



2019-20 access and participation plan monitoring

Provider impact report

This impact report summarises the progress made by University College Birmingham against targets, objectives and written commitments set out in its 2019-20 access and participation plan. This document is a summary of information submitted by the provider to the OfS. This document is a self-report by the provider only and does not indicate any OfS assessment of compliance.

1. Ambition and strategy

University College Birmingham's ambition and strategy as detailed in the 2019-20 access and participation plan:

The UCB strategy for access and student success covers the whole student lifecycle. Due to the large cohorts of widening participation and under-represented students UCB has to date employed a cross-institution, holistic approach to supporting students to succeed. This is underpinned with our pastoral systems (enhanced individual tutorials and electronic tracking of progress) and academic support systems (through CASE – Centre for Academic Support and English). We intend to continue with, and enhance this work going forward, with a view to improving continuation rates and outcomes for all students, and to compliment this work with specific projects aimed at cohorts of students where there are gaps in continuation, degree outcomes and positive progression.

Our ambition is to close gaps in performance for continuation for male students and those from low participation neighbourhoods, in degree outcomes for BAME students and in positive progression for BAME, mature and those students from areas of high deprivation.

Access

We proactively target our own further education (FE) vocational students to encourage progression onto higher education programmes. In many of our internal Departments within the two Schools the curriculum is organised and planned to promote seamless progression routes in vocational subjects from level 3 to foundation degrees and undergraduate degrees.

Many of our further education students are from 'under-represented' groups that are included in this agreement. To further encourage this progression we provide mentoring by our higher education students to our further education students to improve personal performance and raise aspirations. UCB FE students who progress into HE at UCB will be eligible for the targeted support through the cashless/educational engagement bursary scheme and also by the provision of electronic devices and materials that are specific to their programmes of study to support transition into higher education, and improve access to learning resources. We have also developed a number of higher level and degree apprenticeships to further increase the number of non-traditional entrants and to increase the number of progression pathways.

UCB continues to support schools and colleges from across the Greater Birmingham area at primary, secondary level and Post 16 level. Pupils who progress into higher education at UCB from a select number of these schools and colleges will also be eligible for the targeted support cashless/educational engagement bursary scheme (from this point on the Kick-Start Scheme), and also to electronic devices and materials that are specific to their programmes of study.

We are supporting school improvement and aspiration raising through school board representation in a number of trusts; for example, UCB is a minority sponsor of the Equitas Academies Trust. UCB also has a board representative of the Learning Trust for Excellence (a Cooperative Trust of 7 schools working together in the north of the Greater Birmingham area). Additionally, UCB is a trust member of Brownhills School in Walsall, a predominantly white, working class area of the town with high levels of deprivation. We have also set up an Independent Specialist College with Wilson Stuart School for 19-25 year old learners with high needs.

Actions aimed at specific groups include:

- Increasing work with local schools with high BAME populations.
- UCB works closely with a number of Special Schools to support progression for young people with disabilities. The partnership work with Wilson Stuart Special School continues and from September 2016, 19-25 year old high needs students were enrolled at the recently established

Independent Specialist College, The Hive sponsored by both institutions under the umbrella of the Wilson Stuart University College Birmingham Partnership Trust.

- UCB has a history of supporting mature entrants to access higher education; in particular, the successful Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools programme which is delivered in schools that are situated in some of the areas of highest deprivation within Birmingham. The programmes provide an entry route onto higher education programmes in programme areas related to childhood and education studies.
- Our non-continuation rates for our mature and part-time learners are above benchmark and are therefore looking to pilot the provision of electronic devices preloaded with essential

programme information to support identified cohorts of part-time mature students. The aim of these resources is to support teaching and learning, access to learning when off campus and research activities.

- We will also continue with our Vocational Advantage Scheme which provides a vehicle for intensive work with a number of secondary schools in low participation neighbourhoods; encouraging them to improve vocational programme provision for 14-19 year olds by taking advantage of free support from UCB tutors and involving young people in extension activities to improve their eligibility to progress into HE.

