

# University of Reading Access and participation plan

2020/1 to 2024/5

The University of Reading (UoR) is a research-intensive university with a world-class reputation for teaching, research and enterprise. We are a global institution with students from around 150 countries enrolled on our programmes, and an increasing number of international teaching partnerships as well as branch campuses in Malaysia, China and South Africa. Our broad portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes covers the arts, humanities, business, sciences and social sciences. We regularly update and improve our programmes as new ideas emerge, and industry and student needs change. Our ongoing investment in staff and teaching and learning facilities of the highest quality ensures that our students are challenged to achieve their full potential while at University and are well prepared for the wider world when they leave. Our aim is to provide opportunities to those who are equipped to benefit irrespective of background or personal circumstance.

The UoR is committed to access and participation and recognises that, although our student population has diversified over the past five years in terms of ethnicity and disability, our current student population disproportionately represents the more advantaged parts of society. Our track record for retaining students once enrolled is however strong (96.3%<sup>1</sup> in 2017/8), degree outcomes gaps are narrowing and 94.9%<sup>2</sup> of our 2017 graduates were in employment or study within six months of graduating. Of those who enter full-time work, 83.1%<sup>3</sup> found employment in professional or managerial roles.

This plan reviews our access and participation performance over the period 2012/3 to 2017/8 (the most recent available validated dataset), sets out our access and participation ambitions and objectives, the measures we will take to improve and maintain access and participation and the specific targets for improvement.

## 1. Assessment of performance

This assessment of performance looks at full-time first-degree students, drawing on the Office for Students (OfS) dataset for the analysis. Assessment of our performance reveals the following headlines:

- ‡ The only gaps that have been found to be statistically significant over a five-year period across all of the lifecycle stages is the access gap between black and white students, where the proportion of all black students recruited is higher than the national population while the proportion of all white students admitted is lower than the national population.
- ‡ The access gaps between the proportion of entrants from disadvantaged backgrounds (as measured by participation of local areas (POLAR)<sup>4</sup> and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)) in relation to the national population are statistically significant in each year from 2013/4 to 2017/8.
- ‡ No five-year changes in continuation gap data were found to be statistically significant and only 1 out of 425 yearly continuation gap data items (in the OfS dataset) over the last five years were found to be statistically significant<sup>4</sup>.
- ‡ No five-year changes in degree outcomes gap data were found to be statistically significant, however the yearly gap data between ABMO ethnicities (White and Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnicities aggregated) degree outcomes were statistically significant in four out of the last five years.

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<sup>1</sup> 96.3% of all Home funded Undergraduate (UG) entrants completed the year (HESA UK PI T3a)

<sup>2</sup> Percentage of 2016/7 UK-domiciled leavers with a known DLHE destination obtaining first-degrees from full-time courses who were employed, studying or both.

<sup>3</sup> Percentage of 2016/7 UK-domiciled leavers with a known DLHE destination obtaining first-degrees from full-time courses who were in full-time professional or managerial employment <sup>4</sup> This gap was between POLAR4Q1234 v POLAR4Q5 in 2013/4

‡ Progression is a lifecycle stage that has been a strategic focus for the University for several years. No five-year changes or yearly gaps in progression data were found to be statistically significant.

The analysis below drills into the gap data in more detail and identifies the specific target groups and lifecycle stages where we need to focus our future work which is broader than those trends that show statistical significance.

Our course portfolio provides very few part-time options for undergraduate students, therefore the data does not allow for reliable statistical analysis of performance in relation to part-time students due to small numbers.

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

The statistically significant gaps in relation to people from disadvantaged areas are between the proportion of entrants from disadvantaged and less disadvantaged backgrounds. There is also some intersection of under-representation where degree outcome gaps have been statistically significant in some years for specific intersections with ethnicity and gender.

### Access

The POLAR4 entrance rates over a five-year period show the gap between Q1 entrants and those in the general population is increasing (11.6% in 2013/4; 12.1% in 2017/8). The gap between POLAR Q1 and Q5 entrants to the UoR has also widened to a ratio of 1:6 in 2017/18 from 1:5.8 in 2013/14 albeit with some positive progress in the middle of this period (1:4.9 in 2015/16). The subsequent widening of the gap coincides with rapid student numbers growth at UoR. This pattern reflects the national position where the gap between Q1 and Q5 students access to higher education (HE) is an OfS Key Performance Measure (KPM1). Our aim is to reduce this gap at UoR with a specific focus on entrants from POLAR4 Q1.

