sig in latest yr?	3 year trend	OfS KPM
Access	Asian 18 year olds in population	Asian 18 year olds at RH	-6.4	-11.8	-12.6	Yes	↓	
Access	Black 18 year olds in population	Black 18 year olds at RH	0.5	0	-0.6	No	↓	
Access	Mixed 18 year olds in population	Mixed 18 year olds at RH	-2.5	-2.7	-2.2	Yes	↑	
Access	Other 18 year olds in population	Other 18 year olds at RH	-0.4	-1.3	-2.1	Yes	↓	
Access	RHUL White ethnicity	RHUL Asian ethnicity	58.7	45.7	41.3	-	↓	
Access	RHUL White ethnicity	RHUL Black ethnicity	70.1	62.0	58.2	-	↓	
Access	RHUL White ethnicity	RHUL Mixed ethnicity	68.1	60.3	57.3	-	↓	
Access	RHUL White ethnicity	RHUL Other ethnicity	72.1	63.5	59.7	-	↓	
Continuation	RH White ethnicity	RH BAME ethnicity	1	1	0	No	↓	
Attainment	RH White ethnicity	RH BAME ethnicity	17	15	11	Yes	↓	
Progression	RH White ethnicity	RH BAME ethnicity	1	1	3	No	↑	

Access

As can be seen from the table above, in terms of access the gap in the latest year's data is negative for all 4 of the ethnic groups, indicating that the percentage of 18 year olds from these groups who enrolled at Royal Holloway is higher than the percentage of 18 year olds from each of the groups in the population. Whilst this is also the case for the sector generally, the gaps at Royal Holloway indicate a higher level of enrolment for these groups than for the sector, with the exception of black students (see further details below). We can also see that the gap between white students and those from other ethnic groups has reduced within our student community over the past few years for all groups, reflecting our commitment to a truly diverse and inclusive student community.

Success

Non-continuation

We are pleased to note that over the last few years the gap in continuation between BAME and white students has been extremely low, and in the most recent year it was zero.

Attainment

The gap in attainment between BAME and white students is 11 percentage points and is statistically significant, although it is narrowing over time and is 6 percentage points lower than it was in 2015-16. It is also below the sector level of 13.2 percentage points. However the College is committed to continuing to drive down and eliminate this gap, and has implemented a number of initiatives for this as detailed in our strategic measures.

Structural and unexplained factors impacting attainment

We are aware that there are a number of different factors which may have an impact on the attainment gap and work is ongoing to ensure we understand and address these. Analysis of student degree classifications using internal data has identified that there are structural factors which may go some way to explaining the gap, including disparities in entry qualifications between BAME and non-BAME students. For example, for students graduating in 2018, 52% of BAME students entered with A-levels compared to 76% of non-BAME students. However it is clear that this does not provide a full explanation, since for the same cohort there was a 13 percentage point gap between BAME and non-BAME students awarded a first or upper second class degree for those entering with AAB at A level, and a 17 percentage point gap for those entering with ABB at A level.

In addition, work exploring the relationship between ethnicity and gender has been undertaken in some areas, with initial findings suggesting that outcomes for BAME students may differ for male and female students. Further investigation is ongoing to ensure that these results are understood and adequately addressed.

It is also apparent that there are other unexplained factors at work, which include the sense of belonging, overall satisfaction, and whether students are commuting or not. The percentage of BAME students who commute rather than

living locally is much higher than for non-BAME students (45% in the most recent year according to internal data, compared to 12%), and we are working to understand the impact of this. A recent internal survey highlighted that BAME students have a considerably lower overall satisfaction rate than their non-BAME counterparts (79% compared to 90%) and further work is being carried out to ensure that we understand the reasons for this and work to address them. A Royal Holloway Students' Union project in conjunction with The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) is currently underway conducting research on inclusivity and BAME student experience. We will work with the SU to understand and implement its findings as part of our activities for this group of students. Details of how we are seeking to address these issues is provided in the Strategic Measures section.

Progression to employment or further study

The gap for progression for BAME students is small although it has risen from 1 percentage point to 3 percentage points over the 3 year period. Due to its small size this is an area of observation rather than focus at present, although as noted later in the plan, our activities to support progression to employment are developed with consideration of the needs of all underrepresented groups.

Individual ethnic groups

In order to ensure that we do not overlook areas of inequality we have also assessed the performance of individual ethnic groups. For Asian, mixed and other ethnic groups the main area of concern is **Attainment**, in line with BAME students in general at Royal Holloway and also nationally. The gaps are as follows: 11 percentage points for Asian students, 15 percentage points for black students and 10 percentage points for both mixed and other students.

However for black students we can see that gaps also exist at other points of the student lifecycle in terms of Access, Attainment and Progression. Regarding **Access**, although our intake of black students is in line with the percentage of black 18 year olds in the population, it is below the sector average intake by 5.4 percentage points. Whilst the gap is not large, and has narrowed over the last three years, this continues to be an area of focus as detailed in the Strategic Measures section in the **Targeted interventions for other underrepresented groups** section. For **Attainment** the gap is as stated above, 15 percentage points, and is also a Key Performance Measure for the OfS. Although we note that this is 8 percentage points lower than the sector-level gap which is 23.1 percentage points, we acknowledge that the gap should not exist, and accordingly this has been identified as an Attainment target for the College. In terms of **Progression**, the gap is also 15 percentage points and although the gap has varied considerably over the past 3 years and relates to a relatively small number of students, the rate of change has ensured that this is a Progression target for the College.

1.3 Mature students

Stage of lifecycle	Split 1	Split 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Is the gap stat sig in latest yr?	3 year trend	KPM
Access	21 and over UG in English HE sector	21 and over UG at RH	21.6	21.8	21.0	-	↓	
Access	RH under 21	RH over 21	89.4	88.8	86.4	-	↓	
Continuation	RH under 21	RH over 21	14	17	5	No	↓	
Attainment	RH under 21	RH over 21	17	13	10	No	↓	
Progression	RH under 21	RH over 21	6	-6	-3	No	↓	

Access

The percentage of mature students at Royal Holloway is considerably lower than the percentage of mature students in the sector (by 21 percentage points) and the majority of our students join us aged 18, although the gap between young & mature students has reduced slightly over the past few years. Whilst we would like this gap to be smaller, we understand that the low proportion of mature students entering the College is mainly due to certain intrinsic qualities which may limit our attractiveness to mature students. These are: the subject areas in which we have expertise; the fact that the mode of study for all undergraduate programmes is full time rather than part time; and our location outside of London.

Nonetheless, we continue to monitor progress and further develop our understanding of the barriers that may exist for mature students in our context in order to reduce this gap. For example, following analysis of internal applications data we have identified a number of gaps in the success rates of mature applicants compared to those of young applicants, most notably in terms of the percentage of applicants who receive offers, where the gap is around 22 percentage points. As a result we are planning to review our entry qualifications for mature learners.

Success

Non-continuation

We are pleased to note that the continuation gap for mature students has dropped considerably over the last 3 years and is now at a relatively low level. The HESA UK Performance Indicators show a 9.8% non-continuation rate for mature students in the most recent year of data, which is below the HESA benchmark of 13.1%. It is important to note that this non-continuation rate refers to only 10 students, however we are aiming to continue to improve this further.

Attainment

The gap between students under 21 and mature students who achieve a 'good honours' degree is 10 percentage points. This has decreased over time but continues to be an area of focus.

Progression to employment or further study

Rates of progression are excellent for mature students at Royal Holloway, who are more likely than their younger counterparts to secure highly skilled employment or go on to further study at a higher level following graduation.

1.4 Disabled students

When we look at the data for disabled students and students with no known disability, we can see that in terms of access the gap between students has decreased over the past few years, and in comparison to the sector there is a negative gap. At all other stages of the student lifecycle the gaps are small and decreasing, as shown in the table below.

Disability	Split 1	Split 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Is the gap stat sig in latest yr?	3 year trend	KPM
Access	Disabled UG in English HE sector	Disabled UG at RH	0.0	0.4	-0.6	-	↓	
Access	RH no disability	RH disabled	74.2	73.4	69.6	-	↓	
Continuation	RH no disability	RH disabled	4	0	2	No	↓	
Attainment	RH no disability	RH disabled	4	-4	1	No	↓	●
Progression	RH no disability	RH disabled	3	3	1	No	↓	

Access, Success and Progression to employment or further study

Once we disaggregate the different disability groups, we can see that there are areas where the gaps are larger for two specific groups of students; those with mental health conditions and those with other or multiple impairments. All stages of the student lifecycle are considered together for these students in the paragraphs below.

For students with mental health conditions, the gap for **Access** and for **Attainment** has been negative for the past 3 years, indicating that these are not problem areas for this group of students. However in terms of **Continuation** and **Progression** we can see that there are gaps, of 4 percentage points for Continuation and 15 percentage points for Progression. Although the number of disabled students overall is quite high, the number of students with mental health conditions is relatively small (60 in 2017-18). However due to the fact that there are gaps at more than one point of the student lifecycle, and as the Progression gap is quite large, we have identified Progression as a target for this group.

For students with other or multiple impairments there are no significant gaps for **Access**, **Continuation** or **Progression**, but the **Attainment** gap is higher (at 5 percentage points) than for any other group of disabled students and is accordingly an area of concern. We are aware that the Attainment gap for Disabled students is a Key Performance Measure for the OfS, however due to the small numbers of students in this group (40 in 2017-18 and fewer in previous years) and to the fact that although the gap exists it is not large, this has not been identified as a target for the College.

1.5 Care leavers

Data for this group of students is not included in the OfS data dashboard and very little information exists in the public domain, making it difficult to compare ourselves with the sector. However we are aware of the recent 12by24 report released by the Centre for Social Justice, which lists enrolment rates for care leavers at all UK universities for 2016-17. The percentage of care leavers varies across the sector from 0.05% to 3.08%, with 83% of institutions having less than 1% care leavers, and with Royal Holloway at 0.35%. We recognise that more needs to be done to encourage care leavers to enter higher education, and will continue to address this via our inclusive practice access activities, our contextual offer scheme

and our one-to-one work with care leaver students. Once students have joined us we offer a full programme of support for care leavers, as detailed in the strategic measures section.

Access

The number of applications from care leavers is extremely small when compared to overall applications (less than 0.5%) which makes it difficult to make meaningful judgements.

However with this in mind we can see that the percentage of care leaver students who apply and are then offered a place has been lower than the general percentage for some years, but that the gap has narrowed considerably and in 2018-19 it was just 3 percentage points. Similarly in terms of care leaver students who are offered and go on to accept a place, this has also been below the general level but in 2018-19 exceeded it by 1 percentage point. We can then cautiously conclude that although numbers are small, those applying have almost the same success and conversion rate as all other students.

