

University of Worcester

## Access and Participation Plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

### Introduction

The University of Worcester is home to over 10,000 students, many of whom live and work locally to the institution. We attract students from around the UK, Europe and internationally, however a significant proportion of our students travel to study each day combining their learning with family, work and other caring responsibilities. The University has continued to operate innovative modes of delivery through our partnership arrangements with the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) and The Learning Institute, supporting many students returning to learning and a large number of mature students- over 40%.

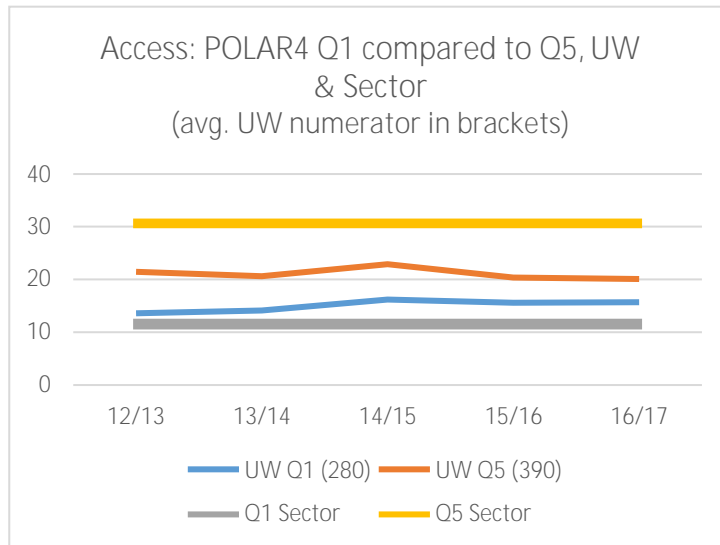
We remain successful in attracting a significant proportion of our students from low participation neighbourhoods, first generation entrants and those with non-traditional qualifications on entry, the university attracts applications from each of the POLAR quintiles in broadly the same proportions that they are in society, and also evenly across quintiles<sup>1</sup>. The whole institution approach to widening participation we adopted is demonstrating a significant positive impact for our learners; for example: we have achieved a significant narrowing of gaps between disabled and non-disabled students, mature and young students and gaps between the most and least advantaged learners.

The University has adopted a new strategic plan in 2019 which embeds the university values and approach as one built on the principle of inclusion and at the core of which are three commitments: we will create possibilities. We will develop potential. We will increase community engagement. 8. advantaged TheE4 (