The pattern for IMD shows more positive progress with the Q1:Q5 ratio reducing from 1: 7.8 in 2013/14 to 1:5.9 in 2017/18.

Table 1: Gaps compared to the general population\*

	2013/4	2014/5	2015/6	2016/7	2017/8	5 year Gap Change
POLAR4Q5	-15.3	-15.1	-13.6	-15.6	-17.2	Gap Increasing
POLAR4Q1	11.6	11.2	10.4	12	12.1	Gap Increasing
IMDQ5	-19	-16.3	-20.2	-21.6	-16.9	Gap Decreasing
IMDQ1	17.1	17	17.9	16.9	16.3	Gap Decreasing

\*While none of the five-year trends w1m(KPM1). Our

### Success: Non-continuation

Reviewing our OfS data set reveals that full -time first -degree students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Q1 alone or Q1 combined with Q2) are experiencing lower continuation rates than students from less disadvantaged backgrounds over a five-year period, and that the gaps between IMD and POLAR4 advantaged and disadvantaged quintiles are increasing. This reflects the national position where the continuation gap between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students is an OfS Key Performance Measure (KPM3).

Looking at intersections of IMD and POLAR4 with ethnicity, we see that students of all ethnicities have lower continuation rates when they come from IMD Q1&Q2. All IMD Q1&Q2 regardless of ethnicity are seeing increasing gaps in comparison to white students from IMD Q3-5. This indicates that disadvantage is more of a concern for continuation rates than ethnicity.

Gender analysis indicates that there is no gap between females or males from POLAR4 Q1&2 and POLAR4 Q3.

The UoR gaps in continuation rates concerning disadvantaged students are neither statistically significant over the five year period nor by individual year, however this is an area where we want to drive improvement in alignment with the national KPM.

### Success: Degree Outcomes

intersecting POLAR4 quintile by ethnicity are decreasing over a four -year period while the other gap is steady over four years. This indicates that disadvantage is of more concern than ethnicity when



to ensure that mainstream attainment raising measures are having positive outcomes for mature students as well as for young students.

### Progression to employment or further study

Progression is a strong area for the UoR, with none of our gaps (across all student characteristics) being marked as statistically significant by the OfS. Mature full-time first-degree graduates are performing better than young graduates in progression and the progression gap is decreasing however it still favours mature graduates (-8% in 2012/3; -3% in 2016/7).

## 1.4 Disabled students

There are no statistically significant trends or yearly gap differences in relation to disabled students across any of the lifecycle stages. However, some large but fluctuating gaps exist for some specific disability types.

### Access

Full-time first-degree disabled student entry rates are increasing over the five years (12.6% in 2013/4; 16% in 2017/8). It has also been noted that the profile of disability types being declared is changing. In WKH ODUJHVW GLVDELOLW\ W\SH ZDV ¶ & RJQLWLYH DQG /HDU WKH ODUJHVW GLVDELOLW\ W\SH LV iQ2013/4 6.7% in 2017/8, PSDLU However, it is likely that the majority of these students have a cognitive or learning disability combined with another condition.

### Success: Non-continuation

The gap for all full-time first-degree disabled students is closing over a five-year period (2% in 2014/5; 1% in 2016/7). However, as one might expect, continuation gaps show a mixed picture across disability types. The data shows students with cognitive and learning disabilities consistently continuing at rates that align with non-disabled students while those with multiple impairments had a continuation rate in 2016/7 that was 6 percentage points lower. The gap was narrower in previous years. Although this pattern is neither statistically significant annually or over the five year period, it will be important to monitor as part of our annual monitoring process in order to identify any specific measures and to ensure that measures intended to increase retention rates generally are having a positive impact on disabled students.

### Success: Degree Outcomes

Degree Outcomes show a similar picture where the university saw students with cognitive and learning disabilities consistently attaining at rates that align with non-disabled students while those with multiple impairments tended towards lower degree outcome rate with a pronounced dip to an 11percentage point gap in 2017/8. However, the gap fluctuated across previous years and although the gaps are neither statistically significant annually or over the five year period, it will be important to monitor this as part of our annual monitoring process and to ensure that mainstream attainment raising measures are having a ET .145 0.3-2(m)4(ea)5(su)5(res are ha)4(v)12(in)5(g a ET .145 0.3-2(m)4(ea)5(su)

The data on care leavers<sup>8</sup> at the UoR does not allow for reliable analysis due to small numbers. However, care leavers are a group that we target in our access work. We also provide a specific and broad ranging support package for care leavers studying with us including additional financial support, access to accommodation, and free graduation gown hire etc (detailed in section 3.2 Strategic measures).