For **Success** and **Progression** it is very difficult to draw meaningful conclusions due to the small number of students in this group, however students are offered tailored support and encouragement on an individual basis throughout all stages of the student lifecycle. This includes advice on finances, accommodation and studies to enable them to continue with their course wherever possible. With regard to **Continuation** we are delighted that all of the students that joined us in September 2018 have continued through to the end of their first year of study.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR₄) and ethnicity

In terms of gaps between student groups, those for low-participation neighbourhoods and ethnicity are generally the largest for the College and are also (for POLAR and black ethnicity) areas of national focus as highlighted by the OfS Key Performance Measures. Accordingly we have looked closely at the intersection between low-participation and ethnicity and have identified the following gaps:

Access

The largest gap in terms of access for intersections between low-participation and ethnicity is for white students from the lowest participation areas (9.8 percentage points in 2017-18). This group has been flagged as underrepresented at a sector level in the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) report, "Working Class Heroes" (published February 2019). As detailed in our strategic measures, we aim to reach students with this specific intersection through an inclusive practice approach to our access interventions targeted at low participation neighbourhoods.

Success

Non-continuation

The gaps in terms of continuation are smaller, and are not an area of immediate concern.

Attainment

When looking at attainment it is clear that this is considerably lower for BAME students when compared to outcomes for white students, irrespective of their POLAR₄ quintile. This area has already been identified as a target in the BAME section above.

Progression

When looking at the intersection of these student groups in terms of Progression the results are complex and do not show a clear or consistent pattern of inequality. This is an area for further research and investigation. However it is heartening to note that progression for both white and BAME students in the lowest participation areas has increased consistently over the last 3 years and is now at a higher rate than students from quintiles 3/4/5, as indicated in the POLAR₄ section above.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

Parental background in Higher Education

The College annually reviews the rates at which different groups of students progress through the applicant cycle in order to consider and develop appropriate support mechanisms required to ensure access. Internal data shows that students with no parental background of Higher Education are less well represented at firm acceptance and enrolment stages than in the applicant pool, and convert less well from offer holder to firm acceptance than those who do have a parental background of Higher Education. Evidence suggests that one intervention that can improve such low conversion rates at firm acceptance and enrolment stages is a contextual offer, whereby applicants meeting set criteria receive an offer at one grade below the standard offer for the programme. The College's contextual offer scheme has recently been reviewed and, following these findings, now includes having no parental background of Higher Education as one of the eligibility criteria.

Low performing schools

Students attending a low performing school are an important group to support through our access and participation measures, with 18% of all new entrants in 2018-19 being from this group. Analysis of entry tariff data shows lower average tariff points for students in this group than the College average over the last four years, and this group do not progress through the applicant cycle at the same rate as other students. Whilst not specified as a target group, the College has a number of strategic measures in place as detailed below to ensure support for this group in access and participation.

Commuter students

Another important group for consideration in access and participation is that of commuter students. It is understood that this group represents approximately 20% of all students, and that students who commute to College may be from an identified underrepresented group. Research shows that commuter students “are more likely to work part-time, have family or caring responsibilities, be the first generation to attend higher education, be from a lower socio-economic group, have a lower income, be mature and be BAME” [source: HEPI report “Homeward Bound” Dec 2018]. The College is currently investigating the possible intersection between commuter students and underrepresented groups, and developing a number of initiatives in order to better support students who commute to campus.

Other underrepresented groups

The OfS lists “a wider set of student groups where the national data indicates there are particular equality gaps and support needs that can be addressed in access and participation plans” [source: OfS Regulatory notice 1], including carers, people estranged from their families, people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, refugees and children of military families. It is understood that these represent very small student groups at the College, however work is being undertaken to consider how we can better identify and support such students. Whilst these groups are therefore not currently included as a target group for access and participation, the College is committed to supporting students from these groups through their engagement with any number of strategic measures across access, success and progression.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

Ensuring equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education has been at the heart of Royal Holloway, University of London since it first began. The university was founded by two social reformers who pioneered the ideal of education and knowledge for all who could benefit; Elizabeth Jesser Reid founded Bedford College in 1849 and Thomas Holloway, inspired by his wife Jane, founded Royal Holloway College. Both colleges were among the very first institutions in the UK to give women access to higher education. In 1900, the colleges were admitted to the University of London and merged in 1985 to form what is today known as Royal Holloway, University of London, where their vision lives on. Royal Holloway’s Strategic Plan (2013 – 2020) highlights widening participation and equality of opportunity as two of the institution’s core strategic priorities, with diversity being one of the main themes for focus in the development of the new College strategy.

Our vision is for all students, regardless of background, to have equity of opportunity to access and to succeed in higher education, and to progress to the personal, social and economic benefits of higher education.

In order to achieve this vision, we are committed to reducing the gaps between students from different backgrounds, particularly those from low participation neighbourhoods and from the most deprived areas of the country, and for students from different ethnic groups, particularly black students. These gaps are particularly notable in terms of access and attainment, and to a lesser extent progression. Accordingly our aims are as follows:

- To ensure that students from all socio-economic backgrounds are given an equal chance to gain a place at Royal Holloway, and that once here they are supported to ensure that they achieve the best degree possible.
- To provide equity of opportunity for students from all ethnic backgrounds, and to support BAME students, and black students in particular, to ensure that they achieve their full academic potential, and go on to further study or graduate employment once they leave us.
- To ensure that students with mental health conditions are supported in finding graduate employment or going on to further study following their time with us.

2.1 Target groups

Our assessment of performance reveals that the groups with the largest gaps, and where we can have the most impact in terms of equality of opportunity across the student lifecycle, are as follows:

- For access: students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4 Q1) and from the most deprived areas as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD Q1)

- For attainment: students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 4 Q1), students from the most deprived areas as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD Q1) and black students
- For progression: students with a mental health condition and black students

The above groups will therefore be our target groups within the specified stage of the student lifecycle. This means that some existing targets detailed in our 2019-20 Access and Participation plan will be discontinued, the reasons for which are explained further below.

In order to most effectively target students from low participation neighbourhoods in terms of Access, we have identified a need to improve the university readiness of pupils in state schools. One of the ways in which we plan to do this is through collaboration with the Brilliant Club, which is an access charity that exists to increase the number of pupils from underrepresented backgrounds progressing to highly selective universities. Further details are provided in the strategic measures section, and this collaboration forms a second access target in addition to that identified in our assessment of performance.

Targets that have been discontinued

For access, the target to increase the number of state school entrants has been discontinued. This is due to students from state schools not reflecting underrepresentation in access, success and progression. However, we are pleased to note that (as mentioned in the assessment of performance) a high proportion of degree entrants to Royal Holloway are from state schools (84% in 2017-18 [source: UK performance indications, HESA]).

For success, the target to decrease the non-continuation rates amongst all undergraduate students has been discontinued. This will allow the College to target support for non-continuation towards specific underrepresented groups who most require it. This means that the target to decrease non-continuation amongst mature entrants has also been discontinued. The assessment of performance indicates no significant gaps for mature students in continuation and that the non-continuation rate for mature students is below the HESA benchmark. The College does, however, ensure that mature students are considered in all of its inclusive practice intervention to support continuation.

For progression, the target to ensure that the percentage of widening participation students progressing into graduate employment remains above 74% has been discontinued. This will allow the College to target support for progression towards specific underrepresented groups who most require it, specifically students with a mental health condition and black students.

A number of previous output-based targets relating to our access activities (such as the number of pupils attending events) have been discontinued. This is in order to focus on strategic, long term targets and is in accordance with OfS guidance stating that activity level targets should be outcomes-focussed [source: Regulatory notice 1]. Only one activity level target has therefore been included, relating to our collaboration with the Brilliant Club as noted above.

2.2 Aims and objectives

Using findings reported in our assessment of current performance, and with consideration of the national KPMs identified by the OfS, we have identified the following priorities for access and participation within the College at each stage of the student lifecycle:

a) Access targets

We will continue to identify and support students with the potential to succeed at Royal Holloway, regardless of their background, through a range of access and outreach interventions. Specifically we will aim to:

- decrease the gap between students from POLAR4 Quintile 5 and Quintile 1 from 38.1 percentage points to 30.1 percentage points by 2024-2025. It is our ambition to eliminate this gap over time, however we acknowledge that this is a long-standing, sector-wide issue, and that change in this area will take some time. We have set a long-term ambition to halve the current gap from 38.1 to 19.1 percentage points by 2038-39*.
- decrease the gap between students from the most (Q1) and least (Q5) deprived areas (IMD) from 23.2 percentage points to 15.2 percentage points by 2024-2025. We aim to reduce this to 4.2 percentage points by 2038-39.
- support 590 pupils to improve their written communication, subject knowledge and critical thinking skills by 5% or more. This is measured as the percentage change in pupils' performance from academic work produced while undertaking The Brilliant Club Scholars Programme with a researcher from Royal Holloway**

*As discussed in our Assessment of Performance, POLAR is a particularly challenging measure for the College. This is due to the fact that 42% of our students come from within 25 miles of the College, with a large proportion coming from London where the issues with POLAR are well documented. We are however absolutely committed to closing the gaps in access between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5, which is why we have set ambitious targets for the five years of the plan and over the longer term, with a new widening access team dedicated to this cause as indicated in our strategic measures section.

To ensure that we work with and positively impact as many widening participation pupils as possible, the new widening access team will target additional schools that we have not previously engaged with that are within POLAR4 Quintile 1 postcode areas and IMD 1-3 decile areas. Through the new widening access team we will be able to offer a wider suite of activities for a higher number of students, designed to offer something of interest to students from all backgrounds and to encourage participation in Higher Education, and Royal Holloway specifically. We will be reviewing our long term target once this new team is operational and as we review progress against targets. It is our ambition to eliminate this gap over time, however, our predominantly regional (rather than national) recruitment limits our ability to recruit students from POLAR4 Q1, meaning that it will take time to be able to eliminate this gap completely.

** The Brilliant Club is a national university access charity. The academic work that pupils produce on The Brilliant Club's programmes is marked at the start and end of the programme on a university style grading scheme. The difference between the two marks is used to measure the progress pupils make in their written communication, subject knowledge and critical thinking skills. The Brilliant Club has determined that 5% progress during the programme represents a significant improvement in key university readiness skills looking at data from over 10,000 pupils who take part in the programme nationally each year. The target represents the number of pupils measured as having made at least 5% progress after undertaking The Brilliant Club's Scholars Programme with a tutor from Royal Holloway. This is an ambitious target, as the latest historical data from 2017-18 shows that students on the scheme typically achieve an improvement score on their assessment of 1%.

b) Success targets

We will continue to develop targeted and inclusive practice interventions that aim to reduce gaps in the non-continuation and attainment between different student groups. Specifically we will aim to:

- i) eliminate the gap in attainment between students from the highest (Q5) and lowest (Q1) participation areas from 9 percentage points to 0.0 percentage points by 2024-2025
- ii) decrease the gap in attainment between students from the most (Q1) and least (Q5) deprived areas (IMD) from 19.0 percentage points to 10.0 percentage points by 2024-2025, with an aim to eliminate the gap by 2029-30
- iii) decrease the gap in attainment between black students and white students from 15 percentage points to 5.0 percentage points by 2024-2025, with an aim to eliminate the gap by 2029-2030

c) Progression targets

We will continue to support all students into graduate employment or further study, with particular consideration given to the needs of underrepresented groups in our activities. Specifically we will aim to:

- i) decrease the gap in progression between black students and white students from 15 percentage points to 5.0 percentage points by 2024-2025, with an aim to eliminate the gap by 2025-26
- ii) decrease the gap in progression between students with and without a mental health condition from 15 percentage points to 5.0 percentage points by 2024-2025 with an aim to eliminate the gap by 2025-26

3. Strategic measures

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Royal Holloway adopts a whole provider strategic approach to access and participation, recognising the importance of this in ensuring inclusivity and best practice across activities at all stages of the student lifecycle. All access and participation activities are overseen by the Access and Participation Steering Group, which has representation at a senior level from all areas of the university. This group meets monthly to ensure that the institutional approach to access and participation is applied across the student journey, and sets and monitors stretching but achievable targets. The APSG is chaired by the Deputy Principal (Operations), with membership including the Senior Vice-Principal (Education), the Director of Academic Services, the Director of Strategic Planning & Change, the Director of Student Recruitment, the Director of Careers and Employability, and two Students' Union representatives (the Vice-President Welfare & Diversity and the Vice-President Education). This steering group reports to Council and management committees on the development and ongoing monitoring of Access and Participation.