In addition to our longstanding accreditation agreement with The University of Birmingham we are also collaborating on a number of specific projects, many of which are to widen participation in higher education. This new strategic partnership harnesses the distinctive and collective strengths of the two independent universities. In those areas where, together, we believe we can create added value, we have developed a clear shared vision focused on raising aspirations, widening participation, enhancing skills and academic excellence, contributing to economic growth and productivity. Examples of the projects include the development of degree and higher level apprenticeships and developing pathways from further education to higher education.

The University is a founding member of the institutionally funded Aimhigher West Midlands partnership with University of Birmingham, Aston University, Birmingham City University, and the University of Worcester, working with young people facing multiple dimensions of disadvantage. This provides a progressive and integrated programme of support and advice including the UniFest Summer School programme and regional Mentoring Scheme, to widen participation in HE at sector level. The partnership acts as a single point of contact to help schools make the most of the support available. The University is also a member of Aimhigher Plus, one of the largest of 29 consortia delivering the National Collaborative Outreach Programme.

Success - Continuation

Much of the sector research highlights that a sense of belonging is fundamental to students continuing their journey within a university. As a result of feedback from our current students and looking at good practice within the sector, we will start to enhance this sense of belonging in a number of ways:

- Introduce a newly defined induction programme for Level 4 students using many of the good practice examples from the 'Flying Start' programme, recently published by OfS.
- For 2 identified programme areas (Sport and Business Enterprise), where there are high number of males and students from low participation areas (gaps identified in continuation rates), we intend to introduce a pilot online transition programme. This will ensure that students have the opportunity to link with both staff and students on their intended programme
- We have also identified that a number of students who have not continued their studies into Level 5, have applied to UCB later in the cycle and a number have come through Clearing. All students attending 'Clearing Applicant Days' are allocated time with our Study Support and Health and Wellbeing staff. This ensures that we have detailed information regarding the students' needs and we can identify the appropriate intervention.
- In 2017/18 we introduced a pilot mentoring programme for two programme areas where we had identified higher non-continuation rates. We invested in 2 Mentoring Officers (plus

additional mentors from our Level 6 cohort) to coordinate this work and provide additional pastoral support for students. In-year monitoring (including feedback from students) suggests that this work has had a positive impact on retention in both curriculum areas (+6% and +12% respectively). Due to the initial success of this pilot we will aim to replicate this role in our other three academic schools and will recruit an additional 3 Mentoring and Welfare Officers plus additional mentors from our Level 6 cohort to support students who are identified as 'At Risk' of leaving UCB or not achieving.

- In September 2018 we will introduce our new cashless bursary scheme 'The KickStart Scheme'. Alongside the investment already committed in our previous Access Agreement for this scheme we will allocate a member of staff to monitor its effectiveness and ensure that the analytics from the programme are disseminated.

- We will adopt a more targeted and intensive approach to intervention and mentoring, tutorial systems (including electronic tracking of student performance, transition tutorials and timetabled academic support sessions).

As UCB has always viewed employability as a central characteristic of our vocational curriculum, there continues to be a focus on this area to improve levels of progression into employment or further study through hired@UCB (UCB's employability unit). We have also planned in activity and expenditure which targets specific groups (BAME, white working class males, mature and students with mental health problems).

The redeveloped student and staff portal will give access to real time data to allow more effective tracking of students' attendance, retention and progression at programme, group and individual student level. This will assist with the early identification of students who are at risk of leaving or failing and will include the use of an electronic tutorial tracking system. In addition to this we will undertake research to identify specific software to supply more indepth learner analytics to allow us to identify 'At Risk' students much earlier.

We will continue with the funded post of Student Mental Health Advisor and an additional Student Counsellor post. These posts will help to further improve the service to the increasing number of students presenting with mental health issues. The work of this team will be supplemented by a range of CPD for academic staff to support them with their understanding of the complex subject area and also ensure that they are equipped to deal effectively with issues that our students may face.