## 2. Strategic aims and objectives

In formulating our strategic aims and objectives for access and participation we have considered: our access and participation performance; the OfS key performance measures; and the positioning of the Institution<sup>9</sup>.

d) Ensure that under -represented students who begin their studies at UoR remain on course and complete their studies





Performance Measure on closing this gap. It is also an agreed target in our UoR Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and we feel it is an area that requires a specific access and participation target in order to maintain a strong focus on improvement.

All three degree outcome targets above are currently set on the basis of the absolute gaps between groups, however we will be undertaking the analysis needed to revise these targets to specifically focus on the unexplained gaps<sup>11</sup>. **Progression Targets**

The widest gaps in progression correlate with disadvantage. Although not statistically significant, the gaps are evident in both the POLAR4 and the IMD datasets. The gaps are widest and more consistently present in the IMD data and therefore our target in this area is formulated on the IMD data. The gap is consistently largest between IMD Q1 and Q5 however, for consistency, robustness of data<sup>12</sup> and effective targeting we have chosen to set the target as the gap between IMD Q1&Q2 and IMD Q3 -5. As with the degree outcome targets above the progression target as currently formulated is based on absolute gaps between groups, however we will be undertaking the analysis needed to revise these targets to specifically focus on the unexplained gaps<sup>13</sup> as well as adjusting the target to accommodate the replacement of the DLHE Survey with the Graduate Outcomes Survey.

## 2.2 Aims and objectives for target groups

### A. Disadvantaged groups

Over the period 2020/1 to 2024/5 we will have a specific focus on students from disadvantaged backgrounds across the whole lifecycle. Our aims for this target group are to :

- ‡ increase the awareness of the UoR as a suitable destination through increased engagement with this target group;
- ‡ facilitate and support access to ensure students from these backgrounds do not experience, or are able to overcome barriers which prevent them from entering our institution;
- ‡ close gaps in continuation and degree outcomes (particularly the unexplained gaps) through a strong focus on academic engagement and achievement;
- ‡ and close the progression gap for students from disadvantaged backgrounds through maximising engagement with career development opportunities both in -curricula and extra -curricula.

Our objectives that reflect these aims are:

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### 3. Strategic Measures

#### 3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

We take a whole University approach. We believe that aligning activity at a strategy, governance, policy and operational level provides the best context for progress.

At a strategy level Strategy, T&L Strategy and employability strategies are all aligned. The Diversity and Inclusion Strategy<sup>14</sup> sets out goals and targets in relation to ethnicity and disability (and gender) that focus on the same lifecycle stages as the APP, thus creating an institution-wide focus on a shared set of goals. The T&L Strategy 2018-2021, recognises and celebrates our diverse learning community, placing our curriculum framework and its core principle of diversity and inclusion at its heart. The focus of our over-arching employability goals are to provide equality of opportunity by engaging students who resources and networks to achieve positive progression outcomes alone.

At the governance level, the Access and Participation Committee (APC) is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) and reports to the University Board for Teaching & Learning and Student Experience as well as the University Executive Board. The wide-ranging membership is

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designed to enable both a whole student lifecycle and a whole institution approach.<sup>15</sup> The Dean of Diversity and Inclusion works closely with the members of the APC and with Reading University the whole Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Resource), has shared membership with the APC and reports to the University Executive Board. The Recruitment and Admissions Steering Group (RASG) (again with overlapping membership with APC) will in future monitor progress against access targets in order to inform admissions policy and practice particularly around contextual offer making.

At the policy level, the University has agreed that all degree programmes should be designed to be diverse and inclusive as one of the core pedagogic principles of our curriculum framework. The outlines the materials will be accessible and provided in advance.

At the operational level there is shared membership across the key governance boards for A&P, D&I, T&L and employability. Key reports that monitor progress in these areas are drafted and scrutinised by staff who are regularly involved in working across the broader context of all of these areas ensuring that the work is not siloed, but rather co-ordinated to incorporate a range of institutional drivers including increased access and participation progress.

Responsibility for access and participation is embedded in our T&L roles, with accountability, monitoring and reporting formalised within our T&L committee structures. For example, annual quality assurance reports include analysis and reflection on continuation, degree outcomes and progression in light of equality and diversity characteristics of student cohorts. School Planning and Enhancement of L&T plans will require Schools and Departments to set targets for their access and participation measures and will hold them accountable.

