

# Loughborough University

## Access and participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

### Executive Summary

This Access and Participation Plan has been prepared in the light of significantly revised guidelines from the Office for Students (OfS), and therefore reflects an ambitious plan to address equality of opportunity across the four stages of the student lifecycle: Access, Continuation, Attainment and Progression.

Loughborough University is proud of its student experience, recognised as outstanding on multiple success measures, nevertheless it is not complacent. Hence, the strategic aims set out in this plan are derived from a thorough analysis of performance in relation to gaps between under-represented groups in higher education and their peers and the progress as a function of time in closing the gaps identified. The strategic aims and associated targets identified support the OfS Key Performance Measures (KPM), particularly those for Access (KPM2) and Attainment (KPM4).

For context, Loughborough University is a medium-sized, high tariff, research-intensive university in the East Midlands, with an outstanding reputation for sport. The majority of students are engaged in STEM subjects. At present, the student body is primarily drawn from the home counties around London and Leicestershire, excluding Leicester city. Loughborough itself is a small market town in which the University is now the major employer, and the university cities of Nottingham, Leicester and Derby are all within 20 miles.

This plan has been the subject of extensive consultation across the University, including with student groups, and is wholeheartedly supported by the institution's entire senior leadership. The eight key strategic aims and associated objectives, with relevant targets, identified for the period of this plan for Loughborough University are:

#### **Access:** Increase intake of students from areas of low HE participation/low socio-economic groups (KPM2)

- Reduce the difference in entry rates for students from POLAR4 quintiles 3,4 & 5 compared to quintiles 1 & 2 to a ratio of 3:5 in 4 years
- Reduce the difference in entry rates for students from POLAR4 quintile 5 compared to quintile 1 to a ratio of 4.5:1 in 5 years
- Increase the proportion of Realising Opportunities students who are tracked into HE who will access a research-intensive university within two years of becoming 'HE ready' and completing their post-16 studies to 54% in 5 years

#### **Attainment:** Understand and explain the different attainment rates observed by ethnicity/socio-economic group, and reduce the gaps identified (KPM4)

- Reduce the % difference between White and Black students undertaking a placement year during their degree to be within 4% in 5 years
- Reduce the difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between White and Black students to 10% points in 5 years
- Reduce the difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between White and Asian students to 7% points in 5 years
- Reduce the difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between students from IMD quintiles 3,4 & 5 compared to IMD quintiles 1 & 2 to 7% points in 5 years

#### **Student Success:** Understand and reduce any inequalities for students with a disability in terms of student success; these gaps are not statistically significant at Loughborough

- Use our unique reputation for sport to engage young people with a known sensory, medical or physical disability and promote their progression to and success in HE, with a target to increase the number of new entrants from this group by 75% over 5 years

#### **Continuation:** This is a current area of strength for Loughborough, nevertheless, understanding the need to monitor any emerging gaps, as well as our role contributing to performance nationally, we will continue to:

- Monitor student continuation across all groups and act where any issues are identified

#### **Progression:** This is a current area of strength for Loughborough, nevertheless, understanding the need to monitor any emerging gaps, as well as our role contributing to performance nationally, we will continue to:

- Monitor progression into employment across all student groups and act where any issues are identified

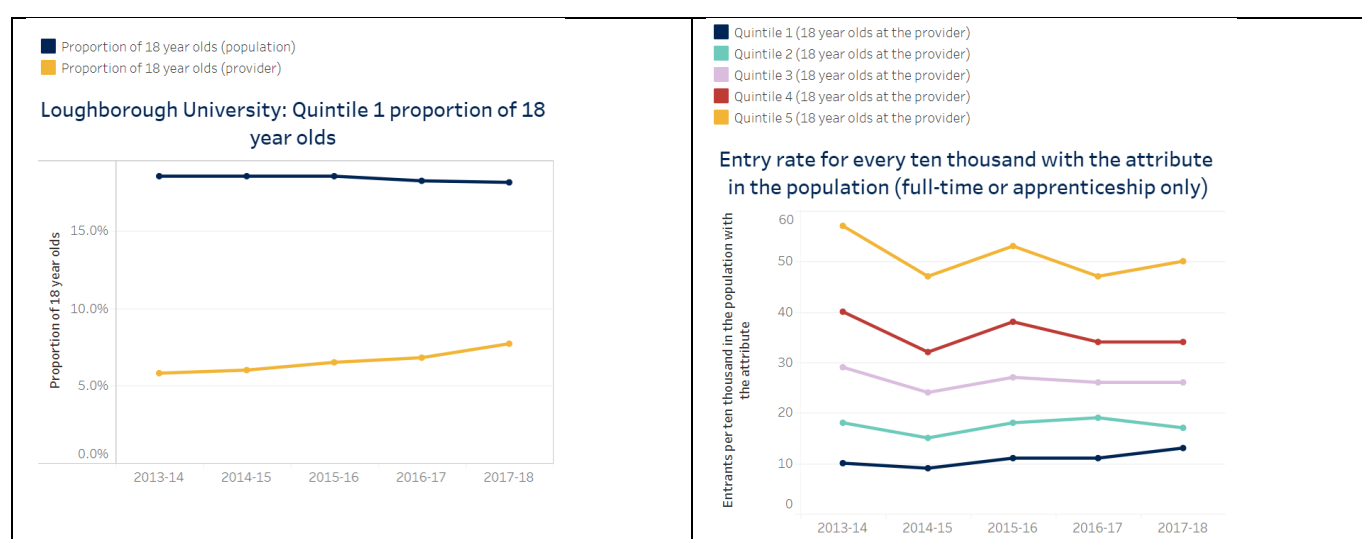
# 1. Assessment of performance

## 1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

### i) Access

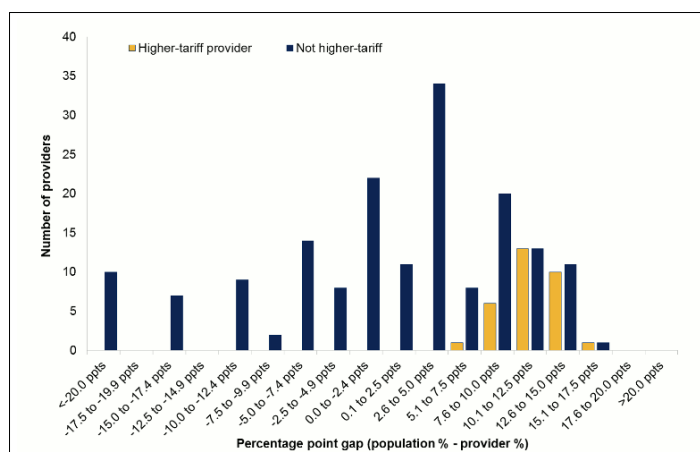
In 2017-18 Loughborough's intake of students from POLAR4 quintile 1 was 7.3% (HESA PI). This is the University's highest intake of students from low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) over the last 10 years. Whilst remaining below our previous benchmark, we note that the gap between our intake and benchmark has reduced from 3.0% to 0.8%.

Considering OfS' second Key Performance Measure (KPM2), in 2017-18 there was a 19.8% point gap between the participation of students in the population who are between 18 and 30 years old from the most and least represented groups at higher tariff providers using POLAR4. Loughborough University has seen a gradual growth in the number of students from quintile 1 over time which can be seen in the graph below (Figure 1a), with a slight acceleration in progress in the last year of the dataset. However, it remains the case that students from quintile 5 are significantly more represented in the student population at Loughborough than those from quintile 1, Figure 1b.



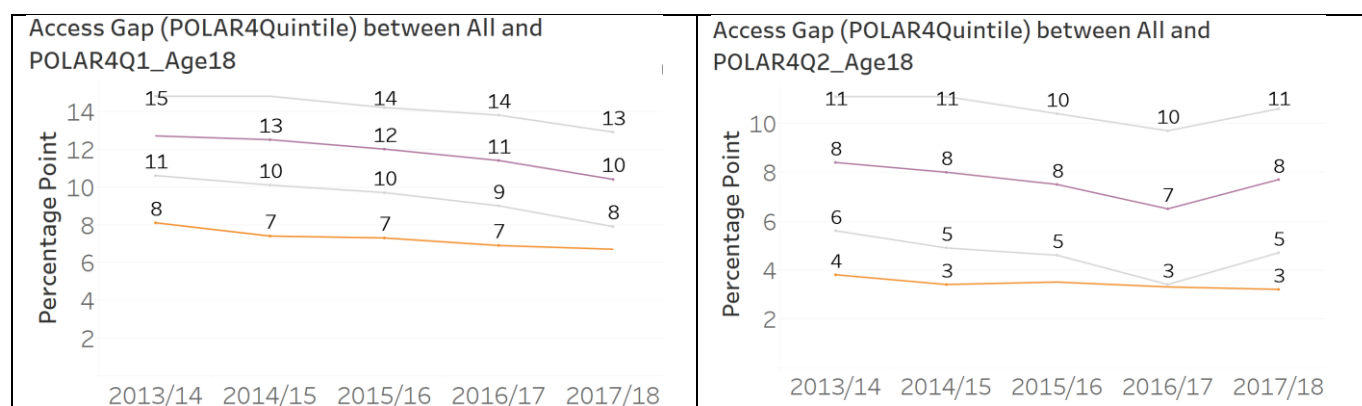
**Figure 1:** a) Proportion of quintile 1 18 year olds in the population compared with those at Loughborough University and b) Entry rate per 10,000 in the population across POLAR4 quintiles 1 to 5 at Loughborough University.

At Loughborough the gap between the proportion of the least represented 18 year olds (POLAR4 Q1) and their distribution in the population is 10.4% points, which is the mode for higher tariff providers (see Figure 2). Whilst the gap at Loughborough has reduced (from 13% points) with time as shown in Figure 1, we fully accept this is an area where further progress should be made.



**Figure 2:** Gaps in proportions of the least represented (POLAR4 Q1) 18 year olds in 2017-18, provider compared with population. For Loughborough the gap is 10.4 % points<sup>i</sup>.

As well as a statistically significant<sup>1</sup> gap for POLAR4 quintile 1 students when compared to the population as a whole for each of the last five years, a statistically significant gap is also seen for POLAR4 quintile 2 students. This has remained ~constant over the five-year period, as indicated in Figure 3b. No statistically significant gaps have been identified for quintiles 3, 4 or 5.



**Figure 3:** The difference between the proportion of 18 year olds in the population (yellow) and at Loughborough (purple) in a) POLAR4 quintile 1 and b) POLAR4 quintile 2.

Similar analysis of Loughborough's intake by the measure Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) demonstrates, with statistical significance, that students from quintiles 1 and 2 are less likely to study at Loughborough and those from quintiles 4 and 5 are more likely to join the University when compared with the proportion of students in the population. The trends with time are similar to those described above in respect of the POLAR4 measure.

In order to better understand the University's performance, we can draw on the UCAS equality report data for Loughborough. This shows no statistically significant variation between our offer rate and that which would be expected for applicants from POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2, and as such indicates that the gaps identified above are due to lack of applicants from these groups rather than bias in the admissions process.