The College has recently introduced an Access and Participation Delivery Group that reports to the Access and Participation Steering Group. The purpose of the delivery group is to bring together colleagues who are involved in the delivery of our activities for underrepresented groups. The group meets monthly throughout the year to join up our activities for underrepresented groups across the student lifecycle, including the way in which we monitor, evaluate and develop these activities. The group includes representation from a number of departments including Student Recruitment, Strategic Planning, Campus Engagement, Disability and Dyslexia Services, Student Advisory & Wellbeing, Careers & Employability, the Centre for the Development of Academic Skills, Educational Development and the Students'

Union. Following a meeting focused on evaluation, the group will be developing an evaluation toolkit for use across our access and participation interventions, as discussed later in the plan.

Alignment with other strategies

Our Access and Participation Plan activity is designed to reduce disparity in access, continuation, attainment, and progression for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. Whilst these target groups may not always align with the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010, we remain committed to ensuring appropriate support is accessible to and inclusive of all students who might benefit from it.

We are proud to have successfully renewed our Race Equality Charter award in February 2019, having been one of only 8 successful institutions to be awarded a bronze level award in the 2015 pilot round of the Charter. We are aware that "having low numbers of BAME staff has been identified as limiting an institution's capability to address the attainment gap" [Source: Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #ClosingtheGap report from UUK and NUS, May 2019]. Since 2015 we have taken positive action to promote racial equality and address institutional barriers, which has been effective; we have seen an increase in the proportion of BAME staff applying to work here, being shortlisted and being promoted. We have also revised our race equality action plan following extensive staff and student consultation and have introduced a career development programme for BAME staff called MANDALA, which was commended as an example of good practice by the Race Equality Charter assessment panel in February.

Our Equality and Diversity Scheme 2018-2021 states the commitment of the College to valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity for all in employment, admissions and in our teaching, learning and research activities. This is reflected in the increase in the proportion of BAME students applying to study here; in 2015-16 BAME students made up 26% of our population, and in 2018-19 internal data shows this as 40%.

The university's dedicated Equality & Diversity Officer was consulted in the process of writing this Access and Participation Plan, to ensure it complies with the Equality Act 2010 and aligns with the institutional approach, and will continue to work with all relevant stakeholders to achieve this. Additionally, representatives from departments working within each stage of the student lifecycle, including the Students' Union, are members of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. This ensures that the Access and Participation Plan and the institutional Equality and Diversity Scheme are complementary and operationalised effectively to ensure efficiency, cooperation and the avoidance of duplication. As detailed in the student consultation section, the Students' Union is also actively involved in both the Access and Participation Steering Group and Access and Participation Delivery Group.

Strategic measures

The following sections detail our inclusive practice and targeted interventions across access, success and progression. Inclusive practice interventions are important in reaching all students, some of whom may not have declared being from an underrepresented group or having a protected characteristic. These types of interventions are also important in ensuring that we continue our success where we are performing above (or on a par with) the sector, as demonstrated in our assessment of performance. Targeted interventions are in place to support specific target groups as identified in the plan, and in some cases some other underrepresented groups where a targeted intervention is appropriate.

Access

Inclusive practice interventions

Research shows that in order to increase access to Higher Education, universities must increase engagement with schools. Between 2015 and 2016, Universities UK convened a Social Mobility Advisory Group, drawing together the expertise of schools, university practitioners and employers to identify practical ways to address inequality in higher education. The group's final report, 'Working in partnership: enabling social mobility in higher education', highlighted the importance of effective partnerships with schools and the need to take local circumstances and requirements into account in order to achieve sustained change. In response to this research, we are proactively moving towards a model of more sustained engagements across all of our activity with schools and their pupils. We have reviewed the Royal Holloway schools liaison strategy with the aim of identifying those schools and colleges where the student population would benefit most from direct and increased engagement with Royal Holloway professional and academic staff. We also recognise that some schools and pupils require higher levels of engagement than others in order for our work to have most impact. To that end, we run sustained programmes of activity at both the school- and the pupil-level.

Our outreach programme includes a range of interventions that are designed to be inclusive for all underrepresented groups and are tailored as appropriate. These include the following:

- Information, advice and guidance through talks and workshops
- Presentations and advice on preparing for university (e.g. UCAS; Student Finance; study)

- School visits from a previous student now at the university
- Residential summer schools for Year 12 students (Arts/Science)
- Royal Holloway Schools Partnership Scheme (sustained engagement)
- Long term outreach scheme for students from underrepresented groups (including mentoring)
- Attainment raising activities: study skills; subject masterclasses
- Teacher briefings on developments in Higher Education
- Parent briefings, advice and guidance
- Pop-up university events including taster sessions
- Working in partnership with academic departments, particularly where there is a low proportion of underrepresented groups
- Working in collaboration with partners, including the Smallpiece Trust (for subject specific residentials) and The Brilliant Club (as noted above, for the Scholars Programme)

The majority of our access and outreach activities are targeted at schools, rather than individual pupils. This is to ensure that we do not isolate or define pupils by one aspect of their background, and potentially make them feel stigmatised within their peer group because of it. To ensure that we work with and positively impact as many underrepresented groups as possible, we target schools using a range of deprivation indicators. These include:

- The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index score of the school's catchment area (IDACI)
- The percentage of pupils eligible for Free Schools Meals
- The percentage of pupils who live in low-participation neighbourhoods (POLAR)
- Whether the school is in special measures (and therefore classed as low-performing)

When working with target schools and colleges, as well as on projects with direct learner applications, we provide guidance to our partners, which requires them to select learners who are eligible for free school meals, whose parents have not experienced HE, care leavers, mature learners and students with a disability. When monitoring attendees at any outreach activity we will also gather data relating to postcode and parental occupation to identify those individual learners coming from lower socio-economic groups and lower participation neighbourhoods. We are also working to build links with the Virtual Schools of neighbouring authorities (specifically Bracknell Forest Council and Ealing Council) in order to identify schools with pupils who are, or have been, in Local Authority Care. This will allow us to ensure the appropriate information, advice and guidance is disseminated to both pupils and teachers when we work with these schools, and that our approach can be tailored to incorporate the needs of this audience.

From September 2019, the College is offering a number of integrated foundation degrees in order to increase access from underrepresented groups. These programmes have lower entry requirements than standard degree programmes, allowing students who have not achieved the required grades for direct entry to enrol for an additional year in order to prepare them for full undergraduate study, participation and academic success. Research suggests that these types of programmes are effective in reaching mature students and those from low participation neighbourhoods [source: HESA, 'Year 0: A foundation for widening participation?'], and we aim to enhance reach to this group through the development of a network of feeder schools and colleges. The programme will be 'integrated' both in the way in which students are embedded and transitioned into their intended department, and in the ways in which academic skills development and confidence is aligned with subject content and teaching via inclusive pedagogies. The effectiveness of the programme will be assessed through the annual review process, which will review progression rates to year 1 of undergraduate degree study and the attainment of students progressing from the IFY compared to those entering degree programmes directly.

Royal Holloway is part of the OFS-funded **National Collaborative Outreach Programme NCOP** partnership, the **Higher Education Outreach Network (HEON)** to improve access to higher education. This is a partnership of ten local institutions which works with students in Years 9 to 13 in eleven wards across Surrey (7 wards) and East Hampshire (4 wards) where HE participation is low overall and lower than would be expected given GCSE attainment rates. Phase 2 of the programme (August 2019 - July 2021) sees the addition of an Outreach Hub offering support to the eleven wards and wider support across the County of Surrey and North East Hampshire.

HEON target students are identified by postcode data from POLAR3 with 4,000 target students throughout the HEON area, in many different year groups and schools. HEON prioritises sustained and progressive programmes of work with these students but also works with whole year groups/other groups of students where there are a notable proportion of target students within them. To date, HEON has delivered over 150 activities to over 3,000 HEON 'target' students and over 10,000 students in total. All work for the Collaborative Outreach Programme is undertaken by Project Officers based at each partner institution. Royal Holloway's Project Officer works closely with both the central project team and Royal Holloway's widening participation team to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication of work.

We also maintain membership of a number of networks which facilitate the sharing of best practice, and the development and dissemination of knowledge and understanding of widening participation. These include the Higher

Education Liaison Officers Association, the National Educational Opportunities Network, AccessHE, and the Forum for Access and Continuing Education. We offer all staff involved in access activities the opportunity to engage with these networks to aid their professional development.

Targeted interventions for students from low participation / high deprivation neighbourhoods

As noted above, students from low participation and high deprivation neighbourhoods are currently targeted through a range of interventions but we recognise the need to develop enhanced support for this group. In order to address the gaps in access for students from these neighbourhoods, the College has committed to invest in a number of new staff posts to comprise a new widening access team. To ensure that we work with and positively impact as many widening participation pupils as possible, the new widening access team will target additional schools that we have not previously engaged with that are within Polar 4 Quintile 1 postcode areas and IMD 1-3 decile areas. Through the new widening access team we will be able to offer a wider suite of activities for a higher number of students, designed to offer something of interest to students from all backgrounds and to encourage participation in Higher Education, and Royal Holloway specifically. A phased approach is being taken in the recruitment of these posts to ensure careful management and effective targeting of activities. This team will focus on pre- and post- 16 activities that target students from low participation and high deprivation neighbourhoods through the following activities:

- 300 additional school engagements per year (talks and attainment raising activities e.g. revision workshops)
- New school based student ambassador mentoring scheme (100 students)
- Expanded residential programme (by 120 students)
- Expansion of long term outreach scheme (by 150 students)
- Additional subject specific taster days and master classes
- Enhanced data evaluation and review of admissions requirements
- New initiatives fund to encourage (internal) school engagement

As mentioned earlier in the plan, we are also working in collaboration with the Brilliant Club in order to target students from low participation neighbourhoods and specifically to improve the university readiness of pupils aged 10 to 17 in non-selective state schools, with the ultimate aim of promoting fair access to higher education. Pupils are selected based on meeting widening participation criteria: eligibility for Pupil Premium; no parental history of HE; living in the bottom 40% of postcodes of the IDACI. During the five-year duration of this agreement, Royal Holloway and The Brilliant Club will partner to recruit, train and place PhD researchers to share their expertise and deliver The Scholars Programme to pupils. Pupils are monitored against six university readiness competencies that The Brilliant Club have identified as supporting progression to highly selective universities. These cover Critical Thinking, Subject Knowledge and Written Communication and are monitored through a baseline and final assignment. Pupils also complete a self-evaluation which measures Motivation and Self-efficacy, University Knowledge and Meta-cognition. Pupils are tracked after completing the programme through UCAS STROBE and HEAT. The Brilliant Club regularly reports on pupil progress to university partners and an independent evaluation conducted by UCAS in 2016/17 found that pupils who completed TSP were significantly (180%) more likely to apply to, receive an offer from and progress to a highly-selective university than pupils in matched control groups who did not complete the programme.