We are working towards achieving the Race Equality Charter Mark and an institution-wide steering group is leading work in this area that is central to the experience and achievement of our ABMO

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/diversity/diversity-commitment.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> Membership includes Director of Global Recruitment and Admissions, Deans for Teaching and Learning, Director of Student Services, Director of Careers and Employability, Director of Student Success & Engagement, Head of Student Financial

students. The LGBTQ+ student experience is part of our annual submission to the Stonewall Equality index where we have achieved a top 100 position as a result of recent work.

### 3.2 Strategic measures

Outlined below is a wide range of measures that we believe will act in combination to reduce or close the gaps that have been identified in this plan. In devising these measures we have adhered to two over-arching principles. Firstly, it is essential to take a holistic approach. There are few measures that will act in isolation to successfully close the gaps. Barriers to entry, continuation and success at (and after) university are known to be influenced by a very complex interaction of factors so only a multifaceted approach can succeed in addressing them. Secondly, in contrast to our approach to access activity which is closely targeted to who individuals are, we have deployed an inclusive approach to the design of most of our student retention, success and progression strategic measures. We are identifying and addressing the challenges students are experiencing, e.g. below expected academic performance, or poor academic engagement, or lack of work experience. These are identified for all students and intervention implemented. This is a strategy based on the individual and what the student actually needs rather than a deficit approach which assumes their needs based on demographic characteristics.<sup>16</sup> Given what we know about the challenges experienced by underrepresented students, and taking a proactive approach this will mean that that underrepresented students will be supported to succeed.

Therefore we do not for example plan to introduce different intervention for different ethnicity groups. We are, however, open to identifying that different ethnicity groups may experience different challenges. This will be identified in evaluation and monitoring activity and which will be undertaken by disaggregated ethnicity groups where the data is sufficiently robust. Any such findings will inform

future development of inclusive approaches or indeed cause us to identify areas where inclusive interventions are not actually the most effective.

#### Objective 1: Reach more disadvantaged people through programmes of activity that support a successful application to UoR courses

Our evidence to date shows that our outreach programmes are successfully engaging with our target groups, and that these students do progress to Higher Education, indicating the activity is successfully supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing HE (see sections below). Capacity on our intensive schemes, and breadth of subject offering currently limits the numbers who can benefit from them, and so we will be significantly expanding this work to achieve the ambitious targets we have set to impact the overall demographic profile of our entrants. Our strategy is to continue with successful programmes, with regular review to ensure participants meet our target profile, and to expand our programmes (in particular Key stage 5 activity) to reach more of our target students. We will continue to work across the year groups to build and maintain a pipeline.

A Theory of Change evaluation framework is now embedded within all the access programmes set out below. At the outset, within each series of interventions measurable competencies and learning outcomes are identified, with each activity designed to support this development. Throughout the programme and at key milestones, these outcomes are assessed and reviewed, enabling us to track impact (particularly useful with younger years, where resulting entry to HE can take many years to measure) and review and develop our activities accordingly.

student intake. We will redress this balance in 2019 onwards, to ensure that we also target access to white students from low progression and disadvantaged areas.

Progression to HE is greater for students having accessed this programme than their peers with 70% progressing to HE (including UoR, Russell Group and Oxbridge universities) <sup>20</sup>. In the most recent cohort, our own survey revealed that 90% of respondents had applied to university. The UoR received the most applications, directly supporting the number of students within our applicant pool from disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently we offer this programme across ten subject strands; to ensure this programme supports access to the full range courses and therefore has the potential to impact our intake across the University, directly supporting our targets, we will continue to grow the number of participants to 400 students by 2020/1 and expand the number of academic subject streams





application stage. Existing work addresses barriers including knowledge and understanding of university and subjects and role models to enhance attainment. Further work will address school level attainment, entry pathways, and finance. We will grow our capacity to tackle the issues both directly with prospective applicants but also with parents and teachers.

Attainment raising in schools. Many students from under-represented groups already have the aspiration to access HE, but do not always have support to develop the additional study skills required to achieve their full potential or make a successful application. We have developed a programme of study skills with targeted schools and colleges who currently perform below the national average to enable the academic success of more students from these schools and colleges. We will also develop and introduce (with the UoR Institute of Education) a study-skills training package for NQTs and other teaching staff to enable school staff to equip their students with the skills to succeed.