Through the services provided to us by EMWPREP, we have begun to track the progression into HE of those who have participated in our recruitment and widening participation initiatives. The most recent analysis has shown that 46.1% of students from quintiles 1 or 2 (POLAR3) who participated in our access/recruitment activities between 2006/07 and 2015/16 have entered HE aged 18 or 19, compared with 62.1% of students from quintiles 3-5.

There is therefore a consistent picture from all data sources that **students from POLAR4 quintiles 1/2 and IMD quintiles 1/2 are less likely to apply to Loughborough than students from other areas/socio-economic groups. There is no identifiable bias in the admissions process and therefore it is important to work on attracting more applicants to Loughborough from these groups.**

## ii) Success: Non-continuation

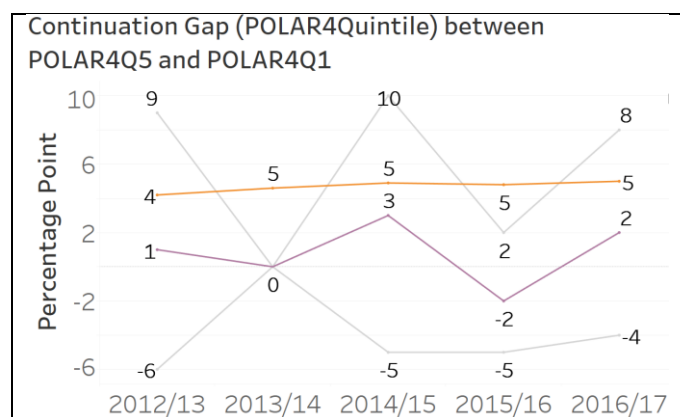
Loughborough has a strong record in terms of student retention, with Continuation having a high absolute value (i.e. in the top 10% of absolute performance for all providers) in the TEF Year 4 metrics at Provider level. The continuation metric for Loughborough is at 97.4% in the TEF Year 4 metrics, against a benchmark of 95.5%. Furthermore, the split metrics for students in quintiles 1 and 2 of both the POLAR4 and IMD categories are 97.2 and 96.7% respectively, which are significantly above the benchmark for these groups of students and are positively flagged. It is noteworthy that when compared with the benchmark, Continuation for students in quintiles 3-5 although high in absolute terms, is not flagged. This suggests that there is very good support available for students in quintiles 1 and 2 to continue with their studies, although we continue to work to ensure that the continuation of these groups is exactly on a par with those from quintiles 3-5.

We have undertaken an analysis of the non-continuation rates by different POLAR quintile groups using the OfS dataset. As the gaps observed are small, variable (-2 to 3% points) over the five year period, and below those seen by the sector, we can conclude that our students from LPNs are not more likely to withdraw from their studies than other students, as illustrated in Figure 4. This is supported by our TEF Year 4 metrics described above.

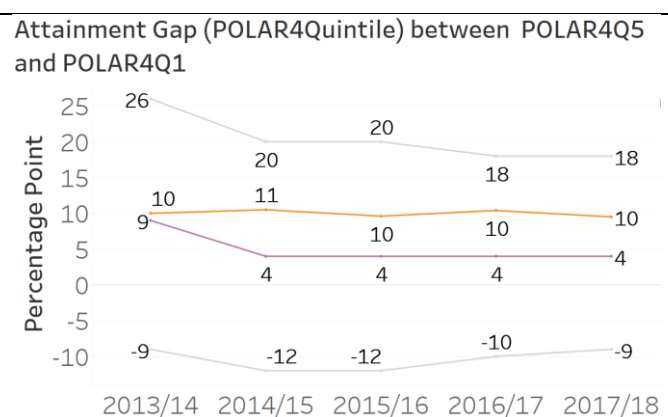
<sup>1</sup> We have used the OfS definition of statistically significant throughout this document when referring to data taken from the OfS Access and Participation Dashboard.

Therefore, Loughborough performs well against OfS' third Key Performance Measure, KPM3. In 2016-17 there was a 4.4% point difference between the non-continuation rates of the most and least represented groups nationally. At Loughborough the equivalent gap is 2% and is not statistically significant nor changing with time.

From detailed consideration of our HESA PI, the OfS dataset, TEF Year 4 data and our own internal data, we have concluded that there are **no significant inequalities in terms of the non-continuation of students from the most/least areas of HE participation at Loughborough, which we continue to monitor.**



**Figure 4:** The gap in continuation at Loughborough (purple) between students from the least and most represented groups in HE (POLAR4 quintile 1 and quintile 5) compared with that for the sector (yellow).



**Figure 5:** The difference in attainment at Loughborough (purple) compared with the gap at sector level (yellow) between students from the most and least represented groups in HE.

### iii) Success: Attainment

Analysis of the OfS dataset shows that students from the most represented areas (based on POLAR4 data) are slightly more likely (4% points) to achieve a 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 compared with those students from the least represented areas, however, the gap at a sector level is more than double this at 10% points. At Loughborough the 'attainment gap' has remained constant since 2014-15, as can be seen in Figure 5.

A small number of statistically significant gaps have been identified when reviewing degree success by IMD (in 2013-14 and 2017-18 for 'All other quintiles except 5 compared with 5'; in 2017-18 only for quintile 5 compared with quintile 1 and in 2014-15 and 2017-18 for quintile 3-5 compared with quintile 1-2). As these gaps are present in only one or two of the last five years they do not indicate a consistent attainment gap. However, it is important to also consider the absolute value of the gap. When doing so we note that the absolute value of the gap in IMD attainment for quintile 3-5 compared with quintile 1-2 across the sector is ~12% points, whereas the absolute value of the gap at Loughborough is lower, being 7, 7 and 10% points respectively in the last 3 years of the dataset. While this gap is relatively large, it is variable with time in both absolute magnitude and in terms of statistical significance. We believe that there is a link with the profile, discipline and number of students admitted to Loughborough in the appropriate years compared to the graduation years and will further explore this and the underlying reasons behind the gap in more detail. We anticipate the measures we are putting in place to address a larger absolute gap for Black attainment will also impact positively on the gap for IMD attainment. However, we will undertake a piece of research to understand what other initiatives should then be implemented to reduce the IMD gap observed. We have therefore set a specific target to reduce the gap in IMD attainment between students from IMD Q1 and Q2 compared with those from Q3-Q5 to no more than 7% points over the next 5 years, with a view to implementing research-informed initiatives which will close this gap over time.

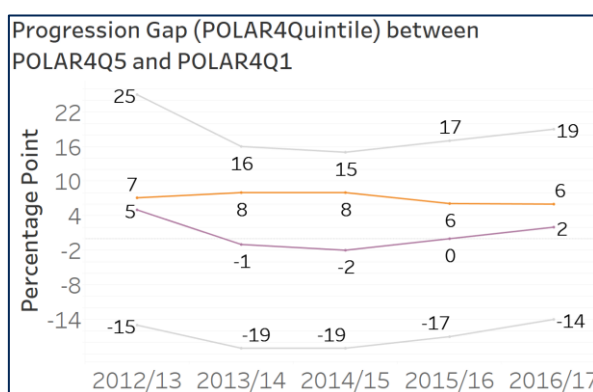
The University has been monitoring attainment by student group for many years and has developed a statistical regression analysis model with the aim of determining which factors, if any, impact on student success when other variables are controlled for. The model includes ethnicity, academic school (discipline), gender, POLAR, disability status, parental education, whether a student has taken a placement year, tariff on entry, and school type. The analysis now includes students graduating between 2012/13-2016/17 and our findings support the conclusion that there is no significant link between degree outcomes and participation neighbourhood (POLAR) or parental education. The regression analysis will continue to be undertaken annually and updated to include new indicators as they become available, with the position monitored closely as our student population changes. We have therefore concluded that **at Loughborough there are limited inequalities in terms of the attainment of students from the most/least areas of HE participation in comparison with the sector as a whole, nevertheless, in view of our commitment to eliminating any gap where they arise, we have set a specific target for the attainment of students from IMD Q1 and Q2.**

#### iv) Progression to employment or further study

Loughborough graduates have an excellent employment record with 94% moving into employment or further study within 6 months of graduation (HESA, 2016-17). Indeed in our TEF4 metrics, Highly Skilled Employment receives a double positive flag for all split metrics (with the exception of Mature students, which is neutral and of whom we have very small numbers) and therefore we have no difference in the ability to progress into highly skilled employment across the POLAR4, IMD, Gender, Disabled or Ethnicity groupings.

A detailed interrogation of the progression information within the OfS dataset reveals that there are no statistically significant gaps between students from across the POLAR quintiles. In 2016-17 there was a 2% point difference between students from quintiles 1 and 5. Looking at the trend over time, shown in Figure 6, we see the gap has increased slightly over the last two years although it should be noted that the gap observed is consistently small, variable and below that of the sector.

This conclusion is supported by the TEF Year 4 data which show very little difference in the professional employment rates between students from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 (82.2%) and quintiles 3-5 (83.4%) and IMD quintiles 1/2 (80.5%) compared with IMD quintiles 3/5 (83.6%). This is significantly better than a recent HEFCE2 analysis for the sector which showed a difference of 7.7% between students from POLAR3 quintiles 1 and 5 across their early careers and is indicative of positive outcomes for all our students.



**Figure 6:** The gap in progression into employment between students from POLAR4 quintile 5 and quintile 1 at Loughborough (purple) compared with the sector (yellow).

As a whole, 49% of Loughborough's students currently undertake a full placement year during their degree, which we believe is very significant in determining both degree outcome and progression into employment. From our internal monitoring of students undertaking a placement year (Part I) we know that students with household incomes below £25,000 are 9.5% less likely to progress from Part B to Part I. This gap has remained at a similar level overall throughout the last three years, although is very variable according to discipline. The gap is something we have been specifically trying to address through the introduction of a bursary for students who have secured an unpaid placement and have a household income of £25k or less. This scheme is in its third year of operation and has so far supported 83 students to complete Part I. We intend to continue targeted support for placements as described in our Strategic Aims. Following our review of financial support, we are introducing a placement start-up grant for all students that have a household income of less than £25k.

A statistical regression analysis of our student Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data has identified that the predominant factors in determining positive graduate outcomes are degree classification, undertaking a placement year, followed by academic School (discipline) at the University, and school background prior to university. LPN, gender and disability are not found to be statistically significant, consistent with the above TEF4 data.

**As a result of the analysis outlined above, we have concluded that there are no significant inequalities in terms of the progression of students into employment from areas of most/least HE participation at Loughborough, although we continue to monitor to ensure that gaps do not develop.**

## 1.2 Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Other students

### i) Access

Using the OfS dataset, it can be seen that the proportion of students of Asian, Black, and Mixed ethnicities at Loughborough is higher than their respective proportions in the population and has been growing over the five-year period analysed, however, this is not therefore the case for White students and the very small numbers of students who have identified themselves in the Other category.