Targeted interventions for other underrepresented groups

It is important that we continue to consider all underrepresented groups when planning access activities, so that we support all groups even if not listed as a target group for access. We do this through a range of measures as follows:

- Targeting schools and communities in West London (where there is a high proportion of BAME students) for sustained outreach interventions
- Providing bespoke and tailored information and guidance regarding the support available for disabled students, and how to access it
- Proactively targeting colleges with Access to Higher Education diploma course provision and offering bespoke information, advice and guidance for this audience
- Providing a specific bursary and individual contact for care leavers to support their transition to university

The assessment of performance also suggests that some underrepresented groups do not progress through the applicant cycle at the same rate as other students. In order to improve this, we will investigate – and take steps to reduce - the possible reasons for lower conversion rates seen by particular student groups at different points in the admissions cycle. For example, we will investigate whether the lower conversion rates of mature students from applicant to offer holder is impacted by our entry requirements for particular qualifications, and how we might enhance our access activities with low performing schools to support conversion from applicant to offer holder by their pupils.

Contextualised admissions

The UCAS End of Cycle Report 2018 states that the most advantaged pupils (in terms of POLAR3 quintile, ethnic group, gender, FSM status, IMD and school type) were 4.58 times more likely to continue to Higher Education than the most disadvantaged pupils, and 15.0 times more likely to attend a higher tariff institution. This disparity has remained

relatively unchanged in recent years and accordingly the College introduced contextualised offer making across all programmes from 2018-19 entry onwards, through which applicants are made a reduced offer one grade below advertised requirements if they fulfil the required criteria. The purpose of the scheme is to set an application into its educational or socio-economic context, allowing the university to take into account additional factors which may have impacted on an applicant's educational achievement to date. The College has recently reviewed this scheme to ensure that it is in line with best practice guidance provided by the (now former) Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA), which provides a broad framework for a wide range of practice currently in use in the sector. The review identified a greater need for triangulation of criteria, as eligibility under the existing scheme includes: those who are care leavers; or mature students; or who meet at least two of the following: attending a low performing school, having a disability, or living in a low participation neighbourhood (POLAR 3 Q1).

As a result of this review and the finding noted in the assessment of performance that applicants with no parental background of Higher Education do not progress through the applicant cycle at the same rate as their peers, the College's contextual offer eligibility criteria has changed. The scheme now includes applicants meeting any two of the following criteria: being a care leaver; being a mature student; having a disability; attending a low performing school; living in a low participation neighbourhood (POLAR 4 Q1); or having no parental background of Higher Education. We note that we do not receive data from all students on their parental background of Higher Education, however we are pleased to be able to further our support for underrepresented groups by including this measure as one of the criteria for a contextual offer. We also note the recent report published by Durham University Evidence Centre for Education that suggests contextual offers could be made at more than one grade below the standard offer without impacting on students' academic performance, and continue to review this scheme to maximise its effectiveness in supporting contextually disadvantaged students. The scheme is currently set at one grade below our standard offer as the Integrated Foundation Degree has been introduced as a pilot in 2019/20 with the aim of providing an alternative route for students with lower entry grades. This has attracted a high number of applicants and we currently have over 150 students enrolled to start in September 2019, of which 49% are BAME students. We will consider our contextual offer scheme alongside a review of applications and enrolments to the Integrated Foundation Degree in December, noting in particular the proportion from underrepresented groups.

Research by the Sutton Trust [Admissions in Context, 2017] indicates that contextual offers are useful in widening access to students from less privileged backgrounds who may have faced educational disadvantage that has impacted on their grades. It follows that such students may not have been able to demonstrate their full potential (i.e. having academic achievements that are not indicative of their abilities for future achievements) and the contextual offer scheme sets out to recognise and support such students in accessing Higher Education and Royal Holloway specifically. We would expect students enrolling at the College who had received a contextual offer to achieve the same attainment rates as those students who entered with (currently) one grade higher at A Level but who did not receive a contextual offer. This type of analysis has not previously been completed, but as part of the revised contextual offer scheme we will review its effectiveness annually to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and to make changes accordingly. This will include reviewing the rates at which different groups progress through the applicant cycle; determining the most appropriate number of grade reductions for the scheme; and comparing attainment rates with entry grades and receipt of contextual offer. Where students who have entered on a contextual offer are not achieving the same attainment rate as their peers, additional support will be provided and changes made to the scheme accordingly.

Success

Continuation: inclusive practice interventions

Internal data shows that the proportion of undergraduate students who withdraw for personal reasons has increased as a proportion of all withdrawals from 14% in 2013 to 30% in 2017. This finding is a concern for the College and indicates the need to provide enhanced personal support to students in order to facilitate their continuation. This is coordinated, developed and evaluated by the Induction and Integration Working Group which aims to ensure a close working relationship between key service providers and academic departments.

As part of this support, Student Advisory & Wellbeing has a team of Wellbeing Advisers who work with students to help them resolve and manage concerns about their personal wellbeing. Support and advice is provided to enable them to continue with their studies and get the most out of University life. Student Wellbeing is reviewing its range of preventative activities and initiatives to further encourage all students to take care of their emotional wellbeing, and works closely with Academic Schools by following up with students who are vulnerable or experiencing attendance and engagement issues. All students who receive academic and attendance warnings are contacted to ensure prompt wellbeing support is offered to them. The Student Wellbeing team is regularly highlighted to students in communications including the weekly Principal's newsletter, and to supporters via the quarterly Parent and Supporter newsletter. An institution wide and holistic wellbeing strategy is being developed which will encompass support for all students and provide a joint approach across departments in promoting good wellbeing.

Royal Holloway's Student Counselling team offers support to students experiencing emotional difficulties which are impacting on their studies or life at university. Students can book one-to-one appointments with a professionally qualified counsellor to discuss any problems. The Student Counselling team also publishes a significant number of self-help advice leaflets and guidance on their student intranet pages. Most students accessing counselling services attend for three sessions and are given the opportunity to return at any time for further support. In 2018 the number of counselling hours was increased and a Counselling intern (part qualified counsellor) was appointed with financial support from the Alumni Fund. Counselling workshops run throughout the year, including Anxiety Management with Mindfulness Practice, and student feedback is regularly gathered on the workshops to assess their content and outcomes. Student satisfaction with this service is high, with an average rating of 3.08 out of 4.00, whilst satisfaction amongst students with the widening participation flag is 11% higher at 3.43. Student Counselling has seen an increase in the number of students accessing their services who have a diagnosis of Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder and, in response to this, all counsellors will be trained in Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) by the start of the 2019-20 academic year and will be offering DBT skills group workshops.

Continuation: targeted interventions for other underrepresented groups

The Institute for Public Policy Research published a report in Sept 2017 stating that "In 2014-15, a record number of students (1,180) who experienced mental health problems dropped-out of university, an increase of 210 per cent compared to 2009-10". In order to support the continuation rates of students with a mental health condition at Royal Holloway, dedicated support is co-ordinated through Student Advisory and Wellbeing (SA&W). Students with a pre-existing condition are invited to register with D&DS who provide:

- Home to Holloway (pre arrival familiarisation event)
- College reasonable adjustments which are communicated to departments
- Support to apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and ongoing support from the D&DS mental health advisor for students who are not eligible for DSA

Any student who has concerns over their mental health following arrival and who has not previously disclosed, can access College services. Support provided will include access to counselling services, support for low level anxiety and stress, help with referral to appropriate services (internal and external) and ongoing support until completion of a referral.

Work has been undertaken through 2018 to date to map mental health pathways and to design clear and consistent ways for students to access mental health services both from College and the NHS (and other related agencies). These include: CBT (Talking Therapies) counselling, clinical psychology, eating disorders support, psychiatry, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT – the NHS psychology service), community psychiatric nurse, occupational therapy and other specialist teams off campus through Surrey and Berks mental health trusts. The revised and simplified pathways are aimed to be launched from start of session 2019-20. Clinical outcome reporting is built into this pathway and will be used in conjunction with progression data to establish whether this is having a positive impact on continuation.

The College has invested in training for staff and Mental Health First Aid training for front line staff has commenced. This will continue to be rolled out across campus to help staff identify and support students. In October 2018 the College started providing training on the early identification of vulnerability in students for department managers. The College is in the process of reviewing mental health awareness E-learning training with a view to making this mandatory for all staff. SA&W will be providing training for new School administration staff, and hall life officers and assistants. D&DS are compiling a mental health awareness module for the College teacher training programmes. By 2019-2020 all College Counsellors will be training in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and will be able to delivery DBT skills workshops for students. In addition, SA&W continue to work with external providers in relation to support services and training opportunities, for example, Surrey Public Health & the Samaritans.

The Students' Union is committed to improving the welfare of Royal Holloway students and has actively enrolled a number of permanent staff members who regularly interact with students to receive the Mental Health First Aider qualification, including the VP Welfare and Diversity and VP Societies and Media. Since then, a peer-to-peer mental health awareness training has been introduced to the wider student groups and SU permanent staff members to equip more individuals within the Students' Union to effectively signpost students to the College's Wellbeing team.

We continue to offer support and ensure an inclusive environment for students with a disability at all stages of the student journey. Our dedicated Disability & Dyslexia Service advises both individual learners and academic departments, and aims to ensure that consideration is given to the needs of students with a disability. A number of interventions are in place to support the success of students with a disability, as follows:

- Reasonable adjustments where appropriate including advance lecture notes, permission to record lectures (where possible), and exam access arrangements
- a 'Home to Holloway' pre-arrival familiarisation event, now open to all students with a disability, to support transition into university

- an optional buddy scheme to provide extra help in settling in during their first few weeks
- close collaboration with other departments in support and events, including disability awareness week
- additional library support, including: extended loans; a book retrieval service; support with claiming back DSA printing costs; an assistive technology suite with access to specialist software; and individual appointments with Information Consultants. The library also offer an alternative formats service and students have access to Robobrace software to convert documents into more accessible formats.
- bi-weekly term-time social club (often run by students)
- £200 contribution for the cost of computers for disabled students, where appropriate
- Subsidised accommodation costs, where disability adapted rooms are not available at the lower accommodation fee band
- specific learning difficulty screening service and fund the full cost of a specific learning difficulty diagnostic assessment for all students
- a regular drop-in service for students with a disability (pilot for 2019-20)

The College has recently identified that some students with autism are at risk of becoming isolated during their studies which impacts upon their engagement with their course and the social aspects of university life. It appears that autistic students may not actively seek support in these times of difficulty, with issues being identified late in the academic year. To address this finding, the Dyslexia & Disability Service will be running a pilot programme in 2019-20 which aims to monitor engagement through attendance, meetings with their personal adviser, applications for Disabled Students Allowance and take up of any related support. The pilot aims to identify any difficulties early in the academic year so that measures can be put in place to support ongoing engagement and to ensure continuation of study and progression.

