

# **Nottingham Trent University: Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25**

## **1. Assessment of performance**

Nottingham Trent University has utilised a range of internal and external data sources to assess our performance and regularly reviews such data through its Success for All programme. This section of the Plan is organised by the stages of the student lifecycle and is centred on the OfS Key Performance Metrics (KPMs). Unless otherwise stated, the provenance of the baseline data referenced is the OfS [Access and Participation Dataset](#).

### **Lifecycle stage: Access**

NTU has consistently recruited a greater proportion of its (full-time undergraduate) intake from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPNs) residing in POLAR4 quintile 1 than the sector (Appendix 1). However, we have a somewhat bifurcated applicant distribution and in 2017/18 for the first time we also recruited a greater proportion than sector from quintile 5. Whilst our gap has fluctuated over the last five years, in 2017/18 this gap (17 percentage points) was at its highest; a result of increased quintile 5 participation. Therefore, our first access target will align with OfS' KPM1 and we have increased the contextual aspect of our admissions from entry 2019.

Table 1: NTU target 1 (access stage) – Reduce gap in access (all undergraduates) between most (POLAR4 q5) and least (POLAR4 q1) represented groups

<b>Year</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>yearly</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>target</b>
	<b>Reduction in gap</b>		<b>reduction in gap</b>	<b>gap</b>	
2017/18	-		-	17 %points	
2018/19 – 2020/21	0.7 %points		2 %points	15 %points	
2021/22 – 2026/27	1.5 % points		12 %points	6 %points	
2027/28 – 2038/39	0.5 %points		18 %points	Zero	

Due to the lead-time between interventions with the target audience and recipients reaching 'HE-ready' age, our ambition will increase after three years. Consistent with OfS KPM2<sup>1</sup>, we aim to eliminate the access gap in the next 20 years – see Table 1.

We will pay particular attention to the under-representation of disadvantaged males (white and BME) for example through revised outreach and marketing.

Black, Asian and other minority ethnic 18 year olds are well-represented at NTU. According to the APP dashboard, in 2017/18, 22% of NTU's 18-year-old first degree entrants were BAME, compared with 16% of the UK 18 year old population. When disaggregated by specific ethnic group, Asian 18 year old representation at NTU (around 9% of all first degree entrants in each of the last five years) has consistently been slightly higher than the underlying Asian 18 year old population (circa 8%). Black student representation at NTU is even stronger, at around 7% of our first degree intake in each year, compared with less than 4% of the underlying UK population. Mixed ethnicity students are, again, particularly well represented at NTU, fluctuating between 4.1% and 4.6% over the last five years, compared with an underlying mixed ethnicity in the 18 year old UK population of 3.2%. The proportion of other ethnicity NTU entrants (0.7%) is currently slightly below the 1.1% in the same population.

Historically, NTU has recruited a considerably lower proportion of mature students (11.1% in 2017/18) to its full-time first degree programmes than the sector average of 23.5%.

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<sup>1</sup> KPM2 refers to access to specific institutions and is not applicable to NTU.

This is explained to some extent by our national recruitment profile as mature students tend to stay closer to home to study. Our validated provision at our partner Nottingham College has a greater proportion of mature students as do our new Access programmes. Mature students are definitely attracted by greater diversity in mode of delivery and for several years NTU has been creating blended and degree apprenticeship courses to appeal to this cohort. The degree apprenticeships are proving particularly successful with two thirds of the >500 students aged 21 or over. More than 40% are older than 25. We are not proposing a target for mature students *per se* as the speed with which we can develop our degree apprenticeships is beyond our control, dependent as it is on employers and the IfA agreeing on curriculum and assessment.

For more than five years we have been strategically improving support for our disabled applicants and students and are pleased that the number and percentage of NTU's full-time first degree entrants with a known disability has increased consistently over this period; from 9.6% in 2013/14 to 11.9% in 2017/18. We do remain slightly below the current sector average of 14.8% and will continue to enhance efforts in this area. In line with the sector the number of NTU's students with a declared mental health disability has increased considerably; from 0.9% of full-time first degree entrants in 2013/14 to 3.2% in 2017/18. Representation of other disability types (cognitive & learning – 5.6% in 2017/18; sensory medical & physical - 1.2%; multiple impairments – 1.4%; social & communication – 1.4%) has remained relatively constant over time.

We have been working with external partners to improve access for Care Leavers and signed the Care Leavers' Charter this year. According to the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)<sup>2</sup>, 12% of care leavers had entered higher education by the age of 23, compared with 42% of other young people, hence we are aware that care leavers are one of the most underrepresented groups in higher education. Whilst care status is not available in the APP dataset, NTU's student records data, derived from enrolment processes, suggest that 0.5% of our full-time first degree entrants had progressed from the care system. This will be an under-estimate as it depends on self-reporting and our own research shows care leavers do not always want to be classified as such. We are not setting a target for this group due to paucity of data but instead are working very closely with the Students' Union and external partners to improve our awareness of and support for these students. Similarly, we have no exact data on refugee status but are part of several initiatives to open up the university to refugees including the Helena Kennedy scheme, CARA, Free University Nottingham and the Nottingham Refugee Forum as are aware that only 1% of displaced people are in higher education<sup>3</sup>.

### **Gap in HE participation between Nottinghamshire students eligible and not eligible for Free School Meals (FSMs)**

Many of the young people who participate in our individual and collaborative outreach provision will move away from their home region to study. Therefore, much of the outreach work that we do benefits the sector. Paradoxically, the vast majority (85%) of NTU's UK domiciled undergraduate students come from outside of Nottinghamshire. Therefore our outreach interventions have at least as much influence on the local populace and subsequently other provider's intakes as it does on our own intake. Consequently it makes sense to look at the wider participation gaps of the students we predominantly work with<sup>4</sup>, in addition to our own intake.

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.nnecl.org/news/new-national-study-more-care-lea>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/higher-education-and-displaced-people-a-guide-for-UK-universities.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> According to our systematic tracking of outreach participants, 37% of pre-16 participants from POLAR quintile 1 (LPNs) progressed to full-time higher education by the age of 19, which is around double the participation rate of the [underlying population](#) from these areas. Whilst systematic tracking offers a potentially very useful additional measure to monitor access outcomes, in the absence of a national outreach tracking metric, there are valid concerns about consistency across the sector.

Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility is one of the key targeting criteria for our outreach programmes. The table below shows that there is a considerable gap in HE participation rates between those pupils eligible and not eligible for FSM. According to the latest data for 2016/17 HE entry, 37% of Nottingham’s non-FSM-eligible and 21% of the city’s FSM-eligible pupils progressed to higher education by 19; a gap of 16 percentage points (up from 14 % points in 2005/06 but down from 18 % points in 2015/16). Respective figures for Nottinghamshire LA were 38% and 16%; a greater gap of 22 percentage points (up from 21 % points in 2005/06 but down from 25 % points in 2015/16). The combined gap for city and county in 2016/17 was 20 percentage points<sup>5</sup>.

HE participation rates by 19 of free school meals and non- free school meals eligible students, 2005/06 to 2016/17 – Nottingham LA, Nottinghamshire LA and all English regions<sup>6</sup>.

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014./15	2015/16	2016/17	05/06-16/17 change
Nottingham All pupils	17%	18%	19%	21%	22%	24%	24%	26%	27%	28%	29%	33%	+ 16 %points
Nottingham FSM eligible	8%	7%	10%	11%	13%	13%	13%	14%	17%	14%	16%	21%	+ 13 %points
Nottingham not FSM eligible	22%	23%	23%	26%	26%	28%	28%	30%	31%	34%	34%	37%	+ 15 %points
Nottingham Gap	<b>14%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Nottinghamshire LA All pupils	27%	28%	28%	29%	29%	31%	30%	32%	31%	33%	34%	36%	+ 9 %points
Nottinghamshire LA FSM eligible	9%	8%	9%	8%	9%	10%	9%	11%	9%	11%	12%	16%	+ 7 %points
Nottinghamshire LA not FSM eligible	30%	30%	30%	31%	32%	34%	33%	34%	34%	36%	37%	38%	+ 8 %points
Nottinghamshire Gap	<b>21%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>1%</b>
England All pupils	31%	31%	31%	33%	34%	35%	36%	37%	37%	39%	40%	41%	+ 10 %points
England FSM eligible	14%	15%	16%	17%	19%	20%	20%	21%	22%	24%	25%	26%	+ 12 %points
England not FSM eligible	33%	34%	34%	35%	36%	37%	38%	39%	39%	41%	43%	43%	+ 10 %points
England Gap	<b>19%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>-2%</b>

In view of these gaps, our second access target will be based on the HE participation gap between Nottingham and Nottinghamshire FSM eligible students and their non-FSM counterparts. Consistent with our first access target based on KPM1, our level of ambition will increase after three years, due to the lead-time between interventions with the target group and recipients reaching ‘HE-ready’ age. In effect, our ambition is for the gap to be eliminated by 2035/36 – see Table 2.

Table 2: NTU target 2 (access stage) – Gap in HE participation rates of pupils from Nottinghamshire eligible and not eligible for Free School Meals (FSMs)

Year	Target yearly reduction in gap between non-FSM and FSM HE participation rate	Cumulative target reduction in non-FSM and FSM HE participation rate
2017/18 – 2020/21	1.0 %points	4 %points
2021/22 – 2026/27	2.0 % points	16 %points
2027/28 – 2035/36	0.5 %points	20 %points

### Lifecycle stage: Student success

#### Continuation

NTU’s non-continuation rates for advantaged and disadvantaged students alike have been consistently lower than the sector average. However, non-continuation for our young students from LPNs did increase between 2014/15 and 2016/17 entry and the gap has widened to 4.0 percentage points (Appendix 2). Although this is not statistically significant

<sup>5</sup> This takes account of the populations of both local authorities plus the proportion eligible for free school meals.

<sup>6</sup> The data are available to download at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2018>

according to the APP dataset, the consistent gap over time warrants attention. Therefore, NTU's first student success target will align with OfS KPM 3. Exceeding the OfS KPM ambition, we aim to eliminate the non-continuation gap (structural and unexplained) in ten years at a consistent rate over time – see Table 3.

Table 3: NTU target 3 (student success stage) - Reduce gap in non-continuation (all undergraduates) between most (POLAR4 q5) and least (POLAR4 q1) represented groups

<b>Year</b>	<b>Target yearly Reduction in gap</b>	<b>Cumulative reduction in gap</b>	<b>Actual target gap</b>
2016/17	-	-	4.0 %points
2017/18 – 2026/27	0.4 %points	4 %points	Zero

Over the last five years, there has been relatively little difference in non-continuation rates between different ethnic groups. Latest data for 2016/17 entry shows that 9% of Asian, 6% of black, 7% of mixed ethnicity and 7% of white students did not continue into their second year. Unlike sector trends, which show that black students have consistently higher rates of non-continuation, NTU's data show that no particular ethnic group is significantly more likely to withdraw from their studies, although this year there is currently a 5 percentage point gap between white and 'other ethnic' students. Denominators are small and these data fluctuate making the trend insignificant. We are therefore, not proposing an APP target for this group.