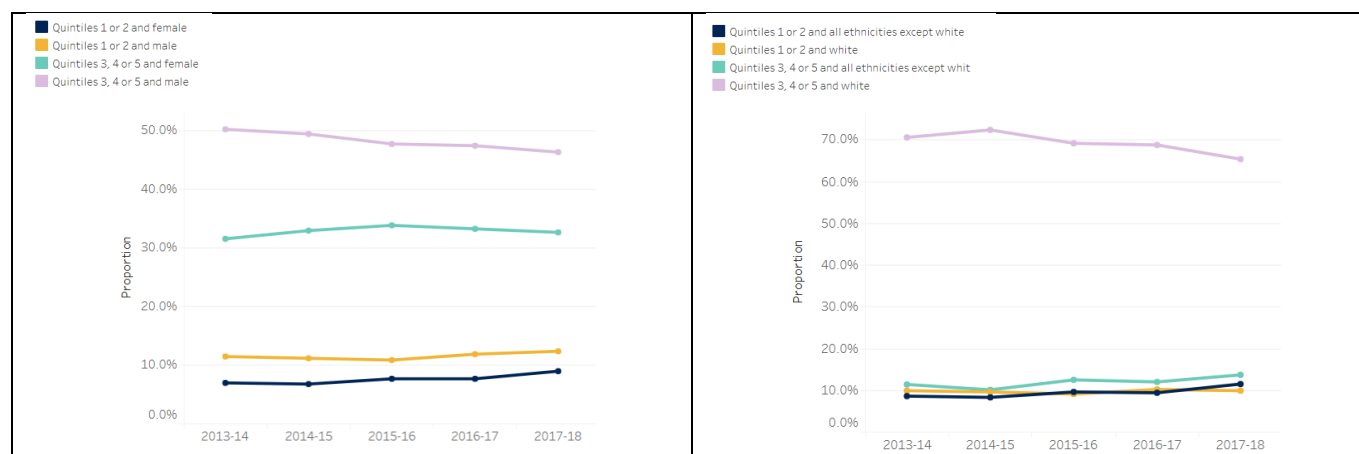
In order to better understand the position, offer making by ethnicity has been explored using UCAS' equality reports. These show our offer rates for White students were slightly higher (0.8% points) than expected for 2016, 2017, and 2018. Meanwhile offer rates were lower than expected for Asian students in 2016 (-2.7% points) and 2018 (-1.5% points), and for Black students in all years since 2014 (average -4.5% points). However, with the latter it is important to consider the underlying population. When doing so the chance of Black students applying and becoming placed at Loughborough is higher than for White students. We believe that the lower incidence of offers is linked to the programmes Black students are applying for and the specifics of their entry qualifications, and the fact that the latter is not accounted for in the UCAS data.

We have considered the intersections between ethnicity, gender and HE participation. Table 1 below shows that White students from POLAR4 quintile 1 are consistently less represented in our entrants than BAME students from POLAR4 quintile 1 across the last five years. It is also apparent that gender is not as significant as ethnicity at this intersection. This is likely to be influenced by the University subject profile and overall gender balance, which is 62% male and 38% female in the student population.

**Table 1:** The entry rate for students from POLAR4 quintile 1 to Loughborough over a 5 year period by gender and ethnicity.

POLAR4 quintile	Gender	Ethnicity	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Average
1	Female	White	6.4%	5.6%	6.7%	6.6%	5.9%	6.3%
		BAME	7.5%	8.7%	10.5%	9.2%	11.1%	9.5%
	Male	White	6.2%	6.0%	6.3%	6.4%	6.6%	6.3%
		BAME	7.4%	10.7%	7.3%	7.5%	10.2%	8.6%

Considering these intersections between deprivation quintile and gender further using the OfS dataset, it can be seen (Figure 7a) that there is a small gap between female and male students from quintiles 1 and 2 and a larger gap between female and male students from quintile 3-5 which is consistent with the overall student population. A similar analysis of the intersection between deprivation quintile and ethnicity, illustrates that the largest component of the student population at Loughborough are White males from quintile 3-5, and that there is no statistically significant gap in entry rates from students from quintile 1 and 2 as a function of ethnicity over the last five years, as illustrated in Figure 7b. **The above analysis demonstrates that access to Loughborough for students of Asian, Black, and Mixed ethnicities is not an issue in comparison to their proportion in the population overall.** We will continue to monitor the participation of students from different ethnic groups, particularly White and Other, and set targets to address them should the need arise in the future.



**Figure 7:** The proportion of students entering Loughborough University as a function of the intersection between gender and deprivation quintile (a), and as a function of the intersection between ethnicity and deprivation quintile (b).

## ii) Success: Non-continuation

Analysis of the non-continuation rates by ethnicity using the OfS dataset has been undertaken. We can conclude from this that students from BAME backgrounds are not more likely to withdraw from their studies than other students as the gaps observed for this group over the last five years are small, variable (-1 to 1% points), and below those seen by the sector. The non-continuation gap for Asian and Mixed ethnicities is comparable with the BAME group as a whole. However, a slightly different trend is observed for Black students in the last 3 years of the dataset. Continuation has dropped from 97% to 96% to 93% respectively and there is now a 4% point difference between non-continuation of White and Black students which will be monitored closely. The absolute value of the gap in continuation rates between White and Black students across the sector

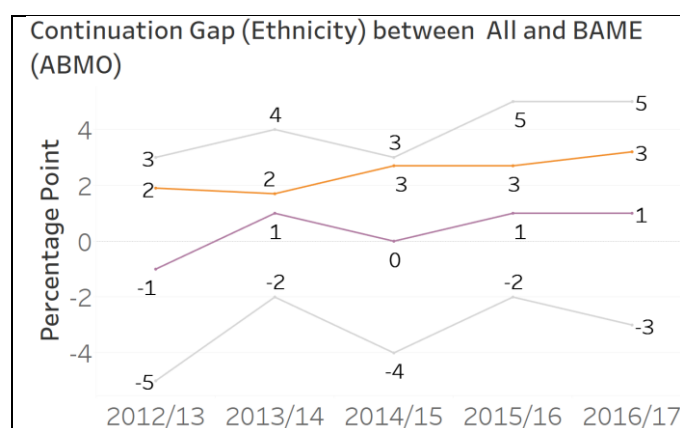
is 5-6% points across the last 3 years of the dataset, whereas the absolute value of the gap at Loughborough is lower, being 0, 2 and 4% points respectively. However, as a potential issue has been identified, over the course of the next 12 months we intend to investigate in more detail the gap that is emerging and develop strategies to mitigate against the different outcomes as appropriate. If the trend continues as the data for the following year become available, we will set a specific target in order to address this emerging gap such that Continuation for all students returns to its previous high level.

Examination of the TEF Year 4 data indicates that whilst continuation overall has a high absolute value at 97.4% against a benchmark of 95.5%, it is not flagged for either White or BME students. The metric for White students is 97.5%, however, the corresponding value for BME students is suppressed from a data protection perspective although it can be inferred from these data that the value must be very similar to that for White students and therefore is consistent with the conclusions drawn from the OfS dataset above.

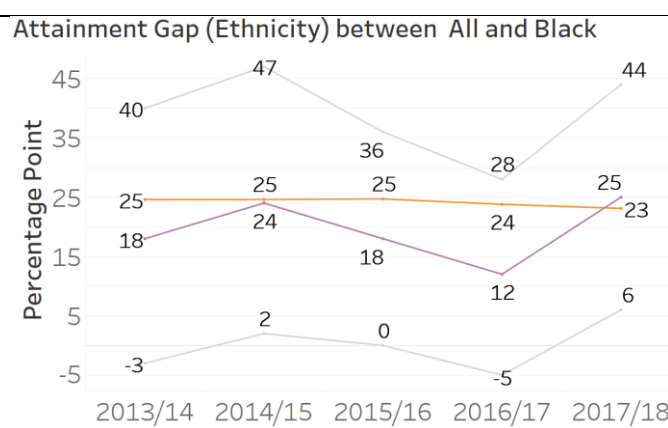
We have therefore concluded that there are **no significant inequalities at the current time in terms of the non-continuation of students from different ethnic groups at Loughborough, although we are committed to monitoring this aspect of the student lifecycle extremely closely.**

### iii) Success: Attainment

A thorough analysis of the attainment gap between different ethnic groups (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) has been undertaken. Across the University students from a BAME background are consistently less likely to receive a 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 degree compared to White students. The gap between these two groups is variable over the time period considered, ranges from 9 to 15% points, and is statistically significant. Examination of the degree attainment by academic School shows no systematic difference in the gap as a function of discipline – for example, from social sciences to engineering, suggesting that this gap cannot be explained by issues directly connected with the content of the curriculum.



**Figure 8:** The observed gap in continuation as a function of ethnicity for students at Loughborough (purple) compared to that of the sector (yellow) as a whole.



**Figure 9:** The observed gap in attainment as a function of ethnicity for students at Loughborough (purple) compared to that of the sector (yellow) as a whole.

Further consideration of the breakdown by ethnic group demonstrates that no consistent statistically significant gaps have been identified when considering the attainment of Asian and Mixed Ethnicity students. Comparison of the attainment of Asian and White students shows a statistically significant gap in one of the last five years of data, 2017-18, only <sup>See Footnote 2</sup>. The absolute value of this gap across the sector is fairly consistent at ~11% points, whereas the absolute value of the attainment gap between Asian and White students at Loughborough is much more variable, ranging from 6 to 12% points across the period. We will investigate both the variability and the reasons behind the gaps observed in more detail over the course of the next 12 months. As part of this, we will explore what additional initiatives should be implemented to reduce the Asian attainment gap. In the light of the absolute magnitude of the gap for Asian attainment, we have set a specific target to reduce the Asian attainment gap to no more than 7% points over the next 5 years, with a view to eliminating this gap in the future.

When we consider the gap between White and Black students, OfS' fourth Key Performance Measure (KPM4), we see a larger and statistically significant difference of 25% points (compared to a sector gap of 23% points) in 2017-18 as shown in Figure 9. A number of measures are being implemented to address this Black attainment gap, and we believe that these will also impact positively on the Asian attainment gap identified.

As referred to above, the University has developed a statistical regression analysis model with the aim of determining which factors, if any, impact on student success when other variables are controlled for. This research corroborates the above analysis, with BAME students found to be less likely to receive a good degree

when controlling for other characteristics, including tariff on entry, and this is significant for Black, Indian and Chinese UK domiciled students.

**We therefore conclude that there is a statistically significant gap in attainment between White and Black (not BAME) students (consistent with that across the sector) and for Asian students, which will both be the subject of further work consistent with the OfS aspirations and to meet the targets which we have set.**

#### iv) Progression to employment or further study

Analysis of the TEF4 metric for Highly Skilled Employment receives a double positive flag for all split metrics (with the exception of Mature students, which is neutral and of whom we have very small numbers) and therefore we see no statistically significant difference in the ability to progress into highly skilled employment across the POLAR4, IMD, Gender, Disabled or Ethnicity groupings. The TEF4 metric for sustained employment or further study is above the benchmark, including for all split metrics associated with POLAR, IMD, Gender, Mature, Disabled (for which it is also positively flagged) and Ethnicity, and we will continue to monitor available long-term data.