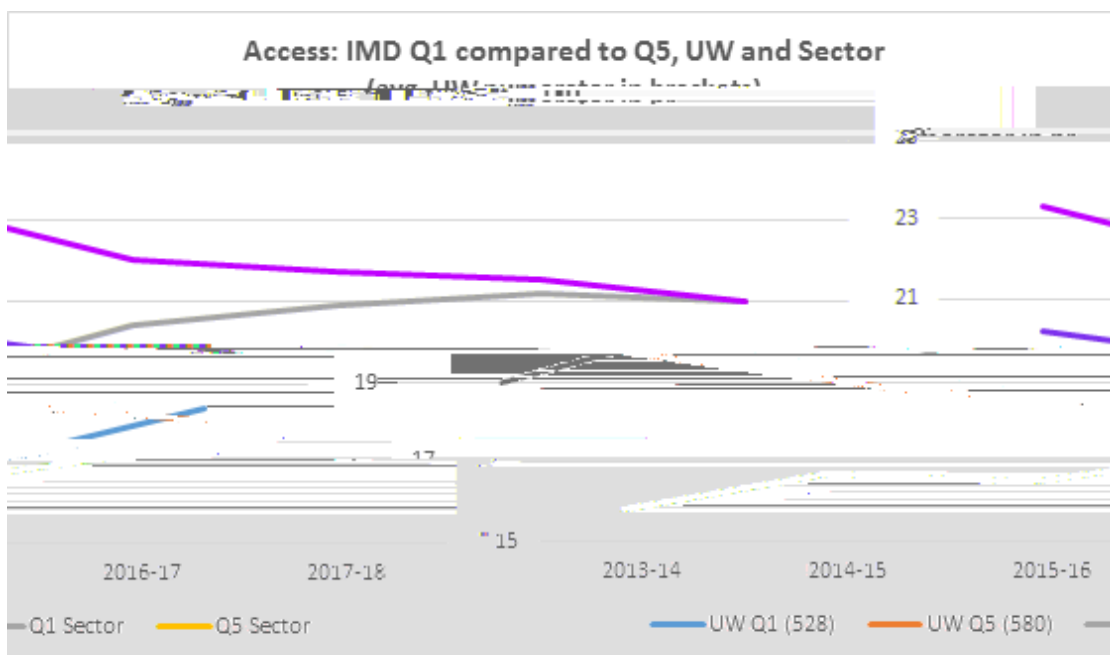
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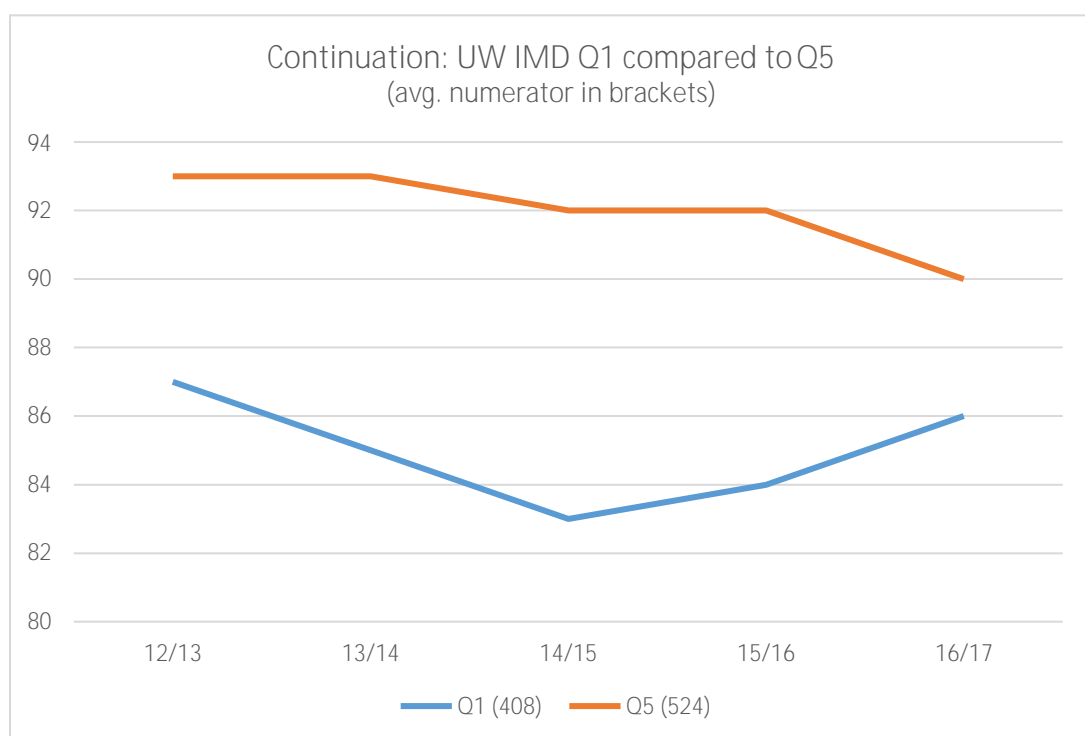
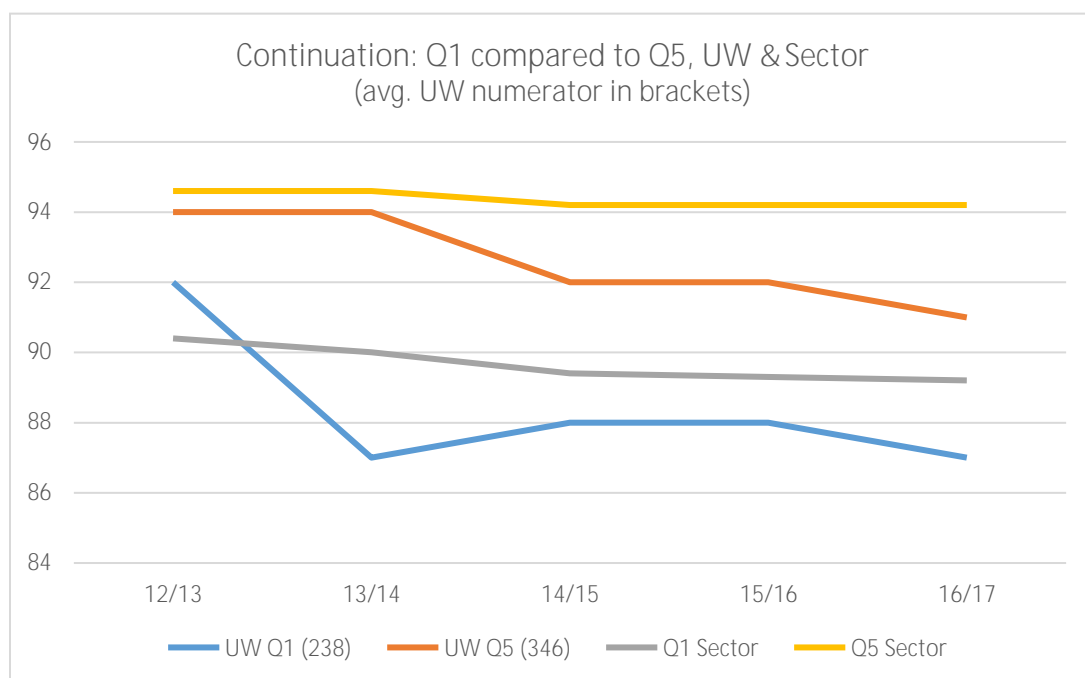
1.1.3 Access (IMD): The graph below shows the access gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 has closed completely at the University. However, the level of access for IMD Q1 is much lower than that of the sector (c. 3pp).