Degree Outcomes

Degree outcomes for all student groups have improved over the past 3 years; we will though concentrate on closing gaps in outcomes for good degrees for Black and Asian students. We aim to undertake a number of specific projects to address this issue:

- We have identified that there are a significant number of Asian students in the School of Education, Health & Community who have poorer degree outcomes. Many of these students are local to UCB coming from areas of high deprivation and are older females. Based on the model used at the University of Sydney, we will pilot an Academic Skills and English Test (ASET) that will be completed by Level 4 students after arriving at UCB (we also plan to extend this to Levels 5 and 6). The results from this assessment will enable us to build student profiles; identify 'at risk' students; and help inform the content of 'embedded' academic sessions / help establish possible changes to the Academic Skills Module taken by Level 4 students.

- We have also identified that our Black students have lower degree classifications on average. For this group of students, we aim to undertake a number of specific activities to raise aspirations which include an intensive mentoring from an external provider that specialises in working with young black students.

- Pilot Sonocent lecture capture tools. Sonocent is a tool to support students with note taking the essential elements of a lecture. Initially this will be piloted with Sports Therapy students and uploaded onto tablets provided by UCB via the Kick Start scheme.

Progression

We have identified Gaps in performance for positive progression for students with the following characteristics: deprivation, ethnicity and age. Further analysis of this data suggests that many of these students are within one of two curriculum areas within UCB: Business Enterprise and

Childhood. In order to close the gaps for progression for these students we aim to do the following:

- Develop new postgraduate provision in the School of Education, Health & Community to provide appropriate progression routes for students currently studying undergraduate provision in this school. The first programme will have the student enrolments from September 2018.
- In 2017, the hired@UCB team, (UCB's careers, employability and placements team), conducted the first Career Readiness survey of all UCB students. The survey asks questions regarding a student's career planning, previous work experience, the relevance of that work experience and their interest in self-employment. This survey will be conducted each year to build up a detailed profile of UCB students and will be used to identify targeted interventions such as careers advice and guidance and enterprise support
- hired@UCB will work to provide additional targeted careers and employability interventions for students from categories that currently achieve below average progress into employment and/or further learning. This may take the form of additional bespoke employability programmes delivered in partnership with external agencies as well as revised eligibility criteria for access to Summer Internship Grants/Bursaries.

Evaluation

We will continue to monitor progress against targets through our Performance, Measures and Targets documents. This is agreed and then monitored on a regular basis by our Corporation through the subcommittee Student Services and Standards which includes elected student representation. We have appointed a member of staff to monitor (at specified points) the effectiveness of the initiatives highlighted and the ongoing impact of the interventions put in place.

We have also established a cross-university group (Student Success Group) which will be the driving force for the implementation and monitoring of these specific projects. The outcomes of our evaluation programme will be used to measure progress against targets set in this access and participation plan, and against smaller programme level targets

2. Self-assessment of targets

The tables that follow provide a self-assessment by University College Birmingham of progress against the targets approved in its 2019-20 access and participation plan.

Please note the tables contain only a summary of target milestones approved in 2019-20 access and participation plans. Full information can be found in **Table 8a – statistical targets and milestones** and **Table 8b – Other milestones and targets** of University College Birmingham’s 2019-20 [access and participation plan](#).

Any optional commentary provided against the targets is given in [Annex B](#).

Statistical targets and milestones

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self-assessment
T16a_01 (Access)	Maintain percentage of young full-time first degree entrants from state schools or colleges.	2013-14	98.2	98.2	98.2	Percentage	2019-20	98.3	Expected progress
T16a_02 (Access)	Improve percentage of young full-time first degree entrants from NS_SEC classes 4-7	2013-14	54.2	n/a	n/a	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		Expected progress
T16a_03 (Access)	Improve percentage of young full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods	2013-14	13.8	14	14	Percentage	2019-20	15.6	Expected progress
T16a_04 (Student success)	Enhance retention of young full-time first degree entrants after year of entry.	2012-13	9.9	9.1	9	Percentage	2018-19	9.4	Limited progress
T16a_05 (Access)	Percentage of students declaring a disability	2014-15	7.2	7.5	8	Percentage	2019-20	10	Expected progress
T16a_06 (Progression)	Percentage of student who progress in to work or further study on completion of programme.	2012-13	87.36	89.5	89.5	Percentage	2016-17	88	Expected progress
T16a_07 (Progression)	Percentage of student who remain unempolyed 6 months after completing their programme.	2012-13	8.51	8	7.9	Percentage	2016-17	6.6	Expected progress
T16a_08 (Access)	Maintain percentage of BME students.	2014-15	56.3	56	56	Percentage	2019-20	50	Expected progress
T16a_09 (Success)	Reduce gaps in continuation for students from low participation neighbourhoods for first year full time undergraduates.	2015-16	-11%	-8%	-6%	Percentage	2018-19	1.8	Expected progress