Detailed analysis of our TEF Year 4 data in respect of the breakdown of the BME groups compared to the national benchmarks, as outlined in Table 2, shows that there is a positive flag for progression into employment for Black students, which is not flagged for all other student groups. This is indicative of positive outcomes for Black students at Loughborough, with an indicator of 93.9% compared to the benchmark of 91.2%, which is only slightly less than the indicator of 94.3% for all students progressing into employment.

**Table 2:** Progression into employment and highly skilled employment for BAME student groups broken down from TEF Year 4 metrics.

	L'boro	Black Benchmark	Diff	L'boro	Asian Benchmark	Diff	L'boro	Other Benchmark	Diff
Employment	93.9	91.2	+2.7	88.0	89.5	-1.5	94.2	91.6	+2.6
Highly skilled employment	80.9	71.3	+9.6	78.4	73.1	+5.3	82.2	74.3	+7.9

Our internal analysis of the DLHE data indicates that in 2016-17, 94.5% of White students were in employment or further study six months after graduation, compared to 91.1% of BAME students. However, the corresponding average starting salary of BAME students was £550 higher than that for White students.

Despite these positive outcomes overall for students as a function of ethnicity, we have been active in closely monitoring engagement by students from under-represented groups. This includes specifically monitoring the number of students taking up a placement year. The placement year at Loughborough is significant, and indeed in the most recent 2017-18 data we had the largest number of students on a year-long placement of any UK university. Through active monitoring of our diversity data, it was noted in 2014 that there was a significant gap between the proportion of BAME students undertaking a placement compared to White students of ~4% points. We therefore put in place specific interventions to support BAME students to take up a placement year, which have been successful in increasing the percentage of students from this group who go on placement from 38 to 42%. Over the same time period, however, the proportion of White students undertaking a placement year has also increased from 42 to 49% and therefore the gap has in fact widened. Given the data-informed influence of the placement year on overall attainment, we will continue to actively support equality of opportunity for students to undertake a year-long placement.

**From the above analysis, there are no statistically significant gaps for students from different ethnic groups progressing into both employment and highly skilled employment, nevertheless, this is an area which we continue to monitor closely.**

### 1.3 Mature students

#### i) Access

Mature students currently make up 3% of the total undergraduate population at Loughborough. Analysis of our admissions data shows that the proportion of applications received from mature students has been falling exponentially over the last three cycles – 3.1% in 2017, 2.9% in 2018 and 2.2% in 2019. This decline has been compounded by both a fall in the mature student offer rate this cycle to 38% (compared to 74% of all UK/EU applicants) and fewer mature applicants deciding to make Loughborough their firm choice.

Loughborough's undergraduate portfolio is comprised of entirely full-time programmes, mainly of a non-vocational nature. In addition, the fact that we are not located in a city means the University is not particularly



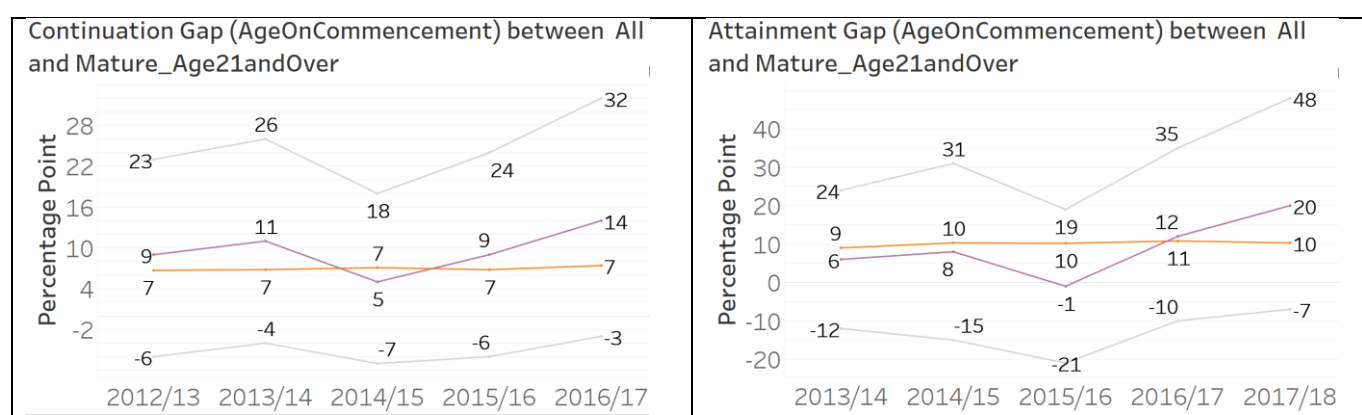
attractive to mature students who can travel less distance to their local city university. The University does not intend to make any significant changes to our overall subject mix or mode of delivery, and therefore we do not anticipate the number of mature learners at Loughborough increasing in the short to medium term.

## ii) Success: Non-continuation

For mature students, our non-continuation rate is variable due to the small numbers involved, ranging from 5.4% to 15.8% (HESA PI) (compared to our most recent benchmark of 12.3%). We have been monitoring this aspect of student retention for some time and note that mature non-continuation continues to be higher than that seen for young students (comparable young non-continuation rate is 3.0%).

The difference between the non-continuation of young and mature learners is available through the OfS dataset and shows that the non-continuation gap between these groups has increased over the last five years from 9% points in 2012-13 to 14% points in 2016-17. Although not statistically significant due to the small numbers of mature students we note that this gap is comparable to the sector gap which is itself statistically significant.

Detailed analysis of the split metrics in the TEF Year 4 data for Loughborough for continuation confirms the difference between young (97.6%) and mature (90.3%) students, however, when compared to our benchmarks for these groups of 95.7% and 88.4% respectively, it is seen that the gap in both cases is 1.9%.



**Figure 10:** The gap in continuation between young and mature students at Loughborough (purple) compared with the sector (yellow).

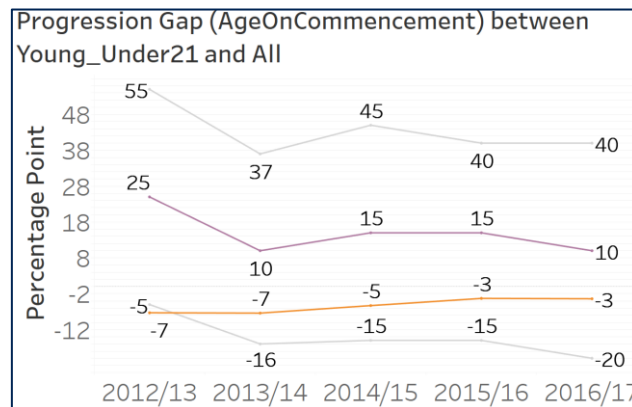
**Figure 11:** The gap in attainment between young and mature students at Loughborough (purple) compared with the sector (yellow).

## iii) Success: Attainment

Exploration of the attainment data through the OfS dataset shows that mature students are less likely to achieve a good degree compared with young students both at Loughborough and across the sector. At Loughborough we see the difference in attainment varying over time given the small numbers of mature learners at the University, with a significant growth in the gap over the last three years from -1% points in 2015-16 to 20% points in 2017-18. As with non-continuation, the gap observed is not statistically significant but is again similar to the national gap which is statistically significant.

## iv) Progression to employment or further study

Analysis of the graduate outcomes data reveals that those joining Loughborough aged 21 and over are less likely to progress to employment/further study than those under 21. In 2016-17, 75% of mature students were in employment or further study six months after graduation compared to 84% of young entrants. This is the opposite to the sector as a whole, where there is a higher proportion of mature students in employment or further study. We also know from internal data that a smaller proportion of mature students undertake a placement year compared to young students. Further analysis using the OfS dataset indicates that the mature student 'progression gap' at Loughborough has narrowed over the last five years, falling from 25% points in 2012-13 to 10% points in 2016-17, although the rate at which the gap is closing has slowed.



**Figure 12:** The gap in progression between young and mature students at Loughborough (purple) compared with the sector (yellow).

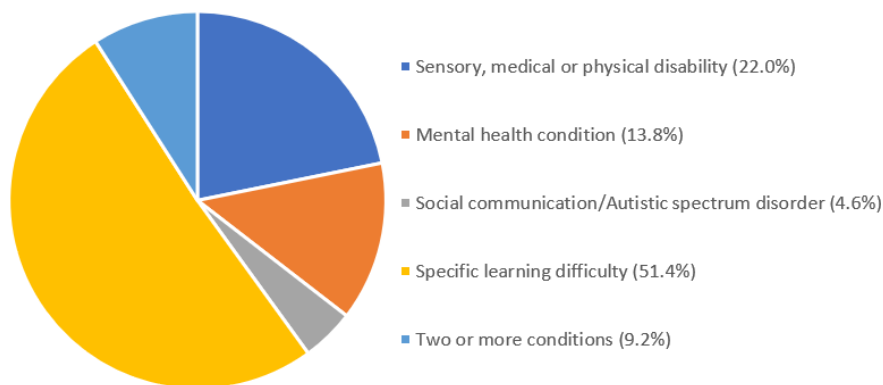
This analysis is confirmed by consideration of our TEF Year 4 data, in which progression into highly skilled employment for young students has a double positive flag and is significantly above the benchmark (83.3% compared to 75.6%) whereas for mature students there are no flags, indicating that progression into employment is in line with the benchmark (75.0% compared to 72.1%).

**Given the small numbers of mature students at Loughborough, explained in the context of subject mix, delivery mode and demographic, we note that any gaps are not statistically significant, nevertheless we continue to monitor all aspects of the student lifecycle for mature students in order to ensure equality of opportunity.**

## 1.4 Disabled students

### i) Access

In 2015-16, 13.3% of full-time undergraduate entrants to the University indicated that they had a disability. In 2017-18, this proportion has risen to 14.4% of all entrants (545 students). As can be seen in Figure 13 below, just over half (51.4%) of these students have a specific learning difficulty.



**Figure 13:** Full-time undergraduate entrants with a known disability 2017-18 broken down by type of disability.

Loughborough is therefore attractive to students with a disability, with 9% of UK/EU applicants to Loughborough declaring a disability. Furthermore 79% of UK/EU applicants who declared a disability have received an offer in the current cycle compared to 74% of all UK/EU applicants. Our relevant HESA PI also corroborates this, with 8.3% of full-time first-degree students being in receipt of Disabled Student Allowances (DSAs) in 2017-18 (compared to a benchmark of 5.8%).