## Success

### Non-Continuation

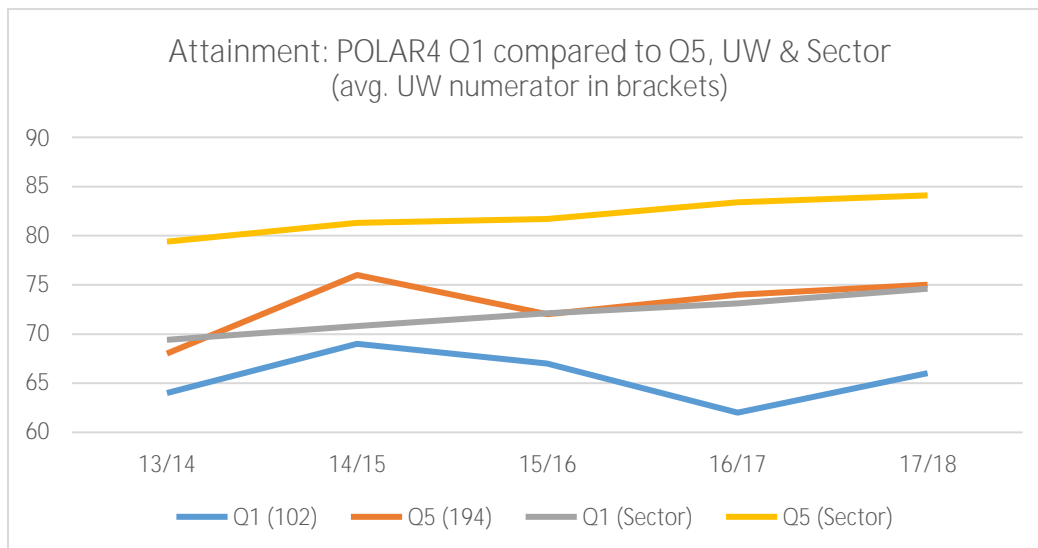
1.1.4 Continuation (POLAR4): The graph below demonstrates that the student continuation rate for Q1 is around 4pp below that of those in Q5, which has broadly been the case over the past 3 years. Similarly, the gap for IMD Q1 is around 4pp below that of Q5 although this has closed since 2014/15.



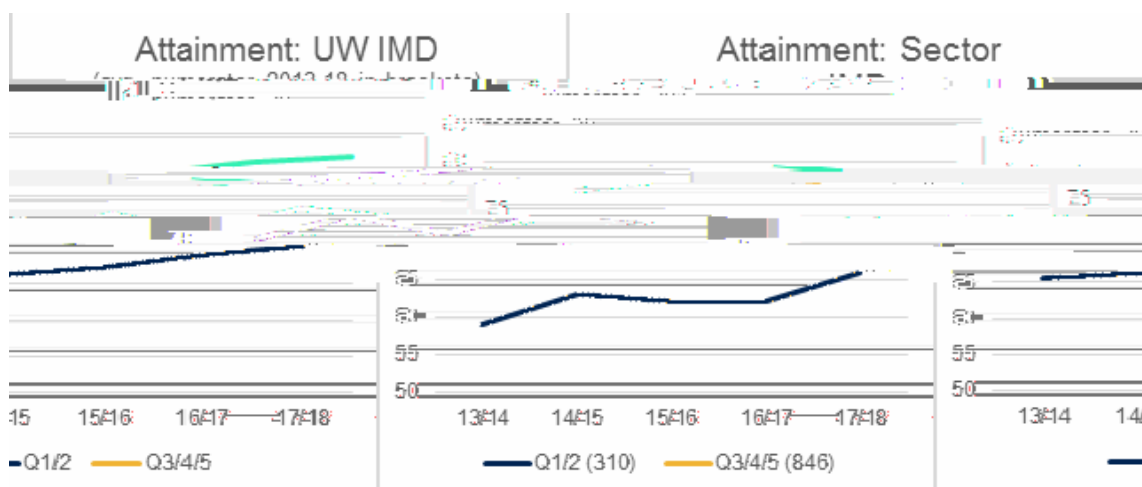
1.1.5

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1.1.6 The attainment gap for POLAR4 Q1 has widened slightly from Q5 since 15/16 from 5pp to a current level of 9pp. Similarly, the gap for IMD Q1 has widened slightly over time to a current level of 11pp.