We have succeeded in reducing the continuation gap for mature students to 5.6 percentage points (2016/17) from 9.1 percentage points in 2012/13. This has been informed by qualitative research in NTU and the sector which highlights the differing familial and financial responsibilities which are characteristic of mature students; making it less relevant to compare their achievements directly with 18 year old entrants. We have focused on improving academic and accommodation services to these students and increasing financial support and advice.

Despite increasing the proportion of disabled students over the last five years we have achieved a zero gap in non-continuation between NTU's disabled and non-disabled full-time first degree entrants. When disaggregating by type of disability, we do find that our students with a mental health disability have been consistently more likely to withdraw from their course for example 9% withdrew in 2016/17 compared to 7% of all disabled/non-disabled students. Looking at the nature of the difficulties inherent in the diagnoses for these students our Student Support Service advises that this 2 percentage point gap is to be expected.

There were no obvious consistent trends for other types of disability. For example, the gap between NTU students with a 'Cognitive and Learning' disability and those with no disability was effectively zero across all five years. The gap between students with a 'Sensory, Medical and Physical' disability and those with no disability fluctuated between minus 2 percentage points and plus 3 percentage points over the 5 year period, which is within expectations due to small denominators. We do not therefore propose an APP disability target but will continue to monitor disabled students' progress very closely through our internal Success for All reporting.

As the number of NTU's students recorded as coming from a care background is very small, it is necessary to combine data over several years to make a meaningful assertion of their success. Using our internal student records data culminating from NTU's enrolment processes and combining the years 2013/14 to 2016/17, we find that there is a gap in

non-continuation rates between care leavers and other students of 3 percentage points<sup>7</sup>. Whilst this gap is smaller than our gap between most and least represented groups (KPM3), we will continue to closely monitor the learner outcomes of our students from a care background through our overarching Success for All programme. We do not plan to implement an APP target because of the small denominators rendering year on year fluctuations inevitable and our evidence suggesting the gap is relatively small.

Our internal data, derived from our admissions processes and matched with NTU student records, reveals that students who entered NTU via the BTEC pre-entry qualification route were up to three times more likely to withdraw from their first degree course than students who entered through the A-Level route. This is particularly important to us because BTEC qualifications are disproportionately studied by other target groups; male students, BME students and students from low socio-economic groups. The BTEC qualifications assessment criteria is in the process of changing from the old QCF to the new RQF framework. We envisage that this change will have positive implications for the academic preparedness of our BTEC entrants. There is no baseline upon which to predict the effect of this change (hence no explicit APP target), although we will be closely monitoring the outcomes of alumni of the new framework in Success for All and our BTEC Champions meetings.

Our own research indicates commuting students who live in their parental/guardian or own home whilst studying have a very different university experience than those who live in a NTU allocated property, such as halls of residence. Our internal student records data, derived from enrolment processes, show that young commuting students residing in either their own or parental/guardian home during term-time have consistently been more likely to withdraw than young students residing in an institution-maintained property. We have worked to address this and the gap has decreased from 5 percentage points in 2014/15 to 3 percentage points in 2016/17. We do not propose a commuting student non-continuation target within our student success APP targets.

We are aware of the intersectionality of the above characteristics but are also aware that targeting students on their inherent single or multiple characteristics can be counter-productive. NTU has therefore worked with students and a technology company since 2012 to create a sector-leading Learning Analytics Dashboard. This identifies students most at risk of withdrawing from their undergraduate course by measuring their engagement with our academic offer and learning resources. Our evidence shows disadvantaged groups and indeed certain intersecting groups are disproportionately 'low engagers' and therefore more likely to withdraw. Tutors and students share access to the system and are both alerted when engagement has been low over a given time period. This prompts meaningful conversations between tutors and their students focusing first on academic engagement and only on their intersecting characteristics where these prove relevant to student success. We therefore do not propose any separate APP target on intersections of characteristics.

### Degree Outcomes

We are aware of the significant gap in degree outcomes (first/2:1 versus 2:2/third) between black and white students. Although our gap has narrowed from 28 percentage points in 2013/14, to 23 percentage points in 2017/18 (equal to the sector average), the current gap remains unacceptably high (Appendix 3). We also know from our internal statistical analysis of NTU student records that the majority of the gap remains 'unexplained', when 'structural' factors such as pre-entry qualifications, subject area and other student characteristics are statistically controlled for. Therefore NTU's second student success target will align with OfS' KPM4. We aim to eliminate the black and white

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<sup>7</sup> Whilst we have replicated HESA's methodology for non-continuation, there remains an unknown 'external transfer' factor – typically around 2.5 percentage points. We do not know if this applies equally to all student groups, hence the gap shown here represents our best estimate.

degree outcomes gap (structural and unexplained) in the next 13 years, as per the KPM. Given the extent of the differences, it is our ambition for year on year reductions to be front-loaded and we aim for significant progress to be made in the initial years – see Table 4.

Table 4: NTU target 4 (student success stage) – Gap in degree outcomes (2:1 or First Class v 2:2 or Third) between black and white students

<b>Year</b>	<b>Target yearly Reduction in gap</b>	<b>Cumulative reduction in gap</b>	<b>Actual target gap</b>
2017/18	-	-	23 %points
2018/19 – 2022/23	3.0 %points	15 %points	8 %points
2023/24 – 2030/31	1.0 %points	23 %points	Zero

Whilst black students are our priority group for the gap in degree outcomes due to their much lower rates of 2:1 /1<sup>st</sup> Class degrees, we are also aware that other ethnic groups historically achieve lower degree classifications. The proportion of Asian students achieving 2:1/1<sup>st</sup> Class has increased from 55% in 2013/14 to 64% in 2017/18, but this remains a statistically significant 16 percentage points below the performance of white students. The degree outcomes gap between mixed ethnicity and white students has narrowed to 7 percentage points in 2017/18. For 'other ethnicity' the denominators are too small to make accurate judgement, although 2:1 / First Class achievement rates increased from 40% in 2014/15 to 70% in 2017/18, with the resultant gap compared with white students reducing from 38 percentage points to 10 percentage points.

Whilst our ethnicity attainment APP target will be to reduce the black versus white attainment gap to support the national KPM4 target, we aim to reduce attainment gaps for the other ethnic groups and will continue to closely monitor student progress through our Success for All reporting.

NTU's Learning Analytics Dashboard enables a focus on attainment as students and tutors can discuss the typical engagement profile of successful students. Our research shows that engagement profile is much more relevant than any inherent characteristic. Tutors are aware there are specific intersectional groups of students e.g. black African or Asian Bangladeshi males with lower rates of attainment and are supported in advising these students accordingly. Through the Academic Representation system the DVC Academic and Student Affairs has led a wide-spread and open discussion on intersectionality and engagement. This has been developed by the current student Vice President Education who is using our engagement data and conducting university-wide research to raise awareness of BAME attainment gaps.

NTU's disabled versus non-disabled student degree outcomes gap has fluctuated between a negligible 2 percentage points and 6 percentage points over the last five years (Appendix 4). NTU's current gap of 4.2 percentage points in 2017/18 is statistically insignificant. The 2:1 /1<sup>st</sup> Class achievement of NTU's students with a known mental health difficulty has fluctuated between 69% and 80% over this timescale, with the associated gap compared with white students ranging between minus 5 and plus 5 percentage points. There were similar fluctuations between the performance of students with a 'sensory medical and physical' disability, with the gap ranging from minus 2 to plus 9 percentage points. With such small denominators, this spiky profile is to be expected. The group of students with a 'Cognitive and Learning' disability had a 5 percentage point gap in 2017/18. We are not proposing an APP target for this group but have increased our capacity to promptly diagnose needs, created a new Skills for Success provision in the library service and embedded Student Support Advisers in academic schools.

The degree outcomes gap between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students has been consistently wide over the last five years, both across the sector and at NTU. Using Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data as the socio-economic indicator, the latest data for the sector demonstrate an 18 percentage point gap between the most advantaged (85%: 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1) and most disadvantaged (67%: 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1) population quintiles (Appendix 5). The gap for NTU was slightly smaller, but still a significant and unacceptable 14 percentage points, which was fairly consistent with previous years, given random variation. Using POLAR data as the proxy shows a considerably lower gap, for both the sector (9 percentage points) and NTU (6 percentage points), suggesting that POLAR should not be used as a target group for degree outcomes. Indeed, further interrogation of our APP dataset shows that the POLAR gap was statistically insignificant over all five years, whilst the gap using the IMD proxy was consistently significant. Therefore, NTU's fourth student success target will be based on the socio-economic degree outcomes gap, using IMD as the socio-economic indicator. We aim to eliminate the degree outcomes gap (structural and unexplained) between the most disadvantaged (IMD quintile 1) and most advantaged (IMD quintile 5) students in the next 14 years at a consistent rate over time – see Table 5.

Table 5: NTU target 5 (student success stage) - Reduce gap in degree outcomes between disadvantaged (IMD quintile 1) and advantaged (IMD quintile 5) students

<b>Year</b>	<b>Target yearly Reduction in gap</b>	<b>Cumulative reduction in gap</b>	<b>Actual target gap</b>
2017/18	-	-	14 %points
2018/19 – 2032/33	1.0 %points	14 %points	Zero

The proportion of NTU's mature students (aged 21 and over) achieving 1sts and 2:1s has increased from 60% to 68% in the last five years; a much more rapid rate of improvement than young students. In future years with increasing availability of a diversity of provision e.g. degree apprenticeships highlighted in the access section we will be aiming to close the remaining 10 percentage point gap (Appendix 6). Our fourth student success target, therefore, will be to address this gap.

Table 6: NTU target 6 (student success stage) - Reduce gap in degree outcomes between mature and young students

<b>Year</b>	<b>Target yearly Reduction in gap</b>	<b>Cumulative reduction in gap</b>	<b>Actual target gap</b>
2017/18	-	-	10 %points
2018/19 – 2027/28	1.0 %points	10 %points	Zero

As noted, data on care leavers is patchy and denominators are small, but our internal student records data derived from NTU's enrolment processes suggest that over the five combined years 2013/14 to 2017/18, 73% of care leavers who had qualified for a degree, achieved either a 2:1 or 1st, which was broadly similar (74%) to NTU's other UK domiciled students. Moreover, 25% of NTU's care leavers achieved a First Class degree, which was higher than the NTU average over this period (23%).

Reflecting continuation trends, our internal data derived from NTU's admissions systems show that students entering NTU via the BTEC qualification route who successfully

complete their undergraduate programme are considerably less likely to achieve a 2:1 or First Class than those entering via A-Levels. In 2017/18, 65% of BTEC entrants achieved this standard. Whilst this represented a 7 percentage point increase compared with 2013/14, the gap remains at some 17 percentage points compared with A-Level entrants. As noted, the BTEC qualifications framework has recently changed and we envisage this having a positive impact on students' academic preparedness, and we will continue to closely monitor the academic achievement of our BTEC cohort.

NTU's internal student records data demonstrate that young commuting students are consistently less likely to achieve a 2:1 or First Class degree compared with final year students living away from home (e.g. in rented accommodation) during term-time. The gap has remained fairly consistent at between 5 and 7 percentage points over the last five years. However, when controlling for other influential factors (including pre-entry qualifications and IMD – commuting students residing in Nottingham are disproportionately from deprived communities) our internal statistical analysis demonstrates no evidence of any unexpected differences in attainment outcomes between commuting and non-commuting students.