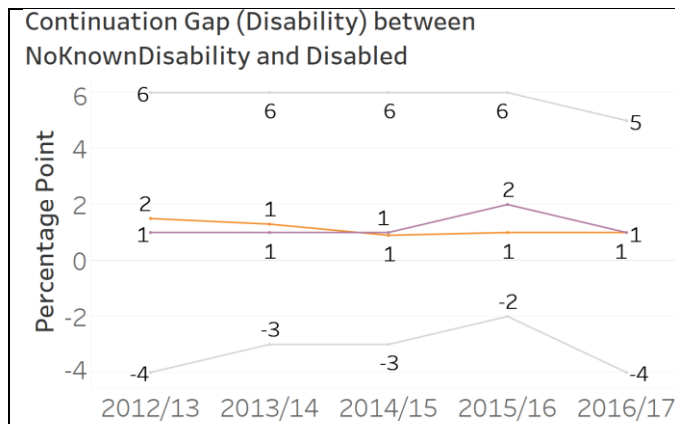
### ii) Success: Non-continuation

The difference between the non-continuation of students with and without a known disability is consistently small (average ~1% point) over the last five years, as shown in Figure 14 below. This is also consistent with the Year 4 TEF metrics which have a difference in the indicators of 1.6%, with both indicators being ~2% above the benchmark. Considering non-continuation by type of disability we see the following trends:

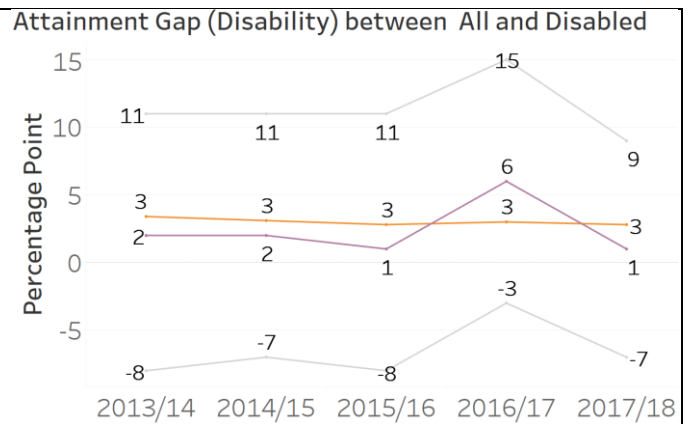
- There is no discernible non-continuation gap for students with a cognitive and learning disability (ranging from 0% points to -2% points)
- The non-continuation gap for students with a mental health condition has increased (from 0% point to 4% points)

- There is no discernible non-continuation gap for students with a sensory, medical or physical disability (except for in 2014-15)
- The non-continuation gap for students with multiple impairments has increased (from 2% points to 7% points)

The small numbers of students, especially when looking in depth at the nature of the disability, mean that none of the gaps identified above are statistically significant. However, we note that a similar non-continuation gap is seen nationally for students with a known disability and students with multiple impairments.



**Figure 14:** The gap in non-continuation between students with and without a disability for Loughborough (purple) in comparison to the sector (yellow).



**Figure 15:** The gap in attainment between students with/without a disability for Loughborough (purple) compared to the sector (yellow).

### iii) Success: Attainment

The OfS dataset reveals a 1% point difference in the number of disabled students achieving a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 compared with students with no known disability in 2016-17. Over the last five years the gap has consistently been 1-2% points, except for in 2015-16 where there was a spike in the data. Looking at attainment by type of disability we see the following trends since 2012-13:

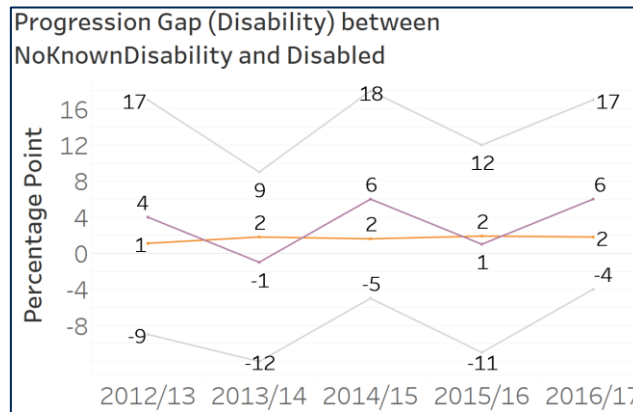
- The attainment gap for students with a cognitive and learning disability has fallen (5% points to -1% points)
- The attainment gap for student with a mental health condition has increased (from 1% point to 8% points)
- There is no discernible attainment gap for students with a sensory, medical or physical disability
- Since 2014-15 there has been an attainment gap for students with multiple impairments, although this has almost halved by 2016-17

Once again, none of the gaps observed are statistically significant or changing significantly as a function of time although the gap between students with and without a known disability at Loughborough is comparable to the gap across the sector which is statistically significant.

We note that OfS' fifth Key Performance Measure (KPM5) relates to the difference in the proportion of disabled and non-disabled students getting a 1st or 2:1. At Loughborough the gap is 1% point compared to 3% points nationally.

### iv) Progression to employment or further study

Internal analysis of our DLHE data indicates that 94.1% of Loughborough students with a known disability were in any level of employment or further study six months after graduation in 2016-17, compared to 93.9% of students with no known disability. Similarly, as shown in the graph below, the gaps observed for progression into highly skilled employment or further study for students with a disability over the last five years are not statistically significant, small, variable (both positive and negative) and broadly in line with the sector. Our internal analysis also shows that there is no significant difference between the number of students with a disability undertaking a placement compared to our student population as a whole.



**Figure 16:** The gap in progression into highly skilled employment or further study between students with and without a disability for Loughborough (purple) in comparison to the sector (yellow).

Using the OfS dataset we have explored the progression gap into highly skilled employment or further study for students with different types of disability and note that:

- Whilst there is variation by year, the gap for students with a sensory, medical or physical disability is consistently lower than for other types of disability (ranging from -5% points to 2% points)
- There is no discernible gap for students with a cognitive and learning disability (-2% points to 6% points)
- Students with a mental health condition or multiple impairments have the greatest progression gaps (average gaps over the five year period are 5% points and 4% points respectively).

**In summary, for student success and progression, relatively small numbers mean that the gaps observed are not statistically significant. However, the gaps for students with a known disability/mental health condition at Loughborough are comparable to the gaps across the sector, which are statistically significant. We will continue to monitor trends in gaps, both in time and with respect to absolute values, across the student lifecycle for students with a disability and will take action to set appropriate targets in the future should we believe they are required to ensure equality of opportunity.**

## 1.5 Care leavers

### i) Access

We currently have less than 20 undergraduate students at Loughborough who have indicated to us that they are care leavers. This is perhaps not surprising given that we only receive approximately 100 applications each year from this student group, representing 0.4% of all UK/EU applications. Analysis of our admissions data shows that care leavers are slightly less likely to receive an offer than other UK/EU applicants. The three-year average offer rate for care leavers is 70%, whereas the equivalent offer rate for all UK/EU applicants is 74%.

### ii) Success: Non-continuation / Attainment / Progression to employment or further study

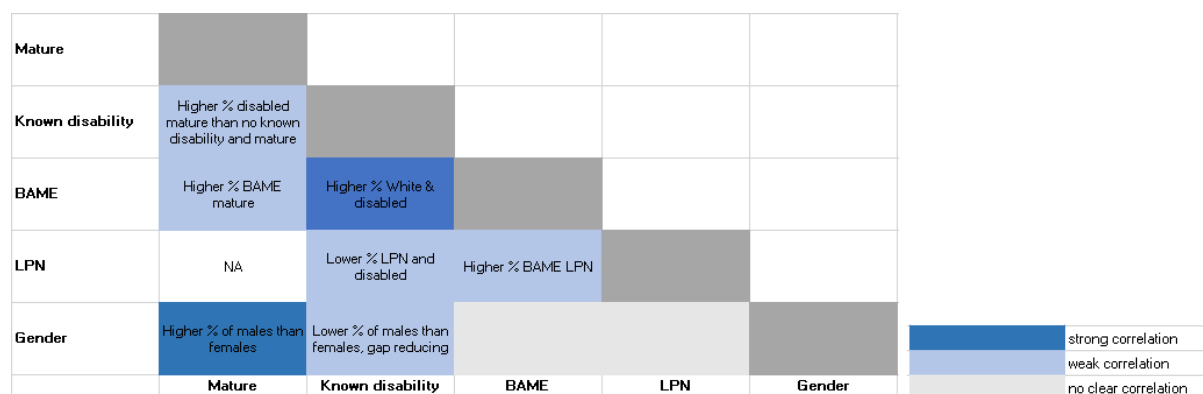
Unfortunately, robust analysis of this group's continuation, degree success or rate of progression is not possible due to the small number of care leavers registered at the University. We continue to seek ways to assess our performance in this area, which includes qualitative research such as structured interviews to explore the experience of care leavers at Loughborough.

## 1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

As outlined in the relevant sections above, we have reviewed the intersections of potential disadvantage at each stage of the lifecycle as part of our assessment of performance. Using internal data sources, a correlation matrix in terms of access to Loughborough for different student characteristics has been developed as shown in Figure 17 below.

Meanwhile the key intersections for attainment identified from the OfS dashboard are:

- Ethnicity/deprivation: White and IMD quintiles 3-5 compared with other ethnicities and IMD quintiles 1 or 2
- Ethnicity/POLAR4: For POLAR4 quintiles 3-5 white compared with all other ethnicities
- Gender/deprivation: For IMD quintiles 3-5, male compared with female
- Gender/POLAR4: For POLAR4 quintiles 3-5, male compared with female



**Figure 17:** Correlation matrix showing intersections of disadvantage at the access stage of the student lifecycle.

## 1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

We do not have consistent and robust data on the number of students at Loughborough who are young carers or estranged learners. We intend to look more closely at these groups once this information is available via the UCAS application process from 2021 entry and will incorporate such measures into our review of contextual admissions.

Loughborough University does not currently offer part-time undergraduate degrees. Those who are recorded as studying part-time with us (2%) are completing their studies over a longer period due to disability or health-related conditions, elite sporting commitments or are undertaking reassessment. The experiences of part-time students are considered as part of our data analysis and monitoring in order to ensure that the specific needs of this group are met.

We understand that commuter students – those students living at home and travelling to the University for their studies – may face additional challenges. Analysis shows that approximately 10% of our students are in this position. Whilst there has been no increase in the number within this category over the last three years, we recognise the need to monitor this student group closely.

The University recruits approximately 70 students onto Initial Teacher Training (ITT) programmes each year, which have recently been rated as Outstanding in every respect by Ofsted. Taking a three-year average, 17% of entrants are from BAME backgrounds and 20% have a known disability (compared to 21% and 14% respectively for the undergraduate population as a whole). Our analysis of ITT completion data indicates that there are no significant differences by ethnicity or disability.

## 1.8 Summary from Assessment of Performance

This detailed Assessment of Performance has provided a clear insight into the gaps identified for each aspect of the student lifecycle. These gaps are summarised in Table 3 below and inform the strategic aims and objectives in the following section.

**Table 3:** Summary of the gaps identified across the student lifecycle.

<b>Access</b>	Gaps for POLAR4, IMD and Ethnicity compared with the population
<b>Continuation</b>	No statistically significant gaps
<b>Attainment</b>	Gaps for Ethnicity, Gender (as well as the intersections of some measures) <sup>2</sup>
<b>Progression</b>	No statistically significant gaps

<sup>2</sup> On the basis of statistically significant gaps being consistently present over the five year period, typically in 3 or more of the 5 years under consideration.