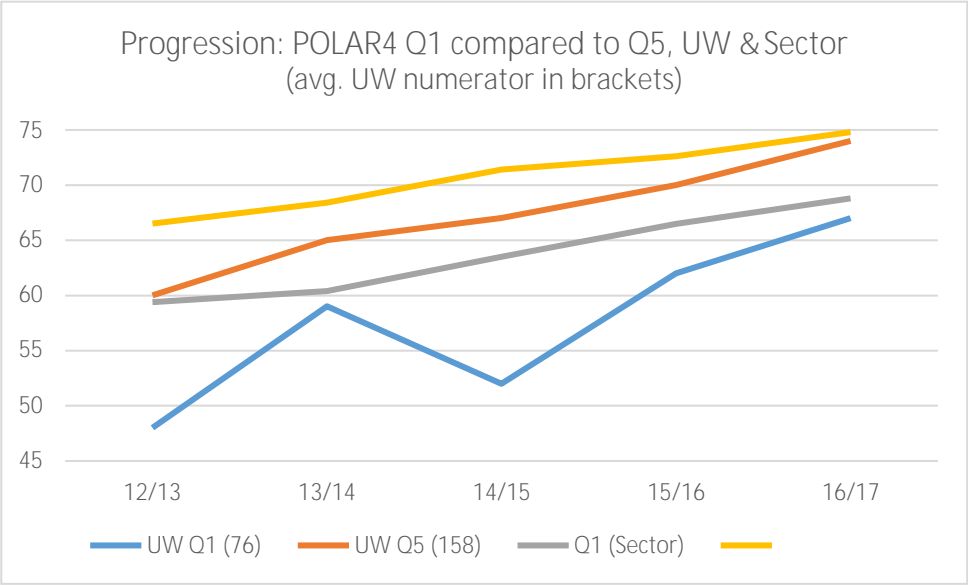


1.1.7 Attainment (IMD): The first graph below shows that although there remains a 6.9pp gap in attainment between Q1&2 and Qs3-5, the gap is narrowing. This compares to a continuing gap in the sector despite overall increases in attainment.



Progression to employment or further study

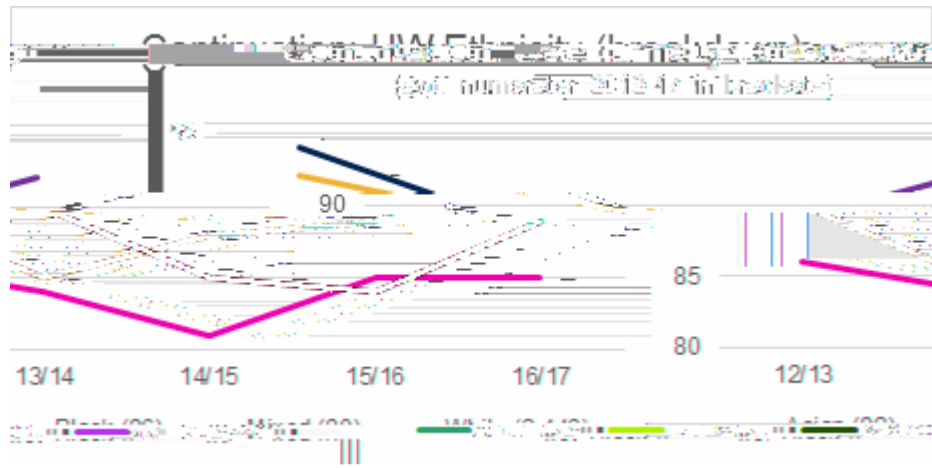
1.1.8 Progression (POLAR4): Progression for this group shows an improving picture for both Q1 and Q5, with Q5 in excess of the sector. However, the gap between Q1 and Q5 within the University is consistent at around 9pp.



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## 1.5 Part-Time Students

- 1.5.1 We have undertaken substantial analysis of our PT student data across all areas of the lifecycle. We have reviewed the data by ethnicity, age, POLAR 4 and sex. However, the numbers of students within some of the categories are too small to draw any significant conclusions.
- 1.5.2 PT students make up a small proportion of the student population and are disproportionately female and mature, as might be expected within the institutional context. Many of these students originally registered as FT and subsequently changed their mode of study to PT for a variety of reasons relating to their personal circumstances.
- 1.5.3 The analysis does show understandable gaps in attainment for these groups, as a result of these findings we will undertake further analysis in order to better understand the impact of our approaches for supporting PT students.

## 1.6 Care Leavers

### Access

- 1.6.1 The University holds a limited amount of data relating to care leavers. Students are given the opportunity to declare their status at the point of application or at any point during their studies, therefore, we only hold information on the students who choose to do so. We have analysed the current data across all stages of the student lifecycle.
- 1.6.2 We have identified a gap between the proportion of known care leavers at UW which our current analysis of internal data suggests that is 0.6% and that of the proportion in the sector generally, though the national figures for Care Leaver participation in HE is unverified, current figures suggest that this is around 6% (PROPEL).
- 1.6.3 We do not currently have any data to suggest that care leavers do not perform as well as other students at other stages in the lifecycle, we would therefore propose a target relating broadly to access.