T16a_10 (Success)	Reduce gaps in continuation for male first year full time undergraduates.	2015-16	-4%	-3.5	-3%	Percentage	2018-19	-3.9	Limited progress
T16a_11 (Success)	Reduce gaps in degree attainment (First and Upper Second Class) for Black students	2016-17	-27.4%	-22%	-18%	Percentage points	2019-20	38	No progress
T16a_12 (Success)	Reduce gaps in degree attainment (First and Upper Second Class) for Asian students	2016-17	-20.3%	-18%	-16%	Percentage points	2019-20	25	No progress
T16a_13 (Progression)	Reduce gaps in TEF metric Employment or Further Study for full time BAME students	2016-17	-9%	-7%	-6%	Percentage	2016-17	-9	Expected progress
T16a_14 (Progression)	Reduce gaps in TEF metric Employment or Further Study for full time mature students	2016-17	-6.6%	-5.5%	-5%	Percentage	2016-17	-6.6	Expected progress
T16a_15 (Progression)	Reduce gaps in TEF metric Employment or Further Study for full time high deprivation students	2016-17	-6%	-5%	-4.5%	Percentage	2016-17	-6	Expected progress

Other milestones and targets

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self-assessment
T16b_01 (Access)	Number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds engaged in intensive activity with collaborative partnership, using a basket of indicators.	Other (please give details in Description column)	500	1000	1000	Headcount	2019-20	547	Limited progress
T16b_02 (Access)	Proportion of engaged young people from disadvantaged backgrounds attaining 5x GCSE Grade A* to C inc. English and maths (or attainment 8 equivalent) is greater than local average for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, using a basket of indicators.	Other (please give details in Description column)	2013/14 FSM 60.2% (regional baseline 36.2%)	25% above baseline	25% above baseline	Other	2019-20		Expected progress
T16b_03 (Access)	Proportion of engaged young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in intensive activity target group entering HE and retained for 6 months is greater than local average for YP from disadvantaged backgrounds, using a basket of indicators.	Other (please give details in Description column)	2013/14 FSM 31.6% (regional baseline 22%). POLAR 3 Q1 40.0% (regional baseline 12.4%)	10% above baseline	10% above baseline	Percentage points	2019-20	23.7	Expected progress

3. Investment commitments

3.1. Access and participation investment for the last audited year

Please note that some differences in predicted vs actual spend may be due to reporting differences between academic and financial years.

Financial year	2019-20		
	Predicted spend (£)	Actual spend (£)	Difference (ppt)
Access investment	£610,488.00	£837,000.00	37%
Financial Support	£1,143,350.00	£1,481,000.00	30%

4. Action plan

Where progress was less than expected University College Birmingham has made the following commitments to increase the rate of progress against their targets.

Reference Number	Steps that will be taken in the future to make expected progress against target
T16a_04	We will continue to make continuation rates, and in particular, closing continuation gaps between target groups, a key focus. The Student Engagement Team will work with targeted students to support them to stay on course. The roll-out of the Learner Analytics dashboard to be visible to students, and its use in tutorials, is expected to help students to stay on track, and to see their progress more clearly (this is supported by sector-evidence from other L.A. projects). In addition, our broader work focused on student belonging discussed in the attainment section is expected to have additional impact on continuation rates.
T16a_10	See target 4 above. In addition, we will particularly target male students where the evidence is that they are at risk of not continuing on their course. We believe that our work on student belonging and cohort-building should have an impact on differential student continuation rates.