## 2. Strategic aims and objectives

### 2.1 Target groups

The assessment of performance has informed where we should be focussing our access and participation activity. Table 4 below details the under-represented groups that will be targeted, and at which stage of the student lifecycle.

**Table 4:** Target groups across the student lifecycle.

Access	Continuation	Attainment	Progression
Low HE representation and low socio-economic groups		Black, Asian and low socio-economic groups	
Disabled students			

The approach adopted – focussing on the recruitment of students from areas of low HE representation (KPM2) and the Black attainment gap (KPM4) – reflects where we have identified statistically significant gaps in equality of opportunity, and areas that we believe are the most important for the University to address.

While students with a disability are well represented at Loughborough, the small numbers mean the success and progression gaps identified, although small, are not statistically significant. We acknowledge that the differences observed are comparable with those identified nationally and therefore we have identified this as a further target group.

Our student retention and progression rates do not vary significantly across all student groups. However, this is an area where we are not complacent. We recognise the need to continue to monitor performance in this area and act on any gaps that arise as our student population changes.

### 2.2 Aims and objectives

Based on these target groups, a series of strategic aims and associated objectives have been developed. The University has set challenging targets, and the level of ambition is clear when these are considered in the context of our current performance outlined above. The targets we have set for Access are consistent with the OfS KPM2 and recognise the fact that the distribution of students across the five POLAR4 quintiles nationally is not quite even, with ~18% of students in quintile 1 and 23% of students in quintile 5.

**Access:** Increase intake of students from areas of low HE participation/low socio-economic groups (KPM2)

- Reduce the difference in entry rates for students from POLAR4 quintiles 3,4 & 5 compared to quintiles 1 & 2 to a ratio of 3:5 in 4 years<sup>3</sup>
- Reduce the difference in entry rates for students from POLAR4 quintile 5 compared to quintile 1 to a ratio of 4.5:1 in 5 years
- Increase the proportion of Realising Opportunities students who are tracked into HE who will access a research-intensive university within two years of becoming 'HE ready' and completing their post-16 studies to 54% in 5 years

**Attainment:** Understand and explain the different attainment rates observed by ethnicity/socio-economic group, and reduce the gaps identified (KPM4)

- Reduce the % difference between White and Black students undertaking a placement year during their degree to be within 4% in 5 years
- Reduce the difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between White and Black students to 10% points in 5 years
- Reduce the difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between White and Asian students to 7% points in 5 years

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<sup>3</sup> The inclusion of this target should not be seen as diminishing our commitment to recruiting more students from POLAR4 quintile 1. Rather it acts as a means of monitoring progress towards achieving our quintile 5:1 target and is in response to the statistically significant gap identified for quintile 2 students.

- Reduce the difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between students from IMD quintiles 3,4 & 5 compared to IMD quintiles 1 & 2 to 7% points in 5 years

**Student Success:** Understand and reduce any inequalities for students with a disability in terms of student success; these gaps are not statistically significant at Loughborough

- Use our unique reputation for sport to engage young people with a known sensory, medical or physical disability and promote their progression to and success in HE, with a target to increase the proportion of new entrants from this group by 75% over 5 years

**Continuation:** This is a current area of strength for Loughborough, nevertheless, understanding the need to monitor any emerging gaps, as well as our role contributing to performance nationally, we will continue to:

- Monitor student continuation across all groups and act where any issues are identified

**Progression:** This is a current area of strength for Loughborough, nevertheless, understanding the need to monitor any emerging gaps, as well as our role contributing to performance nationally, we will continue to:

- Monitor progression into employment across all student groups and act where any issues are identified

### 3. Strategic measures

#### 3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

##### Overview

Loughborough University's strategy, Building Excellence, sets out a vision around four strategic drivers: Investing in our staff; Educating for success; Growing capacity and influence; and Raising standards and aspirations. Fully embedded into this strategy is a desire to identify and attract the most able students, regardless of their background, and provide them with an outstanding academic and student experience.

Institutional commitment and increased awareness about the inequalities that exist at Loughborough across the student lifecycle have enabled the University to progress from having 'individual champions' to 'pockets of excellence'. Plans to further raise the profile of access and participation work and create a truly 'inclusive institution' are being developed using the insights gained through Liz Thomas' research into the whole provider approach to widening participation<sup>ii</sup>.

Many of our strategic measures outlined below are under-pinned by an overarching theory of change<sup>iii</sup>. There are however some areas where there is a need to evaluate and/or undertake further research to establish the most effective and appropriate way to drive forward change and evidence each of the steps comprising the appropriate logic chain. The strategic measures which we are proposing to take have also been informed by a peer analysis using the OfS dataset of other providers with a similar demographic and discipline mix.

##### Alignment with other strategies

**i) Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI):** The University's EDI Strategy is focussed on the provision of a working, learning, social and living environment in which all members of our community can achieve their potential, are valued, recognised, supported and celebrated. We see a shared vision and overlapping relationship with our Access and Participation Plan in understanding and improving the experience of students from under-represented groups and groups with protected characteristics. This can be demonstrated by the priorities set out in the 2019-20 EDI Action Plan which include addressing the Black student attainment gap as well as closely monitoring the potential attainment gap for students with a disability.

Through the strategy the principles of equality will be embedded in all ways of working, studying and living at Loughborough. As part of this commitment the University has recently introduced mandatory unconscious bias training for all staff and the monitoring of data by protected characteristic features in the University's governance arrangements. We will also improve our practices and policies through actively working towards national awards on EDI such as Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charter and Disability Confident.

**ii) Learning, teaching and assessment:** Under the strategic theme of 'Educating for Success', the University has stated that it will develop students as individuals, enhancing their capabilities as creative, confident and adaptable 21st Century citizens who will make a significant contribution to global society. Student engagement is a fundamental element of academic life at Loughborough. We have a framework for student opportunities within and beyond the curriculum that recognises students as partners in learning; skilled assessors of their

academic experience; valued and informed advisors of educational developments; and critical appraisers of innovative approaches to learning and teaching.

Supporting and retaining students from all backgrounds is integral to our approach to learning, teaching and assessment. Reporting to the University's Learning and Teaching Committee, an Equality and Diversity Working Group designs targeted interventions in order to address specific inequalities identified as a result of quantitative data analysis and qualitative evidence gathering. This enables the University to take a strategic and data-driven approach to improving student success and progression from a variety of backgrounds.

We are committed to providing an educational environment in which students are inspired by their university experience, are clear about the skills and attributes they have developed within and beyond the curriculum, and can articulate them with confidence. The success of our strategic approach was confirmed by the Gold rating in TEF Year 2, awarded in June 2017.

**iii) Sport:** There is also alignment between our access and participation work and our Sport Strategy with a focus and investment on supporting disabled students to engage with and excel in sport. Disabled athletes are often required to make a choice between their sport and higher education, as the challenges of combining the two are greater than those for non-disabled athletes. We will use our reputation and facilities to remove this dilemma for these students by providing opportunities and an appropriate environment for them to succeed in both. In addition, we continue to use our unique position for sport to engage young people, develop their skills and promote higher education as part of outreach activities.

## Strategic measures

Given the extent of the gaps identified in our assessment of performance we intend to rigorously evaluate all current activity in line with our stated aims and objectives, as well as invest in targeted new initiatives to enable the achievement of the targets set. A summary of the strategic measures that the University is currently employing and intends to initiate across the lifecycle are outlined in Table 4 and more detail is provided below.

**Table 4:** Summary of strategic measures linked to our strategic aims and objectives.

Access	Continuation	Attainment	Progression
SportMAD REACH Partnership Subject-focussed masterclasses / residentials Subject in a Box Mathscard Mentoring Young carer support Contextual admissions and applicant support Realising Opportunities Foundation courses Teacher CPD (eg LUMEN)	Review of induction and student communication Reassessment bootcamp Well-being advisers	Personal tutors and peer assisted learning Inclusive teaching Mathematics learning support Anonymised marking Black and Asian student engagement Learning analytics	Placement support Micro internships
	Personal Best		
Para sport initiatives Adjustments for students with a disability			

### i) Pre-application and admissions routes

For many years, Loughborough has engaged in a wide range of initiatives that support the progression of students from under-represented groups into higher education. Central to this work is the adoption of a theory of change model focussed on enrichment of the curriculum and/or attainment-raising leading to improved GCSE and A Level attainment as outlined in Figure 18. Initiatives include subject-specific resources and experience days on campus (ie Subject in a Box, mathscard), and student mentoring directed toward Year 11 students ahead of their GCSE examinations. Furthermore, the University is engaged in Continuous Professional Development programmes for teachers, including the development of a new network for mathematics teachers.



**Figure 18:** Theory of change employed at the Access stage of the student lifecycle

While maintaining these interventions, the University plans to expand the post-16 support offered to students from under-represented groups in order to increase the proportion of students admitted from the least represented areas. Dedicated staff will work with students in Year 12/13 through initiatives such as Realising Opportunities as well as developing effective applicant support targeted at those from areas of low participation/socio-economic groups.

Loughborough has for many years operated a contextual admissions policy with applicants meeting certain criteria flagged for additional consideration and has engaged in UCAS' modernised contextual data (MCDS) trial. In light of our own analysis and national research evidence relating to contextual offer-making<sup>iv</sup>, we intend to refine our approach during 2019-20 – broadening the measures used to identify students (beyond POLAR), and guaranteeing differential offers/entry tariffs. This will be accompanied by work to communicate our revised policy with schools and applicants in addition to on-going monitoring and research.

For those students without the necessary academic background for direct entry to the first year of our undergraduate programmes in science, engineering and social science disciplines, we have offered a successful Foundation Studies programme for many years. We have seen the number of young students from POLAR4 quintile 1 increase from 7% in 2013-14 to 14% in 2017-18, while at the same time increasing the number of UK-domiciled entrants by 19% on this programme. In line with the sector<sup>v</sup>, we see this programme and our Art and Design Foundation Course (which leads to a UAL Level 3 Diploma in Art and Design), as being particularly attractive to those from under-represented groups and therefore believe that they have an important role to play in our recruitment of students from the least represented areas. We may need to reconsider this approach in the light of any future changes in the sector in relation to funding for Level 3/Foundation programmes.

## **ii) Curriculum, pedagogic and student support**

The University has a robust process for monitoring and evaluating the quality and standards of our provision to enable us to evaluate student success and confirm that the curriculum aligns with our mission and strategic priorities. This includes annual and quadrennial review of programmes and student performance, overseen by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee. This has enabled us to identify and launch targeted initiatives, and to review and monitor their success.

The University seeks to embed inclusive teaching practice at the heart of every academic's approach to curriculum design and delivery. All new academics are required to complete an Excellence in Academic Practice apprenticeship programme, which takes between 18 months and two years to complete. The programme is aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework and leads to Fellowship of the HEA. The programme, alongside Continuing Professional Development provision for all other academic staff, as well as Teaching Innovation Awards (TIA) and Research Informed Teaching Awards (RITA), enables the University to support, recognise and promote inclusivity in learning and teaching and share best practice.