## 1.7 Intersections of disadvantage

Having identified groups where gaps exist, we have undertaken further interrogation of the data to try and understand any intersectional disadvantage. We have focused this analysis on differences in performance of POLAR, IMD, BAME and male students. It should be noted that the sample sizes reduce considerably when specific elements of disadvantage are combined.

### Success

### Non-continuation

- 1.7.1 Continuation for students in both Polar 4 Q1&2 and from a BAME categories is slightly below the comparator group (approximately 1.5pp). This is similar to the relatively consistent 2pp gap between groups at the sectoral average.





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2.2.5 Aim: Increase the continuation rates of Black students to align more closely with those of the whole student population (currently 89.6% based on TEF Year 4 data). The UW data for BAME students shows substantial gaps in continuation, the analysis of the data when broken down into individual ethnicity shows that the majority of the gap relates to black students. These students are largely within a small number of courses. We would wish to eliminate gaps in continuation between students of all ethnicities. We also recognise that continuation is dropping overall, however the gap is enduring for black students.

Baseline	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
85%	85.5%	86%	86.5%	87%	87.5%

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practice, we will identify specific outputs and interventions to address the particular gaps for different ethnic groups as appropriate.

We seek to reduce this gap to 6pp over the 5 years of this plan. We recognise this is a significant challenge, however there is commitment from the senior leadership to make significant progress across the University over a relatively short period of time.

Baseline (current gap) 2016-17 Sector gap of 13.2pp	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
20pp	18pp	16pp	12pp	9pp	6pp

Table 5: To increase attainment rates of BAME students to align with those of White students

### Progression

2.2.8 Aim: Reduce the gap in progression for POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 over the lifetime of the plan.

We have agreed to address the persistent gap of around 9pp between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 within the University. This will fall within the remit of our strategic approach to employability, which is a significant element of our newly adopted strategic plan. The strategy focuses attention on our position as one of the leading contributors to the local economy and professional education. We are committed to working in partnership with local employers, including small and medium enterprises which make up the majority of the sub-  
that we meet the emerging skills agenda and, in particular, we will expound on the benefits of employing graduates, including graduate degree apprentices. We will also ensure that employability is firmly embedded within the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities.

Baseline (current gap) 2016-17 Institutional gap	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
9pp	8pp	7pp	4pp	2pp	0pp

Table 6: Reduce the gap in progression for POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 over the lifetime of the plan

## 3. Strategic Measures

### 3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

3.1.1 The University wishes to ensure that each learner, regardless of background, is afforded equal opportunity to access and succeed in their HE journey. Our strategy is to clearly understand the most effective practices across all aspects of the University's engagement with students and use this knowledge to deliver an evidenced based approach to practice. This requires a whole institution approach, where inclusion is at the very centre of all of

understanding of how to maximise opportunities for all; seeking continuous improvement in student engagement. One means by which we are progressing this is through a new Learning and Teaching Strategy which was initiated in 2018 and is now currently in consultation, with a view to full implementation from January 2020. Employability is a significant element of our recently adopted institutional strategic plan. A new employability plan will be agreed in 2019/20 with an associated action plan. In line with all institutional strategies this will be kept under review, at least annually, through our Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC) which reports to Academic Board.

A clear strategy for growing the pool of potential HE applicants from groups where participation is at its lowest.

### Strategic partnerships with schools

- 3.1.2 We have clear ambitions to increase the proportions of learners progressing into the University from diverse backgrounds. Our work in this area will focus on the development of our relationships with schools and Further Education colleges. In addition to the continued work of our whole institution outreach programme we will engage in targeted whole school sequenced intervention programmes to raise aspirations and attainment, these will include clearly articulated impartial, information advice and guidance, well-articulated progression routes and agreed compact arrangements. Our evaluation draws on a range of measures including direct school-based performance data such as Key Stage assessments and progression statistics as well as indirect measures such as learner engagement.

### Targeted work with care leavers

- 3.1.3 We have an established strategy in place to support care leavers which clearly articulates the types of support on offer within the institution. In addition, we are also seeking to strengthen16 (ell s)e,withi2 (earner )JJETQq0 0 595.5 841.98 reWñBT/TT0 1 Tf0 Tc 0 Tw 0 Ts 100 Tz 0 Tr 10.9

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qualifications through targeted mainstream support and targeted intervention within courses where there are significant disparities.

- 3.1.9 We have developed an inclusion toolkit for use across the institution to develop best practice, which includes a suite of inclusivity guides, an inclusivity self-assessment toolkit and an extensive resource list to support curriculum design.
- 3.1.10 We are developing work on transitions support for target groups and as part of this will be piloting innovative approaches to pre entry support given to new entrants and student induction. This work will be prioritised in courses where we have identified the higher numbers of learners from target groups. We will focus specific programmes of work beyond our whole institution approach to encourage greater engagement in culturally and ethnically diverse activity and in focussed targeted work with current BAME students that will address barriers to successful HE outcomes.