### **Lifecycle stage: Progression into graduate employment or further study**

NTU now has one of the largest and most sophisticated employability services of any UK university. This investment has meant there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of NTU's graduates progressing to graduate level occupation or higher study over recent years, and in particular our most disadvantaged student groups. For example, the percentage of graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds (according to IMD data) progressing to graduate level jobs or higher study has risen from 52% of the 2013/14 graduating cohort to 78% of the 2017/18 cohort; an increase of 26 percentage points. Only a small gap of 3% remains compared with the more advantaged cohort which is better than the sector average gap of 6 percentage points. We have developed a RISE programme which gives financial and social support to enable disadvantaged students to access work placements and we predict this will close the remaining gap.

NTU's female graduates have historically had lower rates of progression to graduate level occupations than males. Our research suggests that this is, at least partially, explained by females having a greater propensity to study subjects which have disproportionately lower rates of graduate employment. Nevertheless, there has been a consistent increase in female graduate progression rates over recent years; from 56% in 2013/14 to 78% in 2017/18; a 22 percentage point increase, which was higher than the male increase (19 percentage points). Whilst a gap remains according to the latest DLHE data from 2016/17, it is relatively small at 4 percentage points, although the average gap for the sector was zero. An increase in employability provision for female students has been developed to close this gap.

The small gaps remaining between NTU's advantaged and disadvantaged, and male and female graduates in terms of graduate prospects are not significant in the APP dataset. However, when intersecting socio-economics and gender, the gaps are larger (Appendix 7). Therefore NTU's progression target will be based on the gap in first degree graduate employment or higher study between disadvantaged females and advantaged males, using IMD as the socio-economic indicator. We aim to eliminate the graduate progression outcomes gap (structural and unexplained) between disadvantaged females (IMD quintiles 1&2) and advantaged males (IMD quintile 3-5) in the next ten years. Considerable progress has been achieved over recent years and as the remaining gaps are predominantly 'structural' it is proposed the target be slightly delayed. This will permit NTU to encourage disadvantaged females to study courses and/or sandwich placements which our research shows are likely to enhance graduate prospects – see Table 6.



The gaps in graduate level occupation or further study rates between white and BAME graduates are remarkably low when considering the gap in degree outcomes, which our research demonstrates is a key influencing factor. The latest DLHE data for NTU show just a 1 percentage point gap between white and black, a 3 percentage point gap between white and Asian and no gap between white and mixed ethnicity groups. Due to small denominators, comparing gaps between sub-groups over time is problematic, although when combining groups, the BAME versus white gap has reduced from 9 percentage points in 2014/15 to 2 percentage points in 2016/17.

Table 7: NTU target 7 (progression stage) - Gap in progression to graduate level occupation or higher study between disadvantaged female (IMD quintiles 1&2) and advantaged male (IMD quintile 3-5) first degree graduates<sup>8</sup>

Year	Target yearly Reduction in gap	Cumulative reduction in gap	Actual target gap
2016/17	-	-	6 %points
2017/18 – 2020/21	0.0 %points	0 %points	6 %points
2021/22 – 2026/27	1.0 %points	6 %points	0 %points

There has been a considerable increase in NTU’s disabled graduates’ progression rates over recent years, from 57% in 2012/13 to 80% in 2016/17, effectively wiping out the gap. Whilst further disaggregation is problematic due to low denominators, progression rates of students with a ‘Cognitive and Learning’ disability increased from 58% in 2012/13 to 82% in 2016/17, hence the latest progression rate was higher than for non-disabled students (gap of minus 2 percentage points, compared with a plus 2 percentage point gap in 2012/13). There has been similarly significant progress made amongst students with a ‘Sensory Medical and Physical’ disability, with the gap (compared with non-disabled graduates) reducing from plus 7 percentage points in 2012/13 to minus 6 percentage points in 2016/17. There were no obvious trends over time for other disability sub-groups, other than the expected fluctuations for such small denominators.

NTU’s mature graduates have consistently had higher progression rates to graduate level occupations or higher study than their younger counterparts. 84% of NTU’s 2016/17 mature and 79% of young graduates successfully progressed to graduate level jobs or higher study (5 percentage point gap in favour of mature graduates), up from 65% and 63% respectively from 2013/14 (2 percentage point gap).

Although denominators are very low, our preliminary internal data derived from the DLHE survey and integrated within NTU student records suggest that care leavers’ progression rates (combined over several years to boost denominator) were higher (78% between 2013/14 and 2016/17) than for other NTU graduates (75% over the same period).

No other progression targets are therefore proposed.

## 2. Strategic aims and objectives

NTU is committed to enabling our students to transform their life chances. Our top institutional priority is to ensure that we *create opportunities* for all of our students to succeed in developing the knowledge, skills, character and resilience to play the positive role in society that they choose for themselves.

<sup>8</sup> As DLHE has been replaced by the Graduate Outcomes Survey, this will be a temporary target and subject to change, depending upon the results of the new methodology.

These long-standing goals are fundamental as we develop our new Strategic Plan 2020-25: University, reimagined. This was developed with colleagues across the institution and collaboratively and in parallel with the Nottingham Trent Students' Union's (NTSU) new strategy which was informed by more than 4,000 student inputs.

We are committed to increasing the impact of our work in the local area in collaboration with partners. We have a new partnership with Vision West Nottinghamshire College to provide higher education provision in Mansfield (see Strategic measures: Access below). We are an active member of the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Collaborative Outreach Project (DANCOP), part of the NCOP initiative. DANCOP is designed to complement existing local provision. It has the dual aims of increasing uptake of existing outreach and provides a range of additional support, some of which is delivered through third party providers. Derby City's inclusion within the Opportunity Area scheme facilitates collaboration between the two projects in that area.

In addition our 'Universities for Nottingham' initiative with the University of Nottingham aims to develop a new approach to civic impact. This is based on working collaboratively with each other and partners across the region to support the future of economic growth in Nottingham and the life chances of its citizens.

We contribute to numerous other multi-stakeholder networks. We are part of the consortium establishing the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO), the new evidence and impact exchange for the sector. We are on the Governance group of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) and are members of the East Midlands Widening Participation Research and Evaluation Partnership (EMWPREP) and the East Midlands Care Leaver Activities and Student Support (EMCLASS) network.

## **2.1 Priority Groups**

To summarise the assessment of performance, our priority groups are students from low-participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) and on free school meals at the access stage; students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and black students at the student success stage and disadvantaged females at the progression stage. Therefore three of our targets directly match the OfS KPMs. Furthermore our second target will help address OfS KPM2, which is an institution-specific target but shows NTU's commitment to addressing national concerns.

However, we are conscious of maintaining our performance in areas in which we already do well, and addressing areas which might not be the highest priority but where there are concerns. Therefore, our oversight will be mindful of other student groups, in particular students with disabilities and care-leavers at the access stage; mature students at the access and student success stages; disabled students and various disaggregated BME groups at the student success stage, in particular black African and Asian Bangladeshi males.

## **2.2 Aims and objectives**

In summary our strategic aims and objectives and timescales to achieve them are:

- 1) To reduce the gap in access to NTU between most (POLAR4 q5) and least (POLAR4 q1) represented groups to 9 percentage points by 2024-25 and to zero by 2038
- 2) To reduce the gap in higher education participation rates of pupils from Nottinghamshire eligible for Free School Meals (FSMs) to eight percentage points by 2024-5 and to zero by 2038.
- 3) To eliminate the gap in non-continuation between most (POLAR4 q5) and least (POLAR4 q1) represented groups by 2026-27
- 4) To reduce the gap in degree outcomes between black and white students to 8 percentage points by 2022-23 and to zero by 2030-31

- 5) To reduce the gap in degree outcomes between disadvantaged (IMD quintile 1) and advantaged (IMD quintile 5) students to 7 percentage points by 2024-25 and to zero by 2032-33
- 6) To reduce the gap in degree outcomes between mature and young students to zero by 2027/28
- 7) To reduce the gap in progression to graduate level occupation or higher study between disadvantaged female (IMD quintiles 1&2) and advantaged male (IMD quintile 3-5) first degree graduates to 2 percentage points in 2024-25 and to zero in 2026-27.

### **3. Strategic measures**

Our approach to success in access and participation is based on systemic initiatives and large-scale interventions. These are based on evidence and continuously monitored to ensure successful actions are quickly acted upon and less successful projects cease or are amended.

#### **3.1 Whole provider strategic approach**

We consider access and participation work to be the responsibility of all schools and departments in the University. The inclusion of professional services in this work has been critical to the success we have had over recent years and is unusual in the sector. The work is integrated into all relevant strategies and the deliberative and executive committee infrastructure has been developed to ensure oversight. The main committee for directing this work across the University is the 'Success for All' steering group which now has an Access and Participation Group reporting specifically on the APP. The Success for All Group is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, with membership comprising the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs), most Heads of Professional Services, all academic schools' Deputy Deans and student representation.

The Schools and Professional Services are held to account by the Success for All group which meets quarterly. Meeting minutes are circulated widely and actions on addressing gaps are very clearly assigned. The gaps discussed are those detailed in our Assessment of Performance, equality groups and widening participation cohorts are a focus but the group is alive to intersectionality and NTU specific matters e.g. student parents and carers.

The University has had data-driven 'Success for All' targets for a number of years. Each academic school and professional service is required to produce a plan showing how they are addressing these targets (specific targets for each School, overall targets for each professional service). These 'Success for All' targets will be subsumed into our APP targets and then cascaded down to each academic school and where possible, academic department and course. Given the OfS' direction with access and participation, these Success for All plans will become five-year Theory of Change plans.

Our Centre for Academic Development and Quality (CADQ) has always supported the development of these plans. Its newly-formed Educational Research and Evaluation Team (ERET) adds an additional research and evaluation service to the University and we are considering introducing some additional Theory of Change specialists to the University to enhance our expertise in this area.

The Access and Participation Group has been established as sub-group of the Success for All steering group. It has a specific strategic responsibility for the APP and monies spent on related targets. It meets very regularly throughout the year, more frequently when plans and returns/impact reports are required. It is supported by an Access and Participation sub-group; this is where target-related innovations are trialled and new ideas brought in from around the sector to ensure that the 5-year Plan does not become stale.

## **Alignment with other strategies**

The Access and Participation Plan is aligned with the University's other relevant strategies. The interaction between the Access and Participation Plan (APP) and the EDI Strategy is clear through our Institutional Equality Objective:

"Understand the student academic experience for equality groups in order to enhance this experience where appropriate and possible. Focusing on application, to offer, acceptance, progression, achievement and employability".

Both documents reflect the full student lifecycle and directly links and reflects our comprehensive statistical analysis of NTU's undergraduate student body.

The APP is predicated on the requirement to ensure *due regard* (Equality Act 2010) in our decision-making. This is achieved through the examination and regular review of our student lifecycle datasets detailed above. These equality-monitoring activities provide the evidence base that informs our decision-making processes.

The tool we use for explicitly considering the impact of our activities on students with protected characteristics is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). These are regularly used, particularly on significant changes or activities such as the previous reduction of the NTU bursary.