The College also supports the continuation of care leavers by providing an individual contact who offers pastoral support throughout their studies. Once they have enrolled the opportunity is provided for all care leavers to meet with the designated contact during their first week at university. All care leavers are emailed at key points during the year to maintain consistent contact and support throughout their time at university. The College ensures that care leavers are fully supported and are advised of the services available to them to provide them with the best student experience.

Attainment: inclusive practice interventions

Our Centre for the Development of Academic Skills (CeDAS) delivers a range of activities, both centrally and in collaboration with academic schools and departments, to ensure students develop the academic skills and literacies needed to maximise their potential at Royal Holloway. In 2019-20, formalised partnership agreements between CeDAS and academic departments will be piloted with the aim of supporting annual strategic planning and enabling evaluation of these activities. A partnership mechanism will facilitate the targeting of initiatives towards departments and cohorts in which attainment or progression gaps are evident, while also allowing for the promotion of inclusive pedagogical approaches.

CeDAS focuses its activities around two core themes in order to positively impact on student success: transition to university and on-course attainment. The first aims to familiarise students with the academic skills and literacies required at higher education level, to support them in identifying their own developmental needs and to provide initial practice in applying the skills needed to navigate the challenges of university study and make a successful transition to Royal Holloway. The second aims to enable students to be successful in their academic attainment and progression throughout their undergraduate degree, ensuring students develop the academic skills and literacies needed for step changes between years of study.

A range of activities are delivered centrally and within academic departments to enhance student success, including lectures and workshops, drop-in sessions, 1:1 tutorials, and mentoring schemes. There is a strong level of engagement in these activities by students from a widening participation background. For example, in 2017-18 14.6% of attendees across all opt-in activities and 21.5% of attendees at 1:1 tutorials and drop-in sessions had a widening participation flag (compared to approximately 9.9% of the Royal Holloway UG student population).

Attainment: targeted interventions for students from low participation neighbourhoods

The assessment of performance indicates a gap in the success rates of students from low participation and high deprivation neighbourhoods at the College. Given the current gaps in access for these groups, it is understood that these represent a relatively small group of students. Whilst it is difficult to target this group for a specific intervention to support attainment, Campus Engagement run targeted activities to improve the pre-arrival experience and transition into life at Royal Holloway for these students. This includes peer-to-peer mentoring and proactive sign-posting to relevant College services via the telephone before students arrive and in person once they have started on their programme. In addition, the team invite the target groups to attend a pre-arrival event on campus in order to manage students' expectations about university life and ensure that they feel more prepared to start at Royal Holloway, both academically and socially.

These interventions also aim to provide qualitative insight into the student journey of these different groups, what the barriers to their participation are and the types of support services they require.

The level of engagement with students from each target group is monitored and compared to other segments of the same cohort in order to determine the impact of different activities on the students' success. For instance, all targeted undergraduates are allocated a peer mentor prior to the start of the academic year and both the mentor and mentee are expected to report back on the success of this relationship. This allows the team to measure the effectiveness of the scheme and compare students who have accessed peer mentoring with those who have not.

Attainment: targeted interventions for black students

During 2018-19 we have been piloting a Student Success scheme which has focused on attainment for black students, alongside other BAME students. Data revealed that Mathematics, Biological Sciences and Management had the largest attainment gaps and a team led by CeDAS worked with these departments to gain greater understanding of the issues. The scheme is itself part of the Closing Attainment Gaps project, a multi-institution collaboration organized by Advance HE. We have also as an institution signed up to the UUK 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #closingthegap' and will be following the five stages of these recommendations:

- Strong leadership – work on the attainment gap will be lead as part of the Senior Vice Principal (Education) brief
- Conversations about race and culture – actions to continue this will be formed via the Equality and Diversity Committee and through our Race Equality Charter Mark action plan
- Racially diverse, inclusive environment – in 2018 Academic Board debated the issues around the 'decolonialise my curriculum' movement and each department produced an action plan to address the diversity of their curriculum, with plans being reviewed annually at a senior level within the College, and with Student Union involvement. We are delighted that our History department was singled out as having 'the most diverse range of courses, with 18 black and ethnic minority modules in second and third year' amongst 25 top UK universities [Source: The Tab] and we aspire to this high level of diversity across all departments.
- Evidence and Analysis – Strategic Planning and Change produce an annual report on student achievement and this will continue to inform our plans
- What works – we will take the best practice from the pilots we have run this year and integrate them into the practices of all departments and Schools.

As mentioned in the Assessment of Performance section, we are aware that at present there are both structural and unexplained factors at work which have an impact on the attainment gap, and we are trialling and evaluating ways to address these as part of the Student Success Programme. The School of Management has undertaken further analysis of its attainment gap and has found that:

- drilling down to particular modules enabled it to identify issues with an accounting and finance course and that module will now have revised curriculum and assessment to better address attainment gaps
- there was a large crossover between BAME groups, those entering with BTEC qualifications and commuter students who lived at home, visited campus less frequently and often had caring or work commitments. In order to better support these cohorts the School has reconsidered its first year and has introduced a skills based approach to support students with varying academic backgrounds through personal tutor skills sessions, condensed the timetable to allow students to remove lengthy breaks on campus and created commuter group peer learning groups which can meet during downtime on campus, emulating the informal study groups and networking opportunities which exist for those living in university accommodation.

During the coming year we will roll out these approaches with the new School structure across campus and will actively monitor the attainment gap to see what progress has been made, evaluating current activities and implementing new ones as appropriate.

Attainment: targeted interventions for other underrepresented groups

We recently completed the implementation of a mainstream initiative, Student First. The focus of this programme was to improve the student experience, to enhance learning support and to increase academic-related advice, assisting students in navigating the learning experience across the student journey. This was set up to improve our systems and processes to continue to deliver an outstanding student experience, which is aligned with the expectations of our students today. As part of this initiative, a diverse student panel entitled 'Royal Holloway 100' was established to act as student voice to influence decisions being made at the College. This panel is made up of 100 students from a wide range of backgrounds, including mature students, international students, and part-time students. The RH 100 panel provide feedback through large focus group sessions throughout the year, providing student voice on a range of College issues including the services provided in the new library and the new timetabling system. This panel will continue to provide input to many College wide initiatives to ensure that they benefit the entire student population but particularly those students from underrepresented groups.

The outcomes of Student First and the first year of the 'Royal Holloway 100' student panel resulted in a series of initiatives to support raising attainment and degree outcomes in ways which address the needs of all students but particularly those from under-represented groups within Higher Education. This includes the establishment of an enquiry management tool and an attendance monitoring system, as well as the implementation of a student dashboard which allows personal tutors access to live data showing student details, attendance and attainment. It is currently being considered whether it is appropriate for this dashboard to include details of widening participation background, and how consent is obtained from students to use the data in this way, to enable personal tutors to signpost relevant support. We are also currently looking into additional support that can be implemented within departments where there are gaps in the progression and attainment of BAME and mature students, as well as implementing a major initiative to diversify the curriculum. This includes embedding academic support integration and inclusive design (content, sources, teaching approaches, assessment approaches) in curriculum development. These activities should further support the student satisfaction, success and ultimately degree outcomes for underrepresented groups and the entire student body.

A number of interventions are being established to support the skills development of students from widening participation backgrounds. All students will automatically be enrolled onto an online academic skills development package, and we are also investigating the design and production of a series of academic skills signposting and development resources for applicants preparing to study at Royal Holloway. With access to further information on student backgrounds through the Student Dashboard, personal tutors will be able to encourage students from widening participation backgrounds to opt-in to taking advantage of the pastoral and academic support offered by trained Peer Guides. These are trained students that help guide new students through their first year at Royal Holloway, supporting small groups of new students in the same department or faculty.

Financial support

Bursaries

The College offers a number of bursaries to support students who are most likely to require financial support during their studies. The table below provides an overview of the bursaries available to undergraduate students at Royal Holloway from 2020-2021 to 2024-2025. Following a review of these bursaries, we have extended the residency eligibility from England to United Kingdom to ensure that we reach all students who may benefit from financial support. The full Terms and Conditions for these bursaries can be viewed online at <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/fees-and-funding/undergraduate/scholarships-and-bursaries>

Name	Amount	Payment	Eligibility
Royal Holloway Bursary (Band 1)	£1,500	Provided each academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinarily resident in United Kingdom • Household income verified by SLC as below £25,000 • Eligible for a full maintenance loan
Royal Holloway Bursary (Band 2)	£500	Provided each academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinarily resident in United Kingdom • Household income verified by SLC as between £25,000 and £30,000 • Eligible for a partial maintenance loan
Access Entry bursary	£1,000	Provided each academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinarily resident in United Kingdom • Household income verified by SLC as £25,000 or below • 21 years old or over at commencement of degree • Completed a QAA recognised Access to Higher Education diploma
Care Leavers bursary	£5,000	Provided each academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinarily resident in United Kingdom • 18 to 25 years old • Looked after by the state for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and was in care on their 16th birthday

The purpose of these bursaries is to ease financial constraints and enable students to focus on their studies. In order to assess the effectiveness of financial support in meeting this purpose, we recently ran a survey using the OfS financial support evaluation toolkit. The results indicated that, overall, the financial support offered by the bursaries is well received by students. Over 85% of students surveyed agree that the bursary enables them to concentrate more on their studies, positively affects their mental health, makes their student experience more satisfactory, allows them to participate with fellow students and helps them balance commitments such as work, study and family relationships. The findings of the survey were generally very positive, however the survey also revealed that 57% of students did not know they would be eligible for a bursary or award and 78% did not know how much they would receive prior to starting their course. This indicates that there is gap in communication to these students, and the Student Administration team are investigating ways to further promote bursaries and raise students' awareness of them. There were also a few

suggestions made by students in the Band 2 bursary group that it would be helpful to receive the bursary earlier in the year, which is being investigated as a potential change for next year. We will also be using the OfS interview tool in 2019-20 to facilitate a more in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of financial support packages from the perspective of students while they are studying.