Initiatives that will be important for the University to maintain its strong track record for continuation include the personal academic tutor system, peer mentoring and peer assisted learning, lecture capture (ReView), as well as other projects being taken forward as part of the Digital Strategy for Learning and Teaching approved by University Council in 2017. However, we know that the first-year experience is critical for student retention, achievement and satisfaction<sup>vi</sup>. Following autoethnography research and student feedback a review of induction processes and student communications during this important phase of the student lifecycle is underway, with a view to implementing some revisions for the forthcoming 2019-20 academic year and more significant changes for students entering in Autumn 2020.

The University is committed to addressing the Black student attainment gap and has recently pledged its support to the recommendations arising from the UUK/NUS #ClosingTheGap report<sup>vii</sup>. A number of activities are already in train to address the gap at Loughborough including the introduction of fully anonymised marking for the academic year 2019-20 and the development of guidance around inclusive teaching practices following research by the School of Social Sciences and Humanities<sup>viii</sup>.

Given the attainment gap is evident across subject disciplines, it does appear that the gap cannot be explained directly by issues connected with the content of the curriculum. As such we will be focusing on the use of learning analytics and targeted academic support to reduce the attainment gap. Preliminary work on our

learning analytics capability has been carried out over the past two years, with a programme of work currently underway to introduce appropriate dashboards during 2019-20. It is anticipated that the full scope of this work will take two years to complete. Additional opportunities and assistance will be offered to those students undertaking reassessment starting from Summer 2019, and there is a need to ensure better sign-posting to the different forms of mathematics support available to students across the institution.

We are committed to developing additional research-informed and innovative approaches and intend to invest strategically to achieve this. As an example, we are looking at appointing a number of Post Graduate Teaching Assistants who will combine studying for a PhD in various aspects of inclusivity in education and the development/appropriate use of learning analytics to better understand the reasons behind the observed attainment gap (explained/unexplained) as well as proactively support student success, and who may be able to act as role models to inspire students.

A further approach we are adopting in relation to addressing the Black and Asian attainment gap is closer working with student societies such as the African-Caribbean Society. Through investment in increased student engagement and support for initiatives such as Black History Month and the Review of Student and Hall Culture, we see opportunities to work in partnership and implement effective change.

To support success and progression the University has launched 'Personal Best' a programme that provides students with the opportunity to develop, recognise and better articulate their own skills and attributes, leading to greater self-awareness and success both academically and in their future careers. Accessed through the myLboro app, Personal Best will be offered within the curriculum to all first-year undergraduates starting in 2019 following a successful pilot phase involving half of the first year in 2018. On-going support is then available in subsequent years and students are encouraged to develop and reflect on skills acquired from both their studies and all of their extra-curricular opportunities. While offered to all students, we believe that the intervention will be particularly beneficial to those from under-represented groups as we see the proportion of these students within the student body grow. The Access and Participation Committee will monitor engagement closely by student characteristic as the Personal Best programme is rolled out. The University is committed to ensuring that there are no differences in the proportions of students from different under-represented groups completing the Skills Audit (SA), Goal Setting (GS) and Academic Scholarship Test elements and once baseline data is available will set an appropriate target if differences are observed.

We recognise the need to coordinate approaches to supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds and provide better sign-posting to academic and pastoral support for those who could benefit. The University has recently streamlined procedures associated with making reasonable adjustments for students with a disability as well as the way that referrals for support (including mental-health-related referrals) are managed within the institution. In addition, Well-being Advisers have been appointed to provide students with guidance, advice and support on well-being issues and refer on to appropriate professional services for more specialist support where required. This pastoral/welfare support will complement the guidance provided through the University's system of personal academic tutoring, which we continue to review to ensure consistency of approach.

### **iii) Employability**

The University recognises the value of work-based learning and all undergraduate degree programmes offer the option to take a placement year, enabling students to gain professional-level work experience as part of their degree. Each year approximately 1,500 Loughborough students take up this opportunity while many others take part in alternative forms of professional work experience such as summer internships. Alongside the development of Personal Best, we have expanded our placement and employability support to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to placements and other forms of work experience. This includes the establishment of a dedicated placement hub offering advice and support, called 'The Place' and the appointment of a specialist member of staff with the remit of supporting undergraduate students from under-represented groups.

As part of our ongoing monitoring of degree outcomes we have identified a statistical link between achieving a good degree outcome and undertaking a placement year when other factors are controlled for<sup>ix</sup>. In addition, the gap in attainment and progression is wider between White and BAME students who have not done a placement. We are seeking to better understand the reasons for these disparities but have incorporated the placement year into our theory of change aligned to closing the Black attainment gap. Linked to this, initiatives have been established to optimise progression into professional placements and other work experience. These include mentoring schemes, micro-internships, workshops addressing key topics and placement year support.



#### iv) Collaborative working

Loughborough has operated in partnership with the Universities of Leicester and De Montfort in the area of widening participation since 1999 through what is now known as REACH. Through the partnership, a menu of interventions is offered to schools/colleges in Leicestershire. These include Year 9 HE Experience Days and in-school presentations on making GCSE choices and personal statement writing.

From August 2019 Loughborough University is now also part of Realising Opportunities (RO) which is a collaboration of research-intensive universities working with shared objectives to support the OfS in eliminating the national gap in entry rates at higher-tariff providers between the most and least under-represented groups. RO also contributes to our own strategic aim to improve access to Loughborough from low HE participation areas/socio-economic groups. The programme is underpinned by robust evaluation, undertaken by independent evaluators, underpinned by a theory of change model using narrative, empirical research and causality evaluation techniques to evidence impact.

#### v) Alignment with other work and funding sources

The University has historically made an active contribution to national widening access programmes such as the National Collaborative Outreach Programme. Loughborough will continue to contribute to these initiatives where it is appropriate to do so, ensuring that activities offered are complementary rather than operating in competition, and contribute specifically to our focus on eliminating gaps in line with KPM2 and KPM4.

We appreciate the importance of a close alignment between the development and evaluation of strategic measures outlined above and academic expertise within the University. Staff from within our School of Social Sciences and Humanities have investigated factors underlying our BAME attainment gap and recommendations arising from this work are already informing our inclusive teaching and assessment practice. We are also fortunate to have one of the largest groups of mathematics education researchers in the UK, with an international reputation for the research into and practice of the learning and teaching of mathematics and statistics. A new professional development programme for mathematics teachers will launch in 2019 and complement the University's other attainment-raising outreach activity.

The University currently validates sport-related Higher Education (HE) provision at Loughborough College, a Further Education (FE) provider located adjacent to our campus. We are planning to expand the FE/HE partnership to include the validation of their engineering provision in order to further support social mobility in the local area. Recognising the challenges for the University in recruiting mature students directly, it is anticipated that our validation of the College's engineering programmes will contribute to lifelong learning in Leicestershire, providing an opportunity to combine part-time study with work.

#### vi) Financial support

Our package of financial support for undergraduate students is targeted at those groups considered to be most in need and has been recently redesigned to minimise the financial barriers to success at Loughborough whilst also increasing our ability to invest in the range of strategic measures outlined above. As shown in Figure 19, students from low-household incomes receive a cash bursary to reduce the need to undertake paid work during term-time and enable full participation in academic and extra-curricular aspects of university life.



**Figure 19:** Theory of change employed relating to financial support.

In 2020-21 entrants will receive a cash bursary linked to their household income (£1,800 if <£22k and £1,000 if £22k-£25k) in each year of study excluding the placement year. In addition, these students may receive a £3,000 fee waiver during their foundation year and/or integrated masters and a £1,000 fee waiver during their placement year. The cash bursary above is enhanced for mature students (£2,500 if <£22k and £2,000 if £22k-£25k).

From 2021-22 onwards all entrants with household incomes below £25k will receive a cash bursary of £1,200 in each year of their course except for the placement year when they will receive a £500 placement start-up bursary. Our foundation year is known to be a positive recruitment route for students from quintile 1-2 yet we feel that an additional year tuition fee debt could be a psychological barrier. Therefore, an enhanced package of support is retained for those completing our foundation programme (£2,000 fee waiver in the foundation year). Care leavers support is unchanged (£3,000 fee waiver and additional £1,500 cash bursary in all years).

We recognise that for some groups of students, this means a reduction in the individual support package but the changes result in a consistent scheme for all those with household incomes <£25k, meaning it will be clearer for eligible students what support they will be able to access. Furthermore the decision to change the scheme has been informed by peer analysis/feedback from OfS.

In recognition of the significant benefits that study abroad and professional work experience offer, financial support will continue to be available to students from low income households (below £25k) who wish to undertake an international study exchange or an unpaid placement year. Similarly, additional support is provided to students from under-represented groups to facilitate their participation in sport at a high level. The University is committed to supporting students encountering financial difficulties, and we will continue to provide additional hardship support for students from target groups.

We will be trialling additional discretionary bursaries to support participation in the placement year and to support students recruited via the Realising Opportunities partnership. The detail of these discretionary bursaries is still in development as they will not be introduced until 2021/22 but our aim is to align a proportion of our financial support directly towards our targets (PTA\_1, PTA\_2 and PTS\_1). We will need to evaluate the success of the new schemes and we will develop a framework for this.

A robust evaluation plan is in place to ensure that the financial support we provide is effective in achieving our strategic aims. Our package of support will continue to be reviewed annually in response to this evaluation work and in the light of the other commitments outlined within this plan. Withdrawal and attainment rates for students in receipt of financial support will also continue to be monitored. If the data suggest that the revisions to our bursary scheme have an adverse impact on continuation and/or attainment, then we will undertake a further review to understand the factors at play and, if necessary, consider increasing the financial support package.

### **3.2 Student consultation**

At Loughborough we have an established track record of working in close partnership with our Students' Union (LSU) as well as the wider student body. Dedicated meetings have taken place with LSU representatives over the development of the plan. Given that elected officers sit on many of the groups that have contributed to our access and participation strategy, there has also been the opportunity for their views to feed in through the committee structure. LSU were fully in agreement with the plan and targets as they were developed and therefore did not request any specific changes.

In response to our consultation, LSU have provided the following statement for inclusion:

"We have worked with the University to ensure that the student voice is heard when reviewing Loughborough's future plans in terms of access and participation. We have helped them in organising student focus groups, and have regularly met with the team to review the results. It was great for us to see the findings were similar to focus groups that we have conducted, therefore we are reassured and believe the plan is more than fit for purpose. We are also reviewing the current provision and services on offer within the Students' Union to our diverse cohort of students, including the social activities and commercial provision."

To ensure that we have undertaken meaningful engagement with the students that our initiatives are aimed at, we have also spoken with students currently at Loughborough from a wide variety of different backgrounds, via a series of structured focus groups, as well as through an autoethnography research project within an academic programme. We recognise students as important partners and their views have made a significant contribution to the development and refinement of our plan. This includes, for example, the review of student and hall culture, as well as making a commitment in our plan to develop new arrangements for student induction and more effective signposting to support services.