The APP and wider Success for All programme sits within the University's strategic plan, in the theme of *Creating Opportunity*. This has framed, and continues to frame, our Educational Development strategy around inclusive curriculum design and pedagogy. The entire undergraduate portfolio has been reviewed and developed according to inclusive design principles, with the first student enrolments to these re-specified courses in 2018/19. The strategic measures described below for student success build on this work.

NTU's employability strategy recognises that employability cannot be measured by employment alone, and looks to develop not just skills but confidence, self-efficacy and social capital. In order to achieve mass engagement, every course has been redesigned to include careers education and relevant work experience for all students, however, through alignment with the APP, the employability strategy is responding to the knowledge that many students lack the social capital to take full advantage of the opportunities available. In targeting these students specifically, we are able to offer personalised interventions to meet the needs of the individual based on their social background.

## **Collaboration**

We actively collaborate with a range of partners in order to accelerate progress. Our strategic partnerships are detailed in the 'Strategic aims and objectives' section of this plan. Our more operational collaborations include an effective relationship with the University of Nottingham with whom we run several programmes.

Our collaboration with other educational providers in the area is largely facilitated through the DANCOP project although we are actively exploring establishing a free school in the region and are developing a relationship with a new local academy which will be established with a similar ethos to NTU (character, employability and learning analytics - see below). This institution could serve as an innovation centre for our pre-entry outreach work.

We have a strengthening relationship with the local city council and are looking to work more closely with them on accessing their pupil performance data in relation to the school curriculum. Knowing which topics pupils struggle with will significantly assist our attainment-raising work.

We also have a close working relationship with the charity 'Grit'. This charity has delivered transformational coaching programmes to our undergraduate students and we are now

incorporating this work into standard provision including our personal tutor training programme, our Welcome Week induction and our Collaborative Engagement and Retention (CERT) peer-mentoring scheme.

### **Continuous improvement**

We have a sophisticated approach to continuous improvement which draws on our expertise in data and evaluation. At a pre-entry level our membership of EMWPREP and HEAT and at a post-entry level our use of Student Loan Company information, internal datasets and our learning analytics service (see below) enable us to target, monitor and evaluate our outreach activity. We record data about our programmes and individual participants which is longitudinally tracked and matched to these datasets spanning Key Stage 2 data through to postgraduate study and employment. The tracking reports help us to better understand the relationship between our provision and the attainment and progression of our priority groups. We can ascertain any association between participation in our provision and any deviation from average retention and attainment rates which provides an indication of the extent to which the interventions are preparing students for the transition to HE and contributing to their subsequent success. We supplement the findings of this by interviews with former participants to gain further insight into the long-term impact. Results and feedback are delivered through various mechanisms e.g. the Evaluation Working Group (EWG) in our Centre for Student and Community Engagement and the Success for All Programme. These oversee changes to plans and provision and the process starts again. Membership of these groups enables us to take an evidence based approach to planning outreach delivery so that we can continue to invest in outreach activities that optimise progression with disadvantaged cohorts.

### **Strategic measures: Access**

Our course portfolio is instrumental to determining our success in meeting our APP targets and is under constant review. We are continuing to invest and develop our provision of higher and degree level apprenticeships and early analysis of our apprenticeship data demonstrates that these courses are attracting a greater proportion of socio-economically disadvantaged students over our other undergraduate programmes. This will support our APP Targets One and Two. Our apprenticeship programme also attracts significantly more mature students, particularly aged 25 and over and so this will support the mature priority group as well.

A major strategic measure for NTU is the creation of a new site and provision in Mansfield in partnership with Vision West Nottinghamshire College. This new NTU hub will not only provide an integrated FE and HE offer for learners but also be the University's local base from which it will run events for schools, local businesses and members of the Mansfield and Ashfield communities.

The educational offer is initially focused around foundation degrees and provides an accessible entry into higher education. The vocational courses have been designed with the needs of local employers in mind, aiming to reduce skills shortages, match students to local job sectors and attract new employers to the area.

Looking ahead to the future, we intend to offer a wider range of provision including top-ups to Bachelors degrees, Level 7 provision and a range of programmes to encourage a life-long approach to learning via continuous professional development.

We have also established an Education and Skills Working Group in the area. Through this group we will engage with local educational providers, schools and other key stakeholders to extend and develop our existing services, including outreach, with the aim of improving educational achievement and attainment.

These developments will significantly assist our progress on our 'Access' targets (APP Targets One and Two) as the populations of the area are disproportionately located in disadvantaged areas eg POLAR4 quintile 1 areas: Ashfield, 59%; Mansfield, 62%.

We are also developing our Access to HE provision and other further education courses. These courses attract a significant number of mature and socio-economically disadvantaged students and have good progression rates to NTU. Again this supports our APP Targets One and Two.

## **Initiatives**

Our internal evaluation has shown that priority students who take part in several connected pre-entry activities fare better in their Key Stage 4 assessments (in comparison to their predicted performance) and have an increased likelihood of progressing to higher education than those students who take part in 'one-off' interventions. Therefore, at the Access stage our activities form a constructively-aligned sustained programme, with each activity building on the learning from the previous session.

The content of the sessions is based on research-informed practice. For example, lack of attainment is one of the biggest barriers to progression to higher education<sup>9</sup>. Our redesigned 'Students in Classrooms' provision and our 'Raising the Grade' revision conferences focus on specific areas of the school curriculum where pupils are known to struggle. Research also shows that those with pre-existing social and cultural capital<sup>10</sup> and those with certain characteristics<sup>11</sup> are better placed to build their resourcefulness and succeed. Our provision aims to develop this capital (our Progression scheme and summer school programme) and builds these characteristics (our enquiry-based outreach work).

The style of learning delivered in these sessions utilises enquiry-based and cooperative activities which places emphasis on the student taking control of their own learning, in particular the 'flipped classroom' approach<sup>12</sup>. This approach, in which young people explore and discover answers for themselves through independent and group work, better prepares them for the style of learning they will encounter in higher education, particularly at NTU.

This pre-entry work supports our APP Target Two. Our explorations with the local council, of the free school and the new academy should accelerate this, alongside consideration of how we further our work with the University of Nottingham. However this work will not particularly support our APP Target One. Therefore over the next year we will explore new measures with a more national reach such as further course portfolio developments, entry qualifications and an increase in contextual admission activity.

## **Strategic measures: Student success**

A key strategic feature to address success gaps is the design of courses and we are leading the way in developing inclusive pedagogies. Foremost in this area is our sector-leading work on Student Centred Active Learning Environments with Upside-down Pedagogies (SCALE-UP). Our HEFCE/OfS-funded project 'Addressing Barriers to Student Success' programme has just concluded with excellent results for our priority students.

Ramsden states that academic engagement is related to effective learning<sup>13</sup> and our internal learning analytics system also shows the correlation between engagement with studies and success. Our OfS study of some 16,000 students showed that use of SCALE-UP improves attendance, engagement and academic progression for our priority groups,

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<sup>9</sup> [www.teachfirst.org.uk/reports/beyond-access](http://www.teachfirst.org.uk/reports/beyond-access)

<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu et al, 1991; Wakeling and Savage, 2015

<sup>11</sup> The work of Angela Duckworth and Carol Dweck

<sup>12</sup> Mitra et al, 2012

<sup>13</sup> Ramsden, 2003

especially if students studied three or more SCALE-UP modules in a year. This supports our work on our APP Target Three. Our study also showed that SCALE-UP modules were associated with lower failure rates, in comparison with non-SCALE-UP modules with greater improvements for BME than white, disadvantaged than advantaged and mature groups<sup>14</sup>. This will support our work towards APP Targets Four, Five and Six. A central tenet of our work to address our APP targets is to expand the use of SCALE-UP across the University. Our educational development will require courses, where these gaps exist, to implement SCALE-UP.

We will also look to accelerate our progress on these APP targets by reifying and evaluating a broader inclusive curriculum framework, based on the work described above looking at enhanced feedback, meta-cognition and self-regulation. This framework addresses the 'significant steps' identified in the recent #Closing the Gap report for BAME students<sup>15</sup> (thus addressing Target Four) and is underpinned by the Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning toolkit<sup>16</sup>.

We have an excellent track record in learning analytics. The NTU Dashboard is an online resource designed to help students understand how well they are engaging with their studies. It enables them to compare themselves with other students on their course and demonstrates the positive association between high engagement and academic success. We conduct considerable evaluation and research into learning analytics and overall findings are that student engagement, as measured through the Dashboard, is a strong predictor of progression and final degree attainment. Annual student surveys also evidence the positive impact of access to engagement data on student behaviour. As students from our priority groups are over-represented amongst those with low engagement, focusing support on low engagers allows us to indirectly target these groups (APP Targets Three, Four, Five and Six). This forms the next phase of our research focus. Our Erasmus+ funded project 'Onwards from Learning Analytics' (OfLA) seeks to identify what interventions are most effective for students the Dashboard has identified as low-engaged.

A key development for our learning analytics work is in conjunction with Student Support Services (SSS). Currently students are referred to SSS but take some time to seek help; this approach is not effective, predominantly because it delays any remedial actions required and subsequent engagement with support. We aim to develop our Dashboard to create a more proactive practical partnership approach between SSS and academic schools to ensure faster 'back-on-track' interventions. We have an effective Crisis Intervention Policy but are also looking to initiate emergency contact at an earlier stage when we feel students have not engaged and/or we have wellbeing concerns.

We will be assisted in this by our newly-established network of Student Support Advisers (SSAs). These are embedded into academic areas, improving the awareness of services and creating easier access to advice for both staff and students. The team targets support at our priority groups and others detailed in the Assessment of performance. This has proven to be particularly effective with black students (APP Target Four) with more than 12% of students seeking SSA support are black compared with 10% of the NTU general population.

Furthermore we are developing a whole university approach to well-being. The challenge is significant. In 2017/18 10% of the student population referred to wellbeing services. We have created a single point of entry and consolidated the assessment process to ensure appropriate and effective referral into the correct service from the outset. The single point of entry provides an initial screening of referrals by an experienced wellbeing practitioner, facilitating timely referral into a range of NTU support services. All referrers receive a comprehensive, automated email response with crisis support and emergency services

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<sup>14</sup> Final report of the Scaling up active collaborative learning for student success, March 2019

<sup>15</sup> #Closing the Gap, UUK 2019

<sup>16</sup> Teaching and Learning Toolkit, EEF 2019.

information. This is to ensure that those students requiring an emergency response receive relevant information instantly. Wellbeing services operate a comprehensive referral criterion including a risk assessment as a core element.

The introduction of a single point of entry has been a successful initiative. It has shortened response times and facilitates a comprehensive assessment and referral process to ensure effective and appropriate wellbeing support.

Our internal data shows that three-quarters of these students are from low-participation backgrounds and so addressing this issue will enable us to make greater progress on APP Targets Three and Five.

Developing our personalised learning approach even further we will continue to develop our CERT peer mentoring scheme. This team addresses student retention and engagement by working with students from the moment they arrive through designing more inclusive welcome activities and then through a University-wide peer support programme<sup>17</sup> - both designed in collaboration with the charity Grit. Disengaging students (in which APP priority groups are over-represented) are especially targeted.