Alongside the survey we also conducted an internal analysis of retention and good degree rates between students with household incomes <£25,000 who did not receive a bursary, those in the same household income group who did receive a bursary, and the general population of UK domiciled students. Our analysis indicated that students with a household income of <£25,000 who received a bursary performed slightly better than those in the same income group who did not receive a bursary, but slightly worse than the general population of UK domiciled students. In response to this finding, a new scheme is currently in development whereby Peer Guides telephone students from underrepresented groups at key points in the year when withdrawal rates tend to be highest. The aim of this scheme is to support progression from Year 1 to Year 2 amongst underrepresented groups who may benefit from speaking with another student. We have recently completed analysis of our financial support using the OfS statistical analysis toolkit. Unfortunately, due to a very small sample size in the control group it has not been possible to test statistical significance in continuation or attainment rates using the tool. We are currently investigating alternative methods to analyse the data source in order to determine the impact of the bursaries, perhaps through using the nearest control group. We are also aware that the survey and internal analysis results do not indicate if the bursary is targeted at the right student groups, for example estranged students. For this reason, we will be working over the coming year to investigate if other underrepresented groups may also benefit from financial support. This will involve analysing application rates by different groups to financial hardship support and analysing withdrawal rates that are stated as being for financial reasons by different groups.

Other financial support

Undergraduate Royal Holloway students in receipt of a bursary also have access to a Hardship Fund, should they face financial difficulties. This is advertised on the Student Intranet and promoted by personal tutors and the Student Services Centre. Student Advisory & Wellbeing produce a leaflet each academic year which details all of the services that we provide along with contact information. We have allocated a fund of up to £100,000 for this purpose for the 2020-21 academic year.

The College offers an alumni bursary, which provides Royal Holloway graduates with a discount on postgraduate tuition fees. This discount equates to 15% of tuition fees, which provides additional financial support to students from underrepresented groups. In 2018-19 30% of Home/EU students who received an alumni discount were classified as widening participation students (having received a bursary in their final undergraduate year). This indicates that the alumni bursary is effectively supporting students from underrepresented groups as well as the entire student population.

Alongside our monetary support, our Financial Welfare team offer advice and guidance on a variety of financial matters, from Student Loans and other funding opportunities, through budgeting and debt management, to part-time employment whilst studying, and accessing benefits. This advice helps students to manage their money effectively and appropriately, to ensure that their financial situation does not impact on their studies or wider university life, and to help support retention, progression and attainment rates in the students they consult with.

The College has also identified alumni interest in providing financial support to students from underrepresented groups, and is working closely with potential donors to enhance our support in this area and to reach further underrepresented groups, such as those living within a low participation neighbourhood.

Progression

Inclusive practice interventions

Royal Holloway's Careers & Employability department is part of the Careers Group, University of London. We offer comprehensive careers education, coaching and guidance, and deliver a wide variety of career inspiration and employer recruitment events across the year. Our delivery is informed by principles of accessibility, and a stated intention to build students' social capital by encouraging them to engage with our alumni community. We target our employer programming to optimise inclusion and the widest engagement, for example, by organising the recent inclusion-themed Spring Careers Fair in March 2019 attended by 203 students. Much of our employer programming is delivered at times which make it more accessible to commuter students. Royal Holloway also contributes to and benefits from federal Careers Group activities which disseminate diversity and disability employment news and resources to students and staff.

In 2018 the College agreed an Employability Strategy which brings together College services and support to create a coherent careers achievement plan for all students. The whole-institution approach to improving student employability is underpinned by the development of a set of numerically based Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These enable monitoring of progress towards the strategic goals for all departments who work to improve student employability. The contributors include the Students' Union, Academic Departments, Alumni Relations, Sports and Volunteering and the

Careers & Employability Service. Some of these KPIs relate specifically to under-represented groups. Review of achievement of KPIs is undertaken by the College Employability Committee each academic year.

The benefits of work experience are well documented, with a recent High Fliers report [The Graduate Market in 2019] stating that “**over a third of recruiters** who took part in the research repeated their warnings from previous years – that graduates who have had no previous work experience at all are **unlikely to be successful** during the selection process for their graduate programmes.” In order to support our students in their preparation for employment, the Careers and Employability Service provides a micro-placements scheme for first or second year students across 14 academic departments, in recognition of the fact that obtaining relevant work experience is more challenging for students without personal and soft networks. Central support in the sourcing of placements is therefore provided, and this is monitored and evaluated to ensure equality of opportunity for all qualifying students. Financial aid is provided for travel expenses and, in some cases, accommodation. This scheme now impacts over one in three of the eligible undergraduates across 14 academic disciplines. The students who have completed placements show a 15% increase in proportion of entry into highly skilled work / study outcomes when compared to others in the same departments who have not completed placements.

In order to ensure equality of opportunity and that all students are considering their career at an early stage in their time at Royal Holloway, the College has, for the first time in the 2019 academic year, set a requirement for Personal Tutors to have a structured conversation with all undergraduate students about careers in each year of their time at Royal Holloway. The purpose of these conversations is to stimulate students to think about their employability and encourage engagement with the Careers & Employability Service. The reach of the programme will be monitored with the Careers Registration data. The College has also recently introduced a scheme by which all undergraduates will be able to take a year out between their second and third year to engage in one or more of 3 different activities: study abroad; volunteering; and professional work. Published data shows very clearly that increased work experience or studying abroad improves progression into highly skilled work or further study, and this scheme aims to enhance the career opportunities of all students.

The College also offers several initiatives aimed at increasing progression to postgraduate study by current undergraduate students at Royal Holloway and elsewhere. These include fortnightly one to one appointments at both our Egham and Central London campuses, which provide students with information related to courses, student fees and funding, the application process, and placement and career opportunities. This service is also offered to prospective postgraduate students currently studying at other institutions or in employment. We also hold a monthly postgraduate visit afternoon where prospective students and their guests can visit to find out more about our postgraduate offering. We offer a range of online options for students seeking information on postgraduate study, which are promoted via targeted digital advertising. This support includes a weekly online chat forum and online postgraduate events where students and staff from a range of professional services are on hand to provide information on postgraduate opportunities. We also provide information, advice and guidance via our attendance at postgraduate study fairs around the UK and our own postgraduate open evenings held at both campuses. Our open evenings offer prospective students the opportunity to speak to staff and students from academic departments and to find out more about all aspects of the postgraduate study experience.

Careers & Employability offers both one-to-one career advice and guidance and group sessions on evaluating and competing for postgraduate study options, including easily accessible Moodle resources. The potential career enhancement from postgraduate study and its links to career pathways was an embedded part of 22 different careers education and inspiration events in 2017-18 ranging from the vocationally specific Careers in Teaching forum to the more generic session entitled “Planning Your Career: Further study”. Postgraduate study is frequently a topic in our tailored career education delivered to specific disciplines in collaboration with academic departments.

Targeted interventions for black students

The gap in progression between black students and white students may be partially explained by the gap in attainment for this group, as the graduate prospects score was higher for those black students who had achieved a 2:1 or 1st (65%) than those who had achieved a lower grade (58%). Plans to improve the attainment gap are addressed elsewhere in the plan, the positive impact of which will likely improve the progression gap amongst black students. However, according to our survey of students entering their third year in September 2018, black students are less predisposed to go on to further study than white students (17% vs 28%). This finding is concerning, particularly given recent reports that a postgraduate qualification increases long term earnings [Source: Graduate Labour Market Statistics 2017, DfE. Median salaries for 16-64 year olds are shown as £39,000 for postgraduates and £33,000 for graduates]. We are therefore seeking to improve the effective targeting and promotion of our progression activities to encourage black students to engage with these activities. This will include, for example, ensuring that activities to support progression (for example taking a study, volunteering or work experience year) are promoted effectively and in such a way that reflects the diversity of students participating in such activities and the positive outcomes that they have experienced. It will also include ensuring that

progression activities attract and are attended by a diverse range of speakers and employers with whom students from underrepresented groups can relate.

Further promotion of progression activities will be targeted towards black students during Black History Month, when a month long online campaign will run to increase awareness of Careers & Employability Services and raise career aspirations. This will be promoted through multiple channels (including student societies) with content that relates to the theme of the month. The content will consist of incentivised activities that expose students to information from alumni role models, encourage student reflection on their state of career readiness and highlight the support available from organisations that help black students enter different professions.

Targeted interventions for students with a mental health condition

Following our assessment of performance, in 2019 there will be a joint review of all Careers & Employability Service and volunteering activity with Student Advisory & Wellbeing (comprising Disability & Dyslexia Services, Student Wellbeing, Student Counselling, Financial Welfare and International Support & Inclusivity) to ensure that progression activities are designed with maximum accessibility for students with a mental health condition. Currently, in collaboration with the Student Advisory Office, Careers & Employability provides targeted employability support for students with a disability. This includes additional one-to-one careers advice (with careers staff and employers) and application coaching to students beyond our standard provision. A quiet hour is also included at careers fairs in order to enhance accessibility and support students who prefer a quieter environment.

From September 2019, the collaboration between the Careers & Employability Service and Student Advisory & Wellbeing will be formalised with a partnership agreement. The activities and effectiveness will be reviewed each year. The agreement will cover:

- a. Setting up an integrated approach to publicising careers and volunteering activities to students registered or engaged with Student Advisory & Wellbeing.
- b. Setting up a process for improved provision of information about Careers & Employability Service activity to staff within Student Advisory & Wellbeing for use with clients.
- c. Removing possible anxiety associated with attending a careers appointment by setting up a structure to deliver tripartite careers advice 1:1 sessions between Student Advisory Staff, careers staff and a student. Due to the complex needs of disabled students the appointments will be 30 minutes rather than the standard 20 minutes.

One focus for the partnership agreement will be a review of progress in the career readiness of students with a disability as assessed by the Careers Registration data. Additionally, a training session for all careers staff will be run by Student Advisory & Wellbeing once per year to advise on how best to support individuals with a mental health condition on a one-to-one basis and to provide information relating to increasing access to employment.

In the 2016-17 academic year, the Careers & Employability Service's micro-placement scheme was reconfigured to maximise support for students with a disability. This scheme invites students to detail whether any adjustments are required to allow them to participate in the candidate selection process, and most promotional materials have the disability confident branding. Students registered with our Disability and Dyslexia Service are automatically invited to the interview stage of the selection process if they have attended all the training sessions, irrespective of their scores in the early assessment processes. We are also aware of the important influence that parents and supporters can have on students' participation in activities, and as such we will be working with Marketing & Communications to enhance our information on progression activities that are advertised to this group.

3.2 Student consultation

The Royal Holloway Students' Union (RHSU) plays an active role in widening access and participation and the wider equality and diversity agenda, with both the Vice President Welfare & Diversity and Vice President Education on the Access and Participation Steering Group, and the President and the Vice President Welfare & Diversity on the Access and Participation Delivery Group. The College has an excellent relationship with the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers, and we used this to our advantage in inviting student input via the Students' Union. The involvement of SU Sabbatical Officers has been enormously helpful in forming our plan, and they have played the role of 'critical friend' to suggest improvements to plans and activity. They have played an active role in providing feedback on the plan at all stages of its development, in particular with regard to:

- the importance of disaggregating BAME students and ensuring clarity of thinking when addressing the needs of different ethnic groups.
- highlighting that our understanding of the BAME student experience as a whole is vital if we are to have an impact on the BAME attainment gap, and that focusing purely on the academic side is not sufficient. This has informed our thinking with regard to activities being planned to reduce the BAME attainment gap and we will assess and adopt as appropriate the findings from the collaborative research project with The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) when these are available in the Autumn.