Provide outstanding student support, across academic and pastoral engagements.

#### Student wellbeing and mental health support

- 3.1.11 The University has an established multi-agency approach to student mental health support, working with partners including Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust and Worcestershire County Council Public Health. We will continue to build our data and evidence base to develop our strategy in this area and to refine our provision to better target our resources. This work will be closely aligned with the work that we are developing in the areas of student success and progression to ensure that support for disabled students is seamless across all areas of the student lifecycle. We will also continue to deliver our student wellbeing and mental health support through the Student Union.

Ensure a prominent and influential representation system with clear evidence of the student voice in the development of policy and practice.

- 3.1.12 The Academic Representation System at the University of Worcester is a partnership between the University and the Student Union. We will continue to ensure that every student (undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research) has a clear voice in the development of policy and practice. We will continue our efforts to drive forward quality assurance and enhancement and to inform student learning.

- 3.1.13 We will continue to ensure genuine student engagement in the learning process and in ensuring the relevance of the Academic Representation Code of Practice which is overseen by the Academic Representation Committee.



- d. Enhancing the role of internship support and work placement opportunities;
- e. Increased participation in recreational sport and activities related to health and wellbeing;
- f. Increased investment in developing the diversity of representation Tz 3 Tr 10.98 0 0 10.98 94kip supp

the both engagement and successful lifecycle outcomes. Where appropriate we will undertake additional evaluation using the OfS Financial Toolkit.

3.3.8 Our outreach and retention strategies have focussed on delivering sequenced interventions to learners in a targeted and meaningful way, and we have in place good methods of collecting monitoring data for this work. Our evaluation of outreach activity is particularly strong where we work in collaboration as we are able to utilise economies in scale to identify and deploy robust evaluation measurements.

3.3.9 In light of our self-assessment we have identified 5 key strategic priorities for evaluation:

1. Develop institutional approaches to evaluation design.
2. Identify skills gaps in evaluation practice and to build the skills base amongst key staff.
3. Build awareness across the institution of approaches to evaluation and of the institutional strategy for these areas of work.

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available. Within this commitment, we recognise the need to provide clear, accessible and appropriate information that supports students in their decision-making. We will ensure that students are able to find information easily in a format that is relevant to them and that is accurate, up to date and continually reviewed. All communication with students and prospective students will be adhere to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance for Higher Education.

## 4.1 Fees

4.1.1 The University will charge the maximum fee of £9250 (plus inflation) in 2020-21 for all our undergraduate courses. Students studying part time will not exceed the maximum fee level of £6935 (plus inflation). The University has established a Fees, Scholarships and Bursaries Committee, chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor Students and comprising representatives from relevant areas across the University including Finance, Registry, Academic

fee proposals, the Committee considered at length the potential impact of fee levels on students and sought to achieve a fair and reasonable fee arrangement. The Committee

discussed the proposals and approved them on behalf of the University.

## 4.2 Fee Increases

4.2.1 Where our fees are below the fee cap, we may apply annual increases in fee levels for continuing students. Where we do this, it will be in line with the CMA guidance.







delivered events and a largest story-telling festivals, as well as regular family activities for ages from 0 to 5 which combined have reached more than 300,000 people. This work has been recognised by the Levelling Up Universities Awards for meeting Goal 1: Strong foundations in Early Years.

## 5.5 Successful School Years.

### 5.5.1

outreach work and extracurricular activities. We have extensive partnerships and hold several contracts to lead on the initiatives across the West Midlands area schools.

### 5.5.2

Our School of Education manages the West Midlands STEM Ambassador Hub contract on behalf of STEM Learning; the largest provider of STEM education and careers support to schools, colleges and other groups working with young people across the UK (United Kingdom).

### 5.5.3

We also hold the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme - AMSP, West Midlands Area contract for Herefordshire and Worcestershire, making support available to develop mathematics provision in local schools. Local professional development for teachers, and events for local school students are among its activities.

### 5.5.4

Our work with the Ogden Trust seeks to enrich the science curriculum through family engagement and networking with local employers to provide a range of broader physics experiences for pupils. The university supports the Trust in delivering its work in local schools.

### 5.5.5

We are proud of our existing work to raise attainment in schools however we believe we can do more, and in this plan, we set out how we will expand this work and enrich our current offer to become a strategic and targeted programme that leads to improved success for those learners.

## 5.6 Partnerships with Targeted Schools.

### 5.6.1

We will build partnerships with schools in t

Create, in partnership with schools, an attainment raising offer that compliments and enriches support in schools for those learners most impacted by low attainment

participating learners. This will include quantitative evaluation of learner's attainment scores, impact upon Progress 8 scores for the school and individual pupils' attainment at GCSE.