Over the next three years this work will be expanded to engage more schools, directly impacting on the ability of students to access HE and, in particular, University of Reading courses and supporting our overall access targets. We have developed a number of programme-level targets for the first 2 years relating to numbers accessing this activity and the impact on attainment levels of these. In 2019/20, our first full year, our aim is for 55% of students attending multiple study skills sessions to show an increase in academic capacities associated with attainment, for 2020/21 this is 60%.

Progression routes. This activity is key to increasing the numbers of students accessing our courses from non-traditional backgrounds. We will work with colleges and schools in our region, to identify and proactively promote progression opportunities to UoR degrees for those undertaking non A-level qualifications. We will build on our existing Associate College Network<sup>17</sup> and work with at least 10 key identified FE and sixth form colleges in the local and surrounding counties. We will map out current routes and work together to bridge gaps. The aim is to build visible and well understood pathways onto our degrees from colleges (and schools offering alternative qualifications) in our region, with inperson support to enable students to make a successful application. We will review progression from each college annually and if successful we will consider expanding this intensive work to other FE colleges, including those in our geographical satellite regions.

Foundation Years. We have introduced STEM foundation years for nine of our science based undergraduate degrees in 2017/8. The aim was to provide an alternative route into a UoR degree for applicants who did not have the required standard in a required subject. While we do not yet have any success or progression data from these courses, our entrant data for the 2018/9 intake show potential

for the initiative to help redress some of our access gaps<sup>18</sup>. We therefore intend to expand our foundation year provision to ensure an alternative access route to as many subjects as possible, however, we are mindful that successful completion and progression from the foundation year onto a UoR degree are critical measures of success. We will undertake a review of success rates of the first two cohorts early in 2019/20 and monitor progression throughout the degrees. This will allow us to identify and implement improvements to ensure these programmes are fulfilling their access and participation objectives.

Applicant Support. As part of our holistic approach to access, it is important to us that the additional support and resource given pre-application continues once a student has applied to study with us-4(o)4o--2(a)3 (





intensively in South Wales and West Midlands<sup>25</sup>, to raise the profile of UoR among under-represented groups. We have delivered information and guidance and support across the application lifecycle for target schools, colleges and individuals, implementing a strategic plan of activity to raise awareness of options at the UoR. Our typical suite of information and guidance sessions has also been tailored to address specific barriers for the demographic groups in these regions<sup>26</sup>. Evaluation data indicates we are successfully reaching our target audience, with 54.2% from POLAR4 Q1 or Q2 and 70.3% from IMD Q1 or Q2. Impact on applications is not expected until 2020 entry, but we have already seen applications from some previously unengaged, but now target schools and colleges. We have also seen an increase in the number of Open Day bookings from students in these regions. In 2019/20 we will appoint a number of further roles to expand this activity in other regions. We will review annually and consider further expanding this approach if it proves effective.

**Contextual offer-making.** The Sutton Trust note that it is now well established that applicants to HE do not arrive on an equal footing and that the barriers faced by people from disadvantaged backgrounds can have a significant impact on their attainment level at school<sup>37</sup>. Having reviewed the evidence from the sector we have adopted a contextual offer-making approach. Applicants who meet the criteria (POLAR4 Q1 or Q2, IMD Q1 or Q2, declared disability or MEM flag from UCAS) will receive an offer that is 2 grades lower than the standard offer. Our intention is to make UoR a viable choice for applicants who may previously have felt they would not achieve our standard entry requirements. In our pilot year (2019 entry) we introduced the contextual offers late in the admissions cycle so would not expect to see a strong impact on the overall profile of entrants, however we have seen a decrease in declines from students in receipt of a contextual offer in comparison to their counterparts with standard offers<sup>27</sup>. We hope by the 2021 entry the greater accessibility created by the early promotion of and immediate issuing of contextual offers will have facilitated a shift in the profile of our entrants. Our specific aim is that contextualised offers will increase the number of applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds, we will therefore monitor this at key points throughout the application cycle each year as well as analyse the conversion rates for such applicants, this will allow us to assess the effectiveness of the scheme and provide the evidence base for other offer making considerations

**Tailored for individuals with specific constraints.** We recognise that some prospective students/applicants would benefit from individual, tailored advice, support and consideration that will address their particular concerns and needs, e.g. applicants who are care

proportion of white entrants from disadvantaged backgrounds to UoR. We will also build on work within the partnership targeting care leavers, to further engage with these groups from the University of Reading specifically.