We use financial support as a strategic measure to support our non-continuation and attainment objectives (APP Targets Three, Four, Five and Six), including our concern over mature non-continuation. The rationale for this is given in the Evaluation section of this plan.

Our financial provision consists of an NTU bursary to new, eligible full-time undergraduate students paying the maximum home tuition fee, who have a residual household income of £25,000 or below in their year of entry (as confirmed by their national Student Finance service).

The value of each NTU bursary is £750 for each year of the course, provided recipients are eligible in their year of entry on the basis of assessment of household income and other criteria<sup>18</sup>. The University will provide additional bursaries for students from particular backgrounds or circumstances to ensure that financial support is directed to where it is most needed.

Continued eligibility for an NTU Bursary in subsequent years will be dependent on the student remaining fully enrolled on their full-time undergraduate degree or full-time Foundation degree course at NTU. Students required to repeat a year of study will be considered eligible for a bursary provided they are eligible for tuition fee support from their national Student Finance Service.

## **Initiatives**

Our student success initiatives are again evidence-informed. Our research suggests that early in the student lifecycle, student anxieties are often primarily social. Students are concerned about fitting in, belonging to the institution, their course and their accommodation. Therefore, we place great emphasis on community building and developing positive principles such as growth mind-set, personal agency and the power of creating and using support networks in our Welcome programme and beyond.

Our internal data shows the association between engagement in extra-curricular activities and student success. We therefore have recruitment targets and subsequent additional

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<sup>17</sup> Informed by the 'Supporting student success: strategies for institutional change' report, 2017

<sup>18</sup> In order to be eligible for an NTU Bursary a student must have a household income level in their year of entry (as assessed by their national student finance service) of £25,000 or less and must be:

- enrolled on a full-time undergraduate degree or full-time Foundation degree course at NTU; and
- paying, whether directly or by Fee Loan, the full tuition fee for their course
- have UK home status for student funding purposes and are eligible to receive a tuition fee loan and a maintenance loan from their national Student Finance Service.



interventions for a range of priority area students to facilitate engagement in our extra-curricular interventions. Our CERT, Students in Classrooms and volunteering schemes all have targets to recruit students from all priority areas, in particular those referenced in APP Targets Three, Four and Five. New targets for the recruitment of mature students will support APP Target Six.

We have convincing internal data showing that involvement in NTU's Sports programmes is associated with academic success and graduate outcomes. However, these data also show that low socio-economic groups are under-represented in NTU sports activities. We have therefore created a Sports Bursary scheme giving discounted membership to low-income students accompanied by sports introduction events. In 2018-19 this was effective at increasing sports participation amongst low-income groups. We are therefore significantly expanding this initiative to help address APP Target Five and given the correlation between low-income and low-participation APP Target Three.

We conducted an analysis of undergraduate students who resit exams and other assessments over the summer. We found that there are significant numbers of such students (several thousand) and that those students identified in our Assessment of performance are disproportionately over-represented. We therefore developed a Summer Assessment Support Service consisting of additional workshops and 1:1 support, blended learning, Grit training, accommodation and sports and social activities with the Students' Union to support these students in succeeding in their assessments over the summer. Low socio economic and BME students were particularly well represented in this programme as were mature and disabled students. We are therefore expanding this provision to help address APP Targets Three, Four, Five and Six and other priority groups.

### **Strategic measures: Progression**

NTU has invested heavily in providing a breadth of high-quality services and interventions to support the progression of graduates into employment, self-employment or further study.

Previous analysis of our data showed that work experience of any duration has a beneficial impact on graduates' employment outcomes (as measured by DLHE). In particular, at NTU, a year-long work experience delivers professional and managerial employment outcomes for low participation students that are equal to their more advantaged counterparts. We have therefore embedded relevant work experience into our curriculum at level five along with compulsory careers education at level four and a synoptic employability assessment in the final year. We are also looking to design a three-year sandwich degree to reduce student fees whilst maintaining the same outcomes.

### **Initiatives**

To facilitate this work experience we provide financial support to low-income students to mitigate against low or no-income experiences. We also provide additional careers education and counselling support to enhance placement applications, provide skills for selection and the resilience to sustain them in making further applications if or when they receive rejections. This is in addition to the 'standard' extra-curricular interventions.

This work has succeeded in narrowing the progression gap for those graduates from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and for BME graduates and effectively eliminating the gap for care leavers and for those with disabilities (pg. 8-9). However, we intend to retain the focus and the investment at this stage as we are mindful that the success of the University's access and continuation interventions will require additional support as more students from disadvantaged backgrounds will complete their studies and it is critical they progress into graduate employment.

Furthermore, APP Target Seven highlights a gap in progression between disadvantaged females and advantaged males. We were aware of the probability of this gap but to date

this has not been a specific area of focus for us and so we need to explore what additional employability interventions might support female graduates. This is likely to be a development of existing programmes around social capital and self-efficacy but also looking at how subject choice impacts both graduate employment and pay equality and how influential additional factors (ethnicity, socio-economic background) are. This will be completed by summer 2020.

### **New developments and initiatives**

NTU has had considerable success in access and participation across the student lifecycle. However, the new nature of the KPMs (i.e. closing gaps) and the new KPM areas (eg black student degree outcomes; mature attainment; disadvantaged female professional employment) mean new systemic and large scale interventions will be required. Given our success is built on data, analysis and the evaluation of pilot projects we require some time to develop these new interventions. It cannot be done in the timescale given for the writing of this plan.

Over the next year we plan to have a series of facilitated development days to explore 'what works' for our areas of concern. Nevertheless, we do already have areas of interest that we will explore. This includes pre-entry interventions outside our locality for APP Target One and more local collaboration for APP Target Two. We are exploring inclusive curricula for APP Targets Three, Four, Five and Six and our Student Support Services are looking at developing a 'pre-entry readiness tool' for low-participation and low socio-economic students (APP Targets Three and Five) who "need support to navigate an environment that is second nature for some of their peers"<sup>19</sup>. For APP Target Four we are working closely with our Students' Union VP Education who is doing valuable work on the journey for BAME students and exploring staff and students' degrees of comfort with discussing gaps concerning race and culture. We are also signatories to the UUK/NUS BAME attainment gap project and are considering a black student role model and leadership programme (APP Target Four). We are concerned that female course choice impacts on graduate outcomes and will look to explore this further (APP Target Seven). We will continue to use our research and evaluation expertise to make informed judgements. We have recently concluded an investigation into the experiences of commuter students and have found they are more likely to be from the groups pertaining to APP Targets One, Two, Three, Five and Six. We have also investigated non-continuation of mature students and look to replicate this for the attainment of mature students (APP Target Six). We will be acting on the recommendations of these reports over the coming year. We will also conduct new investigations into a number of new areas including the impact of feedback quality (APP Targets Three, Five and Six) and assessment types (APP Targets Three, Four, Five and Six). Finally we have signed the Care Leaver's Charter and have a plan to support Estranged Students.

### **3.2 Student Consultation**

Nottingham Trent Students Union (NTSU) and NTU collaborate on ensuring an effective academic representation system. The NTSU VP Education runs the system for 725 student representatives assisted by an SU staff member. The collaboration is ensured through the StEAR (Student Engagement & Academic Representation) Group which is a joint working group with students and includes the DVC and academic staff who are School Champions for the reps system. Secretariat for this group is provided by the University's Centre for Academic Development and Quality and it is chaired by the VP Education.

Student academic representatives are fully trained into how to get good quality feedback. Their activity is rewarded via a recognition scheme which is reflected on their Higher Education Achievement Report. A key part of the training is in equality, diversity and inclusion and as part of this reps are made aware of the differential access, success and

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<sup>19</sup> Kedra Ishop, University of Michigan, OfS Insight Event May 2019

progression of student groups. Ahead of the APP plan in 2018/19 the VP Education led an NTSU research project focusing on the BAME attainment gap. Students were shown data demonstrating the gap, asked to think about why this exists and to design initiatives to help close and eliminate such gaps. It was a very positive exercise and students indicated they supported a target on this. They also indicated they were keen to engage in the monitoring and resolving of such gaps and this will be systematised as part of APP oversight and the new NTSU strategy.

NTSU also has seven Equality and Diversity Officers who together with the representatives and officers consult widely with the student body. They ensure the input of students from all backgrounds is gathered on a wide range of University business including the Access and Participation Plan. This input is channelled through the Student Council to the NTSU Executive whose members sit on the key decision-making bodies in the University as full members. This includes Academic Board, the Success for All steering group, the Access and Participation sub-group and the Board of Governors (our NTSU President is a full member of the Board). In addition, the NTSU President co-chairs the Executive Student Forum alongside the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs and the NTSU Vice President for Education chairs the Student Engagement & Academic Representation Group. This gives the students almost unrivalled access to the key decision-makers and influencers within the University and its Governing Body.

The NTSU President, Bradley Fox expands on this:

*"The full integration of students into the governance and operation of the University is a key reason behind our success. The Nottingham Trent Students Union (NTSU) is a full partner; NTSU representatives on the committees are full members assimilated into these governance structures. Their input is required at all stages of committee work. Strategic changes, programmes and projects are not devised and presented to students for comment, rather student input is required at the very beginning of all change and frequently students lead the conversation, for example the NTSU VP Education initiated a BAME Accounting and Finance event supported by NTU's employability service. "*

The development of the APP took place through discussion items at the Success for All Steering group on two occasions, the Executive Student Forum on three occasions and at Academic Board and Strategy, Policy, Finances and Resources committee of the Board of Governors (on which the SU president sits) before submission to the OfS. During the academic year Access and Participation Plan work will be discussed at each of these groups under our Success for All initiative.

The NTSU President considers:

*"NTSU aims to enhance the university experience of all students at NTU, regardless of their background. NTSU and NTU have a productive collaborative relationship, working on many projects together. This year students and staff have been enabled to collaborate on the development of both the NTU and NTSU strategies, so that they can have a real influence. Students from all entry routes, modes of study and background were consulted so that both organisations' strategies have the interest of all students at their heart.*

*NTSU is committed to widening access, and closing attainment gaps alongside NTU. In NTSU's new strategic plan, an objective that we have is to campaign to close attainment gaps across NTU and beyond. This shows our commitment to working alongside NTU in closing these persistent gaps that exist within our society. Moving further than this, we have also committed to lead the campus conversation on equality, diversity and inclusion. We want our students to be engaged in this process throughout, not just as a tick box exercise. We firmly believe that students can lead the change that is needed across the*

*campuses and should be leading this conversation with all staff at both the University and Students' Union.*

*A final area of our strategy which allows for NTSU to be invested within Access and Participation is supporting students' educational transitions. We are breaking the traditional model, and working with NTU to encourage those students from low participation areas to go to university, whether that being NTU or elsewhere. It is important to use our own experiences, and to work with NTU to explain the benefits and what life in higher education is like as a student. For the APP the officers have been actively engaged in the process of setting targets and will work to ensure the University is openly challenged and held to account by NTSU and its members for its progress on these."*

The governance structure of Access and Participation Plan work at NTU is given in appendix eight and explained in section 3.4.