- 5.10 Priority C: Set out how access to higher education for students from underrepresented groups leads to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes.
- 5.10.1 Five of the seven targets in this access and participation plan relate to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes for students from lower socioeconomic groups and students from underrepresented ethnic minority backgrounds. Following the initial assessment undertaken to identify these priorities we have developed an institution wide comprehensive plan and framework for student retention and success.
- 5.10.2 This plan details activities that will address systemic issues that negatively impact upon diverse groups of students, as well as a range of interventions designed to support student success. The plan has 8 priority

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Employer Organisations

Local Enterprise Partnership Worcestershire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull

Worcestershire County Council and associated District Councils

Dudley Borough Council and associated partners of the Towns Fund programme

Further Education Partners

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce

Professional Bodies

Health Education England

Department for Education

Education and Skills Funding Agency

Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education

Office for Students

5.11.4 The Apprenticeship Strategy and our commitment to apprenticeship programmes will open broader learning opportunities to all sections of the community, and will increase the opportunities for mature students, particularly working adults, and for those without traditional entry qualifications.

5.11.5 Running parallel to our Higher and Degree Apprenticeship development, over the next 12 months, we will also explore our curriculum development of Higher Apprenticeships. We will achieve this by again working in closely with regional and national Employment and Skill leaders / lead organisations (private, statutory, and professional bodies).

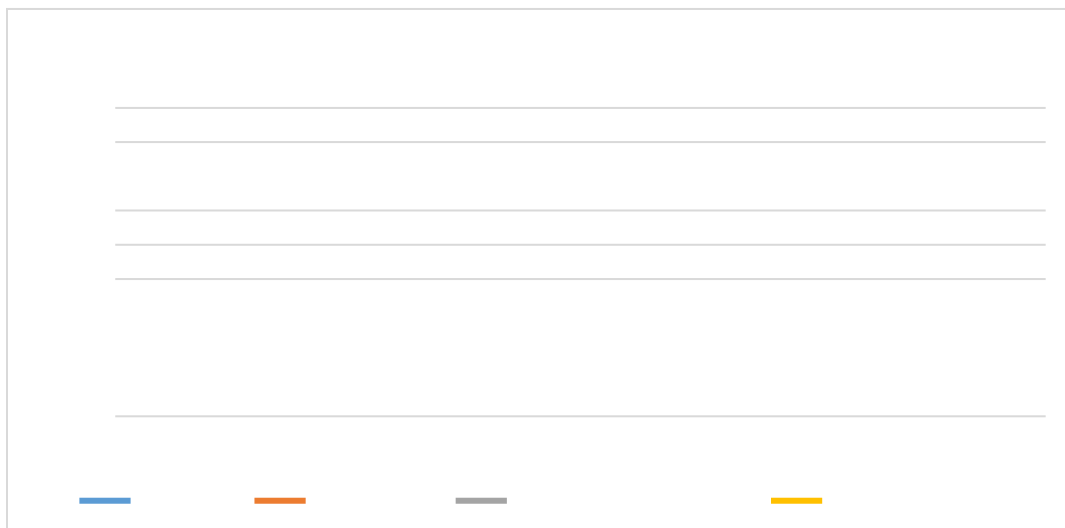
5.12 Resource Investment

5.12.1 The current level and distribution of our investment between access, continuation, success, and progression remain appropriate for our plans.

#### Appendix I Access & Participation plan 2020-25 10007139

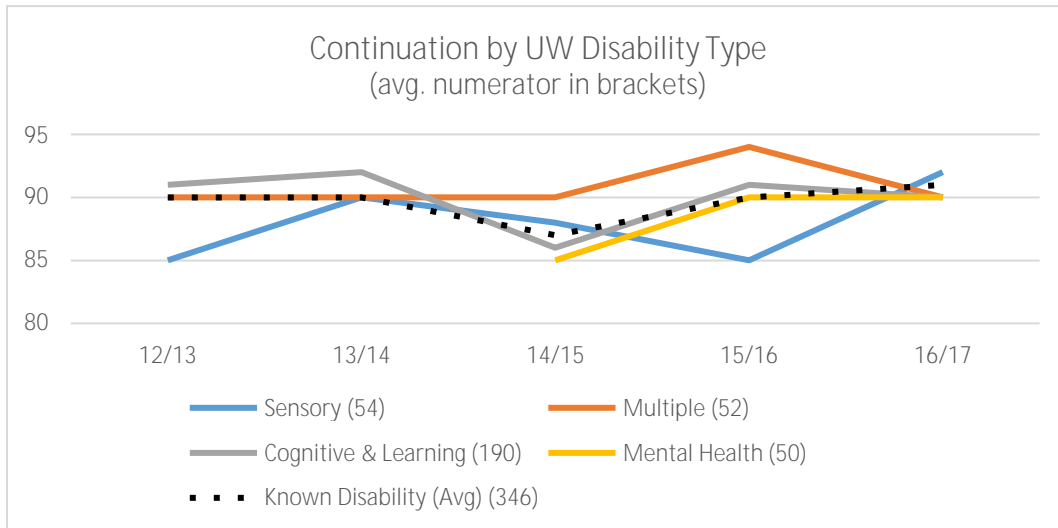
Disabled students account for 16.5% of the total measured population. In our analysis we have reviewed all stages of the lifecycle for disabled students and where we have available data we have disaggregated disability categories.