- our plans for evaluating activities going forwards – we are delighted that the SU is setting up student collectives for underrepresented groups in Autumn 2019 and intend that these will be actively involved in providing feedback and evaluation as we move forwards with our plan.

As noted above, this year the Students' Union have conducted research alongside The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) into inclusive student engagement. This research has been solely student-led and the Students' Union will be providing recommendations following this research in the BAME student experience. Moreover, RHSU have recently changed their constitution, through student input, that includes greater support for underrepresented groups in the form of student-led Collectives. These Student Collectives will bring students together to work on issues affecting them, with RHSU resource, as well as forming Executives to work closely alongside the full time Sabbatical Officers.

As noted above, the Students' Union has been actively involved in the development of this plan, and the President and Vice President Welfare & Diversity will also have a second opportunity to receive and comment on the plan as members of Council. In future years, students from underrepresented groups will be involved in the ongoing delivery of the plan through our newly approved constitution detailed above. The Students' Union has formed Student Collectives for underrepresented groups (ranging from academic groups such as PGT and PGR students, to LGBT+, Women, BAME, Disabled, Commuters etc.). These groups will be student-led and are included in the Students' Union constitution whereby they are guaranteed funding (rather than depending on membership), and will form part of 'Executives' that will surround each sabbatical officer. Once these are up and running, the aim is for these Executives to be involved in the ongoing monitoring and delivery of the Access and Participation Plan.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

The strategic aims and objectives of this Access and Participation Plan have been informed by our assessment of performance, which has been developed using a range of high quality evidence including the OfS dataset, internal data and research. We are committed to ensuring continuous improvement in the evaluation of the strategic measures underpinning our aims and objectives to ensure that they remain effective in meeting their aims and ultimately our overarching vision. We ensure continuous improvement through our evaluation strategy, which has been informed by our evaluation self-assessment and is detailed further below.

Strategic context

The Access and Participation Steering Group (APSG, discussed earlier in the plan) provides a mechanism for an overarching, whole provider strategic overview of evaluation of access and participation programmes. This group, which includes representation from academic and professional services staff and from students, meets monthly and oversees the ongoing delivery of our Theory of Change (Appendix 1). This involves monitoring various measures as illustrated in our Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (Appendix 2) to determine whether strategic measures are effective in meeting their desired outcomes. This ensures effective evaluation of the impact of those areas where we are investing heavily, allowing us to determine where changes need to be made in order to achieve our long term objectives. Reporting to this group, the Access and Participation Delivery Group (APDG) also meet monthly, with evaluation a standing item on the agenda. This group ensures that evaluation activity is coherently maintained across the whole programme of activities. It does this by providing an opportunity for regular conversations about evaluation and for honest reflection on the effectiveness of activities, challenging those involved in the delivery of access and participation programme to continually review and improve practice.

Staff resource has been allocated to evaluation of access and participation programmes within Strategic Planning in order to co-ordinate a cross-institution approach to evaluation. Departments delivering activities for underrepresented groups also discuss evaluation at a local level (across access, success and progression), and the two groups enable the sharing of best practice across the College. Staff responsible for delivering access and participation activities attend a range of professional development activities and events to enhance their evaluation skills and understanding, including OfS workshops and conferences on evaluation, such as the Gathering Data and Measuring Outcomes (Stand Alone) event. The College is also a member of the University of London group for heads of widening participation, who meet regularly to share ideas and best practice. These mechanisms ensure that there is a whole institutional approach to access and participation, with evaluation activity coherently maintained across the whole programme of access and participation activities.

Programme design

Our access and participation programmes are underpinned by clear objectives that link to our overarching Theory of Change (Appendix 1). Programme design is informed by evidence of the impact of activities both at local and national level, for example through reviewing own evaluation and sector best practice and evidence on what works for the specific intervention. This exists at a local level by staff delivering access and participation activities, but will be joined up and enhanced through the APDG and through dedicated support from Strategic Planning regarding effective practice, monitoring and evaluation. Each programme contributes to defined deliverables as indicated in our Theory of Change,

including a range of measures of impact as relevant to the activity such as enrolment and attainment rates and changes in self-reported skills, attitudes or behaviour determined from pre- and post-event questionnaires. The method of evaluation (and required data collection) is known from the start of activities, and work is underway to further develop consistency of approach.

Evaluation design

Our access and participation programmes are underpinned by an understanding of what works in context and of the processes involved in achieving our overarching strategic vision. We evaluate and amend them on an ongoing basis as relevant following previous evaluations and research literature on the effectiveness of such programmes. This means that our programmes are underpinned in all cases by narrative evaluation, and in most cases by empirical evaluation. It is often not possible to undertake causal evaluation due to the ethical considerations in selecting only some students to be able to take part in a programme. However, we continue to consider how we might gather such evidence in future. A summary of our evaluation design for each stage of the student lifecycle is included below:

Access

Evaluation of access and participation activities is undertaken through analysis of application and enrolment figures and through pre- and post-event feedback. In order to evaluate the impact of our access activities on knowledge and attitude, each activity or programme of activities is designed with up to three desired outcomes in mind. Self-evaluation questionnaires and checks for understanding are appropriately tailored to measure those outcomes, and applied within and between activities to track short- and long-term changes. The impact on participant behaviour is evaluated by, again, identifying the desired outcome of an activity during the design process. We utilise self-evaluation questions between activities to understand changes in behaviour relating to participants' education, such as improved approaches to studying. We also track application and enrolment figures for individual students who have been involved in any of our activities, as well as tracking the proportion of applicants and enrolled students from engaged schools who are from underrepresented groups. Through our evaluation framework we have been able to improve future activity, for example in the introduction of new talks or amendments to programme design.

Success

Evaluation of access and participation activities is undertaken using a range of methods as appropriate to the specific intervention. The impact and effectiveness of CeDAS academic skills and literacies activities are evaluated through student feedback obtained through questionnaires, focus groups, and college-wide feedback mechanisms such as student-staff committee meetings. Academic programme leaders meet with CeDAS academic skills convenors to review the effectiveness of interventions, for example by reviewing any changes in student attainment following the implementation of new interventions. Additionally, CeDAS teaching staff regularly review their pedagogical approaches to ensure these are based on evidence from the educational research literature and aligned with policies and priorities for supporting widening participation students. In comparison, the student success strategy is evaluated through analysis of progression and attainment rates alongside feedback from student focus groups during the year, and services provided by Student Advisory & Wellbeing are evaluated through feedback from students and network members. In terms of financial support to promote success, the College has started to use the financial support evaluation toolkits provided by the OfS (previously undertaken independently), including a survey, an interview framework and a statistical analysis tool. Our financial support evaluation is detailed further on page 17.

Progression

Evaluation of access and participation activities is undertaken through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The Careers & Employability Service tracks attendance at events using student ID numbers, which enables analysis of which events are most attractive and useful to specific groups of students. Alongside student feedback from events, this enables changes to be made as appropriate to ensure that events are effective. In each year of study, all students complete a survey at (re)enrolment about their career attitudes and work experience (the Careers Registration Programme), enabling comparative reports across departments on students' self-declared level of work experience and self-assessment of their stage of careers thinking and desired employment sector. This data will soon be available to all personal tutors and senior departmental staff in order to further encourage students to engage with such events. From July 2019 this survey will also be completed at graduation, enabling us to measure the effectiveness of our programmes through students' self-reported career readiness as they enter the labour market. The College will annually review destinations data from the Graduate Outcomes survey to determine whether there are gaps in progression for under-represented groups and will review provision accordingly. The findings will be reviewed at institution level by the Employability Committee (including student input) and at departmental level in the process of constructing joint Careers & Employability Service / Academic Department careers programme plans in partnership agreements.

Evaluation implementation

A range of quantitative and qualitative research methods are used across the College's access and participation programmes in order to collect data on outcomes and impact. The Evaluation and Monitoring Framework (Appendix 2) details the schedule for evaluation, with outcomes reported to the APSG. Our approach to data complies with GDPR

requirements on data collection and sharing, and procedures are in place for addressing ethical considerations via the APDG and APSG. Where possible, data is collected for access and participation activities at an individual participant level, allowing changes to be captured in the outcomes of individuals as well as the group or cohort. This includes capturing student ID numbers (where appropriate) which can be used to track the outcomes of participants over time, for example in progression and attainment. The College understands the limitations of self-reported data, and as such considers qualitative data alongside quantitative data to maximise understanding on the outcomes of activities. The APDG will be considering measures to overcome such limitations, for example through using surveys that are pre-populated with an individual's personal details (e.g. name and date of birth). Such measures should enhance the ability to track individuals through the student journey and to avoid self-report errors. The budget for evaluating specific activities is proportionate to the specific activity, with less evaluation resource required for long standing interventions compared to new and intensive innovations. Risk analysis is not yet undertaken for evaluation but will be developed via the APDG.

Learning

The APDG has been established as a mechanism through which evaluation findings and results can inform practice through reflection and sharing. As detailed further below, this group is in the process of designing a new evaluation framework to enhance learning opportunities from access and participation programmes. This will include standardised impact evaluation reports that will encourage staff to recognise and share any issues or limitations in the research design, and a qualitative evaluation tool that allows insight into which specific design factors have led to the most impact. Evaluation findings inform improvements to access and participation interventions each year, such as in the introduction of new schools presentations, the addition of peer guide support via telephone, and the enhanced advertising of bursaries. Activities have also been discontinued where evaluation has implied a lack of effectiveness. We share evaluation results informally with colleagues in the University of London network, but other mechanisms could be in place to further enable such results to influence practice across the sector. We anticipate sharing the new evaluation toolkit with the Evidence and Impact Exchange when available.

Future development

The evaluation self-assessment tool has been useful in considering how current evaluation techniques could be improved. As a result, the APDG is now developing an evaluation framework to enable a consistent approach to evaluation across access and participation interventions that is completed before the start of an activity. This toolkit will:

- outline a systematic approach to data collection and mixed method research
- outline a template for qualitative evaluation feedback that enables understanding of the most and least impactful elements of an activity
- specify a protocol (as agreed by the APDG) regarding the level of resource to be allocated to evaluation
- identify a skills base for undertaking evaluation
- include a schedule of when and how data will be collected and tracked over time
- include a risk analysis template for evaluation
- detail the way in which evaluation findings will be shared, including cross-function reviews of practices
- provide guidelines and templates for:
 - programme design that includes the following sections: objectives; existing evidence of impact; specification of activities (and their purpose); deliverables; success measures based on outcomes and impact (and the reasons for their relevance); benchmarks and targets; and evaluation techniques (narrative; empirical; causal).
 - an evaluation plan specifying: roles and responsibilities; required resources; evaluation activities to be undertaken; budget; plans for oversight of the evaluation; and arrangements for using results
 - an impact evaluation report specifying: findings; limitations of the research design; factors which have caused impact; triangulation of findings; links to existing evidence; sharing evaluation internally and externally; implications of the findings; action plans.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The College operates a holistic, multi-tiered approach to monitoring progress against delivery of the plan that is embedded across the provider. The Principal has nominated an Executive lead for Access and Participation who is responsible for monitoring progress against the delivery of the plan and ensuring the achievement of targets. Reviews of performance are made by the following committees and groups operating at different levels throughout the organisation: Council; its sub-committee, Council Academic Quality Assurance Committee (CAQAC); the Executive team; the Executive lead; the Education Committee; School boards; the Access and Participation Steering Group (APSG); and the Access and Participation Delivery Group (APDG). Council receives annually a report on performance against the Access and Participation Plan and scrutinises its performance with the Executive team. Council's sub-committee, CAQAC, reviews performance data in detail and reiterates back to Council its concerns and other observations about the College's performance against targets for further review. Where progress is worsening, Council will direct the Executive lead to

review resourcing, policy and procedures in the area of concern, ensuring that mechanisms are in place to drive an improvement in performance.