### **3.3 Evaluation strategy**

The importance to NTU of all students succeeding is detailed in the Strategic aims section of this plan. To achieve this we have taken evaluation and monitoring very seriously for a number of years. We are committed to ensuring that our access and participation provision is underpinned by a robust evaluation strategy. As an absolute minimum, we have ensured that all of our activities reach the OfS access and participation 'Type 1' standards of evidence.

Our approach to ensuring our work is evidence-informed has two strands. Firstly we have a number of staff with expertise in evaluation methodologies. These staff lead on our evaluation plans. However, the second and equally critical strand of work involves these expert staff training and empowering practitioners to undertake their own research and formative evaluation to inform programme development. This has resulted in practitioners feeling a sense of ownership and control within the process; not feeling alienated by change, but in effect, leading it. The tool we use in this practitioner-led model is the Theory of Change.

The ToC not only ensures sophistication within programme-based evaluations, but implementation of evaluation results. In effect, we adopt the rationale that the *establishment* of best practice is not necessarily enough for the *adoption* of best practice. Through our evidence-based practice we recognise that a dual change approach is required; our evaluation strategy must inform change in our provision that, in turn, has been shown to result in positive change in the outcomes of beneficiaries. To this end, a key component of our theory of change will be to embed and improve upon our existing Key Performance Indicators, which underpin our strong outcomes focused strategy across each stage of the participant journey.

We are clear that this process has no particular end date - it is conceptualised as ongoing and to be 'built upon' as new knowledge about the environment and evidence-led practice comes in to play. This is a critical component within our continuous improvement process. As evidence of the effectiveness of our provision is generated, summative and formative feedback is given to practitioners through our Evaluation Working Group and Success for All group. Using this approach we take proactive decisions to change and cease any provision that does not lead to positive change. This process has resulted in major changes such as a redistribution of expenditure and activity from the Access to Student Success stages of the lifecycle and our strategy of multiple access sessions forming a constructively-aligned sustained programme. Further developments will witness greater levels of pupil, student, teacher and wider stakeholder involvement within our overarching ToC process.

In addition to ensuring all our interventions have a clear rationale and narrative underpinning, we systematically track the subsequent trajectories of participants (see

continuous improvement in Whole provider strategic approach section). We can therefore demonstrate that many of our programmes are associated with beneficial learner outcomes, and therefore meet 'Type 2' [standards of evidence](#). This is presently limited to the NTU context and because of limited sample sizes for some programmes we cannot be wholly confident that any differences in student outcomes are a direct *causal* result of participation ('Type 3' [standards of evidence](#)). However, we will be working with TASO and HEAT colleagues to extend our analysis using larger datasets, thus permitting more robust quasi-experimental analysis using more reliable control groups to move towards establishing causal outcomes.

### **Targeting financial support**

The stated objectives of our student financial support provision are to ensure that our bursaries (provided to students from low-income households) negate the effects of financial disadvantage on student success. We were able to test this through a 'natural experiment'; the result of changes in NTU's student financial support systems enabled us to directly compare the success outcomes of bursary recipients (the treatment group) with those equally financially-disadvantaged students who received fee waivers (the control group). This was facilitated through adoption of the OfS financial support evaluation toolkit.

The results of the statistical analysis of learner outcomes (stage one of the OfS toolkit) found strong evidence that bursaries were effective in mitigating any financial disadvantage associated with student success, whilst fee waivers (the control group) were found to be either ineffective or insufficient in scale to overcome the underlying effects of low-income backgrounds.

In order to understand this further and establish the important trigger points that effected the positive change, we triangulated our findings by surveying our students, adapted from stage two of the OfS toolkit. Recipients of bursary payments reported that the money they'd received had played an important role in enabling them to continue their studies (thus reinforcing the findings from the statistical analysis) and, to a lesser extent, achieve the grades they had in their assessments.

Unsurprisingly, students had strong views concerning the financial support available to them. Phase one of the evaluation found evidence that bursaries were associated with improved student outcomes and the student survey in phase two went some way to explaining some of the reasons why students benefited from additional finance. We have also undertaken interviews with students as part three of the toolkit and are in the process of writing up the findings.

This work has led to the redirection of some financial support from the Access stage to the Student Success stage of the lifecycle to encourage students to engage in behaviours and programmes that evidence shows to be successful e.g. bursaries for work experience and sports.

The three-stage approach to the evaluation of student finance not only established associations between financial support and improved student outcomes but also ensured that the student voice was heard.

### **Evaluation self-assessment tool**

We recognise the importance of self-reflection of our evaluation practice. Therefore, whilst our central Evaluation Working Group took primary responsibility for our overarching NTU level self-assessment using the [OfS tool](#), this was informed by submissions at departmental and programme level. As might be expected, the various outputs revealed that there was some difference in evaluation standards, and indeed interpretation of the tool itself, hence scores differed, but were not necessarily comparable. However, we found that this was less of a concern for us; what mattered was engaging with the process itself,

as it enabled practitioners and evaluators alike to focus on continuous improvement within our evaluation framework. In total, we completed seven self-assessments, which ensured that we identified areas of strength but, more importantly, challenged areas where we need to improve our evaluation practice.

In summary, our self-assessment reported that we were at an 'advanced' stage in terms of our *Strategic Context* (scoring 21 out of 24), and 'emerging' for *Programme Design* (14 out of 18), *Evaluation Design* (6 out of 9), *Evaluation Implementation* (16 out of 20) and *Learning from Evaluation* (15 out of 22). We will be looking to improve our evaluation practice in the following key areas in particular:

- Ensuring evaluation is specified in the planning stages of our interventions;
- In partnership with TASO, ensuring greater clarity on the intended audience of our evaluations and sharing internally and with the sector;
- Improving on our existing evaluation plan to take greater account of roles, responsibilities and resources required;
- Moving towards 'causal' impact methodologies;
- Increased adoption of inferential statistics at the programme level and inclusion of a broader range of stakeholders within our ongoing Theory of Change processes; and
- An increased understanding of what works, how it works and for whom.

We have plans to use APP funds to strengthen our expert evaluation service and help spread and embed the informed-practitioner work deeper across the University.

### **National Good Practice**

We lead the way in developing evaluation practice and acknowledge the importance of contributing to the sector's progress in this field. In addition to our leadership of TASO we regularly speak at conferences, symposiums and visit and host other universities to discuss best practice. We have published numerous articles and blogs on our work and have considerable engagement with relevant politicians and civil servants<sup>20</sup>. Our analysis of our financial support offers a unique or rare insight into a comparison of bursaries and fee waivers and we will be looking to publish this once the research has been completed.

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

Given the importance of this agenda to the University, our Board of Governors is very engaged in the subject. The Board sub-committee with responsibility for APP work is the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee (SPFRC). This group approves the APP and will monitor progress against the APP through the approval of the annual impact report. Furthermore, progress against the Success for All targets, which are being amalgamated with the APP targets (as detailed in the Whole provider strategic approach section) are reported to the full Board of Governors quarterly.

The Board will hold the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic and Student Affairs accountable for monitoring and reporting on APP targets. The DVC is supported by the Success for All Steering Group (chaired by the VC) which meets quarterly. To ensure more frequent oversight of targets a new Access and Participation sub group has been established which will meet regularly throughout the year and more frequently when plans and returns/impact reports are required.

The DVC will also report annually on the APP to the full Board of Governors as part of the detailed reporting on the strategy theme 'Creating Opportunity'.

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<sup>20</sup> A few examples of our output include: [Sandwich placements can unlock social mobility](#); [Many universities have a long way to go](#); [Stop wasting time and money by making outreach work](#); [New insights on WP: Evaluation](#); [Differential offer rates do not necessarily indicate bias](#); [The value of character building on outreach work](#);

Although evaluation against targets can only be done annually, the Success for All group and the Access and Participation Group will enable more regular reporting against the provisions of the plan. Should progress not be as required the Success for All Group and the APP Group will require Schools and Professional Services to improve their Success for All plans/provision, using the new information gathered from the programme to date. This would likely result in the APP itself being changed.

The NTU Success for All Organisation Chart at appendix eight shows the range of committees with responsibility for monitoring this work. All these committees consist of Academic and Professional Service staff and all of them with the exception of University Executive team, have student representation as full members as outlined in section 3.2. Furthermore, a monitoring report will be submitted to the Executive Student Forum each year. (Dotted lines indicate that reports are regularly sent from the Access and Participation subgroup to these committees). It is the aforementioned full integration of students into the governance mechanisms and operation of the University which will ensure their full engagement in the monitoring of performance and provisions.

#### **4. Provision of information to students**

The University is committed to providing clear and accessible information to all prospective and current students, detailing exactly what they will have to pay and what financial support will be in place for the duration of their course. This includes arrangements for NTU bursaries and loans and grants provided by national funding authorities.

The University will also provide updated fees and bursary information to UCAS and SLC, in a timely manner, in order for these important external sources of information to provide the most up-to-date applicant-facing web content.

NTU's financial support provision is made available to both prospective students, their parents/carers and current students across a number of channels of communication including:

Dedicated Fees and Funding web pages, with information on tuition fees and related financial information, frequently asked questions and key contacts.

- Finance talks and workshops to young people and their parents/carers. We will distribute hard copy literature (guides and fact sheets) to targeted schools and colleges.
- Highly-visible coverage of financial matters at university open events, including all pre- and post-application events. Student Finance stands, staffed by financial support advisers and a programme of comprehensive talks for prospective applicants and their parents/carers, detailing tuition fees and the financial support and loan repayment arrangements.
- On-line, face-to-face and telephone enquiry services for prospective student enquirers, applicants and current students, to respond to individual queries on fees and funding issues.
- On-line enrolment and payment facilities through "My ntu", providing notification of fee liability and payment arrangements personalised for each student.

Our fees and funding web content, providing helpful and friendly advice and guidance, alongside useful 'Managing your Money' information which emphasises the importance of financial capability for students is regularly reviewed and updated.

Annual course fees are published across a range of printed materials. Fees and funding information is published in the prospectus, course brochures and on the NTU website; this information is made available on both detailed course information pages and specific fees

and funding content. We are explicit in our wording that course fees may change for each year of study and confirm fees for all placement years.

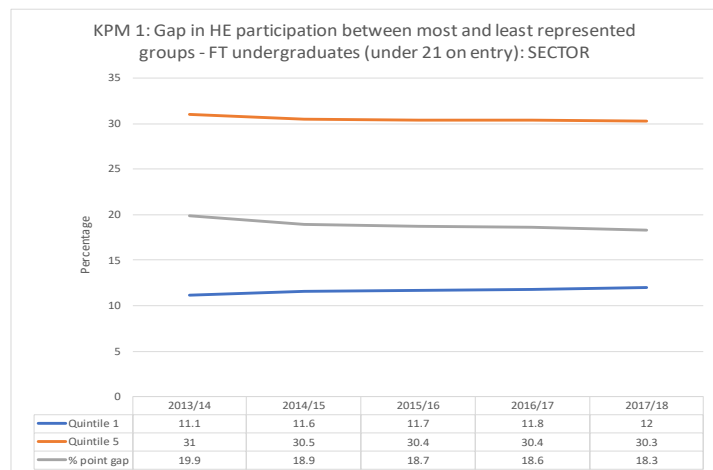
NTU is also committed to abide by CMA regulations and every prospective student receives details of their course information, including the course fee for each year of study, an explanation of what is included within that course fee and any additional costs a student is expected to pay as part of their course of study. This information is readily accessible on the website, but every applicant also receives the information in durable format (pdf attached to an email) at the point an offer to study at NTU is made.