We expect that the combination of contextualised offer making, geographical targeting, the expansion of Foundation Years and the expansion of the Year 12 Scholars scheme to cover all subjects will be the key measures that act to close the access gaps

#### Objective 4: Ensure that under-represented students who begin their studies at UoR remain on course and complete their studies

Improving the retention of under-represented student groups is an institutional priority. Continuation rates are a key performance indicator and T&L leadership groups within Schools are expected to formally address these rates, reporting progress at School Boards of Teaching and Learning and Student Experience, in annual programme reviews (AQAR) and through the annual School Planning and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching process. Bespoke School and programme level enhancements are further supported by University-wide initiatives and centralised support. University initiatives aimed at improving student retention and achievement are described below.

We believe that in order to tackle the continuation gap we need to address a range of factors concerning the broad experience of being a student. Specific areas that we will prioritise are:

- ‡ financial constraints
- ‡ understanding of the HE setting and preparedness for academic study
- ‡ access to academic and welfare support and sense of belonging

Over the five-year period we will aim to provide support that covers all of these dimensions and we will build our capacity and tools to reach out to students pro-actively.

Financial Support Packages. Finance is a major concern for students and particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is often a contributory element of the decision to withdraw from University. The average household income for UoR Home/EU undergraduate students has declined from £32,267.33 in 2015/6 to £30,208.68 in 2017/8<sup>28</sup>. We regularly consult with and listen to students on what is most useful to them while at University and therefore the default option for on-course financial support is a cash bursary that students can exercise choice over how to use. Students will be able to opt for a fee waiver should they wish. Evaluation of our financial support (using the Financial Support Toolkit) provides strong evidence of a positive impact on retention and success and supports our strategy to invest access and participation funds in this area.

We will deploy an estimated total of £3 million in financial support for UoR students. The majority of which is dispersed through the schemes listed below that specifically help students stay on course and achieve their goal and ambitions.

Eligible students entering in 2020/1 will receive financial awards under the following schemes:

- ‡ Reading Bursary Scheme (RBS): All eligible students<sup>29</sup> from households with annual incomes of less than £27k will receive a cash award of £1,100<sup>30</sup> in each year of undergraduate study. All eligible students will automatically receive this award as long as consent has been given to share household income with the University.

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‡ Postgraduate ITT students : Eligible students from households with annual incomes of less than £27k will receive an award worth £550.

‡ Work and Study Placement Bursaries : Covers expenses such as travel, accommodation and/or childcare. Students from households with annual incomes of less than £45k may apply to

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<sup>28</sup> Data from the Student Loans Company

<sup>29</sup> Eligible students are UG students including those with a One-year integrated Foundation Year who are eligible for funding through the Student Finance Authorities of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the EU. This is guaranteed for all students who are eligible and not subject to a limit on the number of awards. Degree Apprenticeship students are not eligible for Reading Bursaries.

<sup>30</sup> Increased from £1000 to £1100 for 2018/9 entrants onwards and will be reviewed annually to reflect inflationary increases in the future.

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supportive networks (as listed above) or for those who do not spend as much time on campus (commuters, mature students, part-time students etc.). Many of these criteria overlap with disadvantage. We are in the early stages of adopting BWW but will be undertaking an evaluation during 2020/21 to inform our future strategy.

Life Tools in Schools. We are seeking to increase the reach of this successful programme to benefit more students wishing to find ways to better cope with the academic and personal demands of their University life. We are seeking to increase the reach of this successful programme to benefit more students by embedding the sessions in the curricula. This will ensure that students who may not be able to engage with the extra-curricular Life Tools programme (e.g. mature students who spend little time on campus) or do not have the social/cultural capital to recognise its importance have equality of opportunity to benefit. Annual review and assessment of impact will take place against agreed criteria in order to establish the effectiveness of this approach. Should it have significant preventative impact we will explore expansion opportunities.

Mature student community building. We know that mature students encounter a wide range of challenges while at University and their continuation rates tend to be lower than for younger students due to issues beyond their studies in their personal and professional lives. Our enhanced individualised welfare and academic support will benefit mature students, but we also know that mature students can be quite isolated at university meaning they lack peer support which we know to be very effective for retention and success. We will therefore (in 2019/20) work to identify how best we can facilitate the development of a strong sense of community amongst mature students with the aim of implementing some measures in 2020/21.