Progress is monitored on a more regular basis through the monthly meetings of the Access and Participation Steering Group (reporting to the Executive Board) and Access and Participation Delivery Group. Appendix 2 details the Monitoring and Evaluation framework used across the student lifecycle that is reported to the APSG. This framework supports the ongoing review of progress against objectives and ensures that activities are developed as necessary to adequately support underrepresented groups. This framework will be further developed by the Access and Participation Delivery Group as part of the new evaluation framework, which seeks to utilise standard evaluation methods across the student lifecycle.

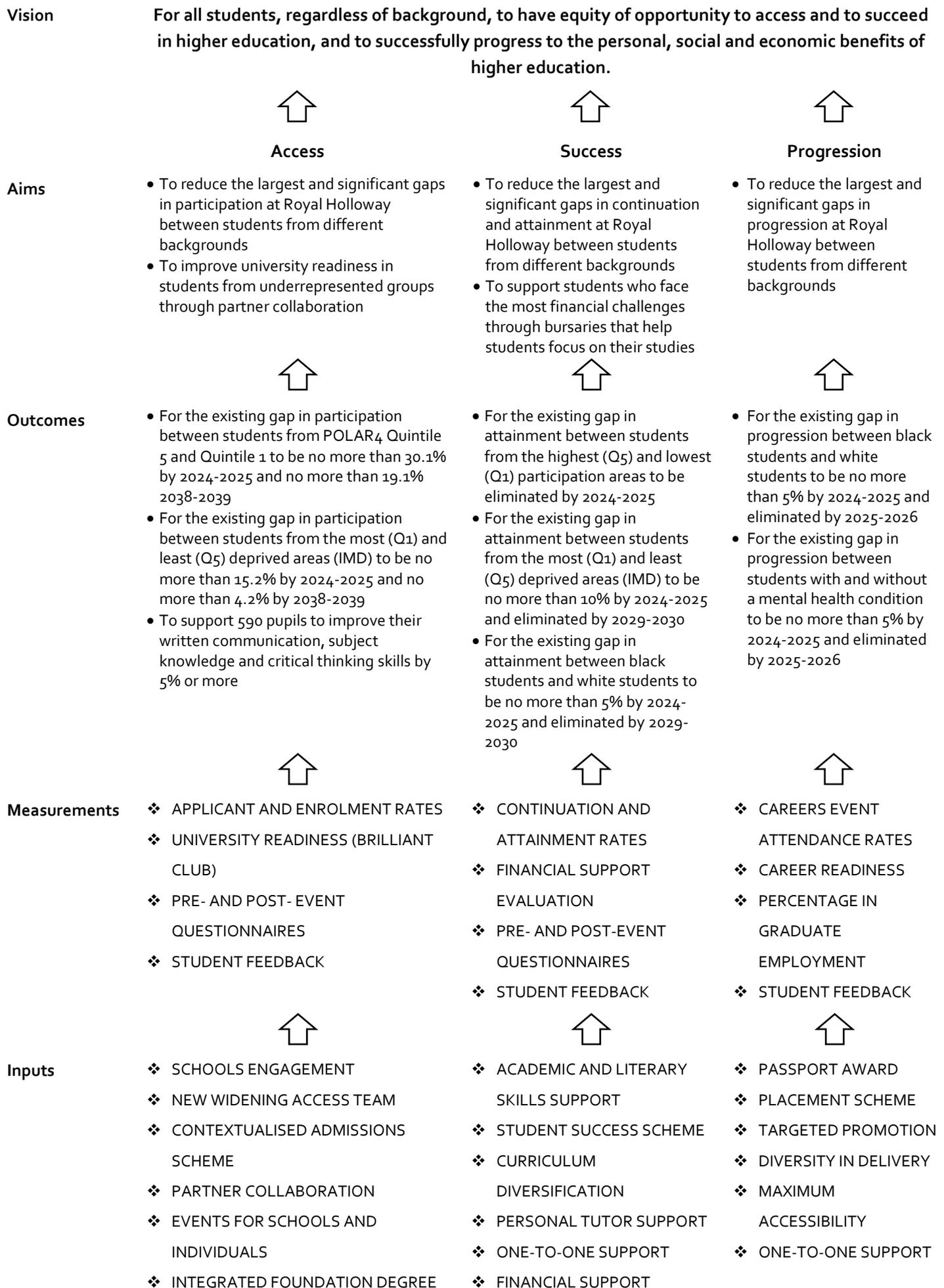
Students are engaged with the monitoring of performance and provisions of the plan in a number of ways. Firstly, members of the Students Union are members of Council and QACAC, and are involved in reviewing and scrutinising performance against targets set out in the APP. Student Union officers are also members of the APSG and APDG, providing the opportunity to input to monitoring progress, and driving improvement, on a more regular basis. As discussed previously, the new Student Union collectives will be actively involved in providing feedback and evaluation as we move forwards with our plan. Feedback on the strategic measures and performance against targets of the APP is also invited through a session with the RH100 student panel, which includes representation from the general student body rather than from underrepresented groups exclusively. We feel that this is important in ensuring that all students are aware of, and engaged in, our ambitious plans to improve access and participation across the student lifecycle.

4. Provision of information to students

We provide all our prospective students with clear, comprehensive and correct information about Royal Holloway, including: our academic programmes, their structure and assessment methods; entry requirements; tuition fees; financial support; and approximate living costs. This information is easily accessible in our printed prospectus and course brochures, and on our website. In addition, we provide all applicants at the point of offer, with a summary of all the key facts relating to their specific degree programme. This information complies with the guidelines as specified by the Competition and Markets Authority. We also send personalised email campaigns to enquirers and applicants, providing timely and relevant information and guidance at different stages of the application process. In addition, we hold numerous on- and off-campus events and information sessions throughout the process to provide prospective students an opportunity to engage with Royal Holloway staff and current students.

Our schools liaison activities include a teachers' conference and regular workshops and briefings. These are designed to ensure that those who are advising students about higher education are able to make informed, accurate recommendations and provide appropriate support. Royal Holloway maintains membership of the Higher Educational Liaison Officers Association to support a collaborative approach to providing clear and accurate information about the opportunities and costs of higher education. We also continue to provide accurate and timely information to external bodies such as UCAS and the Student Loans Company so they can populate their course databases in good time to inform applications. Our approved 2020-21 to 2024-25 Access and Participation Plan will be published on the Admissions section of our website with other policies. This page is easily accessible to both current and prospective students, and will be signposted from the student intranet.

Appendix 1: Theory of Change



Appendix 2: Monitoring and evaluation framework

Stage of lifecycle	Measure	Monitoring technique	Evaluation activity	Review timescale	Outcome responsibility
Access	Applicants	Internal application numbers of underrepresented groups	Analysis of year on year trends in applications	Annually (Sep - Jan)	Student Recruitment
	Conversion	Internal application numbers of underrepresented groups across the admissions cycle, including offer holders, firm offer holders, enrolments and students	Analysis of differences in conversion rates	Annually (Sep - Jan)	
	New entrants	Internal and sector enrolment numbers of underrepresented groups; HESA KPI performance	Analysis of year on year trends in applications	Annually (Jan)	
	Outreach activities	Self-evaluation questionnaires; internal applicant and enrolment numbers	Analysis of participants' awareness, knowledge, attitude, behaviour and attainment; analysis of conversion from participant to applicant or student	Termly (Dec; Mar; Jul)	
Success	Financial support	Internal progression and attainment rates; OfS financial support evaluation toolkit (statistical analysis; student survey and interview)	Internal analysis of retention, progression and attainment data of bursary recipients; OfS statistical toolkit analysis; OfS financial support survey and interview	Annually (Dec; financial toolkit in May)	Strategic Planning & Change
	Non-continuation rates	HESA KPI performance	Analysis of year on year trends in non-continuation	Annually (Jan)	Academic Services
	Progression	Internal progression rates (from Year 1 to Year 2 at the first attempt) of underrepresented groups compared to the student population	Analysis of differences in progression rates		
	Withdrawal	Internal withdrawal rates of underrepresented groups compared to the student population	Analysis of differences in withdrawal rates		
	Good honours degree	Internal good degree rates of underrepresented groups compared to the student population	Analysis of differences in good degree rates		
Progression	Careers activity engagement	Internal participation rates in careers activities, including the Royal Holloway Passport Award	Analysis of participation rates of underrepresented groups	Termly (Dec; Mar; Jul)	Careers and Employability
	Careers attitudes	Self-reported careers attitudes as measured in the Careers Registration Programme	Analysis of careers attitudes of underrepresented groups	Annually (Oct)	
	Graduate employment outcomes	Percentage of students going into graduate employment (Graduate Outcomes) by underrepresented groups compared to the student population	Analysis of differences in graduate employment outcomes	Spring 2020	
All stages of student lifecycle	Impact of financial investment	All above monitoring techniques	Review the outcomes of all activities to ensure that financial investment is targeted appropriately	Annually (Apr)	Access and Participation Steering Group

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0		£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year		£1,850
Erasmus and overseas study years		£1,385
Other	*	*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Royal Holloway and Bedford New College

Provider UKPRN: 10005553

Investment summary

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

Note about the data:

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

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£1,725,000.00	£1,754,000.00	£1,783,000.00	£1,812,000.00	£1,841,000.00
Access (pre-16)	£80,000.00	£82,000.00	£84,000.00	£86,000.00	£88,000.00
Access (post-16)	£1,575,000.00	£1,600,000.00	£1,625,000.00	£1,650,000.00	£1,675,000.00
Access (adults and the community)	£70,000.00	£72,000.00	£74,000.00	£76,000.00	£78,000.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£3,020,000.00	£3,050,000.00	£3,080,000.00	£3,110,000.00	£3,140,000.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£425,000.00	£430,000.00	£435,000.00	£440,000.00	£445,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HF1%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HF1)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HF1)	£21,622,910.00	£21,738,885.00	£21,738,885.00	£21,738,885.00	£21,738,885.00
Access investment	8.0%	8.1%	8.2%	8.3%	8.5%
Financial support	14.0%	14.0%	14.2%	14.3%	14.4%
Research and evaluation	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Total investment (as %HF1)	23.9%	24.1%	24.4%	24.7%	25.0%