The approved Access and Participation Plan will be published on the NTU website, alongside the previous five years agreements, in easily accessible locations for both prospective students and current students. The primary published location on [www.ntu.ac.uk](http://www.ntu.ac.uk) for recent Agreements is the 'About NTU' section, within the 'Policies' section. Separately there is direct link to the Agreements in the 'Study and Courses' section of the NTU website, for prospective students. Recent access agreements are also published on the current student's intranet in the student services section: Fees and Student Finance.

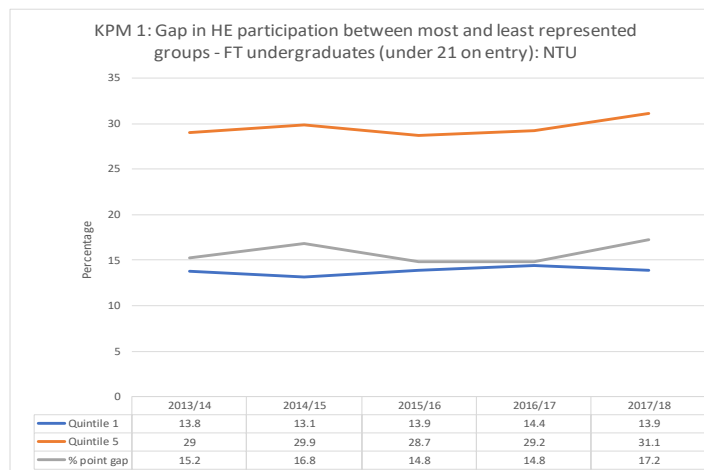


## Appendix 1: OfS KPM1 - Gap in participation between most and least represented groups (POLAR) – NTU target 1

### Sector

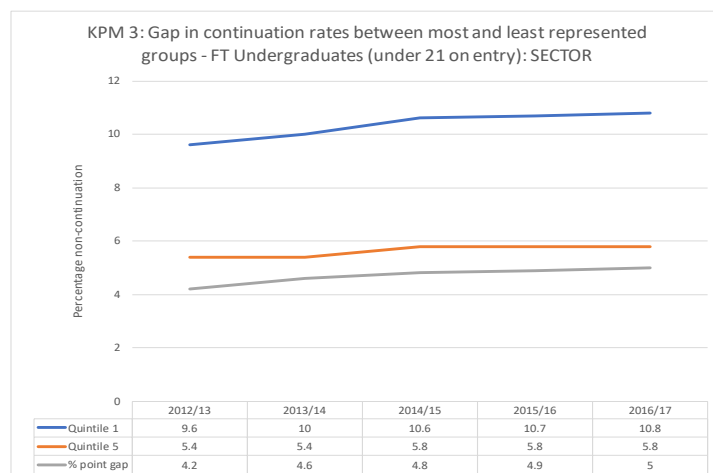


### NTU

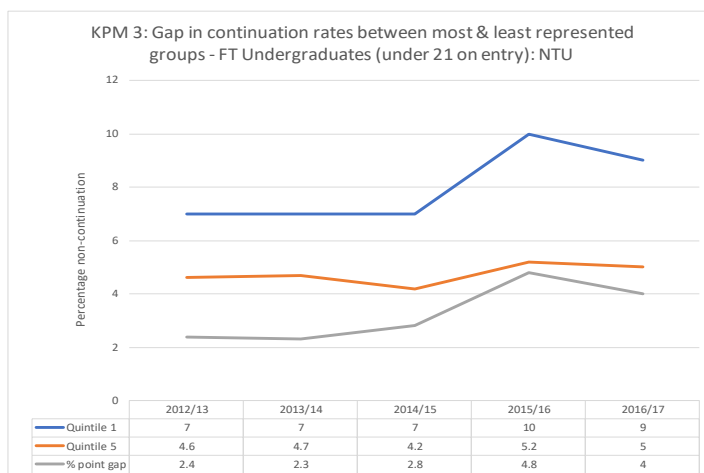


## Appendix 2: OfS KPM3 - Gap in non-continuation between most and least represented groups (POLAR)<sup>21</sup> – NTU target 3

### Sector



### NTU

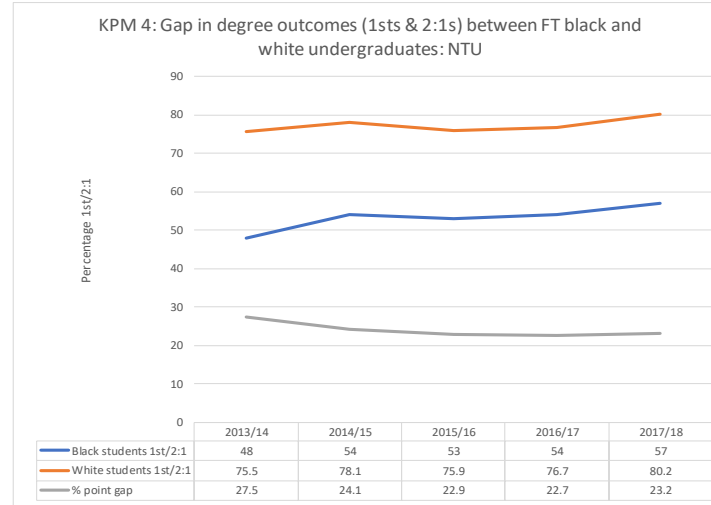
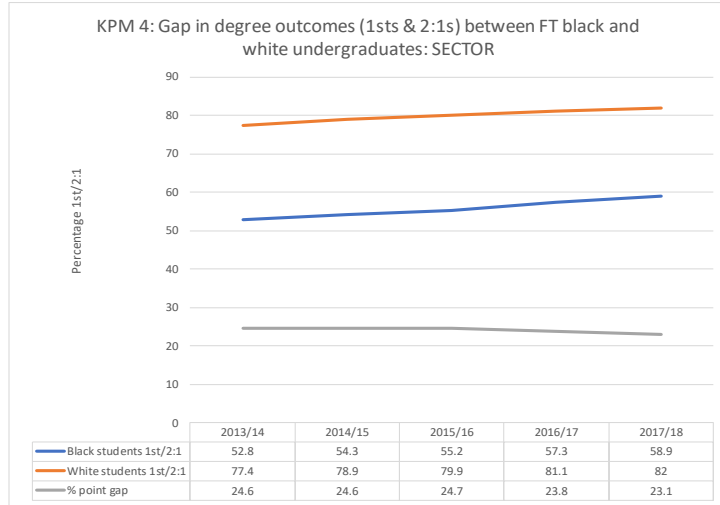


<sup>21</sup> The actual KPM relates to 18-30 year olds. However, the POLAR data in the APP dataset shown in the graph includes under 21-year-old students only.

### Appendix 3: OfS KPM4 - Gap in degree outcomes (1sts and 2:1s) between black and white students – NTU target 4

Sector

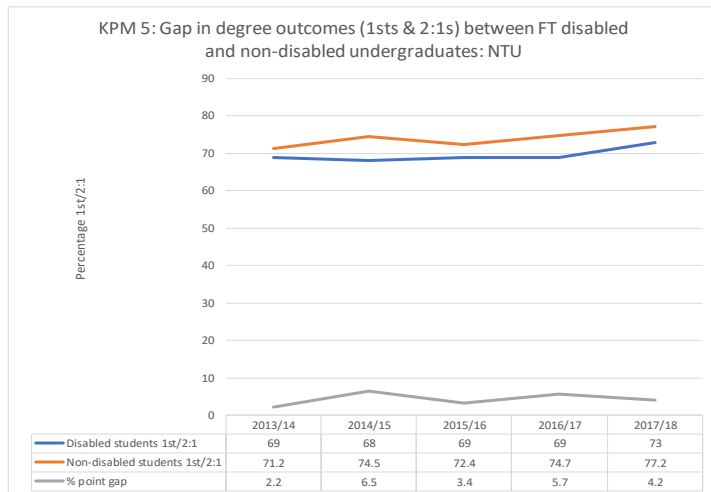
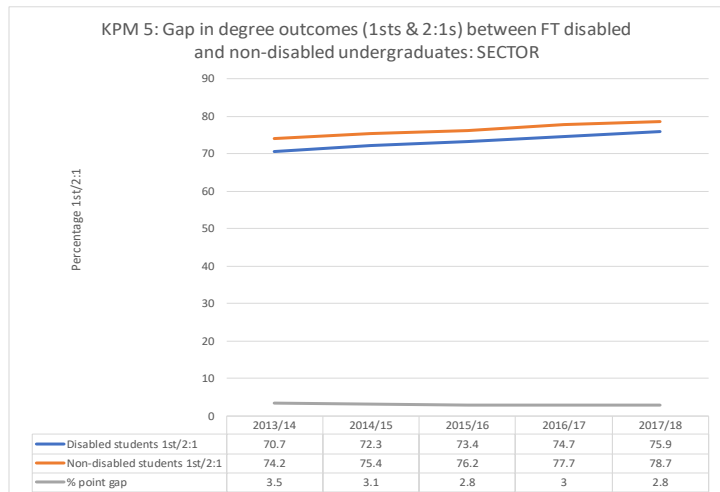
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### Appendix 4: - OfS KPM5 - Gap in degree outcomes (1sts and 2:1s) between disabled and non-disabled students

Sector

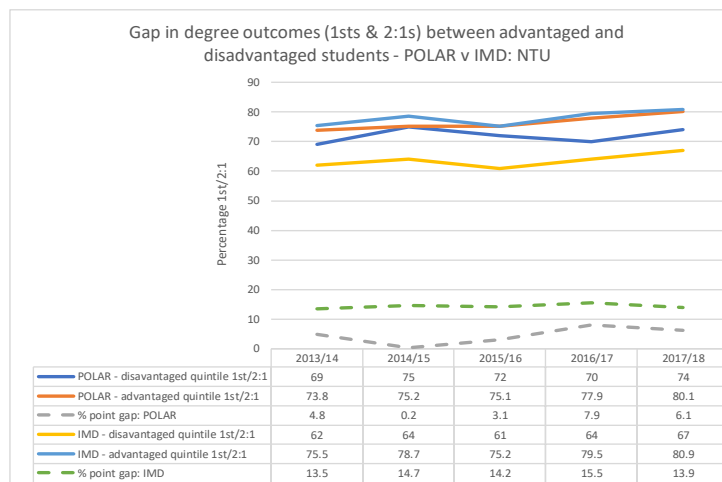
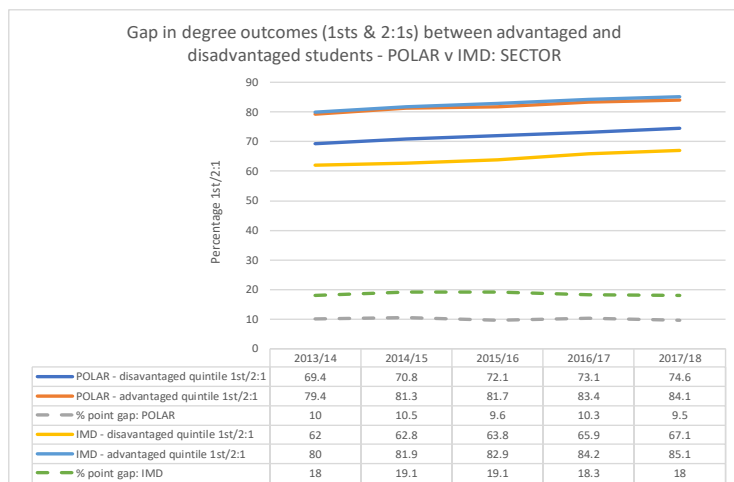
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## Appendix 5: Gap in degree outcomes (1sts and 2:1s) between socio-economically disadvantaged and advantaged students (IMD) – NTU target 5