T16a_11	<p>We are aware that we need to make rapid progress against targets 11 and 12. In order to do this, we have undertaken a thorough analysis of our data relating to ethnicity and attainment/awarding gaps, some of which is presented in the accompanying provider submission. We have a newly constituted group working on the details of our action plan, with an independent chair, and senior membership including the Vice-Chancellor, PVCs and Executive Deans, as well as student representation. This group will ensure that plans are implemented, and that data and outcomes are monitored and evaluated. Our plans include short-term actions to provide additional academic support to Black and Asian students who have been assessed as capable of achieving a 2.1, but are not currently performing at that level, and actions with longer term outcomes, including work to attract and retain more diverse teaching staff, to create a more inclusive curriculum and assessment methods, and to increase students' engagement with, and sense of belonging to, UCB. We have provided a more detailed action plan in the accompanying documentation, and we expect this plan to evolve as we learn lessons from the initial actions we are undertaking.</p>
T16a_12	See target 11 above for details.
T16b_01	The partnership continues to work with West Midlands schools on a range of intense progression support. A substantial covid-secure programme has been planned for Spring-Summer 2020-21, which should ensure that this target is met.

5. Confirmation

University College Birmingham confirms that:

Student engagement	
Have you worked with your students to help them complete the access and participation plan monitoring student submission?	
Yes	
Have you engaged with your student body in the design, evaluation, and monitoring of the plan?	
Yes	
Verification and sign off	
University College Birmingham has confirmed that the information included in this impact report is accurate, that it has been compiled in line with OfS guidance, and that it is being submitted on behalf of the governing body of the provider.	
Yes	
Accountable officer sign off	
Name	Professor Michael Harkin
Position	Vice-Chancellor and Principal

Annex A: Commentary on progress against targets

University College Birmingham's commentary where progress against targets was less than expected.

Target reference number: T16a_04
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
We have met our commitments relating to supporting student continuation. The most substantial related commitment in the 19-20 plan was the provision of Mentoring Officers to work with students at risk of non-continuation of their studies. These posts were put in place, and there is evidence of the impact of their work on targeted students, where those students engaged with the support. However, time lags on this data mean that most actions in the 19-20 plan would be expected to have a more significant impact on the data reported in 20-21 and beyond. Early indications are that continuation rates have improved further in 19-20.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
In Spring 2020 we invested in Learner Analytics Software to enable us to track student engagement in almost real-time, which allows us to focus on students who are at higher risk of non-continuation. Our decision to use this software was based on substantial sector evidence of its impact. The software is being used by our Student Engagement Team, and Academic Management Team, and will be rolled out so that dashboards are visible to students as well as staff by January 2022. In addition, we created a Student Engagement Team to replace the Mentoring Officers, with a similar remit, but more focus on specifically targeting students from underrepresented groups, particularly at Level 4. This team is the primary owner of the Learner Analytics dashboard, and make substantial use of it as part of their proactive targeting of students. Early indications are that this work is having a positive impact on retention.

Target reference number: T16a_10
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
We have met our commitments relating to this target. In addition to those activities described in target 4 above, we put in place additional cohort-building activities in advance of enrolment through our UniConnect online platform, and our Mentoring Officers worked particularly with students on our Business Enterprise and Sports courses which had been identified as having lower retention for male students. As in target 4, the impact of this work wouldn't be expected to be visible in the data until at least 19-20 (reported in 20-21), but we can see initial signs that in-year retention is higher for male students than in previous years.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
The work of our Student Engagement Team includes targeting male students where their (lack of) engagement is a concern. We are aware that male students are sometimes less likely to take up available support services, and so have been using learner analytics and academic team referrals to target students proactively where we feel they would benefit from additional support. In our 20-21 data so far we can see initial signs that this is having a positive impact.