We plan to build on this work and, alongside other student feedback channels, intend to use regular focus groups with students from our target groups to monitor and, where appropriate, refine our activities across the student lifecycle. Involving our own students in the University's widening participation work has been central to our approach for many years and our intention is to ensure that our student body continue to engage fully in the development, implementation and evaluation of future access and participation plans.

### 3.3 Evaluation strategy

Completion of the OfS' Standard of evidence and evaluation self-assessment tool<sup>x</sup> has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of our current evaluation activity. In light of this, we have reviewed our approach to evaluation and provide an overview of both current and planned activity below. The University will be working on a new evaluation strategy during the 2019-20 academic year with a view to it being approved by our new Access and Participation Committee and then implemented by September 2020. Initially there will be a focus on applying the strategy and associated tools to areas where most improvement is needed. Therefore, initiatives aimed at attainment raising and placement participation of Black students, as well as recruitment of students from low participation neighbourhoods will be used to trial our new approaches. There will be a full review of the effectiveness of our strategy reported back to the Access and Participation Committee in 2021 which will be used to inform future developments.

#### i) Strategic context for evaluation

The University recognises the importance of evaluating access and participation initiatives and learning from the findings. As such it has invested in this activity for a number of years. To date resource has largely been directed towards our widening access activity driven by the focus on addressing the gap that exists between those from the lowest and highest POLAR quintiles within our student body.

Staff delivering these initiatives routinely and consistently evaluate their activity through regular discussion at team meetings, robust and compliant data collection and evaluation, an annual reflective evaluation exercise as well as opportunities to engage with teachers/advisors. This work is supported by the services and reporting we receive via the East Midlands WP Research and Evaluation Partnership (EMWPREP) which is based at and line managed by Loughborough.

It is clear evaluation now needs to become formally embedded into university governance and conducted more consistently across the whole student lifecycle. With this in mind, the University commits to developing an institution-wide evaluation framework during 2019-20 with clearly define roles and responsibilities and that will specify both how and where findings will be shared.

We maintain membership of professional bodies such as NEON and HELOA to enable access to best practice and professional development opportunities relating to evaluation. A more comprehensive review of the knowledge and skills base within the institution and how it might be deployed will be undertaken in order to strengthen our evaluation capacity.

#### ii) Programme and evaluation design

Defined objectives, deliverables and success measures focussed on achieving outcomes are well-embedded within our evaluation work. The strategic measures within our APP and associated initiatives, such as those linking placement year participation and attainment, are underpinned by evidenced theory of change models. Similarly, our access initiatives move beyond participant feedback and monitor attainment and progression into HE where appropriate. Having experimented with different regression analysis models which have included non-continuation rates, DLHE and degree outcomes, we now have a clear process to evaluate the ultimate impact of our success and progression initiatives. Our evaluation practices are therefore supported by clear narrative and empirical enquiry, which are applied in proportion to the type of initiative involved.

#### iii) Evaluation implementation

As referenced above, our access work is supported by ethical and compliant data collection and data sharing agreements, facilitated by EMWPREP and the University's Ethics Committee. This enables us to track the outcomes of individuals over time and to undertake research that establishes causality in the future. This might include for example, evaluation of attainment raising activities with specific schools by comparing their academic performance with that of similar schools we have not engaged with.

Policies relating to the processing of our students' personal data necessary to support and evaluate student success initiatives that are GDPR compliant have recently been agreed and this will enhance the insights available to us moving forward.

#### iv) Learning from evaluation

The expertise of staff involved in evaluation ensures we review our research critically, acknowledging its limitations. We have in some areas adopted a mixed method approach to evaluation, looking at both qualitative and quantitative data and seeking a range of different perspectives. A review of our skills base and resources will enable us to extend this in order to triangulate findings from different sources more effectively.

Mechanisms for sharing evaluation findings exist but have historically been siloed. Our plans to integrate evaluation more formally into university governance seek to address this, as well as raise the profile of access and participation work across the institution.

The University recently contributed to the OfS 'Evaluation Framework' project, which tested the Standards of Evaluation Practice for HE outreach and their application in different contexts. We intend to engage in more activity of this type and share our knowledge and experiences to a wider audience via the Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) and other relevant sector organisations.

#### **v) Evaluation of financial support**

Given the significant investment in financial support, we have analysed first year withdrawals for students in receipt of university scholarships and bursaries compared with those for the overall student body. Student retention at Loughborough does not appear to be extremely-sensitive to levels of financial support. As a result, the level of investment in scholarships was reduced in 2018-19 and funds redirected to other priorities.

We understand the importance of analysis in this area and have also employed the financial evaluation tools<sup>xi</sup> made available by the OfS to assess the impact of cash bursaries on student continuation and whether the effectiveness of financial support is influenced by protected characteristics. The findings have contributed to further refinement of our package of bursaries and scholarships which will be implemented in 2021-22. We intend to repeat the analyses outlined above to enable trends to be identified as well as develop our understanding of the impact caused by changing the financial support offered.

### **3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan**

Compliance with this APP forms part of our Risk Management Framework which is overseen by the University's Audit Committee. Executive responsibility for delivery of our Plan rests with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching) who chairs the University's new Access and Participation Committee. The committee, which includes student representation, is responsible for agreeing the University's strategic direction, monitoring delivery against all aspects of the Plan and assessing the effectiveness of the University's approach.

The progress made towards the milestones and other APP commitments will be reported on a quarterly basis to the group. If progress is not made closing the gaps or the gaps worsen, the Committee will review the objectives set and the strategic measures being implemented. As part of this review the group will agree what actions are required to ensure that the position does not worsen further.

The University's Access and Participation Committee will report through Senate to Council (the University's governing body), on matters relating to access and participation including progress towards the targets set as well as to the University's Operations Committee.

In addition, the Equality and Diversity Working Group (EDWG) and Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), play pivotal roles in identifying, championing and monitoring priority areas/projects in this strategically important area. Both committees include student representation.

Alongside the formal OfS annual monitoring activity, equality of opportunity is embedded in many University processes. For example, data on applications and acceptances by student group are reported by subject area across the institution at regular points in the admissions cycle. Inclusivity data relating to all stages of the lifecycle also features in Performance Indicator sheets prepared quarterly for each School and discussed with Deans. Furthermore, a new equality and diversity key performance indicator has recently been created for the University which includes an assessment of progress against the targets contained in our Access and Participation Plan. This key performance indicator will be monitored by University Council on a regular basis to track institutional performance and monitor the impact of activities on students with protected characteristics. The above actions taken collectively will ensure that monitoring is embedded across the University.

## 4. Provision of information to students

The University recognises the need to provide clear, timely and accurate information to both prospective and existing students and is committed to doing so. In recent years developments and enhancement have been made to paper and web-based resources to ensure our guidance on the following is clear and comprehensive:

- Total tuition costs for prospective students
- Estimated study and living costs
- Details of bursaries/scholarships (including eligibility criteria, application process and size of award for each year of study)

Details of the appropriate tuition fee are included in the letters sent to communicate our offer of a place. Once registered at Loughborough, details of the tuition fee and any tuition fee reduction provided by the University is included in a monthly financial statement sent by email. Students are notified by email of any bursary/scholarship (see 'Strategic measures') awarded to them. The University's intention is that in the future students will be able to check this information at any time through the student portal.

Comprehensive information about what is included in the tuition fee and what fees are used to fund has been published on the University website to clarify the position for both prospective and current students.

In addition to the creation of paper and web-based resources detailing the information outlined above, advice is offered to prospective students face-to-face through visits to schools/colleges, open days and other events on campus. Individual prospective and current students can also access confidential advice through the University's Student Advice and Support Service.

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## References

- <sup>i</sup> Office for Students Access and Participation Data Dashboard <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/guide-to-the-access-and-participation-data-resources/findings-from-the-data/>
- <sup>ii</sup> Thomas, L. 2017, Understanding a whole institution approach to widening participation <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180511112311/https://www.offa.org.uk/egp/whole-institution-approach/>
- <sup>iii</sup> Harrison, N., Vigurs, K., Crockford, J., McCaig, C., Squire, R., and Clark, L. 2018 Evaluation of outreach interventions for under 16 year olds [https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/e2c5eea5-b262-4ff6-8261-5b0bc84ba46a/ofs2018\\_apevaluation\\_a.pdf](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/e2c5eea5-b262-4ff6-8261-5b0bc84ba46a/ofs2018_apevaluation_a.pdf)
- <sup>iv</sup> Office for Students 2019 Contextual admissions: Promoting fairness and rethinking merit <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/contextual-admissions-promoting-fairness-and-rethinking-merit/>
- <sup>v</sup> Office for Students 2019 Preparing for degree study: Analysis of Access to Higher Education Diplomas and integrated foundation year courses <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/preparing-for-degree-study/>
- <sup>vi</sup> Meehan & Howells, 2018. 'What really matters to freshers?': evaluation of first year student experience of transition into university
- <sup>vii</sup> Universities UK and NUS 2019 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: Closing the Gap <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>
- <sup>viii</sup> Nyhagen, L. and Esson, J. 2018 Experiences in the Classroom and Beyond: The Role of Race and Ethnicity
- <sup>ix</sup> Analysis of student diversity and degree outcomes at Loughborough University
- <sup>x</sup> Office for Students Standards of evidence and evaluation self-assessment tool <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluation-self-assessment-tool/>
- <sup>xi</sup> Office for Students Financial support evaluation toolkit <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/financial-support-evaluation-toolkit/>



# Access and participation plan

## Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: Loughborough University

Provider UKPRN: 10004113

### 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		£9,250
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		£6,935
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0		£6,935
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: Loughborough University

Provider UKPRN: 10004113

### 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 (£)	£2,264,313.00	£2,476,469.00	£2,508,908.00	£2,595,459.00	£2,555,183.00
Access (pre-16)	£504,539.00	£587,924.00	£599,075.00	£630,825.00	£614,715.00
Access (post-16)	£1,620,963.00	£1,743,908.00	£1,758,568.00	£1,807,176.00	£1,783,010.00
Access (adults and the community)	£23,376.00	£24,068.00	£24,824.00	£25,280.00	£25,280.00
Access (other)	£115,435.00	£120,569.00	£126,441.00	£132,178.00	£132,178.00
Financial support (£)	£5,039,400.00	£4,671,092.00	£4,447,717.00	£4,187,672.00	£4,268,223.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£232,900.00	£372,460.00	£335,324.00	£365,327.00	£313,559.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£34,120,935.00	£34,508,755.00	£34,174,260.00	£34,108,235.00	£34,108,235.00
Access investment	6.6%	7.2%	7.3%	7.6%	7.5%
Financial support	14.8%	13.5%	13.0%	12.3%	12.5%
Research and evaluation	0.7%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	0.9%
Total investment (as %HFI)	22.1%	21.8%	21.3%	21.0%	20.9%

### Table 2a - Access

[illegible]

### Table 2b - Success

[illegible]

### Table 2c - Progression

[illegible]

[illegible]