Attendance management. Implementation of a university -

- ‡ An integrated strategic approach . Access and participation targets in relation to degree outcomes will be integrated into School level strategic planning<sup>31</sup> carrying equal weight to considerations of TEF and NSS outcomes and planning.
- ‡ An Institution -wide Degree Outcomes Task Force. In order to focus progress on closing degree outcomes gaps we will form a University -wide Task Force lead by a new role with strategic leadership for this area. It will include a wide range of stakeholders to ensure a coordinated approach and a unified direction of travel across the University.

Inclusivity in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment will be



Academic Tutoring System.



models that gave them a real -world view of their chosen career, among other benefits. Impact is assessed against agreed criteria annually. Through sharing successes and benefits of the scheme as well as targeting promotion we aim to expand the scheme by 50% over the five years of this plan, maintaining the high proportion of students from under -represented backgrounds

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Supporting students who manage a disability or health condition. In 2018/9 we introduced specific provision focussed on this group. Initial take -up of this provision has been low but we are reflecting on how to better reach this target group with a refreshed approach in 2019/20.

Supporting students to participate in extracurricular career training and activities. Students from our target groups can face barriers to accessing extracurricular support for a number of reasons, e.g. due to disability or caring responsibilities or needing to spend a lot of their spare time in paid employment. We are therefore launching a new dedicated online course (Career Smart) to run over July and August. The course is aimed at students about to start their final year at University and aims to make a particular benefit to students who cannot add to their core employability skill set over summer due to other constraints. Initial evaluation will take place early in 2019 /20 and will inform the future direction of this new initiative. A key criteria will be the participation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Career coaching programme for finalists. In 2018/9 we introduced a pilot programme for finalists addressing the barriers and challenges experienced by students from under -represented groups. Part of this programme is pro -active reaching out to students who report they have not secured employment by the time they leave the university. Take up has been strong in this initial year and we will build on it further for 2019/20, with a view to evaluating impact against Graduate Outcomes data when it is available for this cohort in 2020/1. We will place particular focus on engagement of and impact on students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Transition to work. We have identified that students with disabilities are negatively affected by the sudden removal of the complex support structures the University provides during their time with us. Equally, our female students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to take up careers support whilst at University. We will be creating a pro -active post -university careers support programme that positively engages these students and helps them manage their transition away from university and into graduate level employment.

We expect that the introduction of the work experience framework in combination with the career coaching for finalist programme and the Career Smart online course will be the key strategic measures that will make the biggest impact on closing the progression gap for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### 3.3 Student consultation

5 HDGLQJ 8QLYHUVLW\ 6WXGHQWV. 8QLRQ KDV EHHQ LQYROYHG LQ since 2012/3 and in the overall formulation of strategy and policy on access and participation. Both the RUSU Diversity and Education Officers were full members of the writing group who authored this 2020/21 APP. They were involved in all discussions relating to the assessment of performance, the setting of strategic aims, objectives and targets, as well as the strategic measures identified in this plan.

The APC membership includes one of the sabbatical officers ensuring that students are involved in monitoring progress towards targets in the plan. Student representatives also sit on other related T&L, D&I and employability boards where they monitor and challenge access and participation progress, voicing their concerns, sharing the student perspective and informing the evolution of practice.

Students contribute to the planning of access and participation work through representation on the 8QLYHUVLW\ .V \$3 & ZKLFK SODQV WKH RYHUDOO DFFHVV DQG SDUW prioritisation of spend across the lifecycle stages and activities within each area. A broader representation of students also contributes through a specific annual consultation to which the 400



A culture of evaluation and evidence -based approaches is in the early stages of development at UoR. Over the five -year period of this plan the evaluation framework and its associated toolkit will be embedded and we will build expertise and greater capacity to ensure that the University is reflecting, learning and developing.

### 3.5 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The APC is the body responsible for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the APP. The APC assesses progress against targets and milestones and monitors the evolving action plan, by soliciting regular reports on the progress of activity. The APC reports to the University Board for Teaching and Learning and the University Executive Board. The University Council receives and considers annual accounts of access and participation progress. A key aspect of monitoring and

## 5. Appendix: Variations to access and participation plan for 2023/24

The following appendix explains how the University of Reading currently meets and will further develop work in supporting underrepresented students in line with the priorities set by the Office for Students:

- ‡ Priority A: Make access and participation plans more accessible in a way that prospective and current students, their parents and other stakeholders can easily understand.
- ‡ Priority B: Develop, enhance and expand their partnerships with schools and other local and national organisations, to help raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England
- ‡ 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.
- ‡ Priority D: Seek to develop more diverse pathways into and through higher education through expansion of flexible Level 4 and 5 courses and degree apprenticeships.