Access -



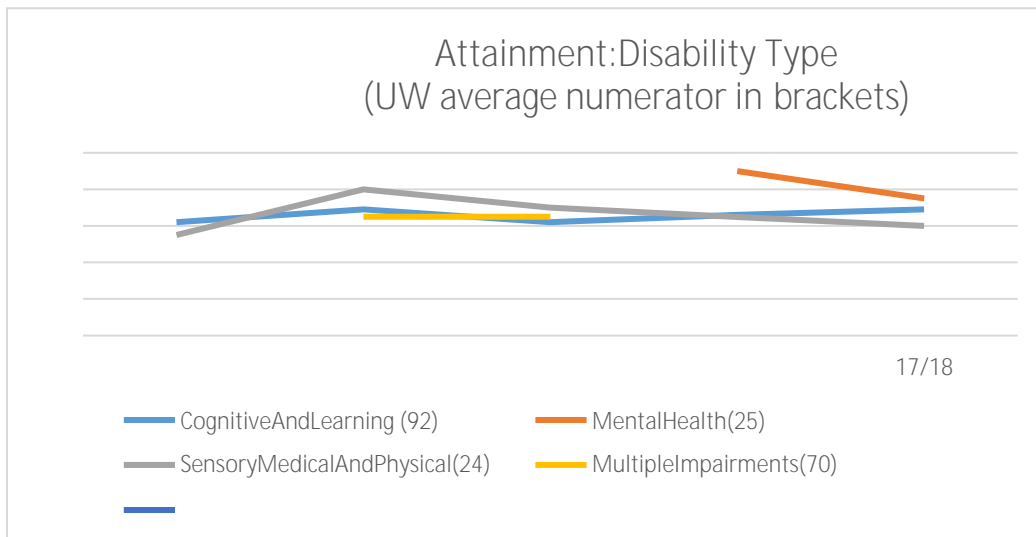
The largest proportion of disabled students accessing the university declare a cognitive or learning disability.

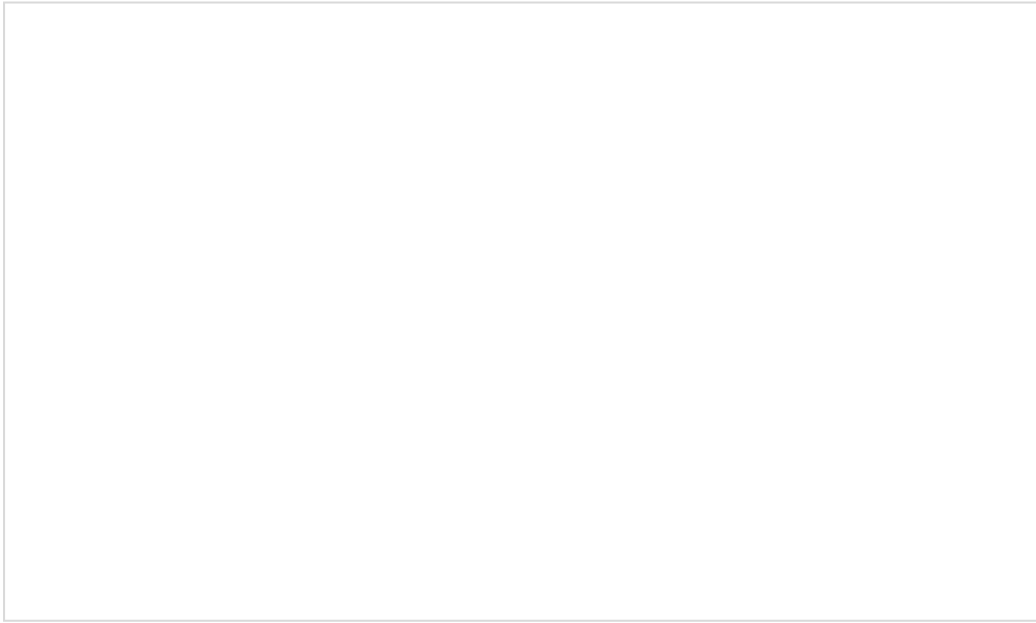
Continuation



Disabled students across all categories of disability continue at a similar rate slightly above the non-disabled population (88%)

Attainment





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HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	Halesowen College 10002852	£6,935
CertHE/DipHE	Herefordshire, Ludlow, and North Shropshire College 10003023	£6,935
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	Halesowen College 10002852 - Diploma in Education and Training	£6,935