Sector

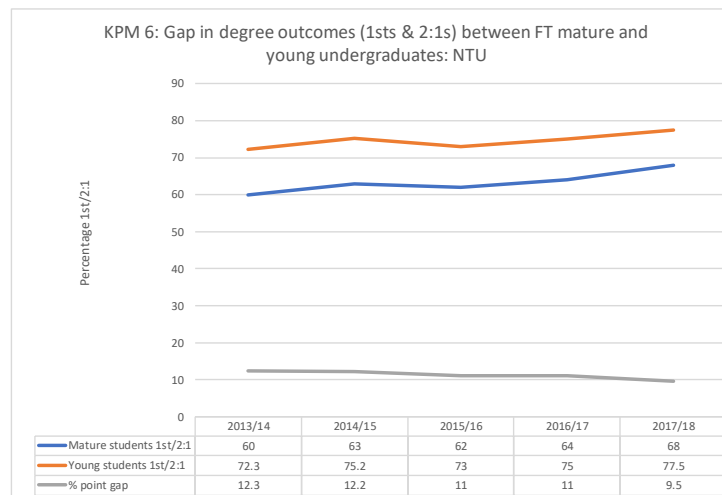
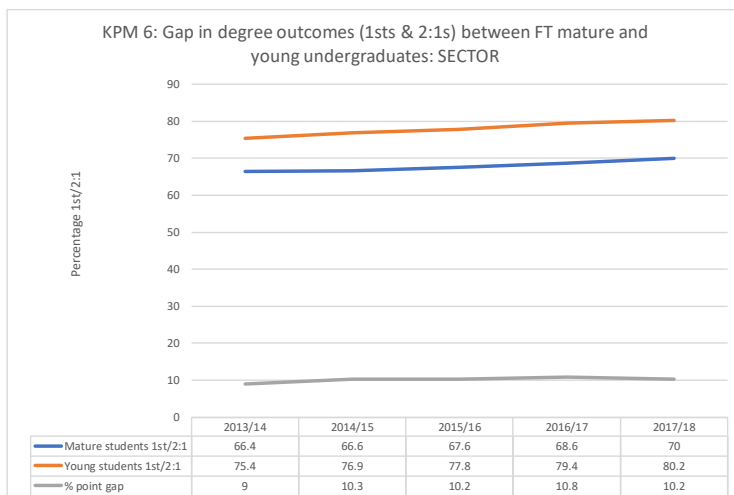
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## Appendix 6: Gap in degree outcomes (1sts and 2:1s) between mature and young students – NTU target 6

Sector

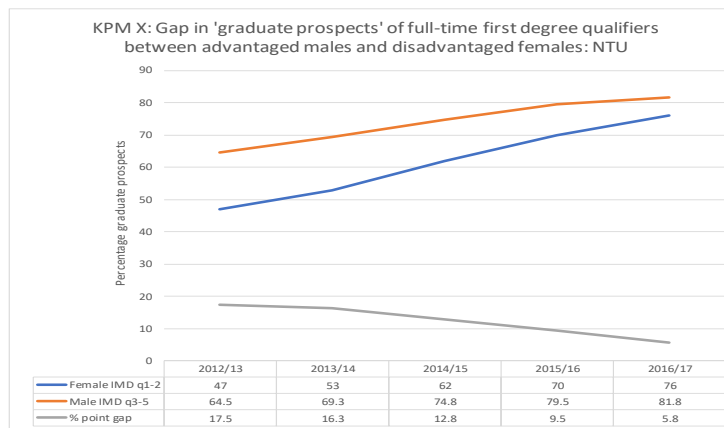
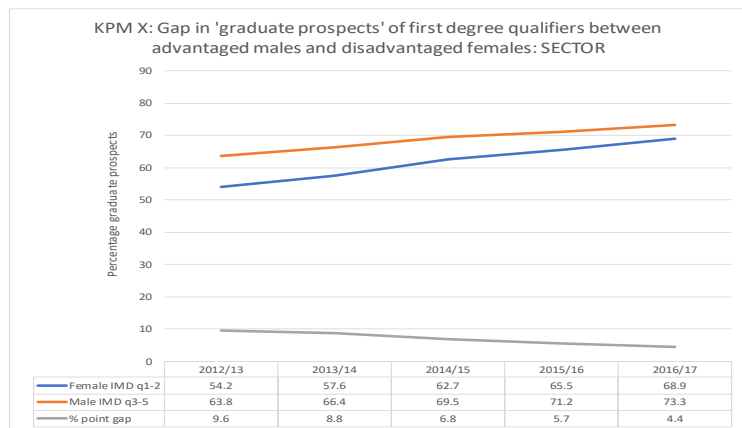
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## Appendix 7: Gap in first degree 'graduate prospects' (graduate level occupations or higher study) between disadvantaged females and advantaged males (IMD) – NTU Target 7

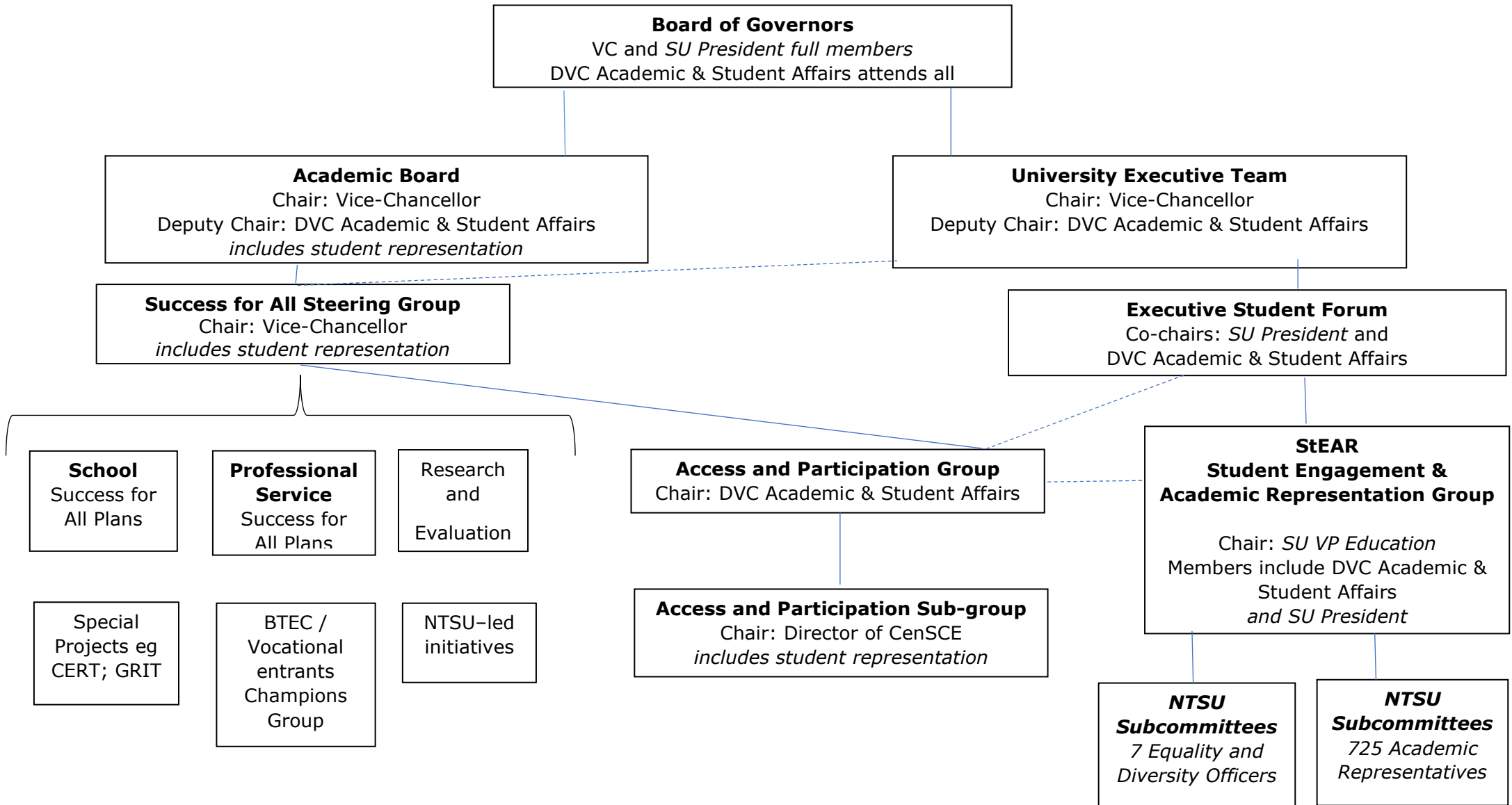
### Sector

### NTU



**Appendix 8: NTU Success for All Organisation Chart**

*Student representation highlighted in italics*



## 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	New & Continuing Students	£9,250
Foundation degree	New & Continuing Students	£9,250
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	New & Continuing Students	£9,250
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	New & Continuing Students who started in 2018-19	£1,385
Erasmus and overseas study years	New & Continuing Students	£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	Nova Centric Limited 10020858 - New & Continuing Students	£9,250
Foundation degree	Nova Centric Limited 10020858 - New & Continuing Students	£9,250
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	LLB (Hons) Law Distance Learning (3 years)	£6,331
First degree	LLB (Hons) Law Distance Learning (4years)	£4,750
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Nottingham Trent University

Provider UKPRN: 10004797

## 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
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£2,930,381.79	£2,977,575.01	£3,024,749.49	£3,113,246.73	£3,178,893.26
Access (pre-16)	£1,086,339.14	£1,108,142.93	£1,130,382.78	£1,153,067.44	£1,176,205.79
Access (post-16)	£324,490.91	£331,003.73	£337,646.81	£344,422.74	£351,334.20
Access (adults and the community)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Access (other)	£1,519,551.74	£1,538,428.36	£1,556,719.90	£1,615,756.55	£1,651,353.27
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£7,754,063.54	£7,877,786.79	£7,936,313.32	£7,981,670.40	£8,027,324.26
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£453,064.04	£462,025.32	£471,165.82	£480,489.14	£489,998.92

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£73,800,753.00	£74,676,624.00	£75,307,460.00	£75,786,565.00	£75,786,565.00
<b>Access investment</b>	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%
<b>Financial support</b>	10.5%	10.5%	10.5%	10.5%	10.6%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	13.0%	13.1%	13.1%	13.1%	13.3%