Target reference number: T16a_11
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
We have met our commitments in the plan relating to this target. We piloted the ASET (Academic Skills and English) diagnostic test in 18-19 with targeted programmes, and then rolled it out to be used with all new student cohorts from 19-20. There is limited evidence that where ASET test results were followed up by targeted activity in classes, they had an impact on students' academic work. However, this follow-up was almost always class-wide, rather than targeted at students who might need specific support. We ran several pilot mentoring programmes with targeted Black and Asian students. Data on the outcomes from these programmes suggests very little evidence of impact (though they were on a small scale). We piloted the use of Sonocent lecture capture and notetaking software, and then made Sonocent licences available to students where a specific need had been identified. Student feedback on this was very positive, and fed into the decision to implement Panopto lecture capture across the university during summer 2020.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
We have undertaken substantial additional work, largely from summer 2020, which is expected to have an impact from 2021 onwards. We have created a Student Engagement Team, as described above, who are focusing on supporting targeted students to remain on course and succeed. This includes activities identifying students from Black and Asian backgrounds who may be at risk of not completing their course, or who are less engaged than their peers. We have implemented Learner Analytics software to support this targeting. We have updated our tutorial system to make it more explicitly goal-oriented, and to provide smoother referral pathways to support services. Whilst of benefit to all students, we know that Black students in particular are often less likely to take up academic support where it requires proactive engagement. During the initial stages of the pandemic we increased our IT support for students by enabling students to make use of KickStart funds (our bursary scheme) to access IT equipment they needed. Many of our Black and Asian students are from areas of high deprivation, and anecdotally we were aware that lack of access to IT resources was a challenge for a significant number of our students.

Target reference number: T16a_12
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
We have met our commitments in the plan relating to this target. See target 11 above for details.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
See target 11 above for details.

Target reference number: T16b_01
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

Our ability to meet this target has been limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancellation of the residential summer school and year 8 day. Other activities planned for earlier in 2019-20 went ahead as planned, and learner numbers for these activities were above target. Data from the activities that UCB led on confirms that UCB contributed a substantial number of the engaged learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (see commentary).

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

Mentoring, and some other intense activities were offered to schools in different formats, including via online tutoring. This was taken up by a small number of schools.

Annex B: Optional commentary on targets

University College Birmingham's commentary on any of the targets listed in [Section 2](#).

Reference Number	Optional commentary
T16a_01	HESA T1a
T16a_02	Removal of this target was agreed in 18-19
T16a_03	HESA T1a
T16a_04	HESA T1a
T16a_05	From internal data records, based on all UK domiciled first degree entrants to maintain consistency with previous reporting. The OfS dashboard shows 11.3% of students reporting a disability.
T16a_06	DLHE 16/17
T16a_07	DLHE 16/17
T16a_08	Internal data using all entrants (not just 18 year olds). Our percentage of BAME students remains significantly above population averages using both internal and OfS dashboard data
T16a_09	HESA T3b
T16a_10	Data based on our own internal calculations for consistency with previous years. On OfS dashboard overall trend is decreasing to latest data in 17-18 (-3%)
T16a_11	OFS Dashboard data
T16a_12	OFS Dashboard data
T16a_13	DLHE 16/17
T16a_14	DLHE 16/17
T16a_15	DLHE 16/17
T16b_01	591 learners engaged within the mentoring scheme of which 372 (92.5%) met 1 targeting criteria. The remainder were either not target (30) or did not provide data (189). In previous years we have estimated the likely proportion of learners that returned no data that are target (from current scheme targeting rates). If we apply this approach we have an additional 175 target learners = Total reportable 547. UCB contributed 213 of the 591 engaged learners (36% against a target of 29% (170)).
T16b_02	We are unable to report on our progress in terms of students GCSE grades for the 15/16 to 18/19 academic years due to changes in GDPR and delays in the NPD processing this request.

T16b_03	Figure given is for HE entry POLAR3 Q1 (18/19 - not 19/20 as stated on the sheet). HE entry for FSM eligible (18/19) students was 31.7%, which is 5.7pp above the benchmark.
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