Whilst evaluation of activities and impact have always been a priority, we recognise there should be a greater focus on this and so we have included how we intend to strengthen our evaluation capacity to support and generate more robust evidence of what works (or not) in supporting underrepresented students to access higher education and succeed.

### 5.1 Priority A: Make access and participation plans more accessible in a way that prospective and current students, their parents and other stakeholders can easily understand.

Please see the Accessible Summary of our 2020/21 to 2024-25 Access and Participation Plan for an overview of our current Plan, including the variations below.

### 5.2 Priority B: Develop, enhance and expand their partnerships with schools and other local and national organisations, to help raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England

d) Intellectual capital (academic skills → raising attainment, and subject/HE knowledge)

### Key stage 3 and 4 - Younger Years.

We are intending to further enhance this provision with specific targeted attainment-raising activity, redirecting £50,000 of existing funds, and with added investment, partnering with organisations to deliver tutoring to create two intensive intervention points at Year 9 and Year 11, with the purpose of developing learning behaviours associated with increasing attainment (metacognition, motivation) and to raising attainment. This is a longitudinal project, forming part of the existing Ignite Programme offered to target schools in the local area, we will pro-actively target schools already engaged with our Year 10 scholars, and the programme will also provide much needed intervention in Year 11 where

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the potential opportunities afforded by the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), and we look forward to seeing the detail of this exciting initiative develop further.

While there are details (e.g. in relation to quality assurance) that are not yet clear, the premise of the LLE has been clearly outlined, and there are at least two key principles which appear to be firmly established and which are guiding our work in this area.

The first of these relates to our collaboration with local FE providers. If we are to ensure that young people are faced with a clear, understandable and attractive range of options for post -18 study then it is essential that we work in partnership with our colleagues in the FE sector. A collaborative approach, with FE and HE providers offering distinctive and complementary provision (rather than engaging in direct competition) will be beneficial for all concerned. In our locality FE provision is dominated by a single provider (Activate Learning) with whom we have a positive relationship at Vice Chancellor / CEO level. We already work in partnership with Activate (along with other colleges) to deliver our opportunities for co-operation with them in the light of the emerging new HE landscape.

The second principle underpinning our

awarding gap, with deeper analysis of student access and participation data alongside intersectional and multivariate analyses to attest the relative impacts of our existing provisions. We will create a pool of internal reviewers, made up of practitioners as well as academics, to strengthen cross-disciplinary collaborations.

3. As evaluation is now a central consideration in access and participation, we will work closer with evaluation hubs and organisations across the sector to ensure we learn of the best practices and approaches to evaluation (e.g., NERUPI and TASO). Continuing professional development and training will be encouraged and developed to strengthen the evaluation mindsets and skills of our staff. We are currently exploring and will test different ways to approach evaluation. For instance, conversation is underway to attest the viability of our current Uni Connect partnership (Study Higher) to function as a cross-university hub for the peer review of access/outreach evaluations.
4. Our approach to publishable and independent evaluation

We believe in the value of evaluations by (a) practitioners themselves, (b) those independent of the activity, (c) and those independent and external to the university.

- a) It is important that our current staff working in access and participation are equipped and empowered with the skills and resources needed to produce high-quality evaluations. Critical self-reflection as part of the evaluation process is central for



First degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£6,935
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Table 1d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2022-23 students

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	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 1a - Full-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
First degree	BA Accounting and Business	Fee applies to continuing students only	£7,400
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	Early Years	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£7,000
Postgraduate ITT	PGCE	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Postgraduate ITT	Schools Direct	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£7,710
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£1,388
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£1,385
Other	*	*	*

Table 1b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	Activate Learning 10004927	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation degree	Basingstoke College of Technology 10000560	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation degree	Berkshire College of Agriculture, the (BCA) 10000654	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation degree	Newbury College 10004596	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation degree	The Windsor Forest Colleges Group 10002107	Fee applies to entrants/all students	£9,250
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Table 1c - Part-time course fee levels for 2021-22 students

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Cohort:	Course fee:
First degree	* 4Cn5(n)5(a5(m24)6(o)4rg 4CT)8 0.376 rg[(g 4CU0.125 0.3rg 4)22(24)525 [(I)5(6 rg		



Foundation degree

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